It gives me great pleasure to officiate at the opening of the 14th Construction and Interior Exhibition. The Exhibition which commenced in 2003 has been held every successive year hence making it an annual event. I would like at the onset to thank International Links, the organisers of this function for having spearheaded it consistently over the years. The forum has provided a platform for exchange of ideas and experience in the field of construction and interior design. It is extremely important that policy makers, Government officials and private sector come together to share ideas, exchange experience and deliberate on issues in the construction industry. This is a healthy development and it should be supported. It is for this reason that International Links have partnered with Ministry of Works and Transport, the lead organ in the construction sector to hold this event on an annual basis.

Construction plays a key role in socio-economic development of any country. It is through construction that vital infrastructure like roads, railway, water supply and sanitation, power transmission is put in place. Our shelters, schools, offices, hospitals are all realised through successful construction projects and activities.

In Uganda, construction is a crucial sector not only because it is the second biggest employer after agriculture but it is responsible for putting in place the vital infrastructure that supports other sectors in the economy. Without construction and infrastructure other sectors in the economy would not perform well. Agriculture, the biggest sector of the economy needs roads to send inputs from factories and Kampala to the farms and the
same roads to evacuate products from farms to markets. Roads also lead to schools, health services, other social facilities and administrative centres.

Government attaches a lot of importance to construction and infrastructure and this is reflected in the budget allocations over the last five years. The Transport Sector, Water Sector and Energy Sector have all been allocated substantial funds out of the national budget. The various actors in the construction industry namely engineers, architects, surveyors, contractors, consultants, suppliers, manufacturers, etc should all position themselves to participate in the available opportunities in these sectors.

Government has put in place a Policy for Development of the National Construction Industry (NCI). The major objectives of this policy are to:

i. Harmonise roles and responsibilities of the public and private sector for effective NCI management;
ii. Regulate activities of the stakeholders and co-ordinate public and private sector dialogue for the development of the NCI;
iii. Develop and strengthen local capacity for effective participation in the NCI;
iv. Increase access to equipment, credit and work by local contractors and consultants;
v. Promote use of new and appropriate technologies;
vi. Remove Restrictive Practices to participation of marginalised groups; and
vii. Ensure that NCI supports sustainable national economic and social development.

Implementation of the policy is ongoing and will be expedited upon the establishment of the proposed Uganda Construction Industry Commission (UCIC).

Let me turn to this year’s theme which is “Construction made Easier, Faster and Effective”. The theme is pertinent as it addresses key concerns in the construction industry today. We need to explore means of doing our work easily, more quickly while ensuring that the objectives of construction projects and activities are achieved in a more cost effective and efficient manner. Construction work should also be safe and environmentally friendly. This will mean employing appropriate equipment and tools for the jobs, deploying the right human resources with right skills and ensuring that work done meets the set specifications in the project descriptions the first time and all the time. By doing work to the right quality that meets specifications, one avoids repeat works that waste resources (money, time and labour).
Often Government Departments are criticised for doing shoddy works. While this may be true sometimes, in some cases it may be due to lack of information to the public. We need to engage the various stakeholders right from the planning stage to implementation. Maintenance works have been confused for construction. Key stakeholders notably political leaders and public should be kept informed of the plans and intended objectives of the various interventions so as to avoid misunderstandings.

In this forum, various actors: contractors, consultants/designers, manufacturers of materials and equipment, the academia and researchers have opportunity to showcase their methods and products that address the theme. During my inspection of the exhibition stalls I have seen equipment and materials on display that can be used to construct more easily, faster and effectively as they will help us achieve our strategic goals. I hope construction project planners, designers and implementers will incorporate these innovations in their methods and approach to work.

As we move towards achieving Vision 2040, the volume of construction work is expected to increase so we need to work smart. We need to employ easy means of doing work, we have to deliver work faster and the work done must be effective and efficient so as to achieve value for the money spent. This will entail innovation in the way we do work and training of the human resources so as to equip them with requisite skills to handle construction work.

I wish to thank the organisers of this Exhibition for all the arrangements and having invited me. I thank the exhibitors for having spared time and resources to exhibit their products and hope that participants will find better means of doing their work more easily, faster and effectively.

It is now my honour to declare the Construction and Interior Exhibition 2016 open and wish all of you a successful event. I look forward to your recommendations after the event that you will bring to my attention for consideration. I wish to assure you that your recommendations will be addressed at the highest level in Government.

I thank you so much for your kind attention.

For God and my Country