



A Narrative Brief to H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni President of the Republic of Uganda

At the Inauguration of the Karamoja Peace and Technology University (KAPATU), Losilang Catholic Parish, Kotido District – November 23, 2025

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**KARAMOJA PEACE
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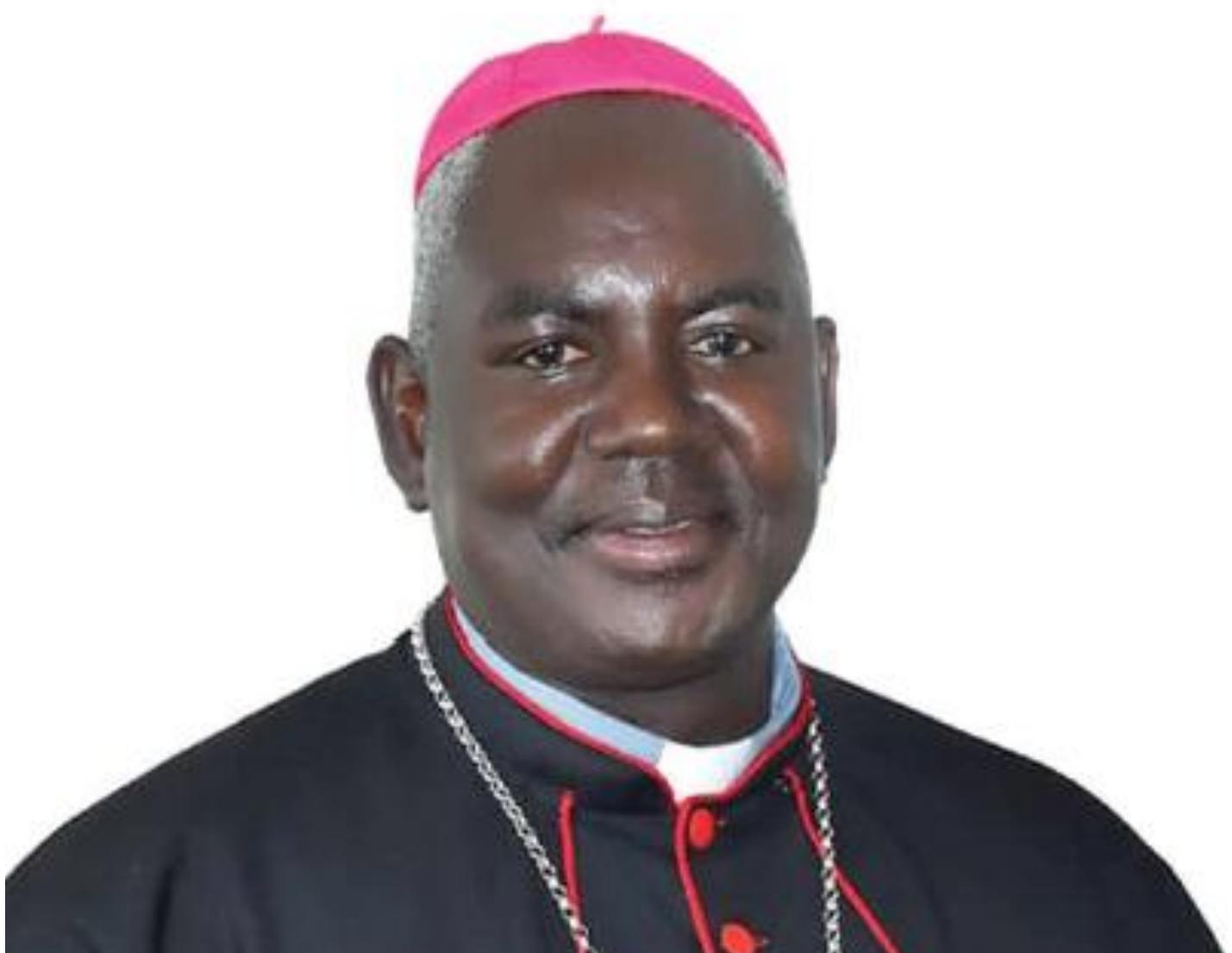
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Executive Summary

Narrative Brief to H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni

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Losilang Catholic Parish, Kotido District – November 23, 2025

The **Narrative Brief** presented to **H.E. the President of the Republic of Uganda** is both a historical reflection and a declaration of transformation. It chronicles the long, complex, and redemptive journey of the **Karamojong people** from cultural resistance of formal education, symbolized by the rejection and '*burying of the pen*' in Akwapowa-Nadunget-Matheniko of Moroto in 1911 and Lomukura-Losilang-Jie of Kotido in 1942, to intellectual renaissance of embracing formal education symbolized by the '*Unearthing the Pen*' in November 1995, culminating in *the November 2025*, establishment of the **Karamoja Peace and Technology University (KAPATU)** — a monumental institution that symbolizes the triumph of peace, education, and national unity under Your Excellency's visionary leadership.

1. A Journey Rooted in Struggle and Redemption

The evolution of formal education in Karamoja mirrors the region's encounter with colonialism and modernity. Before colonial intrusion, education was deeply embedded in **indigenous knowledge systems** — oral, experiential, and community-based. Elders were the teachers, kraals were classrooms, and the curriculum revolved around **livestock management, social discipline, and cultural harmony**.

This equilibrium was shattered with the advent of colonial rule in the early 20th century. Literacy and the pen — introduced by colonial administrators and missionaries — were perceived not as tools of empowerment but of control, oppression and dispossession. During the Second World War, written records were used to **conscript young men** and **tax livestock**, turning the pen into a symbol of **loss and betrayal** rather than learning.

Between **1942 and 1945**, this resentment crystallized into an act of cultural defiance known as "**The Burying of the Pen**." In Kotido and much earlier in Moroto with the killing of chief Lokong in 1911, elders symbolically buried the pen to reject colonial education, declaring it a curse upon their land. The pen was interred as an oath to protect cultural sovereignty and

spiritual purity. For decades, this act defined Karamoja's isolation from Uganda's mainstream educational and political life.

2. The Turning Point: The Unearthing of the Pen (1995–Present)

Half a century later, under the peaceful climate ushered in by the **National Resistance Movement (NRM)**, the winds of change reached Karamoja. On **4th–5th November 1995**, at Losilang in Kotido, elders, faith leaders, and government representatives convened a historic reconciliation ritual — the “**Unearthing of the Pen and Opening of the Children.**”

This profound ceremony reversed the ancestral curse and symbolized a **cultural rebirth**. It proclaimed that education and tradition were not enemies but partners in progress. The elders' declaration — “*The pen shall no longer kill our children; it shall build them*” — marked the dawn of Karamoja's intellectual awakening.

Your Excellency's leadership ensured that this awakening was translated into tangible development. Through government and development partnerships, initiatives such as:

- **Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK)** — adapted to pastoral lifestyles;
- **Universal Primary Education (1997)** and **Universal Secondary Education (2007)**; and
- **State House Scholarships** and **Irish Aid bursaries** for bright, needy students,

transformed Karamoja's educational landscape. Literacy rates rose steadily, thousands of youth joined formal education, and the children of livestock herders became professionals — teachers, nurses, doctors, lawyers, administrators, engineers, and peace builders.

Education became the new currency of dignity. The **pen once buried in fear was now wielded with pride** — its ink writing new stories of opportunity, resilience, and leadership.

3. The University Era: The Inauguration of KAPATU (2025 and Beyond)

The inauguration of **KAPATU** on **23rd November 2025** marks the culmination of an eight-decade transformation — from rejection to rediscovery, from resistance to renaissance. The university rises on the same soil where the pen was buried and later unearthed, completing the spiritual and intellectual circle of Karamoja's rebirth.

KAPATU is more than an institution of higher learning — it is the **cathedral of peace and technology**, a living testament to Uganda's inclusive transformation under Your Excellency's leadership. Its establishment fulfills the long-held prophecy that the children of Karamoja would one day study, innovate, and lead from the very ground their ancestors once rejected education.

Strategically anchored in **NDP IV (2025/26–2030/31)**, the **Karamoja 10-Year Development Plan**, and **Vision 2040**, KAPATU embodies Uganda's commitment to **equitable regional development**. It is built upon six thematic pillars:

- **Peace and Conflict Transformation,**
- **Technology and Digital Innovation,**
- **Pastoral Livelihood Systems,**
- **Renewable Energy and Environmental Management,**
- **Agricultural and Animal Sciences, and**
- **Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Development.**

The installation of **Your Excellency as Founding Chancellor and H.E. Maj. (Rtd.) Jessica Rose Epel Alupo, Vice President of Uganda, as Founding Deputy Chancellor** institutionalizes the partnership between State and the Karamoja-Ateker society. It symbolizes the unity of purpose between the central government and the Karamoja people — that national transformation is only complete when every region shares in the dividends of peace and progress.

4. KAPATU as a Living Symbol of the New Social Contract

KAPATU represents the consolidation of the **NRM's peace dividend** and the **renewal of the social covenant** between government and the people. It stands as a **peace dividend** of the successful **Disarmament and Pacification Programme (2006–2011)**, which transitioned Karamoja from the gun to the pen, and from insecurity to stability.

As a **Regional Centre of Excellence**, KAPATU will strengthen Uganda's leadership in the **Ateker Corridor**, serving as a hub for cross-border peacebuilding, research, and regional integration within the **IGAD, EAC, COMESA, and AfCFTA** frameworks. Its influence will

extend beyond Uganda, connecting communities across **Turkana (Kenya), Toposa (South Sudan), and Nyangatom (Ethiopia)** through education, technology, and trade.

KAPATU's establishment thus redefines Karamoja not as a frontier of conflict, but as a **corridor of innovation, peace, and continental cooperation**. It institutionalizes the NRM's vision of "Transformation through Peace and Knowledge," ensuring that the legacy of disarmament evolves into an enduring culture of learning and productivity.

5. The Pen Has Come Home

The return of the pen to Karamoja is both **historic and prophetic**. Once buried as a symbol of fear, it now stands enshrined within the walls of KAPATU — as a permanent instrument of progress, prosperity, and peace.

Through this university, Your Excellency's leadership has transformed a century-old cultural scar into a source of pride and empowerment. The children of Karamoja, once confined to the margins of national life, are now authors of their own destiny. The pen — once cursed — now writes the future of Uganda and Africa.

As KAPATU opens its doors to students, researchers, and innovators from across the Ateker region, rest of Uganda and the African continent, it declares to the world that **education has triumphed over fear, knowledge has replaced conflict, and peace has found a permanent home in Karamoja**.

6. The Legacy and the Promise Ahead

The inauguration of KAPATU is both a celebration of the past and a commitment to the future. It stands as a monument to Your Excellency's enduring philosophy:

“That no region should remain behind, no community left unheard, and no child denied the gift of knowledge.”

KAPATU will nurture a generation of **peaceful innovators, productive citizens, and Pan-African thinkers**, ensuring that Uganda's transformation is inclusive, sustainable, and enduring.

Thus, the pen — once buried in rejection — has finally **come home** to write the new story of Karamoja, of Uganda, and of Africa's future. It is now the torch that lights the path from **peace to productivity**, from **margins to mainstream**, and from **resistance to renaissance** — fulfilling the promise of Your Excellency's leadership that peace, when anchored in education, becomes the foundation of everlasting prosperity.

1. Introduction: Evolution of Formal Education in Karamoja

Your Excellency,

The story of formal education in Karamoja is, in every sense, the story of a people's encounter with modernity — a long arc of transformation marked by misunderstanding, resistance, rediscovery, and eventual embrace. It reflects the profound journey of the Karamojong community from cultural self-preservation to intellectual awakening, from the margins of Uganda's education system to the dawn of a new era symbolized by the birth of the Karamoja Peace and Technology University (KAPATU) on this very soil of Losilang.

For generations, education in Karamoja existed in its indigenous form — oral, experiential, and deeply communal. Elders were the teachers, kraals were the classrooms, and the curriculum revolved around livestock, survival, and social cohesion. Children learned courage, discipline, and endurance through herding, communal rituals, and apprenticeship in craft and conflict management. Knowledge was transmitted through songs, proverbs, and oral narratives — a model that sustained harmony with nature and ensured cultural continuity.

However, the coming of colonialism in the early 20th century disrupted this balance. The British administration introduced literacy not as a tool for enlightenment but as an instrument of control. During the Second World War, the written word — symbolized by *the pen* — became associated with coercion and betrayal. The colonial officers used it to conscript young Karimojong men into the army and to record livestock for taxation. Many of those conscripted never returned home. The *pen*, which to the colonizers represented civilization, came to symbolize loss, grief, and dispossession to the Karamojong.

This experience bred a deep suspicion of formal education. To the pastoral elders, the school was not a place of empowerment but an alien institution threatening to separate the child from the herd, the home, and the community's values. Missionaries who brought Christianity and schooling to Karamoja from 1929 onwards — both Catholic and Protestant — were met with caution and hostility. They sought to evangelize through education, but the cultural disconnect between the content of learning and the realities of pastoral life bred resentment. Parents withdrew their children; teachers were shunned, and in some cases attacked.

The Burying of the Pen: A Turning Point in Karamoja's Encounter with Formal Education

The resistance to colonial influence in Karamoja reached its peak in the 1940s, when the Jie colonial county chief, **Mr. Nameu**, became one of the most despised figures among his people. He was blacklisted by the communities for embracing and enforcing several unpopular colonial policies.

First, Chief Nameu accepted and implemented the colonial directive to **vaccinate livestock** during a rinderpest outbreak. The Jie people, who had neither understood nor consented to the practice, perceived this as a violation of their cultural understanding of animal health. Secondly, the chief participated in the **forceful recruitment of Jie youth** to serve as fighters in the British Empire's army during the Second World War—many of whom never returned home. Thirdly, through his literacy and the use of **the pen**, Chief Nameu compiled written livestock censuses that became the basis for determining how much each household would pay in the newly introduced and deeply resented **colonial hut tax**.

As these injustices mounted, the Jie elders grew increasingly alarmed. They agonized over how to stop the suffering and reverse what they perceived as the curse brought by Chief Nameu's pen and his association with colonial authority. After long deliberations, the **traditional medicine men and the Akiriket elders** of the main Orwakol branch of the Jie clans proposed a symbolic remedy: to **steal and bury Chief Nameu's pen**—thereby rejecting the written word and cursing the foreign education it represented.

In a daring act of defiance, several brave young men succeeded in stealing the chief's pen. They brought it to the elders assembled at the sacred shrine (Akiriket) known as **Namejio**, belonging to the Ngikotidoi branch of the Karwaakol people. There, in a solemn ceremony at what is today **Lomukura Village, Kotido North Parish, Kotido Municipality**, the elders performed a traditional **burial of the pen**. The ritual was presided over by the senior Akiriket elders of **Ngithilanga/Ngipoet** in present-day Losilang—revered custodians of spiritual authority, empowered to pronounce powerful blessings or curses over the land and its people.

This profound cultural act became one of the defining moments in the history of education in Karamoja—and indeed in Uganda. Through the “**burial of the pen**,” the elders symbolically **rejected the written word, cursed foreign education, and declared that whoever followed the way of the pen would die**. The ritual represented a collective vow to safeguard cultural

identity, autonomy, and spiritual sovereignty being threatened by the encroachment of colonial influence.

The Killing of Chief Lokong and the Burying of the Pen among the Matheniko of Moroto

Before the events in Kotido, a similar but even more violent rejection of colonial authority and formal education had already occurred in what is today **Moroto District**. In the 1911, **Chief Lokong**, a Matheniko leader under colonial administration, became deeply despised by his people. He was notorious for enforcing the **colonial policy of collective punishment**, which allowed the confiscation of livestock from entire clans, including innocent families, to compensate victims of raids committed by individuals or rival groups. He was accused of brutality and use of excessive force, corrupt practices, and siding with the colonial administration against his people. He also actively participated in the **forceful recruitment of young Matheniko men** in to the Kings African Rifles (K.A.R) who were shipped off to take part in the fighting on the British side during the First World War (1914-18)—many of whom have never returned. In addition, Chief Lokong’s efforts to **introduce and promote colonial education** among the Matheniko were met with hostility. The people viewed formal schooling as a tool of subjugation, alien to their culture and spiritual worldview. Over time, resentment against his leadership grew into open rebellion.

According to oral accounts, Chief Lokong was eventually **arrested by an angry youth movement traditionally known as Ameto** who overpowered his soldiers, near the present-day **Mt. Moroto Hotel**. He was brought before a traditional public court of elders convened under the sacred **Lopeduru tamarind tree**, located in what is now the **Katanga suburb of Moroto Municipality**. After deliberations, the elders pronounced a death sentence upon him. He was taken away and executed at a place called **Akwapuwa**, in the then **Nadunget Subcounty**.

In the aftermath of his killing, **Chief Lokong’s Mother**, overwhelmed by grief and anger at the public humiliation and execution of her son, performed a symbolic act that would leave a lasting cultural imprint. She **took her son’s pen**, the very symbol of his authority and connection to the colonial government, **buried it**, and pronounced a solemn curse:

“If my son was rejected and killed because of this pen, his written reports, and his enforcement of government policies, then let there be no education or progress in this land. None of your children shall rise up to take up this pen.”

Her words, uttered in mourning and defiance, became a powerful **curse against education and modernity** in the Matheniko area. Chief Lokong's death thus became a tragic emblem of the **clash between tradition and imposed modernity**, and the pen he wielded—once a tool of colonial administration—became a symbol of betrayal and loss.

Unlike the Jie of Kotido, who later performed a cultural ritual to **unearth and cleanse the buried pen**, thereby reconciling with formal education, the **Matheniko of Moroto** have not yet ritually lifted this cultural ban. The spiritual and symbolic weight of that buried pen continues to linger in oral memory—marking one of the earliest and most profound resistances to formal education in Karamoja's history.

The implications of these events were far-reaching. For decades, formal education in Karamoja stagnated. Schools remained few and poorly attended, literacy rates hovered near zero particularly among the Matheniko and Jie, and the region's children grew up on the margins of Uganda's national education project. Yet, this rejection — though often misunderstood — was not ignorance; it was a form of cultural protest. The elders sought to defend their identity, their economy, and their sovereignty. Their resistance stemmed from a desire for dignity, justice, and self determination not from hostility to learning itself.

The Turning of the Tide: The Dawn of Formal Education in Karamoja

With time, however, history began to change course. The winds of transformation that swept across Uganda after independence eventually reached **Karamoja**, signaling the beginning of a slow but steady shift in attitudes toward formal education.

Among the earliest symbols of this change was **Mzee Joshua Akol**, whose educational journey defied both colonial restrictions and cultural resistance. As a young boy at **Lotome Primary School**, he was **secretly smuggled out** by a British Church Missionary Society (BCMS) priest, **Rev. Bwana Clark**, and taken to **Ngora Junior Secondary School**. This was an extraordinary act at a time when colonial policy **prohibited any Karimojong** from advancing beyond **Primary Six**. Under the colonial system, Karimojong were expected to serve only as **vernacular teachers, translators, clerical officers, or foremen in public works**—never as professionals or national leaders.

Through determination and God's providence, Joshua Akol went on to **pursue higher education at the University of London**, becoming the **first Karimojong to obtain a**

university degree in 1963. His achievement marked a historic breakthrough, symbolizing the beginning of Karamoja's intellectual awakening.

Akol's distinguished public service career further embodied this transformation. He later served as **East African Minister for Railways and Harbours** in Nairobi until the collapse of the **East African Community in 1977**. Subsequently, the late **President Idi Amin** appointed him **Chairman and Managing Director of Uganda Railways**, and between **1981 and 1985**, he served under the late President Milton Obote's Government as **Uganda's Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications**.

Mzee Akol's remarkable journey—from a young boy smuggled out of a restricted classroom and Karamoja as a closed district to a national and regional leader—became a powerful testament to the resilience of education and the eventual opening of Karamoja to the world of formal learning.

Mzee Joshua Akol's triumph became a **turning point in Karamoja's educational awakening**, inspiring a new generation to embrace learning as a pathway to empowerment and progress. His example challenged the deep-seated cultural fears and colonial stereotypes that had long confined the Karimojong to the margins of formal education. By the **1970s and 1980s**, missionary schools, government programs, and a growing number of local leaders began to **champion the cause of education** across the sub-region. The establishment of institutions such as **Moroto High School, Kangole Girls, Nadunget, and Kotido Secondary School** marked the beginning of a slow but meaningful transformation. Although progress remained uneven—hindered by insecurity, cattle rustling, and socio-economic marginalization—the spirit of curiosity and aspiration ignited by pioneers like Akol continued to spread. By the **1990s** under the NRM administration, a small but determined cadre of educated Karimojong professionals had begun to emerge—teachers, nurses, administrators, and clergy—laying the intellectual foundation for the modern Karamoja that would later embrace higher education, peace, and development.

By the early **2000s**, the seeds planted by early pioneers had begun to bear fruit. Education was no longer viewed with suspicion but as a **tool for liberation and transformation**. A new wave of Karimojong youth, both men and women, began to enter universities across Uganda and beyond, pursuing careers in teaching, medicine, engineering, law, and public administration. The once-buried pen—once feared as a curse—had now been **unearthed as a symbol of empowerment, knowledge, and renewal**. This intellectual and spiritual rebirth reached its

most profound expression by attempts in establishing a constituent college under Gulu University in Naduget Subcounty of Moroto District and the **founding of the Karamoja Peace and Technology University (KAPATU)** in Losilang Subcounty of Kotido District—a monumental institution rooted in the same soils where the pen was once buried. Inauguration of KAPATU stands today as a living testament to Karamoja’s long journey from resistance to renaissance—where the written word, and the pen once rejected, has become the very instrument through which the region now writes its own destiny.

The disarmament campaigns of the 1980s and 1990s, the growing presence of government and faith-based institutions, and the region’s increasing interaction with the rest of the country began to challenge old perceptions. Slowly, the Karamojong started to realize that education was not the enemy of culture, but a bridge to opportunity and participation in the modern world.

By the 1990s, the same communities that had once buried the pen were ready to dig it up — literally and symbolically. A new consciousness was emerging: that the pen, when used by the Karamojong themselves, could be a tool of liberation rather than oppression. It is within this transformative context that the 1995 “Unearthing of the Pen” ceremony would later mark the beginning of Karamoja’s educational rebirth — a turning point from resistance to renaissance, and the foundation upon which the journey to KAPATU would ultimately be built.

Thus, Your Excellency, the evolution of education in Karamoja is not merely a chronicle of schools built and pupils enrolled; it is the story of a people reclaiming their right to define knowledge on their own terms. It is the narrative of the *pen* — once buried in fear — being resurrected in hope, and today, finding its permanent home in the halls of a university that stands as a monument to peace, progress, and cultural pride.

2. Phase One: Resistance and the “Burying of the Pen” (1911 & 1942–1945)

Your Excellency,

The first phase in the evolution of formal education in Karamoja is defined by an act of profound symbolism and defiance — *the burying of the pen*. This episode, which unfolded during the turbulent years of the Second World War, remains one of the most powerful illustrations of cultural resistance in Uganda’s history. It represents not ignorance, but a deeply considered decision by the Karamojong elders to defend their community’s identity, sovereignty, and survival in the face of a foreign system that they perceived as hostile and dehumanizing.

When the British colonial administration extended its civil authority to the Karamoja frontier in the 1921 marked by the posting of a District commissioner in the Moroto regional office, and between 1930’s and 1940s, it introduced literacy not as a pathway to enlightenment but as an instrument of control, oppression and dispossession. The pen — that simple tool of ink and paper — became an object of fear and resentment. Through the written word, the colonial officers recorded the names of young men to be conscripted into the Second World War. Many of these recruits, taken to fight in distant lands, never returned. Families were left grieving, and the written lists of names became, in the collective memory of the Karamojong, *lists of death*.

The same pen was also used to count cattle for taxation. This was a double assault on the core of Karamojong existence — their youth and their herds. The community’s wealth and pride lay in its cattle, and to have them numbered and taxed by a foreign authority was a violation of both economic freedom and spiritual order. The act of writing, therefore, came to symbolize exploitation, loss, and betrayal.

In this climate of pain and mistrust, the elders of Losilang in Kotido — custodians of Karamoja’s moral and cultural authority — convened to take a decisive stand. They resolved that the community would have nothing to do with the *white man’s pen*. In a solemn ritual held between 1942 and 1945, they gathered in the open plains of Losilang and **buried a pen** in the earth, accompanied by a traditional curse. The ritual, later recounted through oral histories, was a collective oath: never again would the people of Karamoja submit their children or their cattle to the authority of the written word. To write was to invite death; to go to school was to be lost forever.

This act was more than symbolic — it institutionalized a moral order. It was reinforced by taboos, proverbs, and oral teachings warning children against “the road of the pen.” Parents forbade attendance at missionary schools. Foreign teachers were viewed as agents of cultural destruction. In Moroto, the resistance much earlier, had turned violent with the tragic killing of **Chief Lokong**, and the cultural ritual of burying the pen taken from him, and the utterance of the curse by his grieving mother. He was one of the early local leaders who had attempted to collaborate with the colonial administration through his literacy and the use of **the pen** introducing formal governance among the Matheniko. His stoning to death in the 1911, underscored the depth of local opposition and the sense of betrayal felt by a community determined to preserve its autonomy at any cost.

The justification for this resistance was deeply rooted in the Karamojong worldview. To the elders (like in other Ateker communities), every child was both a labourer and a lineage-bearer. Education that removed a child from the kraal was seen as breaking the chain of generational continuity. The pastoral system itself was an educational institution — rigorous, moral, and practical. A boy learned bravery, animal husbandry, and community defense from his father and uncles; a girl learned discipline, endurance, and the care of the homestead from her mother. The elders saw no wisdom in a foreign school that neither taught cattle keeping, practical skilling of wood carving and forging metal implements for everyday use, mastery of local herbs for treating human and livestock diseases, interpreting the sounds of birds and animals as well as the flowering and shading of leaves of different tree species to signify likely occurrence of up coming disaster, rainy, and dry seasons etc., nor respected ancestral norms.

Moreover, the colonial classroom imposed foreign languages, alien dress, and unfamiliar routines. Children were made to sit indoors, chant lessons in English, and pray to a foreign God. To the Karamojong, this was not education — it was captivity. The new system neither respected the rhythms of pastoral life nor responded to the economic realities and demands of nomadic people whose movements followed the rains and the grazing cycles dictated by spatial occurrences of salt licks, nutritious and leguminous grasses in time and space.

The outcomes of this resistance were, however, paradoxical. On one hand, it succeeded in preserving cultural identity and shielding the community from external domination during an era of exploitation. On the other, it isolated Karamoja from the transformative power of literacy and participation in Uganda’s emerging postcolonial state. While other regions advanced in

education, governance, and modern enterprise, Karamoja remained on the periphery — misunderstood and often misrepresented as resistant to progress.

Yet, Your Excellency, the “**burying of the pen**” was not an act of ignorance; it was a rational response to a system that failed to respect the people’s values, culture, and voice. It was a call for self-determination — a demand that any knowledge introduced to Karamoja must first be *understood, owned, and integrated* into their way of life.

This period laid the foundation for a future reconciliation between tradition and education. The same elders who buried the pen had sown, unknowingly, the seeds for its resurrection — for within their defiance lay a longing for a form of learning that could protect, rather than destroy, their world. It would take fifty years, and the dawn of a new Uganda under Your Excellency’s leadership, **for that “pen” to be unearthed again** — this time, not as a symbol of subjugation, but as an emblem of liberation, enlightenment, and socio-economic transformation.

Thus, the first phase of Karamoja’s educational journey stands as a testament to the power of cultural conviction — a reminder that development must be rooted in respect, dialogue, and understanding. The “**pen**”, once buried in fear and grief, awaited its time of your under your leadership of Uganda, to rise again — to write a new chapter of peace, progress, and prosperity for the Karamojong people and their neighbours.

3. Phase Two: The Unearthing of the Pen and the Rebirth of Learning (1995–Present)

Your Excellency,

If the first phase of Karamoja's educational history was defined by resistance and rejection, the second was marked by awakening and renewal (ably captured in the NRM 10 Points Programme, 8 (2b)) — a cultural and intellectual resurrection that began right here, on the soil of Losilang, three decades ago. This was the era when the elders of Karamoja, guided by wisdom and foresight, made the historic decision to *unearth the pen* — the same pen their forefathers had buried in fear and defiance during the colonial era.

The *Unearthing of the Pen and Opening of the Children Ceremony*, held on the 4th and 5th of November 1995 in Losilang village, Kotido District, stands as one of the most transformative cultural events in Uganda's post-independence history. It was a moment of reconciliation between the past and the future, between tradition and modernity, and between the Karamojong worldview and the nation's vision for inclusive development.

At that time, Your Excellency, the region was emerging from decades of isolation, insecurity, and mistrust. The world around Karamoja had changed — Uganda was stabilizing under your leadership, peace was taking root, and the message of transformation was spreading to every frontier of the country. In Karamoja, the elders began to realize that the same pen once cursed as an agent of death had, in fact, become the key to life — to opportunities, knowledge, and participation in the national development agenda.

The 1995 “Unearthing of the Pen” Ritual: A Cultural Turning Point

During that ceremony, the elders of the Jie, under the guidance of cultural and religious leaders, gathered once more under the great acacia trees of Losilang. They performed a cleansing ritual to reverse the ancestral curse and to “open the children” — symbolically granting the younger generation permission to go to school. A buried pen was exhumed and held aloft as a sign that the time had come to learn, to write, and to join the wider family of the educated.

What had once been a symbol of loss was now reborn as a symbol of liberation. The ritual, which combined Christian blessing with traditional invocation, carried profound meaning: it declared that education and culture were no longer enemies but allies. The elders proclaimed, “The pen shall no longer kill our children; it shall build them.” This moment marked the

spiritual rebirth of learning in Karamoja and paved the way for a new relationship between the community, the State, and the modern world.

Education Reimagined: From Rejection to Ownership

Following this cultural breakthrough, the Government of Uganda through Ministry of Education and Sports, local governments, communities, in partnership with Save the Children organisations, UNICEF, and Irish Aid, launched a new education model specifically designed for the pastoral context — **the Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK)** programme, in the late 1990s. This was an adaption from lessons learnt of the Brac school model in Bangladesh.

ABEK was founded on a simple but revolutionary principle: education must go to the learner, not the learner to the school. Classes were held under trees, in kraals, or at community gathering points — flexible enough to follow the pastoral rhythm of life. The curriculum was built around livestock management, peacebuilding, hygiene, literacy, and numeracy — knowledge that resonated with the everyday realities of pastoral families. For the first time, the Karamojong saw themselves reflected in what was being taught.

This was not merely an education programme; it was a social contract. Elders participated as custodians of knowledge, local facilitators were trained from within the community, and parents began to see education as a means to strengthen — not replace — their cultural identity. The sight of children reading and writing in Ngakarimojong beneath acacia trees became the visible symbol of Karamoja's quiet revolution.

Results and Transformative Outcomes

The impact of this phase has been extraordinary. Over the past three decades, literacy levels in Karamoja have risen from less than 10% in the early 1990s to over 25% by 2017, and enrolment at both primary and secondary levels has continued to expand faster than the national average. Thousands of learners from ABEK centres transitioned to formal schools, while many others acquired functional literacy and went on to work with NGOs, local governments, and peace programmes.

This democratization of education — cutting across clans, genders, and social hierarchies — transformed the face of the region. Once, education was seen as the privilege of outsiders or elites; today, it is a shared aspiration. The children of herdsmen and reformed warriors now sit

beside the sons and daughters of traders and civil servants, all united by the same dream of progress.

It was during this period that the foundations were laid for a generation of Karamojong professionals — teachers, nurses, agricultural officers, engineers, and administrators — who now contribute to the region's and nation's development. The *pen* had finally been reclaimed as a tool of empowerment.

Government and Development Partnership: A Continuum of Support

Your Excellency, the rebirth of learning in Karamoja was not only cultural — it was political and developmental. Under your government's leadership, major education reforms such as Universal Primary Education (1997) and Universal Secondary Education (2007) extended their reach into the sub-region. The integration of peace and development through the Karamoja Integrated Disarmament and Development Programme (KIDDP) and the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) anchored education as a pillar of human security and post-conflict reconstruction.

Parallel to these national efforts, targeted interventions by partners — notably **Irish Aid**, **UNICEF**, and the **World Food Programme** — strengthened educational infrastructure, feeding programmes, and girls' education. Initiatives such as Irish Aid's bursary scheme, UNICEF's "Go to School, Stay in School" campaign, and the WFP school meals programme made education both accessible and desirable to previously reluctant families.

These collective efforts were complemented by affirmative action under Your Excellency's direct guidance. The **State House Scholarship Scheme** and the **Irish Embassy Annual Bursaries**, introduced during and after the disarmament process of 2006–2011, have provided opportunities for hundreds of young Karamojong men and women to pursue higher education within Uganda and abroad. Many of these beneficiaries have returned home as doctors, engineers, teachers, and civil servants — living proof that the unearthing of the pen was not a mere ritual, but the beginning of a real intellectual and socio-economic transformation.

The Cultural and Developmental Implications

The "unearthing of the pen" symbolized more than the acceptance of formal education; it represented a profound shift in the Karamojong worldview. It redefined learning as both a right and a responsibility — a bridge between ancestral knowledge and modern innovation.

The ceremony restored trust between government and community, replaced fear with faith, and turned resistance into partnership.

The broader outcomes of this transformation are visible today:

- A generation of literate and self-confident Karamojong youth ready to lead their region into the future.
- The growth of public and private schools across all districts of Karamoja, including technical and vocational institutions.
- A significant reduction in hostility toward education and a growing appetite for higher learning, culminating in the establishment of KAPATU — the region's first public university.

Conclusion: From Pen to Progress

Your Excellency, the *pen unearthed in Losilang* thirty years ago has written a new destiny for Karamoja. It has traced a journey from exclusion to inclusion, from fear to hope, and from cultural isolation to national participation. What began as a local ritual has matured into a regional renaissance — one that has restored the dignity of learning and aligned Karamoja with Uganda's broader vision of transformation.

This second phase of Karamoja's educational history has thus laid the intellectual and cultural foundations for today's milestone — the birth of the Karamoja Peace and Technology University. For it is here, on the same sacred soil where the pen was both buried and unearthed, that the story of learning in Karamoja comes full circle — now reborn in the form of a university that embodies the hopes of an entire people and the enduring legacy of your leadership.

4. Phase Three: The University Era — The Inauguration of KAPATU (2025 and Beyond)

Your Excellency,

Today, the circle of Karamoja's long educational journey closes and reopens — not as resistance, not as rediscovery, but as *renewal*. The inauguration of the **Karamoja Peace and Technology University (KAPATU)** here in **Losilang**, Kotido District, marks the dawn of a new era — *the University Era* — in which the pen that was once buried and later unearthed now becomes permanently institutionalized as an instrument of peace, progress, and prosperity.

This day, **Sunday, November 23, 2025**, will be remembered as one of the defining moments in Uganda's post-independence history — when the most remote frontier of the nation, once synonymous with marginalization, became a beacon of intellectual and cultural rebirth. It is profoundly symbolic, Your Excellency, that this inauguration takes place on the very ground where the pen was both **buried in defiance (1942–45)** and **unearthed in reconciliation (1995)**. In this sacred continuum, KAPATU rises not just as a university, but as a *cathedral of knowledge* — consecrated by history, sanctified by sacrifice, and propelled by vision.

A Fulfillment of Prophecy and Purpose

Your Excellency, the founding of KAPATU fulfills an eight-decade prophecy — that one day, the children of Karamoja would study and innovate upon the very soil that once rejected learning. It is the ultimate manifestation of transformation under the National Resistance Movement (NRM): the journey from the margins to the mainstream, from exclusion to participation, and from a sub-region defined by conflict to one defined by knowledge and peace.

The establishment of this institution under your guidance and vision — and your installation today as **Founding Chancellor**, alongside Her Excellency **Jessica Rose Epel Alupo**, Vice President of Uganda, as **Founding Deputy Chancellor** — represents a national covenant between leadership and the people of Karamoja. It is a declaration that Uganda's progress is indivisible; that no child, no region, and no community shall remain behind in the country's march toward middle-income status, prosperity, and national unity.

KAPATU: A Beacon of Peace, Technology, and Transformation

KAPATU has been conceived not merely as an academic institution but as a *strategic engine for regional transformation*. It stands as a flagship of **NDP IV (2025/26–2030/31)** and the **Karamoja 10-Year Development Plan**, aligning education with Uganda's broader “**Tenfold Growth Strategy**” and **Vision 2040**. Its mission is to equip the people of Karamoja — and the greater Ateker cluster — with the intellectual, technical, and moral capital to drive peacebuilding, innovation, and sustainable development.

The University's pillars of learning — *Peace Studies, Technology, Pastoral Livelihood Systems, Renewable Energy, Agricultural Science, and Entrepreneurship* — reflect both the heritage and the aspirations of the region. It is designed as a “**University for the Desert Frontier**,” blending traditional indigenous knowledge systems with modern science to address climate adaptation, cross-border trade, water resource management, livestock value chain development, and digital innovation.

By harnessing local knowledge and modern research, KAPATU will serve as a model for *contextualized higher education* — one that does not uproot communities from their culture but empowers them to thrive within it. In this way, KAPATU stands as a practical expression of Your Excellency's philosophy of “*Transformation through Education and Peace*.”

The Coincidence of History: 1995 and 2025

Your Excellency, the timing of this inauguration is not accidental — it is providential. Exactly thirty years ago, in **November 1995**, the elders of Losilang performed the historic ceremony of “*Unearthing the Pen and Opening the Children*.” That act broke the ancestral taboo against education and ushered in a wave of enlightenment that led to the expansion of schools, literacy, and opportunity across Karamoja.

Today, **November 2025**, precisely three decades later, the journey that began with a ritual under the acacia trees culminates in a full-fledged university — a living monument to the enduring power of faith, culture, and leadership. The ground upon which the pen was buried in protest and later raised in hope now holds the foundations of a university where generations will write, research, and innovate.

Thus, this coincidence of history affirms that *Karamoja's time has come*. The long arc of education has bent toward justice, equity, and empowerment. The pen that once symbolized

death now symbolizes destiny — and through KAPATU, it will continue to write new chapters for the Ateker peoples and the nation at large.

The Regional and Continental Significance

The inauguration of KAPATU transcends borders. The presence here today of eminent Ateker leaders — from the **Nyangatom of Ethiopia**, represented by **H.E. Hailemariam Desalegn**, former Prime Minister of Ethiopia; the **Turkana of Kenya**, led by the Governor of Turkana County; and the **Toposa of South Sudan**, led by the Governor of Eastern Equatoria State — signals the rebirth of the *Ateker civilization* as a force for cross-border peace and development.

Under Your Excellency's Pan-African vision, this university becomes a *regional center of excellence* for pastoral resilience, peace building, regional diplomacy, and cross-border cooperation. It will serve as an intellectual anchor for the implementation of **IGAD's Regional Pastoral Livelihoods Policy**, the **EAC and COMESA frameworks on cross-border trade**, and Uganda's commitments under the **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**.

Through its Peace and Technology programs, KAPATU will nurture *a new generation of Ateker scholars and leaders* capable of advancing shared resource management, inter-ethnic dialogue, and regional integration — transforming once volatile borderlands into corridors of innovation, trade, and unity.

A Symbol of Peace Dividend and Disarmament Legacy

Your Excellency, the birth of KAPATU is also the ultimate peace dividend of your successful **Disarmament Programme (2006–2011)**, which ended decades of armed conflict and restored order to the sub-region and its neighbouring districts. The installation of the President and Vice President — both central figures in the disarmament and peace consolidation process — as Founding Chancellor and Deputy Chancellor respectively, symbolizes continuity between the *gun era* and the *pen era*.

In this new chapter, the pen officially replaces the gun as the emblem of prestige and progress. The university, therefore, becomes a living testament to the NRM's philosophy that *peace is the foundation of development* and that education is the surest guarantor of lasting peace. It stands as a promise to the reformed warriors (Karacunas), the youth, and the next generation — that the nation values their transformation, and that learning shall forever replace raiding as the currency of pride and prosperity.

National Integration and Social Contract Renewal

By establishing KAPATU as a public university under the Government of Uganda, Your Excellency has reaffirmed the nation's social contract with Karamoja — a region once marginalized, now recognized as an equal partner in national progress. The appointment of Your Excellency and the Vice President as its Founding Chancellor and Deputy Chancellor embodies the unity of State and the Karamoja community, symbolizing that the Republic itself now sits at the heart of Karamoja's destiny.

This installation, witnessed by regional leaders, religious dignitaries, diplomats, and local elders, and Karamoja Professionals represents not only a university inauguration but the renewal of trust between government and people. It signals a powerful message — that Uganda's development agenda is *one and indivisible*, from the Nile to the mountain plains, from Kampala to Kotido (Karamoja).

Projected Impact: The Knowledge Economy Frontier

In the coming decade, KAPATU is expected to become a catalyst for multiple transformations across the northeast and beyond:

- **Human Capital Development:** Training thousands of youth in science, peace studies, and entrepreneurship to meet Uganda's demand for skilled labor under NDP IV.
- **Economic Growth:** Supporting regional value chains in livestock, minerals, tourism, and renewable energy — translating education into enterprise.
- **Peacebuilding:** Serving as a think tank for conflict prevention, conflict transformation, community dialogue, and reconciliation within the Ateker cluster, in the Horn and Great Lakes region of Africa.
- **Cultural Preservation:** Documenting and promoting indigenous knowledge systems, traditional ecological practices, and the heritage of the Ateker peoples.
- **Gender and Youth Empowerment:** Providing equitable access to higher education for young women and men across social and economic backgrounds.

Through these functions, KAPATU will not only serve Karamoja but the entire nation and region — ensuring that Uganda's transformation and its cross border neighbourhood of Ateker is both inclusive and sustainable.

The Pen Has Found Its Home

Your Excellency, the story of education in Karamoja began with a buried pen — a symbol of fear and rejection. It was reborn on 4th and 5th November 1995 through the courage of elders who unearthed it as a symbol of reconciliation. Today, on 23rd November 2025, that pen is *enthroned* in stone and steel, in lecture halls and laboratories, as **KAPATU — the Karamoja Peace and Technology University**.

It is fitting, therefore, that you, the architect of peace, modernization, and national transformation, stand as the Founding Chancellor of this institution — the living embodiment of the promise you made to the people of Karamoja: that peace would bring progress, and that progress would bring pride.

From this day forward, the children of Karamoja and the wider Ateker community will no longer walk long journeys in search of education; education has come home. The pen — once buried, once unearthed — now *belongs to the people*. It will write the next chapter of Uganda's transformation story — one of knowledge, unity, and enduring peace.

Your Excellency, the pen has finally found its home, and its ink shall write the future of Karamoja, Uganda, and Africa.

5. The Social Contract and the Promise Ahead

Your Excellency,

The inauguration of the **Karamoja Peace and Technology University (KAPATU)** is not merely the opening of a new institution of learning — it is the renewal of a solemn covenant between the State (government) and the people of Karamoja; between leadership and community; between Uganda's historic promise of unity and the region's long quest for dignity and inclusion. It is the reaffirmation of a *social contract* that has evolved through sacrifice, patience, and faith — a contract sealed in peace, anchored in education, and consecrated today by Your Excellency's presence on this very soil of Losilang.

From Disarmament to Development: The Evolution of the Covenant

Your Excellency, the journey to this day has been one of profound transformation — from a region once synonymous with insecurity and deprivation to one that now stands at the threshold of opportunity and innovation. Under your leadership, the Karamoja sub-region has moved from the gun to the pen, from isolation to integration, and from dependency to self-determination.

The successful **Disarmament and Pacification Programme that began between 2006–2011 and to date**, laid the foundation for this transformation. It restored security, rekindled trust in government institutions, and reintroduced a sense of national belonging among the Karamojong. It was during this period that Your Excellency repeatedly assured the people that "*peace is the seedbed of prosperity.*" Today, that seed has blossomed — and KAPATU stands as its most enduring fruit.

The transition from peace enforcement to peace consolidation has been marked by deliberate investments in education, health, infrastructure, and livelihoods. Through flagship programmes like the **Karamoja Integrated Disarmament and Development Programme (KIDD)**, the **Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP)**, and the **Karamoja 10-Year Development Plan**, the region has been redefined not as a humanitarian outpost but as a frontier of national growth. The establishment of KAPATU under **NDP IV (2025/26–2030/31)** now institutionalizes this transformation by embedding peace and development into the permanent fabric of learning and research.

KAPATU as a Living Symbol of the Social Contract

Your Excellency, KAPATU is more than a university — it is a social institution that embodies the NRM government's long-standing philosophy of *inclusive transformation through peace, education, and economic empowerment*. It stands as an instrument of justice — not in the courtroom sense, but in the moral sense of restoring balance between the centre and the periphery, between the past and the future.

By establishing this university in Losilang, Kotido with the possibility of taking over Moroto campus in Nadunget, where Gulu University has not succeeded to establish a constituent college — the symbolic birthplaces of both resistance and reconciliation — the Government of Uganda has given physical expression to the principle that **no region should remain behind in the nation's march toward prosperity**. It affirms that education is not a privilege for the few but a right for all, and that national peace is sustainable only when every community has a stake in progress and protect the gains.

Your Excellency's installation today as **Founding Chancellor**, alongside the Vice President, **Her Excellency Jessica Rose Epel Alupo**, as **Founding Deputy Chancellor**, gives life to this covenant. It signifies that leadership itself is now enshrined within the institution — that the Head of State and the Head of Government's second-in-command will serve not only as symbols of authority but as custodians of knowledge and guarantors of the promise made to the people of Karamoja under the NRM 10 Points Programme even when you were still fighting in the bush.

This act of installation transforms the university into a living chapter of Uganda's democratic and developmental narrative — a chapter where the government's commitment to equity, peace, and progress becomes tangible in the lives of ordinary citizens. It also serves as an enduring reminder that the dividends of peace are measured not only by the absence of conflict but by the presence of opportunity.

The Promise of Inclusion, Innovation, and Intergenerational Transformation

The social contract renewed today is not merely a political arrangement — it is an intergenerational promise. It is a pledge that the sons and daughters of livestock herders will have the same access to education, innovation, and enterprise as the children of urban and agricultural elites. It is a promise that the barriers of geography, gender, and history will no longer define destiny under NRM leadership.

KAPATU will embody this promise through its academic mission and community impact:

- **Inclusive Education:** Opening pathways for youth, women, reformed warriors, and marginalized groups to access higher learning without discrimination.
- **Research for Resilience:** Generating homegrown solutions in peacebuilding, agriculture, water management, renewable energy, and livestock value chains to serve not only Karamoja but Uganda and the greater Horn of Africa.
- **Technology and Transformation:** Bridging the digital divide by training a generation of innovators, engineers, and entrepreneurs capable of driving Uganda's knowledge economy.
- **Cultural Integration:** Preserving and elevating indigenous knowledge systems, pastoral values, and the moral discipline of the Ateker heritage as integral parts of modern learning.

Through these pillars, KAPATU will operationalize the NRM's vision of a **People-Centred, Technology-Driven, and Peace-Sustained Development Model**, where education becomes both a shield and a spear — a shield against ignorance and poverty, and a spear for innovation and self-reliance.

Karamoja in the Context of Regional and National Transformation

Your Excellency, the inauguration of KAPATU also renews Uganda's regional commitment to peace and integration within the **Ateker Corridor** and the wider **IGAD-EAC-COMESA-AfCFTA frameworks**. The presence of Ateker leaders from **Ethiopia, Kenya, and South Sudan** at this ceremony — including former Ethiopian Prime Minister **H.E. Hailemariam Desalegn**, the Governors of **Turkana County (Kenya)**, **Special Envoy of Kenya on Peace in Ateker Region**, **Cabinet Secretary for East African Community-ASAL and Regional Development Government of Kenya** and **Eastern Equatoria State Governor (South Sudan)** — affirms that this university is more than a national milestone; it is a continental statement.

Through KAPATU, Uganda reasserts her leadership in promoting **cross-border peace, resource sharing, and trade integration** — turning the once-hostile pastoral frontiers into a *corridor of cooperation*. The university will serve as a hub for regional research in peacebuilding, environmental security, technological advancements, scientific innovation and

cross-border governance, complementing Your Excellency's Pan-African vision of "Peaceful Borderless communities, Prosperous Peoples."

Thus, the promise ahead is not limited to the people of Karamoja; it extends to other communities within Uganda and the entire Ateker community and, by extension, to Africa's collective pursuit of stability and shared growth.

The Moral Imperative of Continuity: From Peace to Prosperity

Your Excellency, this moment also reminds the nation that peace must never be taken for granted. It must be nurtured, institutionalized, and transmitted through education. The installation of Your Excellency and the Vice President as Founding Chancellor and Deputy Chancellor symbolizes that the *command of the gun* has successfully given way to the *authority of the pen*.

In this symbolism lies Uganda's greatest moral victory — that power now manifests not through coercion but through enlightenment; that the heroes of the past are succeeded by scholars of the future; and that peace, to endure, must be studied, taught, and practiced.

The young people of Karamoja — many of them beneficiaries of the **State House Scholarships** and **Irish Embassy Bursaries** introduced during and after disarmament — are living proof of this new social order. Their success stories testify that education, once feared, is now the most prized inheritance. KAPATU will ensure that this inheritance is not only preserved but multiplied, reaching every village, every learner, and every dreamer across the sub-region.

Conclusion: A Renewed Covenant of Hope

Your Excellency, the inauguration of KAPATU is both a commemoration and a commencement. It celebrates the courage of those who buried the pen, honors the wisdom of those who unearthed it, and entrusts the future to those who will wield it. It enshrines the belief that leadership is not merely about governance, but about guiding a people from darkness into light, from conflict into confidence, and from survival into success.

In Your Excellency's stewardship as Founding Chancellor, this university becomes the intellectual fortress of the NRM's legacy in Karamoja — a legacy of **peace anchored in knowledge, prosperity grounded in productivity, and progress rooted in justice**.

Henceforth, the people of Karamoja — once left out of Uganda’s development story — are now its co-authors. The pen, long buried, has finally found a permanent home in the hands of their children. And with it, they will write not of loss or lamentation, but of innovation, leadership, and hope.

Your Excellency, through KAPATU, the covenant between the State and Karamoja is renewed — a covenant of peace, prosperity, and promise for generations yet unborn.

6. Conclusion: The Pen Has Come Home

Your Excellency,

Today, on this sacred soil of Losilang, history itself kneels to pay tribute. The pen that was once *buried in fear* and later *unearthed in faith* has at last *come home* — not as an object, but as an idea; not as an artifact, but as an institution; not as a symbol of subjugation, but as a beacon of liberation. The inauguration of the **Karamoja Peace and Technology University (KAPATU)** marks the full circle of a journey that began over eight decades ago — a journey from rejection to redemption, from resistance to renaissance, and from the margins of national life to the epicenter of Uganda’s transformation.

What was once an empty landscape of despair is now a campus of destiny. The children of those who buried the pen now hold it confidently in their hands — writing, designing, innovating, and building the future their ancestors once feared to imagine. The very hills that echoed with cries of loss now resound with songs of learning and faith. And the very elders who once warned against the written word now bless it as the foundation of their children’s strength.

A Legacy Fulfilled

Your Excellency, this day represents more than the birth of a university — it is the fulfillment of a promise that has threaded through generations. When the *pen was buried* in the 1940s, it marked the end of an age; when it was *unearthed* in 1995, it heralded the rebirth of hope; and now, in 2025, as it *finds its permanent home* in KAPATU, it becomes the enduring covenant between knowledge and nationhood.

This institution — standing on the very soil where resistance once stood — is the physical embodiment of Your Excellency’s long-standing conviction that “*no region should remain*

behind, and no child should be denied the gift of knowledge.” It gives form to your vision of peace through education, prosperity through productivity, and unity through opportunity.

Your installation today as **Founding Chancellor**, alongside **Her Excellency Jessica Rose Epel Alupo**, Vice President of Uganda, as **Founding Deputy Chancellor**, signifies not just leadership, but legacy. It anchors the presence of the State within the cultural heart of Karamoja, sealing an eternal covenant between the people and their nation — a covenant rooted in trust, peace, and transformation.

The Symbolism of Return

That this university rises in **Losilang** of Kotido with possibility of taking over another campus that was being constructed in Nadunget in Moroto is no coincidence — it is divine choreography. Among the Matheniko the sentencing to death of Chief Lokong (colonial agent) and the burying of the pen and pronouncement of curses by his wife, while here in Kotido, the ancestors of the Jie once buried the pen to protect their way of life; here too, their descendants unearthed it to embrace a new dawn; and here again, under Your Excellency’s stewardship, it has been immortalized as a temple of learning.

The land remembers. The same soil that once received the pen in rejection now yields it back in redemption. The circle is unbroken. The pen — once a colonial instrument of coercion and subjugation — has become a national instrument of socio-economic empowerment.

From the ashes of mistrust, a new covenant has risen — one built not on conquest but on cooperation, not on fear but on faith. This university thus stands as the ultimate reconciliation of Uganda’s past and future — a living monument to cultural dignity, political foresight, spiritual and economic renewal.

A Generation Transformed

Your Excellency, through KAPATU, the children of Karamoja are no longer defined by the image of the spear or the stereotype of backwardness. They now carry tablets instead of rifles, ideas instead of fears, and dreams instead of despair. They are the custodians of the pen — the inheritors of both tradition and transformation.

Already, a generation of educated sons and daughters of Karamoja represented here by the rising group of Karamoja Professionals has begun to emerge — doctors, engineers, peace advocates, judges, magistrates, teachers, and innovators — many of whom were nurtured

through the **State House Scholarships** and **Irish Embassy Bursaries** established during and after the disarmament era. These are living testimonies of the NRM's doctrine that peace must translate into productivity, and security must yield to scholarship.

Through KAPATU, that transformation is no longer an aspiration — it is institutionalized. The university will continue to nurture generations of thinkers, builders, and peacekeepers who will sustain the legacy of peace and development in Karamoja and across the Ateker corridor.

A National and Continental Beacon

KAPATU is not merely an achievement for Karamoja — it is a gift to Uganda and to Africa. It will serve as a **Regional Centre of Excellence** for peace, technology, and pastoral innovation — linking the Ateker peoples across borders and fulfilling Uganda's commitments under **NDP IV**, the **Karamoja 10-Year Plan**, the **IGAD Regional Framework**, and the **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**.

Here, where the borders of **Uganda, Kenya, South Sudan, and Ethiopia** converge, KAPATU will nurture leaders of regional cooperation — scholars who will transform cross-border tensions into cross-border trade, and ancient rivalries into enduring partnerships. The presence today of leaders from **Turkana, Toposa, and Nyangatom** affirms that this university is not just a Ugandan milestone — it is an *Ateker renaissance*, a continental bridge for peace and progress.

The Eternal Message of Losilang

Your Excellency, as the sun sets this evening over Losilang, it will do so upon a different Karamoja — a Karamoja that has chosen the pen over the gun, the classroom over the kraal, and the future over fear. The establishment of this university is the triumph of knowledge over ignorance, of vision over vengeance, and of faith over fatalism.

It teaches the enduring truth that *a nation is not measured by the power of its weapons, but by the wisdom of its people*. KAPATU will ensure that this wisdom is cultivated, guarded, and shared for generations to come.

In this moment, the pen — once feared — has become the torch that lights Uganda's northeastern horizon. It will illuminate not only classrooms but also policies, communities, and hearts across the nation.

Your Excellency, the Pen Has Truly Come Home

Today, the story that began in pain ends in purpose. The Karamojong, once written off as illiterate and resistant, now write their own history — in their own words, with their own pen, on their own land under your leadership.

The pen has come home — not to rest, but to rise.

It has come home — not to mark an ending, but to begin a new chapter.

It has come home — as a symbol of peace, unity, and unending progress under Your Excellency's vision of a transformed Uganda.

And from this sacred ground of Losilang, where the past and future now meet, the children of Karamoja will write — not just their story — but Uganda's next great chapter in education, peace, and nationhood.