Press Release  
For Immediate Release

His Highness the Aga Khan presented with the Most Excellent Order of the Pearl of Africa

Bushenyi, Uganda, 9 October 2017 — His Highness the Aga Khan, 49th hereditary Imam (spiritual leader) of the Ismaili Muslims, and founder and chairman of the Aga Khan Development Network, was conferred with the Most Excellent Order of the Pearl of Africa by His Excellency President Yoweri Museveni during Uganda’s 55th Independence Day celebration held in Bushenyi earlier today. This is the highest civilian award of the Ugandan Honour System and has only been presented to five other individuals in the history of Uganda.

In reading the citation, the Chairman of the Awards Committee, General Elly Tumwine, noted that the Aga Khan has “had a deep engagement with development for almost 60 years”. He went on to describe all of the activities of AKDN in Uganda, in the energy, banking, health, tourism, education and media sectors, and commended the Aga Khan for providing employment to Ugandans. In his address to the nation, President Museveni paid tribute to the Aga Khan by welcoming him as the guest of honor and acknowledging the Ismaili community’s contribution to the economy of Uganda.

The Aga Khan is in Uganda on the first in a series of visits that mark his Diamond Jubilee which began earlier this year on 11 July. The Diamond Jubilee marks 60 years of his Imamat as the spiritual leader of the Shia Ismaili Muslim community. The Aga Khan became the Imam on 11th July, 1957 at the age of 20 years, succeeding his grandfather, Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan.

Expressing gratitude for the Award, the Aga Khan noted, “Your national pathway has been exciting and inspiring to watch and all your friends, including of course myself, look to the future of Uganda in hope, in aspiration, for a better quality of life for all the people of Uganda and of this region of Africa.” He went on to describe his aspirations for the future, “… our institutions have been here for many decades, [and] it is my hope today that they will participate in improving the quality of life of all the people of Eastern Africa as they build for future generations.”

Institutions of the Aga Khan Development Network have been present in Uganda for over 70 years. AKDN’s activities in Uganda range from infrastructure projects providing electricity to millions of Ugandans, to a holistic early childhood education programme for underprivileged communities. In every endeavour, AKDN’s aim is to support sustainable development in Uganda with projects that have clear outcomes in empowering individuals to
improve their quality of life. The total development investment in Uganda by the portfolio entities of AKDN exceeds $1 billion. Collectively, these entities are amongst the highest taxpayers in Uganda.

Media resources are available here.

About the Aga Khan Development Network
The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), which was founded by His Highness the Aga Khan, is a private, international, non-denominational development organization. It employs over 80,000 people in over 30 countries. Its agencies address complex development issues, including the provision of quality healthcare and education services, cultural and economic revitalization, micro-enterprise, entrepreneurship and economic development, the advancement of civil society and the protection of the environment. For more information on AKDN, please visit: www.akdn.org

The Aga Khan and the Shia Ismaili Muslim Community
The Aga Khan is a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) through his cousin and son-in-law Ali, the first Imam, and his wife Fatima, the Prophet’s daughter. He succeeded his grandfather, Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan as the Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims sixty years ago, at the age of 20. Today, His Highness the Aga Khan leads a global community of some 15 million Shia Ismaili Muslims, living predominantly in South Asia, Central Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, North America, and the Far East. Like the Muslim world as a whole, the Ismaili community represents a rich diversity of cultures, languages and nationalities. His role as Imam includes the interpretation of the faith for his community and responsibility for religious institutions and his followers worldwide. More information is available at https://the.ismaili.