



Retired Justice William Tsekoko (left) and Justice Maura McGowan from the United Kingdom Sentencing Council during the Judges Conference yesterday. Photo by Roderick Ahimbazwe



Museveni addressing the Judges at Munyonyo, Kampala yesterday

HEAVY PUNISHMENT
 President Museveni said those who use chemicals on beef deserve harsher penalties
 By John Agaba

Museveni speaks out on butchers using harmful chemicals

President Yoweri Museveni has spoken out about the abhorrent practice of butchers using drugs meant to preserve bodies on meat they intend to sell to people for consumption.

Museveni said that 'criminals' found guilty of lacing meat with the unacceptable preservatives, should attract heftier sentences.

The President was speaking during the opening of the 20th Annual Judges' Conference at Speke Resort Munyonyo yesterday, where he expressed great disdain towards the culprits and the practice.

"It is incredible; so absurd, so shaming, that some characters in our society can use drugs manufactured to preserve bodies, on meat which is intended to be consumed by humans," said the President speaking in Luganda.

The President proposed tougher sentences for culprits who sprinkle the toxic drugs (used to preserve bodies of dead persons) on meat - at least tougher than the "seven or eight months" prison sentence magistrates have been slapping on to convicts.

"The Judiciary has to be relevant to the people it serves. This (when the culprits are really punished) is when you can be relevant," Museveni said.

New Vision broke the story of the unethical practice late December.

Following the story, the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) swung into action, recovering some of the dangerous chemicals and closing a number of butchers' shops.

A number of butchers were arrested.

But the KCCA authorities later argued that the butchers were not using formalin, a liquid drug manufactured to preserve bodies.

Dr Emilian Ahimbisibwe, the KCCA chief veterinarian and the head of health inspection, said the investigations had found out that the butchers were using a chemical known as Tsunami to keep away flies from meat stalls. He, however, added that Tsunami equally posed a risk to the meat consumers.

Six people who were arrested for spraying harmful chemicals on meat and fish were later sentenced to eight months by presiding Grade One Magistrate Beatrice Kainza. The convicted include Erias Kafumba, Isa Ssenoga, Isma Mutebi, Umar Kalyango, Baker Mulondo and Ibrahim Ssekitto. They all pleaded guilty to the offence of causing a nuisance by spraying harmful chemicals on the meat and fish.

The judges' conference, under the theme: "An Inclusive Judiciary for Sustainable Development", will aim



Katureebe

at taking stock of the courts' achievements in the last one year and bring into perspective the dilemmas they still face in improving access to justice in the country, and find solutions to the challenges.

Museveni, in his address, called for the Judiciary to be relevant to society.

"(In Africa and Uganda) we still believe in the law of Moses: An eye for an eye. A tooth for a tooth," said Museveni, calling on the judges to deliver sentences commensurate to the wrongs committed so the institution may not be perceived as another organ which only favours the rich and powerful, and does not deliver justice.

Marriage and Divorce Bill
 Museveni also said he did not agree with some of the "radical" proposals in the Marriage and Divorce Bill, among them a clause obligating share of property at separation of couples - as, according to him, they were far removed from the African and Ugandan reality.

"Some radical people... (Miria

Matembe... were proposing that after a woman has left her home and comes to stay with a man, should they separate, they should share property. I don't agree with them. You come for one day, then separate, and say you want share of the property. No. You should marry for love. Not property," Museveni emphasised.

Chief Justice Bart Katureebe, on his part, chronicled the challenges that still plague the Judiciary. He emphasised independence of the courts.

But at the heart of judicial independence, he said there was the need to secure adequate resources for the courts.

Katureebe said the courts and the Justice, Law and Order Sector were heavily underfunded, requesting President Museveni that "serious consideration" be given to "fully implementing" constitutional provisions on the financing of the Judiciary.

He also called on the Government to consider lifting the recruitment ban on the Judiciary so that it can address the justice needs of "95% of the population that lacks access to justice services".

He said out of the required 532 Grade 1 Magistrates, they only have 192. While 100 Chief Magistrates are required, only 42 are available and out of the required 82 High

Court judges there are 44. There is also a gap of six Justices of the Court of Appeal.

He said the limited number of judges in Uganda was to blame for the exclusiveness of the Judiciary and, to a greater extent, the high case backlog.

In response, Museveni described Uganda as a "recovering state" which "unfortunately" did not have all the resources to address the judges' needs, but proposed some tough strategies - which, if implemented, could free some resources.

"There is a lot of wastage in the system which can be avoided. But that wastage was put in the Constitution by the people who were in the CA (Constitutional Assembly). The CA says Parliament should fix its own budget," said Museveni.

MARRY FOR LOVE

Museveni advised women to marry for love and not for property

"I cannot say stop foreign travel because the parliamentary committee is going to benchmark... I don't know what... There is lack of co-ordination. There are very many Authorities. Authority of this... Authority of that," he added.

He argued that if the Government stopped the wastage, it could save more than sh1 trillion.

He said he was ready to work with the Judiciary, Cabinet and Parliament to stop the wastage.

He advised the Judiciary to find solutions to their challenges and deliver justice with the available funding.

"Some cases are more vital than others. People who rape women. Homicides. These are very crucial. First handle those ones before you go to settle divorce cases," said President Museveni.