

Unions want to block doctors' negotiations

By Barbra Kabahumuza and Michael Odeng

Labour unions have asked court to stop the Government from negotiating with the Uganda Medical Association (UMA) on how to improve health workers' conditions of work.

The National Organisation of Trade Unions (NOTU) and Uganda Nurses and Midwives Union (UNMU) made the request yesterday through their lawyer Richard Rwaboogo before the civil division of the High Court presided over by registrar Sarah Langa.

The registrar is slated to deliver her ruling today. The unions have also asked court to restrain UMA president Dr Ekwaro Obuku and Workers' MP Dr Sam Lyomoki, from representing the socio-economic interests of public health workers and declaring industrial action.

"It is illegal for the duo to submit proposals concerning terms and conditions of workers in Uganda to the Government and engaging doctors in the strike because they have no mandate to do so," Rwaboogo argued. He said the illegal action has serious consequences, including dismissing members of NOTU and UNMU from work using their benefits, which may cause irreparable damage.

However, the Government, through the Attorney General (AG), argued that it has never engaged Dr Obuku nor Lyomoki in negotiations. Jacky Amusugut, the AG's representative, said the Government was engaging health workers in Uganda in a bid to end the strike.

"The application before court is misconceived and lacks merit in regard to the orders against the Government," Amusugut said.

She said the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Health, Diana Atwine, sought legal advice from the AG on the legality of the ongoing strike, which stated that UMA was not a registered trade union, and had no mandate

to call for the medics' strike.

She requested court not to issue the order, saying the unions have not demonstrated that the Government is negotiating with UMA and Lyomoki.

"It is the principle of the state to take all necessary steps to involve people in consultations as a strategy to end the strike," she said.

The lawyers representing UMA and Lyomoki, Shuaib Reayan Chemisto and David Kabanda, asked court to dismiss the application on grounds that negotiations have already been concluded with the Government.

To support their argument, Chemisto presented to court a letter from the state minister of finance for planning, David Bahati, dated November 21, showing that negotiations were concluded.

BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ On November 6, UMA announced a sit-down strike of all doctors until such a time when the Government shall meet their demands. These include better salaries and improved standards of service.

He said it would be disastrous for court to issue the order because the public will continue without health services.

The doctors are expected to hold their general assembly tomorrow to decide on calling off the strike after the Government promised to increase the monthly salary of the lowest paid doctor to sh5m.

The Government also allegedly okayed a supplementary budget to address the chronic stock-outs of medical supplies, vaccines and medicines in hospitals, halting the 'war' on doctors by restructuring or disbanding the State House Medicines and Health Services Delivery Monitoring Unit.

See related story on page 8

500,000 receive

By Francis Kagolo

The Global Fund has paid (sh1.7 trillion), which will benefit 370,000 more Ugandans get free drugs from government facilities for the next three years.

The Government, with funding, will enroll another 540,000 in the free treatment according to Dr Joshua Nsubuga, Minister of Health HIV/AIDS manager.

This is \$57m more than the last funding cycle. It is also the biggest disbursement to an African country by Prime Minister Dr Rukundo.

"This is a significant development partner," Rugundo said as he presided over the grant signing ceremony in Kampala yesterday. He implored the Ministry implementing partners to be invested in the account for prompt HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns took the grant, followed by malaria (TB). The AIDS (TASO) is the only agency benefitting from the address TB/HIV co-funding. TASO is also to support organisations to provide AIDS affected people includes emergency services the period of 2015.

Currently, 70% HIV/AIDS who government health by the Global Fund Musinguzi. This is about 686,000 people government health funding means getting the health facilities when the next to take place. Private and charity facilities US government people living one million. The Government 'treat-and-test' medics require every person irrespective cell count). development The Glo