

According to a document trail by this newspaper, DESERECT Nigeria Ltd, the project contractor, and diplomats at the Mission have been pulling ropes over payment. In some cases, the company is begging to be paid.

BY FREDERIC MUSISI

Questions and uncertainty surround the completion of a new chancery building for Uganda's High Commission in Abuja, Nigeria, six years after construction started, while the latest Auditor General's report raised concerns about Shs9.13 billion for the project that remains "unutilised".

Construction works for the Shs19.7 billion chancery building, including an office block for consular services and four apartment blocks, commenced in July 2022 under the tenure of Ambassador Nelson Ocheger, with an initial completion timeline of 87 weeks ending April 2024.

Ambassador Ocheger and other diplomats at the Mission were accused of money laundering, prompting their recall in late 2024 to pave the way for back-to-back investigations by the Inspectorate of Government and State House Anti-Corruption Unit. The accused have since been cleared of any wrongdoing, but the construction project they left behind at "95 percent" complete remains far from completion.

By the time of the initial completion timeline, the project's Naira account held a sum of Naira 1,515,335,252 or Sh4.1 billion, while the dollar account held \$243,415 (Shs912 million) which, according to a June 2024 report by the then accounting officer, Ambassador Alfred Nnam to his superiors in Kampala, copied to the Inspector General of Government (IGG) investigating the fraud claims, "was adequate" to cover the remaining construction works.

The project contractor, DESERECT Nigeria Ltd, had detailed Naira 1.2b (Shs3.2 billion) as sufficient to facilitate the remaining construction works.

From one crisis to another

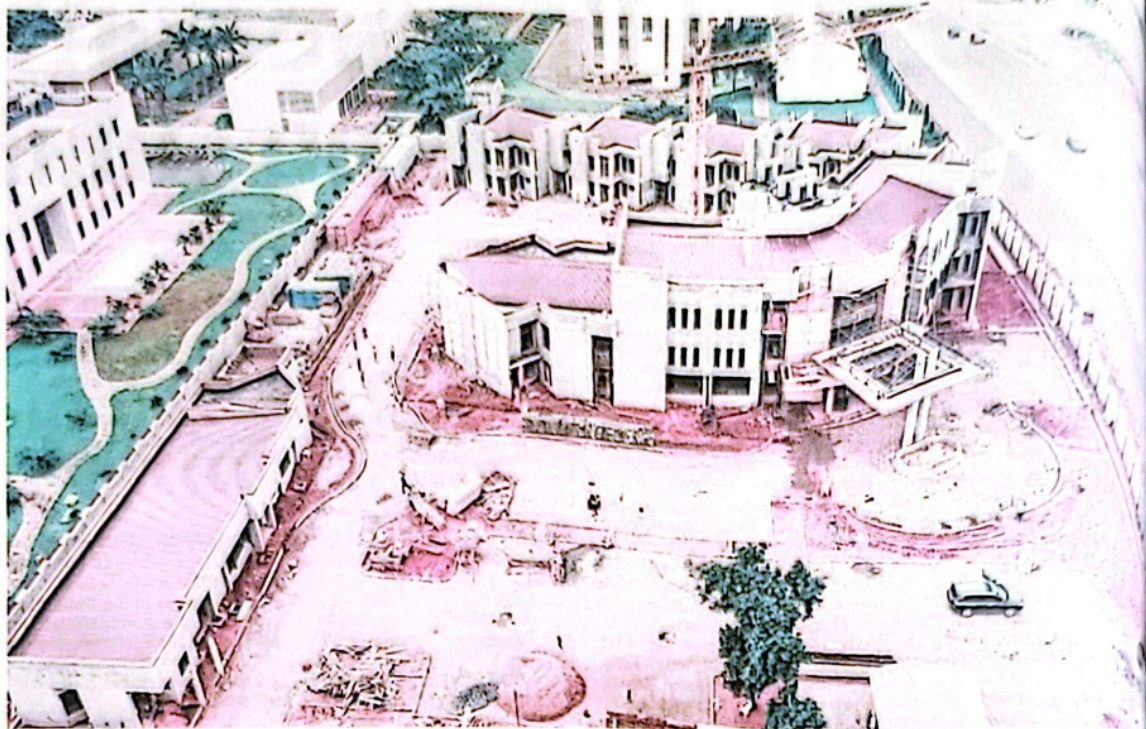
Nearly three years later, the project has oscillated from one crisis to another. During a retreat of Economic and Commercial Diplomacy (ECD) convened by the Mission last month, some staff were startled after being told that up to \$1 million (Shs3.7 billion) could be wired to cover the remaining works after reconciling the current books of account.

Attempts by *Weekend Monitor* to get a comment from Ugandan diplomats in Abuja were futile as they did not respond to our inquiries on the matter.

According to a document trail by this newspaper, DESERECT Nigeria Ltd, the project contractor, and diplomats at the Mission have been pulling ropes over payment. In some cases, the company is begging to be paid.

In a letter dated December 24, 2025, the company wrote to the Deputy High Commissioner Phillip Odida "with great burden in our hearts" requesting to complete the remaining works and have their outstanding balance cleared.

"It will be noted that the client has 'held-down' the project since July 2024



A handout photo released on September 9, 2024, by the Government of Uganda shows the newly constructed Uganda House Abuja complex as it was handed over to the Uganda High Commission in Nigeria on October 31, 2024. PHOTOS: COURTESY

Nigerian firm, diplomats tangle over Shs19 billion Abuja embassy building

to date by withholding payments and approvals on the project. During the period, several teams and groups have visited from Kampala for a series of inquiries, inspections, meetings, reviews, enquiries, etc. The last of these visits and engagements took place early in November 2025, lasted for several days and ended on the promise that the client would positively revert shortly afterward; to enable reactivation of all pending/halted project implementation processes and eventual full resumption of works by January 2026. But as of the date of writing this letter, there has not been any feedback to signal any positive change by January 2026," the company's chief executive officer, Taiwo Oluomuyiwa, wrote.

Inexplicably, the accounting officer at the mission, Mr Eriya Tusubira, on February 9, 2026, wrote to Mr Oluomuyiwa raising concerns by the Technical Advisory Team (TAT) arising out of the red flags by the Auditor General's report of 2024, and a 2025 Public Procurement & Disposal of Public Assets Authority (PPDA) audit.

"You are required to provide responses to the issues above within seven days of receipt of this letter," Mr Eriya wrote, adding: "Be advised that settlement of any payments due to the consultant and contractor is strictly contingent upon satisfactory resolution of these issues."

Need to right the wrongs

The ad hoc TAT was constituted late last year in place of the mandatory Contract Management Team (CMT), composed of representatives of the Ministry of Works and Transport, that oversees the execution of government construction projects to adhere to technical specifications, timelines, and budgets. The eight-member CMT for the Abuja chancery threw in the towel at various intervals since 2024 citing being disdained in the execution of their work.

In a November 16, 2025 report, the TAT compiled a report of architectural and civil defects and proposed remedies for the contractor to effect. It remains unclear how the matter was concluded.

Conversely, the 2025 Auditor General's report for the Mission released in January this year detailed a number of anomalies relating to the completion of the chancery, from unapproved time extensions, unapproved cost revisions, unapproved additional works, and execution of works without valid contracts.

Nonetheless, on April 1, 2026, Mr Tusubira wrote to the contractor indicating that the contract between the company and the High Commission, "underwent a number of additional alterations, which inter alia, had an

effect" of increasing the contract from Naira 50,328,500 (Shs137 million) to Naira 152,717,207 (Shs417 million) and extending the contract duration to April 30, 2025.

"Therefore, the term of the contract expired and the contract terminated by reason of effluxion of time without further extension on April 30, 2025," Tusubira wrote.

He added: "Accordingly, the contract no longer subsists and is thereby incapable of termination following its natural lapse. Even if it had not lapsed, it would still not be possible to extend it owing to the applicable regulatory limits/thresholds as well as the unavailability of funds for such a purpose."

He further requested the company to submit copies of 11 documents, including the current project status report upon which the company's invoice of Naira 22,958,775 (Shs62 million) covering the period May 2025 to March 2026 would be paid upon receipt of the documents.

All the while, the actual completion date of a building that has been at 95 percent since 2024 remains unknown. However, that is just the icing on the cake.

A section of Nigerian staff at the Mission, that oversees the 15 Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Equatorial Guinea, staged a protest a fortnight ago over unpaid salaries prompting local police to waltz into the diplomatic station in contravention of the 1969 Vienna diplomatic convention. The staff had petitioned variously about their pay since last December.

REQUEST TO COMPLETE WORKS

In a letter dated December 24, 2025, the company wrote to the Deputy High Commissioner Phillip Odida "with great burden in our hearts" requesting to complete the remaining works and have their outstanding balance cleared.

Uganda House Abuja as of December 2025.

