

municipalities stalled due to remove age limitations for seat was declared vacant on the polls.

there was a need to focus on

Nalubaale-Kiira dam at risk of shutdown over cracks, leaks

By Mary Karugaba
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Nalubaale and Kiira hydroelectric power stations have developed cracks and leaks that officials from the energy ministry fear could lead to shutdowns if not urgently addressed.

Energy ministry Eng. Irene Muloni told MPs on the natural resources committee yesterday that although Eskom Uganda Limited was given a concession to maintain the plant, they have not done so in the last 15 years they have been in operation.

Documents presented to the committee by Muloni indicate that one of the turbines has not been working for the last three years, while another was turned on March 2018,



Irene Muloni

but still requires new components.

The powerhouses have developed cracks as a result of silicon alkaline reactions. The sluice gates that control floods at the dam leak and

BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ Nalubaale and Kiira power stations supply about 67% of the country's electrical energy. They remain assets of the Government, according to the terms of the concession agreement it signed with Eskom.

were closed. Other systems that have developed faults include the online unit vibration monitoring system for the two dams and the transformers.

"Eskom has been concentrating on carrying out studies on the cracks and other defaults on the powerhouse and the dam since 2009, but no

tangible action has been taken. If nothing is done, 50% of Nalubaale may have to be decommissioned by 2022," Muloni warned.

The MPs, however, bombarded Muloni with questions as to why the ministry and the regulator have not taken action against the company for running down the power plants.

"All the power companies have not done what they were supposed to do and nothing has been done about it," Thomas Tayebwa (Ruhinda North) said.

Eskom is a private company owned by Eskom Enterprises Proprietary Limited of South Africa. As part of the privatisation process of the power sector, the Government offered a 20-year concession for the operation and

maintenance of the Nalubaale and Kiira hydroelectric power stations.

A source from the ministry, however, said the Government cannot take action against Eskom because of the problems in the contract agreement.

"The agreement was poorly designed and does not provide for any action against the company in case they default. The only thing it provides is termination of the contract which is hard to do," the source said.

When contacted, Thozama Gang, Eskom's managing director, said "Eskom is committed to operating the plant using prudent utility practice. As per the provisions of the concession and assignment agreement, Eskom is committed to handing over the plant in an operable condition."