

By Nicholas Wassajja

Uganda, Equatorial Guinea sign oil co-operation pact

President Yoweri Museveni and his Equatorial Guinea counterpart, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, have witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between their countries to co-operate on a host of issues in the field of oil and gas.

The Minister of Energy, Eng. Irene Muloni, committed to the pact on behalf of Uganda, whereas Agapito Mba Mokuy, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation, signed on behalf of Equatorial Guinea.

According to a joint communiqué on President Museveni's four-day state visit to Equatorial Guinea, the two countries have, among others, agreed to establish a joint permanent commission on co-operation and ensure bilateral consultations between their respective foreign affairs ministries on matters of mutual interest.

"They decided on modalities for convening the inaugural permanent joint commission and also agreed on an action plan for implementing the MOU on co-operation in the oil and gas field, with exchange of information on policies, legal and regulatory structures and capacity building trainings as priority activities," the communiqué reads in part.

"The training will be in the areas of operation, production and process control, metering, environmental health and safety, but also cover construction, as well as maintenance of oil and gas infrastructure."

The presidents addressed a joint news conference at Mongomo Hotel, in which Museveni commended Equatorial Guinea for using its finite resources to build durable development infrastructure and enhance human resource development, saying African products have been used to add value to the African people.

"I congratulate President Obiang Nguema on the right decision of not wasting gas by flaring it. He took a decision that it is madness to destroy part of your natural resource. All the gas must be used by liquefying for sale or for electricity," Museveni said.

The MOU committed Uganda and Equatorial Guinea to participating in the hydrocarbon events, starting with the upcoming third Uganda International Oil and Gas Conference scheduled for next month.

The two heads of state swore to share knowledge and experiences in the oil and gas industry and each pledged to appoint an ambassador to the other's country, as a cornerstone to strengthening co-operation.

Museveni and Obiang directed their respective ministers to boost co-operation between the two countries, by operationalising the framework agreement on economic, cultural, scientific and technical co-operation signed in Kampala on April 26.

President Obiang was a guest in Uganda between April 26 and 27 in the same spirit of working together in the oil and gas industry.

Museveni's personality hailed

Obiang said the quality of the person of Museveni is a rare and yet great quality for the African continent and humanity.

"President Museveni is a very good leader, a pan-Africanist, who looks out for the sovereignty of the people of Africa. Without the intention of minimising other leaders on the continent, we need more leaders with the qualities of President Museveni to pacify Africa," Obiang noted.

The praises coincide with the highest honour of the country, the Great Collar



President Museveni (left) and his entourage after being received by Bishop Monsignor Juan Domingo-Beka Esomo Ayang at the Basilica of Mongomo in Equatorial Guinea on Sunday. PPU photo



Muloni and her counterpart Agapito Mokuy signing the memorandum of understanding in Mongomo, Equatorial Guinea on Sunday. PPU photo

of Independence Award that the people of Equatorial Guinea presented to President Museveni when he arrived for the visit on Friday.

Obiang said while there are many pitfalls, it is important to learn and agree with exploration companies to avoid selling cheaply.

Oil is not a curse

Obiang demystified the rhetoric that the oil resource is a curse to Africa by explaining how it has turned a least developed Equatorial Guinea into one of the top three on the continent.

President Obiang said the ugly term,

"President Museveni is a very good leader and a pan-Africanist, who looks out for the sovereignty of the people of Africa. We need more leaders with his qualities to pacify Africa." President Obiang

'curse' is only used by exploiters and that oil is black gold and cannot be referred to as a curse.

"Like honey, oil and gas attracts all and sundry. Petroleum or black gold is never going to be a curse. How can

a curse bring so much transformation and development to a nation? Only those seeking to have the wealth for themselves wish that it is a curse for others," he explained.

President Museveni hailed the people of Equatorial Guinea for conserving their natural forests, which he described as gold mines that attract a high value in tourism.

He described the country as the cradle of Bantuism, saying West Africa is where Bantu go for African pilgrimages in regard to heritage and language.

Meanwhile, Museveni also joined prayers led by Bishop Juan Domingo-Beka Esomo Ayang at the country's largest church, the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary.

The Basilica of Mongomo is currently the largest religious building in Central Africa and the second largest Catholic Church throughout Africa, after the Basilica of Our Lady of Peace in Ivory Coast.

Initially, President Yoweri Museveni was taken on a tour of Equatorial Guinea "City of the Future" to which the country is shifting its capital from Malabo.

The city complete with transport, education and administrative infrastructure is located in Wele-Nzas, between the cities of Bata and Mongomo and only 20km away from the new Mongomeyen Airport.

President Museveni thanked his host for arranging a working tour for his delegation that saw him visit various oil and gas projects, maritime ports, recreational parks and the infrastructure development in the new city of the future in Djibloho.