

Govt pools 40 people, Shs2b to fight pornography

BY TOM BRIAN ANGURINI
& PAUL TAJUBA

editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

KAMPALA. A nine-member pornographic control committee that the government inaugurated yesterday is to begin work immediately to prevent use or spread of pornographic materials and information.

Ethics minister Simon Lokodo said the government will spend Shs2b each year to fund activities of the ad hoc team he inaugurated at the Uganda Media Centre in Kampala.

Chaired by Dr Annette Kezaabu Kasimbazi, representing media fraternity, the team will operate a fully-fledged secretariat with support of technical staff and have the latitude to incorporate any subject specialists of interest. In total, said minister Lokodo, the secretariat will have between 30 to 40 staff.

They will acquire top-end gadgets to monitor and or intercept, downloading, watching, sharing and or transmission of electronic porno-

graphic material and Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) has been co-opted under the arrangement to handle media and cinema proprietors that broadcast such material.

There will in due course be established a stakeholders' strategic working group, drawing members from different government ministries, departments and agencies, and inspectors will be assigned to conduct on-the-spot checks for pornographic material, according to the minister.

He said the team has been empowered to identify, seize and destroy any such material. Suspects, he said, will be turned over to police for further investigations and subsequent prosecution.

The other members of the ad hoc committee include Dr Fred Nyankori, representing the health professionals, Ms Victoria Ssentamu on behalf of publishing houses, Mr Gastone Byamugisha, representing educationists, and, Ms Hasifa Kabaganja,

who represents culturists.

Sheik Ali Mohammed Wasswa and Mr Charles Dalton Opwonya will represent religious institutions and the Uganda Law Society, respectively.

UCC's initial nominee Joan Kyomugisha left her job with the commission before yesterday's inauguration and, as such, will have to be replaced. Meanwhile, Pastor Martin Ssempe had not by press time been inaugurated as he was reported to be out of the country.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Duties. Ensure early detection and prohibition of pornography, apprehend and prosecute perpetrators, collect and destroy pornographic materials and objects. The team will also promote the rehabilitation of individuals affected by pornography, among others.

Inaugurating the committee members in Kampala yesterday, minister Lokodo termed pornographic acts as "one of the deadliest moral diseases in this country" that needed to be stopped if the country was to attend development.

"The display, sale and circulation of pornographic images in the print and electronic media is one of the key reasons we have escalating cases of drug abuse among youths, incest, teenage pregnancy and abortion, homosexuality and lesbianism and defilement," he said.

The minister, without providing evidence, claimed that office workers spend much of their time downloading and watching pornography. "Pornography is now eroding Uganda's human resource," he said, "this will in turn hinder the achievement of our vision."

The PCC is provided for under the Anti-Pornography Act, 2014, which empowers the line minister to appoint the committee members with approval by Cabinet.