BIWAGA HAS BEEN APPOINTED AS INTERIM BOARD CHAIRPERS

UEDCL BOSSES OUSTED AS ENERGY MINISTER ORDERS PROBE

By Charles Etukuri and Benon Ojiambo

The sweeping changes that were made to the Uganda Electricity Distribution Company Limited (UEDCL) over the weekend are necessary to pave the way for a comprehensive review of the company's management and operations, energy minister Ruth Nankabirwa has said.

In a statement released on Saturday, Nankabirwa relieved UEDCL board chairperson Lydia Ochieng Obbo of her duties and sent the managing director, Paul Mwesigwa, on forced leave.

"The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development wishes to inform the public and stakeholders that the Government has undertaken a review of the management at UEDCL. In this regard, the services of the chairperson of the board have been terminated and the managing director has been placed on forced leave to allow for a comprehensive review of the company's management and operations," Nankabirwa said.

Stella-Marie Biwaga Cingtho, a lawyer with a background in oil and gas, has been appointed as interim board chairperson, while Eng. Joselynne Rwakakooko is the new acting managing director.

GENESIS OF THE CHANGES

Within a year of taking over the management of Uganda's electricity distribution sector, UEDCL has grappled with various management conflicts that have had a ripple effect on the stability of power supply. During this period, power blackouts and delayed response to emergencies have been frequent.

It was against this backdrop that Nankabirwa ordered an investigation into the top management of UEDCL in December 2025, after the Electricity Regulatory Authority released a report, pointing out various lapses in the power sector.

However, Prime Minister Robinah Nabbanja advised that the investigation be halted.

"I have been informed that you directed UEDCL board to review and, thereafter, cause massive terminations of UEDCL senior management team (SMT), following an ERA confidential performance review report covering the last six months following the takeover of UEDCL's Umeme services. I am informed that the recent transition from Umeme to UEDCL pooled together up to 2,712 permanent and 1,760 temporary staff, who are now undergoing training and getting support and supervision under the UEDCL SMT. Your proposed massive termination of the SMT will significantly cause unnecessary destabilisation in the general UEDCL workforce, increase power outages and adversely affect the industrial sector in addition to other programmes and the Government image," the Prime Minister wrote.

However, in her letter dated Tuesday, December 9, 2025, Nankabirwa replied, confirming she had directed an investigation, but denied reports of massive terminations.

She also clarified that the ministry was not planning to reintroduce a private player in the power distribution sector.

"My ministry is now awaiting the report of the board of UEDCL on their inquiry and findings, which will inform further decisions and action," Nankabirwa stated.

On April 30, Nankabirwa wrote to Mwesigwa, ordering him to go on forced leave, following President Yoweri Museveni's directive.

"I received a directive from the President dated April 29, 2026, directing me to send you on forced leave. He raises several concerns/ issues regarding the company's operations, including the increase in electricity losses from 15% to about 19%, following the commencement of UEDCL's operation of the national distribution network on April 1, 2025. This forced leave takes immediate effect."

"During the period of forced leave, you are required to refrain from performing any work-related duties or accessing company systems, premises or resources, unless explicitly authorised and return all company property," Nankabirwa directed. *New Vision* has learnt that on Saturday, the Police blocked access to the sixth floor of the UEDCL Towers at Nakasero and also carried away critical files.

Mwesigwa and Ochieng Obbo at a function last year

UEDCL performance

UEDCL came under the spotlight over its performance during a tariff hearing in December, where the statistics indicated that the company was falling short on nearly all performance parameters during the period between April and October last year.

The figures showed that the company's energy loss was at 17.8% as of the end of October, above the 14.6% target set by the regulator. A single percentage energy loss is estimated to translate into $6.5m (about sh23b) in lost revenue. This means that energy losses are costing the company over $20m (about sh70b) in lost revenue. The company also recorded an average outage duration of 75 hours against a set target of 51 hours.

Additionally, the company recorded an average electricity supply outage frequency of 43 hours against a target of 40 hours and incurred up to $49m (sh176b) in operating costs against a target of $45m (sh162b).

However, company information indicates that the company surpassed its new connections target for the period between April 2025 and March 2026. The company made a total of 236,326 new connections against a target of 225,000 as enshrined in its sale and distribution of electricity licenses.

Rwakakooko is the new UEDCL acting managing director

EXPERTS SPEAK

Former ERA boss Dr Frank Sebbowa said the changes are an indication that the Government was not ready to take over from Umeme.

"It is unfortunate that we are gambling with the power supply and, therefore, the national economy. Other than for political reasons and strange things, we were never ready to throw out Umeme. Umeme had given us some stability and then somehow people thought it was time to do something else," he said.

Journalist Andrew Mwenda took a swipe at Nankabirwa for allegedly usurping the powers of the board.

"In early 2025, Nankabirwa changed the articles of association and memorandum of incorporation of UEDCL to say she can ... any member of the board ... board at any time at her ... This makes the board ... to her "discretion". ... Nankabirwa assume such ... the board?" Mwenda wonde...

WHO ARE THE NEW APPOINTEES

Acting board chairperson ... Biwaga Cingtho is an adv... High Court of Uganda wi... years of experience and a ... the Uganda National Oil ... Limited (UNOC) board.

She holds a Bachelor of La... from Makerere University, ... of Laws degree in oil and ... postgraduate diploma in ... and development – natural ... management and a ... diploma in legal practice from ... Development Centre. She ... with Ssebunya Turyagenda ... Advocates, Uganda Associa... Women Lawyers (FIDA) ... Ethiopia Women Lawyers ... Association of Women Orga... in Uganda and Women Le... Development. She ... diverse experience in ... scorecard strategy developm... implementation, gender and ... justice, human rights and child ... programming. She also ... experience in community ... approaches, policy advocacy, ... design, implementation, ... monitoring and evaluation. ... served and still serves on ... boards and these include: ... National Pipeline Company, ... Africa Help International, Action ... Help International – Uganda, ... Hands Community Developm... Free Child Uganda. She is a ... of FIDA-Uganda, Women in ... and Extractives Network ... James Catholic Church Bbiina ... executive committee.

RWAKAKOOKO

For about a year, Eng. Jo... Rwakakooko served as UEDCL's ... commercial and operations ... She was one of Umeme's ... top executives who joined UE... senior management team du... transition last year.

Before joining UEDCL, she ... at Umeme in different ca... including as head of ... operations for nearly six yea... customer service engineering ... for over five years.

On professional networking ... LinkedIn, Rwakakooko de... herself as a senior energy ... executive and electrical e... with over 20 years of experie... electricity distribution.

"My work has focuse... strengthening operational dis... improving service reliability, ... delivering measurable com... outcomes in complex and e... power sector environments. I ... led cross-functional teams ... periods of transition and ... building high-performing ... anchored in accountability, exe... and continuous improvement," ... wrote on LinkedIn.