

Govt to pay traders Shs453b for supplies to South Sudan

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KAMPALA. The government plans to muster at least \$126m (Shs453b) as settlement to a group of Ugandan traders who supplied goods and services to South Sudan government.

The State Minister of Finance for Planning, Mr David Bahati, told the Parliamentary Committee on Trade and Tourism on Wednesday that during earlier engagements in 2016, Juba had provided a list

of 11 companies eligible for the settlement but there were other companies/traders who had done so previously, bringing the total to about 33.

Verification

"We agreed that the Ministry of Trade should do verification to ensure that we have the real data and the real companies that we can deal with," Mr Bahati said.

He added that they have enlisted the Uganda Revenue Authority to assist with verification after which "we intend to come to the

House" for approval.

"The arrangement we got from South Sudan was that if you [Uganda government] can source some funding and you help your people, [it will be] like you are lending us money, then within five to 10 years when we normalise, we pay it back," Mr Bahati said.

"It will require parliamentary approval because it will be lending to the government of South Sudan," he added.

The traders/companies supplied goods to the crisis-laden South Sudan government in the

period leading up to the renewed fighting that broke out in July 2016 following weeks of tension between president Salva Kiir and former vice president Riek Machar.

Petition government

The traders, among others, petitioned the ministries of Finance, Trade and State House seeking government's intervention to save their business, claiming they had heavy loans.

In a March 22, 2016 letter, President Museveni directed the

Finance minister to study how government could raise money to rescue the business persons who supplied goods to South Sudan.

The state minister for Trade Michael Werikhe on Tuesday similarly told the committee that they had done some verification, adding that the process is still ongoing.

"The list of those who have been identified is ready with us. It was verified by the Ministry of Finance, URA and other stakeholders. The issue now is availability of funds," Mr. Werikhe said.