Stop apologising for being African, success is in Uganda



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The world is unsettled. Wars in Europe. Tensions in the Middle East. Economic shocks in the West. The global order is under strain. Yet, steadily, Africa is rising. And that is why we, as Africans, as Ugandans, must stop apologising for who we are.

Africa has never been a footnote in history. It has always been the opening chapter. Humanity's earliest footsteps are traced to this continent. Great Zimbabwe. Ancient Nubia. Axum. Timbuktu. These were not folklore. I have visited each of them. They were organised states with trade routes, architecture, scholarship and governance long before many modern powers were born.

Uganda stands in that same civilisational stream. At independence in 1962, our population was about seven million. Today, we are nearly 49 million. One of the youngest nations on earth. More than 75% of Ugandans are under 30. That is energy. That is labour. That is imagination.

Africa's population will reach about 2.5 billion by 2050. One in four human beings will be African. Markets follow people. Power follows markets. The centre of gravity is shifting. It has arrived in Africa. So why do we still whisper as if success is living elsewhere? Success lives here.

Uganda's economy has expanded more than sixfold since the late 1980s. Poverty levels have declined significantly compared to the 1990s. Roads now connect regions once isolated. Electricity generation has multiplied, even if loadshedding still irritates parts of Namugongo and beyond. Oil production is underway. Industrial parks in Namanve, Mbale and Kapeeka are producing goods we once imported by default.

Foreign diplomats arrive for three-year postings and extend them. Investors come to assess risk and end up building homes. Development experts fly in for conferences and quietly inquire about land. Retirees settle near Lake Victoria. Americans run lodges in Bwindi. Indians operate factories in Jinja. Chinese engineers complete one project and begin another. If it were not for our strict data protection laws, I would name names. They come. They stay. They love it.

Uganda is not perfect. No country is. But it is abundant. Fertile land. Fresh water. Minerals. Oil. A strategic location in the heart of East Africa. Relative peace in a turbulent region. A climate that does not punish you (no harsh winters, no brutal summers; cool through most of the year). Warm people who welcome strangers.

And yet some of our best and brightest youth believe success only wears a foreign passport. Opportunities abroad exist. But opportunities at home are multiplying faster than we admit. Roughly 70% of Ugandans now participate in the money economy. That is structural change. For decades, subsistence defined rural life. Today, more households transact, save, borrow and invest. The remaining 30% must not be abandoned.

Programmes like the Parish Development Model, Emyooga and targeted enterprise funds are not mere slogans. They are tools. Some imperfect, yes, but capable. With discipline and accountability, they can lift households into production. Tax the 70% fairly and efficiently. Invest strategically in the 30%. That is nation-building.

Uganda's wealth lies in commercial agriculture, industry and value addition, services and tourism, and oil and gas. Add the digital economy. Add innovation hubs. Add regional trade under the African Continental Free Trade Area and the East African Community. The market is here. The labour is here. The demand is here.

But economics alone will not secure our future. Character will. We must stop dividing ourselves by tribe and religion. Our tribe is Ugandan. Our larger tribe is African. Sectarian politics shrinks nations. Unity expands them.

Discipline is not oppression. It is order. Unity is not uniformity. It is alignment. Selflessness is not weakness. It is strength multiplied.

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