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Copyrights Bill: More than a legal update

Uganda's creative industry has, over the past decade, experienced notable growth, driven by advancements in digital technology and increased global exposure of local content. However, this growth has also exposed gaps in the country's copyright framework, particularly in addressing digital exploitation, weak enforcement mechanisms, and inefficiencies in royalty collection.

The recent amendment to Uganda's copyright law represents a deliberate step toward modernising the legal regime to better protect creators and align with international standards.

One of the central objectives of the amendment is to bring Uganda's copyright framework in line with the realities of the digital economy.

The traditional Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Act, Cap. 222, was enacted at a time when digital distribution and online streaming were not as pervasive as they are today. As a result, the amendment introduces provisions that address the use and dissemination of copyrighted works across digital platforms.

In particular, the law now contemplates the role of online intermediaries, including internet service providers and digital content platforms, in the distribution of protected works. By doing so, it seeks to curb unauthorised reproduction, communication

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Deklerk Luyima
Copyrights

to the public, and distribution of copyrighted material online, activities that have significantly contributed to revenue losses for creators.

Enforcement has historically been one of the weakest aspects of copyright protection in Uganda. The amendment addresses this by strengthening available remedies and increasing penalties for infringement. The introduction or enhancement of statutory damages and other enforcement mechanisms is intended to deter infringement and provide more effective redress for rights holders.

These reforms are particularly important in the digital space, where infringement is often widespread, difficult to trace, and costly to litigate under traditional frameworks.

The amendment also reflects a broader understanding of creative expression by extending protection to emerging forms of content and clarifying the duration of copyright protection. By aligning with international benchmarks, Uganda positions itself as a jurisdiction that values and safeguards intellectual property, thereby attracting investment in its creative industries.

The practical effect of these reforms is far-reaching. For creators, the amendment offers enhanced protection, improved revenue streams, and greater control over their works. For investors and industry stakeholders, it provides a more predictable and secure legal environment. For the country as a whole, it strengthens Uganda's compliance with international intellectual property obligations.

Ultimately, the amendment represents more than a legal update, it is a policy statement recognising the economic and cultural value of creativity.

By addressing longstanding challenges and embracing the realities of the digital age, Uganda has taken a significant step toward building a sustainable and globally competitive creative industry.

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ference will be given to insightful articles rather than generalised polemic observations. Attach a portrait and send to editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

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