

BY ISAAC SSEJJOMBWE

Govt drafts single law to govern media, digital space

KAMPALA. The government is preparing a sweeping overhaul of its communication laws in what could become one of the most significant policy shifts for the country's media and digital space in years.

Speaking at celebrations marking 20 years of NTV Uganda at Sheraton Hotel on Friday, ICT and National Guidance Minister Chris Baryomunsi, who was the guest of honor, revealed that the government is drafting a single, overarching law to govern all aspects of communication, bringing together a patchwork of existing legislation under one framework.

The proposed law will consolidate statutes such as the Uganda Communications Act 2013, the Press and Journalists Act 1995, and elements of the Computer Misuse Act, among others.

According to Dr Baryomunsi, the goal is to create a unified system that reflects the realities of a rapidly evolving

communication landscape.

"We are writing an overarching legislation so that all issues to do with communication are housed in one law," he said, adding that stakeholders including journalists and media houses will be consulted to shape the final framework.

Baryomunsi's remarks come at a time when traditional media is grappling with unprecedented disruption. The rise of smartphones, social media, and real-time publishing has blurred the line between professional journalism and everyday communication.

"Everybody now is maybe a practitioner. Everybody is a journalist," he noted, pointing to the speed at which information circulates today, often reaching the public long before it is packaged by mainstream outlets.

This shift, often described as citizen journalism, has forced legacy media institutions to rethink their role, relevance,

and business models in an environment where audiences are both consumers and creators of content.

Fourth Industrial Revolution

Beyond media regulation, the minister framed the legal overhaul within a broader push to align Uganda with the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

He cited technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, robotics, and the Internet of Things as forces already reshaping how societies communicate and function.

At the centre of this transition is a new policy on artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, currently in development. Baryomunsi emphasised that these policies will directly affect the media and communication sector, making stakeholder input critical.

"When I sit in the office as minister,

what occupies my mind is how we bring these technologies into our day-to-day lives," he said, positioning the ministry as a driver of the country's digital transformation agenda.

While the proposed reforms signal an effort to modernise Uganda's legal framework, they also raise familiar questions about regulation, freedom of expression, and the balance between innovation and oversight.

Baryomunsi struck a cautious tone, acknowledging both the opportunities and risks posed by emerging technologies.

"As these technologies evolve, they should not disrupt us negatively or distort what we are doing," he said.

Ms Susan Nsibirwa, the managing director of Nation Media Group-Uganda (NMG-U), described the journey of NTV as one built on credibility, resilience, and strong relationships with audiences and partners.

She added that NTV's success has been driven by the dedication of its staff, the loyalty of viewers who have embraced its transition from traditional television to digital platforms, and stakeholders who have believed in its mission.

"For 20 years, NTV has been more than just a television station. It has been a trusted platform for news, a home for Ugandan stories, and a stage for talent," said.

She added that the next chapter will focus on innovation, partnerships and sustained growth in an increasingly competitive and digital-first media environment.

The Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister, Mr Norbert Mao, commended the resilience of journalists, pointing out that media institutions worldwide continue to navigate challenges in defending their space.