

# Govt to meet doctors over salary demands

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**KAMPALA.** Doctors under their umbrella Uganda Medical Association will tomorrow meet the Health ministry officials to explain their demands, a few days after they voted to go on strike early next month.

The general secretary of Uganda Medical Association (UMA), Dr Mukuzi Muhereza, yesterday told *Daily Monitor* in an interview that Health minister Jane Aceng had invited them to a meeting to discuss their demands.

Dr Muhereza said their meeting also seeks to have a harmonised position which will be discussed with the Ministry of Finance and Public Service officials.

"We are going to the Ministry of Health with our demands and we hope to explain how we arrived at these demands. We hope to reach

an agreement before we engage with other responsible ministries," Dr Muhereza said. The doctors resolved to lay down their tools starting November 6.

While explaining their demands, Dr Muhereza said they had made a comparison with all other government ministries, agencies and departments.

For instance, Dr Muhereza said the general manager of the National Medical Stores earns about Shs35m which is the same range they are asking for a senior consultant.

"A senior consultant doctor is an equivalent of a High Court judge and they are all appointees of the President," he said.

According to the proposed demands, a senior consultant doctor or professor will be the highest paid health worker with a gross salary of Shs48m plus allowances.

They also demand that a senior consultant doctor gets a five-bedroom house, 4.0cc vehicle, and three domestic workers.

Currently, a senior consultant doctor earns about Shs3.4 million, consultant Shs2.6m, and a medical officer Shs1.1 million.

In an interview yesterday, Prof Francis Omaswa, a senior consultant doctor and former director general health services at the Ministry Health, said the doctors' demands are not "outrageous but sets ground for negotiations which the Ministry

## CHALLENGE

The State Minister of Health, Ms Sarah Opendi, said much as health workers deserve better pay, their demands are not attainable. "We must appreciate that our doctors are not paid well and I appreciate those who have stayed in the country. But we need to pay what we can afford as government of Uganda," she said, adding that President Museveni has also promised to meet them.

of Health should respond to".

"It is true that the director general health services used to be the highest paid civil servant and it is also true that an appointment letters for senior consultants spell out benefits like chauffeur driven car, housing and domestic workers but are never made available," Prof Omaswa said.

He said a job evaluation exercise conducted by the Ministry of Public Service in 1998 ranked health workers highest but are currently paid poorly compared with their counterparts in other government agencies.

The Permanent Secretary Ministry of Health, Dr Diana Atwine, yesterday confirmed that they would be meeting UMA officials to discuss their grievances in what she termed as a routine engagement.

"We are going to discuss the issues doctors have been raising such as salaries and disagreements in their working conditions," she said.

Dr Atwine, however, said they are waiting for the salary review committee within the Ministry of Public Service to conclude its work on salary review for all public servants.