HOW UGANDA WILL LEAP INTO

BY UMARU KASHAKA

President Yoweri Museveni will today renew his oath of office at Kololo Ceremonial Grounds in Kampala, following his re-election in January. Museveni assumed power in January 1986.

The swearing-in ceremony is under the theme *Protecting the Gains, Making a Qualitative Leap into High Middle-Income Status.*

This is the same theme Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) party campaigned on in the recent general election, which he won by a landslide.

He won with 71.65% of the vote, which is close to his highest-ever tally of 74.3% in the 1996 general election.

His chief rival, Robert Kyagulanyi of the National Unity Platform party garnered 24.72% in a race that had six other candidates.

In August last year, Museveni told the first meeting of the fourth national conference of the NRM at Kololo Ceremonial Grounds that the theme is about protecting the gains as they undertake a qualitative leap into a high middle-income economy worth $500b by 2040.

"Our economy now is $66b. In 1986, it was $3.9b. It has, therefore, expanded 17 times since that time," he said.

Museveni said that Uganda's economy has gone through five phases to reach where it is today.

"Phase one was minimum recovery. Those who are old enough remember there was no soap, no salt, no paraffin, no clothing in shops, no cement; that was the time of "ebbula" (shortage)," he said.

He explained that the second phase centered on boosting production, especially of major exports such as coffee and tea.

The third phase, he said, involved diversification, where previously subsistence products such as bananas, maize, cassava, Irish potatoes, milk, beef, and fruits were integrated into the cash economy.

The President noted that the fourth phase prioritised value addition by converting raw materials into higher-value products.

He also noted that today, Uganda assembles vehicles and is developing capacity to produce vaccines, computers, and other knowledge products.

He called on Ugandans to join the money economy to protect the gains made.

"For the majority of the population, we want them to join the money economy. In the past, one of the problems was working only for the stomach, not working for money," he said.

He recalled that in 2013, 68% of the homesteads were still outside the money economy. "Recently, when we checked, we still had 33% outside the money economy; 67% were in the money economy. And we are saying, all families must join the money economy. Work for the stomach but also for the pocket," he added.



Electricity generation capacity rose to 2,051 megawatts

$500B

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In the foreword for the NRM's 2026-2031 election manifesto, Museveni writes that Uganda's economy has expanded in spite of the "corruption and disorientation of some of the actors".

He states that this economic recovery, expansion, diversification, value addition (to some extent) and transition into the knowledge economy have been enabled by peace and security, correct macro and micro-economic policies, as well as good infrastructure.

NRM secretary general Richard Todwong says the theme speaks to the many achievements registered by the party and the country in the last 40 years.

"Before the NRM came to power in 1986, many of those who were there before can speak about Uganda but in the negatives. But from 1986, there have definitely been qualitative and quantitative changes that everybody can speak about in terms of the socio-economic indicators and peace and security, among other things," he says.

"Many people rush to judge government and governance but it is only those who understand how government operates that will appreciate the magnitude of work that NRM has done for the last 40 years," he says.

Todwong for instance says in the health sector, life expectancy at birth has improved to 68 years from 43 in 1986, meaning Ugandans are living longer lives than ever before.

Uganda, which hosts about 1.7 million refugees and asylum seekers, has been seeking to meet its obligations under the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, opening up access to local services, providing land and allowing greater integration of refugees with local populations.

HIGH MIDDLE-INCOME STATUS

PRIORITIES FOR NEW TERM

In his victory speech given at his country home in Rwakitura, Kiruhura district on January 18, Museveni said to be able to protect the gains as the country makes a qualitative leap into high middle-income status, they must focus on seven areas in the new term. These, he said, include fighting poverty, combating corruption, ensuring that the Police effectively fight crime, maintaining the roads properly, insisting on free education in government schools, improving access to healthcare and ensuring access to clean water. The President also noted there is peace in the country, but there is a bit of crime and impunity. "The NRM structures need to come out and help expose crime and hold all criminals accountable," he said. Museveni made the remarks last year after being nominated as a Presidential candidate.

Uganda asserted its global presence at the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the G77+China summits, which ran back-to-back at Munyonyo Commonwealth Resort Hotel in Kampala from January 15 to 22, 2024.

It was the first time Uganda had hosted such a big number of world leaders at the same time and the summits saw it assume the NAM leadership for three years and the G77+China for one year.

Prime Minister Robinah Nabbanja recently highlighted some of the NRM Government's key achievements, including the size of the economy which has doubled in spite of global shocks such as COVID-19 and disruptions in external markets.

"Real GDP (gross domestic product) growth has grown faster every year from 2020 to 2024. As a result, the economy expanded from sh128.5 trillion in 2019 to sh226.3 trillion in the financial year 2024/25," Nabbanja said.

At the beginning of the NRM administration in 1986 and during the period from 1972 to 1986, following the expulsion of the Ugandan-Indian entrepreneurs by Idi Amin, Uganda experienced continuous high inflation, severe shortages of commodities, high prices, a foreign exchange black market, smuggling of goods out and into Uganda and speculation.

Museveni says all these were solved by the NRM. He has been saying that indeed the surplus of sugar, soap, maize, milk, bananas, cement, steel bars is as a result of that success.

Nabbanja emphasised that once oil production begins later this year, double-digit growth is projected to expand to sh251.4 trillion. She noted that Uganda surpassed the $1,136 gross national income (GNI) per capita required for a country to be classified in the lower-middle-income category. "Uganda's GNI per capita was $1,278 as at

Continued on page 26

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