

KADAGA SAID 'THE PUBLIC PARLIAMENT AIMS AT BRINGING MPS CLOSER TO THE PEOPLE THEY REPRESENT'

By Moses Mulondo

The turnout was overwhelming that some of the participants were sent into the public gallery as there was no more space in the chambers to accommodate them.

Excitement could be seen on the faces of the ordinary citizens who on Friday entered the chambers to act as legislators for one day.

The public parliament speaker, James Wadulo, proposed that the event should be held at least four times in a year to create a platform for members of the public to express pressing views and concerns that need to be addressed by the Government and as a way of grooming future leaders for the country.

The inaugural public parliament involving members of the general public from various parts of the country resolved that the Government implements various measures to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change, including compulsory tree planting for all homesteads.

The sitting passed the motion on environment protection, which was moved by Flavia Kalule from Mubende district.

Justifying the motion, Kalule argued that the Government has passed so many good laws for protecting the environment such as the National Forestry and Tree planting Act, but has failed to implement them.

Regarding the motion, she urged the public parliament to resolve that all structures constructed in the wetlands and forest reserves be immediately demolished.

She also implored colleagues to urge the Government to allocate enough resources for environment protection and to enforce tough punishments for people who degrade the environment.

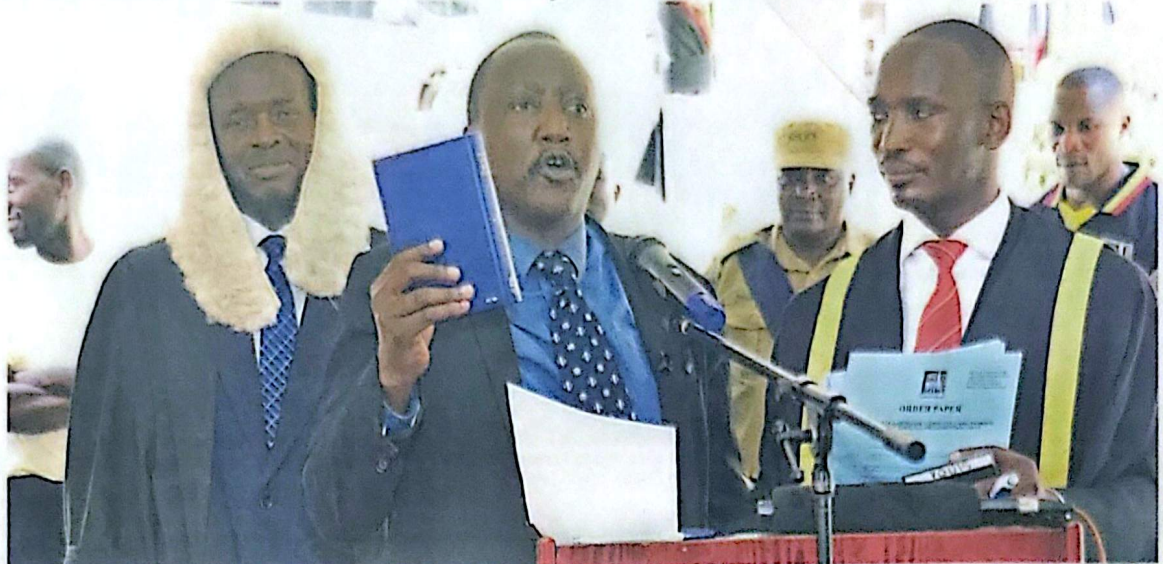
Seconding the motion, Elizabeth Wanyana from Kamuli district pointed to the current food shortage in the country as a wakeup call to the country about the need to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Sarah Teperu from Ngora said: "The youth in Teso are destroying the environment through charcoal burning because the rate of unemployment is so high and that is why the area has been hit by food shortage. The Government should establish factories to create jobs for the youth, so that they stop charcoal burning."

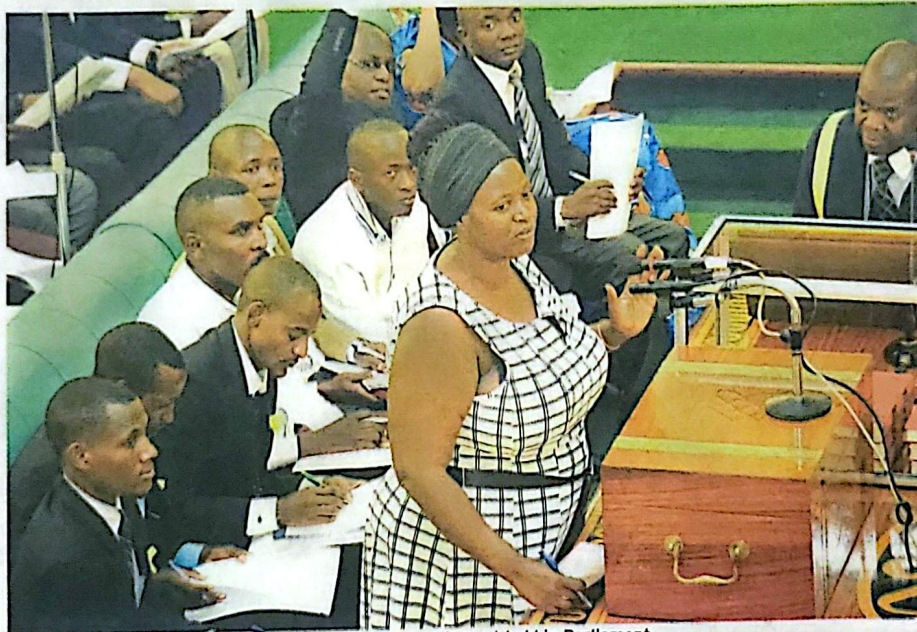
Ruth Nansamba from Kyadondo East blamed government environment bodies such as National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) and National Forestry Authority (NFA) for failing in their duties and conniving with people in destroying wetlands and forests.

Immaculate Auma, speaking on behalf of workers, said: "There are indeed many good laws that Parliament passed to protect the environment, but Government has not

Public parliament calls for environment protection



The speaker of the public parliament, James Wadulo, swears in before the public debate as the deputy clerk to Parliament, Paul Wabwire (left) looks on. This was on Friday at the end of the Parliament Week. Photos by Miriam Namutebi.



A lady speaks during the first sitting of the public parliament held in Parliament

implemented them. If the government implements them, there will be a very big difference."

Irene Kembabazi from Ntungamo district argued that implementing frequent tree planting, with the Government taking the lead, would be a very important intervention.

Dickson Muhirwa from Kinkizi West supported the proposal to have all structures

constructed in wetlands and forests destroyed.

Frank Ssenabulya from Rubaga South in Kampala urged the Government to carry out massive sensitisation of Ugandans on why and what they need to do to protect the environment.

Before the public parliament session kicked off, the participants were mobilised to elect a speaker and the contest

was won by Wadulo with 179 votes. Other contestants were William Were who got 162 votes, Sarah Aguti who got 24 votes and Albert Tiso who got 11 votes. Were automatically became the deputy speaker.

At the beginning of the plenary session, the public parliament was addressed by the Speaker of Parliament, Rebecca Kadaga, the Deputy Leader of Government

Business, Gen. Moses Ali, and the Leader of Opposition Winfred Kiiza.

Kiiza commended Kadaga for the initiative of the public parliament, which she said would be convened annually during Parliament Week.

She assured the participants that Parliament would ensure the views raised in the public parliament are followed up for implementation.

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Kadaga explained that the public parliament is the culmination of the 2012 Inter-Parliamentary Union Convention which resolved that parliaments close the existing gaps and get closer to the people they represent.

She reported that throughout the Parliament Week which started on Monday with the charity walk to help raise funds for the construction of a centre for people living with and ended with the public parliament, over 2,000 Ugandans visited Parliament.

Gen. Moses Ali commended Kadaga and the institution of Parliament for the initiative, which he said would draw the House closer to the public.