



President Yoweri Museveni (second-right), with the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Yukiya Amano (second-left) and other dignitaries after the meeting at State House Entebbe

Atomic energy boss clears Uganda's nuclear power plan

By David Lumu

Uganda's nuclear energy plan has been cleared by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief, Yukiya Amano, following a series of meetings with President Yoweri Museveni and Prime Minister Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda.

"I think you are taking the right direction and we are happy to work with you as you pursue peaceful use of nuclear energy for power generation, health and other benefits," Yukiya, who is the director general of IAEA, said yesterday during a meeting with Rugunda at the Office of the Prime Minister.

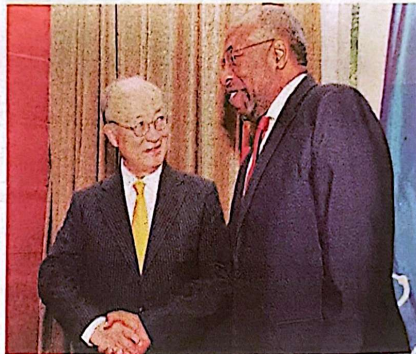
Yukiya, who will today commission the new cobalt radiotherapy cancer machine at Mulago Hospital, arrived in the country on Wednesday.

He also held talks with President Yoweri Museveni and the two agreed that nuclear power is an alternative source of clean energy that must be harnessed for the wellbeing of citizens.

"All rivers in Africa have a potential of about 350,000MW of electricity and yet the population will grow to about 1.2 billion in the next 25 years. The USA uses 1.5millionMW, equivalent to almost five times of all the rivers in Africa.

"Unless solar is a cheaper alternative, we shall have to use nuclear. What is important is to master nuclear technology. Already, we are training our people in this field," Museveni said during the meeting with Yukiya at State House, Entebbe.

State House officials said the two leaders also held high level consultations on activities related to the IAEA technical co-operation programme in Uganda, ahead of the official commissioning of the cobalt 60 cancer machine at the cancer Institute in Mulago, which



Prime Minister Dr Ruhakana Rugunda (right) with IAEA chief Yukiya Amano at his office in Kampala

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started operating in November last year.

"People are not aware that you can use nuclear peacefully for the wellbeing of humanity. We use nuclear to treat cancer. In Uganda, our people came to improve and get involved with technical support in installing the new cobalt cancer machine.

"In agriculture, we are already using drones on one of the islands on Lake Victoria for sterilisation to eradicate tsetse flies. This is the first time this technology is being used anywhere in the world," Yukiya said.

After meeting with Yukiya yesterday, Rugunda said: "It is very clear that Uganda and the IAEA are at the same wave length regarding the use of nuclear as a source of energy."

Nuclear plant

According to the country's Vision 2040, for Uganda to register uninterrupted economic and industrial development, 41,000MW will be required in the next 20 years.

To achieve the 41,000MW target, the energy state minister Simon D'Ujanga, said yesterday feasibility studies for the country to build the first nuclear energy plant by 2026 have been conducted.

State House officials said Uganda has already trained 15 nuclear experts, who are now headed by Sarah Nafuna, who works with the energy ministry.

Among these experts, D'Ujanga said, 12 have undertaken specialised training in nuclear, while others have been funded for further nuclear

energy training in South Korea.

Yesterday, D'Ujanga told the atomic energy chief that Uganda has already identified eight potential sites for the nuclear energy plant in the districts of Mubende, Buyende and Nakasongola.

Explaining Uganda's position on nuclear energy, Sam Kutesa, the foreign affairs minister, said: "We are great believers in peaceful use of nuclear energy."

The Minister of Health, Jane Aceng, said the IAEA supported two-thirds of the radiotherapy restoration services, including the transportation, installation and training of the experts that will operate the new cancer machine.

She also appealed to the atomic energy chief to help Uganda dispose of the old cancer machine, which she said is a threat to the health of many Ugandans.

Earlier in his meeting with Yukiya, the President said there are two confused groups in the use of nuclear.

"Those who say they have a right to the monopoly of weapons of mass destruction and those who push for nuclear weapons. How can a civilised person talk like that? This doctrine is so provocative and unsustainable. Why would big countries push for monopoly instead of disarmament? I cannot believe that civilised people can be so irrational. For us we just want electricity," he said.

The President said even if the cost of solar energy goes down to four cents or even lower in some parts of Africa because of the cloud cover, they may not be able to use solar, unless the batteries for storage improve.

"Let's be open-minded on this. What we want is electricity for our people's welfare," he said.

FTSE
Down at
7696.81

CAC
Up at
5503.30

DAX
Up at
3235.06

DOW
JONES
Up at
6115.65