

Uganda Airlines mess sorted; real Kisanja 'Hakuna Mchezo' begins

When President Museveni was sworn in for the 2016–2021 term, he coined the phrase Kisanja Hakuna Mchezo — a term of “no jokes.” It was a declaration of intent: faster job creation, improved security, better service delivery and a clampdown on bureaucratic lethargy.

Progress was registered in several sectors. Yet many Ugandans remained unconvinced that the culture of inefficiency and the corruption that feeds off it, had been decisively uprooted. Service delivery gaps persisted, and public frustration simmered.

Recent developments, however, suggest a renewed resolve.

When allegations of mismanagement surfaced at Uganda Airlines, the President intervened. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Ms Jennipher Bamuturaki, was relieved of her duties, and a seasoned aviation professional appointed to steady the national carrier as government searches for a substantive head.

Mr Girma Wake, a veteran of African aviation, was named acting CEO and consultant, effective February 13. The move signalled urgency and a willingness to act swiftly where public institutions are perceived to falter.

The ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) manifesto for 2026–2031 prioritises industrialisation, job creation and structural transformation of the economy. It outlines commitments to commercial agriculture, mineral value addition, improved remuneration for lower-paid public servants, infrastructure development and crucially stronger anti-corruption measures.

As the President begins his seventh term, attention is turning to consolidation and legacy. His supporters point to decades of rela-

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Politics



tive peace and socio-economic expansion. Critics argue that corruption within public institutions has undermined these gains. The stated intention now is to confront that challenge head-on.

Enforcement actions by the Ministry for Kampala and Kampala Capital City Authority during the implementation of the Kampala trade order have been cited by some as evidence of a firmer hand. For others, they mark a return to the “no jokes” posture first promised in 2016.

The Chief of Defence Forces, Gen Muhoozi Kainerugaba, has also spoken publicly about restoring order in Kampala and addressing operational concerns at the national airline. His argument — that the capital city reflects the country’s aspirations — resonates with sections of the public frustrated by disorder and inefficiency.

Across the political divide, there is broad acknowledgement that intense political rivalry has at times slowed decision-making in the city. Calls for discipline and institutional coherence have therefore found re-

ceptive ears.

Effective crisis management requires speed, clarity and coordination. Decisive action can reassure citizens and signal that leadership is attentive to public concerns. Whether the emerging posture translates in to sustained reform will depend on consistent follow-through.

The anti-corruption architecture — including the Criminal Investigations Directorate, the Directorate of Public Prosecutions, the Inspectorate of Government, the Auditor General’s Office and the Judiciary — has undergone reforms aimed at strengthening oversight. Funding constraints have previously limited capacity, but government has indicated that improved financing, potentially bolstered by future oil revenues, will enhance logistics, staffing and remuneration.

The President has declared “zero tolerance” for graft and insisted there will be no “business as usual.” In 2025, investigations and arrests targeted officials across various levels of government over alleged corruption. He described public systems as “clogged by parasites” and pledged action against extortion, inflated contracts and entrenched networks.

The message from State House is that the 2026–2031 term will emphasise discipline, accountability and consolidation of earlier gains. Whether this marks the full revival of Kisanja Hakuna Mchezo will be judged not by slogans, but by measurable change in public institutions.

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