

# Solution to South Sudan war is dialogue – Kutesa

By Taddeo Bwambale

In spite of numerous setbacks in negotiations for an end to the conflict in South Sudan, Uganda supports a diplomatic solution, rather than the use of force to bring peace to the country.

Foreign affairs minister Sam Kutesa on Tuesday rejected calls to forcibly remove the principal actors in the conflict that has claimed over 200,000 lives and displaced over two million people.

“That is not our mandate. The people of South Sudan have the right to choose their leaders,” the minister stated during the first Annual Foreign Minister’s Address held at Hotel Africana in Kampala.

Kutesa fielded questions from diplomats and scholars regarding Uganda’s foreign policy and unveiled the country’s priorities to the delegates.

Responding to questions about the South Sudan question, the minister

## BETWEEN THE LINES:

**Kutesa told delegates that Uganda was pushing for dialogue among the warring sides and encouraging them to respect the terms of the last peace accord they signed in Addis Ababa.**

ruled out the possibility of forcing the leaders of the two warring parties out of the power structure.

The unrest in the world’s youngest nation has pitted the country’s president, Salva Kiir against the former vice-president, Riek Machar, both long-serving members of the ruling party. Uganda hosts more than one million refugees from South Sudan. Apart from the strain on managing the refugee response, the unrest in the country has hurt Uganda’s trade.

**Regional trade and co-operation**  
Kutesa said Uganda’s foreign policy

was hinged on promoting regional integration and trade, taking advantage of East Africa’s 170 million people, 390 million in COMESA region and 1.2 billion in Africa.

Uganda will place emphasis on increasing intra-African trade, regional integration and peace initiatives in the region either through peacekeeping operation or through mediation roles, he maintained.

Although the country’s foreign policy has previously focused on peace and security matters, Kutesa stated that economic and commercial diplomacy will now take centre stage. He said all the efforts will be guided by the ambitious development blueprint, Vision 2040 and Uganda’s aspiration to achieve middle-income status by 2020. For instance, the Government will also enhance consular services as a way to support the diaspora to participate in national development, Kutesa said. Uganda generated \$1.2b (about sh4.2b) from remittances, accounting for 4.2% of Uganda’s GDP,

according to the 2016 World Bank report.

## North Korea crisis

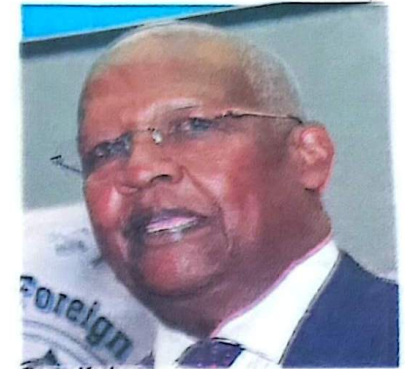
Asked by the South Korean envoy about Uganda’s position on the tensions around the Korean Peninsula, Kutesa called for rational approach to the crisis.

“We believe that the solution will only be through diplomatic efforts. We believe that proliferation of nuclear weapons is a wrong thing, not only for the peninsula, but also for the whole world,” he stated.

Kutesa, a former president of the UN General Assembly, also called for ‘comprehensive reform’ of the UN Security Council’ to include having a seat for Africa.

“We believe that for a continent of 54 countries, a population of over one billion people and political commitment, the continent needs a stronger voice in the global political debate,” Kutesa stated.

He pledged that Uganda would



Sam Kutesa

live up to its global commitments to protect the rights of refugees, uphold human rights and combat climate change.

The foreign minister’s address was organised by the Uganda Council on Foreign Relations, a think tank comprising experts on diplomacy, students and scholars set up to advise on Uganda’s foreign policy.

Several diplomats attended the lecture, including South Korea’s ambassador, Park Jong Dae.