Minister, doctors disagree on outcome of meet with Museveni

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KAMPALA. Health minister and Uganda medical doctors have disagreed on the outcome of the meeting with the president over strike. Under their umbrella Uganda Medical Association, doctors insisted that the call to strike stands despite State health minister Joyce Moriku Kaducu indicating they had accepted to call off the strike.

The State House meeting yesterday followed an announcement by medical doctors to lay down their tools in all public hospitals beginning November 6, in the event government does not respond to their demands.

"We had a fruitful meeting with the doctors who accepted to call off their industrial action and rather focus on dialogue with the Ministry of Health and other stakeholders," Dr Moriku said.

She said the President faulted the Ministry of Health on poor planning which has resulted in lack of functional medical equipment and also lack of accommodation for intern doctors who are currently living in slums.

However, UMA president Dr Ekwaro Obuku, said they had not called off the strike but rather will have further dialogue with the President who cut short the meeting to take a flight to Dubai to attend an economic summit.

> "We did not agree to call off the strike but further dialogue with the President. We shall have an emergency general assembly on November 6, to make a decision on the matter,"
>
> DR EKWARO OBUKU, UMA PRESIDENT

During the meeting, Dr Obuku said the President threatened to call a state of emergency and arrest the doctors and take them back to work, adding that this demonstrates how important doctors are in service delivery.

He said calling off the strike as indicated by Dr Moriku was the minister's perception, adding that the decision to call off a strike is not vested in the national governing council members of UMA but the general assembly. Dr Obuku said he was to attend a session with the committee at the Ministry of Public Service which is reviewing salaries for all public servants.

President Museveni first listened to doctor's demands which included the need to increase their duty facilitation allowances to Shs90 billion annualy, improve working conditions of intern doctors and senior house officers, requested an audience with salary review committee and non monetary benefits such as promotions.

President Museveni reportedly said the country's economy was messed up so bad as compared to her neighbours except Somalia and that comparisons were not right. He reccommended Shs5m per month for worst paid doctor.