

From Opposition darling to one of the most polarising parliamentary leaders in recent history, Ms Anita Among leaves behind a legacy marked by political muscle, and deepening divisions.

BY ARTHUR ARNOLD WADERO

Until 2016, Ms Annet Anita Among was only a senior lecturer at the Makerere University Business School (Mubs), far from the muddy world of politics.

It was not then surprising that her first two attempts to Parliament in the 2006 and 2011 parliamentary elections on the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) party ticket failed.

But she never quit. This grit has continued to define a good part of her life; a trait that has seen her contest as an Independent and join Parliament in 2016 as the Bukedea District Woman MP.

Even as an Independent, Ms Among was largely associated with the Opposition that eventually got her appointed as the vice chairperson of the parliamentary Committee on Commissions, Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises (Cosase).

Even as her committee inquired into the pitfalls at the Bank of Uganda, it was whispered that Ms Among was covertly working with the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party.

Many weren't, therefore, surprised when she picked the NRM party ticket to beat her way into the 11th Parliament.

This triumph was to propel Ms Among to greater heights. Her godsend opportunity came when she was elected Deputy Speaker of Parliament and, in quick succession, was elevated to House Speaker to replace Jacob Oulanyah, who died in March 2022.

Passed most pressing laws?

To sum up her tenure, Ms Among told journalists last week that "the 11th Parliament has been a very good Parliament [because] we have done a lot. It is one of the most remarkable Parliaments that we have had in the history of Parliaments."

This was because Ms Among's had, together with her deputy Thomas Tayebwa remarkably pushed through a total of 138 Bills, cleared 211 resolutions and debated 140 Ministerial Policy Statements in all the 352 plenary sittings the 11th Parliament convened.

She is lauded for having okayed the passing of the austere Anti-Homosexuality law that harshly punishes same sex relations in Uganda. Much as this later earned her criticisms from Western countries, including the United States of America, which imposed on her tough sanctions, Ms Among was credited for having unified the House through the conservative legislation.

But this unity didn't last as fissures of division in the walls of her House cracked open and caved in hard, crashing some legislators in the process.

Controversial tenure

Mr Brandon Kintu, the former spokesperson of the NRM Parliamentary Caucus, accused Ms Among of stifling constructive debate on the floor of Parlia-

How Among uneasily sat on Speaker's seat

ment. "It is unfortunate that the Hansard of the 11th Parliament will not be interesting to read. It is a pity when a presiding officer says this has been the most successful Parliament," Mr Kintu said, stressing "there was a lot of suffocation [and] intimidation."

He also says Ms Among turned the 11th Parliament into a conduit for conducting some of her personal activities.

"You find a Speaker having a money lending company. At [one point], she stopped all [other] money lenders [from accessing Parliament] because she completely owns everything by herself," Mr Kintu said while appearing on the NTV morning show.

Questionable legislations

But when all is said, the Among-led Parliament has passed several controversial legislations.

They include the Computer Misuse (Amendment) Bill, 2022; National Coffee (Amendment) Bill, 2024; Uganda People's Defence Forces (Amendment) Bill, 2025, among others.

In several instances, the Opposition attempted to press against the said legislations but made no headway. Instead, some, including the Mityana Municipality MP Francis Zaake, was punched by the Kilak North MP Anthony Akol during the processing of the National Coffee (Amendment) Bill.

Mr Akol, formerly an FDC legislator, later crossed to the NRM party.

Killed opposition?

The tenure of Ms Among is also characterised as one that stifled Opposition, favoured NRM and even muzzled dissenting views on the floor. This stood only as an allegation until late last month when she used her address at a birthday dinner to proudly claim that the 11th Parliament had no Opposition.

"In the 11th Parliament, I can proudly say, we didn't have Opposition in Parliament," she said last month and stressed that "in the 11th Parliament, opposition got swallowed."

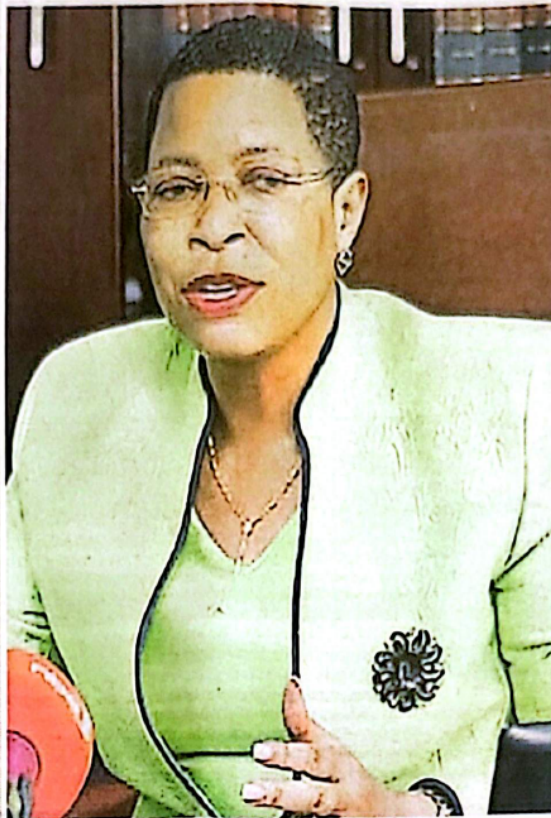
Days later, Mr Jonathan Odur, the Shadow minister for Constitutional Affairs, tried to press her over the same remarks but she denied, attributing them to have been generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI).

But Mr Odur cornered her on the assertion: "The Constitution guarantees that the Opposition is heard in this House. They are not swallowed, walloped and any bad thing that that AI intended to do to the Opposition should not stand. The Opposition is not in this country to destroy anything."

Mr Odur reminded Ms Among that "when you are in that seat, you are not a member of the NRM. You are not a (Second Female) National Vice Chairperson. I implore you to treat us, as the Speaker of Parliament. Even when you are outside [Parliament], let's try to keep our dignity."

But Ms Among trashed this advice because the final sitting of the 11th Parliament saw the Opposition struggle to get space on the floor when the House passed the Protection of Sovereignty Bill, 2026.

The Opposition was dismayed when



Ms Anita Among during a press conference at Parliament. PHOTO/FILE

Ms Among instructed that all five minority reports authored by Opposition MPs be presented in 35 minutes, reasoning that the government side had used the same time to present the main report.

Partial stewardship

The then chairperson of Cosase, Mr Joel Ssenyonyi, had a torrid time pushing through his committee reports to be heard on the floor. For instance, in a sitting convened in January 2023, Ms Among trashed Mr Ssenyonyi's attempt

to present the committee report that detailed the financial mess that his team had unearthed in the running of the Uganda Airlines.

Ms Among reasoned that portions of the report had already been leaked to the public.

On May 5 this year, Mr Ssenyonyi, in his capacity as the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in Parliament, tasked Speaker Among to trash the majority report on the Protection of Sovereignty Bill, 2026, because it has also been leaked more than 24 hours prior to tabling in Parliament.

But Ms Among declined and only boasted that she had okayed its release.

For this reason, the Kilak South MP Gilbert Olanya, who up to the end of the 11th Parliament served as the Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) Local Government, has welcomed the current troubles and inquiry into the wealth and alleged maladministration and corruption in Parliament under the leadership of Ms Among.

Mr Olanya said: "I would like to say [that] I am the happiest about what is going on because many staff and Members of Parliament were living under fear."

Was Among used?

The interim president of the People's Front for Freedom (PFF) party, Mr Elias Lukwago, says Ms Among was only used by the ruling regime.

What lawyer says
She demonstrated village excitement, all the wealth she has amassed. She has not been that smart like the many actors. Many of them have been able to hide but are stunningly rich. Elias Lukwago, a lawyer and interim president of the People's Front for Freedom (PFF) party.

"Whatever raid and the shenanigans going on are an indictment on Mr. [Name] seven because his government gave all the state protection to behave the way she did."

He, however, faults Ms Among for allegedly being showy and attempting to override the glory of colleagues in the NRM party that she only joined about 10 years ago.

"She demonstrated village excitement on all the wealth she had amassed. It has not been that smart like the many NRM actors. Many of them have been able to hide but are stunningly rich," Mr Lukwago said.

On his part, Mr Ssenyonyi wants leaders to draw lessons from the humiliation that Ms Among has faced in the past days.

"While I'm not confident of at all in this regime is now serious about fixing corruption and bad governance because that's in their DNA, at least there should be a lesson to leaders whom they use to do ridiculous things and then throw them under the bus!" he said.

The FDC party vice chairperson, Robert Franco Centenary, holds the same view, claiming Ms Among was only been pressured to opt out of the Speakership race.

He added "Her accumulation of hospitals, schools, sports parks, luxury residences, and real estate was conducted openly and publicly and with the endorsement of President Museveni. He commissioned her Bukedea Teaching Hospital in 2024."

To this end, the FDC, like other counterparts in the opposition where she belonged, stands dismayed. Cosase too became one of the most hard-hit under her tenure, despite previously providing her the springboard to the limelight.

In the end, the same allegations that came with her first major assignment in Parliament on Cosase have triggered her downfall. Her investigations on various entities for abuse of office, graft, misuse of public funds have now come to haunt her too.

Instead of strengthening oversight, Ms Among had vowed to eliminate the entire Opposition in the 12th Parliament as would-be Speaker. But as things now stand, her withdrawal from the Speakership race seems won't. At least not as the Speaker of 12th Parliament.

Will her successor learn?

Mr Olanya says the incoming Speaker of Parliament must bring sanity and work towards restoring the tarnished image of the House.

Mr Ssenyonyi, who is also the Nakaya West MP, has asked his colleagues in the NRM to focus on fulfilling their mandate as expected in Parliament.