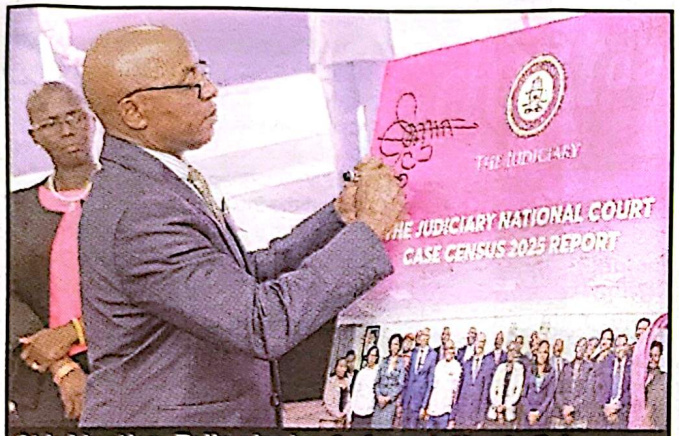
JUDICIARY LAUNCHES NEW CLIENT CHARTER

By Farooq Kasule

In a bid to bolster accountability, transparency and efficiency, the Judiciary has launched a new client charter alongside the service delivery standards to guide its operations in the next five years.

Underscoring the importance of both the client charter and the service delivery standards, Chief Justice Dr Flavian Zeija argued that they serve as the Judiciary's commitment to upholding professionalism, transparency, accountability, equality and independence.



Chief justice, Zeija signing to launch the Judiciary National Court Case Census Report 2025, recently

INSIDE THE CHARTER

Under the charter, the Judiciary commits to observing working hours from Monday to Friday from 8:00am to 12:45pm and 2:00pm to 5:00pm, although judicial officers can work outside the working hours due to exigencies of duty.

The Judiciary also undertakes to deliver decisions within 60 days after the close of the hearing for the lower courts and 90 days for the Supreme Court.

Respond to all correspondence and complaints within 14 days and 30 working days for those requiring full investigations.

The Judiciary also commits to the delivery of bail rulings within 30 days, refund bail money within 21 working days from the date of the submission of the application documents and ensure payment for goods and services rendered to the Judiciary within 30 days after delivery. Some of the commitments in the launched client charter include enrollment of advocates within 14 working days after submission by the Law Council and renewal of advocates' licenses within seven days after filling the application, among others.

BETTER JUSTICE DELIVERY

"The charter is not only a social contract between the Judiciary and justice seekers, it also contributes to the transformation agenda of strengthening the administration of justice," Zeija noted.

He explained that the charter, among others, specifies the service delivery commitments and standards by which the Judiciary's performance will be measured going forward.

Zeija said the charter also provides the staff of the Judiciary with clear standards to strive for during service delivery and the mechanisms by which the people shall participate in the dispensation of justice without compromising the independence, impartiality, transparency, professionalism, integrity, accessibility and effectiveness of the courts of judicature.

"These tools align with the Judiciary strategic plan VI (2025-2030), which focuses on reducing case backlog and enhancing the use of technology," Zeija noted.

PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

He added that the service delivery standards tool defines the expected level of performance in key court processes, including case management, implementation of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms, state brief scheme, enrolment and issuance of practising certificate for advocates, licensing and disciplining of court bailiffs and other public interactions.

The service delivery standards tool requires the chief justice to safeguard judicial integrity and adherence to the judicial code of conduct by the judicial officers at all levels of the court system, while the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) is mandated to recruit judicial officers of high ethical and professional standards.

On the other hand, the Uganda Law Society is mandated to promote ethical values among the advocates. The tool also empowers the court users and members of the general public to raise complaints of misconduct to the Judiciary and other relevant authorities, follow up and demand feedback.

EMPOWERING THE PUBLIC

The Judiciary's Permanent Secretary, Pius Bigirimana, said with the charter and service delivery standards tools in place, the public should hold the Judiciary accountable.

Bigirimana observed that the service delivery standards tool empowers the public to demand services which are due to them at the expected standard.

Under Article 126 of the constitution, the core mandate of the Judiciary is to adjudicate cases of both criminal and civil nature and its core values include independence, impartiality, transparency, accountability, professionalism, integrity and equality.

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