

Norbert Mao and Alioni Yorke Odria have joined two other contestants in the speakership race against Anita Among.

BY SHABIBAH NAKIRIGYA
& BUSEN SAMILU

The race for Speaker of the 12th Parliament has gained momentum after Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister Norbert Mao yesterday detailed his reform agenda, while Aringa South MP, Alioni Odria formally declared his bid for the House's top seat.

Mr Mao, who recently reaffirmed his candidature, said restoration of integrity, strengthening accountability, and rebuilding public confidence in Parliament would be his immediate priorities if elected in May.

"My consultation phase is concluded. I have listened to Ugandans from various parts of the country and I am now offering myself for the position of Speaker of Parliament," said Mr Mao, the Laro-Peche MP-elect, and President General of the Democratic Party.

He framed his bid around the fight against corruption, which he described as Uganda's most pressing governance challenge. According to him, corruption has evolved from petty bribery to large-scale financial dealings involving powerful actors, undermining service delivery and eroding trust in public institutions.

In a surprise move, Mr Mao asked his supporters not to campaign for him, arguing that his record and experience in legislative and constitutional matters speak for themselves.

"I request my supporters and party members not to campaign for me. I am fully qualified and capable of providing leadership in the next Parliament," he said.

Bid for a two-tier Parliament

Beyond his personal ambition, Mr Mao revived his long-standing proposal for structural reforms, including the establishment of a bicameral Parliament.

Mr Mao argued that creating an Upper House alongside the Lower House will strengthen checks and balances and promotes more thoughtful law-making.

"For purposes of balance, we create an Upper House based on sub-regions. If we have 16 sub-regions, each would elect two representatives to the Upper House, regardless of population size," he said.

Speaker race hots up



Anita Among, the current Speaker of Parliament. PHOTO/FILE

Under his proposal, the Lower House would be elected through proportional representation, while the Upper House would comprise more senior leaders with stricter qualifications, including a higher age threshold.

He cited the example of the United States.

"In America, the Lower House can impeach a president, but the Upper House decides whether the reasons are substantive enough to remove a president. That is the balancing role we are talking about."

Mr Mao dismissed concerns that a bicameral system would be costly, arguing that it would instead enhance governance and institutional restraint.

Odria joins fray

Meanwhile, Mr Odria, who has previously criticised the current parliamentary leadership over how they handle corruption debates, also threw his hat into the ring, pledging to restore what he termed the "lost glory" of Parliament.

He has been an outspoken critic of Speaker Anita Among and her deputy Thomas Tayebwa, accusing them of stifling debate on corruption-related matters.

"It is God who spoke to me this time to wake up and redeem this institution of ours. Nothing is impossible, and nobody should get scared. The rule must take precedence in respect to the

They say...



Norbert Mao, Laro-peche, DP.

If entrusted with the Speaker's office, I will prioritise accountability and integrity in Parliament. We must restore public confidence in the institution and ensure that it works for the common good.



Persis Namuganza, Bukono, Indep.

I offer myself to serve as the Speaker of the 12th Parliament not on personal ambitions because our parliament can be better, stronger, more united and more respected both at home and abroad.



Alioni Odria, Aringa South, NRM.

It is God who spoke to me this time to wake up and redeem this Institution of ours. The rule of law must take precedence in respect to the Constitution. I will ensure a corruption-free Parliament.



Lydia Wanyoto, Mbale City, NRM.

I accept the endorsement because it is one of the roles you gave me. You voted for me to represent your views, and one of the first views you have given me is to go and contest for the position of Speaker.

Constitution," Mr Odria said.

He promised to promote media freedom, eliminate corruption

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

Article 82 of the Constitution provides for the election of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker by Members of Parliament from among themselves. The election is conducted during the first sitting of Parliament or when a vacancy arises, under the supervision of the Chief Justice or a designated judge, through a secret ballot that requires a candidate to obtain a majority vote.

Under Parliament's Rules of Procedure, the Speaker is elected from among Members of Parliament, with a secret ballot held if the position is contested,

within Parliament, and establish an independent fund to support MPs in developing their constituencies.

NRM backed

Mr Odria also criticised the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party's Central Executive Committee (CEC) over its reported endorsement of Ms Among and Mr Tayebwa for another term, questioning what he described as attempts to "ring-fence" the seat.

Recently, CEC, chaired by President-elect Yoweri Museveni, reportedly endorsed the current leadership, citing their role in ensuring smooth passage of government business and maintaining party cohesion in the 11th Parliament.

"We are the pillars of the party because without us, CEC will fall down. CEC is just an organ of the party. We must follow the Constitution of Uganda, which is supreme," Mr Odria said.

At least four contenders have so far declared interest in unseating Ms Among. They include Lands State Minister, Persis Namuganza, who said she will run as an independent, and Mbale City Woman MP Lydia Wanyoto, a former NRM Women League leader.

Article 82 of the Constitution provides that the Speaker and Deputy Speaker are elected by Members of Parliament from among themselves.

The vote is conducted by secret ballot during the first sitting of Parliament or whenever a vacancy arises, under the supervision of the Chief Justice or a designated judge, and requires a majority of votes cast.

With months to the 12th Parliament, the contest is shaping up as a test of internal party dynamics within the ruling NRM as well as a broader debate about institutional reform and accountability in the House.