WHAT AWAITS PRESIDENT

By Umaru Kashaka

President Yoweri Museveni will be sworn in for a seventh consecutive elective term today, marking yet another historic milestone in Uganda's political journey. What began as a revolutionary march to State House in 1986 has evolved into one of the longest-serving presidencies in modern Africa, a tenure defined by both endurance and transformation.

Museveni's rise was forged in the crucible of war. Alongside his liberation army (the National Resistance Army), he seized power in January 1986, after a gruelling five-year bush war. He inherited a nation battered by instability, coming on the heels of a decade of brutality under Idi Amin and the turbulent years that followed. Since then, his leadership has been anchored on restoring order, rebuilding institutions and steering Uganda onto a path of relative stability.

Since the reintroduction of elections in 1996, Museveni has consistently returned to the people every five years to renew his mandate. In the January 15 general election, he once again secured a commanding victory, winning 71.65% of the vote. This figure nearly mirrors his highest-ever showing of 74% recorded in the country's first election under his leadership in 1996.

In the January polls, his closest challenger, Robert Kyagulanyi of the National Unity Platform, garnered 24.72% in a race that featured six other candidates, underscoring both the President's enduring dominance and the growing, albeit fragmented, competition.

At least 10-15 heads of state are expected to gather at Kololo Ceremonial Grounds, lending diplomatic weight and global attention to the swearing-in ceremony. It is not merely a ritual of transition, but a moment heavy with symbolism. It's a new term that stretches toward 2031, potentially sealing a 45-year rule.

Yet, beneath the swearing in lies a deeper, more consequential reality. Analysts widely agree that what lies ahead for Museveni is not simply another term in office.

It is a defining period and a test of legacy. The question is no longer about survival or stability; it is about transformation.

Domestically, Museveni faces an old challenge in a new and more urgent form: How to convert decades of relative peace and stability into tangible, inclusive prosperity that reaches the ordinary household. For many Ugandans, the dividends of stability remain uneven and expectations have shifted from reassurance to results.

Externally, the President re-enters the global arena at a time when the geopolitical landscape is markedly more complex.

The world has become increasingly transactional; alliances are fluid and regional security dynamics, particularly in East and Central Africa, remain fragile and unpredictable. Balancing national priorities with regional responsibilities will require careful calibration.

Dr Elly Karuhanga, a respected senior lawyer, believes Uganda is stepping into a pivotal chapter of its development journey. With oil and gas projects nearing fruition, alongside growth in mining, energy and technology and a rapidly expanding youthful population, the opportunities are vast; but so are the responsibilities.

"My prayer is that this next chapter will continue strengthening [illegible] unity, institutions, opportunity and Uganda's place in Africa and the world," he said, capturing both the and caution.

For economist Dr Fred Muhumuza, however, the terrain ahead is defined as much by persistent challenges as by emerging opportunities. He identifies unemployment, corruption and the growing burden of debt servicing as the central issues that will shape the seventh term.

"The linkages between these challenges must remain constantly visible, like a warning light blinking on the dashboard," he says. The term begins with nearly 5.2 million young people aged 18–30 who are neither in employment, education nor training."

This demographic reality presents both a threat and an opportunity. Without meaningful economic inclusion, the country risks growing discontent among its young generation increasingly impatient for growth.

Muhumuza warns that the government's ability to roll out [illegible] creating projects will be constrained by the high cost of servicing public debt. At sh33.4 trillion, debt servicing consumes nearly 40% of the national budget, with interest payments alone accounting for sh12.4 trillion which is over a quarter of domestic revenues.

This heavy borrowing burden has also pushed interest rates higher, with government bonds ranging between 15% and 18%. As a result, private investors face limited access to affordable credit, dampening their ability to invest and create jobs.

"The most immediate and addressable issue is corruption," Muhumuza argues. "It does not only drain resources; it distorts priorities, directing investments to where funds are easiest to steal rather than where they are most needed."

He calls for a leaner and more efficient government structure, stressing the need to redirect resources toward strengthening foundational infrastructure including roads, energy, water, as well as improving critical social services like health and education. Only then, he argues, can Uganda sustain the growth rates required to achieve middle-income status.

Prof. Ronald Kakungulu-Mayambala echoes these concerns, describing corruption as a long-standing cancer that has eaten into the country's progress.

"Dealing with corruption decisively is key not just for consolidating gains, but for safeguarding the future," he says.

According to the Inspectorate of Government, Uganda loses approximately sh9.7 trillion annually to corruption. The losses are spread across tax leakages, ghost workers, inflated payrolls and botched procurement processes. These are systemic challenges that continue to undermine service delivery.

Kakungulu-Mayambala also highlights youth unemployment as an urgent problem that demands immediate attention.

"This issue should have been addressed yesterday," he says. "With programmes like the Parish Development Model already in place, the tools exist – the question is implementation."

Data from the Uganda Bureau of Statistics indicates that youth unemployment rose to 17.9% in 2025, up from 17% in 2021, with young women (21.0%) more affected than their male counterparts (15.2%). The numbers reinforce the urgency of translating policy into opportunity.

ECONOMIC IMPATIENCE

Crispin Kaheru of the Uganda Human Rights Commission describes the current moment as one defined by "economic impatience."

"Young people are no longer judging government by history. They are judging it by present opportunities," he says.

For Kaheru, the new term must shift from storytelling about past achievements to delivering measurable, everyday improvements in people's lives.

He also points to the political balancing act ahead – managing cabinet expectations, addressing generational pressures within the ruling National Resistance Movement and working with a Parliament increasingly driven by ambition.

"After every big victory, the real challenge is not the opposition, it is managing allies," he notes.

The election, he says, has given Museveni a clear mandate. The task now is with deepening that legitimacy through performance, efficiency, discipline and national inclusion.

"The real opportunity is to move from the politics of survival to the politics of delivery," Kaheru says.

He envisions a term anchored on oil production, agro-industrialisation, regional trade, value addition and youth-driven enterprise.

"This term will decide whether the revolutionary of stability becomes the architect of prosperity," he adds.

Professor Gerald Karyeija of the Uganda Management Institute introduces another sensitive, but unavoidable issue: Succession planning.

"By 2031, the President will be 86. This term may well be his legacy term," he says. "Ugandans want to avoid uncertainty."

He also highlights the need to sustain regional security, noting Uganda's continued involvement in peacekeeping and stabilisation efforts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and Somalia.

AVOIDING THE 'OIL CURSE'

Uganda's long-anticipated entry into oil production adds another layer of urgency and expectation. Key projects including Tilenga, Kingfisher and the $5b East African Crude Oil Pipeline are nearing completion, raising hopes of economic transformation.

Yet, as Karyeija warns, the promise of oil comes with risks.

"The challenge is to avoid the oil curse – corruption, conflict and economic dependency," he says.

Public anticipation is high, but so is caution. Many Ugandans are watching closely to see whether oil revenues will be managed transparently and invested wisely.

Museveni himself has cautioned against calls to distribute oil money directly to citizens, advocating, instead for long-term investment strategies similar to those adopted by countries like Norway and Saudi Arabia.

"We must think about how to convert the finite into the durable," he has said.

Dr Tabitha Muhyampiti draws attention to rising political tensions, arguing that Uganda needs more dialogue and reconciliation at this critical juncture. "We are moving against the tide. The country needs a reset," she says.

She also calls for changes in Cabinet and parliamentary leadership, warning that governance failures disproportionately affect women and vulnerable groups.

Buganda Katikkiro Charles Peter Mayiga has similarly urged the Government to prioritise harmony and the rule of law. He has criticised unlawful arrests and called for the release of election-related detainees, arguing that stability is essential for investor confidence and national cohesion.



President Museveni holding the Constitution after swearing in at Kololo on May 12, 2021

Since the reintroduction of elections in 1996, Museveni has consistently returned to the people every five years to renew his mandate. He once again secured a commanding victory, winning 71.65% of the vote.

GRAPHIC BY BRIAN SSEKAMATTE



MUSEVENI IN NEW TERM

Vows to be harsh

In his victory speech at his country home in Rwakitura, Museveni outlined a firm and uncompromising tone for his new term. "I will be very harsh in this Kisanja," he declared, signalling a tougher stance on corruption, service delivery and accountability. He pledged to focus on wealth creation by supporting commercial farmers, manufacturers and entrepreneurs, while also addressing poverty among the 30% of Ugandans still outside the money economy.

"We must end poverty. Families must move from dependency to surplus," he said. His agenda also includes improving education, ensuring drug availability in health facilities, tackling land grabbing and strengthening infrastructure from roads to water systems. He urged local leaders to take a more active role in monitoring service delivery, particularly in health centres where drug shortages remain a persistent problem.

Ultimately, Museveni's message is clear: The era of simply maintaining stability must now give way to delivering measurable prosperity.

After four decades at the helm, the stakes have never been higher. This term will not be judged by longevity, but by impact. Will the promise of transformation become a lived reality for ordinary Ugandans?



Kaheru



Economist Muhumuza



Katikkiro Mayiga



Former Bugweri county MP Abdu Katuntu shifts the focus toward a broader transformation of Uganda's socio-economic landscape.

"Today, the dominant question is not political, it is economic," he says. "People want to know how their lives will improve."

He urges the President to assemble a team capable of driving the country toward high middle-income status, emphasising the need to bring more Ugandans into the money economy, expand GDP, create jobs and increase household incomes.

In Katuntu's view, economic success is the key to political stability.

"When the economy improves, politics stabilises. But when people struggle economically, political tensions rise as they look for alternatives," he says.

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Congratulatory Message



On behalf of **Direct Aid Society (Kuwait) Uganda,** we extend our sincere congratulations to the leadership and people of Uganda upon the successful conclusion of the national elections. This milestone reflects the resilience of Uganda's democratic journey and the collective aspirations of its citizens.

Guided by our **mission** to provide humanitarian relief and sustainable development, and our **vision** of a society where every individual enjoys dignity, opportunity, and well being, Direct Aid Society (Kuwait) Uganda has worked tirelessly to support communities across the country.

Over the years since 1988-2026, we have made significant contributions in the **Education sector** by improving access to quality learning, in the Health sector by enhancing healthcare delivery and awareness, and in **Economic empowerment** by supporting livelihoods and entrepreneurship. We have also stood alongside **refugees and vulnerable populations,** promoting social well being and inclusion.

H.E Yoweri Kag
President of the Re

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