

Ms Lydia Wanyoto joins Minister Persis Namuganza and Norbert Mao in showing interest in the Speaker job.

BY YAHUDU KITUNZI

Mbale City Woman Member of Parliament-elect, Ms Lydia Wanyoto Mutende, has declared her bid to contest for Speaker of the 12th Parliament, becoming the third senior figure within the ruling party to publicly express interest in the position currently held by Bukedea Woman MP Anita Among.

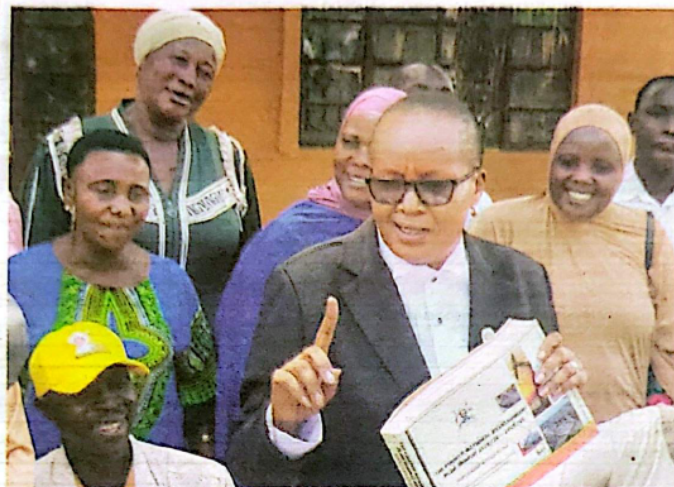
Ms Wanyoto joins State Minister for Lands, Housing and Urban Development Persis Namuganza, and Justice Minister Norbert Mao in showing interest in the Speakership job.

Speaking at a press conference on Friday at House 49 in Malukhu Estate, Mbale Industrial City Division, Ms Wanyoto said her home region of Bugisu is a key stakeholder in Uganda's political and governance landscape.

"When we talk about accessing the national cake, it's not just because I have won the election. Bugisu or Mbale City has a stake in the national politics of our country," she said. "I accept with passion, commitment, and zeal [to contest for Speaker], and we will go all the way."

She outlined plans to formally notify Members of Parliament from Mbale City and the wider Bugisu Sub-region before reaching out individually to all

Wanyoto declares bid to eject Among from speakership job



Lydia Wanyoto Mutende, Mbale City Woman MP elect (centre), announces her bid for Speaker of the 12th Parliament at a press briefing in Malukhu Estate, Mbale City. PHOTO/YAHUDU KITUNZI

529 MPs expected to sit in the 12th Parliament ahead of the anticipated May 16 vote for Speaker.

Ms Wanyoto, a former National Chairperson of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) Women's League, said the Speaker must have a firm grasp of Uganda's socio-economic realities, in-

cluding the country's poverty map, to guide legislative priorities effectively.

She further argued that among the aspiring candidates, she is the only founding member of the ruling NRM, thereby positioning herself as a custodian of the party's tradition and institutional memory.

WHO IS WANYOTO

Lydia Wanyoto Mutende is a lawyer, politician, and diplomat, known for her leadership in regional diplomacy, advocacy for women's empowerment, and political roles within Uganda and the African Union. She is a senior NRM figure and served as a member of the CEC.

Reflecting on past parliamentary leadership, she cited the late James Wapakhabulo, who served as Speaker under the 1995 Constitution before his redeployment, and the late Charles Ayume, who previously chaired the Legal Committee before ascending to the Speakership and later serving as Attorney General. She also referenced the late Jacob Oulanyah, who similarly rose from chairing the Legal Committee to become Speaker.

"The NRM has consistently followed certain traditions in selecting its parliamentary leaders," Ms Wanyoto said. "Let us subject ourselves to the election process with integrity and respect for tradition."

Her declaration comes despite a reported resolution by the NRM's top leadership to freeze internal competi-

tion for the Speaker and Deputy Speaker positions and endorse Ms Among and her deputy for another five-year term. Sources familiar with a January 27 closed-door meeting at State House said the decision was unanimously backed by President Museveni and formalised in a Central Executive Committee (CEC) resolution.

The development sets the stage for what could become a significant internal contest within the NRM, which traditionally fronts a single candidate for top parliamentary offices.

Political analysts said Ms Wanyoto's entry introduces a new dynamic into the race, given her extensive experience in national and regional politics. She has previously served two terms in the East African Legislative Assembly and held senior diplomatic roles within the African Union, including Deputy Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and acting Head of Mission in Somalia.

Supporters at the press conference described her as a seasoned mobiliser capable of steering robust parliamentary debate and strengthening accountability mechanisms. They argued that Parliament would benefit from a "fresh tone" in managing legislative business.

Ms Wanyoto urged legislators to focus on institutional strength over personal loyalties when casting their votes.

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