SWEARING-IN: MPS UNVEIL KEY PRIORITIES

As Uganda's 12th Parliament commenced with the swearing-in of legislators at Parliament in Kampala, MPs used the three-day occasion, which ended on Friday, to unveil key priorities they intend to champion over the next five years.

Poverty eradication, infrastructure development, oil wealth creation, healthcare service delivery, promoting workers' rights, and mounting anti-corruption efforts are the key dominant priority areas that the new MPs have pledged to deliver ahead of their five-year term.

From first-time legislators to seasoned politicians, many MPs signalled that the new parliamentary term would largely focus on improving household incomes and strengthening service delivery across the country.

Their priorities also reflected the issues currently faced by their voters. Amongst the strongest voices were workers' representatives, who pledged to prioritise labour rights and better welfare for employees.

Maj. Gen. Jim Muhwezi (second-right) taking oath as his wife Suzan (second-left) and their son look on at Parliament on Thursday

MINIMUM WAGE

Workers MP Arinaitwe Rwakajara said his main focus would be pushing for the establishment of a minimum wage and a dedicated workers' fund similar to programmes already existing for women and youth.

"We must have a minimum wage fixed this time because enough is enough," Rwakajara said, arguing that Uganda can no longer afford to remain without a legally protected minimum wage.

Similarly, Annet Birungi (workers MP) said she intends to table legislation aimed at improving workplace conditions and enforcing labour protections.

"I am ready to table Bills that can really support workers and also to look at workplace policies," she said.

Birungi added that implementation of the Employment Act and introduction of a minimum wage would be amongst her immediate priorities.

"That is something we are going to start with – the minimum wage – because we know that you are suffering out there," she said.

Debate over a minimum wage in Uganda, Birungi said, continues to expose deep divisions between workers, employers, and the Government, with each side raising concerns about the country's economic future and workers' welfare.

Workers and labour unions argue that many Ugandans earn salaries too low to meet the rising cost of living, citing increasing prices of food, transport, rent, and healthcare. They say the absence of a minimum wage has left many employees vulnerable to exploitation, especially in the private sector and the informal economy.

INFRASTRUCTURE

For Eng. Dr. John Bosco Koy Kariisa (Buhweju West, NRM), infrastructure – particularly roads – remains the backbone of Uganda's economic transformation.

"From an engineering perspective, roads affect businesses by 19.6% in terms of profitability, market access, and all other factors that make business work," he said.

Kariisa warned that bad roads directly weaken tax revenue collection and national productivity.

"If you do not work on the roads, you damage or fail businesses. And when that happens, there is no revenue to be collected by URA," Kariisa said.

He pledged that MPs would back government efforts to invest in appropriate road equipment and strengthen maintenance capacity within the works and transport ministry.

"What we are going to do is to ensure we first look for equipment that can match the Ugandan terrain, and also build internal capacity so that small potholes do not become major problems," he added.

Maj. Gen. Jim Muhwezi (Rujumbura County, NRM) framed Uganda's development agenda within a global economic perspective, pointing to the country's ambition to reach middle-income status.

"We came from highly indebted poor countries, then lower middle income, and now we are going to take Uganda to higher middle-income status," he said.

Muhwezi defended government borrowing, comparing it to global economic practice.

"You should not be worried. The richest country in the world, the US, has the largest debt – the question is what are you borrowing for?" he said.

Muhwezi emphasised that borrowing should focus on productive infrastructure such as roads that enhance economic returns.

Mpaka, the Mbarara City South MP, swearing-in

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SOCIAL PROTECTION

Commenting on his major focus for the five-year tenure, Gerald Karuhanga (Ntungamo Municipality, independent) called for stronger policy-driven parliamentary action, especially in social protection.

"I would like us to push for a national health insurance scheme," he said.

Karuhanga urged MPs to act collectively to influence government policy, arguing that unified parliamentary pressure can drive national reform.

FIGHTING ALCOHOLISM

For Dr Crispus Kiyonga (Bukonzo West, NRM), said all MPs and other leaders across the country must direct their attention to curbing alcohol consumption. Kiyonga said uncontrolled alcohol consumption is a growing national concern.

"We must fight alcoholism. Uganda, in the whole of Africa, is number one in alcohol consumption," he said.

Kiyonga pledged legislative efforts to reduce alcohol abuse, linking it to one of the social and economic productivity challenges facing the country.

OIL SECTOR

Ismael Kasule (Hoima West) questioned whether Uganda's oil sector is benefiting ordinary citizens.

"We come from an area where there is oil, but we do not see it on the ground," he said.

Kasule promised to interrogate the "missing link" in the oil value chain during his tenure.

This interrogation, Kasule added, will ensure that local communities benefit from oil resource extraction. Uganda's oil production phase is expected to commence in July this year.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Outlining his priority areas, Dr Emilly Kugonza (Buyanja East, NRM) emphasised household income growth and service delivery.

"My biggest promise is to improve household incomes and access to services in health, education, water, and electricity," she said.

Kugonza pledged collaboration with government and local leaders to advance socio-economic transformation.

CORRUPTION

Yusuf Kiruluuta Nkeretanyi (Kalungu East, NUP) placed corruption at the centre of his legislative agenda.

"Corruption has hindered the development of the country," he said.

With Uganda's youth population dominating demographics, Nkeretanyi vowed to use his five-year tenure to voice youth concerns and also to promote justice and equality.

"As their representative, I shall echo their voice," he said.

For her part, Charity Kevin Lenia (Vurra County, NRM) welcomed the increasing presence of young MPs.

"This Parliament is full of young people, and our expectations are high," she said.

Lenia also emphasised that on her agenda is to contribute to policy-making that supports youth, women, and rural communities.

"It is our responsibility to make policies that will favour young people, women in villages, the elderly, and all Ugandans," she added.

CLEAN WATER ACCESS

Micah Akasile Lolem (Upe County, NRM) said he will prioritise peace and basic services in pastoral communities.

"What they need is peace. When there is peace, there is multiplication of animals and children go to school," he said.

Lolem highlighted water access and inter-communal harmony across Karamoja and neighbouring regions.

Similarly, Simon Peter Longoli (Chekwii County, NRM) vowed to address structural underdevelopment in Karamoja.

"The region continues to struggle with endemic challenges. I want to shift that by working within government," he said.

Mwine Mpaka Rwamirama (Mbarara City South, NRM) highlighted infrastructure gaps in urban areas and also called for upgrading of Mbarara Referral Hospital to national status.

FIGHTING POVERTY

Charity Kibaaju Kamuhanda (Mbarara City, NRM) noted that she will ensure that anti-poverty programmes reach citizens at the grassroots level.

Dr John Baptist Lokii (Matheniko County, NRM) said his focus will be on livestock diseases and the education of his constituents.

"I want to ensure we control and eradicate livestock diseases," he said.

Lokii added that livestock remains central to survival in Karamoja.

Annet Sarah Logose (Butaleja Woman MP, NRM) said she will prioritise education and fighting early pregnancies.

"We are going to fight poverty levels and ensure that children go to school," she said.

Sylvia Damba Katooko (Kibuku Woman MP, NRM) said rural constituencies demand urgent delivery.

"Serving the electorate requires discipline because expectations are high," she said.

Kiruluuta: Kalungu County East

Karuhanga: Independent

Patrick Kitiyo (Kapchorwa Municipality, NRM) linked sports and tourism to regional development.

"We want to break more world records, but we need tarmacked running tracks," he said.

Kitiyo also emphasised road development to boost tourism around Mt Elgon National Park.

Kenan Opio (Busiro South, NRM) said his focus is reconnecting citizens to government services.

"I want to assure voters that their voices are represented in Parliament," he said.

Opio pledged improvements in health centres, information technology, education, and youth skilling programmes.

For her part, veteran MP Amelia Kyambadde (Mawokota North, NRM) promised continuity.

"I have come to continue where I stopped," she said, highlighting the need to revamp hospitals, markets, water, and electricity projects as key priorities.

FINANCIAL RISKS

Offering perspective as one of the veteran MPs, Amos Lugolobi (Ntenjeru North, NRM) warned newly elected lawmakers about financial risks.

"So, financially, the new Members of Parliament have got to be very careful," he said, warning them against exploitative lending and poor investment decisions.

Adrine Katusiime (Sheema Woman MP, NRM) emphasised household income as key to the development agenda on her political calendar. "You can have good roads and hospitals, but if you do not have income, it will be a problem," she said.

Katusiime also pledged focus on women's empowerment and economic inclusion.

Filed by Mary Karugaba, Sarah Nabakooza and Dedan Kimathi