

MAKING SENSE OF MUSEVENI'S NEW CABINET

By Umaru Kashaka
and Martin Kitubi

President Yoweri Museveni yesterday appointed what analysts described as a cautious new Cabinet, trying to refresh the state without destabilising it.

Although some people expected a more radical tilt to the business of government because politics and progress are also governed by Newton's laws of motion, Museveni maintained the old guard and moved some from executive desks to advisory chairs.

Analysts said the biggest technocratic message is in the ministries of finance, foreign affairs and energy.

They said the former finance state minister in charge of general duties, Henry Musasizi's rise to full finance minister looks like a promotion from inside the budget machinery and not an outsider gamble.

They noted that the finance ministry is the pressure point of Museveni's new term, pointing out debt, taxation, public salaries, infrastructure demands, youth unemployment, cost of living politics, and the credibility of government spending.

Appointing Uganda's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations, Adonia Ayebare, as foreign affairs minister, analysts say, was another clear signal, noting that moving a career diplomat into that docket gives the Cabinet a more professional diplomatic face.

It is also said this suggests the President wants foreign policy to look steadier, more polished and less militarised in tone.

The former minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Monica Musenero, was appointed minister of energy.

Analysts said energy and minerals are not just technical sectors; they are strategic sectors tied to oil, industrialisation, science, investment, local content and the future of Uganda's development story.

They, therefore, said moving Musenero there suggests an attempt to frame energy less as a routine ministry and more as a technology-and-development engine.

Experts also said moving Kiryowa Kiwanuka from Attorney General to Defence was striking, noting that it is not just a personnel swap but puts a legal-political operator into a security ministry.

"The message may be that defence needs not only military administration, but legal discipline, political trust and central coordination. Kiryowa at defence is the lawyer entering the barracks, not to command troops, but to manage the politics around them. He is a great pick in a drive to sustain discipline and accountability," one analyst said.

Veteran journalist John Kakande said the new cabinet list has again shown Museveni as a very



President Museveni

unpredictable man who keeps his cards close to his chest when he is going to make his decisions.

"In appointing Kiryowa as minister of defence and veterans affairs, I think the President wanted somebody very close to him and very strong because the Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) Gen. Muhoozi Kainerugaba is a very strong personality. The CDF should be taking instructions from the minister. So, to me, the appointment of Kiryowa signals that yes, you have the CDF there, but there is somebody who takes overall responsibility for the ministry," he said.

Kakande also noted that the appointment of Sam Mayanja as attorney general was quite striking because he has been literally at war with Mengo, the seat of Buganda Kingdom, over the interpretation of the laws relating to land.

"Now he (Manyanja) is not just a state minister for lands but the Attorney General who advises the entire Government," he said.

Crispin Kaheru, a political analyst and member of the Uganda Human Rights Commission, said that the President promoted people who know the system, brought in newer faces, moved technocrats into sensitive areas, and retired some familiar names without humiliating them.

"That is not irrational. A government entering a new term needs energy, but it also fears internal shocks. From that view, this Cabinet is a controlled transition. Basically, the President is changing the tyres while keeping the same driver, same road and same destination (vision)," Kaheru said.



Mayanja



Ruth Aceng

the President's way of saying, 'I have heard you,' Kaheru said.

"Basically, it is new energy, old command structure; younger faces, familiar rules, technocrats where credibility is needed, mobilisers where politics is needed, and veterans where control is needed," he added.

THE BALAAM FACTOR

Other analysts said the appointment of Balaam Barugahara as local government minister is especially politically loud because it is not just an administrative appointment, but it is where districts, mobilisation, service delivery frustrations and grassroots politics meet.

So, the analysts noted, Balaam's move from youth politics after serving as the state minister for youth and children affairs to local government is a move from the stage to the structure.

Prof. Mwambutsya Ndebesa, a prominent historian and political analyst, noted that the new cabinet is more of the same, and that it falls short of the transitional cabinet that the public expected.

"The public was expecting a cabinet with all regions represented and with members from other political parties, as part of the expected transitional government. Many of the new faces have been part of the system, but just promoted," he said.

OLD STOCK

When asked about the seasoned politicians such as Moses Ali, Wilson Muruli Mukasa and Matia Kasaija who have been dropped, Mwambutsya noted that their exclusion from the cabinet means they have been retired.

Regarding the appointment of Sanjay Tanna as Minister for Trade, Industries and Cooperatives, Mwambutsya noted that it was a reward to the Ugandan-Indian community, who are the largest investors in the country.

On the transfer of Ruth Aceng from the health ministry to Ministry of ICT and National Guidance, Mwambutsya noted that her skills were still needed in the health sector.

"In my opinion, Aceng has been one of the best performing ministers. She is even a potential candidate to serve as a director general World Health Organisation. We should have kept her at the health ministry," he said.

Frank Gashumba, a renowned businessman and Co-Founder of Council for Abavandimwe, has welcomed the appointment of Lawrence Muganga, the vice-chancellor of Victoria University, as Minister of State for Internal Affairs.

"I want to say that as the Abavandimwe, we are grateful for the appointment of Muganga. For a long time, we had been discriminated against at the immigration and National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA), which is under the Ministry of Internal Affairs," he said.



Musenero



Ayebare



Tana



Kiwanuka

NAMEERE APPOINTMENT

He also noted that bringing in younger ministers, such as Masaka City Woman MP Justine Nameere (local government state minister), is a response to a generational quest, not a sudden conversion to youth

politics.

"Youth groups have been explicitly demanding a visibly younger Cabinet and greater representation at the top table. The appointment of younger figures and political entrepreneurs into junior and some strategic roles is