

No problem in procurement process - NITA-U

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KAMPALA. Officials from the National Information and Technology Authority - Uganda (NITA-U) have denied any wrong doing in the procurement process of the Missing Link project which aims at building the second phase of the National Backbone Infrastructure (NBI) project.

The Government of Uganda (GoU), through NITA-U, is in the process of implementing the National Data Transmission Backbone Infrastructure and e-Government Infrastructure (NBI/EGI) project to connect all major towns across the country including Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies via an optical fibre cable network. This is expected to reduce the cost of public administration, support delivery of secure e-Government services in the country.

Appearing before the parliamentary contracts committee yesterday, Mr James Saaka, the managing director of NITA-U, said a bidding document was issued on August 14, 2017 and bids were received on November 7, 2017. The evaluation process is still ongoing and the successful bidder has not yet been awarded.

He further dispelled issues that the

outside parties.

In reference to issues raised, Mr Saaka said: "The bidding document was not developed by any of the prospective bidders or outside parties. The bidding document was developed by the internal expertise resident in NITA-U that has managed the national backbone from 2007."

He said the directorate of technical services within NITA U is staffed by tele-



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MR JAMES SAAKA, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF NITA-U

communication experts from within the information technology and telecommunication sector.

Mr Steven Kirenga, the manager marketing and communications, in an email interview, said: "During the pre-bid stage, all suppliers were invited to view the bid specification and it is at this stage that if a particular supplier had concerns with the bid specification detail, they would raise concern. No concerns were registered and this signaled the transition to the next stage of the procurement process."

In addition, Mr Kirenga said the World Bank uses its global technical experts to audit or review and subsequently approve the documents at the completion of each stage.

He, therefore, says recent media reports that allude to impropriety in the Missing Links bidding process are false and unsubstantiated. The procurement process was adhered to with the requisite quality checks along the way.

The National Backbone Infrastructure (NBI) was rolled out to ease and reduce costs in accessing government services. Under the supervision of the Ministry of ICT, NITA-U has so far laid 2,400km of fibre optic cables, connecting 322 government offices in 33 towns across the