

... to public service.
... citizens across the world are changing rapidly. Citizens are more informed, he said.

By Sarah Nabakooza

Democratic Party (DP) president Norbert Mao, has called for a forensic audit into the administration of Parliament, saying the institution has been weakened by alleged corruption, nepotism and abuse of office.

Speaking at a press briefing at Parliament yesterday, a day after losing the Speaker race in the first sitting of the 12th Parliament, Mao said the new parliamentary leadership must prioritise accountability and institutional reforms, instead of focusing on public image.

"We are calling upon the new leadership of Parliament to establish a forensic audit process," Mao said. "Parliament has failed to effectively oversee itself."

Mao, who lost the speakership contest to Jacob Oboth by 441 votes to 15 during Monday's sitting at Kololo Ceremonial Grounds, said his candidature was intended to expose deeper

Mao demands forensic audit of Parliament

problems within Parliament rather than merely win the office.

"Everybody was dancing around the problem," Mao said. "Civil society was making an alarm, MPs were making an alarm, the opposition leaders in

Parliament were making an alarm. But the problem was the position of Speaker because that office was being abused. Someone needed to shake that chair."

PATRONAGE

The outgoing justice minister alleged that patronage and

nepotism had flourished within Parliament, with influential individuals allegedly securing jobs for relatives and allies regardless of qualifications.

"Only an inquiry will be able to establish who got jobs wrongly without being qualified," Mao said. "Nepotism was at its highest. A patronage system was set in place."

His remarks come amid ongoing investigations by the Inspectorate of Government and the Police into Parliament, particularly surrounding the wealth of former speaker Anita Annet Among. Police recently impounded six luxury vehicles linked to Among, including a Rolls-Royce reportedly valued at over sh1.3b.

Mao congratulated Oboth and his deputy Thomas Tayebwa, upon their election, but urged them to focus on restoring public trust in Parliament.

"Our message is one: Do not just look good, be good too," Mao said. "We do not want Parliament to hire public relations consultants so that Parliament's image starts glittering."

He argued that Parliament had become detached from ordinary Ugandans and excessively dominated by the Executive.

Mao proposed a raft of reforms, including ensuring Parliament sits for at least 120 days annually, allowing the opposition to set debate agendas on selected days, increasing public participation in parliamentary business and introducing electronic voting to improve accountability among MPs.

He also criticised what he described as excessive interference by presiding officers during debates in the 11th Parliament.

"In the 11th Parliament members of Parliament were interrupted like in no other Parliament that I know," Mao said.

"You will be shocked that you went to the Hansard, you will find that the presiding officers spoke more than MPs."

Despite his defeat, Mao insisted he had achieved his objective of sparking debate about reforms within Parliament.

"I have been like a liberator," he said. "Removing what is bad is just a first step. Doing what is good is the next step."

Mao also dismissed suggestions that his support for President Yoweri Museveni in the previous election meant he had abandoned his own presidential ambitions.

"I am not one of those who is going to join the chorus of saying I don't want to be president," Mao said. "If Ugandans believe that I can lead this country, why not? At the right time, that will happen."



Justice minister Mao