



What I would do if allowed to be president of Uganda

Harold Acemah The Might of Ideas

Fellow citizens, in the discharge of my duties as president, I would always bear in mind and be guided by the fact that power belongs to God. As the psalmist writes:

"More than once I have heard God say that power belongs to Him and that His love is constant." Psalms 62:11 (GNB)

Article 1(1) of the Constitution states that: "All power belongs to the people who shall exercise their sovereignty in accordance with this Constitution." In my considered opinion, power belongs to the people in the sense that the collective voice of the people is the voice of God.

In many African countries, including Uganda, power has been usurped by presidents who exercise power for personal gain, not for the good of the people. The first thing I would, therefore, do as president is to reverse this status quo and ensure that power is exercised first for the glory of God and secondly for the greatest good of all the people of Uganda.

To divide a small country like Uganda with a population of only 35 million into 112 districts is absurd, irresponsible and extravagant. In order to drastically reduce the cost of public administration, I would reduce the number of districts to 35 using the formula that a district must have one million people.

A county must have 150,000 people and a city 300,000 people. Instead of decentralisation, I would implement a policy of devolution of powers from the centre to the 35 districts. The de-

veloped districts would raise 30 per cent of their budgetary resources locally through taxation and other legal means to be determined or approved by Parliament.

The Bunge or Parliament

The size of the *Bunge* or Parliament of Uganda would be reduced from the outrageous 458 to 140 based on the formula that a parliamentary constituency must have a population of 250,000 people.

The number of MPs and boundaries of constituencies would be adjusted to cater for demographic changes. MPs for special interest groups would cease to exist, but my government would make every effort to promote affirmative action vis a vis women of Uganda in order to ensure that females and their unique interests are adequately represented in the *Bunge*.

The Executive

With regard to the Executive branch of government, the size of Cabinet would be reduced to a maximum of 20 ministers and 20 ministers of State. I would ensure gender parity and regional balance in making ministerial appointments. The national Budget would focus on three sectors; education, health and agriculture so that government can effectively deal with the problems of ignorance, poverty and disease. I would ensure that 20 per cent of the Budget is allocated to the education sector, 15

The foreign policy of my government would seek to promote good neighbourliness in East Africa and the Great Lakes region. Uganda would promote regional cooperation in Africa and once again play an active and principled role in the non-aligned movement and the Group of 77.

per cent to agriculture and 15 per cent to the health sector.

One of the primary root causes of crime and insecurity is poverty and unemployment; with adequate funding for the agriculture sector which employs 75 per cent of Ugandans, my government would address the tragedy of youth unemployment.

The colossal waste of resources on the military would be expeditiously brought to an end since Uganda does not have any real enemy in the world. As a member of the East African Community (EAC), Uganda would work hand in hand with our partner states to ensure that there is regional peace and security. In the context of IGAD and the AU, Uganda would join hands with other African countries to promote peace and security in Africa as well as promote peaceful settlement of internal and inter-state disputes.

In this regard, Uganda would reduce its army to 10,000 soldiers who would be deployed to the AU military force and an EAC army to deal with African conflicts such as Somalia. My position on whether Uganda needs a standing army is

well known to readers of this column; in a nutshell, I do not believe Uganda needs an army. What Uganda needs is a well-trained, well-motivated, non-partisan and professional police force to maintain law and order in our country.

Foreign policy

The foreign policy of my government would seek to promote good neighbourliness in East Africa and the Great Lakes region. Uganda would promote regional cooperation in Africa and once again play an active and principled role in the non-aligned movement and the Group of 77. At the international level, Uganda would champion the search for a new international economic order based on justice, equity and fair play for all countries, big and small.

Other matters

My government would revert to old and familiar names for our national institutions, such as Radio Uganda, Uganda Television and Mulago Hospital. I would ensure that members of staff who work at State House come from every tribe of Uganda in order to reflect the rich ethnic diversity of our country, as was indeed the case during the 1960s. I would promote harmony among all religions in Uganda; for the Christian denominations, I would encourage and promote unity of the Church whose one foundation according to Scripture is Jesus Christ.

As a servant of God and the people of Uganda, I shall seek the Lord's guidance and help at all times and count on the full support of the gallant and patriotic people of Uganda.

By the grace of God, I would lead by example and practice what I preach. I would ensure that the might of ideas prevails over the gun. Like Nelson Mandela, I would serve only one term of five years and retire to Terego with dignity.

For God and my Country!

Mr Acemah is a political scientist, consultant and a retired career diplomat. hacemah@gmail.com

The Editor welcomes 600-word comments on topical issues. Preference will be given to insightful articles rather than generalised polemic observations. Kindly attach a portrait and send to editorial@ug.nationmedia.com