

doctor have been a better choice of source than a senior health correspondent?

...has access to medical information relating to the disease. The other has reported on earlier epidemics and in the process in-

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We risk losing an opportunity to host African Union Humanitarian Agency

The African Union (AU) and its predecessor have long sought effective ways to address humanitarian crises that undermine Africa's socio-economic transformation. Recognising peace, security, and stability as prerequisites for development and integration, the Constitutive Act laid the foundation for the establishment of African Union Humanitarian Agency (AfHA).

In February 2025, the African Union General Assembly selected Uganda to host the AfHA. It was a historic endorsement of Uganda's globally recognised refugee and humanitarian policies. The decision elevated Uganda's standing as a continental leader in humanitarian response, refugee protection, and regional diplomacy. Today, barely a year later, that achievement is hanging in a balance.

Uganda risks losing the opportunity to host the AfHA due to prolonged delays in fulfilling key commitments required under the host country agreement with the African Union Commission. Reliable information indicates that the African Union is already considering awarding the hosting rights to the next best bidder host country.

The establishment of AfHA in Uganda would not only strengthen the country's international reputation but also deliver immense economic, diplomatic, and strategic benefits. Hosting a continental institution of this magnitude would attract international humanitarian organisations, create employment opportunities for Ugandans, increase conference tourism, and position Kampala as Africa's humanitarian coordi-

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Partnerships



nation hub. Most importantly, it would reinforce Uganda's long-standing image as a nation committed to solidarity with displaced populations and humanitarian leadership.

Without the host country agreement, AfHA cannot legally commence operations in Uganda. The agency cannot recruit staff, mobilise or spend resources, or undertake the humanitarian responsibilities envisaged under its founding statute.

This delay has already created serious consequences. Sources indicate that the African Union had mobilised initial resources to kick-start the agency, but the funds have remained idle because Uganda has not demonstrated readiness to host the institution. Uganda has also failed to fulfil part of its financial commitments contained in the original bid document.

What is more troubling is the fact that the matter has already reached the highest levels of government.

If Uganda loses AfHA, the reputational

damage could be severe. At a time when African countries are competing aggressively to host continental and international institutions, Uganda's apparent hesitation sends the wrong message to humanitarian and development partners, investors, and regional bodies. It creates the perception of indecision, bureaucratic inertia, and lack of commitment to international obligations. Such a loss would also undermine Uganda's diplomatic influence within the African Union and weaken its credentials as a dependable regional humanitarian actor.

The irony is difficult to ignore since Uganda currently hosts one of the largest refugee populations in the world at over two million, and is internationally praised for its progressive refugee policy framework. The country has consistently championed humanitarian causes at regional and global levels. Winning the AfHA bid was therefore a natural recognition of Uganda's experience and leadership in this field.

The government still has an opportunity to rescue the situation but time is running out. The immediate priority should be the urgent signing of the host country agreement with the African Union Commission to enable the agency commence operations without further delay. In addition, the government should immediately release at least 30 percent of the pledged financial contribution to demonstrate seriousness and commitment to the African Union.

This is not merely about hosting another institution. It is about protecting Uganda's credibility, preserving a hard-earned continental reputation, and securing long-term strategic benefits for future generations of Uganda.

Ms Fauzia Nkuningi – Humanitarian & crisis policy consultant

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