

PRESIDENT RESPONDS TO JOURNALIST MWENDA'S GOVT CRITICISM

MUSEVENI DEFENDS UGANDA'S INDUSTRIALISATION AGENDA

By John Odyek

President Yoweri Museveni has defended Uganda's industrialisation programme and challenged journalist Andrew Mwenda to examine the progress made by local entrepreneurs and manufacturers before criticising government investment initiatives.

In a letter released on Saturday evening, Museveni responds to remarks by Mwenda, who described him as "senile and incapable of judging right."

ABLE TO DEFEND UGANDA

"Mr Mwenda, thank you for declaring me senile and incapable of judging right. You will, however, discover that at 82, I am still able to defend Uganda and myself with the Bible, the AK-47 and the pen," Museveni writes.

The President urges Mwenda to visit and assess Ugandan-owned enterprises that have received government support and are involved in manufacturing, research and value addition.

"You are supposed to be a journalist. Why do you not interview these 'commen,' such [as Dei BioPharma founder Dr Matthias] Magoola, [Ugandan herbalist David] Senfuka and others? They are here in Uganda. They are where you can reach them and even the assets they have put on the ground".

The President encourages Mwenda to visit

Magoola's factories in Matugga and Kamuli, meet people who use Senfuka's herbal products, tour Nelson Tugume's coffee processing plant in Ntungamo and inspect Prof. Florence Muranga's banana value-addition project in Bushenyi.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

The Government has provided financial support to several local innovators and entrepreneurs, including Magoola, Senfuka and Muranga, to support research, production and business development.

Magoola leads Dei BioPharma, a biotechnology and pharmaceutical company involved in vaccine and

drug research. Senfuka develops herbal medicines for non-communicable diseases, such as cancer and diabetes. Tugume's Inspire Africa Coffee Park produces a range of processed coffee products, including instant coffee, drip coffee packs, malt coffee, energy drinks and cosmetics.

Muranga heads the Banana Industrial Research and Development Centre, which produces a range of processed matoke products under the "Tooke" brand. The facility is part of the Presidential Initiative on Banana Industrial Development, which seeks to increase the commercial value of Uganda's banana crop through processing and exports.

Museveni singles out Kiira Motors Corporation as an example of local industrial development, saying critics rarely acknowledge such initiatives. "You are ashamed and you dare not talk about the Kiira Motors Corporation because that is a shammer of the neo-colonial agents like Mwenda," he said.

The President dismisses criticism of government

VALUE ADDITION EARNINGS

The President accuses critics of supporting an economic model in which Africa exports raw materials, instead of finished products.

He cites gold and coffee as examples of sectors where value addition can increase export earnings.

According to Museveni, one kilogramme of refined gold earns far more than unprocessed gold, while processed coffee commands higher prices than raw coffee beans.

"The parasites that abound in Africa export gold at 84% purity and get \$60,000 [about sh226.9m]. A kilogramme of fully refined gold of the purity of 99.9% goes for \$168,000 [about sh635.3m]. How much loss is that? A kilogramme of processed coffee, goes for \$25 [about sh94,000] to \$40 [about sh151,000], depending on the brands and yet for raw materials we get \$2.5 per kilogramme," Museveni writes.

The President in the missive defends the Government's decision to ban exports of unprocessed minerals, saying the policy has encouraged investment in mineral refining.

"The stubborn old man of Uganda who is senile banned the export of all unprocessed minerals. There are now 10 gold refineries in Uganda. The gold exports from Uganda have now hit \$7.48 billion," he said.

programmes aimed at increasing household incomes, including the Parish Development Model (PDM) and other government funds.

"The great Mwenda is talking about small capital for small holders. Does this great Andrew Mwenda live in Uganda? Have you heard of PDM and the other funds? If you are a patriot, why do you not participate in making them work?"

Museveni says his political philosophy remains rooted in patriotism, Pan-Africanism, socio-economic transformation and democracy.

The President questions

Mwenda's decision to discuss internal government matters publicly, arguing that such actions could undermine investor confidence and damage Uganda's image.

He links Mwenda to opposition against the Bujagali hydropower project, saying criticism of the project contributed to delays in expanding electricity generation.

The President urges Ugandans to focus on economic transformation and ignore critics like Mwenda, whom he accuses of attempting to derail development efforts.



President Museveni

By Vision Reporter

'Create jobs locally, avoid...'