

Kadaga criticises new NDA guidelines on pharmacies

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KAMPALA. The Speaker of Parliament, Ms Rebecca Kadaga, has criticised National Drug Authority's (NDA) guidelines on pharmacies as "disturbing" and warned that "closing pharmacies when there are challenges of drugs in hospitals" is a recipe for disaster.

Ms Kadaga, who was receiving a petition of the pharmacy owners in Kampala yesterday, promised to ask the health committee of Parliament to probe the matter that has pitted the Pharmaceutical Society of Uganda and Uganda Pharmacy Owners Association (UPOA) against NDA.

The drug authority recently banned the establishment on new pharmacies in Kampala Central Business area and major municipalities, saying they

are filled to capacity.

Citizens have also been restricted to operating only one pharmacy while foreign players run chains of the same.

Ms Kadaga agreed with pharmacy owners that the licensing guidelines proposing a ban on the opening up of new pharmacies in Kampala is a move to restrict drug access to the public.

The NDA 2018 guidelines require all pharmacies operating retail and wholesale sections in one premise to have separate pharmacists for each section.

However, Ms Kadaga questioned why the business community would be blocked from operating multiple units in a free-market-economy.

"These revelations if true, are quite disturbing. You cannot close pharmacies when there are challenges of drugs in hospitals," she said.

"I am fighting for the trad-

ers in downtown, I cannot fail to take up this one as well," the Speaker added.

She said the government needs to act quicker to enact a multi-senatorial law on local content law, to protect local players in business.

Pharmacy owners are demanding that NDA officials be investigated by Parliament over illegal activities.

The association's leadership through their legal secretary

ISSUES

Among other issues raised, UPOA decries what they call stringent levels of high handedness and a radical licensing regime that has kicked many local actors out of business. The association has also decried multiple taxation

Deo Kalikumutima also want a forensic audit of the authority.

"They are insisting if you are to have a dual licence [then] you have to hire at least two pharmacists which is very costly; it is very unfair and unreasonable," he said.

The acting secretary to NDA, Ms Helen Ndagije, has since said the new guidelines are meant to ensure equal distribution of drugs in the country because Kampala is over-served.

manifested in the different levies charged by Uganda Revenue Authority, NDA and other urban authorities. The pharmacy owners want the NDA board fully constituted with a representative from the UPOA and the Uganda Medical Association.