

Cabinet behind school land giveaway, says ULC chairman

Policy. Baguma Isoko explains that the land giveaway is in line with a policy adopted after the promulgation of the 1995 Constitution following discontent by government that the law did not expressly provide land for investment.

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KAMPALA. Cabinet is behind the giveaway of public and school land to investors, the Uganda Lands Commission (ULC) chairperson has said.

"In most of the land allocations that ULC puts on paper, there is a directive from the Executive that land that is currently not being used by the school be allocated to an investor. In some instances some schools may be translocated," said Mr Baguma Isoko, the ULC chairperson.

Mr Isoko was appearing before the commission of inquiry into land matters on Thursday in Kampala.

He explained that the land giveaway is in line with a policy adopted after the promulgation of the 1995 Constitution following discontent by government that the law did not expressly provide land for investment.

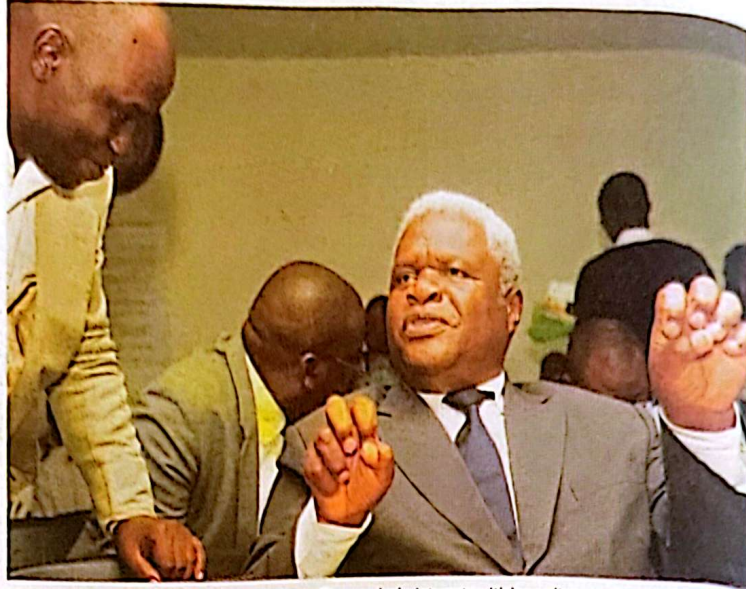
"In every municipality, town council, this is the situation. It is a government policy still in force and together with that policy, officers who were using official cars had them co-owned by them and government. That is a policy of government regarding land that is still being implemented," he added.

"There is a committee constituted by four permanent secretaries which sits and does that work in all the towns where pool houses and pool housing land exists. This is a policy which should now after 25 years be revisited," Mr Isoko told the seven-member commission chaired by Justice Catherine Bamugemereire.

The commission is investigating into the laws, processes and procedures in land acquisition, administration and management in the country.

However, the commission observed that in all complaints filed for investigation, the ULC is mentioned in sale of government property, encroachment of forest reserves and wetlands.

"I wonder if this land was sold before, I do not know what ULC would be handling and managing. Houses belonging to government have been sold and yet sometimes we hear government is looking for land to build headquarters of min-



In charge. Uganda Land Commission chairman Baguma Isoko interacts with journalists while appearing before the land probe committee in Kampala on Thursday. PHOTO BY STEPHEN WANDERA



Justice Catherine Bamugemereire



Mr Ebert Byenkya



Gen Kahinda Otafiire

istries," commissioner Robert Ssebunya said.

He added: "Some of the lands sold by ULC belong to institutions which are there and not dying tomorrow and therefore, there will be development. The country is not going to be static but will be static when development comes and you need to do this to develop yet ULC has sold the land."

Mr Isoko was appearing before the commission to answer questions in regard to fraudulent allocation and acquisition of two pieces of government land in Jinja District.

He asked the commission for some time to enable him prepare adequately to get required information.

The ULC is on the spot for allocating Plot 60/62 on Alidina Road in Jinja Municipality belonging to ministry of Finance to Birus Property Services, a

private developer.

It is alleged that the Minister of Justice, Gen Kahinda Otafiire, while still Trade minister, irregularly allocated the land in 2012.

In another incident, the ULC is alleged to have allocated more

than seven hectares of land to National Fisheries Research Institute (NAFIRI) but Jinja District Land Board titled the same land in favour of a private company - Favourite Enterprises - owned by non-Ugandan.

The ULC is also accused of frustrating the same government body, NAFIRI, from acquiring land titles for the land it occupies.

Mr Ebert Byenkya, the commission's lead counsel, said the team is inquiring into the management and administration of land and this would appear to be land in custody of ULC and yet it had allocated the same to NAFIRI.

Mr Byenkya said the land in question is on Block 103 at Butembe, Jinja.

The late Mayanja Nkangi handled the land matter during his tenure as chairman of the commission.

Affected land

Some of the public and school land given away by government to investors include:

- Shimoni Demonstration School land, the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation land in Nakasero, part of Kyambogo University land, Namanve forest land, a plot on Nkrumah road formerly housing a Kampala City Council Hospital and Uganda Railway land in Nsambya.