Uganda risks losing opportunity to host African Union Humanitarian Agency



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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 the African Union Humanitarian Agency (AfHA). Grounded in the 2016 Common African Position on Humanitarian Effectiveness, the agency is intended to provide a co-ordinated, Africa-led mechanism to strengthen humanitarian response, reduce vulnerability, and build resilience – embodying Africa's collective commitment to move from fragmented crisis management towards a unified, strategic approach that protects lives, restores dignity, and aligns humanitarian action with the continent's development ambitions.

In February 2025, the African Union General Assembly selected Uganda to host 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 the balance.

Uganda risks losing the opportunity to host 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 AU is already considering awarding the hosting rights to the next best bidder, as Uganda has failed to sign the Host Country Agreement to operationalise the agency despite repeated engagements and agreed timelines. This development should concern every Ugandan.

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

However, despite Uganda winning the bid nearly 15 months ago, the Government has yet to sign the Host Country Agreement that would legally operationalise the agency. Although the draft agreement was finalised and mutually agreed upon in August 2025, it remains unsigned to date, and Uganda has remained silent on the matter despite repeated reminders from the African Union.

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 AU 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.

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