



L-R: Geoffrey Wokuri (Bungokho County South MP), Rukia Isanga Nakadema (Woman MP, Mayuge) and Asha Nabulo Mafabi (Woman MP, Sironko) during the elections for the 12th Parliament speakers at Kololo Independence Grounds, yesterday



Oboth (right) with Wakiso district Woman MP Betty Ethel Naluyima at Kololo, yesterday

What MPs say

After voting for the new speakers of Parliament, the proceedings revealed early signs of political tension and dissent.

Opposition legislators cautiously welcomed the new Speaker's pledges to restore fairness and improve oversight. Outgoing Leader of Opposition Joel Ssenyonyi said the Speaker's commitment to serve all MPs regardless of political affiliation offered hope for a more balanced Parliament.

Obongti County MP Hassan Kaps Fungaroo also welcomed Oboth's emphasis on strengthening committees and oversight mechanisms.

"We are going to work with him and we hope he will uphold the principles he outlined," Fungaroo said, stressing that effective accountability requires properly-funded committees capable of independently scrutinising government expenditure and public institutions.

Meanwhile, Hoima City Woman MP Asinansi Nyakato, who contested for deputy speakership, framed the election as a broader struggle for institutional independence.

Herbert Arikio (Gweri County) said the NRM leadership had carefully chosen leaders capable of driving the party's legislative agenda over the next five years.

Other political analysts said for Oboth and Tayebwa, the expectations are immense. They said their leadership begins at a time when Ugandans are demanding greater transparency, stronger accountability and a Parliament capable of defending public interest rather than political convenience.

However, they noted that whether the 12th Parliament succeeds in reshaping its image or falls into the same patterns that damaged its predecessor may ultimately determine not only its own legacy, but also public confidence in the country's democratic institutions in the years ahead.

WHAT AWAITS NEW PARLIAMENT LEADERS

By Nelson Mandela Muhoozi and Sarah Nabakooza

Uganda's 12th Parliament has formally started its work under new leadership amid high expectations, growing scrutiny over alleged corruption and mounting pressure to restore confidence in the legislative institution.

The first step and day in the five-year journey of the new Parliament was yesterday at its inaugural sitting at the Kololo Independence Grounds in Kampala, where legislators elected Jacob Markons Oboth as Speaker and Thomas Tayebwa as deputy Speaker.

The election took place under the supervision of Chief Justice Dr Flavian Zeija, in the presence of President Yoweri Museveni and senior government officials.

The leadership transition comes at a politically sensitive moment for the country, with Parliament facing sustained criticism over alleged corruption, weak oversight and controversial legislation.

Oboth's emergence as Speaker signals a generational, political shift within the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party and a possible reconfiguration of power centres ahead of what analysts describe as a potentially defining period in the country's political future.

Backed by the NRM and Chief of Defence Forces Gen. Muhoozi Kainerugaba-led Patriotic League of Uganda (PLU), Oboth ascended to the helm of Parliament, promising to rebuild the institution's battered image and crack down on corruption.

His anti-corruption message appeared carefully calibrated to respond to growing public frustration directed at the outgoing 11th Parliament,



National Unity Platform MPs and other opposition members supporting their candidate, Paul Mwiru (seated, second-right), who contested for the speakership position during the first sitting of the 12th parliament at Kololo Independence Grounds, yesterday

which was repeatedly dogged by allegations of financial impropriety, abuse of office and controversial expenditure.

Well, as the adage goes, a small leak will sink a great ship. Oboth and Tayebwa need to ensure that they plug every leak, however small, if they are to ensure that the ship successfully sails to the intended shore after five years.

MUSEVENI'S WARNING AGAINST GRAFT

Museveni himself recently warned legislators against corruption and conduct that undermines public trust, describing graft within Parliament as a threat to national stability.

"I do not want to hear of corruption in Parliament. If there is corruption in Parliament, how will you control others? You are the oversight body. It will kill Uganda. It is suicide and must not be tolerated," Museveni said

during the parliamentary retreat at the National Leadership Institute Kyankwanzi in April.

The President also criticised legislators accused of soliciting bribes during oversight and budget approval processes, signalling what many interpreted as growing concern within the Executive over Parliament's public image.

THE CHALLENGE AHEAD

For many observers, however, the challenge before the new leadership extends far beyond speeches and promises.

Museveni yesterday said: "Regarding this Parliament, I have been patient before, but this term, there will be no room for leaders who seek titles without helping the people they lead."

He directed NRM leaders to return to the parishes and ensure that existing government programmes are lifting people out of poverty.

"I do not want to hear excuses about poverty while solutions already exist. Ministers and government officials who fail in this responsibility will be held accountable. This is *kisania* no sleep. Enough is enough."

Political analyst Yusuf Sserunkuma argues that the biggest test for the 12th Parliament will be whether it can assert genuine institutional independence in a political system where the Executive remains dominant.

"The fight against corruption is not a legal fight, it is a political fight. If you bank on Parliament to deliver victory in the fight against corruption, you are banking on the wrong people. It is the Government that has to set the standard," Sserunkuma said.

He suggested that many legislators enter Parliament driven more by access to power and resources than by institutional reform.

"Most of them are looking

forward to the money because the money is there," he said.

However, Sserunkuma believes the 12th Parliament could find itself presiding over a historic political transition in Uganda.

Veteran journalist John Kakande believes rebuilding public trust will ultimately determine whether the 12th Parliament succeeds or fails.

"The new leadership has got an uphill task because Parliament, as an institution, has been badly battered," Kakande said, adding that legislators must avoid actions that reinforce public perceptions of greed, entitlement and political patronage.

"One thing they must avoid is increasing their emoluments. Like every other Ugandan who is suffering, they should also bear the suffering," he said.

"The public gets the impression that these people are up for sale," he said, referring to some of the cash donations they allegedly receive to back proposals or pass particular Bills.

The veteran journalist further argued that Parliament must strengthen committee accountability systems to curb bribery allegations involving bureaucrats and legislators during oversight processes.

"I think the leadership will have to devise a mechanism of monitoring those committees to ensure MPs are not bribed by bureaucrats," he said.

Beyond corruption, Kakande believes Parliament must become more responsive to ordinary citizens and give MPs greater opportunity to raise constituency concerns rather than focusing almost exclusively on government business.

"People in the constituencies will be happy if they know their MP took their matter to Parliament," he noted.