

'OBOTH COMMANDS BROAD CROSS-PARTY RESPECT AND GOODWILL'

By Mary Karugaba

The Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) party and the Caucus yesterday unanimously endorsed Jacob Oboth-Oboth and Thomas Tayebwa as Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the 12th Parliament, respectively, after all the 19 candidates who had expressed interest in the positions of Speaker and Deputy Speaker agreed to step down.

The development followed intense consultations within the CEC meeting that first met on Friday and later Sunday morning at State House, Entebbe. Yesterday's meeting was followed by the party caucus meeting.

Those who stepped down for the position of Speaker are Masindi Woman MP Florence Akiki Asimwe and Alioni Yorke Odia (Aringa South County, NRM). Those who withdrew their candidature for the position of Deputy Speaker were Rose Obiga, Catherine Lamwaka, Susan Nakawuki, Mary Kamuli Kutesa, Patrick Ogwang, James Kaberuka, Davis Namara and Odia Wanyoto Mutende.

Although CEC on Friday agreed that people interested in the two positions submit their names for vetting, the top policy organ insisted that the two were still the best individuals to take on the position.

Sources that attended the closed-door meeting told *New Vision* that although each of the contestants was allowed to explain why they wanted the positions, the party chairperson, President Yoweri Museveni and the members insisted that for the sake of unity and harmony, Oboth-Oboth and Tayebwa should be left to take on the leadership positions.

According to the sources that attended the CEC meeting, members and the President considered issues, such as legal competence, party loyalty, continuity, mobilisation skills and the need to avoid internal divisions within the party.

Explaining to the caucus why CEC had endorsed the two, NRM secretary general Richard Todwong said: "CEC noted that the party has traditionally endorsed incumbents for a second term where there is no controversy surrounding their leadership. The committee also noted that the incumbent speaker had withdrawn her candidature, paving the way for fresh consideration of candidates."

He told the caucus that for the position of Speaker, CEC endorsed Oboth-Oboth, describing him as a candidate with "exceptional legal acumen and an in-depth command of constitutional and parliamentary law."

He also said CEC considered Oboth-Oboth's perceived ability to unite members across the political divide.

For the deputy speaker position, Todwong said the committee endorsed Tayebwa on grounds of institutional continuity, experience and youthfulness.

In the resolution, CEC cited Tayebwa's previous experience as a lawyer, government chief whip and deputy speaker, saying his sustained

WHY NRM ENDORSED OBOTH AND TAYEBWA

PHOTO BY SIMON PETER TUMWINE



Oboth-Oboth (left) greeting Tayebwa after they were endorsed by the NRM for speaker and deputy speaker positions at the caucus meeting at State House, Entebbe

engagement in parliamentary work provides "a measure of institutional continuity that is of significant value to the orderly and effective management of parliamentary business."

The committee said his familiarity with parliamentary conventions and procedures makes him well-suited to continue serving in the role.

CEC also highlighted Tayebwa's mobilisation abilities, saying he had demonstrated "an outstanding capacity to organise, galvanise and mobilise party structures, communities and the electorate at large."

The committee further pointed to Tayebwa's age and exposure, saying he brings "energy, dynamism and the fresh perspective of a younger generation" to one of Parliament's top offices. His endorsement, CEC said, reflects the party's commitment to involving young people in governance and high-level decision-making.

He further informed caucus members that CEC had engaged all aspirants who had earlier expressed interest in the positions of speaker and deputy speaker.

"CEC interacted with those comrades who had expressed interest in the various positions. In the resolution I am going to read, I will also read the names of those who understood the main direction and purpose of the party," he said.

After reading the resolutions, he invited the party's electoral commission chairperson, Tanga Odoi, to present the two to the caucus.

As applause filled the room, Odoi proceeded with the formal process,

BETWEEN THE LINES

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taking members through the voting guidelines. He then asked the eligible 372 NRM members to vote by a show of hands since there was only one candidate for each of the positions.

He then called for a show of hands from the caucus to support the candidature of Oboth-Oboth for Speakership. He then declared, "the candidate by unanimous decision is Oboth-Oboth."

He then introduced Tayebwa, who was also unanimously voted for by a show of hands.

"By unanimous decision, Your Excellency and members, the NRM flag-bearer for Deputy Speaker is Right Honourable Thomas Tayebwa," he said, declaring the process as fair, transparent and excellent.

"This election has been fair, transparent and excellent," he said.

Museveni applauded the NRM MPs for handling the speakership process through consensus rather than engaging in divisive political battles, which he described as *empaka*.

Museveni said positions, such as speaker should ideally be filled

through consensus rather than confrontational contests characterised by mobilisation, lobbying and factionalism.

TAYEBWA, OBOTH-OBOTH SPEAK OUT

On his endorsement, Oboth-Oboth said he was grateful. "I feel so indebted and humbled by the enormous trust that has been placed in my head. I will not take that lightly, nor will I take it for granted. I pledge to represent the views of the caucus and CEC and even my other friends in PLU (Patriotic League of Uganda), because PLU is aligned with NRM. I want to thank them for all the endorsement," he said. Tayebwa said the endorsement of Jacob Oboth-Oboth reflects a shared commitment to reforming Parliament and restoring public trust in the institution.

DONE DEAL FOR NRM

At its first sitting starting 10:00am at Kololo Ceremonial Grounds today, the 12th Parliament is expected to vote for its speaker and deputy speaker. By press time, Norbert Mao was still in the race. Although the Opposition has presented Jinja South East MP Paul Mwiru as its candidate for speakership, the NRM is expected to sweep both positions due to its numerical strength. The 12th Parliament has 529 seats, of which the NRM controls 372. There are 68 independent MPs, many of whom are considered sympathetic to the ruling party.

Additional reporting by John Odyek

REASONS FOR ENDORSING OBOTH

■ **Proven legal skill:** Oboth-Oboth has legal acumen and an in-depth command of constitutional and parliamentary law over a distinguished career. His legal expertise equips him to interpret and apply the rules and procedures of Parliament with authority and precision, ensuring that proceedings are conducted in full accordance with the law and the rules of Parliament.

■ **Consistency as a party cadre:** Oboth-Oboth has demonstrated an commitment to the party's values, ideology, and programmatic agenda over many years of dedicated service. His record of loyalty to party positions makes him a reliable custodian of the institutional processes of Parliament.

■ **A uniting and uncontroversial factor:** Oboth-Oboth commands broad cross-party respect and goodwill and his candidature is unlikely to attract significant opposition or controversy from within or outside the Party.

TAYEBWA

■ **Proven mobilisation skills:** Tayebwa has demonstrated an outstanding capacity to organise, galvanise and mobilise party structures, communities and the electorate at large. These skills are directly transferable to the parliamentary context, where the ability to build consensus, marshal support and maintain working coalitions is essential to the effective functioning of a Deputy Speaker.

■ **Youthfulness:** Tayebwa brings the energy, dynamism and fresh perspective of a younger generation to one of Parliament's most important offices. His youthfulness is a deliberate and affirmative response to the party's commitment to the inclusion of young people in governance and high decision-making.

■ **Institutional Continuity:** His prior parliamentary experience as Deputy Speaker and his sustained engagement with the legislative process provides a measure of institutional continuity that is of significant value to the orderly and effective management of parliamentary business, ensuring that the Deputy Speakership is discharged by a candidate who is conversant with the conventions and practice of Parliament.