



IN THE PARLIAMENT OF UGANDA

Official Report of the Proceedings of Parliament

FOURTH SESSION - 22ND SITTING - FIRST MEETING

Tuesday, 1 October 2024

Parliament met at 2.21 p.m. in Parliament House, Kampala.

PRAYERS

(The Deputy Speaker, Mr Thomas Tayebwa, in the Chair.)

The House was called to order.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable colleagues, I welcome you to today's sitting. Our Prime Minister is back, from New York, where she even got an international award. I hope she will share with us the details.

Honourable colleagues, on a very sad note, on the 27th of September, we lost our former colleague, Hon. Francis Onapito Ekomoloit, a former Member of Parliament for Amuria County. He was a distinguished legislator and leader, both in the political and private sectors.

He is a former Presidential Press Secretary. We have heard that the President has offered an official burial for him. We shall be waiting for further details to do with the burial arrangements.

It is really sad. I request that we stand up and observe a minute of silence in his honour.

(The House observed a minute of silence.)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Rt Hon. Prime Minister, welcome back. We have been handling very many issues and I explained to the House how we were in touch throughout your travel to New York where you represented His Excellency, the President, at the UN General Assembly.

I do not know if you have any comments to make, but I congratulate you on receiving the Global Leadership Award. If you have it here, you can lay it on the Table or show us so that we get inspired to work hard.

2.25

THE PRIME MINISTER AND LEADER OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS (Ms Robinah Nabbanja): Mr Speaker, I got information and I remember informing Parliament sometime back that the Global Women Power based at the UN or New York, identified me as one of the inspirational leaders. *(Applause)*

Mr Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to humbly thank you for the support, as the Parliament of Uganda, and also use this opportunity to thank the President of the Republic of Uganda for appointing me in this position, and also appointing me through my various positions in my career.

Mr Speaker, the Global Power Women Award was given to me on 26th September 2024, in New York. We were attending a conference of the global women; a big conference of many women. It was given to 10 women. Among them were; two ministers, four first ladies, and me, the Prime Minister. *(Applause)*

Mr Speaker, I asked a question when they were giving me this global award. I said, “Why me?” Then they played videos; there is when our country was hit by floods - in Kayunga; when we were going to Kawongo landing site, the vehicle stopped about five kilometres away. We used a small boat, and then after that, where the people were staying, there were no vehicles because they were cut off completely. I used a *boda boda* - they had that clip, which they played and said; “Service beyond self.” *(Applause)*

Mr Speaker, they also had another clip, when we went to Ntoroko - I do not know whether my brother is here – *(Interjection)* - yes. We went to Ntoroko, and remember that time when we had people who were stuck in the waters. They had nowhere to go. All their land had submerged. We went there with a boat, and there was a crawling baby. They had that photo when a crawling baby was on top of the water, and the way we were giving them support.

They also had another one, when I represented Mama, the First Lady, in Japan. We did a lot of communal work in Japan. They also added so many other things; I did not know; they were always following us.

I want to take this opportunity, Mr Speaker, to lay on the Table this global award as an inspiration to other leaders.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Rt Hon. Prime Minister.

MS NABBANJA: Allow me to lay on the Table. I dedicate this global award to a number of people; the President of the Republic of Uganda, the ministers and Cabinet members, the Parliament of Uganda, including Hon. Ssemujju. *(Laughter_)*

The people of Kakumiro; my voters who have always brought me here. I also dedicate this, Mr Speaker, to the staff of the Office of the Prime Minister and the women of Uganda. Mr Speaker, I lay on the Table.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Rt Hon. Prime Minister.

MS NABBANJA: Mr Speaker, it is not only that. They gave me this; this is an award, and I request that I give it to him to read so that - people may think I am reading my own words.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, Rt Hon. Prime Minister, it is yours. You read it for us. We trust you.

MS NABBANJA: Okay. Mr Speaker; “The Global Power Women Award, New York 2024, to Her Excellency Robinah Nabbanja, Prime Minister of Uganda-”

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is a real accent now. *(Laughter)*

MS NABBANJA: You know, Mr Speaker, I have been there – *(Laughter)* - Global Inspiration Leadership Award, 2024.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Colleagues, you know we always celebrate our very own. Rt Hon. Prime Minister, we congratulate you once again.

Honourable colleagues, once again, another cause for celebration as a country; our very own Mr Emmanuel Katongole, Chairman, Quality Chemicals, was appointed a Director for Rotary International representing Africa. That is very huge for Africa to have our very own. He has been so dedicated to serving humanity beyond self and any expectation. I take this opportunity, on your behalf, to congratulate Mr Emmanuel Katongole for raising our flag very high and I am very sure he is going to be a good ambassador of our country.

Honourable colleagues, I know the Prime Minister has made us happy but why don't we do matters of national importance? But before then, in the VIP Galley this afternoon, we have a delegation of staff members from the Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania. The delegation includes:

1. Mr Gerald Magili, Assistant Director, Administration;
2. Ms Asia Minja, Assistant Director, House Operations;
3. Ms Asia Msangi, Principal Parliamentary Clerk;
4. Ms Shirima Eunike, Principal Administrative Officer;
5. Ms Neema Msangi, Principal Hansard Reporter;
6. Mr Christopher Comino, Principal Assistant Printer;
7. Ms Mbinga Sikudani, Parliamentary Clerk;
8. Ms Veronika Komba, Legal Service Officer;
9. Ms Jumbe Thuwaiba, Legal Service officer;
10. Mr Daniel Zephania, Legal Service Officer;
11. Mr Ramadhani Kalingonji, Hansard Reporter; and
12. Ms Mashimba Limi, Hansard Reporter.

They have come to observe proceedings of this House. Please join me once again in welcoming them. You are always welcome, our brothers and sisters. *(Applause)*

In the Public Gallery this afternoon, we have pupils and teachers of Princess Royal Nursery and Primary School, located in Aswa County, Gulu City. They are represented by Hon. Wokorach Simon Peter, Hon Aol Betty Ochan, and Hon. Laker Sharon Balamoyi. They have come to observe the proceedings of this House. Please join me once again in welcoming them. *(Applause)*

Hon. Ssemujju, they have dedicated the award to you. *(Laughter)*

2.35

MR IBRAHIM SSEMUJJU (FDC, Kira Municipality, Wakiso): Thank you, Mr Speaker. Many colleagues, especially the new ones, do not know that Hon. Nabbanja and I have come from far. One day we will tell our stories. I sincerely congratulate her, that is what I wanted to say, Mr Speaker. *(Applause)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Hon. Sarah and then Hon. Kyooma –

2.36

MS SARAH OPENDI (NRM, Woman Representative, Tororo): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I take this opportunity on behalf of the women of this Parliament, together with the men and the women of Uganda, since we are their representatives in Parliament, to congratulate the Rt Hon. Prime Minister for receiving this global award. *(Applause)* I thank you for putting Uganda on the global map, because this event was a global one, and people came from different countries and witnessed you receiving this award.

I thank you for the great work that you are doing for this country and encourage you to continue serving humanity with distinction. This is my appeal to you, Rt Hon. Prime Minister. I thank you for the open-door policy that you have in your office; when you get to her office, she is available. I know some people who are too big and when you get to their offices, you will not even see them. However, I thank Rt Hon. Prime Minister, for keeping that open door policy, something that I also did when I was serving as a minister. *(Laughter)*

I do not want to blow my trumpet Rt Hon. Prime Minister. I also received a global award sometime back. Thank you very much.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Kyooma, Hon. Huda Oleru –

2.37

MR XAVIER KYOOMA (NRM, Ibanda County North, Ibanda): Thank you, Mr Speaker. In the same vein, I take this opportunity to congratulate our own, Rt Hon. Speaker and Mr Emmanuel Katongole upon the appointment. When such events happen, they do not just stop at that because like the Rt Hon. Speaker has read, I think there were five personalities who were recognised, and Rt Hon. Prime Minister, from her submission, said five personalities were recognised.

The General Assembly is attended by very many personalities from different spectrums. The fact that she was recognised among the five and awarded to that effect, is not only an achievement for her, but for the entire country and that one elevates us in terms of political ranking and democracy. So, because of that, I congratulate you, Rt Hon. Prime Minister, Uganda, and I encourage you to do more as we emulate you. I beg to submit.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Huda Oleru

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2.39

MS HUDA OLERU (NRM, Aringa East County, Yumbe): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for giving us the opportunity to openly congratulate the Rt Hon. Prime Minister. I join others in congratulating you for receiving that global award. There are millions of leaders in the world. Now that you have been identified among the many to receive that, you have shown your capacity to work not only for Uganda but for the whole world.

You are doing the work of humanity. You have raised the flag of women high and we thank you. You have shown the world that the women of Uganda can work and you have also proven that when the Commander-in-Chief and the President of Uganda identified you among the many women in Uganda, to take that leadership, he made the right choice.

When he was giving his speech to the new Cabinet he put in place he said, “This time I have nominated or selected the fisherwomen and fishermen to work.” Though he was talking biblically, you have proven that indeed he has done the right work. We thank you very much; keep it up. I know there are many challenges and hurdles, but you have overcome them so continue to build that confidence.

The work you are doing; you are a mentor to all of us as women. When I sat in my office watching the television and I saw you in Yumbe, Karamoja, Kanungu, and everywhere, I felt ashamed to sit in that office. I get out and call my people to let me go to the field. So,

indirectly you have been training the women to follow you. We thank you and we are not going to let you down. We shall continue to give you the support and I am encouraging the whole Parliament to give you the support so that you do more than what you have done for this country. God bless you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Matters of national importance, Hon. Josephat Tumwesigye – Colleagues, I have an Order Paper to run.

2.41

MR JOSEPHAT TUMWESIGYE (NRM, Bugangaizi South County, Kakumiro): Thank you, Mr Speaker, but you allow me at least 30 seconds to add my voice in congratulating my Prime Minister for your information to the House that she is not only a woman Member of Parliament for Kakumiro District but a resident of my constituency.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Prayers? *(Laughter)*

MR TUMWESIGYE: My prayer on this submission is not on a matter of national importance. It is that the dedication she has made on this Floor today reaches the people of Kakumiro through my voice that she has recognised that the people who voted for her are a pillar to lean on.

Therefore, for those who are listening and tuning in, we have an award today in our district. Thank you very much, Rt Hon. Prime Minister, for representing us at that level that many people covet but may never reach.

On the other hand, I would like to thank you, Mr Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to stand in for the people of Bugangaizi South on matters that affect them. Recently, hailstorms hit our people very badly.

The most affected subcounties were Kakumiro Town Council, Kasambya Subcounty, Birembo Subcounty, and partly Kisengwe Subcounty. Very many villages lost gardens of food and houses to the hailstorm.

Particularly, in one village of Nyamuha, 345 families were reduced to almost- people who should be helped very fast.

I wanted to use the word “beggars” but quickly I changed my narrative. However, these people need attention. A community in Kyedikyo Village in Kasambya Subcounty lost a school.

I am appealing to the Office of the Prime Minister to come in very fast because I fast-tracked a report, which is already made. It contains even pictures of the level of devastation that was occasioned on my people. My prayer is that they get seeds, food relief, and iron sheets to roof their houses, community schools, and churches that were demolished, So I pray.

2.44

THE PRIME MINISTER AND LEADER OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS (Ms Robinah Nabbanja): Mr Speaker, I am aware that we had a problem in my district in the sub-counties of Kisiita, Nalweyo, Kasambya, Birembo, Bwanswa, Kakumiro Town Council, Kitaihuka and Igayaza Town Council.

I have already informed the concerned and also asked the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to go and make an assessment with the District Disaster Committee and I got the report today. Unfortunately, I have been out. Maybe, you could have had an interaction with my brother. I came on Sunday evening; yesterday was a Cabinet meeting; maybe he did not get in touch with me. We shall handle it, I promise.

2.45

MS SUSAN ABEJA (Independent, Woman Representative, Otuke): Thank you, Mr Speaker. Allow me to begin by congratulating my sister. I am here on an urgent matter, which requires an urgent response. On 10 September 2024, a terrible hailstorm destroyed all food crops in five villages, in Orum Subcounty, Otuke District. The same incident happened in Ogwette Subcounty and destroyed food crops in five villages.

My prayer is that today, as we are celebrating the good work of our lovely sister, the Rt Hon. Prime Minister, she has been everywhere. Even if you are not going, let your office provide these vulnerable people with some seeds or compensate the damaged food crops, they will celebrate you more. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Rt Hon. Prime Minister, maybe I can add another related one and you do all of them at once. I have Hon. Museveni William.

2.46

MR WILLIAM MUSEVENI (Independent, Buwekula South County, Mubende): Thank you, Mr Speaker, but protect me. There are some attackers around here. I do not know what is wrong with the name “Museveni”.

Mr Speaker, I am rising on a matter of national importance. Again, it is a hailstorm and violent winds which were experienced in my constituency, that is, Kyenda Town Council and Kitenga Subcounty. Several houses and plantations were destroyed and people lost food.

My prayer again is to request for food relief and iron sheets. I also request the Government to come up with a policy on tree planting. We are experiencing violent wind because people have cut the natural thickets. Wind forms and runs a long distance, destroying everything that it comes across.

We are losing churches and schools and soon, we are losing houses everywhere in the country. Uganda has no capacity to combat the disaster. Why can't we make a policy where every Ugandan should plant at least a tree every year? We can gazette a national tree planting day to avert the situation. Thank you.

2.48

THE PRIME MINISTER AND LEADER OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS (Ms Robinah Nabbanja): Mr Speaker, to my sister from Otuke District, I request that the district disaster committee gives us a report. We shall send the technical people to assess and see how to come up with the relevant support.

Hon. Museveni has given us a long-term plan - you know; he is called Museveni. We need to encourage our people to plant trees to act as windbreakers so that the wind does not destroy all our buildings.

I will also request that the honourable member gives us a report from the district disaster committee, which is chaired by the CAO and then we shall act appropriately.

2.49

MR MOSES KABUUSU (FDC, Kyamuswa County, Kalangala): Thank you, Mr Speaker. The night that made yesterday, passengers aboard a cargo transport boat were traveling from Lujabwa Island to Bukakata in Masaka but capsized and only three people survived.

Six people have been identified dead and it is a known custom among us fishermen that when a boat capsizes, on the third day the search for bodies starts.

The prayer I would like to make is that the Uganda Police, this time, helps my people to search for their bodies. They have been leaving it to the people making it hard for us. They would say, “Leaders, you have not helped to look for the bodies and take them for burial.” The Government of Uganda should help in search for these bodies.

I also pray that the Minister of Works and Transport comes up with a plan. My constituency does not have a ship, a ferry, or any Government facility for transport. At least for once –

I have been a Member of Parliament; this is the second time within a span of 10 years in between. It is now 20 years; I have not persuaded the Government to buy a ship or ferry for my people. At least, I should note that after the next election, I should pledge that I will ask Government to buy a ferry. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable colleague, sorry about that tragedy. Let me first request that we observe a minute of silence for the victims.

(The House observed a moment of silence.)

2.52

THE PRIME MINISTER AND LEADER OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS (Ms Robinah Nabbanja): Mr Speaker, I send my sympathies; every life matters. I can see the Minister of Works and Transport around. He does not have the powers to direct, but I have. So, let me direct Uganda Police Marines to go to Kyamuswa and assist the communities in searching for the bodies.

You can come and tell us why you are not putting a ferry – not even a ship – on the waters. The transport minister is here.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: *(Member rose_)* Procedure, honourable colleague?

MR MATOVU: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would like to thank the Prime Minister for the directive that she is about to give *-(Inaudible)-* thank you for your correction.

Mr Speaker, I rise on a procedural matter. This very year, around the 27th of March, the Prime Minister and the minister for transport came to my constituency – and I thank them for that. They commissioned the construction of Nateete-Nakawuka Road. On that same day, I told the minister for works of a similar incident that happened in my constituency a few months back – about a boat that capsized and close to nine people perished.

Wouldn't it be procedurally right for the Prime Minister to make the same directive, reminding the minister for works to send a ferry that he committed to bringing to the people of Busiro South?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. The only directive made by the Prime Minister was for a search for the bodies. I do not know whether I should also tell her to order a search for bodies. She only called the minister to come and explain why they have not put – however, honourable minister, take it from that line.

(Members rose_) Honourable colleagues, please, sit down. The minister in charge is

here. Let him give the information. Minister for transport?

2.55

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR WORKS AND TRANSPORT (TRANSPORT)

(Mr Fred Byamukama): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I also condone with the families that have lost their dear ones. That is an incident that happened yesterday night, around 8.00 p.m., where the boat hit a hard rock and got damaged. By the time they realised it, the boat was already full of water. The only person who had a life jacket was the one who gave us that information.

Rt Hon. Prime Minister, we have already complied with your directive. The marine police, together with staff of the works ministry, are already on site with the locals to ensure that they get these bodies. That side is an island. We already have a ferry there, but it concentrates on the transportation of people.

On the request by the honourable colleague to have a ferry that can cater for these fishermen, we are on for it and we have already engaged you - that was around March – to advise on whether the ferry that we are bringing is the best for these fishermen. We are engaging the finance ministry to give us that budget. Since the Bukungu ferries are almost completed, come next year, we shall be on board. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: We had another colleague – (*Member rose*) – no, I was watching you properly. You stood up on clarification, but he refused. While you were still standing, you changed to procedure before resuming your seat. (*Laughter*) These are the rules. I do not know whether clarification has now turned into procedure. However, let him - Hon. Ethel, is it related to Hon. Matovu's?

2.57

MS BETTY NALUYIMA (NUP, Woman Representative, Wakiso): Yes, it is related. Mr Speaker, being that I am the Shadow Minister of Local Government and I also represent Bussi Islands, yesterday, the chairperson of

Bussi Islands – which is a subcounty full of islands – informed and showed me the pictures. The ferry that was provided to Bussi was commissioned by the works ministry. Yesterday, it was dismantled and ferried away.

Therefore, our inquiry at this time –(*Interjections*)– yes, I even have the video. It was taken away yesterday.

Through you, Mr Speaker, can the works ministry inform us if at the time of taking it or giving it to the members - because for some good months, it had been docked and they were waiting for some technical assistance for the –(*Interjections*)– can I get protection, Mr Speaker?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please, honourable members, let us listen to our honourable colleague.

MS NALUYIMA: As representatives of the people of Bussi Islands, could we know where the ferry went? At the time of handing it over, you called all the local leaders and the people of Bussi were informed that this was the ferry that was going to be aiding all people in commercial matters.

Could we know what has happened and when it is going to be returned?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I can see the Prime Minister is coming.

2.59

THE PRIME MINISTER AND LEADER OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS (Ms Robinah Nabbanja):

Mr Speaker, today, I had a meeting with officials from the Ministry of Works and Transport and that issue came up. They told me that the ferry had a mechanical problem and that they had to go and fix some parts that were lacking.

They wanted to give them a spare ferry for any eventualities, but that spare ferry is currently in Pakwach – because Pakwach got a weed that covered the bridge. After removing that weed from the bridge, they will bring - because some

of the parts are not in the country. They feared that people could easily get into an accident. So, they dismantled it.

They wanted to bring the other one as they repair this – (*Interjections*) - yes, it is new but I think it came with some mechanical problems. That is the answer I can give; I got it today.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Ssemujju, was it related to that?

MR SSEMUJJU: Thank you, Mr Speaker. When we had the fatal accident associated with the owner of the facility, the late Templar - I have forgotten the technical words. The Government has a duty to make water transport safe by, first and foremost – I said I have forgotten the technical word – periodically surveying. I do not know what they do, but they are supposed to go and establish if there are physical changes on the lake or the river itself.

Earlier on, the minister spoke about a rock - the last time that sort of inspection happened was during the colonial days; even the law relating to water transport is a colonial law. The undertaking was made - because at that time they had not provided money to go and do that sort of inspection.

The point I wanted to bring to your attention and the attention of Parliament, Mr Speaker, is that the moment you do not go to find out the shape in which the roots on the water are, it means you will have more boats and more vessels hitting those rocks.

What other people do is to carry out inspections, remove them, or advise people not to use that particular direction. So as the minister says that there is a rock that was hit, let him also tell us if they have found money to go and do that exercise that was last done during colonial days.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable minister?

MR FRED BYAMUKAMA: Mr Speaker, in May this year, we brought out a marine notice to all the people who live along Lake Victoria. In that notice, we also put an attachment showing the no-go zone areas at night. If I am given time tomorrow, I can lay it on the Table. But these are our people who are looking for survival and that is their business.

In that notice, we stated that people who are using the lake should use it from 6.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m., with life jackets. It is detailed and I can lay it tomorrow. But in this case, the locals were aware of it and that attachment – that is one of the areas that we notified our people not to go to at night because at night the visibility for marine officers is restricted.

However, this Parliament passed a loan from the African Development Bank and we have a comprehensive plan under that loan to ensure that we earmark all these obstacles and officially improve how we manage our boats on the lakes - including when you get an accident, do you just make an alarm or there are other advanced systems in addition to what we have so that you can be rescued. Once that loan matures we shall have that as history. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Ssekitooleeko?

3.05

MR ROBERT SSEKITOLEEKO (NUP, Bamunanika County, Luwero): Thank you, Mr Speaker. The matter of national importance I am raising is about Ugandan kids who are at home based on the fact that the schools they attend require them to have National Identification Numbers (NIN) which are based on their parents. And then the pupil or the student is also supposed to be registered with the student's registration numbers. This is becoming a problem with no clear guidance and parents are stuck.

When they go to school, they assume that the Government granting the capitation grant will be based on how students are being registered and that is bringing problems and some kids are at home purposely for that.

My prayers:

1. The Ministry of Education and Sports comes up with clear guidance on how to bail out parents who are crying for school fees and at the same time crying for NINs; and
2. The National Identification Registration Authority (NIRA) should also come up with a clear guideline, which will help schools to save this situation because it is alarming and contradicts academic standards within our areas. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Rt Hon. Prime Minister?

3.07

THE PRIME MINISTER AND LEADER OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS (Ms Robinah Nabbanja): Mr Speaker and honourable members, the Ministry of Education and Sports, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs will be guided depending on the information he gives me. I request that he puts it in writing so that I can conclusively handle that matter – it is not only in your district; it is almost countrywide.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Mapenduzi? A procedural matter by Hon. Oseku?

MR OSEKU: Thank you, Mr Speaker. A while ago, Hon. Ssemujju said that the law we have on water transport is a colonial law and the minister does not seem to have paid attention to that.

However, in 2021, this Parliament passed the Inland Water Transport Act, so, is it procedurally right for us to maintain that on record?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am just asking myself - if I am to get what Hon. Ssemujju meant - is it about updating the law on inland water transport or the marine law specifically? Honourable minister, can you clarify that? Let me not disturb the minister. *(Laughter)* I will cross-check with our technical team for guidance, then I will give a ruling on that.

Hon. Mapenduzi?

3.09

MR MARTIN OJARA (Independent, Bardege-Layibi Division, Gulu City): Thank you. Mr Speaker, you are aware that on 23 September 2024, the Ministry of Works and Transport temporarily closed Karuma Bridge to pave the way for rehabilitation works on the old Karuma bridge. As a result, traffic was diverted to alternative routes including the Rwekunyè-Masindi Port, Apac route where passengers use ferries to cross the Nile.

Mr Speaker, this diversion has created a worrying situation on the ferry services at Masindi Port that requires immediate attention. Before the diversion, only about 10 to 20 vehicles would use the route on a daily basis.

However, at least 400 vehicles are now using that route daily and only about 250 vehicles cross the River Nile while the rest of the vehicles have to wait for a day or days. This is because the two ferries on Masindi Port are small, old and not in good mechanical condition.

The official time for ferry operations is from 6.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. but with this new pressure, the operators work up to 10.00 p.m. and those extra hours are considered voluntary hours.

Mr Speaker, there are already a few instances where the ferries have developed problems in the middle of the water, and you can imagine the risk, panic and pressure that the people face.

I, therefore, pray as follows:

1. The Ministry of Works and Transport takes immediate action to deploy bigger and modern ferries at Masindi Port to match the current traffic demand;
2. The Ministry of Works and Transport should introduce night shifts and motivate the operators by paying them for the extra hours on the job; and
3. The two ferries currently in operation should be improved on and put in good mechanical condition to safeguard the lives of the citizens. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Yes, Minister of Works and Transport.

3.10

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR WORKS AND TRANSPORT (TRANSPORT) (Mr Fred Byamukama): Thank you, Mr Speaker. On Sunday I was in the same place he is talking about. We had one smaller ferry there which we removed and replaced with a bigger one. We went ahead and added another ferry, so now there are two there. And our people operate from 5.00 a.m. to 10.00 p.m.

As I speak, the two ferries which are there, are able to manage the number of vehicles which are crossing from that side. Should there be many vehicles, we have the capacity to add another ferry bigger than that.

Meanwhile, yesterday the President also directed the Prime Minister to add another ferry which was there in the 1960s crossing from the tour road.

However, at Masindi Port, currently, the situation is normal. Vehicles are crossing and by the time we close at 10.00 p.m., we do not leave any vehicle unattended. Maybe what we can look at is for those who come between 10.00 p.m. and 5.00 a.m. We can look into the special arrangement which we can give to them and deploy officers to work between those hours. Thank you very much.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Next item?

BILLS FIRST READING

THE ADMINISTRATION OF PARLIAMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2004

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Richard Lumu?

3.13

MR RICHARD LUMU (DP, Mityana County South, Mityana): Thank you, Mr Speaker. Allow me also to congratulate the Prime Minister. At least this is the first time I

have seen her here happier than ever.

Mr Speaker, pursuant to Rule 128 of the Rules of Procedure, I beg to move that the Bill entitled, “The Administration of Parliament (Amendment) Bill, 2024” be read for the first time.

Mr Speaker, in compliance with Section 76 of the Public Finance Management Act –(*Interjections*) - I think you can hear me clearly. I beg to lay the Certificate of Financial Implications for the Bill.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. The Bill is referred to the Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs and should be processed in line with Rule 129 of our Rules of Procedure.

MR LUMU: I thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF PARLIAMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2024

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you - No, just wait, Hon. Oguzu Lee has the procedural matter.

MR OGUZU: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have perused through the Bill which has been laid here and Rule 117(3) requires that there must be a memorandum that outlines the policies and defects in the existing law that must be signed by the mover of the Bill – Rule 117. When I peruse through this Bill, it is not signed by the mover of the Bill. That means there is a bar to entertaining this Bill at this point.

Secondly, Mr Speaker, Rule 56 provides that a Member wishing to move a Private Member’s Bill that is provided for under our Constitution shall give notice. I gave a notice to amend the Administration of Parliament Act. That notice was received by the Parliament of Uganda on 29 August 2024.

To date, I have not received feedback on whether my rights which are guaranteed by the laws of Uganda can be adhered to by this

Parliament. I see that another private Member has been provided with assistance, a certificate and whatever is needed to bring his Bill. I am now wondering, do the private Member and I have the same privileges in this House or not?

Mr Speaker, Rule 232 provides that any papers that are laid here shall be inspected. Rule 227 also provides for the record of Parliament and under Rule 227(b) that the Clerk shall have custody of all these documents. It would have been good before I impute improper motives on the administrators and the presiding officers that you allow me to inspect if this Member moved or gave notice to the House earlier on to warrant that he should be entitled to opportunities that I am not entitled to.

Therefore, I move as far as this motion is not signed, the objectives are not adhering to the rule I cited earlier. It should not be entertained. Mr Speaker, the issue of adhering to laws in this Parliament is very important. Why do I say that? Section 39 of the Administration of Parliament (Amendment) Act, requires that there should have been an annual report brought to this House by Parliament that is not – *(Member timed out.)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable member, your issues are very clear. Hon. Alioni?

3.18

MR ODRIA ALIONI (NRM, Aringa South County, Yumbe): Thank you, Mr Speaker. As my colleague has stated, the Constitution of Uganda, Article 95 and rules 121 and 122 provide a Member of Parliament the mandate to raise a Private Member's Bill. Mr Speaker, based on those rules and the Constitution of Uganda, I raised a Bill which – *(Interjections)* – notice is coming – for the amendment of the Administration of Parliament Act in relation to the voting of Parliamentary Commissioners.

I gave a notice to the Speaker's office last year on 17th October. Since then up to date, the Speaker has not responded to me. This is a sign of dealing with the matters selectively. We are entitled to be heard. Mr Speaker, what is

so special with this amendment of Hon. Lumu, which was generated in Gulu just within a month, and is now on the Order Paper? Are you fairly ruling this Parliament?

Mr Speaker, I think things are running out of hand, legally. I think the Speaker, Rt Hon. Among, is taking the law into her hands – Mr Speaker, listen to me. Listen. It is my right to call you by any name –

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable colleagues –

MR ALIONI: Mr Speaker –

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just a little bit, Hon. Alioni. Our rules are very clear and I discussed it. I told you the other day that your rules do not allow you to discuss the conduct of the Speaker and all that unless you do it through a substantive motion. Okay? So, I request that we do not personalise issues. Raise your concern and then I guide how we are going to address them. Thank you.

MR ALIONI: I thank you, Mr Speaker. I have raised this matter.

My Bill came on 17 October last year. The person who is trying to amend the Administration of Parliament Act just generated his Bill within a month and it is already on the Order Paper. Is that fair?

I have a second matter. On Tuesday last year – *(Interjection)* – I mean on Tuesday last week, sorry, excuse me. You know my mind is about my motion of last year. On Tuesday last week, you made a ruling here. I believe it was on Hon. Odur's submission. Upon his submission, you made a ruling and it was in relation to our motion that was calling for the impeachment of the Commissioners.

However, our motion has never appeared on the Order Paper and has never been raised by the mover. Has never been seconded on this Floor and has never been debated. So, you made a ruling on a statement by somebody, not on our motion. We are kindly requesting you

to put our motion on the Order Paper and we debate it. We are begging you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable I have heard. Thank you.
There are two things;

One, Hon. Oguzu Lee and Hon. Alioni - indeed, your rights as Members are protected. You have the right to move private Members' Bills. Kindly, let me receive - yes - and then we see how we can put you on the Order Paper. No, I will receive them again - do not mind. I will receive them again, do not get tired. I have a lot of Business which is pending. Then I will ensure it is scheduled on the Order paper.

Number two, in regard to Hon. Lumu's Bill, it was gazetted. We got a certificate of financial implication and it is ready. Now, that is not for me to answer. The reason is that I am not the mover of the Bill. So, the moment it is ready for the first reading, I just do - any Bill that is ready for the first reading does not wait for a day or two. So, how a Member quickly processes- Hon. Niwagaba.

3.25

MR WILFRED NIWAGABA (Independent, Ndorwa County East, Kabale): Thank you, Mr Speaker. Having listened to the issues raised by our two colleague Members, I just wanted to inquire from you as the presiding officer, whether: one, the two Members gave notices in accordance with Rule 56; and two, whether they have already moved the motions to bring their private Members' Bills.

If they have and we have passed the motions, I just wanted to alert the Members that when we were passing the Public Finance Management Act, we included in Section 76, which gives you an automatic certificate of financial implication if the finance minister does not give it to you within 60 days.

So, I would want the Members, if at all they brought the motions and they carried the day and they have not yet got the certificates from the finance minister. Then they should invoke Section 76 where they get a certificate of

financial implication by operation of law.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I just wanted to also clarify on that. They are not yet granted leave. They put in requests for their motions seeking leave to be put on the Order Paper. That is why I said I am going to link up with them and put you on Order Paper so that your motions can be heard.

Hon. Alioni raised several issues. You know, these days, after he has submitted, then it is Hon. Ssekikubo. They are so close, they can even share a white ant - now, just allow me to finish the ruling on what my brother Hon. Alioni raised earlier.

On the earlier ruling that I made here, by reading the Speaker's letter which had already been communicated before an item is put on the Order Paper, we ensure it conforms to the requirements of our Rules. So, the moment that we invoked a rule which my brother, Hon. Jonathan Odur, disagreed with and respectfully made his submission. We found the motion could not qualify to go on the Order Paper.

Now, that is a ruling of the Presiding Officer, but our ruling can be challenged in case one is uncomfortable with it. Instead of continuing to argue about it, and yet I cannot do much about it when we have already made that ruling. Hon. Ssekikubo - Oh, there is no one on the Floor. Point of order. Honourable colleagues please allow me, I might be out of order.

MR OKUPA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. With due respect, for the last month or so, we have seen the same two Members taking time every day after your communication. Some of us also have burning issues to raise but we see the same people, day in, and day out, on the same stuff which you have ruled on.

Is it in order for only two Members to continue raising the same matter when we also have concerns, which affect our country, and our constituencies; I have raised here the matter of the student loan scheme, how unfairly they have been distributed but up to now- and the students are about to report to the universities.

Ours who are disadvantaged are going to miss and none has responded here but I have not behaved like them.

Mr Speaker, do you want us to reach that level? Because we also have the capacity - No one has the monopoly of being unruly. We are all capable of being unruly and we can do it. Is it in order for them to continue behaving the same way and we allow them?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR OKUPA: (*Hon. Alioni rose*) I have been listening to you quietly.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Hon. Okupa. I got you. Now let me just ask you, honourable colleagues - Hon. Alioni, order. Do you enjoy treating each other this way? On a national, prime time, your children are watching, the country is watching, we have a lot of pending business to sort out and we just exchange this way.

I request, honourable colleagues - Hon. Ssekikubo please wait. Honourable colleagues, I urge that you restrain. At the end of the day, they are judging us all. I urge you to restrain yourselves. Let us not put our House into disrepute. I understand your concern, Hon. Okupa. Let me finalise with Hon. Ssekikubo on this.

3.32

MR THEODORE SSEKIKUBO (NRM, Lwemiyaga County, Ssembabulue): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I am greatly and deeply disappointed, but I am not surprised by my colleague with whom we joined this Parliament in 2001. Apparently, whereas we have both become -

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Ssekikubo, let me first guide you. Hon. Okupa stood up on a point of procedure which was addressed to me. And I guided. Let us not start provoking each other again. Just submit your point. You had already come up with your point. Please, go for that.

MR SSEKIKUBO: Mr Speaker, what the colleagues; Hon. Oguzu Lee and Hon. Odria Alioni have raised goes to the root of our Rules of Procedure. As Parliament, we cannot, unfortunately, act outside the rules. Once we are all equal in this House, the duty remains with you, the presiding officers of this House, to guide. What is good for the goose is good for the gander.

It is surprising that we, as Members of Parliament - what do we do? Mr Speaker, the first issue is that we begged for your indulgence; the indulgence of the Chair, to debate matters when they had surfaced up. At that stage, we were seeking your indulgence.

However, when the indulgence was not forthcoming, we went through the rules. And the rules provided us with a way out of this. A third of your Members, here seated - A Member can raise a motion or a Private Member's Bill as an individual, but pity us who go through, and with Members, and were able to have more than a third of Members to support a matter.

This should go to the root of your Chair. How do you treat your Members? Before we know it, some Member, just under a month raises a motion and he is given the privilege to have it. However, a third of the Members of this august House are denied a matter.

Lastly, for me - (*Interjection*)- let me take the information from Hon. Ssasaga.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable, you do not have that much luxury. Please conclude.

MR SSEKIKUBO: He is capping on this, Mr Speaker.

MR SSASAGA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The information I wanted to give the Members is that Members did not only append their signatures on the petition, but Members had to travel long distances. Others even had sick people in their homes. However, for the sake of sanity, for the good of dialogue and discussion, we had to sacrifice whatever it took to come and put our signatures. That is the information I was giving - (*Member timed out.*)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Time out.

MR SSEKIKUBO: Mr Speaker, I am concluding.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, once you donate your time, you donate it and you do not get any other time. Please, do not tell me about rules providing - the moment you decide to donate part of your time –

The problem is one: when someone is talking to you, you do not want to listen to him. When you are talking, you want to be listened to. That is the challenge I usually get. These are the double standards we have been talking about.

MR SSEKIKUBO: Mr Speaker, I believe you derive your powers from the Chair. We, the petitioners, do not say that we are right and that you should rule in our favour. However, we say that whatever we did, the matter should be put on the Order Paper, you rule against it, and it goes on the *Hansard* from the Chair.

If someone like myself sitting somewhere writes a communication – that is why you are here to give your ruling in the Chair. That is the source of your power and mandate. Put it on the Order Paper and even rule against us, but you must conclude the procedure in one way or the other. And we shall rest our case, Mr Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Now, honourable colleague, let me once again, repeat myself. The ruling was read on the Floor, and it is on the *Hansard*. I would like to tell you that this matter is closed and we shall not put it on the Order Paper again.

Honourable colleagues, I have received information from the Minister of Health requesting that we handle these matters early next week and the Deputy Attorney-General who is to speak to item five is handling interviews for the judiciary. Therefore, we are going to handle item six. Next item.

MOTION FOR ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE ON COMMISSIONS, STATUTORY AUTHORITIES AND STATE ENTERPRISES ON THE REPORT OF THE AUDITOR-GENERAL ON THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS OF UGANDA REVENUE AUTHORITY ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE 2023

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Committee Chairperson on Public Accounts (COSASE) –

3.39

THE CHAIRPERSON, COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS (COMMISSIONS, STATUTORY AUTHORITIES, AND STATE ENTERPRISES) (Mr Medard Lubega Sseggon): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker –

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I request the honourable colleagues who are standing to take their seats. This is my last request to honourable colleagues who are standing to take their seats. Thank you. (*Laughter*)

MR LUBEGA SSEGGONA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Before I begin, permit me, in accordance with the rules to lay on Table the minutes of the meetings that gave rise to the four reports that have been placed on the Order Paper. These include URA, Uganda Revenue Authority Account, Uganda Revenue Authority Corporate, Uganda Investment Authority and the National Population Council. I beg to lay.

Mr Speaker, I also beg to lay on Table, the reports in issue. But first, permit me to also join colleagues in congratulating my very own friend, the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister, for winning and receiving the prestigious award.

In addition, I would like to thank her for her humility, which has been demonstrated, especially when she mentioned having represented the Minister of Education and Sports in Japan. Some people might laugh but to me, it is humility that the Prime Minister can represent her Minister. (*Laughter*) With your permission, let me proceed to the report.

Having uploaded the report, indulge me not to go into the conventional chapters but proceed to the core of the report and with your permission, I will not go into the methodology, introduction, documentary view and meetings which were held. The observations made by the committee -

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Point of order -

MR SSEMUJJU: Mr Speaker, Hon. Ssegona is a distinguished lawyer. He knows that a Prime Minister supervises ministers. Just recently, the Minister of Defence and Veteran Affairs invited the Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) as a guest of honour, his junior. He also invited the Prime Minister as just one of the other guests.

The good thing is the Prime Minister was not around. She sent her deputy, Rt. Hon. Nakadama and shoddily invited the CDF to address the gathering.

Is Hon. Ssegona, a distinguished lawyer in order to validate something he knows is illegal? That a junior cannot summon or even salute the supervisor, and he wants it recorded on our Hansard as if- because this Parliament is watched by students, children-

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Ssegona, Are you in order? *(Laughter)*

MR LUBEGA SSEGGONA: Mr Speaker, the other day you received an opinion from the Deputy Attorney-General, and I want to take this opportunity to educate my brother, Hon. Ssemujju, that an opinion is neither right nor wrong, it remains an opinion.

All I said was that I salute the Prime Minister for her humility. I did not go beyond that and it was an opinion. Now, a lawyer will only give an opinion upon instruction.

So, if my brother, Hon. Ssemujju, had asked me for an opinion, which is professional, upon instruction and payment, I would have issued one. Thank you, very much. *(Laughter)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is how you sort friends.

MR LUBEGA SSEGGONA: Mr Speaker, thank you for your guidance, which is wise as ever. We did make observations in relation to the financial statements of the Uganda Revenue Authority collection accounts and these observations are found on pages 8 to 9.

The first is that there is a low tax to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) ratio, namely that the tax revenue to GDP has averaged 11 per cent over a five-year period up to 2023, below the regional average of 18 per cent.

The committee recommended that the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) tax effort over the medium-term to achieve the domestic revenue mobilisation strategy targets or even better, the regional peers.

The second recommendation is that the Government diversifies tax revenue sources to cushion the economy from revenue shortfalls that could result from external shocks.

Mr Speaker, with respect to the performance of Value Added Tax (VAT), the committee recommends enforcement of Electronic Fiscal Receipting and Invoicing Solutions (EFRIS) to all eligible taxpayers to increase tax revenue collections. URA should roll out EFRIS after extensive and comprehensive sensitisation of the taxpayers.

With respect, to tax on gains, profits, fees and licences, the committee recommends an investigation by the Auditor-General into the returns filed by betting companies during the financial year to ascertain the actual collections to be conducted.

With the recovery of companies to profitability, the Government should revisit all companies benefiting from tax waivers to scale down tax exemptions over the medium term to benefit companies.

The government should regulate the rental pricing of properties to improve occupancy

rates and sustain the real estate sector to generate sustainable returns to the economy.

With regard to the performance of the petroleum revenue, that is Non-Tax Revenue (NTR), the committee recommends a reconciliation of NTR collections from petroleum activities before the next audit.

With regard to revenue due to the consolidated fund account, the committee recommends that the Uganda Revenue Authority’s statement on the revenue collections due to the Consolidated Account should be amended to reflect the actual expenditure incurred by the authority during the period.

And that the residual amount of Shs 82.856 billion should be netted off the Consolidated Fund to avoid the overstatement of the amount transferred to the Consolidated Fund.

Mr Speaker, with regard to revenue stock arrears, the committee recommends that URA develops and implements an arrears collection strategy. To collect all outstanding arrears prior to the next audit. All Government entities with tax arrears should be prioritised in the next budget cycle after the adoption of this report.

On the performance of revenue collection, the committee made a thorough financial analysis from pages 15 to 20 and made observations that the entity was non-committal regarding the stage at which reconciliations are done, indicating the stages that vary.

There was no reconciliation with the Accountant-General’s Office between the global Government resources and revenue at the entity level to prevent distortions in reporting.

The Committee also observed that the final adjustment of Shs 62 billion of the total revenue collection declined. The amount that remained after adjustment should not fully meet the budget financing threshold.

We recommend, therefore, that the accounting officer should ensure that reconciliations for the period under review are done to provide an

accurate picture of the global government as well as entity resource status.

Analysis of revenue collections for the last three years

The analysis of revenue collections for the last three years, Mr Speaker, is provided by the committee on pages 20 to 21.

Observations

We make the observation that during the period under review, the authority received unallocated tax revenue worth Shs 2 trillion. The entry of revenue into the URA system was without tax heads, which was attributed to the slow process of onboarding the tax heads. However, there was a global position of NTR as a target for the comprehensive reporting that takes care of the unallocated tax revenue.

We recommend, therefore, that:

- (i) The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development should set realistic and attainable revenue targets for each NTR-collecting agency of the Government to minimise budget distortions; and
- (ii) Going forward, the Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Development should require any NTR- or tax-remitting institution/organisation to go through the URA system.

Domestic taxes

Development of EFRIS user components (soft and hardware)

Mr Speaker, we do observe, on page 24 that:

- (i) The rollout of EFRIS was overdue. Whereas it should have been rolled out at the beginning of the financial year under review, the registration of taxpayers onto the system was envisaged to have ended by June 2024 and the rollout to have begun in July 2024; and
- (ii) The inadequate taxpayer education among the population had resulted in apathy and resistance against the new

VAT tax collection modality. This was not met by serious efforts to deepen taxpayer education through the creation of awareness and sensitisation beyond the major cities of the country, hence low tax compliance.

Recommendation

- (i) The accounting officer should fast-track the completion of the system to ensure the seamless functioning of the EFRIS system and enhance tax administration efficiencies; and
- (ii) The management of URA should invest in taxpayer education to increase tax compliance and improved revenue collection, which was the objective of introducing EFRIS.

Management of tax arrears

Observations

URA had both actual and estimated taxes. This is because tax assessments are triggered by either delay or refusal to conduct personal assessment, where an administrative assessment was conducted.

Without structuring the revenue collection unit, it would be difficult to implement an efficient revenue collection strategy.

Whereas there was some positive shift towards reducing tax arrears, Shs 4 trillion in total arrears and Shs 713 billion of debt arrears outstanding in government commitments remain high.

There was no involvement of the local governments in the URA revenue collection efforts as they were not on-boarded or incorporated into the tax administration to enhance collection efforts necessary for narrowing government arrears.

The committee observed that *–(Interruption)*

MS NALUYIMA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Given that the reports are uploaded, wouldn't it be procedurally right if the committee

chairperson gave us the key highlights of all the reports, the key highlights of the observations and comments such that we can discuss? I thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable committee chairperson, I hope you have taken note.

MR LUBEGA SSEGGONA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have not only taken note, but it is exactly what I am doing *-(Laughter)-* except that one's summary may be something else to somebody else. However, I am only reading the observations and recommendations. I am not doing anything else.

Recommendations

- (i) The accounting officer should ensure realistic and accurate tax assessments are conducted to achieve expeditious revenue collection;
- (ii) The authority should conclude the structuring of the tax collection unit to enhance revenue collection in the country;
- (iii) The tax administration law should be amended to support tax administration efforts and prevent growing arrears; and
- (iv) URA should incorporate the local government's tax administration to enhance the tax collection efforts and narrow the Government arrears.

On tax assessment and payment on the exportation of certain minerals, Mr Speaker, we recommend that the Minister of Energy and Mineral Development should be held accountable for the loss of revenue due to the absence of the regulations.

On irregular exportation of unprocessed minerals, Mr Speaker, we recommend, on page 29, that the accounting officer should adhere to the presidential directive banning the exportation of unprocessed minerals and institute measures to implement the directive.

On the inability to collect taxes on gold exportations, Mr Speaker, the committee recommends, on page 30, that the accounting

officer should keenly follow up this matter with the relevant ministries and agencies until it is resolved.

On outstanding court cases, we recommend, on page 31, thus:

- (i) The accounting officer should improve the mechanisms to ensure accurate self-assessment by taxpayers to reduce the number of disputes, hence improving tax collections;
- (ii) Additionally, the accounting officer of URA should strengthen the dispute resolution mechanisms to ensure accurate self-assessments by the taxpayers and improve tax compliance in order to reduce the number of disputes; and
- (iii) Management should take stock of all tax disputes, reconcile the numbers and make appropriate adjustments in its records.

With regard to the issuance of Third-Party Agency Notices (TPAN), Mr Speaker, the committee recommends, on page 32, as follows:

- (i) The accounting officer should adhere to the Domestic Tax Department (DTD) arrears management guidelines that require tax arrears to be referred to the Debt Collection Unit (DCU) for further management; and
- (ii) URA management should also develop and utilise an electronic TPAN tracking system to fast-track the taxpayer and status of tax due to the authority to improve tax compliance in accordance with the regulations.

On un-validated transit bonds, we recommend, on page 33, that URA Commissioner-General should ensure that the said controls are consistently applied to minimise the risk and likely revenue losses.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, we believe that by improving transparency in petroleum activities, providing an enabling regulatory framework

to aid the collection of revenue from mineral exports, accumulation of tax arrears by the Government, reducing the reliance upon the business community for implementing the domestic revenue mobilisation, and the widening of the tax base, URA will significantly eliminate discrepancies in revenue generation data, and revenue reporting, and improved revenue collection for sustainable economic development.

I beg to move, Mr Speaker, that this Parliament finds pleasure in adopting our recommendations. I thank you and thank the honourable colleagues for listening to me and the members of the committee for the industrious work. I thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Chairperson of the Committee on Commissions, Statutory Authorities, and State Enterprises (COSASE).

Honourable colleagues, earlier on there was an issue of the law raised by Hon. Oseku, which an honourable colleague had said it is colonial and I said I was going to consult the Technical Bench. I have been informed that we have the Inland Water Transport Act, 2021, which provides for, among others, the registration and licensing of vessels, the safety of life and navigation on waters, the prevention of pollution and the protection of the marine environment and marine security. That is comprehensive enough to handle all marine-related issues. So, let the *Hansard* team correct the record properly; the law is not colonial.

Yes, Hon. Odur.

4.02

MR JONATHAN ODUR (UPC, Erute County South, Lira): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I heard Hon. Ssemujju very well. Just like when a road is constructed, for the safety of the drivers, they are marked and road signs are put there. So, what Hon. Ssemujju was saying was that ever since the colonial times – that was the last time our waterways were actually marked, and until now that process has not taken place.

In Lake Victoria, for example, it is possible to put navigational lights so that the captains of the ship can then navigate through; the same thing we were requesting as people from northern Uganda in that crossing at Rwenkunywe so that the ferry can move throughout the night. If you put the navigation lights across the River Nile, that ferry can work 24 hours. That is the record that people know. Not that there is no law, if I heard him correctly.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The issue was not that there is no law, but I remember he also talked of the colonial law. But then, if the navigation was done before we amended - when we are still using the colonial law, then Hon. Ssemujju would be right. Otherwise, the minister has not updated us on whether there is anything that has been done since this law of 2021.

I do not want to open this issue for debate, honourable colleagues because I know issues of water - Hon. Okeyoh, I was looking for you to guide me the other day when we had the fishing community issue.

Honourable colleagues, let us go back to what we were doing. I now propose that we also receive item seven, since it is also on Uganda Revenue Authority, and then we shall debate both of them together. I know one is on public accounts and the other on corporate services but they are closely related. We have only this week as a deadline to finish all these accountability committee reports, so I want us to move as fast. Yes, Hon. Ssemujju?

MR SSEMUJJU: Mr Speaker, I do not know whether that is a ruling or advice because if it is a ruling, then my hands are tied.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, I want us to go to item seven on the Order Paper and we shall debate them together because they are closely related and it can help us save time. Thank you.

MOTION FOR ADOPTION OF THE
REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS ON THE REPORT
OF THE AUDITOR-GENERAL ON THE
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS OF UGANDA
REVENUE AUTHORITY - CORPORATE
SERVICES FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR
ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Chairperson, COSASE.

4.04

THE CHAIRPERSON, COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS (COMMISSIONS, STATUTORY AUTHORITIES AND STATE ENTERPRISES (COSASE) (Mr Medard Lubega Sseggon): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Permit me to adopt the minutes I have already laid on the Table in accordance with the rules and to proceed in the same manner of giving summaries of observations and recommendations. With regard to Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) - Corporate Services, the report is as follows, from the committee.

Mr Speaker, at page - you know I have a colleague who signed where I put the pagination and consistently so. With regard to the over-expenditure on the part of URA, the committee does recommend that since URA's over-expenditure was irregular and the Accounting Officer's explanation could not absolve the entity, the Permanent Secretary and Secretary to the Treasury (PSST) would have been the right person to sanction the Accounting Officer on that person and we recommend so.

However, him being a board member of URA -

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Procedure, Hon. Odur?

MR ODUR: Thank you, Mr Speaker. At the beginning of this sitting, you did, in delivering one of your rulings, indicate that before any document or any matter comes here, you would have perused and you are convinced, and therefore that is the reason why it comes.

On the Order Paper, Mr Speaker, item seven is “Motion for Adoption of the Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the Report of the Auditor-General on the Financial Statements of Uganda Revenue Authority – Corporate Services for the Financial Year Ended 30 June 2023.”

That is the matter we are dealing with. I would like to ask that the reports be flashed there so that you can see the point I am addressing. It is the first time in this Parliament that we are talking about a draft report. It has never been presented to this Parliament in draft form. And there it reads: “DRAFT REPORT OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE ON THE REPORT OF THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL.”

This report has implications, both legal and in this form, if we go ahead with it, the recommendations can be challenged and it cannot succeed. So, I kindly ask you to make a ruling, Mr Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, for being alert, Hon. Jonathan Odur. Yes, and I think, as a person who perused through, I did not mind so much about this title; the heading. That is why, on the Order Paper, we captured it properly. So, honourable chairperson, are you presenting a draft?

MR LUBEGA SSEGGONA: No, no. Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank my brother, Hon. Odur. First, I concede that there is a mistake in including the word “draft.” But I am sure it is cured by signatures. No draft is signed. It is not signed as a draft. I want to correct that it is actually the final report.

The others, actually can only be semantics and form, but in terms of substance I confirm that this is not a draft, it is the actual report. I have conceded. Mr Speaker, to make it simple, we can withdraw it and resubmit it appropriately. Thank you.

MS KAAAYA: Mr Speaker, I feel we could remove the front page since the chairperson is proving it is the right report.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let us not try to improvise. Hon. Oboth?

4.10

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND VETERAN AFFAIRS (Mr Jacob Oboth): Mr Speaker, if we are to find fault in the word “draft”, I think Hon. Ssegona –

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, point of order.

MR SSEMUJJU: Mr Speaker, the colleague holding the Floor does not see faults. That is how he ended up inviting his junior as a guest of honour at his function - (*Laughter*) - and he embarrassed the Deputy Prime Minister.

Can you imagine a Deputy Prime Minister inviting a junior of her minister to come and deliver a speech at his function and his junior praised him as a good worker, a confirmation that he works for the junior?

Mr Speaker, is the person who does not see fault to now invite this Parliament not to see fault where it has identified one? (*Laughter*)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: By the way, I was not scared of whatever Hon. Ssemujju was going to say. I was only scared of how he was looking at you – (*Laughter*) - because he was in a lot of pain, looking at you. Hon. Oboth, what is the issue?

MR OBOOTH: It is very interesting that a person who did not attend a function - in fact, I did not invite him – is now trying to get at me. (*Laughter*)

I had a private function where I invited many people, including people that I work with, but nobody from the Ministry of Defence was a guest of honour. For the record, Hon. Nakadema never invited anybody to speak. She spoke and left, and I was the one who invited the CDF to speak.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable minister, can you give us a full report of your party – (*Laughter*) - and we put it as a substantive item on the Order Paper?

MR OBOTH: The full report is that bringing a report to Parliament about a private function where I was thanking God tells you how empty Hon. Ssemujju is getting. He is devoid of substance - *(Hon. Ssemujju rose_)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, honourable colleagues, I will not allow this to be an exchange between our two colleagues. Hon. OO, I just wanted your view.

MR OBOTH: If I can speak on the subject matter, a draft is cured – *(Interruption)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let me allow a point of order.

MR SSEMUJJU: Mr Speaker, I do not imagine a day when you will have a function and invite a staff of Parliament as a guest of honour, and I pray that it does not happen.

As a Minister of Defence - the ministry is a public office; it is not a private matter. Your conduct affects the whole country. That is why you go through vetting. *(Laughter)* The person who did something “empty” is now saying that I, who is raising it, I am “empty”.

Is he in order – *(Laughter)* - for doing something empty and then accusing me of being empty, when I am just drawing the matter to your attention and that of Parliament?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. House is suspended for five minutes, let us have a short break. *(Laughter)*

(The House was suspended at 4.14 p.m.)

(On resumption at 4.18 p.m., the Deputy Speaker presiding_)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable colleagues, let us stand over item seven and start the debate on item number six. We shall have Hon. Onzima, Hon. Paparu, Hon. Christine, Hon. Denis Oguzu Lee and Hon. Apea.

4.19

MR GODFREY ONZIMA (NRM, Aringa North County, Yumbe): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I start the debate with the observation by the committee and take this chance to thank the chairperson and the committee members for the report.

In his observations, the chairperson said that there is low collection of tax and one of the issues they talked about was the issue of sensitisation.

The element of sensitisation is one of the things I support that the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) should engage in. Many times, you find that they come up with assessments, some of which may be unrealistic and this breeds resistance towards the activities of URA. I support it and uphold that recommendation by the committee.

Another of the factors that lead to low revenue mobilisation and collection is the selective nature that URA uses in the collection of taxes. There is a tactical way of people evading taxes. I do not know whether it has been a recent arrangement; the issue of tax waivers to foreigners.

I have proven that there are many Ugandans who are not paying taxes by conniving with foreigners to start enterprises. The face is either an Indian or a Chinese when the actual project belongs to a Ugandan because we favour these foreigners and we waive off the taxes for them and sometimes give them tax holidays.

This leads to a lot of loss of revenue but sometimes, there are situations where we could raise a lot of revenue but we leave it and go to people who can pay less tax. This brings about a low revenue mobilisation.

Finally, the issue of assessment - There have been rampant complaints from taxpayers that sometimes when you look at the assessment of URA, two people who are selling the same item may be assessed differently.

One is assessed at a cheaper rate and the other one is assessed at a higher rate. This also breeds resistance and at the same time, it affects revenue mobilisation. Therefore, I support the committee on these two areas and encourage that these selective approaches should be stopped. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Hon. Paparu.

4.22

MS LILIAN PAPARU (NRM, Woman Representative, Arua): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have already picked the people to speak. I am stopping there and I will pick others on the next report.

MS PAPARU: Thank you. I also thank the committee for the report. There is an observation of the low involvement of local governments in tax assessment and this is very key.

Mr Speaker, in this House, we have ever reported the conflicts between the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) and the taxpayers. This comes about because of the limited involvement of the local leaders and limited tax education.

The assessments at times are not from an informed point of view because the local leaders or the local governments are not involved. So, when the assessments are not satisfactory to the taxpayer, the payment becomes a problem and this leads to disputes among the taxpayers and URA as observed.

These disputes are so many because of the way URA handles them; they are so strict. That is why we see a rift, especially in West Nile. You see, the URA staff always have problems or conflicts with the business people locally and this has, at times, contributed to loss of life and conflicts which reduces the revenue base.

I uphold the recommendation from the committee that let the local leaders be involved

and tax education be enhanced so that there is a good relationship between URA and the community. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Hon. Christine - Honourable colleagues, I have already picked the people to speak. Hon. Oguzu Lee, Hon. Christine, Hon. Edakasi, Hon. Kateshumbwa and Hon. Ababiku.

4.24

MS CHRISTINE KAAYA (NUP, Woman Representative, Kiboga): Mr Speaker, it has still come out in the report that we have failed to raise revenue from some unprocessed minerals, one of which is gold.

This is an issue that the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources has always been battling together with some other committees here. We should find a way of writing off this issue because we cannot keep complaining about the failure of Uganda to earn from the unprocessed minerals.

Mr Speaker, when you look at areas, especially next to Kiboga, routes that go to the mining areas are in a sorry state and sometimes we are like, "Yes, we are advocating that the roads be constructed" but we are sealed off.

We cannot critically say that this is the money gotten from here and then we advocate for at least a contribution to road maintenance.

It is also worrying us that if the exportation of the unprocessed minerals has been stopped, what is happening to the minerals right now? We hear rumours that there is an institution buying the unprocessed minerals now, the miners are earning but at the same time, no revenues are subscribed to our treasury.

We need the line minister to update us on the status of the unprocessed minerals whose exportation was halted, how the miners are gaining out of this, who is buying it, and whether the national treasury is gaining anything from this. This is an issue that we need to put a halt to because we have raised it on several instances. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Hon. Oguzu Lee -

4.27

MR DENIS OGUZU LEE (FDC, Maracha County, Maracha): Mr Speaker, the issue of low tax revenue should concern all of us because the services we depend on must come from our taxes but there is no way people can pay tax if the principal of tax benefit is not adhered to.

When people pay taxes, they expect that certain services will be delivered to them and that will be a motivation for paying more tax. What we are seeing in this country is that much of the tax revenue gets stolen and therefore, there is low tax morale. People do not want to pay taxes because they know that at the end of the day, the revenue will not come back to them in the form of tax benefits.

Two, we cannot continue to point fingers at the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) when there are policy issues that must be addressed. For example, this country has signed so many double-tax agreements with other nations. These double tax agreements stipulate the applicable tax rates to any beneficiary between these two countries or among these countries. Those who are always doing what we call treaty shopping, knowing where the opportunities are, will take advantage of that and they will do it legally by applying aggressive tax planning. As a result, we will be losing tax.

Therefore, I request you, Mr Speaker, that you direct the Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Development or the Minister of Foreign Affairs to bring to this House all the tax agreements the Government of Uganda has signed with other governments for our review so that we can explore the opportunities and loopholes.

Senegal reviewed their double tax agreements and was able to mobilise over \$300 million, an opportunity we have lost over time.

Mr Speaker, I have also noticed that Uganda continues to lose tax revenue through illicit financial flows. These illicit financial flows are

enabled. For us to deal with that, we must also deal with the gaps in our tax laws that facilitate these illicit financial flows.

Currently, it is said that Africa loses annually over \$88 million and how much of this do you think occurs in this country? We must be able to examine the laws.

Lastly, recently, the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development released the tax expenditure report for the last financial year. It is said that the Government foregoes Shs 2.9 trillion in tax expenditure. That is revenue foregone when exemptions are given out when tax waivers are given to supposed investors without qualifying whether there are benefits coming from those tax expenditures.

For example, we have seen supermarkets and big multinational companies in this country close after exploiting the tax benefits. So, it is high time this Government reviews and qualifies every decision it makes on tax exemptions and tax expenditures so that the benefits of our policies can promote more revenue collections.

We are advocates for improved revenue collections and that requires us to take measures. I would like to invite the other committees of Parliament, especially the Committee on Finance, Planning and Economic Development, to critically examine the report of the Committee on Public Accounts so that we can be able to tap into some of the proposals they are making and resolve these issues at hand. Thank you so much.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Hon. Agnes Apea -

4.31

DR AGNES ATIM (NRM, Woman Representative, Amolatar): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and the Chairperson, Committee on Public Accounts (COSASE), for a very good report.

I would like to refer to page 8 which highlights the tax-to-GDP ratio at 11 per cent compared to 18 per cent of the regional target.

Mr Speaker, I would like to applaud the URA for the efforts they have made. However, if you look at the domestic revenue mobilisation strategy from 2020 to 2026, their target was 16 to 18 per cent and three years down the road, they are still at 11 per cent. That should worry the country and us, Members, who appropriate these monies, that we are nowhere near the target that we set.

Therefore, for us to start talking about revenue mobilisation, we have got to look at some of the incentives that do exist. I would like to also interest our colleagues that most of these incentives that we normally refer to international businesses or investors are actually available for our local investors. Unfortunately, they do not know about these incentives.

My colleagues have talked about more effort that needs to be put into raising awareness of our local investors and businesses out there that these incentives do exist. The other aspect is that much as we expect so much from URA, there is so little that they can do unless we invest in URA itself. You cannot expect to milk so much when you have actually not fed the cow.

As Parliament, we need to interest ourselves; what is it that we need to invest in URA? Is it digitisation? Is it increasing our tax base? Do we have to invest more maybe in the productive sectors such that when we are talking about their low performance on this tax-to-GDP ratio, we are actually sure that we have put money where it is supposed to generate the revenue? In most cases, we only want to look at the revenue, but we fail to look at where this revenue should be coming from. Thank you very much.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. *(Members rose.)* Please, honourable colleagues, on such a debate - That point of procedure is what disturbs me. We have gone beyond it. When I am having a debate, I want to concentrate. We are proceeding very well. Hon. Edakasi –

4.34

MR ALFRED EDAKASI (NRM, Kaberamaido County, Kaberamaido):

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I probably want to start from the point of the exemptions. Why shouldn't we periodically evaluate these exemptions? I think the report highlights that these exemptions cheat us. Some of these companies stay here for 10 years, but when they are applying, they take advantage of the Government policy.

If you see what they do between the first year up to the 10th year, you see that there are gaps. I think it would be important to periodically evaluate and assess these particular companies that we are giving exemptions.

Relatedly are our own local investors. You find that Government is very slow in paying our local investors who give a lot when they supply to Government in the form of works that they do or in the products that they produce. You find a company has supplied Government for one year and they have not been paid. That way, as Government, we have both lost the tax, because if we had paid them the arrears, they would pay the tax. We have lost the tax but also, we have delayed them. I think that would be important.

The other is the idea of diversification. There are few taxpayers in this country. The entities that are contributing are few. If you look around, if you ask people who are in business, they tell you that they are tired of paying taxes. At some point, I think this year, the Speaker in this House actually suggested that we needed a robust discussion on revenue.

The way we are paying for our budgets, if you look backward, we are not doing well. We have not confronted the issue of revenue mobilisation adequately. The Budget processes are so fast that we do not deal with ways in which we should raise revenue. Unless we stop and evaluate that, and assess our own ability to contribute, our ability to sustain our budgets will remain low.

I agree with the committee that we need to think about how Ugandans can contribute to their revenue. Apart from a few businesses, we are losing businesses. If you go downtown, you see people open, they rent, three or six months down the road, that business has closed. When you go back and look at the shops, you realise that this shop closed, and mostly it is related to tax. I think the committee is spot on to say we need to diversify.

Finally, Mr Speaker, even our low-hanging fruits that URA should use - for instance, our systems are very slow. You keep hearing us talking about system failure. The system is not working. Even when a taxpayer wants to pay, it is difficult for a taxpayer to pay. Up to now, to acquire a TIN, you need a third party. If you go upcountry, these digital systems are not serving even those who want to pay.

I think we need to make sure that the digital platforms that we use are user-friendly. Putting a container in downtown Kampala has helped to educate on Electronic Fiscal Receipting and Invoice Solution (EFRIS) and create not only awareness but also bring more people towards using that platform. Therefore, I agree with the committee, thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable, I would like to make it very clear that we have given ample time to the resource mobilisation component but the problem is that we only look at the Tax Bills. I have never heard of any other proposal beyond that.

Indeed, we have to look much deeper into our revenue mobilisation strategy but when we are discussing it here, it is important that we finish the Tax Bills. Let us look at the proposals that we have rejected, we cost them and then pass a budget minus those proposals because sometimes, we reject some tax proposals, which would have generated about Shs 200, 100, or 50 billion but then continue and pass the whole figure yet we will have rejected the source of financing. How will you finance it? That is where we shall put a lot of emphasis.

Mr Chairperson, the honourable colleague has alerted me on some of these errors and I will ask the *Hansard* to look into them. For example, on page 24, recommendation (ii) says “management of URA should invest in voter education.”

I know that we love voters and our voters are taxpayers but the content would be different. Hon. Kateshumbwa and lastly Hon. Ababiku - I picked the colleagues to speak when we were opening the debate.

4.40

MR DICKSON KATESHUMBWA (NRM, Sheema Municipality, Sheema): Thank you, Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the chairperson for the report. I have a few observations to add.

The first one is the issue of tax arrears. The chairperson has informed us that there are many arrears, some of which arise out of Government commitments but I expected a very strong recommendation because part of the arrears is as a result of Government arrears; money that is owed to businesses that have supplied the Government. If you have done business with the Government and they have not paid you for two years but you have issued an invoice for Value Added Tax (VAT), it becomes due and you have to pay to the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA).

What do we do? Because people are borrowing money to do business and pay taxes but they are not paid. We need a very strong recommendation to the Government with respect to arrears because it will rejuvenate our economy. If people are paid, that money will generate more money.

Secondly, my colleague talked about the system. The current URA system is 16 years old; since 2008 and it can no longer hold the tax population for which it was intended. For example, at the time the system was bought, URA was not collecting Non-Tax Revenue (NTR) on behalf of many other agencies. They have been added on, including University fees so the government needs to invest in URA to

make sure that they have the latest technology that can be able to assist in revenue collection.

Some of the arrears you are talking about could be system assessments that are not yet verified. We need a commitment from the Government to support URA in upgrading the system so that we have a system that can serve the current population and current needs.

On the issue of NTR, when URA took over the collection of NTR, the collections doubled. If there is any other agency that is collecting fees or other forms of taxes, we need to quickly transfer that responsibility to URA, including expanding the local government revenue collections to integrate it with URA so that they can be able to collect.

Finally, Mr Speaker, you have talked about amendments. We need to amend the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA). We start discussing the Budget Framework Paper before the end of the first half of the financial year but we are left with very little time to consider Tax Bills and that stampede makes us commit that mistake that you have talked about.

We need to synchronise; if we are discussing the budget supply side, we must simultaneously look at the income side so that we make proposals, which can boost the economy to help us generate revenue in future. If we scrap down some of the measures, we do not find ourselves in a situation where expectations exceed the demand. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Ababiku?

4.44

MS JESCA ABABIKU (NRM, Woman Representative, Adjumani): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I support the recommendations of the committee. However, as people are talking about financing URA to help us collect a fairly adequate amount, I am concerned about those who are paying taxes.

Small as Adjumani is, the businesses that I knew when I was growing up have collapsed. Many have died as a result of pressure put on them in the course of paying taxes.

Therefore, I am of the view that as we collect monies, let us also do an assessment by listening to those who are paying taxes and make use of their views because we have multiple taxes from one point to the other.

We have narrowed the base of taxation because the number of people who are paying taxes has reduced. Can we look at increasing the number of people who are paying taxes without killing their businesses?

Two, sensitisation is very key because not everybody who is doing business and paying taxes is educated. We expect them to perfectly manage the systems and do remittances but this makes them default at times.

I have personally taken people to URA, the URA staff are hospitable and attend to their customers but how many business people will get help from individuals who are ready to take them to the headquarters? I therefore pray that they continue with their outreach programmes where they can educate these people on what to do when doing their business.

On tax waivers, there is a lot of outcry about being selective; with few people benefiting from the waivers. I routinely pray that the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development brings reports with clear justification on who is to be exempted and why so that we can be able to disseminate it. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable, the rules are clear. Please, the chairperson is not on the Floor. Colleagues, I have listened to all your submissions and what you raised in the debate are issues to do with the sectoral committee and not issues of accountability. Therefore, let the sectoral committee follow up on these issues because I have not heard any questions on accountability.

I put the question that the report of the Public Accounts Committee on Commissions, Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises (PAC COSASE) on the report of the Auditor-General on the financial statements of the

Uganda Revenue Authority – Revenue Account for the year ended 30th June 2023 be adopted.

(Question put and agreed to.)

Report adopted.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Clerk extract the report and ensure that it reaches the minister to bring a treasury memorandum. Next item.

MOTION FOR ADOPTION OF THE
REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS (COMMISSIONS,
STATUTORY AUTHORITIES, AND STATE
ENTERPRISES) ON THE REPORT OF
THE AUDITOR-GENERAL ON THE
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS OF UGANDA
WILDLIFE AUTHORITY FOR THE
FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE
2023

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Committee chairperson, you have 10 minutes.

4.49

THE CHAIRPERSON, COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS (COMMISSIONS, STATUTORY AUTHORITIES AND STATE ENTERPRISES) (Mr Medard Sseggon): Thank you, Mr Speaker – *(Interruption)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Procedure, Hon. Aisha?

MS AISHA KABANDA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. As a matter of procedure, may I know whether we have quorum that will facilitate us to effectively discuss those reports and pass them.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, honourable member. For these matters, we have quorum. Go on, committee chairperson – Honourable colleagues, let me first tell you this. This week, for any report of accountability, which will not be handled by Thursday, we are adopting all of them. We are already behind schedule, as per the requirement of the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA). Even now, I am trying to accommodate so that, at least, we can pick views.

However, all of them will be adopted so that a treasury memorandum can be processed because it is an action-taken report on the recommendations of the Auditor-General. I cannot afford to waste any more time on this. Committee chairperson?

MR SSEGGONA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have already laid on the Table the minutes, in accordance with the rules. This is a report of the committee with respect to the accounts of Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) for the financial year ended 30 June, 2023.

Mr Speaker, we have raised a number of observations and attendant recommendations. With regard to the observations, they start on page 7 of our report. We recommend, with respect to the unauthorised excess expenditure, on page 8, that the accounting officer be cautioned against flouting the law on the authority's spending patterns.

With regard to the non-provision of information on gorilla and chimpanzee booking and data in reservation office, the committee made observations on pages 9 to 10. It recommended that Uganda Police Force should expedite the ongoing investigations to facilitate appropriate action to be taken against whoever is found culpable. The background to this is that there is an ongoing forensic investigation in the affairs of UWA, as well as a police investigation to unearth culpability.

With regard to unaccounted-for funds, the committee makes observations on page 11 and recommends that UWA should strengthen its internal controls to prevent financial loss. The committee also recommends that the unverified accountability should form part and subject of the ongoing forensic investigation or audit.

On implementation of the approved budgets, we did a thorough analysis of the figures on pages 12 to 13. We made observations on the performance of internally generated revenue on pages 13 to 14 and make recommendations on page 15 to the effect that:

- (i) The Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, in consultation

- with the authority, should always endeavour to set realistic Non-Tax Revenue (NTR) targets;
- (ii) With realistic NTR targets in place, the Government should stop extending budget support to the authority and encourage it to reach a level of self-sustenance. Incrementally, the projection should be to enable the authority to provide financial contributions to the Consolidated Fund, just like other sectors;
 - (iii) The two laws be amended to bring them in harmony and achieve the desired goal of bringing all Government entities within the purview of the Public Finance Management Act Framework; and
 - (iv) The authority should be granted a Vote status to increase its transparency.

With regard to performance of Government warrants, we make an analysis and observations on pages 15 to 16.

With regard to utilisation of receipts, our observations are on pages 16 to 17. We make recommendations as follows:

- (i) UWA should comply with Section 67(3) of the Uganda Wildlife Act, which requires that an entity spends within the limit of its approved budget and/or through a supplementary request; and
- (ii) The accounting officer should always ensure that UWA meets all the tax obligations as required by law to avoid future penalties.

On implementation of outputs, we make observations on page 18 and the recommendation on the same page that the committee reiterates the Auditor-General's recommendation to the effect that the accounting officer should ensure that effort is always made to identify and address bottlenecks to the implementation of the planned outputs.

On validation of employees and the entity's main payroll, we make observations on page 20 and recommend that the query be dropped, it having been addressed.

On inconsistencies in employee details, we make observations on page 20 and recommend on page 21, that the accounting officer should periodically update the employee records and payroll to avoid inconsistencies.

On utilisation of the wage budget, we make our observations on pages 21 to 22 and recommend that:

- (i) The accounting officer should always adopt prudent budgeting practices by using the positions in-post in the approved recruitment plan as a basis for budgeting, as guided by the Ministry of Public Service; and
- (ii) UWA should institute mechanisms of addressing all recruitment bottlenecks to achieve optimal wage budget utilisation.

On review of the entity's staff establishment, we make observations on pages 22 to 23 and recommend that UWA should:

- (i) Improve on its staff attraction and retention policy in order to address the challenges of staffing gaps; and
- (ii) Expedite the recruitment processes following the Government's clearance of its rationalisation status.

On delayed re-evaluation of the entity's assets, we make observations on page 24 and recommend that the re-evaluation should be done immediately to ascertain the actual value of the authority's assets.

On accumulation of payables, we make an analysis and observe, on page 25, and recommend that:

- (i) UWA management should always make prompt payments to clear the outstanding payables as per UWA's Financial Procedures Manual, 2016; and
- (ii) Accountability for the accumulated payables be included in areas for verification under the ongoing forensic audit.

On overdue receivables, the committee makes observations on page 26 and recommends that:

- (i) UWA management should develop a debt recovery policy concerning concessions, within six months from the date of adoption of this report;
- (ii) The entity should strengthen their debt collection efforts to recover outstanding concessions and receivables; and
- (iii) UWA should terminate agreements or contracts with non-compliant concessionaires.

Delayed disbursement and accountability of revenue share to local governments

Mr Speaker, I make observations on pages 27 to 28 and make the following recommendations on page 28:

- (i) The Uganda Wildlife Authority(UWA) should periodically sensitise and support the beneficiary communities in developing proposals in line with the set criteria to benefit from the grant and continue enforcing accountability in accordance with the law; and
- (ii) That accounting officers of local governments should submit their accountabilities in a timely manner to facilitate the smooth transfer and utilisation of the shared revenue.

With regard to the failure to integrate other UWA systems into the main accounting system, which we identified to be a source of fraud, we make observations and recommendations on page 30 as follows:

- (i) UWA management expedites integration and rollout of the systems to all protected areas; and
- (ii) The Board and management should review the Authority's ICT Strategic Plan and prioritise the information systems.

Delayed completion of the reservation, booking, payment, and park access systems

Mr Speaker, on this we make observations on page 31 and recommend as follows:

- i) The UWA Contracts Committee should ensure that all contracts are executed within the specified time frame;
- ii) UWA should expeditiously install infrastructure that adequately supports the implementation of the reservation, booking, payment, and park access systems; and
- iii) The MFI Document Solution should be blacklisted from doing any business with any Government establishment for at least 10 years from the date of adoption of this report.

On the management of concessions, Mr Speaker and honourable members, outstanding concession receivables, we make observations on pages 32 to 33 and recommend as follows:

- (i) The UWA management expedites the recovery of outstanding receivables; and
- (ii) UWA develops a comprehensive framework or policy on receivables management.

On underdeveloped concession sites in the protected areas, we observe on page 33 and recommend on page 34, that:

- (i) UWA should review existing concession agreements in view of its implementation;
- (ii) Concessionaires should be given a time limit to work in phases and UWA reports to Parliament on the performance of the concessions every six months from the date of adoption of this report; and
- (iii) Failure by the concessionaires to implement the concessions by the end of the Financial Year 2023/2024, should have their contracts revoked and advertised.

On the management of confiscated items from the endangered species, Mr Speaker and honourable colleagues - this is a very dicey and sensitive matter - we make our observations on page 35 and make recommendations on the same page as follows:

- (i) UWA should strengthen measures to mitigate poaching practices and the endangered species; and

- (ii) We concur with the Auditor-General, that UWA should engage with relevant stakeholders to address the matter.

Mr Speaker, we are cognisant of our international obligations and the sensitivity of this matter, and somebody reading the entire report will see where we are coming from in arriving at the structuring of this recommendation.

With regard to the review of the UWA's litigation portfolio, we make three observations on page 36, and our recommendations are:

- i) UWA should conduct a thorough risk assessment on its litigation portfolio to guide its decision and pursuit of justice; and
- ii) All agencies of Government that are susceptible to high litigation incidences should always compile case status reports and prosecution reports to inform future engagements in court processes.

On unimplemented procurements on page 36, we make our observations on page 37 and recommend as follows:

- (i) That the accounting officer should adhere to the procurement laws, plans, and timelines during the procurement;
- (ii) Further investigations be undertaken to confirm a possible mischarge and or diversion of funds by the entity. Mr Speaker, it is part of the ongoing forensic investigation; and
- (iii) The accounting officer should prioritise addressing procurement bottlenecks, such as the recruitment of the requisite number of procurement officers and conducting due diligence on the capacity and efficiency of contractors.

Other matters that came to the attention of the committee and were found to be important included the following: on page 37, we talk about the failure to conduct due diligence on Micro-Finance Institutions (MFI) Document Solutions as a software developer leading to the loss of public funds.

Mr Speaker, the committee observed that the Legal Department of UWA overlooked and neither advised management nor the Board to ensure that due diligence as an integral part of legality was observed.

The failure of the UWA legal department and the Directorate of Tourism to have a due diligence report as part of, ultimately led to the loss of taxpayers' money amounting to Shs 180 million, including arbitration costs.

The committee faults the two departments that were represented on the UWA Contracts Committee for failing to provide technical guidance to the committee to consider due diligence as an integral part of the contract process leading to the procurement of a company that specialises in hardware to provide software development and implementation. We recommend, therefore as follows:

- (i) That both the Director of Legal Services and the Director of Tourism be held personally liable for Shs 180 million loss caused by their negligence in providing the technical guidance in the procurement of MFI Solutions as a software development company; and
- (ii) That due diligence is a fundamental check that UWA should take seriously during the selection of service providers to avoid implementation disruptions and loss of public funds.

4.2 Procurement of the Business Accounting Central System (Shs 180 million)

Our observation is captured on page 40, and we recommend as follows:

- i) Management should deploy technical tight financial systems and conduct periodic reviews, updates, and upgrades to ensure that they are free from manipulation and mutilation;
- ii) UWA should procure only user-friendly systems, that are time-tested and efficient, to avoid delays in processing services; and

iii) UWA should embed the Annual Operating Plan for systems in a single-cost computation to avoid recurring payments that make the acquisition, operation, and management of the system costly.

4.3 Award of contract to Non-VAT registered company

Under this, we made the observation on page 41 and recommend as follows:

- (i) UWA should recover Shs 64,396,351 and remit the same to the Uganda Revenue Authority as VAT payable; and
- (ii) That UWA and all agencies of Government involved in procurements should observe due diligence in their contractual obligations and transactions before engaging suppliers to avoid retrospective recovery of funds from stakeholders.

4.4 Repairs of motor vehicles and equipment (Shs 300 million) and wheel loaders (Shs 380 million)

The committee makes observations on pages 41 to 42 and recommends that the matter be referred for the forensic audit, which is ongoing.

4.5 Procurement of the Second-Hand Scania at Kasenyi

The committee makes observations on page 42 and recommends that UWA should uphold the procurement standard of new and long-lasting equipment. This was after finding out that the vehicle procured was not the old model as complained by the whistle-blower.

4.6 Procurement of a Flatbed self-loader vehicle

We make observations on page 43 and recommend that UWA should follow the procurement procedures in the award of its contracts for the supply of goods and services; and two, that UWA should also consider

awarding contracts to companies registered and operating in Uganda.

Procurement of firefighting equipment at Shs 1.2 billion

The committee observes that the delay by UWA to clear payment for the goods and services provided may lead to interest payable and affect the cost of supplies in the medium time.

We recommend, therefore, that UWA should always clear its payment for goods and services promptly to avoid any further expenditures arising from interest or related charges on the supplies procured.

Payment of over Shs 300 million for water connection to Lake Mburo National Parks

On this we make observations and recommendations on pages 44 to 45 that management of evasive species in the National Parks and Conservation area – (*Interjections*) - no, just a minute, pardon me, Mr Speaker - we recommend that the query be dropped because it was satisfactorily explained.

On the management of invasive species in the national parks and conservation areas, we make our observations and recommend that this query still be dropped, having been satisfactorily explained.

On the questionable utilisation of the donations of \$100,000 to Game Rangers, the committee recommends that the ongoing forensic audit, which is being conducted establishes the rightful beneficiaries of the donation and therefore, the matter be handled in that particular audit.

On the poor handling of park access fees collected through mobile/ Airtel money, we made observations that the particular matter is under forensic investigation, which was directed by the Speaker of Parliament, and we recommend that an expeditious investigation be carried out and concluded.

In conclusion, therefore, we believe that by strengthening the internal controls and

deployment of adequate and watertight integrated reservations, booking and financial management systems, UWA can ably avert a repeat of the similar fraud in the future.

With that, permit me to move that the report of the committee be adopted. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Chairperson. The debate begins now. Hon. Bish, Hon. Okia, Hon. Kasolo, Hon. Balmoyi, honourable for workers - no, these are not issues of the Leader of the Opposition, these are for reports.

5.11

MR ROLAND NDYOMUGYENYI (Independent, Rukiga County, Rukiga): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would like to thank the committee for the report although, I have a few matters to raise here because some of the recommendations, which have been attached to the observations may be very weak.

I will give an example. The committee finds that there is unauthorised expenditure by the authority. An unauthorised expenditure would generally mean that there is fraud because someone spends without being authorised.

So, if an entity like the Uganda Wildlife Authority does not have the authorisation mandate or some staff spend without being authorised, I would expect the committee to recommend recovery of some of those monies, which have been spent without authorisation.

In addition to that, the committee seems to have given up on its work and everything they are saying "This should be referred to the forensic audit that is taking place."

As a committee, I thought they would have their own position on each of the matters that the Auditor-General has raised, and where they think the forensic audit should be conducted, they should recommend so. However, when the committee says this and that are being handled by the forensic audit, as a Parliament, we will have had a raw deal on this matter.

Lastly, the issue of the frauds in the permits was all over the media and everyone knows what is happening in Uganda Wildlife Authority courtesy of the media.

There is widespread information about this matter and although the committee has said that forensic audit is being conducted, there is need for expedition because issues involving fraud and misappropriation of funds require urgent attention.

But most importantly, it is very key - and I support the committee, on the issue of revenue correction being put under the Consolidated Fund Account, because the entities, which are collecting money and spending at source; there is a lot of misappropriation happening, and therefore, that matter - maybe one of the Members of Parliament should bring a Bill to ensure that the entities that are collecting money and spending at source are abolished. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Hon. Okia – maximum is three minutes for each of you.

5.14

MS ANIKU JOANNE OKIA (NRM, Woman Representative, Madi-Okollo): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would like to thank the committee for the report. Under the observation on utilisation of UWA receipts, the report indicates that UWA spent over Shs 4.7 billion in excess of their budget and the reason that is given is that it is because there was an outstanding amount on VAT that UWA wanted to pay. However, it also indicated that there was an under-declaration of payee that was discovered and also a Shs 720 million amount of under declaration of income tax.

I do not know how this income tax is imposed on UWA but for those of us who use the northern route to West Nile, even when Karuma Bridge was opened - because the road was so bad a lot of us opted to use the route through the park under UWA.

I have been paying the amount just to go through UWA to save my back. However, the report highlights that many businesses are struggling with - if a Government agency like UWA is failing to pay their payee, what about the businesses out there?

If a Government agency like UWA is under declaring incomes, it points to the report that we have just finished on Uganda Revenue Authority; the same businesses are being taxed and pressure is put on those businesses, therefore, there is an issue with the way they are paying their payee and the tax.

Therefore, I thought that this is an important point. If the Government itself is failing to pay payee for its workers, what about the business people out there? Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Hon. Koryang and then Hon. Ssolo

5.16

MR BATOOM BEN KORYANG (NRM, Dodoth West County, Karenga): Thank you, Mr Speaker. Let me also thank the committee for this good report.

I would like to address my concern to the issue of the conflict in the guidelines on the requirement for the local governments to submit proposals and thereafter account to Uganda Wildlife Authority as a requirement for disbursement of the next funds, and yet, this is delaying the process of disbursement of funds for revenue sharing.

I come from a local government that hosts Kidepo National Game Park, and the committee has clearly observed that there is delayed disbursement. There is a project that has stayed for two or three years without being implemented and this is owing to the fact that there is a conflict between the guidelines that UWA submits to the local government and the contracts committee, that this project should go through the community procurement process, yet the law on procurement requires that the district contracts committee should be the ones that award contracts in the local government.

So, somehow, when the committee goes down to look at the observations, they state clearly that the requirement for the local governments to account to Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) is in contravention of the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), but they become shy in their recommendations to state clearly what recommendation should be put forward to cure that inconsistency.

I expected that the committee probably would mention and strengthen the point that going forward, the local governments should use the law that is provided instead of looking at the guidelines that UWA – *(Member timed out.)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Well, are those three minutes? Honourable, conclude.

MR BAATOM: Thank you. I wanted to raise a second issue.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, if you said – let us go to Hon. Ssolo.

MR BAATOM: The staffing goes in relation to the problem of animals -

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, I had said that you conclude, so let us go to Hon. Ssolo if it is another issue.

5.19

MR GEOFFREY KAYEMBA-SSOLO (NUP, Bukomansimbi South County, Bukomansimbi): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for giving me this opportunity. I thank the committee for the wonderful report presented.

Mr Speaker, we have a problem with domestic revenue. In countries like Kenya - when tourists come to Uganda, they spend very few days and then go to Kenya and Tanzania. That at times is brought by the poor services they get in the game parks and wherever.

When you are entering, you are not allowed to go with eats or consumable products. You leave them out but when you reach inside, the services are wanting. That makes us lose a lot of domestic revenue that would have helped this government.

Therefore, UWA should make sure that we do not lose any money to other countries like Kenya and Tanzania and also look at a way of subsidising the price for the hotels - hotels in Uganda are very expensive compared to those in Kenya and Tanzania. Thank you very much.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Yes, Hon. Byakatonda.

5.20

DR ABDULHU BYAKATONDA (Independent, Workers Representative):

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank the committee for the watertight report. Being that I am a member of the Committee on Tourism, Trade and Industry, I think the issues are representative of the situation.

Mr Speaker, tourism is one of the four key activities that the country is settling for - after industrialisation, agro-processing, digitalisation, ICT, and then tourism. And we are envisaging that we should move from \$50 million to \$500 million. But you find that UWA is one of the underfunded entities. So, I think we need to style up because if we are saying that we want to move from this amount to the other, we should actually look at these core areas.

But then, relatedly, Parliament came up with a law on negotiation among the workers called the Public Service (Negotiating, Consultative and Dispute Settlement) Machinery Act, 2008. However, we find that the empowerment of workers is wanting in most respects. Mr Speaker, we need to come up with consultative committees, including in the local governments and these agencies. It is not actually there. So, when they talk of retention of staff being a challenge, it is very true, because we have not exploited these laws.

This arises out of 40(3) of the Constitution which talks about collective bargaining yet when you go to institutions, you find that there is no collective bargaining. We do not talk about policy issues. We are not talking about rewards. Human resources development policies are wanting. Mr Speaker, how I wish

we could ensure that we look at these areas. This will help us grow the agencies and the economy at large. I thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Hon. Angura, followed by Hon. Sekyanzi.

5.22

MR FREDRICK ANGURA (NRM, Tororo South County, Tororo): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I join colleagues to thank the committee chairperson and members for a good report. I want to address myself to NTR.

Mr Speaker, NTR collection, now in many entities, is a preserve of the Uganda Revenue Authority. How I wish the committee had strongly recommended that at the gates of the parks and other areas of UWA, we put up booths or collection points like it has happened in the universities and hospitals to boost NTR collection.

NTR that is collected and spent at the source is giving us a leakage, as highlighted by Hon. Kateshumbwa in the first report that we discussed. When URA took over, the amounts doubled, so that should be considered because it may help us.

Secondly, on the implementation of outputs, Mr Speaker, it is only through the outputs that you can feel service delivery. Now when the entity does not deliver on the implementation of some of the outputs, it means it falls short yet resources are warranted and even made available for some of those outputs that are supposed to be implemented.

Therefore, in that case, I would have expected the committee to strongly recommend that entities that cannot absorb all the funds in relation to the outputs that are expected, have their budgets scaled down because they are depriving other entities of money that would have been put to better use, considering that we have budget cuts that are at times coming across because of the scarcity of resources.

Mr Speaker, at the airport, which is one of our main entry points for tourists, many times when we move out at – *(Member timed out.)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Nyanzi -

5.23

MR PATRICK BINGI (NRM, Butemba County, Kyankwanzi): Thank you, Mr Speaker. My attention is drawn to the utilisation of the funds and I will very quickly also –

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let me make it very easy. Honourable colleagues, whenever we come here, you waste my two hours in arguments – listen yet I come with a very clear agenda and business to conduct. Please, when I go on such issues, allow me to proceed without interruption. Sorry, Hon. Nyanzi -

MR BINGI: Mr Speaker, I thank the committee for the report, but the issue I want to raise is to do with the unlawful utilisation of the funds. I noticed that the committee was a little lenient. Hon. “Bish” has talked about it, but I want to draw the attention of the honourable members to, for example, page 11, where we have Shs 462 million unaccounted for.

Mr Speaker, this may look like small money, but this is big because outside you find Ugandans languishing in jails over small issues like goats, chicken, et cetera. So, this is very important. Much as this amount is not accounted for, the committee said that it should be part of the audit. I am also concerned that some audit reports are never followed to conclusions, honourable members. It is dangerous because a report may come out and no action is taken.

I would implore the committee perhaps to add that where culpability is established, appropriate action is taken, but not just saying that this should form part of the audit.

Mr Speaker, on the issue where the committee established that there is poor handling of park access fees and the \$100,000 offer, the committee is still lenient when it says that let this be part of the audit. I am more concerned with the outcome and action taken after the audit report than mere write-ups. I thank you, Mr Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Hon. Goli, followed by Hon. Kisembo.

5.26

MR GOLI OGWAL (NRM, Dokolo North County, Dokolo): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am impressed with the committee’s pinpointing of the issue related to concessions. What I would request the committee to consider is if these concessions - because concessions may be used for speculation, but more importantly concessions may be used to deny others who would want to invest in profitable areas. So, we should make sure that the concessions, which are there are utilised. If they are not utilised, then give the opportunity to other people to invest so that we can reap from tourism. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Hon. Noeline Kisembo, Hon. Maximus, Hon. Osoru and Hon. Atima –

5.27

MS NOELINE KISEMBO (NRM, Woman Representative, Kibaale): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity. I thank the committee chairperson and Members, for the comprehensive report. My attention has been drawn to gorilla and chimpanzee tracking where the correctness of the revenue earned from this valuable resource cannot be confirmed and they suspected fraud thereto.

I support the strong recommendation of the committee but I want to add that the ongoing investigation should be expeditiously handled. Those found culpable should be brought to book.

I also want to add that UWA and the Uganda Revenue Authority need to seriously tighten the monitoring system for our revenue collection because we know that tourism is a very important resource and source of revenue for our country.

Further, I want to add that the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities needs to up the game as far as marketing of this valuable resource is concerned. As my other colleagues

have alluded to, in the region, Uganda has a higher population of gorillas and chimpanzees, but we do not get the corresponding revenue compared to what other states in the region get.

There are issues of infrastructure that are not handled properly and the marketing bit of it. So, I thank the committee, for the report and I think the ministry needs to do a little more to improve tracking of the revenue from this sector. I thank you, Mr Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Hon. Maximus Ochai -

5.29

MR MAXIMUS OCHAI (NRM, West Budama County North, Tororo): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I also want to thank the committee for a very good report. Generally speaking, the recommendations that have come out of the analysis are sound and robust. Specifically, I want to talk about the accumulation of payables.

Arrears tend to arise largely because of fiscal discipline. We have observed that over time, UWA has succeeded in knocking down the amounts payable up to the tune of Shs 546 million down from about Shs 957 million. The recommendation that the accounting officer of UWA ensures that the amounts not yet verified are actually verified and prioritised in the subsequent budget over the medium term, is good.

Therefore, I concur with the chairperson of the committee that we need to instill discipline in our accounting officer, particularly that of UWA, and ensure that we do not accumulate arrears anymore. I thank you, Mr Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Osoru –

5.31

MS MOURINE OSORU (NRM, Woman Representative, Arua City): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank my chairperson for presenting that nice report. However, listening to almost all the reports that were presented by Hon. Kivumbi, Hon. Namugga, and now my other

honourable here, there is evidence that almost all the money is being used, but not accounted for. Or it is being diverted without anybody following up.

As Parliament, I am wondering what we are going to do about this. In almost all the PAC reports, you find that money is being used without authorised signatures.

Now, it is very difficult to debate a report where every time PAC is presenting we are having issues with money being used without being accounted for.

Secondly, Mr Speaker, I would like to draw your attention to the review of entity staff establishment. UWA has a staff gap of about 1,187. That is negatively affecting the capacity of this entity to deliver on its mandate. I also know that it is having challenges with attracting staff, especially from distant conservation areas.

I agree with the committee's position that UWA should improve its staff attraction and retention policy. I agree with that position of the committee because, in the committee of trade, we see UWA ever bringing this up. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Atima -

5.32

MR JACKSON ATIMA (NRM, Arua Central Division, Arua): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I thank the chairperson and the committee for the good report presented.

However, I would like to draw our attention to the point of lack of an internal control system in this entity, UWA. An entity or any organisation without an internal control system poses so many dangers.

That is why we see these areas of collecting money from source or spending from source, unaccounted for monies by the entity, and the funds budgeted are not utilised well or are diverted. The lack of internal control system gives an opportunity for an entity not to use

so many necessary documents that would allow this organisation to control its funds and resource utilisation.

I, therefore, agree with the committee's recommendation for a forensic audit, but my concern is: which firm is going to conduct this forensic audit? And when shall the report come back to Parliament? Many times, we recommend or pass resolutions like this, but they never come back to Parliament and it ends like that. So, it is a very serious concern for a big entity like UWA to have no internal control systems. Thank you very much. I submit.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable colleagues, you see, the difference with this one is that there is an ongoing forensic audit. So, any issues would go to that. I had cautioned you earlier that forensic audits cost a lot of money.

So, when you order a forensic audit, that same institution that is supposed to be audited is the one to provide the money yet they say they do not have such money in their budget. So, when you find that they do not have money, the Auditor-General submits a Bill to the entity and says, I need Shs 1.5 billion for a forensic audit - now, should they suppress other items they have availed money for to be caught? In the future, maybe when we are budgeting, we should always project that in a financial year, we shall have like 10 forensic audits and we budget for them at the Auditor-General so that we do not again expect him to go to the same entities to seek such funding. I saw some of them. Hon. Rusoke -

5.35

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT (Ms Victoria Businge):

Thank you, Mr Speaker. The woman representative for Madi-Okollo asked a very pertinent question. She observed that the procurement at the district level is tampered with and UWA wants to use its own. I would like to guide that at the district level, we follow the Government's guidelines, rules, and regulations.

So, in the Local Government Act, there is supposed to be a district procurement committee. Any money that comes, be it the Uganda Support to Municipal Infrastructure Development Programme (USMID) or Local Government Economic Growth, we use the district procurement committee. So, there should not be an objection. That is what the districts should use.

Someone has just talked about the revenue from tracking gorillas being mismanaged. We introduced a scientific system; the integrated revenue administration system. This does not allow anybody to collect and put in the pocket. So, please when we discuss things, go and help in the districts. Otherwise, the CAOs are already aware. They meet every three months. We call them and emphasise this. Mr Speaker, we cannot get tired of advising. I will compel the Permanent Secretary of Minister of Local Government to issue another stringent circular so that rules can be followed. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. These are also clearly straightforward issues. I now put the question that -

MR LUBEGA SSEGGONA: With your permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to thank colleagues, for the observations made. But I just need to put a few things in context. Number one, for those colleagues that are concerned about the forensic audit, the Minister of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities ordered for a forensic audit because there was an alarm.

However, we were not sure that the minister's report would be submitted to Parliament yet we were investigating the same issues. That is how the Speaker of this House got involved and ordered another forensic audit.

In effect, it is going to be the same audit but we expect to receive a report in Parliament to allay the fears of colleagues. Therefore, once a forensic audit is conducted, it will come here and we shall process it as Parliament.

Number two, with regard to those colleagues who are concerned, that we kept referring to

the forensic audit, a forensic audit is a detailed audit that shows who did what. Other than making a blanket observation and a blanket recommendation, we want to know who is culpable for doing what. After all, the audit was already going on.

To my honourable colleague, Hon. Ndyomugenyi, otherwise known as Bish, the recommendation of “recover” should not be uniform and standardised. You are not talking about somebody who stole money and put it in their pocket. We are talking about somebody who did not follow a procedure but used the money for an entity’s service only that they did not follow this - and because the Public Finance Management Act, 2015 (PFMA) requires that they do this, we are recommending that they do this.

This is different from fraud. On that particular issue, the committee did not establish fraud. And where we established that money was lost, we recommended recovery.

Mr Speaker, I also want to clarify that UWA’s money does not go to the Consolidated Fund account. You would not be talking about money that was not remitted to the Consolidated Fund. UWA, by law, which we made, uses, utilises and spends its money with the approval of its board.

Some of the issues that are being raised cross from accountability to policy, are issues for another committee on the sector.

Finally, on the issue of conflict of laws, including procurement laws, which Hon. Rusoke talked about, the issue that was raised as pertinent - whereas UWA insisted that we must first receive accountability before we release the next batch, the local governments were saying, “we do the accountability in accordance with the PFMA, we are not accountable to you”.

In other words, “Do not treat this as a donation to us. It is money we are entitled to by law”. That is the conflict of laws that we were talking about and we believe that the recommendation we made is appropriate.

Colleagues, if you interest yourselves in reading the entire background in the report before the observations, through the observations to the recommendation, the concessionaires had a legitimate defence.

That the concession in the year 2021 - through 2021 and almost up to 2023, I was not doing business. We were in COVID-19. Therefore, we need to revise.

There are those that we singled out, which were lame and we made specific recommendations. We agreed that those that abuse the concessions be withdrawn and we have made the recommendation, which we would invite you to find pleasure in passing. Those were the issues that arose from the interventions of the House. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. I now put the question that the report of the Public Accounts Committee on Commissions, Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises (PAC-COSASE) on the report of the Auditor-General on the financial statement of Uganda Wildlife Authority for the year ended 30 August 2023, be adopted.

(Question put and agreed to.)

Report adopted.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Clerk, extract the report and give it to the minister. We expect the treasury memoranda as required by the PFMA. House adjourned to tomorrow at 2.00 p.m.

(The House rose at 5.43 p.m. and adjourned until Wednesday, 2 October 2024, at 2.00 p.m.)