

Egumire

THE VOICE OF TRUTH AND JUSTICE | www.egumire.com

FORTHNIGHTLY BULLETIN

JULY 20 - AUGUST 3

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DP Condemns Torture of Suspects

As law abiding citizens and peace loving Ugandans, it is our wish to see suspects on charges of the attempted murder of General Katumba Wamala and the double murder of Brenda Nantongo and Haruna Kayondo arraigned before court and justice served. We however insist that due process and the constitutional presumption of innocence must be adhered to at all times. These were the words of DP National Legal Advisor, Omuk. Erias Luyimbazi Nalukoola when he addressed last week party press conference.

Article 24 of the Constitution expressly prohibits torture. The provision of that Article states that: "No person shall be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment".



Luyimbazi Nalukoola

We're concerned about illegally detained, brutalized and tortured suspects being brought before the courts of law, we wish to add our voice in condemning the abuse of judicial processes that emanate from the abuse of suspects' constitutional rights. We have also heard the voice of the Uganda Law Society denouncing the abuse of the human rights of those facing criminal prosecution and we join in denouncing and condemning in the strongest terms the torture of suspects. In addition we demand that such prosecution be dropped. There are sufficient authorities to guide the courts as they exercise their discretion to halt the prosecutions that have been tainted with evident case of torture, inhuman and other forms of degrading treatment.

In the case of Uganda vs Robert Ssekabira and 10 others, Justice Ralph Ochan made a landmark ruling when he said: "We cannot stand by and watch prosecutions mounted and conducted in the midst of such flagrant, egregious and mala fide violations of the Constitution and must act to protect the constitutional rights of the petitioners in particular and the citizens of Uganda in general as well as the rule of law in Uganda by ordering all the tainted proceedings against the petitioners to stop forthwith and directing the respective courts to discharge the petitioners."

In Dr Kizza Besigye vs Attorney General, the Constitutional Court stated the law in these words: "This court cannot sanction any continued prosecution of the petitioners where during the proceedings the human rights of the petitioners have been violated to the extent described above. No matter how strong the evidence against them may be, no fair trial can be achieved and subsequent trial would be a waste of time and an abuse of court process."

These binding authorities point to only one thing: the dismissal of the charges and discharge of the accused persons. As Edmund Burke wrote "Law and arbitrary power are in eternal enmity."

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UPCOMING EVENTS



Friday 23 July, 2021

Training/Orientation of NEC Members on Virtual Meetings using Zoom

Friday 30 July - Saturday 31 July, 2021

NEC Meeting

"We warn all security personnel that whoever will violate the rights of citizens will be sued in their individual capacity. DP has assembled a team of lawyers to initiate litigation against the culprits in the courts of law."

Luyimbazi Nalukoola
DP National Legal Advisor

Welcome to the inaugural issue of Egumire - The Voice of Truth and Justice. This fortnightly bulletin is today officially born. The name Egumire is part of our historical identity born in Kigezi. It was the Bakiga who realizing that the foundation of DP is unshakable decided on Egumire as our war cry in the struggle for Truth and Justice. After listening to the prophetic voice of our hero and martyr Benedicto Kiwanuka, the Bakiga said in unison: DP Egumire nk'eibare (DP is strong like a rock).

Egumire celebrates our resilience, our togetherness and our commitment to the cause of Truth and Justice. But it is also about learning and mutual respect. It is about seeking inspiration and inspiring others too. It is about creativity.

The newsletter has an Editorial Board whose Chair is the President of the Party in his capacity as Chief Spokesperson of the party. The Editor in Chief is the National Publicity Secretary. The team includes professional journalists who have honed their skills over the years and understand the challenges involved in the battle for the minds of party members, citizens and other stakeholders in the arena of politics. The Editorial Board welcomes news from members. Members are also welcome to write letters to the Editor. Please write to editor.egumire@gmail.com.

We will support your daughter's dream - DP President assures the late Peter Nseko

Those who were on the DP Presidential Campaign Trail in the 2011 elections in Jinja and most of Busoga must have noticed a man with a determined face riding ahead of the convoy. Covered with dust but still smiling he would instead be a source of encouragement for the rest of the campaign team. He hardly complained. He rode his motor cycle and even fueled it. He catered for his needs like food and accommodation on the trail. That man was Peter Nseko. He Wasajja true DP stalwart acting out of conviction. He was an example to all Democrats that no price is too high to pay for Truth and Justice.

On 30th July, 2019 the DP President General of DP, Hon. Norbert Mao visited Mzee Nseko Peter at his home in Bufula village, Budondo Subcounty in Jinja District. The party leader has learnt that his friend Nseko had an accident and could only walk with the help of others. He then decided to make the journey to visit Nseko.

Mzee Nseko was one of the strong men that sacrificed almost all that they had for the Democratic Party. He was a staunch member. Even on his death bed he professed DP. He lived and breathed DP. Mzee Peter Nseko in his time served in various positions in the branch parsnip of Jinja. He served as the DP Organizing Secretary, Publicity Secretary and finally the Chairman of Elders Platform in Budondo sub county. He was in the frontline of every election. He moved wherever his motorcycle could go mobilizing for DP Presidential candidates in Busoga region, he campaigned for Dr. Paul Kawanga Ssemwogere in 1980 and 1996, Dr. Ssebana Kizito in 2006 and Hon. Norbert Mao in 2011.

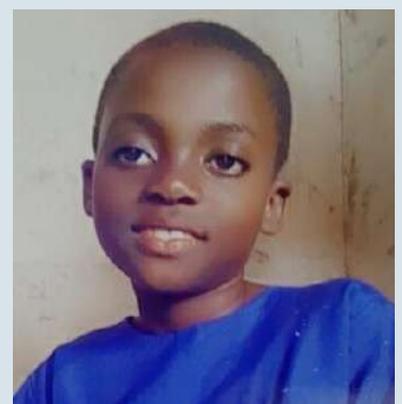
When the President went visiting, Mzee Nseko requested him to take care of one of his youngest daughters called Ogeya Rebecca Nseko in whom he had a lot of hopes. Rebecca's performance in school created a smile on the sickly mzee Peter Nseko however he was not sure of how she could continue with school after his death. Therefore when the President General visited, he handed over the girl to the party for nurturing and her education. The President undertook to ensure that Rebecca studies up to university level.

Indeed as he has earlier anticipated, he died a few months later and was laid to rest on December 18th, 2019 in Bufuula village, Jinja district. The President being the chief mourner, reiterated the Party's commitment to support Rebecca's education picking her from primary level to University.

Currently Rebecca is admitted at St Mary's Junior school owned by the DP National Treasurer, Hon. Babirye Kabanda who offered a partial scholarship. With the help of the President, who bought the school necessities and topped up the fees Rebecca is back in school and determined to make his father and the party proud. The Jinja DP Branch have been helpful in arranging transport from Jinja to and from the school. The party President has also pledged to continue helping with the livelihood of Rebecca at home. This is but one of the examples that show that DP is a family which looks out for the members.

By Kiirya Ismail, UYD President

"Egumire celebrates our resilience, our togetherness and our commitment to the cause of Truth and Justice. But it is also about learning and mutual respect. It is about seeking inspiration and inspiring others too. It is about creativity."



Rebecca Nseko

They Walked Through Fire: Meet the DP MPs in the 11th Parliament.



Hon. Luttaguzi Ssemakula
MP Nakaseke South



Hon. Fortunate Nantongo
MP Kyotera District



Hon. John Paul Mpalanyi
Lukwago
MP Kyotera County



Hon. Dr. Micheal Philip Lulume
Bayiga
MP Buikwe South



Hon. Fred Kayondo
MP Mukono South



Hon. Richard Kizito Lumu
MP Mityana South



Hon. Eng. Richard Sebamala
MP Bukoto Central



Hon. Geoffrey Okello
MP Nwoya East



Hon. Peter Okot
MP Tochi County

“Let us celebrate those who against all odds hoisted the DP flag especially in the Central Region of Buganda where DP has been a target for annihilation for so long particularly in the last elections. It is time for Harambee – pulling together in the same direction. Anyone pulling in the opposite direction from the mandated party organs cannot be considered an asset to the party.”

Let's Celebrate Our Stars

The DP sky has many bright stars and we should celebrate them all. The debate about whichever one is the brighter may depend on where one is located and also on a particular political season.

Let us celebrate those who against all odds hoisted the DP flag especially in the Central Region of Buganda where DP has been a target for annihilation for so long particularly in the last elections. It is time for Harambee - pulling in the same direction. Anyone pulling in the opposite direction from the mandated party organs cannot be considered an asset to the party.

To all members, We say what matters is that we should improve our report card. There's no time for licking political wounds. Let's regroup.

Remembering our Founders as we march boldly to our 70th Anniversary in 2024

DP FOUNDERS 1954



From Left To Right **Sebastian B. Kibuuka**(Executive Committee Member), **Joseph Kasolo**(Founding President), **P. Nsubuga**(Executive Committee Member), **John Kasule**(Founding Secretary General), **Anthony B. Sserubiri** (Executive Committee Member), **Louis M. Tyaba**(Executive Committee Member), **M. Kidu**(Founding National Treasurer) and **Alphonse Ntale**(Executive Committee Member)

“They undertook at all times to champion, respect and protect the fundamental human rights and freedoms embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; to observe and uphold the rule of law; and to search earnestly for the means to, and provide, prosperity and happiness for the people of Uganda.”

On 6th October, 1954 our eight heroic founders met and resolved to found a political party called the Democratic Party. Driven by their patriotic zeal and nationalism they declared that British colonialism must end in Uganda so that the country can take its proper place along the community of nations as an independent country.

These eight selfless nationalists guided by the principle of TRUTH AND JUSTICE (which they adopted as the motto of the new party) and a desire to SECURE for ALL the people of Uganda the best attributes of an independent nation, proclaimed that the sovereign power of Uganda is vested in the people of Uganda as a whole; that the people have the inalienable right to freely choose their Government by democratic process; and that the Government so chosen must exercise the authority and powers entrusted to it by the people solely for the common good and benefit of the people.

They undertook at all times to champion, respect and protect the fundamental human rights and freedoms embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; to observe and uphold the rule of law; and to search earnestly for the means to, and provide, prosperity and happiness for the people of Uganda.

Their overriding desire was to acquire for Uganda a place of honour among the international community of nations, striving for banishment of tyranny, slavery, oppression and intolerance from the world and the preservation of peace and human dignity among mankind. They accordingly pledged upon their honour to use the resources and means at their disposal for the preservation and furtherance of the principles and the attainment of the ideals herein before mentioned, acting in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution they adopted and in which they enshrined their beliefs as stated above. This is the living document they bequeathed to us their heirs. It is this glorious birth and the ideals of founders declared that make DP a most credible party. Indeed for Uganda to have a government whose foundation is Truth and Justice, DP must lead government and heal our nation and put it on a path of durable peace, freedom and prosperity.

Let's Rebuild the UYD to Sow the Seeds of Democracy



A Message from the UYD President

I convey my greetings to all the Youth in our party - the Democratic



Kiirya Ismail, UYD President

multi party democracy.

There were those who wanted UYD to sever its relations with the mother party but these were but a loud minority who wanted UYD to operate like an NGO soliciting funds from overseas and spending it without oversight from the party. Yet from its founding the patronage of UYD was vested in the Democratic Party! It's registered address was the DP Headquarters. And even its postal address was the one belonging to DP. But the party leadership decided that the debate should rage on until a consensus would be built and then the constitution of the party would be amended to rename the Youth Organ of the party as UYD, allow the Youth in DP to organize themselves within DP as a semi autonomous organ of the party with its own constitution and structure answerable to the mother party.

There have been key milestones that have culminated into the full mainstreaming of the UYD. There was an attempt before 2010 to form a separate Youth League for the party and let the UYD operate without any formal links to the party. This decision was however reversed by the Ssebaana Kizito leadership. When Norbert Mao ascended to the leadership of the party buttressed by key UYD leaders who assumed strategic positions in the party, it was believed that the mainstreaming of the UYD would be easy. Unfortunately in 2013, the UYD split into two with older members trying to elect their own leaders and the younger members also electing their own leaders. The group led by the younger members agreed to disband while the group of the older members most of whom are well into their late forties remained defiant. The conflict almost led to the expulsion of 33 members of the party who were the ringleaders of the indisciplined older members who didn't want an accountable UYD. The conflict was only resolved when the National Council sat and resolved that the NEC had to deal with the issues of the UYD with finality.

In 2015 the Katomi National Delegates Conference resolved to mainstream the UYD. These resolutions were finally redrafted and adopted in the 2020 Gulu National Delegates Conference. Accordingly the following amendment was made to the DP Constitution:

"Article 24 of the Constitution is amended by substituting it with the following new article:

Party. Since 2010 the party has been on a path to mainstream the Uganda Young Democrats (UYD) as the official Youth Organ of the party. An incessant and often divisive debate raged in the party for years with the aim of mainstreaming the UYD as an integral part of the Democratic Party. This became imperative and urgent when Uganda restored

"Article 24

There shall be a National Youth Organization of the Party to be known as the Uganda Young Democrats. The Uganda Young Democrat's shall be open to all persons between the ages of 16 (sixteen) and 35 (thirty five) years. It shall operate on a national and branch basis. Its objectives are to unite and lead young men and women in confronting and dealing with the problems that face the youth and to ensure that the youth make a full and rich contribution to the work of the Democratic Party and the life of the nation. The Uganda Young Democrats shall function as a semi-autonomous body within the overall structure of the Democratic Party, of which it shall be an integral part, with its own Constitution, rules and regulations, provided that these shall not be in conflict with the Constitution and policies of the Democratic Party.

Members of the Uganda Young Democrats of and above the age of 18 (eighteen) shall play a full part in the general political life of the Democratic Party.

A member of the Uganda Young Democrats shall not be eligible for election to any position as office-bearer of the Democratic Party or to attend Democratic Party conferences, members' or executive meetings of the Democratic Party (unless specially invited), unless he or she is a full member of the Democratic Party."

It is therefore my honor to salute the Youth in our party for the interests they have shown in our organization - the UYD - and its role in the Uganda Society. Uganda Young Democrats was founded in June 1995 as a National Organization of men and women, who cherish, practice and promote the ideals of genuine Democracy. Over the years we have championed a consistent advocacy and an aggressive campaign for the ideas of Political pluralism, Federalism and Social Justice.

The UYD stood in the gap when political party activities were banned by the NRM. Therefore it's rallying cry was a clamor for a social order founded on universal franchise based on a MULTIPARTY SYSTEM as no single Party can claim to represent varied shades of opinion like the NRM wanted the whole world to believe.

The UYD is aware that Uganda is all its Regions which in their several ways i.e. economic, ecological and cultural have contributed towards making of a modern and progressive Uganda, what remains is cultivating, Political will aimed at distributing enterprise, opportunities, utilities and developing potential of various regions which therefore warrants that regional authorities be granted extensive liberty with its frames clearly defined by the constitution to plan specific measures of Regional policy.

Our vision is of a society where everybody regardless of tribal, religious and ideological considerations gains access to equal opportunities to develop and enjoy as a human being. It's our call to all Ugandans to accept common responsibility and wake up to the daunting challenges we face. Passive citizenship is a threat to this noble cause.



From Left to Right:
 Hellen Sayunt
 (UYD Deputy President)
 Juliet Dumbaba
 (Kampala City UYD Chairperson)
 Barbara A. Bano
 (UYD Secretary)
 Ismail Kiirya
 (UYD President)
 Esther Agaba
 (UYD Deputy Secretary)

Below is a recap of some of the founding ideas of the UYD. They are extracted from earlier publications of the UYD and I reproduce them here for the information of members. The purpose is to ensure that the Youth of today appreciate the contributions of those who sacrificed so much to build UYD as a bulwark against tyranny and abuse of power in all its forms. These remain the ideas that drive the UYD today. Note that at the time UYD was at its most active, political parties were not allowed to carry out any activities. None of the organs were allowed to meet. It is UYD that stood in the gap and indeed earned its place to play a vital role in the life of the Democratic Party.

MISSION STATEMENT:

The inception of the UYD was no doubt a renewal of the peoples struggle for freedom, truth and justice and as summarized by her mission statement UYD was founded to: SOW SEEDS OF DEMOCRACY.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To bring together all Ugandans in the struggle for, observance, respect and promotion of fundamental human rights, political, economic, social and religious freedoms of the people of Uganda.

To advocate for social justice, and equity i.e. champion for all Ugandans before the law and equal opportunities for all sphere of life.

To promote and preserve the unity among the people of Uganda and to imbue, intensify and maintain in them a spirit of nationalism and political consciousness.

Champion political Pluralism and good government that will provide a frame work within which to advance Local empowerment and Economic development.

Engage in popular activities, debates, seminars, conferences, campaigns and petitions in order to exert constructive pressure that will condition National policy makers formulate people sensitive Political and Socio-economic programmes.

Promote and preserve traditions, customs, values and cultural institutions of the people of Uganda.

To do all things necessary to promote moral, intellectual, physical and social welfare of vulnerable groups like women, the poor, disabled, orphans, homeless, unemployed and other disadvantaged categories.

Encourage and instill among Ugandans the spirit of participating in community activities, take up vocations and income generating activities, so as to improve individual skills, economic powers and social welfare.

Raise environmental consciousness to help conserve Uganda's natural beauty.

Champion investment on especially Youth leadership manpower training and developing in order to secure a better future for Uganda.

To establish, maintain cordial relationships and urge solidarity with other National and International Organizations that share similar ideas.

Do all that is intended, conducive and humanly possible to the attainment of the foregoing objectives or any of them

MEMBERSHIP:

Membership to the UYD is voluntary and open to every Ugandan citizen who accepts the aims, policies and ideal of the organization, UYD boasts of 50,000 strong registered Membership spread across the country and comprising of mainly youths in secondary and tertiary institutions of learning, farmers, leaders, lawyers, the unemployed, physicians, taxi operators, factory workers, etc.

ORGANS OF THE UYD:

The supreme organ of the UYD is the National Delegates Conference which lays down the basic policy and programmes of the organization. It comprises of representation from Regional, Districts, Institutions, women groups and National Executive committee levels. It is convened annually and it's charged with the election of national office bearers

The National Executive committee is the Directorate of the UYD and generally, it supervises the administrative machinery of the UYD at all levels and takes such measures it deems fit to enforce decision and programmes of the organization

BRANCHES:

The UYD has branches at the Regional, District, County, Sub County to village levels and any members of the organization within any institution or grouping are entitled to open a branch

PATRONAGE AND TRUSTEESHIP:

The patronage and trusteeship of the UYD is vested in the hands of the Democratic Party of Uganda who guide the UYD in all her endeavors.

THE UYD HEADQUARTERS:

The UYD headquarters is an instrument for serving UYD's various organs and its members. The Secretary General of the UYD is the Administrative head of the headquarters which comprises of such departments

like

- Finance/Economic planning
- Organization
- International co-operation
- Women
- Publicity and information
- Social welfare/security
- Federal affairs

On top of running UYD activities, the Headquarters is a think tank and workshop for ideas and because very little is known about African movements struggling to break the bondage of oppression and greed like the UYD, the headquarters co-ordinate an international network geared towards promoting partnership with International Organizations that identify with values of Democracy

ACHIEVEMENTS:

The UYD has no doubt made a mark on the Ugandan political scene over the past two year. A basic explanation of UYD's achievements so far is that she has given expression to the genuine demands, will and aspirations of Ugandans

-UYD played an active and pivotal role during the 1996 Presidential elections

-UYD has provided a platform to young Ugandans to discuss and influence the shape of public affairs not only in their own areas but also at National level

-UYD has spread the ideas of Political Pluralism through a community outreach network (KAKUYEGE), recruited and trained young Ugandans in Democratic thinking along with developing a sense of public responsibility

-UYD has played an eye opening role and provided Ugandans with an opportunity to gain knowledge on various political, socio economic questions

-Through advocacy, and civic education, UYD has improved prospects for the long term building of Democratic pillars thus strengthening the Civil society

UYD FINANCES:

The UYD work is financed by membership contributions and Individual/organization donations. We struggle on though with limited means of financing our activities. We welcome donations from private individuals as well as organizations.

ACTIVITIES:

- Seminars/workshops
- Charity days
- News Publications
- Radio/T.V programmes
- Press Conferences, Public rallies/debates
- Human Resource development programmes
- Women programmes
- Environmental Awareness programmes
- Income generating Activities
- Picnic/Fun days.

Are RDCs “Senior Civil Servants” or Petty Party Functionaries?



What distinguishes civil servants from other government employees is one of allegiance. Civil servants serve the State (the central government) not the person who appoints them. They're answerable to the government, not a political party.

The question to be considered is whether in the discharge of their duties, RDCs conduct themselves in the manner civil servants are expected to conduct themselves. RDCs in Uganda have degenerated into party functionaries whose allegiance is not to the State but rather to the appointing authority and the party in power. That is the case for legal reform. Either they stop being called civil servants or they are compelled to stop being partisan party functionaries. The former would require a constitutional amendment. The latter would require an interpretation by the Constitutional Court stating the limits of the RDCs powers and declaring their Dos and Dents. Some people have threatened to go to court over this matter.

As DP we've often insisted that Uganda is yet to see a Trans-Regime Army. The army is supposed to be above politics. They're supposed to be non partisan. Their duty defend the constitution and to defend the territorial integrity of the country. Their allegiance is expected to be to the State which endures beyond the changes in government that elections may bring.

But over the years, the successive armies have had to disband with every change in government. The police on the other hand have always been left alone by the successor governments even when they assume power marching behind blazing guns. This is because it was clear that the police were loyal to the State not to the ruling party. These days the police also seems to have degenerated into partisan functionaries.

Those who want to seek redress in the courts of law should know court is but one arena for seeking reform. Political activity is another important arena. The proposed National Dialogue is another arena which can be used for renegotiating the very concept of Uganda. The collapse of every successive Consensus we have attempted from Lancaster, to Moshi, to the 1995 Constitution makes a National Dialogue imperative. This would give a sense of ownership of Uganda to the various communities that make the building blocks of our country. It would also give greater legitimacy to the State that inherited the authority previously exercised by the British colonial power. It would help the people to stop feeling like subjects and become citizens with rights and the power to hold the government accountable.

“RDCs in Uganda have degenerated into party functionaries whose allegiance is not to the State but rather to the appointing authority and the party in power.”





From the Desk of **THE PRESIDENT**



A Letter to the Opposition in Uganda's Parliament

The Role of the Parliamentary Opposition

By Norbert Mao

The official opposition is the main non-government party in Parliament. It is the second biggest party or coalition of parties voted into parliament. The opposition is expected to provide an alternative to government policies or actions. The job of the opposition is thus to scrutinize the government and hold it accountable for its decisions. In a functional democracy the opposition is the "alternative government" since it must be ready to form government if it is voted in after an election.

The Shadow Cabinet is composed of members of opposition who are the spokespersons in the key portfolios of governance. Shadow cabinet members are known as Shadow Ministers because they "shadow" the work of the government ministers.

The Shadow Cabinet is expected to meet regularly to discuss opposition policy on current issues. Shadow Ministers are expected to explain to the Parliament what the opposition would do about certain problems if the opposition were the government.

The other opposition parties beside the official opposition are expected to appoint Whips. These Whip's perform the same functions as the Government Chief Whip and the Chief Opposition Whip. Rule 13(10) provides that "Other functions of the Government Chief Whip, Opposition Chief Whip and Party Whip shall include: (a) organizing party business (b) keeping Members informed of business; (c) supplying lists of Members to serve on Standing and Sessional Committees; (d) co-operating with Whips in putting into effect and coordinating agreed Parliamentary business; (e) acting as intermediaries between leaders and other party Members; (f) arranging representations of party Members on official Parliamentary delegations; and (g) acting as tellers during divisions."

Parliamentarian, "the opposition should so conduct itself in Parliament as to persuade the people of the country that it could be an improvement on the government of the day. No one will deny that our system works best when there is a change of government at reasonable intervals."

The role of the opposition according to Knowles is to "check and prod, but ultimately to replace the party in government."

A democratic government must create room for choice. Parliament is therefore an arena where various views must be heard.

The Ugandan society appreciates the role of opposition but to the NRM, the opposition is at worst an inconvenience and at best a necessary evil.

Our electoral system is the 'first past the post'. This means that a numerically small opposition usually represents a very large proportion of votes.

Your role as initiators of legislation is clearly limited but your role as representatives is unlimited. Furthermore when it comes to oversight and scrutiny of the government, society looks more to opposition members than government backbenchers.

In mature democracies the opposition plays the role of government in waiting and that is why in developed democracies the leader of the largest opposition party is usually briefed on sensitive matters so that he or she is ready to step into the role of governing the country at short notice.

The opposition has to give visibility to its policies. But visibility without credibility is empty. Credibility comes from being seen as

the policies must be relevant. An effective opposition can do a lot through the platform parliament offers. Has the government got any responsibility towards the opposition? The answer is Yes!

First, sufficient resources should be provided for the work of the opposition. Secondly, there must be an unfettered access to information especially those available to Ministers and Civil Servants. Thirdly, there should be adequate advice from professional parliamentary staff such as researchers and draftsmen. Fourthly, there should be resources allocated to fund publicity and for the use of the media. Fifthly, there ought to be recognition of the special place of the Leader of Opposition and members of the Shadow Cabinet.

How can the opposition play a more effective role in scrutinizing the government and ensuring accountability?

Scrutiny means overseeing the operations of the executive in order to check how laws are being implemented. Scrutiny means the opposition should hold the government to high performance and accountability benchmarks. The opposition must check to see that there is value for the money spent by the government. In this role the opposition not only contributes to efficient running of the country but also stress their own points and show how their policies would have worked better.

What are the avenues available for effective scrutiny of government by the opposition?

First, is the avenue of the parliamentary question put to ministers to answer in parliament. Secondly, the opposition can request for time to debate or raise a specific issue which request should normally be allowed under the Rules of Procedure or by practice and tradition of parliament. Thirdly, parliamentary committees that provide oversight avail the most powerful avenue for the opposition. These committees include the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), the Local Government Public Accounts Committee, the Committee on Government Assurances and the Committee on Parastatals and Public Enterprises.

It is true that the limelight is brighter on the floor of the House, and MPs feel that Committee work is boring and gets less media coverage than debated in the open house, but the limelight can follow skillful debaters even in the smaller arena of a parliamentary committee.

The reason one is in opposition is because one doesn't have a majority. Until one gets a majority one's best bet is to offer constructive criticism and keep alternative policies in the full view of the public, which may push the government to adopt opposition policies.

The opposition as a whole has to be well facilitated otherwise the members will raise bogus arguments that lack evidence of research. This would be tragic as it would waste the time of parliament and lower the quality of democracy.

Parliament's major role is passing laws but many times being in opposition means that you only play a peripheral role – you may have your say but the government usually has its way. For this reason many opposition MPs don't put as much effort in debating bills since they believe that the majority side will impose its will through voting rather than debate. The truth is different. An opposition however small can influence and shape legislation both substantially and procedurally. A lot depends on how the opposition whips interact with their opposite numbers on the government side and also how they relate to the Speaker who needs to be constantly reminded that while business must move speedily, this must not be at the expense of sufficient deliberation. There is always debate in the Committee after a Bill has been tabled but informal discussions and negotiations can help the government appreciate the views of the opposition and prepare it to accommodate some amendments.

That said, the opposition members, like government backbenchers, are empowered by the Rules of Procedure to present Bills. However the same Rules of Procedure prevents backbenchers from presenting money Bills – that is Bills that will authorize the spending of public funds. Only a Minister may table money Bills. But the toughest challenge to an opposition member's Bill is where the subject matter is controversial. In this case the Bill will have little chance of success because it may not be given enough time or die in infancy due to lack of enough members in support. Such a Bill would be classified as a D.O.A. – Dead On Arrival!

Nevertheless, every debate gives visibility and a voice to the sentiments of sections of the society whose feelings may either be ignored by the government or are generally unknown to the government and the public. There is no useless debate if it represents genuine feelings among the citizenry. I now come to the sticky issue of where the Opposition may not oppose the government but actually cooperates with the government. Sometimes a matter comes before parliament and the opposition has the tough decision to support the government proposal or to work towards a consensus on a policy issue. There are many ways this can be viewed. Some would say this is statesmanlike. Indeed those on the government side will heap praises on opposition members who bat on the side of compromise rather than confrontation. You may be lauded for being unselfish and nationalistic. But this can also be a minefield politically. We cannot discount the politically damaging negative perceptions towards such positions by the people. Strong, albeit minority interests, that identify with opposition may feel abandoned if the opposition appears to compromise too often and too easily. It is for this reason that sometimes the opposition has to push forward an alternative view however obnoxious, even where the interests of the nation would demand another course of action.

This is not only in relation to government. The opposition has to be careful how it forges alliances with sections of society. Sections of society may have their own bones to pick with the government and will seek to mobilize support from the opposition. If the opposition jumps onto the bandwagon of a section of society crossing swords with the government, the opposition may be perceived to be in agreement not only with the goals but also the methods of action of that section of society. However untruthful or unfair this perception may be, this can undermine the credibility and prestige of the opposition among other sections of society. For that reason the opposition must have the courage to present its views and defend them in their dealings with various pressure groups. The best policy is for the opposition to be clear about where it stands and why.

The opposition is thus the other side of the process of democratic governance. In your work as the opposition in an autocratic and repressive environment like Uganda under the NRM, you are faced with many hurdles. You are swimming with sharks. You are swimming against a tide of corruption, repression and arrogance of people drunk on power. I hope this presentation has given you some methods of surviving and sometimes prevailing in a very hostile environment.

I am sure every party leader in commissioning you to your noble charge as Parliamentarians would recite the words of the scripture in Luke 10:3: "...behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves."

"Even in these difficult circumstances we should not despair. The hours before dawn are the darkest. I fervently hope that one day Uganda will have a president who is a servant leader, who is committed to reconciling the nation, ending corruption, building an inclusive economy and leading the process of building a new consensus. I remain committed to the cause for which the Democratic Party stands and I believe that our time will come. The cause endures!"

Norbert Mao

(In a Statement issued on 16th January, 2021 after the Electoral Commission announced the results of the Presidential Elections)



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