



OFFICE OF THE
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

RESPONSE TO THE STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS

JULY 2021

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**Rt. Hon. Speaker,
Hon. Members of Parliament,
Esteemed citizens of Uganda,**

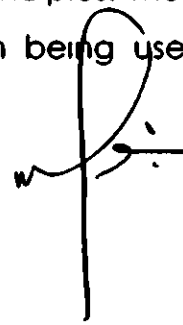
It is my singular pleasure to congratulate each Member of this 11th Parliament upon your election and appointment to different leadership positions in this land. While we are constituted from different shades of opinion, it is our obligation whether singularly or collectively to diligently serve the interests of the citizens of Uganda.

As I mentioned when the House was notified of my appointment, effort will be taken whenever possible to pursue a bipartisan approach in the spirit of accountability and service. It is our conviction that Parliament is a front that we should use to liberate the country from autocratic governance and biting poverty levels.

Pursuant to Rule 53 of our Rules of Procedure, I seize the opportunity to respond to the State of the Nation Address delivered by the President on 4th June 2021. While the Article 101 of the Constitution does not prescribe the content of the Address, it is expected that President would use it as a performance report card of what has been undertaken by government since the last address. Unfortunately, this has never been the case.

The Constitution provides that the National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy are the gist of government operations. They pertain political, human rights, socioeconomic, cultural, accountability, environment, foreign policy and citizen objectives.

Specifically Objective I(ii) requires the President to report at least once a year the extent of realization of the policy objectives and principles. The provision does not deter the State of the Nation Address from being used as the

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reporting mechanism. Otherwise without the clear benchmarks, the "State of Nation Addresses" tantamount to a mere speech. Going forward, for the subsequent years, the President should conform, structure and deliver the State of Nation Address based on the National Objectives.

Despite the address's fundamental structural short fall, a few aspects highlighted by the President will be responded too.

COVID Pandemic

COVID-19 has become a cover-up for almost every government failure. Of late, the President and his government attribute to the pandemic the contraction of the economy, rising poverty levels, escalating public debt and poor service delivery among others. Before the pandemic, these concerns were already manifest. The lifeline of the economy and indeed government has for long been borrowing. The tax revenues are insufficient to fund the government's expenditures. As a result public debt has risen from USD 2.9 billion in 2006/07 to USD 17.96 billion (UGX 65.83 trillion) in December 2020¹. It has been projected that Uganda needs over 94 years to clear its public debt without acquiring new debt².

The sectors of tourism, hotels, banking, music, sports and professional services, irrespective of their potential have for a long time been neglected by government. The President has even referred to them as luxurious. For instance, this exhibited in the budget allocations towards the tourism and hospitality sector. Irrespective of its present capacity of generating US\$ 1.6 billion (close to UGX 6 trillion) per year, the government only invests UGX 100 billion. This has been the case for years.

¹Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, 2021. Medium Term Debt Management Strategy 2021/22 - 2024/25

²Parliament of Uganda, 2018 Report of the Committee on National Economy on the Performance of the Economy during the FY2016/17



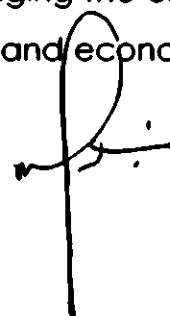
It is only natural that any sector will dwindle in productivity with continued deprivation. This has been the case for the agriculture, education, health, information, innovation, technology, public service and trade sectors. Almost every sector of government has been deprived except for security and physical infrastructure. Based on this, it is not surprising that the NRM regime is gambling in its response to the pandemic. Let therefore not the pandemic be used as a distraction from government's poor planning and prioritization.

Instead of addressing its planning and prioritization shortfalls, the President has resorted to apportioning blame to the citizens. He attributes the worsening pandemic to citizen's failure to adhere to the standard operating procedures. Wait a minute. Who is responsible for controlling immigration? Are citizens responsible for taxation regime, regulation of trade, recruitment of medical workers, purchase of beds, installation of Intensive care units and oxygen plant as well as vaccination of the country among others? It is clear that government has violated Article 189 of the Constitution by its decimal performance in the delivery of public services.

Entrenchment of Inequalities

The President asserted that people who are in the middle class are not prone to what he termed as home poverty pressure. They are the best suited for appointment to positions of authority. Based on this assertion, people that have been raised from humble backgrounds are less appropriate for government service because they work for money not passion.

The President has deliberately entrenched the stratification of the citizenry according to access to power into the rulers and the ruled. The rich and the paupers. The privileged and under privileged. Instead of engaging the entire country in a dialogue on how to address the prevailing social and economic

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inequalities, the President assured us that the solution only lies in his children. The rest of the citizens have been reduced to a status of followers and there are deliberate attempts to preserve their deplorable lives.

The rich and those in positions of power are competitively compensated for their land by government while attempts are made to compulsory acquire land from the poor with meagre compensation. Quality health care is largely guaranteed to the rich in private facilities or wards within public facilities while the health of indigents is condemned to deplorable health facilities and demotivated health workers.

It is increasingly impossible for several children from peasant households to access tertiary education that has seemingly become a preserve of the affluent. Irrespective of levels of competencies, it is common knowledge that many people have been granted jobs and appointments based on nepotism and sycophancy.

The recourse to the rest of the citizenry is to continue the struggle to free ourselves from captivity of political and economic vultures in government. Only then can we blossom in a new Uganda in which every citizen is guaranteed successful future. A new Uganda in which citizens are not discriminated against based on their economic status, belief system, cultural inclination, political affiliation, proximity to rulers or any other factor. A country in which opportunities will be accessed and granted based on merit. Leaders will be appointed and jobs attained based on competence.

Unemployment

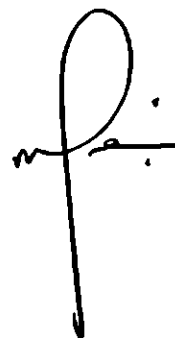
While the President was silent on youth unemployment, it is rampant in the country. It is a security threat that requires urgent and deliberate attention. The educated youth are increasingly getting frustrated due to lack of employment



opportunities. There has been a remarkable mismatch between skills attained during education and the available opportunities. For those that are lucky to find some form of paid employment, they are barely living. Wages are low to sustain their lives and aspirations. The alternative of self-employment is crowded by petty businesses whose proceeds are so insufficient to sustain and transform livelihoods. As consequence many remain unemployed for many years and in due course have their skills as well as knowledge eroded. This leads to a continuous cycle of unemployment for they cannot compete for opportunities that may appear in due course. Surprisingly, government has frustrated the passing of the National Graduate Service Bill (2018) that sought to partly address the mismatch of skills amongst graduates.

Initiatives such as Youth Livelihood Programme, Youth Enterprise Scheme and Skilling Uganda and Youth Venture Capital Fund have failed to bear satisfactory fruits. They have failed to stimulate labour demand and uptake. Unfortunately, no comprehensive evaluations of the initiatives have been undertaken to inform effective replacements. As consequence the scarce public funds continue to be spent with no satisfactory impact. The funds need to be freed towards actualizing the National Human Resource Development Plan that has been flagged in the Third National Development Plan.

Government seems to have embraced externalization of labour as an escape route of dealing with the youth whose aspirations it failed to fulfil. Regrettably, it has failed to effectively regulate the labour externalization. Cases of sexual harassment, trafficking, non-payment and underpayment are reported but not adequately addressed. As a result, there are many distressed Ugandan workers abroad. This is largely attributed to inadequate monitoring and inspection of recruitment firms and work stations abroad.

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Corruption

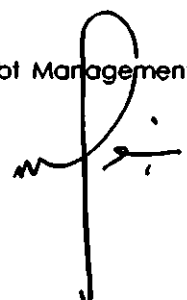
While one may agree with the observation that corruption is an enemy to development, the resolve by the President and his government to fight it is a mere rhetoric. The President indicated that he had established that corruption started from the Ministry of Finance through the development of bloated projects.

The bloated projects are the main drivers behind the continued securing of debt or loans which the country is not ready to absorb. This has not been helped by the entrenched procurement entrepreneurship by some government officials. Consequently, stock of public debt has risen astronomically from USD 2.9 billion in 2006/07 to USD 17.96 billion (UGX 65.83 trillion) in December 2020³. This translates to an increment of 84%.

Presently, each citizen whether young or old has unwillingly been allocated a debt burden of over UGX 1.6 million. Why dangle such a burden on the lives of people who cannot afford medical care, quality education for their children and feed their families? Millions of people have become secondary citizens in their own motherland. Corruption is responsible for trimming their aspirations to survival instead of prosperity.

Unfortunately, almost all of the Ministers responsible for the bloated projects were never dropped in the newly appointed Cabinet. Instead, they were reappointed and some transferred to other dockets. These have joined others that were censored and convicted for corruption. Is this how corruption is fought? Surely not! In our absurd case corruption is rewarding. Probably the President would like to share with the country if indeed his fight is not dispirited or indeed, he is not a captive of the corrupt!

³Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, 2021 Medium Term Debt Management Strategy 2021/22 – 2024/25

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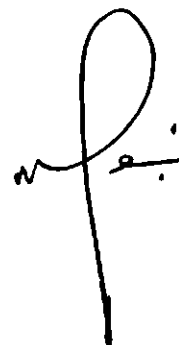
Anti-corruption agencies have domineered public posturing instead of curbing corruption. Parades, press conferences and security convoys service the egos of those appointed to head the agencies. They never pursue their master and his colonies.

Instead, they loyally follow their directions for seemingly vindictive investigations towards those that have fallen out of favour. It is high time that an audit is instituted into the Presidential appointments and creation of convenient parallel anti-corruption outfits. Subsequently, appointments to anti-corruption agencies should be subjected to open vetting.

Insecurity

The President laments the insecurity in the country irrespective of the billions of shillings that have been committed through domestic and external debt to finance the security sector. Notwithstanding the massive classified expenditures, there has been a spike of mysterious and unresolved murders of Muslim clerics, women, police officers and army officers among others. Instead of lamenting, the President as the Commander in Chief should account for the funds so far spent on bolstering the security apparatus in the country.

While addressing Parliament in 2018, the President proposed measures to contain the insecurity in the country. Apart from some form of progress registered regarding CCTV and forensics laboratory, the rest of the measures are yet to be implemented. With the support of Parliament, domestic borrowing of UGX 380 billion (USD 100 million) was approved to finance classified expenditure and a syndicated loan facility of more than UGX 395 billion (USD 104 million) to bolster CCTV network.

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Unfortunately, the recent attempted assassination of Gen. Katumba Wamala exposed the inefficiencies in the network and intelligence gathering. The involved criminals could not easily be identified and tracked.

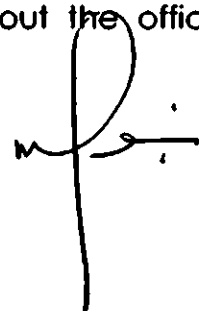
Three years down the road, not all guns are fingerprinted. Undertaking of ensuring that helmets of motor cycle riders are illuminated and monitored in a central hub is yet to be realized. Revival of 999 still remains a dream. Social media sites such as Facebook were blocked contrary to the commitment of monitoring abuse. If this is not a recipe for continued insecurity in the country, it is a recipe of continued loss of insecure lives.

Criminalization of Opposition

The State of the Nation Address was the first, immediately after the most violent and most fraudulent election since independence! The election was conducted in the disgraceful and shameful manner, never seen before. All state agencies were pitted against the opposition.

It became an indictable offence in the eyes of the state machinery to profess opposition. Many were arrested and held in illegal military detentions without charge, while others were held on politically motivated charges by all manner of operatives without a clear line of command. Security forces have tortured, maimed and killed citizens in an attempt of curtailing political dissent. This was done under the full knowledge and tacit collusion of the official state security machinery.

This was the year of the notorious "drones"! Did the President immediately forget about the notoriety of the drones, bought by the tax-payer and used to vest suffering to the same people? That he made no mention of the killings, disappearances, maiming vested on citizens tells a lot about the official direction of the state.

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Security structures particularly the court martial try civilians in disregard of civil courts. The regime is endeavouring to rule by law and the not under the law through trumped up charges.

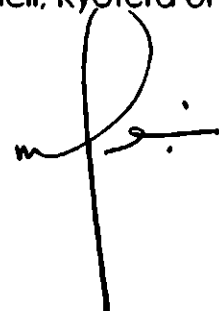
Rt. Hon. Speaker and Hon colleagues, grossing over the grave injustices of the last 10 months should concern and cause worry to every peace-loving Ugandan, especially leaders at this level. The growing levels of intolerance for divergent political views is not only bad for our fragile democracy, but a recipe for disaster.

Rt. Hon. Speaker and colleagues, we have so many families whose loved ones disappeared since last year. They were picked by security operatives in drones and all manner means available to the state apparatus, as part of settling political differences.

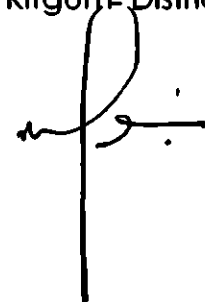
So, we have a mass state party, 35 years in power full of political cowards presiding over the state, and we need to remind them of our political history for them to respect the choices of citizens. This is a great shame!

The State of the Nation address did not offer any assurance for justice to the affected families, let alone a humble mention and admission of circumstances! I invite the 11th Parliament to summon its Constitutional powers to reign into a runaway state that is acting through extra-legal means! Let the state account for all citizens that were picked up by security operatives.

1. Kibalama John Bosco. He was picked from Kumukaaga, Gayaza road on 3rd June 2019. Has not been seen or heard from since then.
2. Kasumba George was arrested from Kasaali Town Council, Kyotera on 19th January 2021. His whereabouts are not known.

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3. Mbabazi Moses was picked by armed gunmen from Kisekka market on 07th December 2020. All efforts by the family and friends have not yielded any results.
4. Wangolo Shafic of Kyebando-Nansana was picked by security operatives and his wife has been ransomed by them but have failed to produce him.
5. Nalumoso Vincent was picked from Bugolobi market on the 1st December 2020. The family was allegedly advised by informers that they should settle and organize last funeral rites for him and move on with life!
6. TellaJumawas abducted from Obongi District on 12th January 2021.His family is desperate and confused up to now.
7. Mangwi Henry from Adjumani was abducted from Ibirikwa Sub-County, Adjumani East.
8. Manjo Robinson from Moyo was picked by plain-clothed gunmen on or about 16th January2021.
9. Ddamulira John was abducted by armed gunmen from Kisekka market on 21st November 2020. A protracted trace by his family has been as frustrating as the facilitation they have given security operatives.
10. Mutaasa Alex was picked-up by men in Police and UPDF uniforms in November 2020 from Bwaise.
11. Mubiru Hassan was abducted in December 2020 by armed gunmen.
12. Jinjo Fred of Bweyogerere was picked from Owino market on 24th November 2020.
13. Mwanje Sunday of Nansana was picked from Owino market on 24th November 2020.
14. Kalunda Rashid of Bukasa was picked from Owino market on 24th November 2020.
15. Muhammad Kanatta was picked from Walusubi village, Namawojolo in Mukono District.
16. Okello Syson was abducted from Orom Subcounty, Kitgum-District by armed gunmen on the 10th December 2020.



Rt. Hon. Speaker and Hon. Colleagues, I want to speak to these families, somebody rise on the floor of this August House, the Peoples House of Parliament and advise me how to speak to these families on the state of the nation!! Are we preparing this country for retribution and revenge!

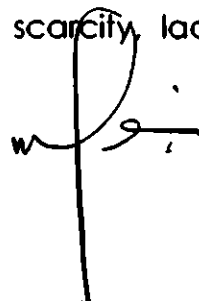
Politics and political space should be occupied for a positive purpose. Our political space is laden with negativity and survival. It is dangerously occupied by self-seekers and regime hangers-on who have become the single biggest danger to national security and political predictability.

Role of Government in Economic recovery

A mastery of the President of late is the illusion of defining categories of the economy. Real and vulnerable economy. Money and non-money economy. He asserts that only substantial private actors more so investors can transform people who are in non-money economy into money economy. Subsistence into commercial citizens. This is an indication that their future is only secure in private sector led development.

It is increasingly becoming evident that government has relegated almost all its core obligations to the private sector. It is ceding ground in most critical sectors such as finance, education and health. During the previous regimes, these sectors were prioritized by government and made strides in developing infrastructure that delivered affordable services across the country.

Government has remained with very limited footprint. Private commercial banks are the leading domestic lenders of the country. Government is competing with its citizens in accessing credit instead of competing with commercial banks in providing credit. The most dilapidated and poorly remunerated schools are public schools. In the health sector, government health facilities are characterized by absenteeism, drug scarcity, lack of

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ambulances and poorly remunerated personnel. Nonetheless, citizens are struggling to access cheap credit, education and medical care. The government is seeking to secure their future in after life not during life. Apart from been destined for doom, a poor, unexposed and sick citizen cannot enter the chartered money economy.

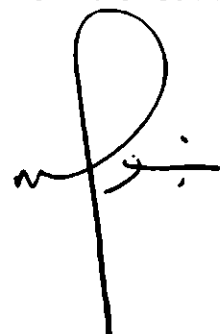
Preference is usually given to foreign other than local investors on the justification that the former bring huge sums of money into the economy. In return, government awards them incentives such as tax waivers, land and guarantees among others. These are usually accessed through renting of positions and proximity to persons of authority.

It is not uncommon to notice an individual posturing to promoting commercial and industrial enterprises in almost every region of the country. Apparently, this is an attempt at transforming subsistence households into commercial ones. A decoy of conscripting investors into an autocratic network and its subsequent effect of primitive accumulation of assets.

Such persons thrive at the expense of ordinary citizens who are paid paltry wages in factories that are not commensurate to the value of their sweat. How then will they join the chartered money economy? Instead of safe guarding their interests, the President declined to assent to the Minimum Wage Bill that sought to address these inequalities. If this is not hypocrisy, its epitome of exploitation.

Government involvement in Public Private Partnerships (PPPs)

Rarely does the President own up to botched dealings of government. For once he admitted to sleeping on the job and owned up to his mistakes in the electricity sector.

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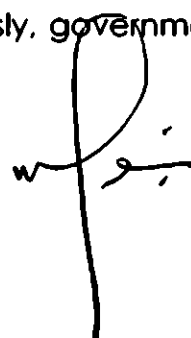
On several occasions, the President has attributed high electricity costs to the poor contract of Bujagali and UMEME. These are just icebergs of a systematic problem. Poor negotiation teams. While the private actors engage the best negotiators that they can find at the best remunerated terms, the State on the other hand engage the inadequately remunerated negotiators. As a result, they are exposed to the risk of being compromised for they place personal interest at the cost of national interest.

Instead of addressing the systematic deficiencies of government teams, the President places the blame on the private partners. No wonder, incidences of poorly negotiated public private partnerships such as SGS, Rift Valley Railways and Entebbe Express Highway among others are regular. Unfortunately, the legal and administrative costs associated with correction or renegotiation of the partnerships are extremely exorbitant. As a result, the country is bound to lose public resources to exploitative contracts.

On the other hand, when an efficient and effective partnership is realized such as Face Technologies, the government is quick to take over irrespective of its inadequate preparedness. While it may be too early to make a comprehensive judgment call, more preparedness was required by the successor i.e. Uganda Security Printing Company. Such take overs ought to be preceded and informed by audits undertaken by Auditor General as required under Section 30(1) of the Public Private Partnership Act 2015. Unfortunately, such audits are rarely undertaken.

Legislative Agenda

As earlier noted, due to lack of a structured State of the Nation Address, this year's address did not enumerate government's legislative agenda. This was a clear indication that since this term was seized acrimoniously, government was yet to develop its legislative agenda.

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Unlike the President and his government, the Opposition in Parliament under the leadership of the Shadow Cabinet will spearhead the following in Parliament.

OPPOSITION LEGISLATIVE AGENDA MATRIX

| Sector | Legislative Interventions |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Justice and Constitutional Affairs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passing Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2019 • Initiating Constitution (Amendment) Bill to address aspects not covered in Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2019 • Initiating a Bill on National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy • Review affirmative action • Review of political representation system |
| Public Administration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiating Government Transition Bill • Initiating open vetting for Presidential appointees • Initiating a criteria for establishing administrative bodies • Review of discretionary presidential structures |
| Local Government | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of decentralisation policy • Review of criteria for creation of new districts |
| Security and Internal Affairs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiating Public Order Management (Amendment) Bill • Initiating Uganda Peoples Defence Force (Amendment) Bill |
| Gender, Labour and Social Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiating amendment to Employment Act • Review of externalisation of labour • Initiating Markets Amendment Bill |
| Finance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiating Public Finance Management (Amendment) Bill • Initiating liberalisation of the retirement benefits sector • Initiating public debt repayment structure • Initiating review of tax exemptions • Review of register of foreign and domestic investors |
| Health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restructuring of funding of health sector • Review of the Uganda National Minimum Health Care Package |

| Sector | Legislative Interventions |
|---|--|
| Education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Education Act • Instituting regulatory body for teaching profession • Review of criteria on the distribution of government schools |
| Accountability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking accountability committee findings with intended beneficiaries • Initiating Bill on citizenry led public audits • Initiating Leadership Code (Amendment) Bill |
| Information, Communication and Technology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiating amendment to Uganda Communications Act • Initiating amendment to Data Protection and Privacy Act • Review of minimum broadcasting standards • Reconsideration of National Biotechnology and Biosafety Bill |
| Water and Environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of criteria for awarding licences to commercial tree farmers in Central Forest Reserves |

I beg to Submit.



Mpuuga Mathias (MP)
Leader of the Opposition