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**Thursday, 13 February 2020**

*Parliament met at 2.36 p.m. in Parliament House, Kampala.*

PRAYERS

*(The Speaker, Ms Rebecca Kadaga, in the Chair.)*

*The House was called to order.*

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I welcome you to this afternoon sitting. I have just two matters to communicate. One is to remind the Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development that the meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women is due to take place next month in New York. I am wondering whether we are now up to-date in our country reports. In 2016, we were already late by seven reports. Therefore, we would like to know from the Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development whether the country reports are now up to date.

Secondly, this morning, I received a delegation of the African Women Leaders Network, based in Addis Ababa. Among other things, they came to remind me about Resolution 1325 and the fact that we are supposed to present Plan 3 under Resolution 1325. I remembered that we have never been briefed as a country and as a House about the plan of action.

Therefore, I would also like to ask the Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development to come and brief us on the implementation of Resolution 1325 of the United Nations but also the preparations for the third plan of action, which Parliament should be interested in knowing. Thank you very much.

There were a few issues of national concern. Hon. Komakech, two minutes.

2.39

**MR LYANDRO KOMAKECH (DP, Gulu Municipality, Gulu):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise up on a very urgent matter concerning our secondary and primaryschools in the country. We have been made aware that the rain for this year is going to be the heaviest since 1961. That is the report from the Meteorological Department.

The rain for this year is going to be the heaviest since 1961. Based on that, we have schools in this country that have not had any installations of lightning conductors. If you did a survey, you will find that most of our schools do not have lightning conductors and yet, these are areas where the population, in terms of students and pupils, is very high.

I would like to find out from the Ministry of Education and Sports about our state of readiness and preparedness in terms of ensuring that our children are safe in school, in the eventuality that thunder and rainstorms are going to be heavy this year.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I believe this is the resolution of this House we made that all schools should be furnished with lightning arresters. I think it is important to get an update on where we stand now.

2.41

**THE MINISTER, OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER (GENERAL DUTIES) (Ms Mary Karooro Okurut):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you, honourable member, for that very pertinent query. I will appraise the Minister of Education and Sports, who should come and inform this House how far we have gone with the matter.

Also, I would have loved the honourable member - because I think some of us are not privy to that report and yet, it is very important. Should we look it up in the Meteorology Department? It is very crucial but I wish you had uploaded it for some of us. Otherwise, I am going to inform the Minister of Education and Sports. Thank you.

2.42

**MR MICHAEL MAWANDA (Independent, Igara County East, Bushenyi):** Madam Speaker, thank you very much. I rise on a matter of national importance. The position of Deputy Governor of Bank of Uganda has been vacant for quite some time and you are aware that the Deputy Governor is the vice chairperson of the Board. Currently, the Board is headed by the Governor and also since there is no deputy, he is a deputy to himself.

This is a strategic institution. We all know the role that Bank of Uganda plays. If that position is not filled in the shortest possible time, we fear we might face some challenges. I am processing a Bill, as you are aware, Madam Speaker. I have been to Bank of Uganda. I had some issues to raise with the Deputy Governor. Nobody was committal to answering questions in respect to the position of the Deputy Governor.

Therefore, I would like Government to enlighten this House and the country at large of what is happening with the position of the Deputy Governor of Bank of Uganda. I thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable members, the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development should come and update us about when we shall get a Deputy Governor because despite the resolutions of the House to separate the management from the Board, they are still bound in the old law. It is important that we get information. Therefore, the minister should come next week on Thursday and give us a response.

2.44

**MS SANTA ALUM (UPC, Woman Representative, Oyam):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise on an issue of national importance, concerning the certification of academic documents. There is a lot of information in the public domain concerning the certification of academic documents, as a requirement by the Electoral Commission for those intending to contest in different positions in the country.

The uncertainty has caused a lot of panic in the public. For example, I have been receiving phone calls since yesterday and even today, from members and people from my district and even in Lango, trying to inquire whether the deadline of 15 February 2020, which was proposed some time back in the newspapers, is what the intending contestants are to go by.

I would like the minister concerned to come and give an explanation to the country as to the right information, as far as the certification of academic qualifications is concerned. I thank you.

**THE SPEAKER:** Fortunately, the minister concerned is here. May I add that yesterday, someone also came to my home to find out whether the deadline is Friday. They were telling me, “Madam, is it true that it is Friday?” “Minister for elections”?

2.45

**THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS (Prof. Ephraim Kamuntu):** Madam Speaker, this is an issue of general interest. If you give me time, I will give you a full report tomorrow. *(Interjections)* Well, on Tuesday, when Parliament is sitting.

However, clearly –

**THE SPEAKER:** Order. Please, allow the minister to answer.

**PROF. KAMUNTU:** I am saying the information is of general interest and I am going to crosscheck it and give the House full information on Tuesday.

**THE SPEAKER:** Is the deadline tomorrow?

**MR KISA:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I am seeking clarification from the minister. The deadline is clear in the public and social media that it is 15 February 2020. The minister is saying he needs more time. He needed surely to assure the country that 15th February is not the deadline so that he is given more time.

Secondly, the same information has been circulating relating to whether it is necessary for those who had their academic papers certified last time to have them certified by UNEB. Therefore, we need to get this information from the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs. Thank you.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable minister, in view of the urgency of the matter, perhaps you could send for some information and brief us before the close of business today. If the deadline is tomorrow, the country must know.

**PROF KAMUNTU:** Madam Speaker, most obliged. Thank you.

2.47

**MS ROSEMARY TUMUSIIME (NRM, Entebbe Municipality, Wakiso):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise on a matter of national importance regarding coronavirus, which is a threat around the world today. However, as a Member of Parliament for Entebbe, I am concerned about Government’s preparedness to handle it, given the fact that when you go to the VIP lounge, the VIP guests are not screened.

Secondly, they are only three health workers carrying out the screening. When there are a huge number of passengers going through the other channels, these health workers are really overwhelmed.

Therefore, I beg to know from the Ministry of Health how prepared we are to handle this matter. Thank you.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable members, of course, the issue of coronavirus is topical. Our airport is both a centre for exit and entry. So, the minister should come on Tuesday next week and tell us what they are doing at the airport and also the other entry points to this country.

**MS KAROORO:** Madam Speaker, there is supposed to be a statement. I believe that the minister is on her way. So, all these questions will be answered. Thank you.

**THE SPEAKER:** So, after the other statement, then she can as well answer the issue of Entebbe Airport.

2.49

**MR PATRICK NSAMBA (NRM, Kassanda County North, Kassanda):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. We are in the third quarter of the financial year and Kassanda District is one of the districts that are operating without units.

We have a district engineer with a budget approved by Parliament but in the third year, the engineer finds it hard to get a machine to work on the district roads.

At the moment, there is a full sub-county of Kamuli, which is cut off by the rain. The people of Kassanda run to the district but the district says they have no machine. Madam Speaker, one time, we brought the matter in the first quarter and you required the ministry to allow them use machines from other districts. The biggest challenge is that the other districts are also busy working on their roads. So, the engineer is left stuck. Every time there is a problem, he cannot solve it.

Madam Speaker, our prayer is simple. The Ministry of Works and Transport has some machines. We desire that at least, one grader is allocated to Kassanda District for the remaining part of the financial year so that our roads can be worked on.

**MR GUMA:** Madam Speaker, the first Member of Parliament, hon. Komakech, raised indeed a matter that was national in character. The second one did so in the same vein. The Member of Parliament for Entebbe Municipality raised a similar issue about coronavirus. Is hon. Patrick Nsamba in order to bring local issues of a district instead of going to see Gen. Katumba and sort out the matter there?

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I am glad that Members now have come to agree with me that the issues raised should be really of a national character. The others can be answered through questions. Please, do the needful.

Honourable members, join me in welcoming a delegation of concerned parents of children who are in Wuhan, China. They have come to listen to the response to Item no. 3, which we expect today from the Prime Minister. You are welcome.

Let us go to Item no. 3.

2.53

**THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Ms Betty Aol):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Parliament is a very important organ in the governance of the country. On 04 February, we made a resolution here on the change of the curriculum, which is for lower secondary schools and yet, the problem of education is not just that. The problem is enormous.

What we wanted was that there should be probably review policy commission to address the issue of education entirely. Even when you are building a house, you do not start strengthening it from up but you have to start from the foundation.

If we want practical education to be taken up seriously, we cannot go to secondary schools and then, say, we begin to address it from there. What are we curing in the change of the curriculum that should be implemented?

Parliament resolved here that the new curriculum should be suspended for further consultation. However, the Executive decided – it was the Prime Minister – to go ahead. Are we doing the right thing?

When our children register in primary schools, about 1.6 million are registered in Primary One. By the time they reach Senior One, 1.1 million children will have dropped out.

How is that change in curriculum going to address that enormous problem? We should actually see to it that education is compulsory and for all Ugandans. *(Interruption)*

**MS ADONG:** Thank you, Madam Leader of the Opposition for giving me way. The information I would like to give you is that last Saturday, when we were on the radio - of course, they called us to go and talk about the curriculum. One of the teachers who attended the training said that even the trainers from National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) were disagreeing before them on how to train them.

One comes and gives a different position and the other gives a different position. This means that they are also not sure of what exactly they are giving us.

**MR KASIBANTE:** Madam Speaker, what is taking place outside here is looking very awkward. It is putting Parliament in a very bad image. The Ministry of Education and Sports is not only in defiance of the resolution that we took here but there is a lot of belittling of Parliament.

I have heard from the Executive Director of NCDC saying that this is for the technical people and not for the politicians. We are like we are not in charge of this country as the Parliament of the Republic of Uganda.

I have heard information from publishers who were contracted by NCDC and they signed memoranda of understanding to publish books. They were supposed to be submitting the books by end of next month. Before even the date came, NCDC and the minister herself came here and laid on the Table copies of books that have been published by NCDC.

They are stuck out there and they do not know whether- they had had hope when Parliament took a decision to suspend. However, now the ministry is insisting that it cannot hear from Parliament and that Parliament has no powers to suspend a curriculum because it has to be for the technical people. That is the information I wanted to give.

**MR KISA:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The information I would like to give you is that I have equally made consultations with the teachers who have been picked for training. Some of them are from projects that deal with education. They have equally consented that the time framework they gave them for training was not enough. Senior one is beginning on Monday but the materials supposed to be used are yet not in the schools.

I have just also read from the papers that there is beginning of distribution of books next week but it is clear that over 4000 schools will not get curriculum materials. This properly implies that the NCDC and the Minister of Education and Sports are not prepared for this. I thank you very much.

**MS BETTY AOL:** Madam Speaker, you can see the magnitude of this problem. It is enormous and great. That is why information keeps coming *–(Interruption)*

**MR ABALA:** Thank you very much, Leader of the Opposition, for giving me way. I would like to give you information that last Saturday, while on Etop Radio talking about curriculum, two things happened. One that came out clearly and we are shocked is that we were starting from secondary but the Senior Inspector of Schools of Ngora told us that they are already implementing the reviewed curriculum of primary schools and Parliament is not aware.

Secondly, the information that came out is that not all schools’ teachers were trained. You can now imagine a scenario where there are 12 subjects and you have four trained teachers. What are you going to do with the rest? That is the information I wanted to give you.

**MS BATTY AOL:** Thank you for all the information. However, I would like to let the country know that Parliament should be respected by the Executive. Even if you now want to go ahead with the implementation, definitely you cannot just do it the way it is being done. You should find a better way of respecting the resolutions of Parliament.

Secondly, we have a lot of problems in education and the biggest problem is the dropout of our children. The bigger population of our country is not highly educated. We want something, which will address compulsory education for our people from probably Primary One to Primary Seven. At least to say that up to the age of 16 years, our children must be in school. We can make it compulsory by not just lip service but by a reviewed policy.

Funding of education - funding for teachers and children- at least I went to school when in primary, parents would not buy books. You would just get books from the store. Gone are those days and I think those days, everybody was given chance to go to school.

There are people who read and were properly catered for here but they do not care about the population of Uganda, which are being left out; the children who are being left out of education because their parents cannot afford. What is the country going to do about them?

Instead of thinking about Senior One, change the curriculum, let us have something better. Why don’t we start addressing the issues -*(Member timed out.*)

**MR MAWANDA:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Last week, we deliberated on this matter and pertinent resolutions were taken. Government has decided to defer or refuse to take our decisions. This is a very serious matter.

Now that the Leader of the Opposition has raised this matter, wouldn’t it be procedural right for us to be given an opportunity to further discuss this matter and also take a decision once again and we see what takes place further? Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**MR SSEKIKUBO:**  Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. We all belong to this institution called Parliament and Parliament is not a personal wish of anybody but it is a constitutional command that we have three arms of Government.

Under this Constitution where we all swear before taking our rightful places in this Parliament, for the sake of reminding Members and the general Public, Article 79(1) provides that, “*subject to the provisions of this Constitution, Parliament shall have power to make laws on any matter for the peace, order, development and good governance of Uganda.”*

Article 79(2) “*Except as provided in this constitution, no person or body other than Parliament shall have the power to make provisions having the force of law in Uganda except under authority conferred by an Act of this Parliament.”* and the last one;

Article 79(3) “*Parliament shall protect this Constitution and promote the democratic governance of Uganda.”*

Honourable members, we seem to be veering off the Constitutional Order and it is a sad moment, in a sense that, for Parliament to resolve and you find civil or public servants not having the reasons to come before Parliament to explain themselves but choose to address the press, turn Parliament into a subject of ridicule, what more reasons are we going to have to sit in this Parliament to deliberate on matters of this Country, if we are being treated in such a ridiculous and demeaning manner? Honourable members, the ball is in your court. It is up to us. We are either here sitting and keeping positions because we want to be members of Parliament or we take our rightful places and decide for this country.

The decision to halt the curriculum was bipartisan. It was agreed to by the Government side and the opposition. When we sit here - and this is the highest number of Parliamentarians in the history of this country, how come that such a number – *(Interruption)*

**Mr Ndeezi:** Thank you, my honourable colleague, for giving way. Madam Speaker, the honourable member is aware of the situation where the pronouncement of this House is binding and where it is not. When a pronouncement by resolution is made here without an Act of Parliament, that pronouncement has always been referred to by our friends in the Executive as not binding and merely advisory.

It is not the first time. Many times we have passed resolutions here but they are not implemented by our colleagues in the Executive. They say the resolution was only advisory.

Therefore, may I beg the Member to advise us on the situation where we as Parliament can ensure that our resolutions are binding on the Executive.

**Mr ssekikubo:** Madam Speaker, whatever positions are taken, we are guided by the Constitution unless a Member moves a point that, “I’m not in consonance with the Constitution.” I have read the provisions of the Constitution, the supreme law of the land and the powers vested in Parliament. Unless Parliament sits as an arm of Government, its powers and authority are eroded. As long as we are in democracy and we go by the rules and the Constitution, there is no way Parliament can be disregarded in a matter that affects the population of this country.

I would, therefore, wish to move that this matter be brought to the House. Fortunately, amidst us is the Leader of Government Business to explain the circumstances under which the resolutions of Parliament were disregarded and from nowhere, they insist that they are proceeding against the Parliamentary resolutions; well aware that Parliament at the end of the day has the final say on the budget that will run this curriculum.

Honourable members, you have the powers unless you want to legislate yourselves out. If you are not here for only purposes of picking the salary and you are contented with that, we better stand the ground*.(Interruption)*

**Mr ssemujju:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Member for yielding the Floor. I saw the substantive Minister of Education and Sports here once since this Parliament started. She always sends her juniors to answer.

When it came to this resolution, we read in the papers that she was briefing Cabinet and swearing that it must continue. The information I would like to give is that may be as Parliament, we made a mistake of approving “Her Majesty” to be a minister and she is not answerable to anyone. That is why she does not respect Parliament. She will send her juniors and she begins implementing against the resolution of Parliament.

This is a matter of policy. Why then do you present policies for Parliamentary approval? If Parliament says, “We are uncomfortable with this policy,” then you continue as if Parliament does not exist. I wanted to give you that information and may be later, if I am allowed, to move that “Her Majesty” be referred to the Committee on Rules, Privileges and Discipline for contempt of Parliament.

**The Speaker:** Honourable members, I think we need to end this matter. First of all, the debate on that matter was done here in the public. It was not done in secret like they did with the Cabinet. We had legitimate questions and we want answers, which must come. The Minister of Education and Sports must come and answer those questions to the country.

If they do not, honourable members, if you have never exercised your power in the past, now is the time. *(Applause)* We are doing budgeting; you know where to bite. Therefore, the minister must come and address this House on the issues raised legitimately on behalf of the people of Uganda.

3.12

**The prime minister and leader of government business (Dr Ruhakana Rugunda):** Madam Speaker, I have listened to the concerns expressed by colleagues and by the Speaker herself.

Secondly, I see rather explosive languages being used to express points. There is no need to light fire when there is no firewood or fuel. Cool down tempers for all those concerned.

Thirdly, what Parliament and Cabinet are doing is mutually re-enforcing and complementary. That is the strong position of Government. Therefore, Government will come and the position of Cabinet will be explained to this august House.

However, let me say that when you are talking to colleagues; members of Parliament or ministers, let us talk to them respectfully. Let us not talk to them as if they are – *(Interjections)* – let us respect each other. My point is that let us have mutual respect *– (Interrupted)*

**Ms betty aol:** Madam Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister was emphasising respect. When we made a resolution here on 04 February, and they just decided to turn it down without even coming to explain to us here why they did so. I am wondering if that was respect to Parliament. If you are to be respected, you should also respect others.

Is the Rt. hon. Prime Minister in order to demand respect when they do not respect Parliament?

**The Speaker:** Rt. Hon. Prime Minister, I draw your attention to rule 217 of the Rules of Procedure of Parliament of Uganda on action taken reports. It state that:

“*A minister shall submit to Parliament an action taken report detailing what actions have been taken by the relevant ministry following the resolutions or recommendations of Parliament or committee*.”

Therefore, by sitting there by yourselves and saying, “we are proceeding,” you cannot escape responsibility here. You have to come and explain to this House what you did about that resolution. (*Applause)*

**MR NANDALA-MAFABI:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The procedural issue I am raising is that Rt Hon. Rugunda who is the Prime Minister of Uganda is my Old Boy from Busoga College Mwiri; so, he is a big boy.

The procedural issue I am raising, if you have a policy in place and this policy has a financial implication- that means you are spending public money and public money is appropriated by Parliament. The people who are supposed to appropriate the money have said do not do it but you go ahead and do it. Where do you get the money? Did the Cabinet have its own money or what?

If they do not have it and they have done it, Madam Speaker, under the Constitution of Uganda, it is not only contempt but something else.

Is the Rt Hon. Prime Minister procedurally right to continue saying that we wait for what they have done. And that they are aware yet we know, that if at all they try to implement what Parliament says that they should not has a direct charge on the Consolidated Fund and yet, the person who has authority on the Consolidated Fund is Parliament? Is it procedurally right that they should continue without coming back to tell us first before anything?

**MR SSEKIKUBO:** Thank you, Madam Speaker and Members. Madam Speaker, with greatest restraint, if we fail as individuals, we act as institutions. In that respect, the so-called respect the Rt Hon. Prime Minister was referring to even if you may demean the Members of this House, at least respect the institution called Parliament.

However erroneous you think and however superior you may think you have more stakes in the country, the highest regard should have been to the institution. If the institution of Parliament passed a resolution and you the Executive, you feel they are inferior; it is only courteous that you explain to Ugandans and the best avenue is the floor of Parliament.

Madam Speaker, I would like to take exception that Members of Parliament are not being disrespectful and we need to be forgiven and pardoned if we seem so. However, it is only the provocation and our being relevant to the people of Uganda.

Madam Speaker, the term is opening on Tuesday but apparently, they are taking an open cheque. Can we have the timelines like Tuesday, so that the Prime Minister or the Minister of Education and Sports herself can come and address Parliament before the same is rolled out?

The term is beginning on Tuesday and now they are saying -*(Interruption)*

**MR MAWANDA:** Thank you, honorable colleague, for giving way. The ministry is saying that it has trained four teachers; the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and Director of Studies to supervise the rest of the teachers. These three people have not been trained at all. How are they going to supervise the teachers who have been trained despite being trained haphazardly? How will they supervise them when they do not know what they are supposed to be training?

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I think we have already demanded that the Minister of Education and Sports comes here to answer the issues we raised last week. They were not jokes, they were spoken on behalf of the people of Uganda and we must have answers here in the arena of Parliament.

Therefore, those other questions will be answered when the minister comes. Therefore, Tuesday next week, Rt Hon. Prime Minister, Tuesday next week, so that the term starts when we are all together. Thank you.

**MR SSEKIKUBO:** I would like to thank the Rt Hon. Prime Minister. Madam Speaker, we all know the affinity the Minister of Education and Sports has with State House. We pray that the minister responsible does not in any way give the impression that that is the impression of the Head of State and Government. In addition, it is incumbent that she comes clean on this matter; either there is an abrogation of the Constitution or we are in a Constitutional order in this country. Thank you.

**THE SPEAKER:** Okay. We wait for the Minister on Tuesday next week. Honourable members, join me in welcoming a delegation from Germany, who are volunteering at Ebenezer Christian High School Bulenga. You are most welcome. They are represented by hon. Seninde and hon. Sseggona.

We also have a delegation from Obongi; represented by hon. Fungaroo and hon. Joyce Moriku. You are welcome.

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER ON GOVERNMENT PLANS TO EVACUATE UGANDAN CITIZENS STRANDED IN THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA ON ACCOUNT OF THE ON-GOING CORONA VIRUS SCOURGE

3.23

**THE PRIME MINISTER AND LEADER OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS (Dr Ruhakana Rugunda**): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister was asked to make a statement by this House on a serious matter that is affecting our country and the world. We take it seriously and the Government statement is going to be made by the Minister of Health who is also in charge of the operation and control of epidemics and who is doing and heading work to fight against the coronavirus.

Therefore, with your permission, Madam Speaker, the honourable Minister of Health can make this Government statement to the House. Thank you.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you. Honorable members, the Prime Minister and Leader of Government Business has assigned the duty to the Minister of Health.

3.24

**THE MINISTER OF HEALTH (Dr Ruth Aceng):** Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Rt Hon. Prime Minister, I will present a statement regarding the Ugandan students in Wuhan City Hubei Province, China.

This statement has been uploaded and it is online on your iPads.

Madam Speaker, allow me first of all to update this august House on the global outbreak of the Novel Corona virus 2019 in China and other parts of the world and to briefly give an insight on our countries preparedness.

As of today, 13th February, there is a total of 60,350 confirmed cases. 59,800 of these are in mainland China. When I talk about mainland China, I mean the entire China. 1370 deaths have been reported globally with one death occurring outside China in the Philippines. Recoveries total 6,074 in China.

Outside China, another 525 cases have been confirmed in 24 countries as follows; Japan – 28, the cruise ship in Yokohama -175, Republic of Korea – 28, Vietnam 16, Singapore – 50, Australia – 15, Malaysia 18, Philippines – 3, Cambodia – 1, Thailand – 33, India – 3, Nepal – 1, Sri Lanka – 1, USA – 14, Canada – 7, German 16, France – 11, United Kingdom – 9, Italy – 3, Russia – 2, Spain – 2, Belgium - 2, Finland – 1, Sweden – 1, and United Arab Emirates – 8.

No African country has yet reported any case. *(Interjections)*

The situation in Uganda

Uganda has no confirmed case of the 2019 Novel coronavirus as of today, 13 February 2020. However, the risk of importation into the country is still very high due to the rapid spread of the virus. Furthermore, Uganda is a major trading partner with China.

Many Ugandans travel to China for trade, education and tourism. There are also many Chinese nationals who come to Uganda for construction, business and tourism. Uganda also has links with the other 24 novel coronavirus affected countries.

In view of the above, it is pertinent that Uganda remains on high alert and invests adequately to prevent and respond.

Therefore, the Ministry of Health remains on high alert to identify any person who may develop signs and symptoms of the disease.

As of today, 265 travelers, both Chinese and Ugandans traveling back home have been isolated for purposes of follow up. Of these, 166 are Chinese nationals while 99 are Ugandan citizens. Of the Ugandan citizens, 10 are students who were supported to return home by their parents.

The Ministry of Health has undertaken the following measures to prevent, detect and respond to the 2019 novel coronavirus importation.

1. We have ensured that the Uganda Virus Research Institute has the necessary equipment and reagents to test and confirm any suspected 2019 novel corona virus samples in the country. This will enable early case detection, containment and management of the disease.
2. We have developed an information sheet that is distributed to travellers with telephone numbers of surveillance officers to contact. This is to facilitate travelers who are not feeling well to call for help at any time.
3. We have strengthened screening at Entebbe International Airport. This is done using thermal scanners that are able to pick a person’s temperature within a crowd in a range of 4-20 metres. It then identifies the person with raised temperature and creates a picture of the individual with finer details on a different screen. We have four of such. A health worker monitors images generated by the scanner on a different screen. The forms filled are deposited with the health workers at the health checkpoint before the traveler proceeds to immigration checkpoints.
4. Travelers from affected countries are provided with information on the 2019 novel coronavirus, where to report and seek care should they develop symptoms and put on self isolation for 14 days. These travellers are followed up by the surveillance officers on a daily basis.
5. Provision of information to the public through the available media outlets and other communication channels is ongoing and the ministry of health sends out press releases every two days
6. Risk mapping and assessment of vulnerable locations in the country is ongoing. This is to identify possible avenues of importation of the 2019 novel corona virus and high risk areas for intensified surveillance.
7. Entebbe Regional Referral and Naguru National Referral Hospital have been prepared to receive and manage people who may fall sick. Two ambulances have been provided to transport suspected cases to the appropriate places for follow up and care.

However, Madam Speaker, allow me to say here that we have 11 ambulances for emergencies but as you are aware, we have other outbreaks ongoing in the country. I will talk about that a little later.

1. The Ministry of Health developed a comprehensive response plan amounting to Shs 25.7 billion for a period of three months. The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development has committed to avail this money to the ministry to support prevention activities.
2. The Ministry of Health and partners have had two high level meetings with His Excellency the Ambassador of the Democratic Republic of China to discuss and plan how to cooperate on handling the novel Coronavirus. Areas of cooperation identified include;
3. Regular sharing of information – what we call situation reports – between the two countries so that we are updated in real time
4. Sharing of information on the location and status of the Chinese people living in Uganda
5. Mobilisation of Chinese translators. They have mobilised 60 and positioned them at the airport to support with language translation for those coming in and wherever they are required.

At the national level, the Rt hon. Prime minister has set up an inter-ministerial committee comprised of ministers of health, ICT and National Guidance, Finance, Planning and Economic development, Foreign Affairs, Disaster Preparedness, Education and Sports, Internal Security, Defence, Agriculture and Trade to follow up on activities taking place to prevent and give guidance.

So far, he has held three meetings with the inter-ministerial committee. Partners like WHO and USCDC are co-opted during such meetings.

His Excellency, the President also met with the inter-ministerial committee on 4 February 2020 to discuss the threat of the novel coronavirus and gave his guidance.

Government’s position regarding the students in Wuhan City

Uganda has about 105 students in Wuhan City University. The list of the students is available with their telephone contacts. 65 are known Government sponsored students while 40 are on private sponsorship.

Our mission in Beijing is in contact with these students on a daily basis. They created a WhatsApp group called *Wechat* which enables them to chat.

There is an officer who has been designated by the mission to follow up and he is called Ambassador Phillip Kanyoonzi. I have attached his telephone number.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also has contacts of the next of kin of these students. No Ugandan student in Wuhan has yet contracted the disease.

During discussions with the Chinese Ambassador to Uganda, we got a reassurance that the Chinese Government will do all it takes to ensure that the Ugandan students are well taken care of. Students in the university halls of residence are being provided with food by the universities while those outside the universities have to procure their own food.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is aware of the challenges the students are facing as regards their welfare. As such, it is in the process of wiring $ 61,800 to support the students in the interim as more evaluation of the situation takes place. Funds can be sent directly to the students through *PayWay* system to their telephones. We have been informed by the embassy that purchases are made online and delivered to the doorsteps of the individuals.

To date, Madam Speaker, no African country has repatriated her students. Rumours going on that some have done so are false. However, we take cognizance of the anxiety, distress, pain and uncertainty it has caused the parents. There is no travel ban for any student or traveler outside Wuhan City. Therefore, students and other travelers from outside Wuhan City have been travelling back home and, as I reported, 10 are with us.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has issued repatriation guidelines for countries to follow in the event that a political decision is taken to repatriate nationals. I said “political” because the WHO does not give guidance on repatriation. It is a political decision.

From the public health point of view, it is safer to keep the persons in Wuhan City in China. The city is under lockdown, meaning travel to and from the city is prohibited but the Chinese Government may not refuse to release nationals. However, the guidance given by the WHO – and I have attached it as Annex 1 – must be followed. I request that Members look at the guidelines.

Countries are strongly advised to assess their capacity to handle the outbreak, bearing in mind that repatriation of persons from Wuhan City into the country may potentially be introducing the virus in that country. Movements from the homes where people are isolated to the airport are no guarantee that one may not get infected or even acquire the infection from another once on the plane during transportation. Therefore, decisions to repatriate should take consideration of all these.

Does Uganda have the capacity to handle a Coronavirus outbreak in terms of specialised isolation facilities, with specialised equipment? My answer is: “No.” This virus is new and spreads very fast. In addition, the country is already overstretched with outbreaks. The Ebola threat from the DRC is still ongoing since 2018 and our health workers have been at the border since. There is also Yellow Fever in Buliisa, Moyo and Maracha. The health workforce, as you are aware, is very thin on the ground.

Madam Speaker, we went ahead and contacted various airlines that have flights to Uganda from China and the report is as follows. Chartering flights to Beijing City may be considered but not to Wuhan City since it is on lockdown:

1. Emirates Airways requires two months to avail a chartered flight;
2. Qatar Airways suspended flights to China;
3. Ethiopian Airways and Kenyan Airways are non-committal on charter services;
4. Fly Dubai has no flights to China.

However, we also found out the cost of chartering a plane depending on the size. The airlines said China is far and only the big airlines can go there. The costs vary from $500,000 to $1 million. Transportation between Beijing City and Wuhan City, where they are, is not clear currently but this can be discussed with the Chinese Government.

Madam Speaker, the Government has taken an interim position as follows:

1. Maintain the students in Wuhan City with close monitoring of their situation and welfare
2. The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and Ministry of Foreign Affairs to immediately release the funds to students through the available online system. I saw the requisition and I have monitored the processes. The money is ready for wiring
3. We have assigned two officers based at the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and Ministry of Foreign Affairs to join Mr Philip Kanyoonzi to liaise with the students and their relatives –
4. The Ministry of ICT and National Guidance to explore the possibility of establishing a toll-free number where the students can call directly
5. The Government is making arrangements to meet the parents and guardians of the students for purposes of addressing their concerns and counseling
6. Gather information on all Ugandan students in China from the Embassy in Uganda for purposes of follow-up as the situation evolves. This is important because the next city, which is heavily affected, is Quanzhou and it may undergo a lockdown very soon
7. Continue exploring the possibility of repatriation based on the WHO guidelines, our capacity to handle the outbreak and the situation as it evolves; and
8. The Ministry of Health is currently undertaking a costing exercise to estimate the amount of funds required to isolate, monitor and manage in the event of an outbreak among the group if they are repatriated.

Madam Speaker, the Government is closely following the events in China as they evolve while exploring the possibility of evacuation of the 105 students. I beg to submit. *(Applause)* However, before I take leave, I know Members may not look at the guidelines. Again, I stress that there are guidelines attached, as Annex 1, to my statement. I request that we consider these guidelines as we discuss.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you, honourable minister. I think I had introduced a team of parents who are seated in the Gallery. They came to be present today during the Prime Minister’s delivery of this important statement. Let me add that they have also formed their WhatsAPP group as parents, linking with the children who have also got their WhatsAPP group in that city. Therefore, you might want to interact with them at some stage.

3.43

**MR BENARD ATIKU (Independent, Ayivu County, Arua):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the Prime Minister and Minister of Health for quickly responding to this situation. However, there are some contradictions, which I would like to request her to clear. In the statement, the minister talks of movement within and outside Wuhan being free yet, at one point, she is saying the city is on lockdown, meaning nobody can move in or out of it unless under guided instruction. The information I have is that the city is on lockdown and any movement in or out of it must involve bilateral arrangement between the Government of China and Uganda. *(Interjections)* You have contradicted yourself.

Madam Speaker, I concur with the minister that there are students who are living within universities and others are outside the universities. However, there is no guarantee that their welfare, particularly supply of food or other basic necessities are coming in timely.

By yesterday, some of the students were crying out for support. When the minister said the money is still being processed, I would like to confirm from her whether this money can be used to procure food supplies. If the city is on lockdown, who will supply the food? These are some of the points that we must consider while debating this statement. The students are appealing for evacuation based on the limited access to supplies.

Secondly, I would also like to appreciate that no student has yet come into contact with the virus. That is good news and it should be a strong point for the Government to consider because what we must do is to ensure that none of them gets infected. We know the consequences. For us to prevent them from catching the disease, let us explore the opportunity available for their safe evacuation. If the evacuation to Uganda cannot be done, there are even other parts of China which do not have the virus. Therefore, the embassy in China should be able to explore some of these opportunities or options.

Madam Speaker, yesterday, as we met you in your office, we were also told that the ambassador, who should be leading these negotiations, is here in Uganda. He ran away from China because of the fear of this virus. *(Laughter)* Yes, I am giving you valid information. Even what the minister has stated here that the embassy has assigned a one Kanyoonzi, the students with whom I am in contact are not *–(Interruption)*

**MR OBOTH-OBOTH:** Madam Speaker, “running away from duty” is a strong statement. For the benefit of the future readers of the *Hansard*, if the honourable member does not say a little more, it would not be fair to that ambassador, who is not a member of this House.

Can the Member give facts? If not so, Madam Speaker, guide us on how we should proceed when he is making a serious statement like that. In fact, if it is proved that the ambassador ran away, it is a serious matter. How can the commander run away from the battlefield? *(Laughter)*

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable member, do you actually have evidence that the ambassador is here because he abandoned his station?

**MR ATIKU:** Madam Speaker, this matter is very passionate to me. We must find the balance here and there. It is a fact that the ambassador is here. I am not sure whether he ran away or came to report to Government that the situation is serious. *(Laughter)*

However, on a serious note, the fact is that the embassy is not in constant communication with these students. There is one student who was interviewed on NBS. From the conversation on the parents’ WhatsAPP group this morning, this student said he was being hunted down by the university where he is being hosted for having given an interview back home here and he is now hiding. If that is the cost of communication back home about the situation in which they are, what about the others?

Rt Hon. Prime Minister, it is a fact that people are not being allowed to communicate and we would like you to open the communication channels for these students with the Government as well as the parents and the public here in Uganda. Some of the information that they share will help this country on how to handle this situation.

Madam Speaker, I appeal to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Health to look into the guidelines that the WHO has set up to see how best we can get these Ugandans out of this situation. What other countries are doing is to first of all get their citizens out of that situation and the rest of the things follow.

Last night, the US released their citizens that they had evacuated from China, after isolation for 14 days. After finding out that they did not have the virus, they were released. We should be doing the same. Therefore, for this Shs 28 billion that the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development is planning to release to the Ministry of Health, the Government should also factor in the evacuation cost because that should be the ultimate target: getting our citizens out of danger before we think of other things.

I beg to submit. However, I request the Prime Minister to be in constant communication with the parents who are more worried here. There are parents who have said they are even ready to put in money to evacuate their children if the Government cannot do it. I do not see a situation where the Government will go there to pick the Government-sponsored students only, leaving others. These are all Ugandan children who are being trained to help this country.

Honourable Prime Minister, take it upon yourself to ensure that we get our children out of danger from Wuhan City as the situation escalates. What we anticipate is that even Beijing itself may not be safe. Quanzhou itself may not be safe and there are many other Ugandans there. We should pass the same message of getting Ugandans out of China until the situation normalises. Thank you.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable members, in the absence of evidence that the ambassador ran away, that part of the text should be expunged from the record. *(Applause)*

3.53

**MR ABBAS AGABA (NRM, Kitagwenda County, Kitagwenda):** Madam Speaker, I thank the Prime Minister for the statement. I would like to raise three quick issues.

First, I know the minister is not a politician and she may not be much detailed in diplomatic circles. On page 4 of the statement, the minister said, “the Ministry of Health and partners have had two high-level meetings with H.E the Ambassador of the Democratic Republic of China…” There is no country called the “Democratic Republic of China”. It is called the “People’s Republic of China”. This can cause a big diplomatic row because this is a Government statement and it is being read at Parliament.

Yesterday, I had a chance to interact with one of our colleagues – a Member of Parliament – who has a daughter in Wuhan. The Member was communicating with the daughter and I chose to be part of the discussion. I agree with the Government that it might be too early to evacuate our Ugandans in China. Currently, they are in places where they think they are safer, away from the virus.

The journey from where they are, even to the airport, is very risky and dangerous that they can catch the virus.

The daughter was explaining to us that even accessing food, the way they go shopping, is difficult and risky. If you have been to the shopping malls and back, it takes about two days to reintegrate you with your colleagues.

It might make sense that they are left there but we keep monitoring the situation. The girl told us that in case the country thinks of evacuating them, they must take the plane from Uganda direct to where they are, pick them and bring them this side without stopping anywhere because the risk of contracting the virus is high.

Therefore, the Government is right. We should keep our Ugandans there but keep monitoring the situation and the idea of sending them upkeep is good because she was also complaining that the little money they have been having is finished.

Even if it is difficult to access food, with the little money to support them, somehow they end up getting food and they can be supported.

Finally, some of the people who managed to come back passed through Entebbe without thorough checks. The ministry has strengthened the mechanisms at the border; one of the people who came in said that he reached the airport and signed the normal entry forms. There are some health papers you fill and return while at the airport. You hand them over and enter the country.

They entered the country and nobody had stringent measures to understand whether they had been to Wuhan or go through a procedure of being sure that people are free of the coronavirus.

I would like to urge the ministry to quadruple their effort at the airport and other border points. Uganda’s borders are porous and sometimes it has been strategic but currently, we need to tighten and screen the visitors as much as we can, thank you, very much.

3.58

**MR JAMES WALUSWAKA (NRM, Bunyole County West, Butaleja):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The statement we are discussing is very paramount. Yesterday, the Committee on Physical Infrastructure interfaced with a Chinese contractor on the alleged swindling of money on the Isimba Dam. We had to make sure that the Chinese tells us why he did not go for their new year.

I would like to agree with Government as usual for not repatriating people here. However, the challenge is that we are refusing to bring students but other people are coming. Rt Hon. Prime Minister, since you said that you do not want to bring the students but business people and other Chinese are coming, not only China but other countries the minister mentioned.

Madam Speaker, we came here in the crisis of floods and this Parliament appropriated money but up to now, the ministry is still preparing to disburse. There is nothing.

We saw locusts, though we have some issues. Rt Hon. Prime Minister, I have put you on notice for accountability of the locusts’ money. You may find that they will process that money for years and it may end up in the hands of the mafia. The intended people will not receive the money but when it was released and put on foreign accounts. We have seen scandals where the chairpersons LCV of Apac had Shs 3 billion on his account.

Rt Hon. Prime Minister, can you inform the country and can we know when exactly the money will go because processing will take years.

Otherwise, I would like to agree with the Government for not repatriating people but you should also have stakes on how they are facilitated.

Finally, when hon. Nabbanja came here, she gave the first statement on coronavirus. As one of our former commissioners, we respected her view. It was applauded that the country is prepared and has capacity to handle.

Now, the technical people say that they do not have capacity. Why did the technical people misguide the new minister? They told her that we have capacity but the Prime Minister said that we do not have. Do not use other ministers because they are new and give them fake information. Thank you.

4.02

**MR HASSAN FUNGAROO (FDC, Obongi County,Obongi):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. First, I thank the minister for this information. Ugandans are glad that so far, so good; we have not heard of a Ugandan who has died of this virus in China or a Ugandan who has contracted this disease.

We are also glad to hear that Africa as a whole is so far safe. With this, I would like to speak to the people outside Africa.

We have gone through mockery and ridicule as Africans as a result of diseases like Ebola breaking, Marburg and other disease. We were treated as if Africa was the only source of diseases for humanity in the world.

Today, this case is redeeming the people of Africa that we are also human beings and diseases of that nature can also breakout from other places.

We sympathise with people of China and the United States of America who have also a large number of people who have died there.

This should be a moment of assessing our vulnerability as a country. It is like an attack on all of us. The disease may not spread to Uganda from China. On a very serious note, the point of entry of the disease maybe from another country *-(Member timed out.)*

4.04

**MS JANE NABULINDO (Independent, Woman Representative Busia):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I was listening to the minister very attentively when she was presenting her statement. In her point, she said that they have installed a scanner at Entebbe airport and equipped hospitals like Entebbe and Naguru.

Honourable minister, I come from the border and I have Chinese in Busia constructing Mayuge, Namayingo-Lumiino Road and they get their equipment direct from China. They pick these equipment from Mombasa and their engineers escort them up to Busia.

Can you, please, install a scanner at the borders of Busia and Malaba and then equip the hospitals in Busia like Masafu Hospital, Busia Health Centre IV, Tororo Hospital, Namayingo and Bugiri hospitals?*(Interruption)*

**MS AMONG:** Madam Speaker, I would like to give my honourable colleague information because the member for Entebbe Municipality had just talked about the issue of the scanner. The people coming through the VIP do not go through the scanner. Therefore, we need to find out how the minister is handling that.

Secondly, there was an issue where the minister said private students who stay outside the university cater for themselves. Where do those students get the money? How will they receive the money? We are now saying we are sending money for catering for the students who are the other side. It is also known that all the banks are closed. If the banks are closed, how will this money be accessed to be given to those students? (*Interruption)*

**MR KIPTERIT:** Thank you, my honourable colleague, for giving way. Amudat is also a border district, bordering Kenya and there is free movement of people and goods from Kenya and Uganda.

I would like to ask the Government, which plans we have to also put those scanners there because somebody can be infected in Kenya and wants to cross to Uganda. Which plan does Government have? That is the information I would like to give you.

**MS NABULINDO:** Thank you very much for the information. Madam Speaker, the people of Busia are really worried because we also have the Wagagai Gold miners who are constructing a factory in Busia and have married our girls. My request to the minister is to equip all the borders. Thank you.

4.07

**MR ABDULATIF SEBAGGALA (Independent, Kawempe Division North, Kampala):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. As a matter of urgency, we must act very fast. There are no signs that the Coronavirus is going to be a closed chapter in the next two to three weeks or a month.

The situation is worsening every day. Yesterday alone, it was announced that 242 people died and this has been the worst case since Coronavirus came into existence. Almost 1,500 new cases were registered. The worry about our students in China is that if the situation worsens when there is no room for evacuation, what will be our answer?

We must act now because it has been established that every other day, the situation is worsening. We have around 72 Government-sponsored students but we also have more than 200 privately sponsored students –*(Member timed out.)*

**THE SPEAKER:** I wanted to relate your contribution to the guidelines issued by the World Health Organisation. Address the guidelines as well.

**MR SEBAGGALA:** My humble request, Madam Speaker, is that as we really know that – Because as I have said, there are no signs that the situation is normalising now. My worry is that when we think about the other step of evacuation and there is nowhere we can ensure that that is implemented, I request that as we try to engage the Chinese Government, let us plan accordingly so that we save the lives of our students and Ugandans in China.

**MS SSENTONGO:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to appreciate the Minister of Health and the Prime Minister for ably articulating how they are going to help our students.

Knowing the fact that the disease is deadly and our students have been isolated, I would like to know from the minister how their psycho-social welfare is being dealt with. It is not only the physical that tortures but also the psychosocial torture. I appreciate that there is welfare that is going to be sent to them. Who is the contact person for our students to know that they have received the welfare that they need and have received the psychosocial support and that they are okay? - By the time we evacuate them or the disease gets cured, our students will be psychologically, mentally and physically okay.

Secondly, I would like to know from the minister and Prime Minister. They have said that Uganda has no capacity to manage the Corona Virus. How sure are you that the virus will not come to Uganda, considering the fact that the business people are going to and from China at leisure? That is my question.

4.12

**MS SANTA ALUM (UPC, Woman Representative, Oyam):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Let me thank the minister for this information that she has given to Parliament. As the minister was making her presentation, she mentioned the number of students in one university. However, there are many other students who are not in this university but are in isolated colleges and universities.

I spoke to one of the students from my constituency this morning. He is in one of the universities but they have been struggling to get in touch with our embassy in vain. These students are also running out of food. They have been isolated and if they want food, it is through their lecturers to go and buy; then it is brought to their isolated dormitories.

As for now, they are running out of money and have tried to get in touch with the embassy in vain. All the banks have been closed. They are not allowed to get out and do any other kind of transaction, food or money.

As the minister presented, she mentioned that some of the students – about 10 of them – and some other people have come into the country. This puzzled me because given our weak healthcare system - and some of the students have already come back - We have parents here who are crying that some of their children must also be brought back –*(Information)*

**MS FRANCA AKELLO:** Thank you very much, hon. Santa, for giving me the opportunity to give you information. Madam Speaker, I would like to inform the House and hon. Santa that even members of Parliament who travelled recently to China should be investigated.

It is true that some Members were in China recently and we have interacted with them. Since we do not have the exact information regarding the longevity of this virus when you get it, we also get worried in the House. Thank you.

**THE SPEAKER:** On that one, I think I will ask the Clerk to identify the Members who travelled last to China – *(Applause)* - so that we can isolate them. *(Laughter)*

**MS ALUM:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. This poses a very serious concern. In addition to what hon. Franca Akello has mentioned, I also travelled back - not from China but from Kenya – and I was not checked. Therefore, if there are students and other people traveling back from China into the country yet the minister is saying there is a WHO guideline – *(Interruption)*

**MS AMONG:** Thank you, honourable member, for giving way. Madam Speaker, the minister said we have a weak system here especially on how to manage – if we cannot manage just mere locusts, what about the Coronavirus?

We are better off keeping those people the other side than allowing them to come and kill the 42 million people here.

4.16

**MS LUCY AKELLO (FDC, Woman Representative, Amuru):** Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. Allow me to also add my voice in thanking the minister for giving us information.

I also would like to thank the minister for being frank and sincere when she said that we have no capacity to deal with this outbreak. When you talked about 11 ambulances, I got very worried. Out of the 11 ambulances, how many would we consider functional?

When I talk about a functioning ambulance, I mean a well-stocked ambulance that can handle an emergency. It is not the one that is ready to transport a body from one place to another. Most of our ambulances are like that.

When you talked about information being shared with all the travellers – I travelled to Nairobi last week. At our VIP Lounge, there is no information being given out. Maybe it was only me but I did not see any information being given out. You also need to strengthen that area.

Secondly, of course when we have such a situation, we get a lot of information on social media. There is actually one that caught my eye. It said that there was emergency research done by 10 doctors in China and found that Chloroquine can treat this virus. The person claims the research is going to be published soon.

These are some of the things which –*(Member timed out.)*

**THE SPEAKER**: You can close.

**MS LUCY AKELLO:** These are some of the things that give us divided attention. So, what strategy have you put in place, as a ministry, to actually manage some of this misinformation? If it is true, how best can we stock Chloroquine so that it does not run out of stock? Thank you very much.

4.18

**MR DAVID MUTEBI (NRM, Buikwe County South, Buikwe):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the Government for the prompt response to this problem and the measures that have been undertaken. However, I would like to note that within these measures, we have not considered the people who entered the country especially from China almost at the verge of the announcement of this outbreak.

You have noted, honourable minister, that Uganda and Africa at large have not registered any cases. However, there has been some news running today over radios that there are three suspects of Chinese origin that have been identified this morning in Mukono. I think you should interest yourself in these people and work out a strategy that can track backwards to those who went to China prior to the announcement – probably within the last three weeks before the pronouncement was made because we may be facing a risk, which is not yet identified.

4.20

**MR NOAH MUTEBI (NRM, Nakasongola County, Nakasongola):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the ministry for its efforts to save Ugandans. I have keenly listened to the minister’s presentation where she states that we have isolation centres in Uganda. However, she did not name those isolation centres. When Corona virus broke out in China, the country came up with isolation centres.

As poor as we are, we might not be able to construct an isolation centre. As Parliament, we would like to know those isolation centres because the rumour on social media is that there are a number of cases in Mukono whereupon people have been isolated in their homes. Therefore, we would like to know those isolation centres, which the ministry has created.

Madam Speaker, the minister has also said that they are looking for about 60 Chinese interpreters. I would like to inquire from her whether the 60 interpreters are enough for this country because a number of Chinese and other people are entering this country from several borders. Some are entering the country through Katuna, others are coming in from Entebbe International Airport and Busia. Will the 60 interpreters be enough to handle this situation when called upon?

On the examination at the airport – as you enter Entebbe International Airport, there is no much examination as the Member of Parliament for Entebbe Municipality stated. Madam Speaker –*(Member timed out.)*

4.22

**MR GODFREY ONZIMA (NRM, Aringa County North, Yumbe):** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity. I have heard and gone through the report. Some of these issues that are raised in the report are issues that – when you look at the outbreak of Ebola after it was imported from Congo around 1998 by our soldiers who had gone to fight there, and you also look at the condition of our people in Congo, the whole situation puts one in a dilemma.

When you say they should come in, the problem is then whether we are going to be safe. If we leave them there, whether the situation - so, it is really a very disturbing situation?

I was watching a television news story about a cruise ship that was supposed to go to Japan. They had it quarantined and nobody from that ship was allowed to come out for 14 days until yesterday when they were cleared. Today, it also emerged that out of these people who were cleared, 17 already have coronavirus. The situation is tricky.

However, my concern is: if these students – first of all, the number given in the report is about 105 students in Wuhan. However, on the *WhatsApp* group, you will find they are talking about 204 students. They are isolated and the place has been locked down. These students are quarantined. There is no movement and/or contact from one person to another.

If we were to help them, how do we do that? What arrangements has the Chinese Government, in collaboration with our Government, put in place?

I was also looking at the situation – if it were possible, these isolated students can be put closer to each other *–(Member timed out.)*

4.24

**MS ESTHER ANYAKUN (NRM, Woman Representative, Nakapiripirit):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the Minister of Health, for giving us this report that everyone in this House has been yearning for.

I just would like to ask a question because we have been seeing these Chinese nationals moving – they are traveling in Uganda and other parts of the world and they have freedom to travel, then I can imagine our own Ugandans who are in China who are not in position to come back home.

We have specialised organisations, for example, the International Organisation for Migration; they are good at repatriating people whether in whatever condition. If the Government of Uganda can work with such organisations to see how these people can be handled, they screen them before they leave Wuhan and when they arrive in Uganda, we can first quarantine.

Sustainability; Madam Speaker, we are seated here with hon. Mudimi and we looked at the money - $16,000. When you divide it by 106 students who are there, each student gets around $588 and when you multiply it with the Chinese RB, it is only 5,000 RB. But then for how long will you give this little money? Can it be sustainable and help them to do all those things that an individual - for example, the requirements of the ladies that are more than that of the boys.

The brochure has also given us the guidelines. Yes it is true but they have also cautioned us that if a Government –*(Member timed out.*)

4.26

**MR ROBERT KASULE (NRM, Nansana Municipality, Wakiso):** Thank you, Madam Speaker and I thank the Government, through the Minister for Health, for the statement. My only concern is the consistence of the information we are getting. We should not allow everybody to be giving information on coronavirus. We must have a guided situation room that gives information out to the public.

Otherwise we are stigmatising the Chinese community. Whenever people see them, they talk about coronavirus; it is as if we want to be respected when we go out and our sub-continent is full of Ebola. Let us also treat the Chinese the same way. China is a sub-continent with over 1.2 billion people. It cannot be that everybody from China has coronavirus. Therefore, we must be guided in the communication that we are taking.

I also support the matter of the students staying put. Let them stay where they are and they are catered for by everybody who can. Let us galvanise our forces to help them where they are; not only students, we have people who have gone there for other businesses and are also under lock. Therefore, let us help our friends from where they are.

Honourable minister, that money that you are trying to send there is little. Maybe we should also give a number such that they contact the ministry this side if they are failing to contact our embassies.

Madam Speaker, the evacuation guidelines should help and we should also have guidelines here of how we should behave. I am only worried that there were some messages that said that we only acquire this virus through fluids –*(Member timed out.*)

4.28

**MS ROSE AYAKA (NRM, Woman Representative Maracha):** Thank you, Madam Speaker and I thank the minister for the statement. I would like to reemphasise the threat, which was in the social media that there are cases in Seeta. The minister needs to make some clarification in that regard.

Secondly, we are handling this coronavirus from a myopic approach. We are only thinking about the flights and aircrafts landing and we are ignoring the road system. This virus moves from person to person and already, a number of countries have cases. If we are only going to focus on flights landing at Entebbe, we might miss the point.

Therefore, on that note, we have a very serious gap which is at our entry point. Last time, we reminded the House that there is no screening system, no set offices, and no equipment at Busia border. Can the minister kindly confirm that this system has been updated and that we have a health officer seated there with equipment and he is checking on every person who is entering into the country?

Recently, we travelled across the border and on entry into Kenya we were screened but coming back to Uganda, there was no such thing; there is no system in place. Therefore, the minister needs to confirm that there is a system set in place especially at those border points other than Busia.

Madam Speaker, the safest thing is to go by the World Health Organisation to have those people stay in China. We will have to go by that instead of struggling. The best thing we can do is to supply the systems –*(Member timed out.*)

4.30

**MS MARGRET BABA-DIRI (NRM, Woman Representative Koboko)**: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and I would like to thank the minister for the statement. We are really worried about our children there in China. Well, you said that they should stay there for a while but what is their condition there? Are they being fed and treated well? The Chinese maybe thinking of themselves first because of limited food and they may be doing nothing for our children. Who has seen that the children are well and they are being fed?

Secondly, we are giving a lot of time saying, let us wait. The situation may be worsening; suppose it worsens, what happens? I have heard that some planes no longer reach China and as the situation worsens, no plane will go there. How shall we bring our children back home here?

Thirdly, I understand that people are still coming in from China to Uganda. I would like to know where the quarantine is for keeping these people. How many people are being quarantined in Entebbe? Some people may be coming and associating with us?

Lastly, if there are those already suspected to have the virus - the situation will be worse if this coronavirus reaches here. We shall die more than with HIV/AIDS and Ebola. Therefore, let us take care and see that we have enough medicine –*(Member timed out.*)

4.32

**MR JAMES ACIDRI (NRM, Maracha East County Maracha):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the Minister of Health for the statement on behalf of the Rt Hon. Prime Minister and the Government. However, when I listened to this statement, it sounded like news on CNN today.

The facts are already available in the public domain and I take exception to this statement because when we say no African has died and yet we are at the same time saying we do not have mechanisms to try and track - you know news channels like CNN do not take a lot of interest in covering our situation. I would rather advice that the statement is revised to say that just based on your knowledge, no African has died. This will leave room just in case there are Africans who have died and you have never captured the reality of their death. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

4.34

**MR COSMAS ELOTU (NRM, Dakabela County, Soroti):** Thank you, Madam Speaker and I would like to thank the minister for the statement as well as the House for the great concern for our children who are out there not only in China but other parts of the world.

Madam Speaker, Uganda as a country is credited for the various fights it has put across in the various outbreaks of diseases over time, particularly Ebola. I know very well that the minister seated here with us has played a key role in fighting those various outbreaks in the past.

As we pay keen attention to our nationals outside the country, I would like to draw the attention of this House and the Government that we need to do a lot more to ensure that the whole population of 40 plus million people in the country is fully protected.

My brother raised the issue that there is a bit of misinformation in the public. I request that the Government through the Ministry of Health and probably the Prime Minister’s office take particular keen interest in getting a way of getting information at the right time to the whole population appropriately. Unless information goes out there, our people will remain totally blank and not knowing what to do in case of any outbreak.

Otherwise, the approach adopted or whatever the minister has come up with will go a long way in helping our children in China.

On the issue of our border points, I would like to draw this *–(Member timed out.)*

4.36

**Mr silas aogon (IND. Kumi Municipality, Kumi):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Allow me to first appreciate our team, most especially the Ministry of Health led by the minister. I have the confidence that you can manage this issue given the fact that we had Ebola just near here in Congo and you managed to close it out. Uganda has a good track record.

I have a few concerns. First, how are the recovery statistics looking like for those who contracted the virus? We should be able to get such information. What is the percentage of those that are able to recover after getting treatment?

Secondly, do we have assurance that we now have contact with all our persons trapped in China? Do we have a mechanism for making sure that the public fully participates in sharing information about this Coronavirus and those who are trapped in China?

Can you provide a clear and realistic breakdown of our work plan and budget for the money that you are spending on Coronavirus?

Do you also have the ability to ensure efficiency in resource utilisation? Of recent, we are spending a lot on issues of disaster. Locusts are taking Shs 19 billion, Coronavirus is taking about this and Ebola recently took the other. What is the efficiency level of our country in making sure that we do not waste resources?

Honourable Minister, after that, we would love to see that you return resources, which are like balances to the treasury. There we shall be confident that you are doing a good job. We have never heard in this country –*(Member timed out.)*

4.38

**Mr gaffa mbwatekamwa (NRM, Kasambya County, Mubende):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to thank the honourable minister and the Government for trying to think about our people. However, I wish to know from the minister; if we compute the money you mentioned you are intending to wire, it is around maybe one point something. Isn’t it like pocket change for you? Can it take you in our country Uganda for the whole month?

How about if we are to considered the standards of living in China for the people who are supposed to be given this money? Above all, are you going to be remitting it monthly as if they are getting a salary?

Another clarification I wish to seek from the minister is that she mentioned that we should not worry; Ugandans are purchasing food online. If people are quarantined, how are the deliveries made? Are they delivering food the way we wire money like in the Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) when someone has ordered online, that food comes by air or cloud? Who delivers this food? Can you help us understand how they are moving –*(Interruption)*

**Mr nsereko:** Thank you, hon. Mbwatekamwa for yielding the floor. Madam Speaker, the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister and the Ministry of Health have informed us that as a measure, some resources have been put on standby.

The issue is that in China, we do not only have students. We have people who are non-students there and even undocumented Ugandans. There are two issues here; you are not only looking at those that are in Wuhan Province. There are also those in different cities but because interaction is limited in China and the business is not moving, even the airlines that would have moved them out are no longer flying there. That means that they are there against their own will.

If Kenya Airways does not fly them anywhere and you had paid a ticket to fly with Kenya Airways, it is against your will that you are there. Who takes care of you? All airlines have declined to take responsibility of those persons that are there because they see this as a natural calamity.

Therefore, I would like to give my brother more information that as they cater for those students, let them use the bigger chunk of the money to trace how many Ugandans are in China so that we take precautionary measures to help them be safe where they are. We shall spend less rather than have victims here on ground. Thank you.

**Mr mbwatekamwa:** Finally, we have heard reports that there is an allegation that a certain gentleman from China who happens to stay in Mukono has exhibited similar symptoms today of someone having Coronavirus. They were alleging that the ministry has confirmed.

Therefore, can the minister help us clear the air whether it is an allegation or a fact such that you can calm our anxiety? Thank you.

4.42

**Mr moses kasibante (Independent Rubaga Division North):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. About last week, the junior minister in charge of Health, who I think was carrying a Government position, advised Ugandans living in China to stay there. I would like to get clarification from the minister on the status of those Ugandans in China who were advised to stay there.

Away from the students, now that Government gave advice, which I think would be ideal, I would like to get their status. Where are they and who is catering for them? They would be travellers and had wanted to come back, but now the position of their country of origin is that they should not.

Secondly, Entebbe International Airport and other entry points in Uganda have papers that travellers normally fill but they are for formality. One time, I was travelling through Entebbe International Airport and I tested them. I just did not put anything and I did not see any person calling me back to fill the paper. This is very serious.

You have to get information of people who are travelling through the entry points. When I gave in mine without filling, I sat in the VIP Lounge waiting whether they could detect and get me back but no one ever called me.

There are times you see disinfectants with the staff at the airport; they disinfect people; what about the luggage? When I am travelling, I have my luggage elsewhere and I can only pick it after I have been disinfected. This luggage includes the clothes that somebody wore on in which they sweated. All of a sudden, it is cleared but the person was disinfected.

I would like to understand from the Minister of Health what the purpose of disinfecting is *– (Member timed out.)*

4.44

**MS FRANCA AKELLO (FDC, Woman Representative, Agago):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the minister for bringing this statement. There were many rumours here and there. I have been in my constituency for the last two weeks almost on a daily basis, giving feedback from Parliament to my constituents.

However, in every meeting, Madam Speaker, I was being asked about this. Therefore, this statement is going to be an official source of information to all of us as we interact with our people.

Some members of my district were saying that China is only waiting for a court ruling this week to allow them inject or kill those that are quarantined as a permanent solution, which was a very scary message.

Madam Speaker, I would like to request the minister to include signs and symptoms that manifest and the incubation period from the time someone gets the infection to the time it manifests so that as we give information to people, they are also vigilant in terms of trying to monitor to ensure that they report to health units in case such signs show up.

Madam Speaker, I get disturbed and I know it is true that the country is not prepared. I thought this would be a point of preparation as a country. It is important, now that we have the information, that the country prepares for any emergencies that may come. We do not need to wait for the first case to be registered so that we start fidgeting here and there to prepare. I wanted to ask the minister whether they have plans for such emergencies.

Madam Speaker, this attack is in the whole world. As such, the Prime Minister or the minister in charge of the economy should come up with a statement on the impact of this outbreak on the economy. There are so many traders who are importing and exporting to China. At this level, we need to know the fate of these traders who are importing and exporting. It is important that they bring a statement as well. Thank you very much.

4.48

**MR JACK WAMANGA-WAMAI (FDC, Mbale Municipality, Mbale):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to clarify on one issue; whether the Ambassador is in the Mission or not, the Mission functions. There is an officer who handles education matters. We used to have education officers but now there is an officer in the Mission who handles all student affairs.

Honourable minister, you do not have to wait until Parliament asks you to come and report on something international. When there is an issue like the coronavirus, you should have rushed to Parliament to come and make a statement so that the people know. However, you were forced by Parliament to come and make a statement as if you do not know what is happening around the world.

Secondly, there are many Ugandans in China; in Wuxi, Xining, Guangzhou and so on. These are business people. Do you have the capability of monitoring these people when they come back from China? I once heard that you had quarantined people; that you were confining them in their homes. Do you have the capacity to follow up and find out whether these people have developed high temperature or not? This is a very serious issue.

Secondly, you said that the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development is organising money to send to students; 60 are Government students. What about the private students? They are outside and do not have access to food. At least for those in university hostels, the Chinese Government is providing food. What about the private students? What we want Government to do is to provide for all those students in China.

China is a powerful country and it is very concerned about this disease. It is working so hard to bring down the disease but as Uganda, how are we going to manage this if you don’t even have the capacity to monitor and know how people are entering the country and whether these X-ray machines that are monitoring the temperature *–(Member timed out.)*

4.50

**MS ROSEMARY NAUWAT (Independent, Woman Representative, Amudat):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the minister for the statement. The minister has given us measures to prevent, detect and respond to this virus and I am particularly concerned about the provision of information to the public through available media.

Honourable minister, you need to take cognisance of the fact that there are some parts of this country where there are no media houses or newspapers. An example is Amudat District. We get newspapers when the news is already history.

Currently, as Government is fighting locusts, some staff of NTV reported and indeed they confirmed what I have been taking about; that there is no network there. Therefore, Madam Minister, out of the Shs 25 billion, you need to put aside something to support the district health team of Amudat so that they can go to the villages and talk about the symptoms of coronavirus, how to prevent it and where to report.

Madam Speaker, concern has been raised about the US$ 61,000 for the 105 students. After Government giving that money, they should not think that, that is enough. You need to keep monitoring to see how long this money will take our students and if there is need to add something; Government should continue supporting them until such a time –*(Member timed out.)*

4.52

**MS ANN ADEKE (Independent, Female Youth, National):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the minister for the statement and I would like to inform the House that actually, the number that she has presented of students who are stranded in Wuhan is a contested figure. One of the students who I can identify by the name Thomas Owishami actually states that the students in Wuhan right now are 68 versus the 105 she has presented.

Therefore, there is an issue about the numbers. I think that shows a weakness within our Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding their inability to keep track of Ugandans who are in China and yet we have a foreign mission in China.

Madam Speaker, the minister also said that African countries have not evacuated their citizens. I have reliable information that six African countries have evacuated their students including Libya, which right now is grappling with security. It is unstable but it has afforded to evacuate its citizens from China; so, what about Uganda that has enjoyed 35 years of peace and prosperity?

The minister is speaking about sending money. However, there is a crisis right now because stores that have items have been closed down. That money is not going to be able to buy anything as stores with supplies are not operating. Everyone is in isolation so if we are going to send money, we risk a repetition of the times of Joseph in the book of Genesis, when money could not buy anything.

Madam Speaker, we are going to send money but the students cannot access anything. I read a story of a student who had to ride a bicycle for over 10 kilometres just to access a store because all the stores are closed. Therefore, sending money does not really solve the situation for the Ugandans abroad.

Lastly, the priorities that we are setting, as a country, are really wrong. We are prioritizing foreign nationals accessing our borders, including Chinese from China but not giving the same privilege to Ugandans.

As we speak, social media is awash with information that there are three victims somewhere in a Chinese company who are showing symptoms of the coronavirus. These people are accessing our borders but we cannot accord the same privilege to our citizens that we would be able to screen and identify who is infected and/or who is at risk and set them apart. Where are our priorities as a country?

I would like the minister to either confirm or allay our fears as to whether we indeed have a case of coronavirus in Uganda. Thank you.

4.55

**MR FRANCIS GONAHASA (FDC, Kabweri County, Kibbuku):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The first call I got while still in bed was from a parent whose child I helped send to China. His concern was about what is going on with his child.

There are very many children and I stand here to join the people who came into this House asking us to bring their children back. There is no justification. We have allowed the Chinese to come back into this country. We screen them and we quarantine them.

There are parents out there who want their children but to say that we do not want to bring the people out of China because we think they will bring the virus is an unfair position we are taking.

I would like to join Members of this House who think it is their children’s right to come back home if the conditions are bad.

I have been to places where you have the money but you cannot go out. You cannot access anything. All these things have been said by my predecessor. I normally do not want to say the same thing over and over again. You will send money but you do not know how long this money will take them and are there chances that we will find more money?

I would rather we bring those children back, screen them, quarantine them and when they are free of the disease, they join their families. They love their education but I do not think we should simply abandon them out there as a nation. Thank you.

4.57

**MR ALEX NDEEZI (NRM, Persons with Disabilities):** Madam Speaker, I have one specific question arising from page eight of the presentation, about the very important role of our parents. On page 8, the minister states, “*Government is making arrangements to meet the parents and guardians of the students for purposes of addressing their concerns and counselling.*”

My understanding is that the Government has not met the parents and guardians. We all know the very important role of our parents and guardians.

When are you meeting the parents and guardians? I know they are now listening to us in this Parliament. They have hope in this Parliament. Can you tell us when, where, what time and who will meet these parents on behalf of the Government? Thank you very much.

4.58

**MR ISAAC ETUUKA (NRM, Upper Madi County, Madi-Okollo):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I also would like to thank the Minister of Health for the statement presented.

As already said, the situation is getting worse day by day. When we consider the decision of sending money and keeping our students there - you realise there is no guarantee when this virus will be controlled.

Students have been locked up and they cannot get food and other facilities. We were told, in the statement, that purchases are made online and deliveries are made; who are these people and how are they allowed to come and deliver this and at what interval? Can we keep these students there?

As it was said in the statement, our interaction with China is frequent - trade, employment and we have so many people entering Uganda from China every day. If we are able to allow them to come, why should we keep the students there? I think keeping the students in China should be a very short remedy. Otherwise, we should have an immediate longer plan to evacuate them. We are not sure if our students are being helped. I request that something is done.

Secondly, there is need for official communication as has been emphasised because everybody seems to be giving information about this virus anyhow, which is causing a lot of anxiety. Besides the communication given, information in local languages should be disseminated by the Ministry of Health such that people are able to understand the situation at hand. Thank you.

5.00

**MR TOM ALERO AZA (NRM, West Moyo County, Moyo):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Honourable minister, thank you for the report.

In West Nile, we have fears about the spread of coronavirus because we are near porous borders. Refugees move freely through Koboko, Yumbe, Moyo, Adjumani and so on and as they move in, there is nobody checking them.

We also have multi-national companies in Sudan where some Chinese have got businesses and they normally move freely in and out of Uganda back to Sudan. Honourable minister, please take note of this. If you do not have a close check on this, we will have coronavirus spread in West Nile.

Recently, there was a spread of yellow fever in Moyo and Buliisa. How did yellow fever come to Moyo District where four people died? This is from Sudan. There are Chinese in Sudan. Therefore, help us by not preventing the spread of this virus amongst the host communities as well as those living in urban areas. Thank you very much.

5.02

**MS JOVAH KAMATEEKA (NRM, Woman Representative, Mitooma):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would also like to thank the honourable minister for the statement presented.

I know that she is responding to a specific question about students but at the same time, it seems to be a comprehensive statement. It seems like we are victimising the students, keeping them in Wuhan while we have opened our borders to those other people who want to come.

Secondly, I expected the minister’s statement to have the modes of transmission. These people are coming - we suspect them - and how can we protect ourselves from contracting this disease?

We see some people putting on masks but at the same time we have been told that this is not sufficient because it is transmitted through body contact and through fluids. Can we have clear information from the ministry as to how this virus is transmitted so that we can protect ourselves?

It has also been said that there are so many Ugandans in China and some of them would want to return home but there are no flights. I think we should get to know where these Ugandans are and arrange for a chartered flight so that some of them can pay and subsidize on the cost for the students.

This would be a good arrangement rather than just focusing on the students who are not able to pay. A lot has been said. Why keep the students in isolation in China when they are not affected yet? Bring them and put them into confinement here in Uganda? If any of them are sick – as we are dealing with the Chinese ambassador – we can also treat them using the means that others are using.

5.04

**MR DAVID ABALA (NRM, Ngora County, Ngora):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for giving a very clear statement. I am happy with the report.

Madam Speaker, we all know that this virus is very dangerous. Last Saturday, I was in Soroti Municipality and I went to a certain shop where there was a Chinese man and somebody said, “Have you seen the coronavirus?” That is very dangerous. As you know, the numbers are enormous. As we talk, 1,300 people have died worldwide and at the same time, over 60,000 are infected. This makes everybody scared and I am one of those people who are afraid of leaving our children in China.

Majority of the people dead are from China. That is why I do not agree with the minister, although she has produced a very good report. We must look for money and return Ugandans to Uganda and when they come back to Uganda, we should quarantine them. After all, they are in quarantine the other side *– (Member timed out.)*

**THE SPEAKER:** Please, conclude.

**MR ABALA:** Madam Speaker, they are saying delivery of goods is being done online. Is the delivery being done by robots or human beings? Assuming the delivery is being done by human beings who are suffering from this virus, don’t you think Ugandans who are the other side will also get the coronavirus? That is why we must look for money and return Ugandans back to Uganda other than leaving them to get the coronavirus in China.

5.07

**MR JOHN NAMBESHE (NRM, Manjiya County, Bududa):** Madam Speaker, the statement of the minister - in my considered view – is very hollow and lacking in value and meaning. She cites the reported cases from the coronavirus outbreak as the basis of the screening efforts in Entebbe but the numerous entry points we have in Uganda are open and there are no efforts to screen at those points at all.

I highly doubt the statistics that she based on. I must even say that the statistics she has given are not dependable. Much as they are talking about stepping up the screening efforts, the majority of our entry points do not have the screening services.

Madam Speaker, the World Health Organisation has identified 13 countries, including Uganda, as being most vulnerable. These are countries which have close ties with China. Actually, there is support that has already been given to these countries. I expected the minister to mention this in this statement – whether the support is in kind or cash. She has remained silent on that support and I wonder why she is silent, yet the print and electronic media is awash with this information.

Madam Speaker, I was going through a scientific periodical which indicated – and I expected the minister to mention this – that children, whom we would think are very vulnerable, have a stronger immunity compared to adults.

5.10

**THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR LANDS, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT (HOUSING) Dr Chris Baryomunsi:** Madam Speaker, I would also like to thank the minister for the statement. I would like to comfort the parents because I can appreciate the stress and pain they are going through – to have their children very far away and maybe with little communication.

In deciding on this matter, I have seen the options the minister has given us with respect to the possibility of having flights and it is as if the available one is Emirates, which will be in two months’ time. I think the major considerations we have to look at are public health considerations. We want the students safe and the question is, are they safer if we bring them and quarantine them from here or are they safer as long as we address their needs from where they are quarantined in Wuhan?

Reading through the guidelines by WHO, you get persuaded that shifting them from where they are might actually put them at risk *–(Interjection)-* Yes, in transporting them from Wuhan to Beijing and from Beijing to Uganda, they may actually be exposed to risks. In my view, it would be better for now to keep them quarantined in Wuhan provided we meet their socio-economic needs like food and their upkeep and we keep in constant communication and watch them from there. Otherwise, disrupting their stay there now might expose them to higher risks.

Secondly, I have been to China several times. Their electronic system of money transaction is very effective. They have a system called *WeChat* where you just put money on the phone and you are able to do all sorts of transactions. Actually, in China people do not carry money in their pockets. I think that as the minister has reported, if they are enabled with finances and they are deposited on their phones, they should be able to purchase food and other items through arrangements, which I am sure the Government of China must be working on together with our embassy.

Lastly, I think it is wrong to stigmatise the Chinese. Not every Chinese is a suspect or has coronavirus. As long as we have systems to check and screen people who are coming in, let us not stigmatise other nationals. Let us treat this matter with a human face. Thank you.

5.13

**THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (Ms Betty Aol):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. There is one thing on which I need clarification. How did these Chinese manage to come if at all there are no flights from there? According to the report, Emirates is not flying and the availability of flights for our people would be in two months’ time.

About 60,000 people are infected and that is a big number but we have concentrated on one city only. Are we sure those other cities are okay? We are mindful of our students but what about our other people who are in China?

At home, when things are not alright but the head of the family is present, psychologically people become confident and they try to contain the situation. I am not saying the ambassador has run away from his duty station because I know that ambassador. We worked very hard together during the Ebola outbreak in Gulu. He was the Minister of Health while I was the Secretary for Health in Gulu District Local Government. He didn’t fear Ebola.

However, he should know that his presence in the embassy in China would give a lot of confidence to Ugandans who are in China. When is he going back? While he is here in Uganda, he should also communicate with the Prime Minister. Honourable Prime Minister, be in close communication with him because I am sure he is communicating with his staff in China.

You need work together. Our people are better off here than in China. If other countries can repatriate their people, what about us? Let us look at this as a very big problem. What if the outbreak lasts forever *– (Interruption)*

**MR AGABA:** Thank you, Leader of the Opposition, for yielding the Floor. I have closely followed your advocacy for the head of mission to fly back to China as soon as possible in order to give comfort to our Ugandans who are there and also help buttress the fight against the virus.

However, I would like to seek clarification from you. If Parliament preferred to set up a fact-finding mission to Wuhan to confirm whether the virus is there and be sure that our people are safe, would you be happy to lead that delegation? *(Laughter)*

**MS AOL:** Thank you, Madam Speaker and thank my colleague for seeking that clarification. I am not the head of mission there. I am the Leader of the Opposition. During those days when we faced Ebola, they gave us all the guidelines on how to protect ourselves against Ebola. Some people would not want to go to isolation wards but I visited the isolation wards every time but after, we were properly guided and protected with the protective gear. Therefore, if I am properly guided and protected, I would go for Ugandans’ sake to give them psychological comfort. *(Applause)*

Let us be humane. Let us give priority to Ugandan citizens. Even if we send money – if we can put this money together and bring them back, why don’t we bring them back, especially the students? For some people, it may be their choice to stay in China but for the students, it is not their choice *–(Interruption)*

**MR NSEREKO:** Thank you, Leader of the Opposition, for giving way. It is clear that this is no longer a one-city infection in China. There are actually several cases of infections in many cities in China. That is why when we are talking about the matter; it is not only about the students in Wuhan but also about other Ugandans who are at higher risks of getting infected.

Secondly, as we address China – because it is the epicentre of the epidemic at the moment – there are other countries with cases of the coronavirus infections. For example, there are over 250 cases in Japan. There are also various cases reported in Hong Kong and even the United Kingdom. In the UK, they have discovered a case of someone who was dropped off by an Uber driver.

What is the travel advisory that we are issuing to Ugandans who are travelling to Japan? Where shouldn’t they go? What about Ugandans travelling back from Japan? Everyone is focusing on China but there are 251 cases that have been reported in Japan, with one death. There are 58 cases in Singapore, with no death reported. There are 51 cases in Hong Kong, with one death reported. There are 33 cases reported in Thailand, with zero death reported.

We have very many Ugandans travelling to Thailand, Hong Kong, Macau and other areas. These should be the point; how ready are we just in case anyone is to come in infected? Do we have masks? What is our level –

**THE SPEAKER:** Is that information really? *(Laughter)*

**MS AOL:** Thank you for the information. Madam Speaker, let me talk about the incubation period. It looks like the incubation period of coronavirus is two weeks. If the incubation is two weeks, maybe it would not be too much to confine the students in one place for two weeks *– (Member timed out.)*

**THE SPEAKER:** The Minister of Health can respond.

**THE MINISTER OF HEALTH (Dr Ruth Aceng):** Madam Speaker, allow me to thank Members for their questions. First of all, let me start by requesting that the mistake of calling the “Peoples Republic of China” the “Democratic Republic of China” be expunged from the *Hansard*.

Let me now respond to the questions. Wuhan is the only city under lockdown in China. All the other cities still have free movements and I did indicate that some of our students in those other cities have come back. Our other citizens outside Wuhan are also coming into the country. The Chinese from outside Wuhan are also coming to Uganda. However, those in Wuhan City cannot come and they are not coming and we do not have them, except perhaps those who came before there was a lockdown. In any case, if they came before, then they have passed the 14 days test.

Madam Speaker, I take cognisance of what Members have raised about screening at Entebbe Airport. However, allow me to say that at the VIP section, there is a scanner. Many of you do not even know where it is. I interest you to go there and ask where the scanner is in the VIP section and you will be shown – you are being screened as you enter. You do not have to know but we know and there are people screening you. As I mentioned, there are three other scanners. As you walk through, you are being screened and the officers are there taking notes.

For those who have temperatures that are higher, there is another screen that registers. That is when they will come and isolate you from the main group.

In my statement, I clearly said that our capacity regarding specialised isolation facilities and equipment is not there and I repeat that we do not have specialised capacity. If it is capacity to test, carry out surveillance and monitor, that we have.

There was a statement made to this august House regarding the coronavirus where we shared issues of signs and symptoms. We already shared.

Madam Speaker, this is a new virus and even China is learning. Other countries are also learning. We are also learning as they learn; so, we cannot say that we know about it and this is what we shall do when it comes into the country. I have to make that very clear.

Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in my statement, we are carrying out risk mapping for areas that are at risk so that we can start our surveillance there. Already, we are aware of Busia, Tororo and Kisoro because of travels from the international airport towards those areas and those that have industries. We are also cognisant of high risk areas like Namanve, Bugolobi and Kapeeka but our risk mapping is still on-going and we shall continue doing that.

The issue of handling the psycho-social aspects of the students is addressed in my statement; I said that we are going to include a Ministry of Health official on the *Whatsapp* groups.

I also indicated that Government will gather information about students in China because private students sometimes do not register with our embassy. Our embassy has a list of the Government sponsored students, which I also have and I can lay on the Table but for purposes of ethics, I will keep it unless you request for it.

The issue of contested numbers does not arise; we have the exact numbers of Government sponsored students and they cannot know each other all over the universities. We also got the numbers of the private students from this same group of students and that is why I provided to you the numbers that are known to us officially but I indicated in our statement that we are contacting the embassy to give us the list of people who are there.

Regarding specialised ambulances in the country, in Uganda we have one specialised ambulance, which is with the Uganda Heart Institute. The rest are general ambulances for emergencies; they are not highly specialised.

I mentioned that a lot of research is on-going regarding this coronavirus and the research on chloroquine should be disregarded. You will see a lot coming up; once something new comes up, everybody will say something.

Regarding the three suspects in Mukono, these are Chinese who work in a factory there, whom we isolated. They do not have signs and symptoms but because people have seen them wearing masks, they are labelling them as people with signs and symptoms. Our surveillance officers have been following them up and just like the others have said, we should not stigmatise the Chinese.

Madam Speaker, if we are to bring the students back home, we need to isolate them in specialised centres but we do not have these. Our country is in the process of completing two isolation facilities; one at Entebbe and another at Mulago.

The one at Entebbe is not yet complete and the one at Mulago is just at ground level. So, I cannot talk about ready to use isolation facilities. That is why, in my statement, I said that we are looking at costing what is required in the event that the country decides on the issue of the students.

In the interim, we have put aside Entebbe and Naguru Hospitals for purposes of isolation, should we detect any cases. I take note of the fact that the fund being provided is little but as I mentioned, it is in the interim and as the situation evolves, the Ministries of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and Foreign Affairs are following this up very closely.

On the issue of when we are meeting the parents, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has the contacts and they are mobilising them. Once they are ready, we shall meet and counsel them and also listen to their concerns.

Regarding support coming through the World Health Organisation, we have not received any funding from WHO but they ensured that we have reagents in the country for testing coronavirus. The World Health Organisation and the Centre for Disease Control are providing the personal protective equipment and they do this even for the other outbreaks and these are extremely expensive. They also provide technical guidance; they have flown in experts into the country for support.

Why are children not affected? It is still an issue under research but what has been reported is that the elderly and those with compromised immunity are the most affected.

Are there flights to China? Yes, ET and Emirates continue to go to China but none land in Wuhan City; they go majorly to Beijing.

Lastly, our ambassador is in the country. He is part of the inter-ministerial committee; he has been meeting with the Ambassador of China here and providing useful information. Thank you.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much, honourable minister. I hope that Members are now better informed and that the parents have been listening. I am sure that the minister will get in touch with them for further consultations. Thank you very much.

BILLS

SECOND READING

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019

5.32

**THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS (Mr Ephraim Kamuntu):** Madam Speaker, under rule 129(1) of the Rules of Procedure of Parliament of Uganda, I beg to move that, “The Presidential Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2019” be read the second time.

**THE SPEAKER:** The motion has been seconded by several Members of the House.

**MR KAMUNTU:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. As you may recall, on 25 July 2019, the Attorney-General introduced in this House the Presidential Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2019 and it was read for the first time.

The objectives of the Bill are very clear and straightforward:

1. To amend the Presidential Elections Act, 2005 to prescribe the period for holding presidential elections;
2. To prescribe the time for campaigns;
3. To provide for the participation of independent candidates in presidential elections;
4. To provide for restrictions on candidates’ sources of funding to finance elections;
5. To provide for electronic transmission of presidential election results; and
6. To align the Presidential Elections Act, 2005 with the Constitution, as amended by the Constitution (Amendment) Act, 2018.

Madam Speaker, the salient provisions of the Bill include:

1. Aligning the Presidential Elections Act, 2005 with the Constitution, as amended in 2018;
2. Eligibility to stand as an independent candidate;
3. Election financing by a presidential candidate;
4. The use of state-owned media houses by presidential candidates; and
5. The distribution of election materials and polling procedures, special procedures of voting of persons in restricted areas.

Madam Speaker, I would like to report to the House that we have held intensive discussions and meetings with the Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs and we commend their work. We have shared comments from interested parties. We have shared our own views with them and the committee has made quite a number of comments and proposed amendments to the Bill, to which I will respond when time comes. Government is very receptive to the proposals intended to further improve this Bill.

Madam Speaker, I beg to move that the Bill entitled, “The Presidential Elections (Amendment) Bill 2019” be now read a second time. I beg to move

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much, honourable minister. I believe our committee has had the opportunity to examine the rationale and proposals in the Bill. Can we have a report?

5.36

**THE CHAIRPERSON, COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (Mr Jacob Oboth):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I begin by laying on the Table, the Report of the Sectoral Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs on the Presidential Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2019.

Madam Speaker, we have the minutes and I have to say this: on the compilation of minutes, we handled all the five electoral reform Bills together; the Presidential Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2019, the Local Government (Amendment) Bill, the Electoral Commission (Amendment) Bill and the Political Parties and Organisations (Amendment) Bill. Therefore, our records of proceedings and minutes are all together. I would like to lay them as records of the proceedings.

When we invited the stakeholders, they made general comments and most of them are brief. This means that when it comes to parliamentary and others, I will only be laying the report. I beg to lay.

On 25 July 2019, the Government introduced, in Parliament, the Presidential Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2019, as part of the electoral reform Bills of 2019. The Bill was then accordingly referred to the Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, pursuant to rule 128 of the Rules of Procedure of Parliament.

In its methodology, Madam Speaker, I am referring to an abridged version of the report; the committee was guided by rule 128(2) of the Rules of Procedure of Parliament and met and received memoranda from a number of interested stakeholders. The list of the stakeholders is provided.

I would like to thank Parliament again, through you, for facilitating the committee to go out to all the districts in the sub-regions we sampled out. Their views are contained in the report.

The main purpose of the Presidential Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2019 is:

1. To amend the Presidential Elections Act, 2005 to prescribe the period for holding presidential elections;
2. To prescribe the time for campaigns;
3. To provide for participation of independent candidates in elections;
4. To provide for restrictions on candidates’ sources of funding to finance elections;
5. To provide for electronic transmission of results; and
6. To align the Presidential Elections Act 2005 with the Constitution, as amended by the Constitution Amendment of 2017/2018.

The committee considered the Bill and found that the amendments proposed were necessitated by two major things or factors.

The first is the decision of the Supreme Court in the case of Amama Mbabazi *vs* Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, the Electoral Commission and the Attorney-General, Presidential Election Petition No. 1 of 2016, in which the Supreme Court made a number of recommendations and directed Government to follow up on their implementation.

The recommendations dealt with, among others:

1. The time for filing and determining of presidential petitions;
2. The time for holding fresh elections;
3. Unequal use of state-owned media and
4. Donations during election period.

The Bill seeks to implement the recommendations of the Supreme Court.

1. The need to bring presidential Elections Act in tandem with the Constitution, following the amendment of the Constitution by the Constitution (Amendment) Act 2018, which made various changes to the Constitution, including but not limited to providing for the time within which to hold presidential elections; the eligibility requirements for a person to be elected as President; the number of days within which to file a presidential election petition and the number of days within which the Electoral Commission is required to hold a fresh election, where a presidential election is annulled.

Madam Speaker, allow me to take you - very briefly – on a few key areas of the Bill.

1. Aligning the Presidential Election Act with the Constitution

The Bill proposes amendments, which are intended to align the Presidential Elections Act with the Constitution, as amended by the Constitution (Amendment) Act, 2018. The Bill further proposes, in clause 1, to amend Section 2 of the Presidential Elections Act to change the time within which the Electoral Commission shall hold presidential elections.

The Bill further proposes, in clause 2, to amend Section 4(1)(b) of the Presidential Elections Act on the eligibility of a person to stand as President of Uganda. The Bill also proposes, in clause 12, to amend Section 59 of the Presidential Elections Act to change the time within which to file and consider a presidential petition.

We noted with concern that whereas the intention of the Bill is to bring the provisions of the Presidential Elections Act in line with the Constitution of Uganda, the Bill, in some instances, falls short in complying with the latter and spirit of the Constitution.

For example, in clause 2, the Bill proposes to repeal section 4(1)(b) of the Presidential Elections Act, which required a person to be 35 to 75 years for him or her to be eligible to stand as President. That is in the Bill.

Whereas that amendment captures the letter and spirit of Article 102 of the Constitution, it falls short of complying with all the other amendments that were made to the qualifications of a President as outlined in Article 102 of the Constitution. Detailed analysis of this can be found in the report.

2. Eligibility to Stand as Independent Candidate

The Bill proposes clause 3 to insert Section 9(a) dealing with eligibility of an independent person to stand in a Presidential election. The Bill proposes that a person who intends to stand for election, independent of the registered political party or organisation must have ceased to be a member of a political party or organisation and has either ceased to be a member of political party or organisation 12 months before nomination day or has never been a registered member of a political party or organisation.

The provision further requires that an independent candidate shall be taken to have ceased to be a member of a political party or organisation if that person has not complied with the constitution, rules and regulations of the political party or organisation to which he or she belonged that relates to cessation of membership of that political party or organisation and was discharged by the political party or organisation.

Madam Speaker, the committee made an extensive analysis of this proposal as detailed in the report. Summarily, this proposal will have gross effect on Articles 1, 21, 29 (1)(e), 72(4) and 102 of the Constitution and Section 3(2) of the Political Parties and Organisations Act.

These provisions collectively and individually guide and guarantee the enjoyment of rights of a person standing as a Presidential aspirant independent of a party or organisation. For the details of these arguments, I would indulge the Members to refer to the main report as has been indicated.

3. Elections Financing

The Bill proposes, in clause 6, to amend section 22 in the Presidential Elections Act to provide for financing of elections. The Bill proposes to impose an obligation on a candidate in a Presidential election to declare to the Electoral Commission within 14 days after nomination day the source of funds for financing his or her elections.

The Bill further proposes to prohibit the obtaining, soliciting or receiving any financial or other assistance from any foreign Government, institution, body or persons which or who has demonstrated an intention to overthrow the lawfully established Government of Uganda or to endanger the security of Uganda and from organisations that have been terrorist organisations.

This, on top of imposing a punishment on a candidate or agent for contravening the provision, empowers court to order the funds received in contravention of the provision to be forfeited to the State.

Whereas the proposed amendment is laudable, it is the opinion of the committee that it does not go far enough in addressing the matters of election financing. The Bill is conspicuously silent on matters of commercialisation of politics despite it being one of the biggest threats to democracy in the country.

We hope that in the future, there will be a substantive legislation to stem out the bad effects of commercialised politics.

Madam Speaker, this Bill also makes various proposals on areas of distribution of election materials, provision of time space by State media houses, polling and polling procedures and special procedures for voting of persons in restricted areas.

The committee analysed all these proposals and made appropriate recommendations thereto. I implore Members to refer to the main report in their possession. At an appropriate time, Madam Speaker, I will present the proposed amendments of the committee. I beg to report. Thank you.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much, honourable chairperson and the Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs. Honourable members, as you recall, I think we did agree that starting on Tuesday; we shall begin the debate, at length, on all these issues including the other Bill on the administration of Judiciary and run continuously until we complete all of them.

So, I do not know whether you might want to also present the other reports. Maybe you can present all of them so that Members can go and read them. Clerk, call the Bill.

BILLS

SECOND READING

THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019

5.49

**THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS (Prof Ephraim Kamuntu):** Madam Speaker, once again, under rule 129(1) of the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Uganda, I beg to move that the Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2019, be read the second time. I beg to move.

**THE SPEAKER:** Is it seconded? The Bill is seconded by several Members of the House.

Justify the Bill, honourable minister.

**PROF. KAMUNTU:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The objective of the Bill is essentially to amend the Parliamentary Elections Act, 2005 and to provide for the participation of independent candidates in the elections.

Secondly, it is to provide for restrictions on candidates’ sources of funding to finance elections.

Thirdly, to require the Electoral Commission to designate restricted areas and provide for a special procedure for voting in the restricted areas.

Madam Speaker, the salient features of the Bill are basically to provide for the participation of the independent candidates. It is almost the same as the Bill we have just presented for Second Reading.

Consequently, I beg to move that the Bill entitled, “the Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2019 be read the second time. I beg to move.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I believe that our committee had an opportunity to examine the objectives. I invite the chairperson of the Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs to present the report.

5.36

**THE CHAIRPERSON, THE COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (Mr Jacob Oboth):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have the pleasure to present the Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2019 and the report of the committee as signed. May I have the pleasure?

Madam Speaker, I should note as a procedural matter and to aid Members – Presidential Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2015 and the Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2019 are so related both in the arguments and the presentation.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, we used the same methodology and I will try to go into briefly to say that the committee analysed the proposal in the Bill as detailed in the report in possession of members. However, briefly, key areas of the Bill are summarised this way:

1. Election of Members of Parliament of newly created districts. The Bill proposes in clause 1 to amend Section 8 of the Parliamentary Elections Act by substituting for sub-section (5) the following: “Where a new district or a constituency is created after the general elections, the elections for the district or constituency shall not be held until the next general elections to fill the vacant elective positions.”

Section 8(5) of the Parliament Election Act currently grants a district woman representative the option where a new district is created to continue representing the district of her choice.

Furthermore, the provision requires election in the district that remains without a representative to be held within 60 days. The effect of the above amendment is to require that when a new district or constituency is created after a general election, the elective positions created are not filled immediately as has been the case but are filled at the next general election. *(Applause)*

Madam Speaker, What do I do when such applause are made? (*Laughter*)

**THE SPEAKER:** You Smile and proceed.

**MR OBOTH:** The committee thinks that this proposed amendment is progressive and should be supported for reasons such as aligning the commencement of a constituency, and election of Members of Parliament for a newly created district to be in line with the principle contained in Article 63(6) of the Constitution.

Secondly, the proposal will help the planning and budgeting of Parliament and Government generally in as far as knowing that exact number of Members of Parliament. It should be noted that at the moment, once a new district is created during the subsistence of the term of Parliament, that newly created local Government commences immediately unless the commencement is target to a further date.

This means that the number of Members of Parliament cannot be ascertained since this can change anytime from the creation of new districts. However, well as this provision is important and should be supported, there is need for this provision to be harmonised with the Constitution especially with Article 1(4) of the Constitution.

Secondly, eligibility to stand as an Independent candidate and this is where they are similar with the presidential. This Bill proposes in clause 2 to insert a section 10 (a) dealing with eligibility of an independent person to stand in parliamentary election.

The Bill proposes that a person who intends to stand for election independent of registered political party or organisation must have ceased to be a member of a political party or organisation and has either ceased to be a member of the political party or organisation 12 months before nomination day or has never been registered as a member of a political party or organisation.

This provision further requires that an independent candidate shall be taken to have ceased to be a member of a political party or organisation if that person has complied with the Constitution, rules and regulations of a political party or organisation to which he or she belongs that relate to cessation of membership of that political party or organisation and was discharged by the political party or organisation.

Madam Speaker, the committee made an excessive analysis of this proposal as contained in the report summarily this proposal will have gross effect on Articles 1, 21, 29(1)(e), 72(4) and 102 of the Constitution as well as section 3(2) of the Political Parties and organisations Act. These provisions collectively and individually guide and guarantee the enjoyment of rights of a person standing as a parliamentary aspirant independent of a political party or organisation.

The Constitution in Article 72(4) specifically grants and guarantees a person’s right to stand for election as a candidate independent of a political party or organisation. The same Constitution commands that all persons in Uganda are equal before the law in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life and in every other respect direct that such persons must enjoy equal protection of the law.

Other than the provisions of Article 80 of the Constitution, the Constitution does not impose any additional requirements on a person to be eligible for election to Parliament and does not discriminate against such persons, whether independent or party sponsored.

It is important to note that that the Constitution guarantees the person’s right to associate with others and the only limitations imposed on such a person must be demonstrably necessary in a free and democratic society as prescribed in Article 43(2)(c) of the Constitution.

For details of these arguments I would indulge members to refer to the main report.

Election Financing

Madam Speaker, the argument for election financing go hand in hand with what was in the presidential and I invite members to refer to the report because there is no - but to read the opinion of the committee.

It is the considered opinion of the committee that the proposed amendment on election financing should be lauded and supported. Firstly, the current legislation regulating the election financing and expenditure, such as the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995, the Electoral Commission Act, Cap 140, the Parliamentary Elections Act, 2005, the Presidential Elections Act, 2005, the Local Government Act, Cap 243 and the Kampala Capital City Authority Act, 2010, do not adequately regulate election financing and expenditure in Uganda.

The inadequacy of the legal regime has resulted in commercialisation of politics; increasing the cost of running for political office and resulting into unsustainable pressure on the part of candidates, wastage of resources, macro-economic volatility such as was experienced after the 20l1 General Elections as well as increased occurrence of corruption cases in Uganda.

Madam Speaker, the time for distributing election material is of interest. The Bill proposes in clause 3 to amend the time within which to distribute polling material. The Bill proposes to amend section 27 by substituting for the words, “Within forty eight hours before polling day” the words “At any time before polling time”. The Bill proposes within 48 hours before polling day and at any time before polling time.

Currently, section 27 imposes an obligation on a returning officer to, within 48 hours before polling day, furnish every presiding officer ballot papers, a statement showing the number of ballot papers issued and other voting material. The Bill proposes that this statutory duty should not be carried out within 48 hours as is currently the law, but should be carried out “at any time before polling time.” And the argument we had in the committee and views of the people was, “Which one is safer?” Within 48 hours or at any time before polling time? “At any time” before polling time is also within 48 hours.

It should be noted that the law does not define what amounts to polling time but section 29 (2) of the Parliamentary Elections Act guides that at every polling station, polling time commences at seven o’clock in the morning and closes at five o’clock in the afternoon.

The proposed amendment, although well intentioned, may cause a number of challenges, which might affect the integrity of elections as well as disenfranchise voters.

The proposal to remove the time within which to distribute polling materials is likely to lead to delay in dispatching, receiving, set up and commencement of polling time since the time prescribed in the current provision was intended to ensure that election materials arrive early enough at the polling stations.

Furthermore, the proposal does not take into account the fact that some polling stations are hard to reach or in most cases, far away from the offices of returning officers, which are at the district.

In such a situation, the removal of the prescribed time within which to ensure release of polling materials might affect the conduct of elections at such polling stations arising from late release of elections.

The Bill also made proposals on areas of polling and polling procedures and special procedures for voting of persons in restricted areas, which the committee analysed and made recommendations. I would implore the House to refer to the main report for more details of this committee report.

At an appropriate time, I will present the proposed amendments of the committee on the Bill. I beg to report. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, honourable chairperson. I notice that a certain section of the House was exceedingly happy about paragraph 4.3 -*(Laughter)-* Honourable members, again, we shall defer debate to next week.

**Mr onzima:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. When the chairperson was reading about when a district is created, he said that elections are supposed to be deferred until the next general elections.

When hon. Mutonyi brought up the issue of local government whereby when a new district is created, the interim Government is set, if its chairperson happens to come from the new district, he gets stigmatised when people say, “Your district is already created, why don’t you go?”

You will also realise that these interim governments, which are formed, virtually have no powers –

**The Speaker:** Are you discussing Local Government elections?

**Mr onzima:** No. As we were moving forward to make that amendment in the Local Government Act, we could not proceed because it required amendment of the Constitution.

Since we are trying to handle the issue of parliamentary elections, I do not know whether it would not be procedurally right for Government to see that the areas that affect local governments could also be harmonised such that elections for these leaders can also come at the end of the –

**The Speaker:** Honourable members, we should allow the chairperson to present our report. You can then go and study it and starting Tuesday, you can bring your proposals.

What I can say about that proposal is, it has been very difficult for the Parliamentary Commission to determine which numbers we are going to have in any year. It is only during this tenure that constituencies have been created and members come. In the past, they would come in the new elections and there was no problem.

BILLS

SECOND READING

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019

5.49

**The Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs (Prof. Ephraim Kamuntu):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Under rule 129(1) of the Rules of Procedure of Parliament, I beg to move that the Local Governments (Amendment) Bill, 2019 be read a second time.

**The Speaker:** Has it been seconded? It is seconded from both sides of the House.

**Prof. kamuntu:** I appreciate the overwhelming support for this Bill.

Madam Speaker, you will recall that this Bill, as part of the Election Reform Bill, was presented to this House on 25 July and referred to the Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs.

The Bill is basically to amend the Local Governments Act, Cap 243 to provide for the creation of Local Government and Magistrate Units at least two years before the due date for the next general elections. This should go and consolidate the effectiveness of our elections.

Secondly, the amendment Bill is to –

a) provide for the demarcation of electoral areas;

b) prescribe the manner of conducting campaigns;

c) bar persons not ordinarily resident in a local government area from contesting for councillor for that area;

d) provide for the procedure for commencement of polls at each polling station; and t

(e) align the Local Governments Act with the provisions of the Constitution as amended by the Constitution (Amendment) Act, 2018.

The salient features of the Bill are also very clear and very ably articulated in the report of the chairperson.

I commend the work of the committee because we have interacted and shared our views with them. We have also shared the views of other interested parties. The committee has made a number of amendments to the Bill to which I will respond when time comes.

Consequently, we are very receptive to the proposals intended to further improve this Bill. As a result, I beg to move that the Bill entitled, “The Local Government (Amendment) Bill, 2019” be now read for a second time. I beg to move.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, honourable minister. Can we listen to the committee report?

5.54

**Mr Abbas Agaba (NRM, Kitagwenda County, Kamwenge):** Madam Speaker, I would like to lay on the Table the report of the Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs on the Local Governments (Amendment) Bill, 2019.

The minister has gone through the purpose of the Bill. I do not want to take the House into details but to say that, as a committee, we examined the Bill and found that the amendments proposed were/are indeed required for election of the district chairperson, removing the age restrictions to bring the Local Government Act in tandem with the current Constitution following the amendments of the Constitution by the Constitution (Amendment) Act, 2018, which made changes to the qualifications being imposed on the position in Article 183 of the Constitution.

Allow me to take you briefly through a few key areas of the report on the Bill.

Consultation of the Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Development before creation of districts and lower Local Government units

The Bill variously makes proposals on the consultation of the Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Development before a district or Local Government creates local government units.

The Bill, in clause 1, proposes to amend section 7 of Local Government Act to require the consultation of the Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Development in addition to the Minister of Local Government, before altering the boundaries of or creating a municipality, city and lower local governments unit.

It is the considered opinion of the committee that the above provision should be supported. The requirement to consult the minister responsible for finance is necessary since it will help in examining the viability of the proposed local government unit. This will not only go a long way in ensuring that the proposed alteration of boundaries of, or creation of a municipality, city or lower local government is able to run its activities, but also help in ensuring that Government can adequately sustain the local governments that are created, including the provision of services and recruitment of staff.

The proposal to consult the minister responsible for finance will further alleviate the current problems faced by newly created districts and local governments where, in most cases, suffer from chronic staffing challenges while some have not even commenced.

Even where they are created or commenced, they are not financially viable since they do not collect enough revenue to finance their expenditure, thereby affecting service delivery and failing the objective for which they are created.

Whereas the consultation of the minister should be supported, the proposal in clause 1, paragraph (f) needs to be rethought as analysed and explained in the main report, which I urge members to look through.

Madam speaker, number 2 is about qualification for election of office bearers of local governments and administrative units.

The Bill in clauses 3, 6 and 7 makes proposals to amend the Local Government Act to make changes to the qualifications of office bearers in local governments and administrative units.

The Bill proposes to –

1. amend Section 12 of the Local Government Act to remove the age restrictions imposed on a district, municipality, town, division and sub county chairperson;
2. amend Section 111 of the Local Government Act to require the chairperson of a district, municipality, town, division and sub county to be ordinarily a resident of the district and to remove the option of a district chairperson making an undertaking in writing to the Electoral Commission of establishing a residence in that district within six months; and
3. impose an additional obligation on local government councilors to be residents in the local government area they represent in the various councils within the local government.

In the opinion of the committee, the proposal should be supported and it got overwhelming support during the consultation.

The proposed amendment, especially to sections 12 and 111 of the Local Government Act are indeed intended to bring the provisions in line with the amendment to Article 183 of the Constitution.

The Constitution (Amendment) Act of 2018 made various amendments to the Constitution, including removing the age restrictions imposed on the district chairperson under the Constitution.

Following the amendment, there is now need to harmonize the provisions of the Constitution with the Local Governments (Amendment) Bill to reflect the above amendment.

Furthermore, the proposal to require the chairperson of a district, municipality, town, division and sub county to be ordinarily a resident of the district and to remove the option of a district chairperson making an undertaking in writing to the Electoral Commission of establishing a residence in that district within six months, should be supported since it harmonizes the provisions of the Local Government Act with the Constitution.

While consulting in Mbale District, the proposal was supported with the argument that having a chairperson who is a resident of the area guarantees proper appraisal from the locals of their abilities to lead or not.

It should be noted that there currently exists a divergence between the Constitution, especially Article 183 (2) (a) and Section 12 of the Local Government Act as captured in the details of the main report.

Number 3 is about population quotas required to form urban areas.

Madam Speaker, clause 5 of the Bill proposes to amend Section 108 of the principal Act by revising upwards the population quotas that Electoral Commission must take into account when demarcating electoral areas in urban areas.

The Bill proposes that for an electoral area to be declared in a city, it must have a population of 100,000; in a district, 30,000; in a municipality or city division 15,000; in a municipal division or town council, 7,000; and in a sub county 12,000.

The committee notes that this proposal should be supported since it enhances the population quotas required to declare an electoral area from the quotas that were set in 1991 to the current quotas, which reflect the current population growth. However, the committee was informed, during the stakeholders’ consultations, that there is need to reduce the geographical areas represented by women councilors from three sub counties to one as is the case with other councilors.

The committee recommends that clause 5 stand part of the Bill. However, Government should consider reviewing the geographical areas represented by women councilors in order to reduce the burden on such persons.

Madam speaker, number 4 is about eligibility to stand as independent candidate.

The Bill proposes, in clause 8, to insert Sections 119(b), 119(c) and 119(d) in the Local Government Act dealing with eligibility of an independent person to stand in a local government election.

The Bill proposes that a person who intends to stand for election independent of a registered political party or organisation must have ceased to be a member of a political party or organisation twelve months before nomination day or has never been registered as a member of a political party or organisation.

The provision further requires that an independent candidate shall be taken to have ceased to be a member of a political party or organisation if that person has complied with the Constitution, rules and regulations of the political party or organisation to which he or she belonged, that relate to cessation of membership of that political party or organisation, and was discharged by the political party or organisation.

In analyzing this proposal, the committee considered the effect it will have on Articles 1, 21, 29(1)(e), 72(4) and 183 of the Constitution as well as section 3(2)of the Political Parties and Organisations Act and Section 119(a) of the Local Government Act.

These provisions collectively and individually guide and guarantee the enjoyment of rights of a person standing as a candidate in a local government election independent of a party or organisation.

The Constitution, in Article 72(4), grants and guarantees a person's right to stand for election as a candidate, independent of a political party or organisation.

The same Constitution commands that all persons in Uganda are equal before the law in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life and in every other respect and directs that such persons must enjoy equal protection of the law.

Other than the provisions of Article 183 of the Constitution, the Constitution does not impose any additional requirements on a person intending to contest for election as a district chairperson and does not discriminate against such persons who are whether independent or party sponsored.

The committee is also aware that the Constitution guarantees a person’s right to associate with others and the only limitations imposed on such a person must be demonstrably necessary in a free and democratic society as prescribed in Article 43(2)(c) of the Constitution.

This proposal can be challenged in courts of law for a number of reasons which we have enumerated in the main report to the House. I urge members to go through the main report so that we can be abreast with the grounds listed there.

Therefore, the committee’s recommendation is that clause 8 is amended in the proposed 119(b) by requiring that a person is only eligible to stand as an independent candidate only if that person is not a member of a registered party or organization; having ceased to be a member of a political party or organisation just before nomination day; having had his or her membership of a political party or organisation terminated before nomination day; or having never been registered as a member of any political party or organisation.

This Bill also makes various proposals on areas of election financing, candidates meetings, polling and polling procedures, candidature, allocation of candidate symbols, colours and death of candidates, interim councils and harmonization with the Electoral Commission’s Act.

It is therefore the prayer of the committee that this House adopts this report and passes the Bill with the amendments enlisted, which we will present at an appropriate time. I beg to report.

**THE SPEAKER:** Actually, honourable chair, his presentation about independents was different from what was presented in the parliamentary and the presidential. *(Applause)* But I guess we shall deal with it.

BILLS

SECOND READING

THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019

6.25

**THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS (Prof. Ephraim Kamuntu):** Madam Speaker, under Rule 129(1) of the Rules of Procedure of Parliament of Uganda, I beg to move that the Electoral Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2019 be read a second time.

**THE SPEAKER:** Is the motion seconded?Seconded by several members from both sides of the House.

**PROF. KAMUNTU:** Thank you very much. The Electoral Commission affects both sides of the House.

The objectives or the purpose of the Bill is to amend the Electoral Commission’s Act cap 140 to-

1. establish the electoral reform committee as one of the objects and to provide for the use of technology in the management of elections;
2. designate registrars as district election administrators;
3. provide for the appointment of assistant returning officers by the commission;
4. require the commission to publish in the gazette places at which voters’ registers and polling stations are to be displayed;
5. align the Electoral Commissions Act with the Constitution as amended by the Constitution’s Amendment Act 2018.

Madam Speaker, this Electoral Commissions (Amendment) Bill was subjected to serious scrutiny by the Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs and we commend their work.

I want to confirm to the House that we compared their comments with ours. We also shared comments from other interested parties and the committee has made comments as well as proposed amendments to the Bill.

We shall respond to these amendments at an appropriate time. I can confirm to you, Madam Speaker, Government is very receptive to the proposals and amendments intended to improve this Bill.

At this time, I beg to move that the Bill entitled, “The Electoral Commission (Amendment) Bill 2019” be now read a second time.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much, honourable minister. Let us invite the chair of the Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs to present a report.

6.29

**THE CHAIRPERSON, COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (Mr Jacob Oboth):** Madam Speaker, let me take the opportunity to lay on Table, the report of the Sectoral Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs on the Electoral Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2019. I beg to lay.

The same Bill like the other previous ones was brought on 25 July 2019 and we adopted the same process as I had indicated earlier.

The minister has referred to the object of the Bill, which I will not refer to. This is to note also, in our report, the committee analysed the Bill and has supplied a report to members, which I am going to present in summary form to this House.

The amendments to the Electoral Commission Act Cap 140 are necessitated by the decision of the Supreme Court in the case of Amama Mbabazi v. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, the Electoral Commission and the Attorney-General, Presidential Election Petition No. 1 of 2016 where the Supreme Court made a number of recommendations and directed Government to follow up their implementation.

The Bill specifically deals with one recommendation of court on the issue of technology in the electoral process.

The Supreme Court recommended that while the introduction of technology in the election process should be encouraged, we nevertheless recommend that a law to regulate the use of technology in the conduct and management of elections be enacted.

It went on to guide that it should be introduced well within time to train the officials and sensitise voters and other stakeholders.

It is the considered opinion of the committee that since the use of technology in election management required legal reform, this Bill is timely and will provide the basis for the introduction and implementation of technology in the management of elections in Uganda.

This Bill is further necessary because it attempts to respond to the needs to reform the law on elections as has been agitated by Members of Parliament, civil society organisations and by court.

The Bill further proposes amendments in the following areas:

Electoral Reform Committee

The Bill proposes in clause 2 to establish an Electoral Reform Committee comprised of persons drawn from the Electoral Commission, the Attorney-General, Uganda Law Reform Commission, National Consultative Forum, Civil Society, Ministry of Local Government and Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.

The Bill requires the chairperson of the Electoral Commission to constitute the Law Reform Committee within six months from the date of the general elections. The Law Reform Committee is charged with a number of functions, including receiving proposals for law reforms from the public, elections observers, political parties, civil society and other stakeholders including courts. That committee will be obligated to recommend to the minister, proposals for electoral reforms and strengthening the electoral reforms.

The Bill further requires the Law Revision Committee to make recommendations to the minister within 18 months after being constituted. The minister is obligated to present the said reforms to Parliament at least two years before the next general election. Madam Speaker, you have been agitating for electoral reforms to be brought early.

The establishment of a Law Revision Committee is welcome and should be supported. Apart from answering to the call for electoral law reforms, the committee, being a permanent committee, will ensure that electoral reforms are proposed, synthesised and brought to Parliament for enactment. It should be noted that law reform committees are a mainstay in most of the Commonwealth jurisdictions. Post-election reviews are used by election management bodies to assess the adequacy of the legal and management structures for elections and of their performance in delivering credible elections.

As for the analyses from the main report, the committee recommends the following. Madam Speaker, the recommendations are numerous and I would like to refer members to them. I could read recommendation (f), which says: “The committee should include other shades of opinion drawn from the academia and the law society as is the case with similar bodies in India, Nigeria, Canada, Antigua, Pakistan and United Kingdom.”

Adoption of technology in elections

The Bill proposes, in clause 2, to adopt the use of technology in the management of elections in Uganda. The Bill empowers the Electoral Commission to adopt technology in the management of elections in Uganda and directs the minister, in consultation with the Electoral Commission and by statutory instrument, to prescribe the manner in which technology will be used in the management of elections.

The committee thinks that the proposal to introduce the use of technology in election management is progressive and should be supported because of the benefits it will bring to the electoral process. The goal of elections is not simply to determine the winners and losers but also to give legitimacy to the winners, even for those voters who did not vote for them. One of the ways of ensuring confidence in the electoral system, transparency and legitimacy of the winner is by ensuring that the election management is beyond reproach. This can be achieved through the employment of ICT in the electoral management system.

The committee also received a proposal from hon. Waira Majegere – we are pointing out this because we felt it was a very good proposal. He proposed that at every tallying centre there should be a public digital display screen showing the actual entry of results as they are being tallied. The committee has considered and agreed to the proposal since it will enhance transparency and voter confidence in the electoral process.

Madam Speaker, to demonstrate that, if we had that as the screen at the tally centre, when they say a one Michael Mawanda has 300 votes, it is put down in the computer and displayed up. When they say a one Musamba has 10 votes, it is also displayed there.

Therefore, we made recommendations which will actually be highlighted at the committee stage.

Change of terminology and duration of carrying out statutory duties

The Bill variously makes provisions for the change of terminology used in Electoral Commission Act as well as in the time of doing certain things.

The Bill in clauses 4, 5, 6 and 8 proposes to change the terminology used from “registrar” to “district administrator” and in clauses 3 and 7 to change the duration of performing certain statutory duties. The proposal to rename the “registrar” as “district administrator” is welcome and should be supported. The change of the name is in recognition that the “registrar” performs more administration functions than registrar or “registry” work.

Furthermore, there is confusion with registrars appointed under the Electoral Commission Act and those appointed in the Judiciary, pursuant to Article 145. The change will, therefore, clarify this confusion. On the changes in duration of carrying out statutory duties, clause 3 proposes to obligate the EC to transmit to political parties and organisations taking part in an election, an electronic copy of the voters’ register immediately after the nomination day at least three days before polling day.

This provision should be supported since it remedies a lacuna in section 18A as to when the voters’ register is submitted during a by-election. The amendment to clause 7, which is proposing to reduce the time within which to report the loss, destruction, defacement or damage to a voter's card from seven days to 30 days before polling day.

The committee observes that the time within which to report the lost, destroyed, defaced, torn or otherwise damaged voters’ cards will allow the Electoral Commission adequate time to replace such a voter card.

Clause 11 on its part proposes to amend section 33 to change the duration within which to gazette a list of all places at which a voters’ register shall be displayed and the list of all polling stations.

The committee made several recommendations and agreed that clauses 4, 5, 6 and 7 to be passed without amendments.

Madam Speaker, we shall be getting to the details at appropriate time.

Appointment of returning officers and assistant returning officers

The Bill proposes in clause 8 to amend section 30 of the Principal Act by allowing the returning officers and assistant returning officers to be appointed by the Electoral Commission. Whereas the committee supports this proposal, it is concerned that the proposal does not go far enough. For instance, the committee notes that the proposal does not take into account recent pronouncements of court, especially as far as punishing returning officers who participate in election maladministration is concerned.

The committee notes that various courts of law have found that returning officers have abused their positions and have mismanaged the electoral process or not complied with the electoral laws.

The committee finds that in spite of those court pronouncements, those returning officers are still retained in the service and are merely transferred to other electoral districts.

The committee further notes that there is need for the law to specifically provide for the removal of a returning officer if he or she has been adversely mentioned in an election petition judgement to have participated in election irregularities, illegal practices or participated in the commission of an electoral offence.

We have recommended that clause 8 should be part of the Bill and we have made several proposals for amendment.

That said, Madam Speaker, I pray that the House will find it necessary to accept this Bill, with amendments that will be presented later. I beg to report.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you, honourable chairperson and Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs for that report.

BILLS

SECOND READING

THE POLITICAL PARTIES AND ORGANISATIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019

6.44

**THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS (Prof. Ephraim Kamuntu):** Madam Speaker, I beg to move, under Rule 129(1) of the Rules of Procedure of Parliament, that the Political Parties and Organisations (Amendment) Bill, 2019 be read the second time.

**THE SPEAKER:** The motion is seconded by both sides of the House. Thank you. Justify your motion.

**PROF. KAMUNTU:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As members will recall, this Bill was introduced in this House in July 2019 as part of the Electoral Reform Bills and it was read for the first time.

The objective or purpose of this Bill is very brief and straightforward; the Bill intends to amend the Political Parties and Organisations Act, 2005 to remove the powers given to the minister to prescribe the code of conduct for political parties and organisations and to prescribe the code of conduct for political parties as required by Article 71(2) of the Constitution.

I would like to confirm that we worked closely with the Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs. We interacted with the committee, shared views on our proposals and also shared the views of other interested parties with the committee. The committee has made various comments and a number of proposals for amendments to the Bill. We will be responding to these proposed amendments at an appropriate time. For the time being, I can mention that most of the issues are covered in the committee’s report.

For purposes of today, I beg to move that the Bill entitled, “The Political Parties and Organisations (Amendment) Bill, 2019” be read for a second time. I beg to move.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you, honourable minister. Let me now invite the Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs to present their position on that Bill.

6.47

**MS ROBINA RWAKOOJO (NRM, Gomba West County, Gomba):** Madam Speaker, permit me to present the report of the Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs on the Political Parties and Organisations (Amendment) Bill, 2019. Before I present the report, I beg to lay the report on the Table.

This Bill was read for the first time and referred to our committee on 25 July 2019. The methodology used in processing this Bill was the same as we have indicated for the other Bills.

The Bill proposes to amend the Political Parties and Organisations Act, 2005 to remove the powers given to the minister to prescribe a code of conduct for political parties and organisations and to prescribe a code of conduct for political parties and organisations as required by Article 71(2) of the Constitution.

The Constitution, in Article 69, further grants the people of Uganda the right to choose and adopt a political system of their choice through free and fair elections or referenda. The Constitution, in Article 69(2), recognises three political systems that may be adopted namely: the Movement Political System, the Multiparty Political System, and any other democratic and representative political system.

In 2005, Parliament enacted the Political Parties and Organisations Act with the intention of regulating the financing, formation, functioning, registration and membership of political parties and organisations. The Act was further intended to prescribe a code of conduct for political parties and organisations in Uganda.

On the matter of prescribing a code of conduct for political parties and organisations, section 19 of the Political Parties and Organisations Act, 2005 empowered the minister, in consultation with the Electoral Commission and political parties and organisations and with the approval of Parliament, to prescribe a code of conduct for political parties and organisations. The Bill now seeks to amend section 19 by prescribing a code of conduct instead of allowing the minister to prescribe the same as is currently the case.

Madam Speaker, indeed the committee analysed this Bill and commented on the following proposals:

1. Power to prescribe a code of conduct

The Bill proposes to amend section 19 of the Political Parties and Organisations Act, 2005 by replacing it with the following:

“19 Code of conduct for political parties and organisations

1. A political party or organisation shall comply with the code of conduct set out in the Fourth Schedule to this Act.
2. A political party or organisation, a leader, official, candidate, member, agent or representative of a political party or organisation shall adhere to the code of conduct referred to in sub-section (1) during and after elections."

Currently, section 19 of the Political Parties and Organisations Act, 2005 empowers the minister, in consultation with the Electoral Commission and political parties and organisations and with the approval of Parliament, to prescribe a code of conduct for political parties and organisations. The proposal by the Bill removes the power for prescribing a code of conduct for political parties from the minister and bestows it back to Parliament.

The committee considers this proposal to bestow the power to Parliament to issue a code of conduct as progressive and in line with the command of the Constitution as prescribed in Article 71(2) of the Constitution. The committee recommends that the proposal to return the function of prescribing the code of conduct for political parties and organisations to Parliament is welcome and should be supported since it is in fulfilment of the command of the Constitution in Article 71(2) of the Constitution.

1. Enforcement of the Code

The Bill proposes, in paragraph 17 of the Fourth Schedule, to bestow the enforcement of the code of conduct in the National Consultative Forum. The National Consultative Forum is empowered to, where a person breaches the code, issue a caution to such a political party or organisation or to recommend to the political party and organisation to comply with its orders or to make a recommendation to the Electoral Commission to take action as empowered by law.

The code, under paragraph 17, empowers a person or political party or organisation that has reason to believe that a person or political party or organisation has breached a code of conduct to report the same to the National Consultative Forum.

It is the considered opinion of the committee that this proposal be supported since it allows the political parties and organisations to check themselves and allow the person to report to the National Consultative Forum breach of the code.

The National Consultative Forum is comprised of representatives from all registered political parties in Uganda and performs among other functions the function of ensuring that all political parties comply with the code.

Our general recommendation is that the Bill is passed into law subject to the amendments that will be presented at an appropriate time. I beg to report.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairperson and members of the Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs. Now we have received the business for next week namely: the Administration of Judiciary Bill, 2018; the Presidential Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2019; the Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2019; the Local Governments (Amendment) Bill, 2019; the Electoral Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2019; the Political Parties and Organisations (Amendment) Bill, 2019.

That will be our business for next week; I would like to caution members that there will be no spontaneous amendments tabled on the Floor; if there is anyone with amendments, they should be circulated well in advance so that no one is taken by surprise.

Honourable members, you are now on notice, no one will say I have not seen the Order Paper; it has been told to you and you know what it is. We had asked the minister to check on something causing anxiety in the population; maybe he could report on it.

6.50

**THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS (Prof. Ephraim Kamuntu):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Members asked me to check on information regarding the deadlines for members to submit the documents for verification. What is provided in the law is that for a Member of Parliament to qualify to be a Member of Parliament, they have to have completed a minimum formal education of advanced level or its equivalent.

It is this “equivalent” which is causing problems but it has to be established by the National Council for Higher Education under the University and Tertiary Institutions Act.

Those who have equivalences have to submit their papers for verification. So, what has been put in the press is part of the requirements by the National Council for Higher Education.

Those who have equivalences to prove should do so two months before the elections and the press release they have put out simply states 15th April 2020 - and not February - all those persons aspiring to be district chairpersons in local governments should take their papers for verification.

On 15 May 2020 persons aspiring to be Members of Parliament or President should take their papers for verification. Consequently, the purported 15th February date is not correct. It is just social media hoax.

The second thing is that the verification of academic qualifications will be done for every aspiring candidate who is affected in every electoral cycle. So, that affects those who qualified from outside and need their papers to be equated.

Unfortunately, for every electoral cycle these papers have to be verified and the reasoning is that in the petition, which our colleague, hon. Paul Mwiru - if he was in the House he would tell you – filed against the hon. Nathan Nabeta and two others, the court ruled that equating academic papers for purposes of elections is not a onetime event. Consequently, every electoral cycle those affected must take their academic papers for verification. Thank you very much.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much, honourable minister, for clarifying the situation. I would like to urge any members who are in that category to handle this situation early; do not wait for the deadline, including those in the local governments.

**MR MAWANDA:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Yesterday, we had a matter, which the Attorney-General generally answered. The person who raised that matter wanted – okay, it was said that if he one time comes to the House we could share with him how he intends to address that issue.

**THE SPEAKER:** The Attorney-General answered that question yesterday. We cannot keep on causally asking people for their opinions. Honourable members, House is adjourned to Tuesday, 18th February at 2.00 p.m.

*(The House rose at 6.59 p.m. and adjourned until Tuesday, 18 February 2020 at 2.00 p.m.)*