



Museveni ignores big 'thieves', turns on junior officials

Posted By Musa

President Museveni handed more ammunition to his critics who say he has no will to fight corruption when he accused junior officials of stealing public funds in last week's State of the Nation address, but remained silent on ministers indicted by a parliamentary report of impropriety during the 2007 CHOGM.

In the speech, the President took a swipe at NAADS officials at sub-counties, primary school teachers, county chiefs, district health officials and doctors whom he has consistently accused of stealing money and medicines. He said that corruption impedes investment and likened corrupt officials to flies that drop in milk and make it unsuitable for human consumption. "We need to protect milk from these flies...People who harass investors are flies."

But some opposition MPs interjected, saying: "Yellow flies," insinuating that the corrupt officials belong to his NRM party, whose colour is yellow.

The President heard the message but said that he would not be drawn into using un-parliamentary language.

"They [corrupt officials] are a disgrace but we shall get them," the President said to murmurs from the MPs, some of whom retorted: "When?" "You will see," Museveni replied.

He also suggested that the Army Court Martial be given authority to try corruption cases, but some lawyers argued that either the President has lost faith in the Judiciary or he is merely being diversionary.

CHICKEN THIEVES

The National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) received the hardest beating from the President over graft. Museveni said that while the programme had extended its

Ugandans to the rescue



6/17/10

outreach, its funds are misappropriated at the sub-counties.

The President also accused primary school teachers of being corrupt. Although he never mentioned names, there have been instances of 'ghost' pupils and misuse of UPE funds in primary schools.

Also high on Museveni's list of corrupt people were doctors, nurses and other health officials whom he accused of stealing medicines. He also said the officials often failed requisition for drugs from National Medical Stores so as to create artificial shortage and defeat the new centralised system of procuring drugs. He cited Mulago Hospital, which, as of May, had not ordered for medicines worth Shs 2 billion, yet, "I am sure that there is need for the drugs at the hospital."

"There have also been cases of district health officials having 'ghost' health centres which receive drugs. This is criminal. I am, therefore, directing the Inspector General of Police to investigate all these cases of 'ghost' health centres and hold criminally liable all those officials who have been involved in this malpractice," he said.

The MPs who expected the President to talk about the recent report by the Public Accounts Committee that incriminates the Vice President, Prof. Gilbert Bukenya, Security Minister Amama Mbabazi, Foreign Affairs Minister Sam Kutesa and several other ministers in the misuse of billions of shillings meant for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kampala in 2007, were left unimpressed.

Even when some MPs chorused "CHOGM report, CHOGM report," the President remained silent. Prof. Bukenya and Mbabazi sat quietly next to him.

By reprimanding junior officials and remaining silent on the big fish named in the CHOGM report, critics say that the President was applying double standards. This feeling was recently expressed by Justice John Bosco Katutsi, who said that he was tired of trying only junior officials while bigger fish remained at large.

Katutsi made the remarks while delivering judgment in a case in which Eng. Samson Bagonza, the former Chief Engineer in the Ministry of Works and Transport, was accused of abuse of public funds meant for CHOGM. Bagonza is the first official to be tried for CHOGM related impropriety.

A political analyst told us that the President is in a catch 22 situation. He has to please

Ugandans to the rescue



6/17/10

voters and donors by appearing to act on the corrupt so as to keep the votes and funds, respectively, coming to Uganda; while at the same time he seeks to protect the corrupt, particularly highly placed ones, who have political value for him, he explained. Thus sacrificing head teachers and NAADs officials whose services are more visible to the common person placates voters and to some extent donors, while leaving high level corruption intact for political expedience.

ROADS

Even when he spoke about corruption in road construction, the President focused on district officials. He said that processes for road construction projects in most districts had become an avenue for “massive theft.” He thanked district chairpersons from Ankole sub-region whom he said had helped him identify anomalies in road construction projects.

POLITICS

Describing himself as an expert on elections, Museveni again told off donors not to involve themselves in local politics. This was in direct reference to calls by the opposition for a new Electoral Commission.

He firmly stated that the current commission will remain and next year’s election will be held as planned.

But the opposition FDC Deputy Secretary for International and Regional Affairs, Anne Mugisha, says the President should differentiate between what the country wants and his personal ambitions.

“It’s not about what Museveni wants. It’s about what Ugandans want. Uganda and Museveni are not synonymous...” she wrote.

DP President General, Norbert Mao, said that by telling donors to keep off politics yet asking for their help on roads, electricity and health, the President showed he is panicking.

“You see, the President is panicking. He knows that he can’t bite the hand that feeds him,” Mao said.

Kampala Central MP, Erias Lukwago, said that without free and fair elections, all the country’s achievements that the President talked about could go up in flames.

Ugandans to the rescue



6/17/10

“What the President is doing is to intimidate us, but we shall not bend on our request and move to make sure that the current EC is overhauled,” Lukwago said.

Leader of Opposition, Prof. Morris Ogenga Latigo, shared Lukwago’s view. “As a country, we need to put aside our political differences and agree that we have a challenge of the Electoral Commission. Nobody hates Museveni but we are tired of him,” Latigo said.