



UGANDA DEBT NETWORK

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Friday, August 31, 2007

The Rt. Hon. Speaker
The Parliament of the Republic of Uganda

Dear Rt. Hon Edward Ssekandi,

Re: Parliamentary Failure to Debate Sector Budgets

WE members of Civil Society under the auspices of the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CS BAG)¹ would like to register our appreciation of the good work Parliament has done so far under your guidance to strengthen the roots of democracy in the country.

WE would however, like to express our deep concern at reports that parliament is not going to critically scrutinize all the Sectoral Committee reports on the 2007/08 National Budget. Since the budget is the most important instrument for implementation of Government policy in all sectors, it should therefore be given priority in Parliament business and critically scrutinized and not be rushed.

WE are worried that scrutinizing only 4 out of 13 sectors will not only set a bad precedent on effectiveness of the oversight role of Parliament, but may aggravate corruption and misuse of public funds in the other untouched sectors.

WE are disappointed that Members of Parliament have continued to abscond from their Constitutional mandate of overseeing the Executive in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of government policies and programmes. We are concerned that the quality of debate on important national policy issues such as public expenditure management has continued to deteriorate as seen in the recent CHOGM supplement expenditure debates. This kind of trend is totally unacceptable, if parliament is to remain a respectful, independent and not a rubber stamp of the executive.

WE are afraid that poor time management in Parliament and failure of Hon. Members of parliament to attend parliamentary sessions and committee meetings has resulted into inadequate debates. WE are not convinced by the Speaker's directive not to debate all the 13 ministerial policy statements due to time constraints. The budget cycle is well defined in the Budget Act 2001; which gives parliament ample time to prepare debate and approve the budget.

¹ Uganda Debt Network, Forum for Women in Democracy, Environmental Alert, Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development, Action Aid International Uganda, Safer World, African Centre for Trade and Development, Uganda National Health Consumers' Organization, Africa Leadership Institute, Centre for Development Initiative, National NGO Forum, VECO-Uganda, Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development, East and Southern African Small Scale Farmers Forum and Caritas Uganda.

WE challenge the Hon. Speaker of Parliament and Hon. Members of Parliament to consider extending the time to thoroughly scrutinize debate and approve the sector budget. Hon. Speaker should therefore exercise his powers under Section 22 of the Budget Act 2001, to do this.

For God and our County!



Prof. Edward Kakonge
Chairman UDN Board of Directors
On Behalf of CS BAG Members

cc: His Excellency the President
Of the Republic of Uganda

The Rt. Hon. Prime Minister
Of the Republic of Uganda

The Leader of the Opposition
Parliament of the Republic of Uganda

Hon. Minister of Finance Planning and Economic Development
Republic of Uganda

