SWAHILI TODAY WEEKLY

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Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, South Africa's First Woman Deputy President, Dies at 71



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BY JOSEPHS QUARTZY · 21 NOV 2026

Former South African Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, who made history as the first woman to hold the country's second-highest political office before going on to lead the United Nations' agency for gender equality, has died at the age of 71.

Her death was announced by South Africa's Presidency on Friday, November 20, 2026, with Acting President Paul Mashatile conveying condolences to her family on behalf of President Cyril Ramaphosa, the government and the South African people.

A subsequent statement published by the South African government on Saturday said Mlambo-Ngcuka died following complications from a medical procedure she had undergone approximately two weeks earlier. The family described her death as a major loss and thanked members of the public for messages of support.

Mlambo-Ngcuka occupied an important place in South Africa's post-apartheid political history. Appointed Deputy President in June 2005 under then-President Thabo Mbeki, she became the first woman to hold the position, serving until 2008.

Her appointment came after Jacob Zuma's removal from the deputy presidency amid a political controversy surrounding corruption allegations connected to an arms deal. Mlambo-Ngcuka's husband, Bulelani Ngcuka, had previously served as South Africa's National Director of Public Prosecutions and was involved in the legal proceedings surrounding Zuma.

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Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, South Africa's First Woman Deputy President, Dies at 71

BY JOSEPHS QUARTZY · 21 NOV 2026



Former South African Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, who made history as the first woman to hold the country's second-highest political office before going on to lead the United Nations' agency for gender equality, has died at the age of 71.

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Her appointment came after Jacob Zuma's removal from the deputy presidency amid a political controversy surrounding corruption allegations connected to an arms deal. Mlambo-Ngcuka's husband, Bulelani Ngcuka, had previously served as South Africa's National Director of Public Prosecutions and was involved in the legal proceedings surrounding Zuma.

Before becoming Deputy President, she had already established a substantial record in government and public service. She entered South Africa's first democratic Parliament in 1994, following the end of apartheid, and chaired the Portfolio Committee on Public Service and Administration. She also participated in the Constitutional Assembly, which helped draft the country's democratic Constitution.

Her ministerial career included serving as Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry between 1996 and 1999 before becoming Minister of Minerals and Energy, a position she held from 1999 to 2005. During her time in the latter office, she advocated for changes in the mining sector, including greater participation and ownership by women.

After leaving the deputy presidency, Mlambo-Ngcuka continued her public service career internationally. In August 2013, she became Executive Director of UN Women, the United Nations entity responsible for advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. She also served as a United Nations Under-Secretary-General, remaining in the position until 2021.

Her leadership at UN Women placed her at the center of international efforts to advance women's rights, improve economic opportunities for women and address barriers affecting girls' education and participation in public life.

Outside government and international institutions, she established the Umlambo Foundation, an organization focused on supporting teachers and improving educational opportunities for children, particularly in disadvantaged communities.

News of her death prompted tributes from political leaders and international institutions. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres described her as a lifelong advocate for the rights and empowerment of women and girls, while recognizing her contribution to advancing gender equality.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) also expressed its condolences, honoring her contribution to public service and women's empowerment across the region.

In Tanzania, President Samia Suluhu Hassan extended condolences to South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, Mlambo-Ngcuka's family and the people of South Africa on behalf of the Tanzanian government and its citizens.

South Africa's Parliament also paid tribute to her involvement in the country's democratic institutions, describing her as an opponent of apartheid and an advocate for social justice, human dignity and the rights of women and girls.

The family has requested privacy as it comes to terms with her death. Details of the memorial and funeral arrangements are expected to be communicated following consultations with the Presidency.



Fire Damages Six Hotels and Nearby Businesses in Zanzibar’s Nungwi

BY NYAMBITA MAGOMA · 22 NOV 2026

A fire that broke out in Nungwi, North Unguja Region, Zanzibar, on Saturday, November 21, 2026, affected six hotels and several small businesses, with three of the hotels reportedly sustaining extensive damage.

Khamis Kibata, Secretary to the Sheha (leader of a local authority) of Nungwi, confirmed the incident, saying the fire started at approximately 2:20 p.m. at a hotel known as Makofi before spreading to neighboring properties.

Speaking by phone, Kibata said firefighters successfully brought the blaze under control, adding that no deaths or injuries had been reported at the time of his statement.

He said three of the six affected hotels sustained significant damage, while shops operated by small-scale traders in the area were also affected. However, a full assessment of the financial losses had not yet been completed.

Kibata said the cause of the fire remained unknown as authorities had yet to establish what triggered the incident.

The fire affected businesses in Nungwi, one of Zanzibar’s prominent tourism destinations, raising concerns over the damage to hospitality establishments and other commercial properties in the area.

Authorities are expected to establish the cause of the fire and assess the full extent of the damage.

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NIDA Unveils New Identity Card Designs for Tanzanians, Foreign Residents and Refugees

BY NYAMBITA MAGOMA · 20 NOV 2026

Tanzania's National Identification Authority (NIDA) has showcased three different national identity card designs intended for Tanzanian citizens, foreign residents and refugees, as the country continues to update its identification infrastructure and expand the range of services connected to personal identification.

The designs, published through NIDA's official social media account, show separate cards for Tanzanian citizens, resident foreigners and refugees. Each carries distinct identification details, including the holder's name, date of birth, photograph, nationality and identification number, alongside features intended to distinguish the different registration categories.

The publication comes a day after the government launched the 2026 edition of Tanzania's national identity card at a ceremony in Kibaha, Coast Region, on November 18. Prime Minister Mwigulu Nchemba, representing President Samia Suluhu Hassan, officiated at the launch, which also introduced new card-production technology, the NIDA Wallet mobile application and 10 vehicles intended to bring registration services closer to communities.

Although the three designs serve different groups, their presentation comes against the background of a wider effort to strengthen the country's identification system and make identity information more useful across government institutions and private service providers.

For Tanzanian citizens, the redesigned card is intended to accommodate more information than previous versions. NIDA Director General James Kaji said at the launch that the upgraded card would have eight information sections, compared with four in the earlier version.

The expanded system is expected to accommodate information linked to birth registration, health insurance, Taxpayer Identification Numbers (TIN), blood groups, driving licences and marital status. The government says the changes will reduce the need for citizens to carry several separate documents when accessing services.

The integration is also intended to make it easier for institutions to verify information without repeatedly requiring individuals to present different documents. According to Kaji, birth certificate details will be accessible through the system, while the inclusion of tax and health insurance information could simplify access to services offered by the respective institutions.

The government has also identified opportunities to use the upgraded identification system for regional travel. Under arrangements with countries that agree to recognise Tanzanian national identity cards as travel documents, the cards are expected to facilitate cross-border movement without requiring travellers to use passports for those journeys.

However, the arrangements depend on agreements with participating countries and coordination between the relevant authorities. The new card should therefore not be interpreted as automatically replacing passports for international travel.

The expansion of NIDA's services also reflects the growing role of national identification in accessing everyday services. Home Affairs Minister Patrobas Katambi said 157 institutions, comprising 72 public and 85 private entities, had been connected to NIDA's system.

This means the authority's identification infrastructure is increasingly relevant beyond the issuance of physical identity cards. Its records can support verification processes across different institutions, making accurate registration and the protection of personal information important considerations as more services become connected.

The introduction of separate designs for resident foreigners and refugees also draws attention to the different groups covered by identification and registration processes in Tanzania.

The resident foreigner card, labelled Legal Resident ID Card in NIDA's published specimen, is distinct from the national identity card issued to Tanzanian citizens. The distinction is important because possession of a resident identity card does not confer Tanzanian citizenship. It identifies a foreign national within the applicable registration arrangements.

The refugee specimen is similarly identified as a separate category rather than a variation of the citizen's national identity card. Its appearance in NIDA's publication illustrates the authority's presentation of different identification documents, although the announcement does not provide further details about eligibility, registration procedures or the legal arrangements governing its issuance.

Under Section 10 of Tanzania's Registration and Identification of Persons Act, the legislation identifies two categories of identity cards: those issued to citizens of the United Republic and those issued to aliens resident in the country. The separate refugee specimen therefore should not be taken as evidence that the legal classification under that provision has been amended.

Beyond the appearance of the cards, the government has also introduced changes to their production. The upgraded technology is intended to address complaints about earlier cards whose printed photographs and personal details sometimes faded with use.

The new production process incorporates laser engraving, which embeds personal details within the card's layers rather than relying solely on surface printing. The technology is intended to improve durability and make the documents more difficult to alter or counterfeit.

The launch also comes as authorities face the challenge of ensuring that registered individuals actually receive their identity cards. Kaji disclosed that NIDA had more than 1.2 million uncollected cards and urged people who had completed registration to collect their documents from the relevant offices.

Officials also stressed that the introduction of the upgraded version does not invalidate previously issued national identity cards. Existing holders are not required to replace valid cards simply because a newer design has been introduced.

The growing integration of personal records, however, raises questions about how information will be protected as more institutions gain access to the identification system. Linking identity records with health, tax and other personal information could reduce administrative difficulties, but it also increases the importance of preventing unauthorized access, misuse and inaccurate records.

Tanzania's Personal Data Protection Act, 2022, provides a legal framework for handling personal information, while the Registration and Identification of Persons Act also contains provisions addressing the disclosure and control of identification data. Effective implementation will be important as the number of connected institutions and uses of NIDA records increases.

For NIDA, the latest developments represent a move beyond issuing physical identity cards towards a more connected identification system. The introduction of different card designs, upgraded production technology and digital identification services places the authority at the centre of several administrative processes that affect citizens and other registered populations.

The extent to which these changes improve people's access to services will ultimately depend on how reliably the systems operate, how effectively institutions coordinate and whether individuals can obtain and use their identification documents without unnecessary delays.



Rema Releases 'Tanzania' on New EP, but Lyrics Make No Mention of the Country

BY JOSEPHS QUARTZY · 20 NOV 2026

Nigerian Afrobeats star Rema has released his new extended play (EP), E-Mortal Boy, featuring a track titled “TANZANIA” that has attracted attention among Tanzanian listeners, although the song's lyrics make no direct mention of the country.

The seven-track project arrived on Friday, November 20, 2026, with “TANZANIA” appearing as the fourth song on the tracklist. The track features American record producer BNYX, who is credited alongside Rema on the recording.

The song follows the attention generated by its title when the tracklist for E-Mortal Boy began circulating ahead of the EP's release. As previously reported by Swahili Today, its inclusion had drawn interest in Tanzania, with listeners curious about what Rema had prepared under the country's name.

However, the released track offers little indication of a connection to Tanzania through its lyrics. Across the song, Rema sings about a woman, focusing on her appearance, dancing, physical attraction and their romantic

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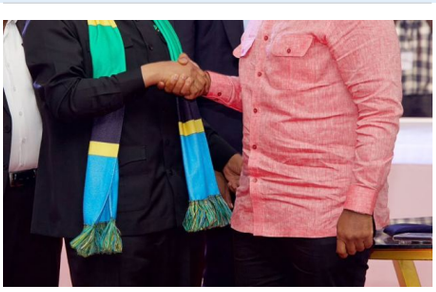
encounters. The lyrics make no direct reference to Tanzania, its people or any identifiable aspect of the country.

This has left a gap between the song's title and what listeners hear. While the name naturally draws attention to Tanzania, the lyrics do not establish whether the title carries a particular meaning, refers to someone or something, or has another explanation.

Rema has not publicly explained the inspiration behind the title, leaving the reason for naming the track “TANZANIA” unclear.

E-Mortal Boy contains seven songs: “Feel Alright” featuring Wizkid, “Oh No”, “Velvet”, “TANZANIA” featuring BNYX, “TEA”, “SUGA” and “Bang Bang” featuring London and Kah-Lo. The release brings together several collaborators while marking Rema's return to the EP format following his 2023 project, Ravage.

For Tanzanian listeners who had been anticipating the song after seeing the country's name on the tracklist, its release has provided an answer to one question: the track is real and officially part of the EP. What remains unanswered is why Rema chose to give it Tanzania's name.



Joho Points to Tanzania's Tanzanite as Model for Kenya's Tsavorite Ambitions

BY ANNA FARAJA · 21 NOV 2026

Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Mining, Blue Economy and Maritime Affairs, Hassan Ali Joho, has pointed to Tanzania's Tanzanite industry as an example of how mineral resources can contribute to national economic development, saying Kenya hopes to achieve similar progress with its Tsavorite gemstone.

Joho made the remarks after joining Tanzania's Prime Minister, Dr Mwigulu Nchemba, at the 2026 Usiku wa Madini celebrations in Dar es Salaam on Friday, November 20, where government officials, investors and other mining industry stakeholders gathered to recognize developments in the mineral sector.

In a statement shared on his social media accounts, Joho described Tanzanite as a unique gemstone found only in Tanzania, noting its contribution to the country's economy. The gemstone, known for its distinctive blue and violet appearance, is associated with the Merelani mining area in Manyara Region, near Mount Kilimanjaro.

He drew a comparison with Kenya's Tsavorite, a green gemstone found in Taita Taveta County, describing it as an important resource that his country wants to develop, process locally and position as a contributor to economic growth.

"For Kenya, our signature gemstone, Tsavorite, found in Taita Taveta County, presents a similar opportunity. It is a uniquely Kenyan gemstone that we are keen to develop, add value to and position as a driver of economic growth," Joho said.

His remarks reflect a broader interest in how East African countries can obtain greater economic returns from their mineral resources by developing industries that go beyond extraction and the export of raw materials.

Tanzania has been pursuing this approach through efforts to expand mineral processing, refining and manufacturing activities within the country. Tanzanite remains one of its most recognizable gemstones, with the government also working to improve geological research and expand knowledge of deposits that could support future production.

Kenya, meanwhile, has an opportunity to develop its gemstone industry around Tsavorite, which is valued internationally for its green color and is mined in parts of Taita Taveta County. Joho's remarks suggest that the government wants to strengthen the sector's contribution to the economy through greater local processing and the development of finished products.

The celebrations took place alongside the seventh Tanzania Mining and Investment Conference, which ran from November 19 to 21 at the Julius Nyerere International Convention Centre in Dar es Salaam.

Held under the theme "Value-Added Minerals: The Engine of Industrialization and Economic Growth," the conference brought together government representatives, mining companies, investors and other industry participants to discuss investment opportunities and ways of developing mineral value chains.

Prime Minister Nchemba attended the Minerals Night as guest of honour, with the government using the gathering to recognize contributions to the country's mining industry and promote its ambitions for greater domestic value addition.

The comparison between Tanzanite and Tsavorite also places the two neighboring countries' mineral industries within a wider regional discussion about how African economies can retain more value from resources extracted from their own territories.



Botswana Vice President Links Community Partnerships to Economic Transformation Goals by 2036

BY ANNA FARAJA · 20 NOV 2026

Botswana Vice President Ndaba Gaolathe has called for stronger partnerships between government, humanitarian organizations and development partners, saying national development ambitions cannot be achieved by government acting alone.

Speaking on Thursday, November 19, 2026, during the launch of the 7th Africa Lions and Leos Forum in Tlokweng, Gaolathe urged development partners to help translate Botswana's priorities into tangible improvements in people's lives, particularly through initiatives that address community needs.

He highlighted the contribution of Lions Clubs International to healthcare, education and disaster relief in Botswana, citing several projects through which the organization has supported communities and public institutions.

Among the examples he mentioned were the Mochudi Eye Clinic and another eye clinic at Sekgoma Memorial Hospital in Serowe. He also pointed to the Girl Guide centre and support provided to children receiving cancer treatment through the Global HOPE partnership.

Lions members have also assisted communities affected by flooding in Nata, Francistown and the Okavango. Their interventions included support for learners at Linchwe Junior Secondary School following the floods of May 2025, when affected communities faced disruptions to their daily lives and access to essential services.

These initiatives illustrate how organizations outside government can contribute to the delivery of services that might otherwise place additional demands on public institutions. Healthcare facilities, educational support and emergency assistance are areas where sustained cooperation can extend the reach of development programmes to communities.

Gaolathe connected this contribution to Botswana's broader economic transformation ambitions, particularly the Botswana Economic Transformation Programme (BETP), which has identified 186 projects and initiatives intended to diversify the economy and support its growth towards nearly double its current size by 2036.

The programme covers agriculture, manufacturing, financial services and digitalization, infrastructure, tourism, energy and mining, alongside healthcare, education and social protection. Its broader ambitions include mobilizing approximately 514 billion pula in investment and creating more than 512,000 jobs by 2036.

The government has presented BETP as a framework for moving national development priorities into projects with defined implementation responsibilities and measurable outcomes. However, delivering that agenda requires investment, technical capacity and cooperation across different sectors, creating opportunities for private investors and development partners to contribute.

The Lions movement's community-based work, as highlighted by Gaolathe, represents a different but complementary dimension of development: addressing immediate social needs while national economic programmes pursue longer-term structural changes.

Meanwhile, Lions Clubs International President Mark Lyon urged participants to embrace the forum's theme, "Rooted in Service, Expanding Our Horizons and Growing Our Pride."

He encouraged members to create opportunities for younger generations to take leadership roles, develop innovative ideas and participate in community service.

Lyon also called for a broader understanding of organizational growth, arguing that success should not be measured solely by increasing membership numbers. He emphasized the importance of building stronger clubs, developing meaningful partnerships, and creating communities where people feel valued

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and empowered.

The 7th Africa Lions and Leos Forum brings together members of the Lions movement from across the continent to discuss leadership, service and cooperation. The 2026 gathering is taking place in Botswana from November 18 to 21.

Gaolathe's remarks placed particular emphasis on the relationship between community-level interventions and the country's national development ambitions, with the government seeking broader participation in efforts to improve living standards and transform the economy.



German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier to Visit Kenya on November 25–26

BY ANNA FARAJA · 22 NOV 2026

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier is scheduled to visit Kenya on November 25 and 26 for bilateral talks with President William Ruto, as Germany seeks to strengthen its longstanding relationship with the East African country.

The visit will form part of a five-day African tour running from November 22 to 26, which will also take Steinmeier to Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, according to the German Embassy in Nairobi.

During his stay in Kenya, Steinmeier is expected to meet Ruto at State House in Nairobi for discussions on bilateral relations. The programme will also include engagements covering healthcare, digital services, skills development, arts and culture, and nature and biodiversity conservation.

His Kenyan programme is scheduled to begin at Tatu City, where he will visit a mobile hospital operated by Zuri Health. He will also visit Call Centre International Kenya (CCI Kenya), which provides digital services, and CareerBox, a nonprofit organization involved in skills development.

The German President is also expected to visit Anno's One Fine Day arts centre, which works with children and young people, before travelling to Naivasha for the final part of his Kenyan engagements.

On November 26, Steinmeier is scheduled to visit Crescent Island nature reserve on Lake Naivasha, where his programme will focus on nature and biodiversity conservation. He will also meet representatives of Kenyan civil society before departing for Germany.

The visit is expected to provide an opportunity for both countries to explore areas of mutual interest and build on existing cooperation. Germany and Kenya have maintained longstanding relations, with partnerships covering economic development, trade, education, skills training and other areas.

Steinmeier will be accompanied by a business delegation during his African tour, which will include engagements with the leaders of all three countries. He is scheduled to meet Côte d'Ivoire President Alassane Ouattara and Ghanaian President John Dramani Mahama before arriving in Kenya.

The African tour will be his final visit to the continent during his second term as Germany's Federal President, which began in March 2022.



Ethiopia Signs Host Country Agreement With African Financial Institutions Alliance

BY ANNA FARAJA · 21 NOV 2026

Ethiopia has signed a Host Country Agreement with the Alliance of African Multilateral Financial Institutions (AAMFI), paving the way for closer cooperation between the government and the continental financial alliance.

The agreement was signed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Addis Ababa by Ethiopia's State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Hadera, and Dr. Corneille Karekezi, Chairperson of the AAMFI Governing Council and Group Managing Director of the African Reinsurance Corporation (Africa Re).

Speaking during the signing ceremony, Ambassador Hadera said Addis Ababa's position as the headquarters of the African Union and host to several international organizations makes it a suitable base for AAMFI's operations. He also pointed to Ethiopia's international transport connections through Ethiopian Airlines as an advantage for the institution's engagements across Africa and beyond.

Dr. Karekezi welcomed the Ethiopian government's support, reaffirming the alliance's commitment to responsible operations and cooperation with the country's authorities.

Established in Addis Ababa on February 17, 2024, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, AAMFI brings together African-owned and controlled multilateral financial institutions. The alliance, also known as the Africa Club, seeks to strengthen cooperation among African financial institutions and support the continent's financial and economic development.

The agreement gives Ethiopia a formal partnership with the alliance as it seeks to strengthen its position as a center for continental institutions and international cooperation.



Tanzania's Samia Meets Uganda's Museveni as Two Neighbours Seek New Investment Opportunities Beyond EACOP

BY NYAMBITA MAGOMA · 18 NOV 2026

Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan's two-day state visit to Uganda comes at a time when the neighbouring countries are seeking to expand their economic relationship beyond traditional trade and infrastructure cooperation, with manufacturing, energy and investment emerging as important areas of shared interest.

Samia arrived at Entebbe International Airport on Wednesday, November 18, 2026, following an invitation from Ugandan President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni. She was received by Uganda's Third Deputy Prime Minister, Rukia Nakadama, ahead of official engagements with the Ugandan leadership.

According to Uganda's State House, the discussions between the two governments will cover energy, agriculture, industry, trade and finance. The programme also includes a visit to the Double Q Automotive Assembly Plant in Mpigi District, where the two presidents are expected to participate in its official inauguration.

The manufacturing facility offers a useful illustration of the kind of economic cooperation the two countries are seeking to develop. Vehicle assembly is an important part of Uganda's industrialization ambitions, while the plant's regional reach gives the investment significance beyond the Ugandan domestic market.

Double Q, which began operations in Uganda in 2013, has developed its automotive business around vehicle distribution, assembly and heavy equipment. The company assembles vehicles, including Sinotruk trucks, and serves markets in several neighbouring countries, including Tanzania, Rwanda, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The company had already established an assembly operation in Mpigi before the latest presidential visit. Reporting by Uganda Radio Network in October 2023 indicated that the company was expanding its facilities to increase production, with plans at the time to assemble up to 1,000 vehicles annually. The company also reported employing hundreds of Ugandans and exporting vehicles to regional markets.

The significance of the visit, therefore, extends beyond the opening of an industrial facility. It brings attention to the possibility of building stronger manufacturing and distribution networks across East Africa, where businesses can serve several national markets rather than depend entirely on domestic demand.

For Tanzania, closer industrial cooperation with Uganda could create opportunities for its businesses, suppliers and investors to participate

in a growing regional manufacturing market. However, the extent of those opportunities will depend on the terms of cooperation, investment arrangements and the ability of both countries to address trade barriers affecting businesses operating across their borders.

Energy remains another major part of the relationship.

The two countries are already connected through the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), which is designed to transport crude oil from Uganda's oil fields to Tanzania's Port of Tanga for export. The project has become one of the most significant examples of cross-border infrastructure cooperation between the two countries.

In August 2026, Museveni and Samia witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding involving the Uganda National Oil Company, Tanzania Petroleum Development Corporation and Vitol Bahrain E.C. to develop the proposed Tanga Regional Energy Hub.

The project is intended to expand petroleum storage, refining, logistics and distribution infrastructure, creating additional opportunities around the energy trade between the two countries. Uganda's planned Hoima refinery and Tanzania's position as a coastal transport and energy gateway are also relevant to the broader partnership.

Beyond petroleum, the governments have discussed electricity cooperation, including a proposed 400-kilovolt power interconnection that could strengthen electricity exchange between the neighbouring countries.

These developments suggest that the relationship is increasingly being shaped by practical economic interests, including access to infrastructure, investment, industrial capacity and regional markets.

The two countries also have a history of cooperation dating back to the independence period. Their relationship has developed through regional integration efforts and shared participation in the East African Community, although commercial and infrastructure interests have become increasingly prominent in recent years.

Samia's visit provides another opportunity for the two governments to move those interests forward. The more important measure, however, will be what follows the diplomatic engagements: whether proposed investments translate into functioning projects, whether businesses encounter fewer barriers when trading across the border, and whether industrial cooperation creates employment and wider economic opportunities.



Somalia warns UAE against bypassing Mogadishu in dealings with regional administrations

BY SWT NEWS DESK · 18 NOV 2026

Somalia's latest confrontation with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is raising questions about who controls the country's strategic infrastructure, security partnerships and foreign relations, as President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's administration pushes back against agreements it says were negotiated outside federal authority.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, November 18, 2026, Somalia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs called on the UAE to conduct all its relations with the country through the Federal Government, rejecting what it described as continued interference in Somalia's internal affairs.

The ministry said foreign engagements and security arrangements that bypass Mogadishu undermine the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity. It also warned that the government would take all necessary lawful measures to protect those interests.

The statement followed a televised address by President Mohamud on Tuesday, in which he accused the UAE of supporting political and security structures operating outside the authority of his administration.

At the center of the disagreement is a longstanding dispute over the extent of Mogadishu's authority over Somalia's federal member states and their relationships with foreign governments.

The UAE has developed significant economic and security relationships across Somalia, including investments in strategic ports and support for regional security forces. Some of these relationships have involved administrations that maintain their own political and security arrangements and have frequently disagreed with the Federal Government.

In January 2026, Somalia's Council of Ministers announced the cancellation of all agreements with the UAE, including arrangements covering port operations, defence and security cooperation.

The decision affected agreements involving Berbera, Bosaso and Kismayo, three strategically important ports along the Somali coastline.

However, the announcement exposed the limits of Mogadishu's authority over regional administrations. Somaliland, Puntland and Jubbaland rejected the federal government's decision, maintaining that their existing arrangements with the UAE would continue.

The disagreement is particularly significant because the ports involved are not simply commercial facilities. Their locations along important maritime routes give them economic and strategic value, attracting investment and foreign interest in the wider Horn of Africa.

Berbera, in Somaliland, has been developed through a partnership involving Dubai-based DP World, while Bosaso in Puntland is also connected to a long-term port concession involving the company. Kismayo, in Jubbaland, has likewise featured in Somalia's dispute over foreign agreements.

The UAE's involvement has also extended beyond commercial investments. Reuters reported in January that the country had trained Somali troops and was providing salaries and logistical support for approximately 3,400 military police and special forces personnel, according to senior Somali sources.

That security relationship has become another point of disagreement, with President Mohamud arguing that foreign-supported forces operating outside the national command structure weaken the country's security institutions.

In his latest address, the President also accused the UAE of providing political and financial support to regional administrations, contributing to divisions between Mogadishu and other political actors.

He further alleged that the UAE had been involved in activities connected to the recognition of Somaliland by Israel and referred to an incident in January in which he said Emirati involvement allowed a militia leader fleeing Yemen to travel through Berbera without federal authorization.

These are allegations made by the Somali President and have not been independently established by the statements released so far.

The latest diplomatic position also reflects Mogadishu's attempt to distinguish its dispute with the Emirati government from the historical relationship between the two populations.

The Foreign Ministry emphasized that Somalia's concerns relate to the UAE government's policies rather than the longstanding friendship between Somali and Emirati people.

The UAE's response to the latest accusations was not included in the ministry's statement. The country has previously denied allegations of interference, while its authorities did not immediately comment on Somalia's January decision to cancel the agreements.

For Somalia, the challenge extends beyond its diplomatic relationship with Abu Dhabi. The government must also contend with regional administrations that have maintained their own foreign partnerships and have previously rejected Mogadishu's attempts to terminate them.

That leaves an important question unresolved: whether the Federal Government can enforce its position across the country when some regional authorities continue to defend agreements negotiated directly with foreign partners.

The dispute is therefore about more than the future of relations between Mogadishu and Abu Dhabi. It also exposes the unresolved question of how power, foreign relations and control of strategic national assets should be shared within Somalia's federal system.

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Ruto-Oburu meeting exposes unresolved questions over ODM-UDA partnership ahead of 2027 elections

BY ANNA FARAJA · 18 NOV 2026

Kenya's president William Ruto's latest meeting with Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) leader Oburu Oginga has brought renewed attention to the political negotiations between the ruling United Democratic Alliance (UDA) and the former opposition party, with disagreements emerging within ODM over the terms of their cooperation ahead of Kenya's 2027 general election.

Ruto hosted Oburu at State House in Nairobi on Tuesday, November 17, 2026, with both leaders publicly emphasizing the importance of maintaining their political partnership. In a statement following the meeting, Ruto said their discussions covered political cooperation, national cohesion, equitable development and the welfare of Kenyans.

Oburu also described the discussions as an effort to strengthen the broad-based government arrangement between the two parties, emphasizing dialogue, national unity and their shared interests.

However, the emphasis on cooperation comes at a time when ODM leaders are divided over how far the party should go in supporting Ruto's political ambitions and what it should secure in return.

A section of the party's senior leadership has been pushing for a formal, written agreement with UDA before committing to a possible electoral partnership in 2027. The proposed arrangement is expected to address power-sharing, political representation and the respective roles of the two parties in a future government.

National Assembly Minority Leader Junet Mohamed has been among the most outspoken proponents of a negotiated agreement, arguing that ODM should not offer unconditional support without securing a meaningful political stake.

Speaking at the party's headquarters, Orange House, Junet maintained that ODM was formed to acquire and exercise political power, not simply participate in government without negotiating its interests.

His position reflects a broader concern among some party officials that the cooperation established with Ruto should translate into clearly defined political commitments rather than remain an informal working relationship.

The disagreement is not limited to the question of whether an agreement should be signed. Some ODM leaders have argued that the party should maintain its cooperation with the President without imposing conditions, pointing to the potential benefits of continued engagement with the government.

Nyando MP Jared Okello, for instance, has questioned whether a written agreement would necessarily guarantee that its terms are respected, citing previous political arrangements in Kenya that failed to deliver their expected outcomes.

The different positions present a difficult balancing act for Oburu, who assumed leadership of ODM following the death of his brother and the party's former leader, Raila Odinga, in October 2025.

Raila had been central to the negotiations that brought ODM and Ruto's administration into a broad-based arrangement. In March 2025, he and the President signed a 10-point framework covering governance, national unity, devolution, corruption, the rule of law and other national issues.

The framework provided a basis for cooperation between the two political formations, but it did not establish a political union or settle the terms of a future electoral coalition.

Since Raila's death, ODM has had to navigate its relationship with an administration that was once its political opponent while also managing competing views within its own leadership over the party's future.

The latest meeting between Ruto and Oburu therefore carries significance beyond the public assurances of unity. It comes as both political formations consider how their current cooperation could shape the next general election.

For ODM, the central question is whether its participation in the broad-based government will translate into a negotiated political arrangement that reflects its electoral strength. For UDA, maintaining the partnership could help consolidate support beyond its traditional political base.

Although the two leaders have reiterated their commitment to cooperation, the meeting did not publicly establish whether they had reached any new agreement on power-sharing or the terms of a possible 2027 coalition.

The distinction matters. Political cooperation in government and an electoral alliance are not necessarily the same thing, and the parties still have to determine what their relationship will look like when they eventually face voters.

As the 2027 elections approach, the outcome of those negotiations could determine not only the future of the ODM-UDA partnership but also the direction of Kenya's political competition.



Tshisekedi Opens Public Service Conference as DR Congo Pushes for Better Government Services

BY ANNA FARAJA · 20 NOV 2026

The Democratic Republic of Congo has renewed its efforts to reform public administration, with President Félix Tshisekedi calling for better working conditions, stronger professional standards and more responsive government services as he opened the second edition of the country's Annual Public Service Conferences in Kinshasa.

Tshisekedi officially opened the two-day conference on Thursday, November 19, 2026, at the Kinshasa Financial Centre. The meeting, known by its French acronym CASP, is being held under the theme, “Investing in Human Capital for Innovative, High-Performing and Ethical Public Services.”

The conference brings together government officials, public institutions, administrative professionals and development partners to examine how the country's public administration can better serve citizens. Its agenda goes beyond introducing new technology, placing particular emphasis on the people responsible for delivering government services.

Addressing participants, Tshisekedi argued that public institutions must treat citizens with dignity, respond to their requests promptly and guarantee their rights. He said these responsibilities are central to building public confidence in the state.

However, the president also acknowledged an important part of the public-service reform debate: the conditions under which government employees work.

He instructed the government, through the Deputy Prime Minister responsible for the Civil Service, to accelerate the preparation of a National Occupational Health and Safety Policy, together with a roadmap for its implementation across public administration.

The directive reflects the government's position that demands for better performance must be accompanied by attention to the welfare, safety and professional development of public employees. Training, merit-based advancement and improved working conditions were also identified as priorities in the broader reform agenda.

The conference comes as the Congolese government seeks to move beyond discussions about administrative modernization and assess the progress of reforms already underway. The inaugural edition, held in December 2025, focused on building public services around competence, integrity and digitalization.

The second edition is therefore intended to provide an opportunity to examine the implementation of earlier recommendations, identify persistent administrative weaknesses and establish practical measures for improving services. The organizers have also outlined plans to document successful administrative practices in a digital database that other public institutions can use.

One of the main developments presented during Thursday's opening ceremony was the unveiling of the e-Service digital platform. The system is designed to make administrative procedures more accessible by allowing citizens to consult official service charges, access information about government procedures and complete certain formalities and payments online.

The initiative addresses a longstanding challenge in public administration: the difficulty citizens can face when trying to establish which office handles a particular service, what documents are required and how much an official procedure should cost.

Digital access could help reduce unnecessary visits to government offices and make administrative requirements easier to

understand. However, the platform's practical value will ultimately depend on the services available through it, its accessibility to people with limited internet access and the ability of government institutions to process applications submitted through the system.

The conference also featured the presentation of Public Service Awards recognizing government departments that have introduced improvements in their operations. The awards are intended to encourage innovation, transparency, accountability and better service delivery across public institutions.

The National School of Administration (ENA) also presented two African awards it had received, while participants visited exhibition stands showcasing initiatives aimed at modernizing government services.

The two-day meeting is expected to provide further discussions on professional skills, institutional performance, ethical standards and the role of human resources in public-sector reform.

For the Congolese government, the challenge is not simply to introduce new platforms or organize conferences, but to translate policy commitments into improvements that citizens can experience when accessing public services.

The introduction of e-Service, the proposed occupational health and safety policy and the recognition of better-performing institutions represent different parts of that agenda. Their effectiveness will depend on implementation, adequate resources and whether reforms reach public offices beyond the country's main administrative centres.

As the conference continues, the central question remains whether these initiatives can help build an administration that is not only more modern in its systems, but also more reliable, accessible and accountable to the people it serves.



Museveni Courts Dangote Over Uganda's Oil Refinery and Fertilizer Manufacturing

BY ANNA FARAJA · 18 NOV 2026

Uganda is seeking to attract Nigerian industrialist Aliko Dangote into its oil refining, fertilizer and manufacturing sectors as President Yoweri Museveni steps up efforts to expand domestic industrial production and reduce the country's dependence on imported finished products.

Museveni disclosed on Wednesday, November 18, 2026, that he had held discussions with Dangote on several investment opportunities covering energy, petroleum, agriculture and mining. The meeting took place a day earlier at State House in Entebbe.

The discussions included possible investment in fertilizer manufacturing, which the Ugandan President said could help strengthen regional food security, alongside an update on the country's planned crude oil refinery, designed to initially process 60,000 barrels per day.

Museveni said the refinery was being developed through a joint venture involving the state-owned Uganda National Oil Company (UNOC) and Alpha MBM Investments, a company based in the United Arab Emirates.

The engagement follows a visit to Nigeria by a Ugandan government delegation led by Energy and Mineral Development Minister Monica Musenero, which toured Dangote's petroleum refinery and fertilizer manufacturing facilities in Lagos on November 14.

The delegation also included Minister of State for Privatisation and Investment Aminah Mukalazi. Uganda used the visit to present investment opportunities involving oil refining, fertilizer blending, phosphate processing and salt production.

According to the investment proposals presented during the visit, Uganda hopes to use Dangote's experience in developing large-scale industrial facilities to turn more of its natural resources into products that can serve domestic and regional markets.

However, the discussions come at an important stage for Uganda's own refinery project, which already has an established investment partnership.

Under an implementation agreement signed in March 2025, Alpha MBM Investments holds a 60 per cent stake in the approximately $4 billion refinery project, while UNOC retains the remaining 40 per cent. The facility is planned for the Kabalega Industrial Park in Hoima District, western Uganda.

The agreement established the framework for developing the refinery, which is intended to process domestic crude oil and reduce the country's reliance on imported petroleum products.

The Petroleum Authority of Uganda said in August 2026 that it expected a final investment decision in February 2027, with preliminary engineering work already underway.

Dangote's potential involvement therefore raises questions about how his investment interests could fit into an existing arrangement that already has designated shareholders.

Neither Museveni's announcement nor the information released following the latest discussions identified a new investment agreement, a change in the refinery's ownership structure or a financial commitment from Dangote. It remains unclear whether his group is being considered for a role in the existing project or whether the discussions concern additional industrial investments.

The Nigerian billionaire has substantial experience in the sectors Uganda is seeking to develop. His business group operates across cement, fertilizer, petroleum refining, salt and other manufacturing industries. Its 650,000-barrel-per-day refinery in Nigeria has become one of the continent's most significant investments in downstream petroleum production.

His interest in East Africa also extends beyond Uganda. Dangote has been pursuing a proposed large-scale regional refinery in Kenya, with plans for a facility at Lamu intended to serve several markets across the region. The proposed development is separate from Uganda's 60,000-barrel-per-day domestic refinery.

For Uganda, attracting investment into fertilizer production could be particularly significant. The country wants to increase the local processing of phosphate and other mineral resources into agricultural inputs, potentially reducing reliance on imported fertilizer while supporting farmers and agricultural production.

The wider investment discussions also reflect an effort to strengthen the connection between resource extraction and manufacturing. Rather than exporting crude oil and minerals without substantial local processing, Uganda wants to develop industries that can generate employment, supply domestic demand and create opportunities for regional trade.

OPINION

The work left in an AI Exception Queue

BY TADEUSH MURATOV · 17 NOV 2026



An AI assistant can answer routine customer questions, collect relevant information and recognize when a problem requires human attention. It can then transfer the conversation to a member of staff. But while that may be the right decision, it does not necessarily mean the customer's problem has been solved.

For small businesses, the work that follows this transfer can be just as important as the initial response. A company might see more enquiries answered and fewer unanswered messages on its dashboard, yet still have customers waiting for quotations, corrections or decisions. The difference between responding to a customer and actually helping them is one that businesses cannot afford to overlook.

Consider a fictional appliance repair company. Its AI assistant receives an enquiry about a faulty appliance, collects a description of the problem and asks for the model number. The customer does not have that information, so the assistant passes the enquiry to an estimator for further assistance.

At this point, the system may record the conversation as transferred to a human agent. But several questions remain. Has the estimator reviewed the enquiry? Does the customer need to provide additional information? Is a physical inspection necessary? Has anyone taken responsibility for getting back to the customer?

Simply recording that a conversation has changed hands does not answer any of these questions. Without proper follow-up, the enquiry can disappear from the assistant's active queue while remaining unresolved.

This is why businesses using AI customer service tools need a clear way to track what happens after a conversation is transferred.

A shared record is a sensible place to start. It does not have to involve expensive software or a complicated management system. What matters is that every unfinished enquiry has a clear status, a named person responsible for the next step and a record of what the customer has already been told.

The status should distinguish between cases awaiting staff review, those requiring additional information from the customer, requests waiting for an internal decision and enquiries that have genuinely been resolved. An automatic acknowledgement should not be mistaken for completed work.

Businesses should also record when an enquiry first arrived and when it was last meaningfully updated. This matters because moving a conversation between departments should not make an old request appear new. A case that has been waiting for three days should remain visible as such, even if it has passed through several people.

Responsibility is equally important. Assigning an enquiry to a department or a general human support queue does not necessarily mean someone is actively handling it. A named employee should know what they are expected to do next, whether that involves requesting a photograph, preparing a quotation or arranging an inspection.

Any commitments made to customers should remain visible throughout the process. If an employee promises an update, the business should be able to identify who made that commitment and whether it was fulfilled. This prevents customers from having to repeat themselves or chase answers that someone has already promised to provide.

There is also a difference between an enquiry that is genuinely waiting and one that has simply been forgotten. A customer who needs time to provide additional information may reasonably leave a request open for several days. An enquiry that nobody has reviewed is a different problem.

Businesses should regularly examine their oldest unresolved requests rather than concentrating exclusively on new arrivals. The purpose is not simply to send more reminders, but to identify what is preventing each case from moving forward. If the original next step is no longer appropriate, someone should update it and explain what needs to happen instead.

Closing an enquiry deserves the same attention. A customer receiving a quotation, withdrawing a request and submitting a duplicate enquiry are three different outcomes. Recording all of them as successful resolutions can give management a misleading picture of how well the service is performing.

Before marking a case complete, businesses should establish what completion actually means for that particular request. An enquiry requiring a quotation, for example, should not be counted as resolved merely because the quotation has been prepared internally. The customer must receive the information they were promised.

Another useful exercise is to test whether a different employee can take over an unfinished conversation without having to start from the beginning. Give an open enquiry to someone who was not involved in the original exchange and ask them to identify what the customer needs, what information has already been collected, why the AI assistant could not proceed and what should happen next.

The employee should also be able to distinguish information supplied directly by the customer from details generated or inferred by the AI. A well-written automated summary may appear convincing, but it should not replace checking important details before making decisions.

Businesses should measure the work that happens after the transfer, not just the number of conversations their AI assistant handles. Comparing the number of enquiries sent to human staff with those eventually resolved can reveal whether the team is keeping pace with incoming requests.

It is also worth examining how much time employees spend reviewing automated summaries, correcting inaccurate information, contacting customers, and reopening cases previously considered complete. AI may reduce the time spent answering routine questions, but an increase in enquiries requiring human attention can offset some of those savings.

The business should also have clear rules for deciding which requests receive attention first. An urgent repair or a customer who has been waiting several days should not automatically be pushed aside in favour of simpler enquiries that are quicker to close. Waiting time, urgency and existing commitments should all inform those decisions.

As companies expand their use of AI, they should establish when the arrangement needs to be reviewed. A growing backlog, repeated cases without an assigned employee or increasing time spent correcting automated summaries may indicate that the existing process is no longer working as intended. The answer could involve improving the questions asked by the assistant, making transfers more informative or allocating additional time for human review.

In some cases, slowing the introduction of

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new AI-supported tasks may be more sensible than allowing unfinished enquiries to accumulate.

AI can make customer service faster, but speed at the beginning of a conversation means little if customers are left waiting at the end. A useful handover is not simply one in which the assistant recognizes its limitations. It is one in which the business takes responsibility for what happens next.

Disclosure: This company-affiliated contribution was initially submitted as an AI-generated manuscript and was substantially rewritten by Swahili Today's editor.



OPINION

Uganda's New Employment Law: Five Important Changes Every Employer And Employee Should Understand

BY SMITH KIIZA · 18 NOV 2026

6 MIN READ

Employment relationships are central to economic development, business stability and individual livelihoods. Yet disputes between employers and employees continue to arise over dismissal, unpaid wages, redundancy, disciplinary procedures and contractual obligations.

In Uganda, the legal framework governing employment has undergone an important change. The Employment (Amendment) Act, 2026 (Act 10 of 2026), which commenced on 5 June 2026, amended the Employment Act, Cap. 226.

The amendments deserve attention not only from Ugandan employers and employees but also from investors, multinational companies, human resource professionals and organisations operating across East Africa.

Here are five important developments.

1. Employees must be given an opportunity to respond before dismissal

One of the significant changes concerns disciplinary fairness.

Under the substituted section 65 of the Employment Act, an employer must explain to an employee, in a language the employee understands, the reasons why dismissal is being considered.

The employee may have a person of their choice present during the explanation. The employer must hear and consider the employee's representations before making a dismissal decision. Importantly, the employee must be given five working days to prepare those representations.

An employer who fails to comply with section 65 is liable to pay an amount equivalent to four weeks' net pay. The employee may raise a complaint before a labour officer within three months after dismissal, subject to the statutory provision allowing a later complaint where reasonable grounds are provided.

This requirement reinforces the importance of fair disciplinary procedures. Employers should not issue dismissal letters before giving employees the legally required opportunity to respond.

2. The law distinguishes unfair dismissal from wrongful dismissal

The amended Act introduces sections 65A and 65B, which address unfair and wrongful dismissal.

Section 65A provides that dismissal is unfair where the employer dismisses an employee for a reason other than those specified under section 64A.

Section 65B addresses wrongful dismissal where an employer fails to fulfil contractual obligations when dismissing an employee.

In determining whether contractual obligations were fulfilled, a labour officer or court may consider the employment contract, the statutory Disciplinary Code, the procedure followed, communication of the dismissal decision, the handling of an appeal and the conduct of both parties.

This distinction matters because a dispute may involve both the reason for dismissal and the manner in which the employer carried it out.

3. Certain grounds cannot justify dismissal or disciplinary penalties

Section 65C provides protection against dismissal or disciplinary penalties in specified circumstances.

These include pregnancy or matters connected with pregnancy, taking or proposing to take legally or contractually entitled leave, lawful trade union participation, discrimination on specified grounds, and initiating or proposing to initiate a complaint or legal proceedings against

> *In Uganda, the legal framework governing employment has undergone an important change.*

an employer, subject to the statutory qualification.

The provision also addresses temporary absence from work on reliable grounds, including illness or injury, within the statutory period.

Employers should examine their human resource policies carefully to ensure that decisions are not based on prohibited grounds.

Employees should also understand that the protection provided by law does not remove the need to comply with legitimate contractual and workplace obligations.

4. Redundancy requires genuine operational grounds

Redundancy is different from dismissal for misconduct.

Under section 64, as amended, termination may arise where an employer's business has ceased operations or where organisational changes, restructuring, labour-saving devices or changes in work patterns mean that fewer employees are required.

The employer must be able to demonstrate the relevant operational circumstances.

Section 80 also imposes notification and consultation requirements where an employer intends to terminate at least ten employees within a period of not more than three months for economic, technological, structural or similar

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reasons.

Businesses contemplating restructuring should obtain legal advice before implementing a redundancy programme. Employees should understand their rights and the legal distinction between genuine redundancy and a disciplinary dismissal disguised as restructuring.

5. Severance allowance has a new statutory calculation

Another important change concerns severance allowance.

Section 86 provides for severance allowance in specified circumstances where an employee has completed at least six months of continuous service. These include unfair dismissal, certain cases of death in service, specified physical incapacity situations and redundancy.

Under the substituted section 88, severance allowance is calculated at one month's salary for each year worked.

However, severance allowance is not automatically payable whenever an employment contract ends. The statutory qualifying circumstances and other applicable provisions must be considered in each case.

Employers should therefore review their termination and final-settlement procedures to ensure that eligible employees receive the correct entitlements.

What employers and employees should do now

The 2026 amendments make it important for organisations to review their employment practices.

Update employment contracts and disciplinary policies.

Document allegations and disciplinary proceedings.

Give employees the required opportunity to respond.

Review redundancy procedures and statutory notification obligations.

Calculate notice, outstanding wages and severance allowance correctly.

Maintain proper employment records.

Keep copies of employment contracts and appointment letters.

Preserve pay slips, disciplinary correspondence and termination notices.

Request written explanations of employment decisions.

Understand applicable complaint periods.

Seek professional advice where dismissal or contractual rights are disputed, a wider lesson for East Africa.

Uganda's amendments demonstrate the importance of keeping employment legislation responsive to changing labor markets and workplace realities.

For businesses operating across East Africa, compliance should not be approached as a matter of issuing contracts and paying salaries alone. It also involves fair treatment, transparent decision-making, proper documentation and effective dispute-resolution mechanisms.

Regional businesses should be careful not to assume that employment laws are identical across Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and other jurisdictions. Each country has its own statutory requirements, institutions and procedures.

The Employment (Amendment) Act, 2026 has made employment compliance an important priority for Ugandan organisations. Employers should understand the new procedural and financial obligations, while employees should become familiar with their statutory and contractual protections.

A well-managed employment relationship protects more than the employer or employee. It supports institutional stability, productivity, investment confidence and economic development.

Employment (Amendment) Act, 2026, Act 10 of 2026, Uganda Gazette, 5 June 2026.

Employment Act, Cap. 226, as amended by Act 10 of 2026. (Sections 64, 64A, 65, 65A, 65B, 65C, 80, 86 and 88 of the Employment Act, Cap. 226.)

Consolidated Employment Act