NAM delegates, welcome anytime to Pearl of Africa

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EDITOR: On behalf of the office of the national chairman of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) party, who doubles as the President of the Republic of Uganda, I take this opportunity to warmly welcome your excellencies the heads of state and government and all the distinguished delegates to the 19th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Kampala from January 15-20, 2024.

Hosting the NAM summit is a milestone given that it is the second largest grouping of states worldwide after the United Nations.

Sixty years ago, Uganda was admitted to the membership of the NAM during the second summit held in Cairo, the United Arab Republic (now Egypt). This means, Uganda joined this family in the third year after it was founded in Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

The NAM membership has since significantly increased. Today, NAM has 120 member states, 18 observer countries and 10 observer organisations.

The decision to have the 19th summit of NAM conducted in Kampala was reached at the 18th NAM summit in Azerbaijan. And the theme of this year's summit is *Deepening Co-operation for Shared Global Affluence.*

The theme is timely considering that President Yoweri Museveni has been underscoring the same.

For example, at the closure of a three-day South-South and Triangular Co-operation for Sustainable Development 2023 Forum at Speke Resort Munyonyo, he advised that in order to achieve global affluence, member states need to support each other by creating a sustainable market for their goods and services. He explained: "It is now time to ensure affluence for all our people and what does it mean because when I produce a good or a service, we need a consumer to buy what I produce. If I produced a good or service and nobody buys it, then I am stuck, we cannot have affluence. It is now time to address the issue of global affluence; we don't want partial affluence in only a few countries. That is a system of parasites, we don't want parasitism; we want symbiosis where people equally gain from working together."

Now that NAM is deepening co-operation for shared global affluence, I want to draw the attention of the distinguished delegates to the impressive tourist attractions in Uganda.

Such attractions motivated top US cable television network CNN to rank Uganda as one of the best destinations to visit in 2023.

In its report titled, *Where to travel in 2023: the best destinations to visit*, CNN said that it would be a missed opportunity, if a traveller didn't visit Uganda which has a lot to offer.

It detailed: "From the expansive shores of Lake Victoria to the snowy Rwenzori Mountains, Uganda is a beautiful wilderness playground, with opportunities for adventure, including treks through the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest or up to the craters of the Virunga Volcano chain or whitewater rafting along the Victoria Nile."

To the distinguished delegates interested in fauna, I must let you know that Uganda has 10 national parks, 12 wildlife reserves, five community wildlife management areas and 13 wildlife sanctuaries. Within those mentioned areas, there are 50% of the world's mountain gorillas, 345 mammal spies, 140+ reptile species, 1,060+bird species and 1,249 butterfly species.

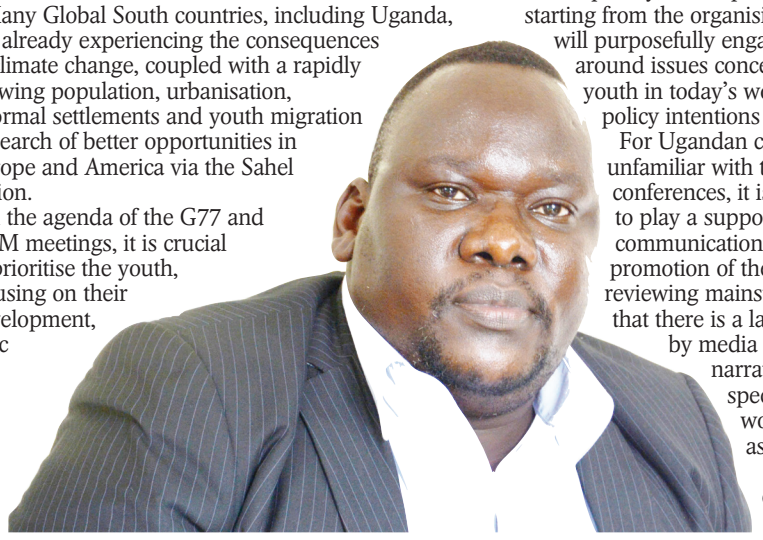
It is those endowments coupled with the good weather and overall peace in the country that motivated President Museveni to publicly say recently: "There is no better place for tourism in the world than Uganda."

I, therefore, beseech the delegates at the NAM summit, to consider returning to this Pearl of Africa (Uganda) and go on a tour of the several wonderful tourist sites.

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Elevating children, youth policy at NAM, G77+China summits: A priority amidst geopolitical governance

MOSES OTAI



The year 2024 has begun with a beehive of activity. Uganda is taking the lead in hosting significant conferences involving decision makers in their respective nations' governance spheres.

Initially, the speakers and presiding officers of the Commonwealth gathered to discuss policy matters and enjoy Uganda's hospitality, amidst experiencing the country's beauty and grappling with challenges such as bad roads, traffic congestion and inadequate waste and environment management practices.

Uganda's Speaker of Parliament shared insights from the discussions, highlighting agreements on issues like further democratisation, human rights and knowledge exchange.

Uganda is hosting two major conferences this month – the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the G77+ China grouping.

While many may not fully grasp the significance of these groupings, the focus in communication remains on the country's readiness and the anticipated benefits, including potential economic stimulation from guests spending and investments made for hosting preparations.

While a crash course in political science may not be necessary to comprehend the geopolitical dynamics that led to the formation of these groupings, hosting conferences with delegates from 120/77 countries in Uganda warrants an exploration of our expectations for such significant gatherings. These conferences, regardless of the hosting country, hold the potential to make decisions that extend beyond national borders. In the current global landscape, the world is grappling with a myriad of issues such as conflict, environmental protection/ climate action, youth, governance and technology. For Uganda, these issues directly impact us due to our geographical location, demographic composition and policy decisions, aligning with the concerns of many Global South countries, the majority of which belong to the G77 and NAM.

As the country leading the organisation of these conferences, it is imperative for Uganda to articulate its stance and influence global discussions, particularly on pressing issues like the wellbeing and involvement of children and youth in the face of advancing technology and climate change. Uganda, with its youthful population, reflects a broader African narrative.

Many Global South countries, including Uganda, are already experiencing the consequences of climate change, coupled with a rapidly growing population, urbanisation, informal settlements and youth migration in search of better opportunities in Europe and America via the Sahel region.

In the agenda of the G77 and NAM meetings, it is crucial to prioritise the youth, focusing on their development, civic participation and role in driving digital advancements for future global ecosystems.

Discussions should centre around creating opportunities for dignified green jobs linked to the digital economy for a sustainable future. This emphasis on youth-related jobs is linked to the digital economy for a sustainable future. This emphasis on youth related topics should complement the traditional geopolitical questions and democratisation issues.

Anticipating spaces for meaningful policy dialogues with active participation from young adults is essential. These engagements would not only instil optimism among future generations, but also contribute to a clearer understanding of the values and aspirations of G77+China and NAM in the current globalised political system, making them more appealing to those unfamiliar with the history of these groupings. Consequently, it is expected that leadership, starting from the organising teams and chairs, will purposefully engage in discussions around issues concerning children and youth in today's world, translating into policy intentions and commitments.

For Ugandan children and youth unfamiliar with the NAM/G77+China conferences, it is crucial for the media to play a supportive role by facilitating communication, explanation and promotion of these events. Upon reviewing mainstream media, it seems that there is a lack of deliberate action by media houses to shape the narrative and focus on specific core themes that would benefit the country as the host.

This presents an opportunity to take the initiative in shaping the narrative, particularly regarding the children and youth agenda, promoting dignified and green jobs for young adults and addressing actions related to technology and the digital economy, where significant opportunities exist for the youth, including our GEN Z.

While discussions about the advantages of hosting these conferences often centre on the economic infusion, there are broader, long-term benefits beyond financial gains.

These conferences can influence key decisions that shape the policy agenda of countries, especially in critical areas such as dignified employment for the youth, addressing modern day exploitation through illegal migrant labour, climate action, harnessing technology for smart jobs and economic growth, inter/intra-regional trade and collaboration in research and innovation, among other topics.

In this context, the media plays a critical role as a link in highlighting these issues. While not everyone may have access to the Munyonyo Conference Centre, the media possesses the necessary infrastructure to ensure that the right people are targeted to provide accurate information and suitable channels are used to relay this information to the public.

This also presents an opportunity to establish a clear understanding of the historical and future role of these groups, emphasising their relevance to current and future generations, including the young generations and current GEN Z. By doing so, future focus and enthusiasm can be cultivated for similar conferences when the country hosts them in the years to come.

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