

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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Uganda Summary 8 August 2022

Russia's foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, makes a historic visit to Uganda, aiming to increase Russia's influence in Uganda. The United States (US) counters with a visit by US ambassador to the United Nations (UN), Linda Thomas-Greenfield, less than a week later. Leading opposition political leaders in Uganda have signed an agreement to foster cooperation amongst themselves in any upcoming elections in addition to other efforts geared toward ousting President Yoweri Museveni (1986-present) from power. Museveni comes under criticism for suggesting that the current fuel crisis in Uganda could be sorted by the introduction of electric cars, despite only 2% of the population owning a car.

Uganda gravitates toward Russia for cooperation

Russia and the **United States (US)** have both increased efforts at increasing influence in **Uganda**. Uganda, still struggling to recover from the impacts of the **COVID-19** pandemic, has viewed it as an opportunity to strike better business, political and security deals with the two wrangling world powers.¹ Russian foreign minister **Sergei Lavrov** visited Uganda on 26 July, marking a historic visit, as Lavrov is the first high-ranking Russian official to ever visit in Uganda, viewed by many as a diplomatic victory for Moscow.² Lavrov, during his visit, rejected accusations that Russia was exporting hunger and instead, blamed the **West** for monopolizing commodity and supply flows during the pandemic, saying it worsened the situation for food imports.³

The US ambassador to the **United Nations (UN)**, **Linda Thomas-Greenfield**, visited **Ghana** and Uganda on 4 August, less than a week after Lavrov's visit, in what observers see as an attempt to counter Russia's influence in Uganda and **Africa**. Thomas-Greenfield, during her visit, underlined **Washington's** resolve to keep working with **Kampala** on issues of mutual concern in the restive **Great Lakes region**.⁴ Thomas-Greenfield, however, also warned that it would be risky for African countries to trade with Russia, noting:

"Our sanctions are intended to discourage Russia from continuing with the aggression on Ukraine. I would caution that countries should not engage with countries that have been sanctioned by the United States."⁵

Recent events, however, show that Uganda is gravitating its political, economic, military, and diplomatic cooperation toward **Russia**.⁶ On 1 July, the ruling party, **National Resistance Movement (NRM)** signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** with Russia's ruling party, **Единая Россия (United Russia)**, to bolster cooperation.⁷ President **Yoweri Museveni** (1986-present) also held talks via Zoom with former Russian president **Dmitry Medvedev** (2008-2012) and is now the chairman of United Russia in June.⁸ Museveni revealed during the talks that the pivot towards **Moscow** was attributed to Russia's anti-colonial stance:

¹ Source, Uganda Analyst 4 Aug 2022

² Source, Uganda Analyst 6 Aug 2022

³ Source, Africanews 30 Jul 2022

⁴ Source, Daily Monitor 7 Aug 2022

⁵ Source, Uganda Analyst Aug 6 2022

⁶ Source, Uganda Analyst 5 Aug 2022

⁷ Source, Africa Report 17 Jun 2022

⁸ Source, Daily Monitor 30 Jul 2022

*"We worked with them (Soviet Union) because they had an anti-colonial position and now we are very happy to work with your party. I want you to know that we the African freedom fighters are forever grateful to the Communist party of the Soviet Union and Russia."*⁹

However, Uganda could risk its relationship with the US, its historical ally, which spends millions of dollars every year supporting various projects in Uganda.¹⁰ In 2021, the **US State Department** indicated on its website that it gives **Uganda** \$970m per annum in development and security aid. In return, the Kampala regime runs security errands in the region, more significantly fighting **al-Shabaab** in **Somalia**, brokering peace with bickering neighbours, and playing its diplomatic power favourably at international forums.¹¹

Museveni acknowledged the difficult choice Uganda has to make during his state of the nation address on 5 August. Museveni stated during the address:

*"If we wanted, we could talk to Russia and ask them to sell us subsidized fuel but that will put us in collision with Americans. We would start arguing with the Americans and for now, I don't think that's necessary."*¹²

The pivot, however, also comes after **Washington** opted not to include Uganda among 110 countries that took part in the **Summit for Democracy** that was held last December in Washington.¹³ Despite their friendly relationship, there was no invite to the summit that attracted neighbours **Kenya** and the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**.¹⁴ This, and the fact that the US discredited the January 2021 presidential elections (*see ARC Briefing Uganda Feb 2021*) that gave Museveni another five-year term could have forced Uganda to gravitate towards strengthening cooperation with Moscow.¹⁵ Despite a decade-long alliance with the West, Museveni appeared unmoved by the visit from Thomas-Greenfield. Museveni stressed during a joint press conference held on 26 July with visiting Lavrov that *"we are neither pro-East nor pro-West. I'm pro-Uganda."*¹⁶

Uganda's leading opposition politicians sign cooperation agreement

Leading opposition political leaders in **Uganda** have signed an agreement to foster cooperation amongst themselves in upcoming elections. The agreement was signed on 1 August in Kampala by four-time presidential contender **Kizza Besigye**, **Robert Kyagulanyi** (also known as **Bobi Wine**), Kampala city Lord Mayor **Erias Lukwago** and leaders from the **Justice Forum**, **People's Progressive Party** and pressure group, **People Front for Transition** includes other efforts geared towards removing president Museveni from power.¹⁷ The agreement is also in protest of election violence and malpractices that have marred recent elections in Uganda.¹⁸ The statement issued after the signing of the agreement reads in part:

*"Going forward, we shall jointly or severally use any upcoming elections to organise and rally the population to defend their democratic rights and the election madness that has bedevilled the country since independence."*¹⁹

⁹ Source, Uganda Radio Network 6 Jun 2022

¹⁰ Source, Uganda Analyst 4 Aug 2022

¹¹ Source, Daily Monitor 7 Aug 2022

¹² Source, NTV Uganda 5 Aug 2022

¹³ Source, Daily Monitor 30 Jul 2022

¹⁴ Source, Daily Monitor 30 Jul 2022

¹⁵ Source, Uganda Analyst 6 Aug 2022

¹⁶ Source, Uganda Radio Network 3 Aug

¹⁷ Source, East African 7 August 2022

¹⁸ Source, East African 7 August 2022

¹⁹ Source, Uganda Radio Network 2 Aug 2022

The opposition leaders are mostly displeased by three recent by-elections that they allege were marred by irregularities in favour of ruling party candidates. The leaders further alleged that the ruling **National Resistance Movement (NRM)** party heavyweights move around in unmarked vehicles with security operatives arresting opposition agents at polling stations and detaining them allowing the ruling party to stuff ballots.²⁰

Political analysts have cautiously welcomed the signing of the agreement.²¹ A Kampala-based political analyst **Stephen Ouma** told **Africa Risk Consulting (ARC)** that the agreement signed offers the opposition a chance to defeat Museveni, noting that opposition leaders have in the past failed to work together because of ego:

“It’s good for the opposition if they do that with utmost honesty but to me the two opposition figures need to tame their egos if they are to succeed in ousting Museveni from power.”²²

Dr **Stella Nyanzi**, former 2021 candidate for the **Kampala Woman Member of Parliament** who has since fled to exile, stated that the agreement signed by **Wine** of the **National Unity Party** and Besigye of the **Forum for Democratic Change** offers the opposition a chance to wrestle power from President Museveni because of their huge support base.²³ Nyanzi also expressed her cautions about the agreement to ARC:

“May this union be more real than symbolic, more lived than performed, more practical than theoretical and more productive than stagnant.”²⁴

The signing of the agreement comes as Museveni’s ruling NRM signed a similar pact with the opposition **Democratic Party** on 20 July. Democratic party president **Nobert Mao** was subsequently appointed as justice and constitutional affairs minister.²⁵

Public reacts negatively to Museveni’s electric car solution to fuel crisis

President Museveni has come under criticism for suggesting that the current fuel crisis experienced in Uganda will be sorted by the introduction of electric cars. Amid rising prices, Museveni took to national television on 21 July to push for electric cars and railways as a long-term solution to crude oil supply shocks. During the address, Museveni states *“this is the answer. The correct way is to start moving away from petrol to electric cars and we have already started.”²⁶*

Museveni noted that Uganda needs 20 billion shillings (\$5.1m) to develop more affordable electric automobiles. He repeated the same narrative in his state of the nation address on 6 August, promoting the answer to imported inflation and fuel prices as a shift from petroleum cars to electric vehicles and motorcycles:

“All government agencies will have to buy electric buses from local manufacturing companies. That means there will be no more importation for those vehicles and that way we will be able to avoid imported inflation.”²⁷

Kampala-based civil society leader **Peter Okubal** told ARC that many people had tuned to their television sets with the hope that Museveni was going to pronounce practical solutions for the skyrocketing food and fuel prices but got disappointed to hear him instead talk of electric cars.²⁸ Okubal further noted:

²⁰ Source, Uganda Radio Network 2 Aug 2022

²¹ Source, Uganda Analyst 7 Aug 2022

²² Source, Uganda Analyst 7 Aug 2022

²³ Source, Uganda Analyst 7 Aug 2022

²⁴ Source, Uganda Analyst 7 Aug 2022

²⁵ Source East African 6 Aug 2022

²⁶ Source, Daily Monitor 21 Jul 2022

²⁷ Source East African 6 Aug 2022

²⁸ Source, Uganda Analyst 7 Aug 2022

“From promoting drip irrigation to now electric cars shows he (Museveni) is out of touch with the problems that the common man in Uganda is experiencing”²⁹

In Uganda, less than 2% of the 44 million strong population own a car. As fuel prices approach 7,000 Ugandan shillings (\$1.8) amid a beleaguered economy, the president’s comments received a negative reaction from the public and civil society.³⁰ Social media users agreed with Okubal’s sentiment, labelling Museveni as being out of touch with the common man’s suffering.³¹

Planner

13 Aug 2022 **Kampala (Uganda)** International Conference on Leadership, Entrepreneurship and Business Management (ICLEBM)

23 Aug 2022 **Kampala (Uganda)** International Conference on English Learning and Teaching (ICELT)

24 Aug 2022 **Kampala (Uganda)** International Conference on Global Economy in Business, Management, Social Science and Humanity Perspective

Chronology

8 Aug 2022 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Independent*. At least 1,017 children who were born in captivity after their mothers were abducted by rebel group, the **Lord’s Resistance Army**, are struggling to acquire **National Identification Cards** and access government services. The children were born in the **Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic** and **South Sudan** during the war that lasted close to two decades in northern Uganda;

7 Jun 2022 **Kampala (Uganda)** *The Independent*. Health minister **Jane Ruth Aceng** warns that Uganda is experiencing an increase in the number of daily **Covid-19** cases compared to stable trends observed since January;

6 Aug 2022 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Observer*. Fuel prices in Uganda, particularly in Kampala continue to rise, but at a slower rate compared to the sharp increases registered between March and early July;

5 Aug 2022 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Nile Post*. President **Yoweri Museveni** receives the **United States Ambassador** to the **United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield**;

4 Aug 2022 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Daily Monitor*. Ugandan lawmakers ask the **East African Legislative Assembly (EALA)**, country representatives, to reject the proposed **Sexuality and Reproductive Health Bill** that seeks to promote sex education in schools and legalise homosexuality and abortion;

4 Aug 2022 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Daily Monitor*. Education institutions across the country propose early closure of this term over rising food prices, prompting anxiety among learners;

3 Aug 2022 **Kampala (Uganda)** Parliament. Parliament passes the **Mining and Minerals Bill 2022** with amendments primarily to protect artisan miners and to elaborate the licensing requirement for mining. It is also agreed that mining licenses should not be awarded on the size of mines, mining sites or ore volumes but rather based on capital investment involved;

2 Aug 2022 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Independent*. The relief, disaster preparedness and refugee ministry reveals the death toll from flooding in the **Elgon** sub-region has increased to 29. The flooding followed heavy rains that pounded the **Bugisu** and **Sebei** regions on 30 July, forcing

²⁹ Source, Uganda Analyst 7 Aug 2022

³⁰ Source, Daily Monitor 21 Jul 2022

³¹ Source, Daily Monitor

several rivers to burst their banks leading to flooding and landslides in **Mbale, Manafwa, Bulambuli, and Kapchorwa** districts;

2 Aug 2022 **Kampala (Uganda) Independent**. The **Ugandan** shilling continues to depreciate against the **United States** dollar as both local and external factors exert pressure on the local and other emerging currency markets. The shilling has stayed short of touching the 3,900 level against the dollar, amidst sustained intervention into the market by the **Bank of Uganda** by selling dollars or buying out excess liquidity;

1 Aug 2022 **Kampala (Uganda) Independent**. Uganda's **commercial banks** are planning to provide one trillion Ugandan shillings (\$258.7m) in export credit facilities to help local manufacturers boost their access to the regional markets;

30 Jul 2022 **Beijing (China) Independent**. **Chinese** oil drilling equipment, namely the **Drilog, Welleader System** and the land rig 'LR8001' is being shipped to Uganda;

29 Jul 2022 **Kampala (Uganda) Independent**. **Uganda Bureau of Statistics** says Uganda's **inflation** rate has risen to 7.9% year-on-year from 6.8% in June 2022. The agency attributed the increase to rising food crop prices and transport fares;

28 Jul 2022 **Kampala (Uganda) East African**. Government announces that civil servants in Uganda will have to wait unusually long to receive their July salaries, rattling sections of workers who blamed the administration for negligence;

27 Jul 2022 **Kampala (Uganda) Ministry of Health press release**. Results of **COVID-19** tests done on 27 July 2022 confirm 41 new cases. The cumulative confirmed cases are 169,230;

26 Jul 2022 **Kampala (Uganda) Bloomberg**. President **Yoweri Museveni** states during talks with Russian foreign minister **Sergei Lavrov** that **Uganda** is seeking **Russia's** assistance to develop **East Africa's** first nuclear power plant and expand its space-research capabilities;

26 Jul 2022 **Kampala (Uganda) Nile Post**. All vehicles from **Uganda** transiting to **South Sudan** will be required to pay 230,000 Ugandan shillings (\$60) per border entry from 1 August. Lt Gen **James Ruot Wuor Tiap**, the South Sudan Assistant Inspector General of Traffic Police, also signed a directive on 22 July stating that vehicles will pay an additional \$100 to obtain a digital border security control badge, valid for one year;

25 Jul 2022 **Kampala (Uganda) Independent**. Migrant workers are paying more than 100,000 Shillings (\$25) to acquire **COVID-19** vaccination certificates through agents at labour export companies and data entrants at certain vaccination sites across the country;

23 Jul 2022 **Kampala (Uganda) Nile Post**. President Museveni has said **East African** integration should not be seen with political lenses but as a means of survival for the people of the region through markets for their goods;

22 Jul 2022 **Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) KFM Radio**. The **East African Heads of States Summit** takes place in **Arusha, Tanzania** intended to review the progress report on the verification exercise on the admission of **Somalia** to the **East African Community (EAC)** regional bloc;

21 Jul 2022 **Kampala (Uganda) Parliament**. Members of parliament announce they are divided over the proposal by government to buy shares worth 207 billion Uganda shillings (\$53.5m) in the local construction company **Roko Construction Limited**. Finance minister, **Henry Musasizi**, moved a motion for a resolution on 20 July for parliament to approve the proposal that would see the government purchase 150,000 preferential shares in Roko;

20 Jul 2022 **Kampala (Uganda) Nile Post**. Opposition **Democratic Party** president **Norbert Mao** has met with the ruling **National Resistance Movement (NRM)** party and its national chairman President **Yoweri Museveni** to ink a deal to work together;

19 Jul 2022 **Kampala (Uganda) KFM Radio**. President **Yoweri Museveni** emphasises **Uganda's** commitment to ensuring all food and trade standards meet international standards, but particularly those of the **United Kingdom**. This is in his message ahead of the **Uganda-UK** annual investment convention planned for 10 September;

18 Jul 2022 **Kampala (Uganda) New Vision**. President **Yoweri Museveni** returns the **Mining and Minerals Bill, 2021** to parliament for reconsideration. Museveni advises parliament to delete clause 8 on the definition of large-scale mining, as it defines large-scale mining to mean international mining of minerals in a mechanized operation involving excavation of a large surface pit or underground openings. The definition also limits large-scale mining to operations with a production value exceeding 1m tonnes;

17 Jul 2022 **Kampala (Uganda) Independent**. The **World Health Organisation (WHO)** has applauded Uganda for maintaining numbers in routine vaccination exercises despite the **COVID-19** pandemic, which affected routine vaccinations in many countries;

16 Jul 2022 **Kampala (Uganda) Parliament**. Works minister General **Katumba Wamala** told members of a parliamentary committee that individuals transiting through **Entebbe International Airport** will no longer be subjected to mandatory testing while health minister Dr **Ruth Aceng** said mandatory testing for travellers will end at all entry ports;

15 Jul 2022 **Kampala (Uganda) Independent**. Health minister Dr **Jane Ruth Aceng** Malaria says malaria cases in **Uganda** have been on the rise since January 2022. Aceng points out that of the 11.25 million patients who had visited outpatient departments since the start of the year, roughly 3.15 million had malaria. Nearly 775,000 of these cases were children under five years old;

14 Jul 2022 **Kampala (Uganda) Nile Post**. Cabinet contemplates placing a total ban on labour export, particularly to the **Middle East**. Cabinet spokesperson **Chris Baryomunsi**, says the decision follows several reports of untold suffering that Ugandans undergo while working abroad, with the Middle East mentioned specifically;

13 July 2022 **Kampala (Uganda) Crisis 24 news**. Security forces fired tear gas and live ammunition to disperse protesters gathered in several neighbourhoods of Jinja and arrested an unspecified number of participants during protests on 11 July. Further protests are anticipated nationwide through the end of July amid an increased number of demonstrations denouncing the rising cost of living in recent weeks.;

12 Jul 2022 **Kampala (Uganda) XINUA**. The **Bank of Uganda (BoU)** publishes its monetary policy report for August 2020, stating that the Ugandan shilling depreciated by 3% against the US dollar in the first five months of 2020 due to increased outflows of investment following the COVID-19 outbreak. The BoU further states the pandemic forced foreign investors to remove their investment from Uganda;

11 Jul 2022 **Kampala (Uganda) Independent**. Uganda is yet to meet one of the most critical provisions of the **Extractives Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI)**, the disclosure of details of **Production Sharing Agreements**, nearly two years after joining;

10 Jul 2022 **Kampala (Uganda) URN**. The **Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) First Division** has scoffed at those questioning the now full-time day and night presence of military personnel on **Kampala** streets and its suburbs. Major **Charles Kabona**, spokesperson for the UPDF First Division, says people should not expect that the military to leave Kampala soon;

9 Jul 2022 **Kampala (Uganda) Press Release**. The **Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group** challenges government to do more to ensure that more Ugandans benefit from middle-income status. This follows President **Yoweri Museveni's** confirmation to the nation that Uganda had attained \$1,046 GDP per capital surpassing the threshold of the **World Bank** of \$1,036;

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