

By Vision Reporter

FIRST LADY **URGES** STUDENT LEADERS TO EMBRACE SERVANT LEADERSHIP

The First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, Mrs Janet Museveni, has urged student leaders across the country to embrace servant leadership founded on integrity, humility and patriotism. She described leadership as a divine calling that demands sacrifice and selfless service marked with humility and resilience.

Mrs Museveni was speaking at the swearing-in ceremony of the 36th Uganda National Students Association (UNSA) 15-member National Executive Committee led by Sheila Ainembabazi, and the handing over by the outgoing 35th National Executive Committee led by Wilson Mugazhu.

The ceremony, held at State House Nakasero in Kampala last Thursday, was themed, *Renewed Student Leadership for Peace, Integrity and Values*. It was attended by high-ranking government officials, including state ministers Peter Ogwang and Dr Joyce Moriku Kaducu, Members of Parliament, vice-chancellors Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe of Makerere University and Dr Ronald Mbago of Seeta University. Others were Col Edith Nakalema from the State House Investors Protection Unit, senior officials from the Ministry of Education and Sports, the UNSA board of trustees, youth leaders, student representatives, and Pastor Wilson Bugembe.

The First Lady congratulated the newly elected UNSA leadership and commended the outgoing executive for their service. She reminded them that leadership is not simply ambition, but a call from God to shepherd His people.

LEADERSHIP PROCESS

Drawing lessons from biblical leaders including Abraham, Moses, Joseph, David and Esther, Mrs Museveni explained that God prepares leaders through a process, often marked with difficulty, to remove pride, greed, selfish ambition, and other pitfalls and to shape their character and capacity to bear responsibility.

Mrs Museveni emphasised that UNSA remains a key platform for nurturing responsible leadership, observing that many former student leaders have gone on to serve as ministers, Members of Parliament and leaders in other spheres of influence.

“Our President started out as a student leader and was taken through a very difficult process – five years in the bush – before God entrusted him with leadership of our homeland,” she said, adding



The First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, Mrs Janet Museveni (seated, centre), together with (Seated L-R) Members of Parliament; Boniface Okot, Shartsi Musherure, state ministers; Joyce Kaducu and Peter Ogwang, Dr Cleophus Mugenyi and Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe with the newly sworn-in 36th Uganda National Students Association National Executive Committee and its board members (standing) at State House Nakasero in Kampala last Thursday. The new leadership is led by Sheila Ainembabazi (standing tenth-left)

that Uganda recently marked 40 years of President Yoweri Museveni's leadership, achieved through sacrifice rather than privilege.

She cautioned the new UNSA leadership against selfish ambition, greed, immorality, pride and disloyalty, urging them to remain focused on service and integrity. She also appealed for unity, warning that sectarian politics based on tribe or religion weakens the nation.

“One country, one people under God – that is how we achieve our divine purpose,” she said.

The First Lady urged young leaders to honour authority, work as a team, and steward their leadership season faithfully and responsibly to contribute to national development.

Reflecting on past challenges within UNSA, Mrs Museveni acknowledged that the association had previously faced governance difficulties that nearly led to its suspension. She credited leadership training at Kyankwanzi and sustained prayer for the association's current stability and progress.

She urged the student leaders to steward the current stability responsibly and avoid returning to past confusion, emphasising that

BETWEEN THE LINES

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national development requires patience and steady effort.

The First Lady also encouraged them to actively participate in the “Emerging Leaders Programme”, which fosters integrity and will help them grow as individuals and as leaders.

BUILDING YOUTH CAPACITY

On youth empowerment, Mrs Museveni reiterated the Government's commitment to supporting unemployed graduates through a fund to be added under the Parish Development Model, and encouraged young people to use the facility to start enterprises and create jobs.

She also confirmed that funds pledged to cover costs incurred during the recent UNSA annual general meeting at Seeta University had been processed and would be credited to the association's account.

Mrs Museveni congratulated the young people for faithfully

engaging in the electoral process and upon the victory God granted President Museveni and the NRM party in the just-concluded elections.

“I believe you each laid your brick on Uganda,” she said.

“I will continue to pray for UNSA, its leadership, and all students across the country. I pray that God will use this generation to give new hope to Africa,” Mrs Museveni said.

Ogwang, the Minister of State for Sports, described the leadership transition as a symbol of renewed commitment to peace, integrity and responsible stewardship.

He encouraged students to remain ambassadors of unity and peace, due to the role student leadership plays in the country's future and national development.

“You are leaders at a time when value-driven leadership is essential. Many of us in leadership today passed through student leadership structures,” Ogwang said, recounting his own journey from student leadership in Soroti S.S.S to Parliament and Cabinet.

ECHOING COMMITMENTS

Ainembabazi, a student at Victoria University and the first female UNSA president from a private institution

in recent years, described her election as a collective mandate from students across universities, tertiary institutions, and secondary schools. She pledged to lead a united, disciplined and patriotic student movement.

“Student leadership is not opposition to government but partnership for progress,” Ainembabazi said, committing UNSA to being a responsible bridge between the students and the state, promoting structured dialogue, discipline, accountability, patriotism in action, and support for national development programmes.

She said her administration intends to focus on: digitalisation of education, affordable access to learning tools, advocacy against teenage pregnancies and school dropouts, fighting hidden fees in Universal Primary Education/Universal Secondary Education schools, empowerment of students including those with ‘special abilities’, plus championing quality education, skills development, research, entrepreneurship, and digital innovation.

She also announced plans to host an Africa Commonwealth Students Conference and a national students' prayer day.

Mugazhu thanked the First Lady and government for their

continued support to student leadership. He highlighted achievements of the outgoing executive's one-year tenure, including promoting peace within UNSA, supporting students with disabilities, and organising national student engagements.

He asked the education ministry to look into the “harsh surcharge policies” regarding late tuition payments. “Surcharge has become a vice,” Mugazhu said, explaining how students are penalised with heavy fees if tuition is not paid by the third week of a semester.

“Why charge another big figure to someone who has already failed to pay?” Mugazhu said.

The UNSA executive secretary, Fred Cherukut Toskin, described the swearing-in as historic, noting that it was the first time in nearly a decade that such a ceremony had been hosted at State House. He credited reforms, ideological training, and closer collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Sports for restoring stability and credibility within UNSA.

He also read out UNSA's congratulatory message to President Museveni – the association's patron – on his resounding win in the presidential elections.