

BY A-NASSER SSEMUGABI

UPCOMING YOUTH OLYMPIC QUALIFIERS

March 23-31: 10th World Junior Championships, Tianjin, China

June 5-7: 17th Spring Dragon

Wushu International Tournament, Catanzaro, Italy

KAMPALA. Eddie Gombya, president Uganda Wushu Federation, has appealed to the Chinese Embassy in Uganda to help the teenage athletes achieve their dream of qualifying for the 2026 Youth Olympic Games in Dakar, Senegal.

Coach Robert Kizito was impressed by the performances of Nahia Nayiga, 14 and Haitham Lubega, 15 at the IWUF African Youth Wushu Training Camp in Ismailia, Egypt in mid-February before they competed at African Championship in the same arena, but the teenage duo will need more tournaments to qualify for the Dakar Youth Games, which will be wushu Olympic debut.

Those tournaments include the 10th World Junior Wushu Championships (WJWC) due March 23-31, in Tianjin, China, at the Tianjin Olympic Center Gymnasium and the 17th Spring Dragon Wushu International Tournament, a

Gombya appeals to Chinese Embassy for help



In Need. Nayiga, federation president Gombya, athlete Lubega and coach Kizito showing a plaque and certificates from the IWUF African Youth Training Camp. PHOTO/ABDUL-NASSER SSEMUGABI

major European event, in Catanzaro, Italy, from June 5-7.

"That is why we badly need some help from our development partners like the Chinese Embassy.

If they can sponsor these athletes to the event in China or the one in Italy, we will be very grateful and we know they will stand a high chance to qualify for Dakar," Gombya told *Daily Monitor* during the team's official welcome at the federation's office on Kampala Road.

"These kids and their coach represented Uganda very well in Egypt, so we need to facilitate their Olympic ambitions.

But as a federation we are constrained by resources. We thank the National Council of Sports for the support, but it is still far from ideal.

We spend on these athletes right from proper training, wear, visa fees, etc.

For Egypt, the international body gave us the three tickets. But we cannot expect the same from them always. And these athletes need some allowances and upkeep, which we cannot provide."

Despite the challenges, Gombya expressed his commitment to following the NCS guidance on complying with the National Sports Act, 2023, which requires an amateur sport like wushu to, among others, be present in at least 50 percent of the districts—which is 73 districts.