

# AFRICA RALLIED TO ADDRESS UNEMPLOYMENT

By Nelson Kiva

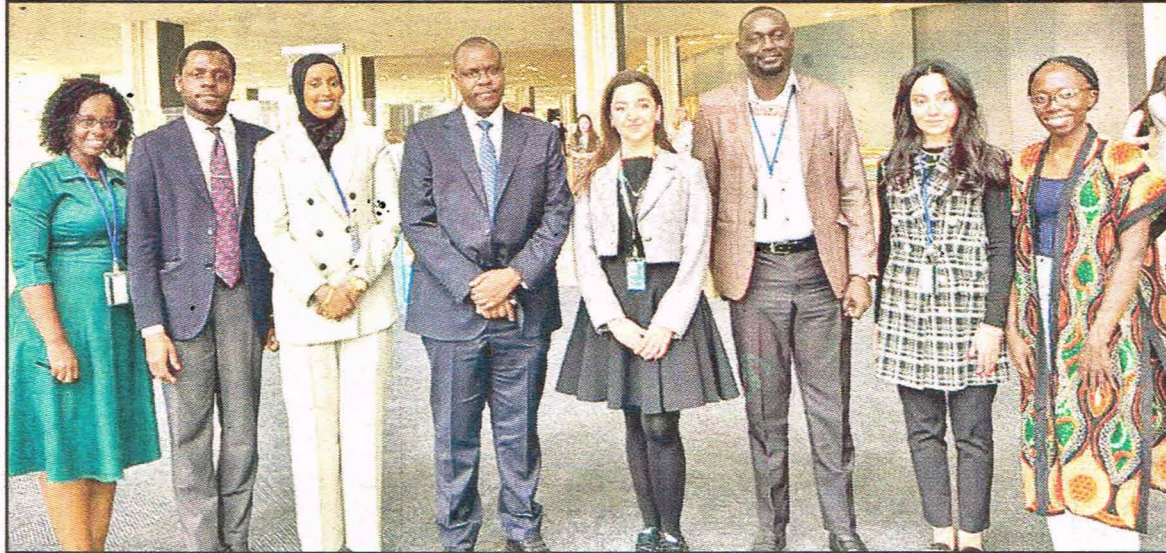
Africa's transformation will require co-ordinated and deliberate action that connects young people to economic systems, state minister for gender, labour, and social development in charge of children and youth affairs, Balaam Barugahara has said.

He called for a shift from subsistence livelihoods to meaningful youth participation in the money economy.

Speaking during the United Nations Economic and Social Council Youth Forum 2026 in New York on Wednesday, Barugahara said rising youth unemployment, particularly in Africa, is not merely an economic concern but a pressing development and stability challenge.

"With a population of over 1.4 billion, projected to reach 2.5 billion by 2050, and nearly 70% of its people under the age of 30, our continent holds immense potential. Yet each year, approximately 12 million young Africans enter the labour market, while only about three million formal jobs are created," he said.

The forum took place from April 14-16 under the theme: *Innovate, Unite and Transform: Youth Shaping the Road*



Barugahara (fourth-left) with participants at the United Nations Economic and Social Council Youth Forum at the United Nations headquarters in New York, held April 14-16

to 2030.

Youth leaders from around the world engaged with government representatives, policymakers, civil society actors and private sector stakeholders to advance youth priorities.

The 2026 forum focused on transformative, equitable, innovative and co-ordinated actions to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals.

Barugahara said Uganda has

taken practical steps to address key bottlenecks to youth empowerment.

"Through initiatives such as the Youth Livelihood Programme and the Parish Development Model, the Government is extending financial support and bringing services closer

## BETWEEN THE LINES

◊ The youth and children affairs state minister stressed that Africa's transformation must be integrated, youth-centred and driven by strong partnerships. "The time to act is now. The future of Africa is not ahead of us; it is already here," he said.

to communities to stimulate grassroots economic participation," he said.

Barugahara added that the Emyooga programme had strengthened access to affordable finance by organising citizens into savings and enterprise groups, many of them youth-led.

"Investments in skilling through technical and vocational education and training, as well as digital innovation hubs, are equipping young people with competencies relevant to today's evolving economy," he said.

Barugahara emphasised the need to invest in future-ready skills, including digital, green and entrepreneurial capabilities.

"Second, we need to unlock financing for youth-led enterprises. We also need to ensure young people are engaged