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UGANDAN YOUTH AND WOMEN DEMAND URGENT REFORMS TO UGANDA'S ENERGY TRANSITION PLAN

Over 211 women and youth from over 37 districts in Uganda have today written to Hon. Ruth Nankabirwa, Uganda's Minister of Energy and Mineral Development (MEMD).

The women and youth wrote to the minister following being sensitised by Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO) about the strengths and gaps in Uganda's Energy Transition Plan (ETP)¹.

Consequently, the women and youth are calling on Hon. Nankabirwa to undertake substantial reforms to the ETP².

Launched at COP28 in Dubai in December 2023, Uganda's ETP is billed as a central pillar in ensuring that Uganda achieves carbon neutrality by 2050 and universal access to electricity by 2030.

The ETP is underpinned by five objectives that include:

- (i) To provide universal access to electricity and cleaner cooking by 2030;
- (ii) To modernise and diversify Uganda's energy mix and promote its efficient use across all sectors to support industrial growth, poverty reduction and socioeconomic transformation;
- (iii) To ensure secure affordable energy supply; and
- (iv) To mitigate energy emissions in line with Uganda's conditional climate commitments, which imply a 20% reduction compared to baseline levels.

Through the plan, government has set some of the following targets to enable fulfillment of the above objectives:

¹ AFIEGO is a public policy research and advocacy organisation that empowers citizens to participate in the making and implementation of policies and laws.

² Uganda Energy Transition Plan: <https://memd.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/UgandaEnergyTransitionPlan-2023.pdf>

- All Ugandans gain access to electricity through grid power, large solar home systems and small solar systems with the majority of the population gaining access to power through the latter two by 2030;
- All Ugandans gain access to clean forms of cooking through electricity, Liquefied Petroleum gas (LPG), Improved Cook Stoves, as well as biogas and bioethanol by 2030; the majority are expected to gain access to clean forms of cooking through Improved Cook Stoves by 2030;
- Coal, oil, electricity and gas power industrial processes with gas playing a role in industrial processes up to 2050;
- The transport sector is powered by oil products with electrification taking hold, rising from 3% in 2030 to over 20% in 2050.

The women and youth have raised the following concerns in their petition to Hon. Nankabirwa:

- **Absence of gender and youth targets:** While the ETP contains population-wide targets to promote universal access to electricity and clean cooking, the plan lacks tailored targets for women and young people, who are disproportionately affected by energy poverty. Because the plan is gender blind, it could see government failing to address barriers that undermine women and youth's access to clean energy.
- **Fossil fuel dependency:** The ETP places emphasis on promoting 'clean' cooking, mining, and industrialisation through dependence on coal, oil, and gas. As a result, the plan foresees emissions from the energy sector rising, instead of decreasing.
- **Limited ambitions for the transport sector:** Further, the ETP has limited ambitions when it comes to electrifying the transport sector. The plan foresees the share of electricity demand in the transport sector rising from a paltry 3% in 2030 to over 20% in 2050. Uganda's transport sector will largely continue to rely on oil products.

The youth argue that though the ETP is important for promoting a transition to modern energy, the plan needs to be reformed to minimise the huge harm that it could cause to women and youth if it is implemented as is.

“The biggest criticism that we have as regards the Energy Transition Plan is that it places huge emphasis on powering Uganda's development with fossil fuels. The plan envisions over 33% of Ugandans gaining access to clean cooking by 2030 through access to LPG.

The plan also says that industrial processes especially in the steel and cement sectors, oil exploitation processes and mining for critical raw materials among others will be powered by, among others, coal, oil or natural gas,” Mr. Paul Kato, one of the youth petitioners, says.

Ms. Olive Atuhaire, another youth, adds, “The continued dependence on fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas remains one of the biggest threats that women and youth are faced with. This is because the burning of fossil fuels drives the climate crisis, to which women and youth are some of the most vulnerable.”

Ms. Rachael Amongin, a youth, says, “Uganda's Updated Nationally Determined Contributions [NDCs] are clear: the climate crisis presents a jobs crisis in Uganda. The NDCs identify

ecosystems, water, agriculture and business as being some of the most vulnerable to climate change impacts. Youth employed in farms, tour and travel businesses, fishing and others stand to suffer huge impacts if no action is taken to address the climate crisis. The ETP must be reformed to promote renewable energy to protect women and youth.”

The petitioners are calling on the Minister of Energy to:

1. Reform the ETP to eliminate fossil fuel dependency and prioritise renewable energy.
2. Integrate concrete gender and youth targets in the plan to ensure inclusivity.
3. Fasttrack the development of a Solar Energy Policy since the ETP identifies the need for enactment of relevant policies and laws to enable government to promote universal access to clean energy, including solar.
4. Push for the enactment of the Consumer Protection and Management Bill to regulate off-grid energy products.
5. Invest in strengthening Uganda’s grid infrastructure and subsidise off-grid solar solutions.
6. Establish youth and women advisory boards in the Ministry of Energy to inform policy direction and implementation.

Uganda loses an estimated **USD 5.9 billion annually** to climate change impacts. The youth and women behind the petition stress that the nation cannot afford an energy strategy that compounds the crisis it aims to resolve.

ENDS

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