



UGANDA



The Hon. Sam K. Kutesa

EDITORS' NOTE Sam Kutesa is a businessman and a lawyer by profession. He has held his current post since January 13, 2005. He is also the elected Member of Parliament (MP) for "Mawogola County," Sembabule District. He holds a Bachelor of Law (LLB) degree and also holds the Diploma in Legal Practice from the Law Development Center in Kampala. From 1973 until 2001, Kutesa was in private law practice and served as a Member of Parliament (MP) for Mbarara North Constituency between 1980 until 1985. He was Attorney General between 1985 and 1986. He served as a delegate to the Constituent Assembly that drafted the 1995 Ugandan Constitution. Kutesa was elected MP for Mawogola County in 2001 and re-elected in 2006 and again in 2011.

As President of the 69th United Nations General Assembly session, how would you describe the purpose and mission of the UN assembly?

The United Nations was set up soon after the Second World War, which took many lives and caused much destruction in the world.

It was set up for three main purposes: to maintain world peace and security; to deal with economic and social development; and to maintain the rule of law.

As a result, they set up six institutions: the Security Council; the UN General Assembly, with all 193 member countries in the world; ECOSOC, which deals with economic and social issues; Trusteeship, for countries that have not yet gotten independence; the International Court of Justice in the Hague; and the Secretariat.

The purpose was to deal with the things that had gone wrong before the beginning of the Second World War and to prevent the re-occurrence of such wars and human catastrophe.

In its operations, it has six committees dealing with issues from finance to the social and political realm.

Is the UN playing the role it was set up to do?

A Multilateral Approach to World Issues

An Interview with The Honorable Sam K. Kutesa, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Uganda and President of the 69th United Nations General Assembly

It's playing the role but it can do more, because there is now an increasing need for multilateralism rather than unilateralism, and there is greater need for a coalition to be formed around the world. When you talk about issues like climate change and economic development, the best organizations to work with are multilateral institutions such as the UN, the World Bank, and IMF.

What interested you in overseeing the 69th session and how do you envision the role will pan out?

There is an increasing need for a multilateral approach to world issues, and this is what I think I should be doing within the United Nations as its current President: to encourage coalitions, to encourage all of us moving together, because the world issues that confront us are best solved with a multilateral approach.

You have touched on some areas you want to focus on further, the first being the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Would you describe those efforts and what needs to be done to make sure it's implemented?

The Post-2015 Agenda is replacing the millennium development goals, which were set up in 2000. There were eight goals; currently, a working group focused on a new round of goals to succeed the MDG's has come up with a proposal of 17 new goals. There is another working group that has been figuring out how to finance the implementation of these goals and yet another working group that is focused on transfer of technology and capacity building. All of these groups are making reports to the Secretary General who, in turn will submit recommendations on how to implement and finance this agenda to my office and the General Assembly.

Is enough being done on climate change and how will you evaluate the success of the session when it comes to addressing this issue?

Climate change is going to be one of the defining issues of our times, and I'm encouraged by the growing appetite to reach an internationally binding agreement. In the past, we have had failures, but there is now a clear understanding of the importance of dealing with issues of climate change. The world has experienced unprecedented droughts and floods, rising sea levels, and a host of other climate change-related tragedies. In an effort to deal with this existential threat, the UN together

with United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has set up a mechanism that will be holding meetings in Peru and subsequently in Paris where we hope to conclude an internationally binding agreement by December of next year. This will be the real measure of success.

How should the UN approach its role in conflict resolution?

It's important to do a number of things: one is to have an early warning mechanism that enables us to identify and prevent conflicts that are about to arise. But in the event that these conflicts do occur, it is important to seek resolution while simultaneously pursuing peace-building.

In my experience, particularly in Africa over the past 10 years, I have seen that, if you take on conflict resolution, you must simultaneously focus on peace-building.

Not only must you resolve the conflict, but also you must begin to rebuild by addressing social and economic development, and addressing the real issues that caused the conflict in the first place.

So peace-building and conflict resolution must be undertaken simultaneously.

How critical is it to have systems in place to ensure that dialogue becomes actual progress?

After passing resolutions, the UN needs to ensure implementation. I hope that we can have a review of the implementation on the resolutions we have passed, so as to evaluate how they have been implemented either by member states or institutions of the United Nations. It's possible to have a review mechanism so that we can continuously monitor implementation – this is one thing I want to introduce.

Do you need to establish metrics to track progress in these areas?

Yes, we have to figure out who is taking care of what and we need to give everyone timelines. Then, if something hasn't been done, we have to see the reasons and be able to solve it that way. It's important to have metrics to track achievement.

In addressing the major challenges facing the world, will assistance need to come from a public/private partnership and does the private sector need to be engaged more in their resolution?

Absolutely. Right now, when we talk about financing development, we are talking about

official development assistance (ODA). But even if all of these commitments of ODA were fulfilled, it would still be insufficient to bring about transformative change. Even if all developed countries paid the amount of money pledged by them, that would not be more than \$190 billion per annum and a transformative agenda requires about \$1.8 trillion per annum.

Therefore, to finance this agenda, we need to get the private sector involved. However, the private sector doesn't do things for charity – the private sector does things for profit. So we need to be imaginative in finding ways to incentivize the private sector to come in and make sure they not only make a profit but they also help finance this agenda.

How valuable is your extensive background for your role in leading the General Assembly?

It will be helpful because I have been involved in negotiations as Minister of Finance for my country with the World Bank and with IMF. As Minister of Foreign Affairs, I have been involved in a lot of bilateral discussions and agreements to resolve conflicts within my own region in Africa. It puts me in a good state to be at this high level. It's a good opportunity but a challenge as well.

You began your career as a lawyer but have also been involved in the commercial business world. How did your early business career affect your path towards public service?

From 1976 to 1979, I worked as the in-house legal counsel for a wealthy multinational company called Lonrho East Africa. It was there that I participated in making business and commercial decisions on behalf of the company. I also learned that public service and private business are inseparable because the government shapes policies and if they don't take into account the interests of private business, they make mistakes because government depends on revenues collected from the private sector. So rather than be an obstruction, government should be a facilitator to the private sector. This is the only way to have a smart partnership and, therefore, it has shaped my belief in my own public service.

Has your business experience influenced your thinking about what the proper role of government is with regard to regulation over the private business sector, as well as in terms of promoting trade and investment in Uganda?

It is important to know that the private sector and the government are not adversaries; in fact, they supplement each other's efforts. Policies must be pro-business to attract investment, create jobs, and employ people, as well as to collect even more revenue in terms of taxes from these businesses. So I'm pro-business and I promote policies that support business because it's mutually supportive.

Do you think diplomats who serve the United Nations and other international institutions understand what people need to do in order to start a business, to provide products and services to customers, and to create job opportunities?

They are increasingly coming to understand these things. In the past, diplomacy was focused on talking about your country and introducing it to other countries. But as we stand today in the world, diplomacy has changed to commercial diplomacy, where diplomats and even the UN must now promote commercial relations among nations and, even more so, work toward a greater international trade regime that enables countries to have market access and technology transfer to help growing middle classes in all parts of the world, which is actually in the interest of business – to create more consumers.

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How will you use your experience as a business manager in presiding over the United Nations General Assembly?

During my term as President of the General Assembly, we need to create a global partnership among business, the public sector, and civil society, and actually encourage entrepreneurship to create more jobs and growth opportunities. This is particularly important given the fact that we shall be dealing with the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which involves creating a transformative agenda that has a universal application and creates inclusive growth for all.

I believe my experience in business management will assist in creating this global partnership along with others.

Is there a strong understanding of the opportunities that exist business-wise in Africa?

There is not enough international awareness and there needs to be more work done to attract foreign investment to Africa. The opportunities in Africa now are enormous, especially in sectors such as natural resources, infrastructure, electricity, and telecom. More importantly, there is now a more stable legal regime in most countries in Africa to protect foreign investment, and this is key to attracting foreign investment.

Returns in Africa are about 30 percent, which is higher than anywhere in the world. The opportunities are abundant, so one should be able to attract the private sector to come to Africa.

Are the right changes being made to attract those who are concerned about the security of their investments?

They have been made – Africa is more secure now than ever before. There are more democracies in Africa now and more legal regimes that protect foreign investors. There is now greater understanding of the role of the private sector than there was in the past. So the opportunities are enormous.

I would encourage those investing in Africa for its raw materials, however, to add value to those raw materials within Africa so that they create employment. This is the direction that most African governments are taking.

What advantages does Uganda offer?

Uganda is very centrally located. We are part of the East African community, which is made up of five countries; with a population of about 150 million people, which is a big market; we have one customs union; we have a common market; and if you invest in Uganda, you can have free movement of goods and services within this territory and community. Also, Uganda has a lot of natural resources, and a very skilled and educated population.

There are many opportunities for both industry and services. We have a huge mineral sector. We have now discovered oil and gas in our country, and we are looking for people to invest in these sectors. We also have tremendous opportunity in agriculture.

Infrastructure development is also an investment opportunity – we're building railroads and roads, and upgrading airports, so private sector investors take advantage of this opportunity as well.

Furthermore, we have a growing service sector and tourism sector, which provide a number of opportunities.

For someone with private sector experience, what excited you about getting involved in government?

From my young days as a student, I have been interested in public service. I've always thought I had a role in serving my country and I have felt I have an obligation to trying to change things for the better.

When you look at the progress Uganda has made, do you take the time to appreciate its accomplishments?

Our country has seen tremendous positive change over the past 28 years, with the revival of our economy and the implementation of policies both internal and foreign that have helped us take great strides in its growth. I'm thankful I have been able to play a part in this transformation. Of course, I also look at times when there have been challenges and how things could have gone better. But I believe on the whole, I've been lucky to play a role in the transformation of my country. ●