



GUILD PRESIDENTS' FORUM ON GOVERNANCE (GPFOG)

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COMMUNIQUE CALLING ON GOVERNMENT TO IMPROVE EFFORTS TO ENABLE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN THE OIL SECTOR

INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday, January 30, 2018, the Guild Presidents' Forum on Oil Governance (GPFOG), a youth-led association of current and former Guild Presidents, Guild Ministers and youth leaders in institutions of higher learning across Uganda, convened a meeting in Kampala during which members discussed President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni's remarks on skilling Ugandans to find gainful employment in the oil sector. The remarks were made at the Skilling and Local Content Forum held between January 22 and 23, 2018 in Kampala.

Noting that the president had said that foreigners could be hired to fill the skills gaps in Uganda's oil and gas sector, members of GPFOG observed that the president's remarks were not only painful and a rebuff to youth's hopes of finding gainful employment in the oil sector, they were also testament to a lack of adequate commitment by his government in ensuring local content in the oil sector.

While they reminded themselves that government has put in place several policies and laws and has undertaken some interventions such as instituting a National Suppliers Database to enable national participation in the oil and gas sector, the youth noted that what is being done is insufficient.

They observed that youth access to information on relevant oil and gas skills is still limited putting them at risk of studying irrelevant courses. Moreover, they noted, vocational training in Uganda is still weak and government efforts to strengthen it by creating centres of excellence two years before production of first oil in 2020 was unhelpful. Further, the youth noted that their lecturers and other trainers are still weak because of inadequate efforts by government to enable industry attachments that would see lecturers and trainers deliver better content. The youth also noted that the poor regulation of oil and gas training institutes including sub-standard ones that have mushroomed across the country put them at risk of being exploited and receiving irrelevant skills.

The youth participants made several other observations which are captured below:

OBSERVATIONS

a) Lack of commitment to national content

Participants observed that despite government rhetoric on promoting employment of Ugandans in the oil sector, government actions and indeed the president's remarks demonstrate that government has a lukewarm attitude to ensuring that Ugandans work in the oil sector for the common good.

b) Poor education standards

The youth at the meeting noted that this was evident in the kind of education system that government is superintending over. Pupils can barely read, write and solve mathematics problems. Participants also cited the recently released 2017 PLE results which showed that out of the millions of pupils who join primary one, only 646,190 make it to primary seven. Thereafter, a pitiful number make it to secondary school, vocational training institutes and university! Can a country that is doing a bad job of training its human resource say that it is adequately preparing engineers, environmentalists and others for oil sector opportunities and socio-economic development? Participants said that it could not. No wonder the president was talking of hiring foreigners, participants said.

c). Weak vocational training

The youth at the meeting noted that while 60% of the oil sector labour force will require vocational skills and therefore training, the vocational training in Uganda was still too weak. Vocational institutes offering necessary oil and gas skills such as welding are still too few, participants said. They noted that it was only this week on January 30, 2018 that government announced that it would disburse funds to institutes such as Uganda Petroleum Institute, Kigumba and Uganda Technical Institute, Kichwamba to turn them into centres of excellence. They also recalled that approved curricula for oil and gas institutes is still not in place. Could an education system that is playing catch up with the fast moving oil sector provide the required labour force to enable Ugandans work in the oil sector? The youth at participants at the meeting said it would not.

d). Universities not any better

Furthermore, participants noted that the training being received in universities was also insufficient. Not only is the training largely theoretical offering little in the form of hands-on-skills, government has largely failed to strengthen university lecturers through industry attachments and exchange visits among others to deliver dynamic content commensurate with the needs of the 21st century. Lack of adequate hands-on training delivered by lecturers failed by government showed government's inadequate commitment to enabling local content, participants said.

e). The sticking issue of certification

The youth participants at the meeting noted that despite calls from several stakeholders to enable certification of oil and gas professionals, the calls largely remained unheeded. Per 2017 information from the Ministry of Energy, only two institutions, Kinyara Sugar and Q-Sourcing, have City and Guilds Certification. Without certification, Uganda's youth stand to be locked out of the oil and gas sector, participants said. Little wonder that the president was looking to foreign countries to get the necessary expertise, participants said and cautioned that Ugandans must demand that government fulfills its duties and enables adequate training and certification.

f). Relegating skilling duties to the private sector and poor regulation

Participants were saddened by the fact that the president was relegating the duty of skilling Ugandans for the oil and gas sector to private businesses. In saying that investors should set up private technical institutes, the president is putting Ugandans in harm's way as poorly regulated sub-standard teaching institutes had already exploited Ugandans by offering questionable skills. While participants appreciated that public-private partnerships are critical for the provision of education, government's failure to adequately regulate oil teaching institutions that have sprouted up in several places put Ugandan youth seeking oil and gas skills at risk of further exploitation and receiving sub-standard education.

e). Lack of adequate access to information

Lastly, the participants at the meeting noted that youth were further put at risk of being exploited by businessmen because of insufficiencies in government's dissemination of information on skills necessary for the oil sector. Noting that while government disseminates information on the types of skills needed for the oil sector, participants said that the information is largely disseminated at workshops and through media channels such as newspapers that majority of the youth lack access to. Career fairs and other popular means through which government committed to share information remain largely under-utilised.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the above, the youth participants recommended the following:

- (i) To ensure that the government of Uganda does not fail Ugandan youth's hopes and dreams by failing to sufficiently train citizens for the oil sector, government must strengthen vocational and university training through increasing the number of certified institutes, putting in place a vocational training curricula, setting standards for training and instituting a multi-stakeholder committee to uphold these standards.
- (ii) Further, government must put in place quotas that show what percentage of Ugandans must be employed in the oil and gas sector. These quotas must be strictly enforced. In turn, the Ministry of Energy and other relevant ministries must put in place a workplan that details

how and when Ugandans will be trained to ensure that there are enough skills to meet the set quotas. The workplan must be widely publicised to enable Ugandans hold government accountable.

(iii) In addition, government must support universities to improve the training received by students. Government must strengthen trainers and lecturers through industry attachment and others and must ensure hands-on training through apprenticeships and internships by students.

(iv) Finally, government must ensure that more information on the skills requirements for the oil and gas sector are shared with students using relevant channels. The Oil and Gas Skills Communications Strategy that is planned for in the National Content Policy should be put in place and youth should be mobilised to ensure that it is implemented.

For God and our country.

The Guild Presidents' Forum on Oil Governance (GPFOG)

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