

Kenya should rescind sh148b new oil terminal charges

HARDLY a week after the Uganda National Oil Company (UNOC) celebrated the arrival of its first direct fuel imports, Kenya has imposed unrealistic charges against Uganda's oil imports through the port of Mombasa.

The Kenyan authorities have imposed a \$40m (sh148.4b) bond fee onto Vitol Bahrain terminal (VTTI Kenya), a private firm that will hold UNOC's imports at Mombasa Port.

The storage terminal is the only privately owned facility that is connected to the Kenyan Pipeline Company, serving Uganda.

The terminal was selected to store all the fuel under UNOC before it is sent to the Kisumu and Eldoret terminals through the Kenyan pipeline, where the Ugandan oil marketing companies (dealers) would pick it up for sale.

The sudden introduction of the unrealistic bond fee has been interpreted as another attempt to frustrate Uganda's plans to ensure that oil products on the market become cheaper than when the country was importing through Kenyan intermediaries.

With this charge, the planned imports by UNOC will be more expensive for the final user on Ugandan market.

Although the \$40m bond fee has not been imposed onto UNOC directly, it is expected that VTTI Kenya will offset the



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burden on UNOC, making its imports extremely expensive for the dealers.

The dealers would then have to increase pump prices.

In the spirit of integration and mutual trade ties between Uganda and Kenya, the two countries should negotiate and settle for a realistic charge to avoid a situation where Uganda could end up with a bigger problem yet the purpose was to come up with a permanent solution on sustainable and cheaper oil products.

The new exorbitant fee by Kenyan authorities is a deterrent move, which is against all the principles of the East African Community spirit.

Uganda and Kenya should engage in order for there to be for a win-win situation out of this standoff.

Last week, UNOC commenced its direct imports to Uganda when it received two ships carrying a total of 138,000 metric tonnes of fuel products at the Kipevu Oil Terminal II in Mombasa.

UNOC plans to import at least 180,000 metric tonnes of petroleum products every month so as to meet all the country's needs. Uganda consumes about 6.5 million litres of fuel products per day, implying that the planned consignment can take us for 27 days.

However, the challenge is also a wake-up call for Uganda to look at alternatives, if Kenya doesn't reconsider the current charges.

About the 'Run for the love of Acholi' campaign

The desperate needs of Acholi children following two decades of war have been well documented in many studies, but rarely has someone pointed out the mental health implications.

This is about to change thanks to the determination of one woman behind Ring pi Maro Acholi (Run for the Love of Acholi), a seven-day Kampala to Gulu run scheduled for November 3-13, 2024.

She is Dr Justine Nakimuli Kigozi, a mental health professional based in London, UK and founder and CEO of Mind, Body and Soul (MBS).

She is also the president of Uganda Nurses and Midwives Association-UK, a dedicated organisation committed to supporting and unifying Ugandan nurses and midwives living and working in the United Kingdom.

The Run for the Love of Acholi event she is promoting aims at highlighting the mental health problems some Acholi children continue to face long after the war concluded more than 15 years ago.

Dr Kigozi was born and raised in Masaka in a family of Baganda that valued public service above the love of self. Her grandfather, Damian Kajubi, who passed away in December 2021, was a headteacher and village chief whose counsel was sought often by members of the community.

When she crossed Karuma Falls bridge into northern Uganda for the first time in December 2022, she was captivated by the beauty and warmth of the Acholi people. Yet she was also disturbed by the number of children she saw on the Gulu city streets struggling with signs of mental health.

"When I went to Acholi, the beauty of the countryside and people was stunning," she said, adding, "I wanted to get out of the car every five kilometres to take pictures of the villages. But in Gulu city, where we were staying, my trained eyes as a psychiatrist saw children as young as 10 years old on the streets. I recall speaking to a 10-year-old boy, asking him what he was doing on the street, and he told me he was not in school, instead spending his time with friends on the streets. I saw the use of drugs and alcohol firsthand, all signs that all is not well following the prolonged war that destroyed the social and family support for many children."

Dr Kigozi who attended Namugongo Primary Boarding School, Maryhill Secondary School and



completed A'level at St Joseph Senior Secondary School Naggalama said she felt a sense of urgency in Acholi that she had not experienced in her own practice in the UK, where she treats Caribbean and African population regarding a range of mental health issues.

Prior to the trip to Acholi, Dr Kigozi was already involved in collaborating with Uganda mental health professionals by sharing best practices for patients care, including at Butabika National Referral Hospital and other health centres in south-central Uganda.

Through her UK-registered and based organisation, Mind, Body and Soul, she has supported upgrading for Uganda mental health professionals who travel to the UK for additional upgrading and professional capacity building.

She felt she owed her country the same level of care she was providing to patients in the UK. "The impetus behind working in Uganda with mental health professionals is to ensure that we have mental healthcare with access to the latest research for better support for patients."

Moreover, according to Dr Kigozi, in the past families regarded mental health as shameful, and would rather hide relatives suffering from it than seek access to care. "Things are slowly changing, and we need to take mental healthcare out of the closet and bring it into the open so that the community is part of the care of those who are suffering."

For now, Dr Kigozi is very upbeat about the positive support being generated by the Run for the Love of Acholi campaign. Organisers are planning to host runners from Uganda and the UK, working closely with the Uganda Police and security agencies to ensure safety for the runners and volunteers.

According to the programme, the



Dr Justine Nakimuli Kigozi

run will start from Kololo Independence Grounds on November 3, with plans underway to invite First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports Mama Janet Museveni to flag off the event. A charity dinner is scheduled for November 9, and a charity football match for November 10, 2024.

Along the way, Mind Body and Soul (MBS), supported by 15 mental health professionals from the UK and Uganda, will host unique one-hour long mental health awareness sessions in four districts along Kampala-Gulu road. For the final

5km, the public and 50 students from secondary schools in Gulu will join the runners for the run to Pece Stadium where a rally will be held to address the issues around mental health.

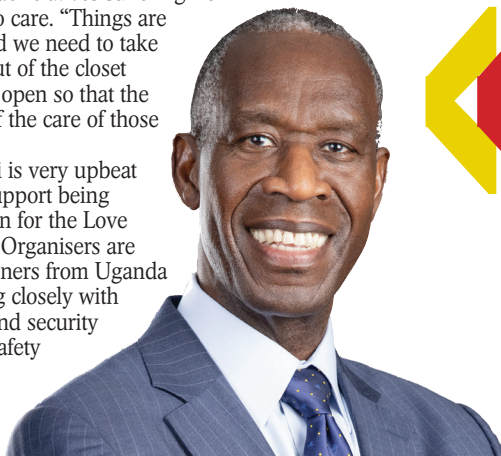
The programme will include a two-day seminar hosted by MBS at Gulu University supported by local medical professionals, to address the mental health needs of the population in Gulu and neighbouring districts. The team will use a comprehensive approach that prioritises first aid training, trauma-informed care, community-based interventions, psychosocial support and access to mental health services in Gulu.

Dr Kigozi says she welcomes individual and corporate sponsors from Uganda and the UK, to make this the most successful focus on mental health ever held in Uganda. Her hope is to see all Acholi children succeeding at school, are all-round happy, vibrant and participating in the life of the community.

Individual and corporate sponsors eager to get in on the action can contact Jon Olak WhatsApp No. +256789553723 or Ben Odwongo at WhatsApp No. +447459319040 or email Dr Kigozi at Info@cphmindbodyandsoul.org.uk

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The Run for the love of Acholi event Dr Justine Nakimuli Kigozi, a mental health professional based in London, UK is promoting aims at highlighting the mental health problems some Acholi children continue to face long after the war concluded more than 15 years ago.