



# PARLIAMENT

OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

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## History of Parliament

The first elements of a legislative organ in Uganda can be traced as far back as 1888 when the then Imperial British East African Company (IBEACO) started some kind of administration in Uganda. Its purpose was to undertake the duties of general administration, imposition and collection of taxes and administration of justice in areas under its control, all on behalf of the British Crown.

In 1902, the constitutional framework of the country was first outlined in the Order-in-Council. Under this Ordinance, new provisions for the administration of Uganda were made. The law also designated the Commissioner as the official responsible for administration. Article 12 of the Ordinance empowered the Commissioner to make ordinances for the administration of justice, raising of revenues and generally for the peace, order and good governance of all persons in Uganda.

In effect, the 1902 Ordinance established a system of legislation through the promulgation of personal decrees by the Commissioner, a representative of the British Crown. This system continued up to 1920 when a new ordinance was promulgated, which made provision for the formation of another legislative landmark.

The body was called the Legislative Council (LEGCO) whose membership was purely European. It had seven members all led by the Governor, Sir Robert Coryndon, at the time. However, in 1926 the first Asian member was sworn in and a second Asian member joined the LEGCO in 1933.

On December 4th, 1945, the first three African representatives were sworn in to the LEGCO representing Buganda, Western and Eastern Provinces. They were Michael Ernest Kawalya Kaggwa, the Katikkiro of Buganda; Petero Nyangabyaki, the Katikkiro of Bunyoro; and Yekonia Zirabamuzaale, the Secretary General of Busoga.

From 1945 to 1961, representation kept on increasing. In 1954, the composition of the LEGCO became 17 official members, 11 crossbench members and 28 representative members. The crossbench members sat on the Government side of the House but were free to speak and vote as they wished, except on a Motion of Confidence when they were bound to support the Government side.

The racial composition of the crossbench was six Africans, four Europeans and one Asian. Of the 28 representatives, 14 were Africans, seven Europeans and seven Asians.

A Ministerial system was introduced two years later, and the LEGCO membership increased to 60 in total. Thirty were representative members, 13 were government backbenchers and 17 were officials.

In January 1958, the first Speaker of the LEGCO, Sir John Bowes Griffin, was appointed. Thereafter, he presided at all the Council meetings.

Meanwhile, the venue of meetings of the LEGCO had been shifted from the Council Chamber in Entebbe to the High Court, Kampala in 1945; then to the Town Hall in 1950 and eventually to the current Parliament building in 1960.

Due to continued pressure for self-government from the Protectorate in the late 1950s, an electoral law was introduced to the Constitution, and the first ever direct general elections were held in March 1961.

This election returned an African majority into the Legislative Council. The Democratic Party (DP) led by Ben Kiwanuka, formed the majority party while the Uganda People's Congress (UPC), led by Apollo Milton Obote, formed the Opposition.

The stage was now set for the final move towards complete independence and cessation of the Protectorate. In September 1961, 48 representatives from Uganda of all shades of opinion and varying interests met at a Constitutional Conference in London where the shape of the future Constitution of Uganda was agreed upon. On 1st March 1962, self-government was inaugurated. On that day, the Prime Minister presided over a Cabinet and the LEGCO became the National Assembly.

In 1962, the Assembly was formally dissolved and the last general elections before Independence were held. The Uganda Peoples Congress led by Apollo Milton Obote won with 37 seats as against 24 for the Democratic Party (DP) excluding Buganda. Buganda region had opted for an indirect election, hence its Lukiiko nominated 21 representatives to the National Assembly. The Buganda representatives under Kabaka Yekka (KY) struck an alliance with the UPC known as UPC/KY Alliance. This gave the Alliance the necessary strength to form a coalition government with Apollo Milton Obote as the Prime Minister, and DP led by Ben Kiwanuka in the Opposition.

This was the Government that was to receive the instruments of Independence on the 9th of October 1962. Under the Independence Constitution of 1962, the First Parliament of Uganda, the National Assembly, was partly elected and partly nominated. The Buganda representatives were to continue to be indirectly elected by the Lukiiko.

The Independence Constitution distributed the legislative powers. It conferred certain powers to the federal governments such as the power to legislate on offices of rulers, their powers, obligations and duties, among others.

The bulk of legislative powers were reserved for the Central Government. This situation continued until May 1966, when the Independence Constitution was abrogated and an interim one was introduced, pending promulgation of a Republican Constitution.

In 1967, a Republican Constitution came into force and maintained a multi-party system of Government. The Constitution stipulated that after a general election, the Party with the greatest numerical strength of the elected members would form the government.

Parliament under the Republican Constitution was the Second Parliament of Uganda. The elections provided for under this new Constitution, which were to be held after a period of five years, were never held due to the military coup, which took place in January 1971. From 1971 to 1979, the Uganda Parliament was in abeyance.

Following the overthrow of the military regime in 1979, Uganda got an interim Parliament known as the National Consultative Council. It was initially composed of 30 members who were elected in Moshi, Tanzania. The National Consultative Council continued to be the supreme legislative body until the general elections that were held in 1980. This was the Third Parliament of the Republic of Uganda.

The elections ushered the Uganda Peoples Congress into power with the Democratic Party in the Opposition. This formed the Fourth Parliament of the Republic of Uganda. However, in 1986 after a series of military coups, the National Resistance Movement (NRM) came to power.

The National Resistance Council (NRC) at the time consisted of 38 Historical Members of the National Resistance Movement/National Resistance Army. It was the Fifth Parliament of the Republic of Uganda.

Countrywide elections were held in 1989 and the NRC was expanded to a membership of 270.

Later, the NRC continued to expand with the creation of four districts, namely Kisoro, Pallisa, Kiboga and Kibaale on 15 March 1991 and Ntungamo on 5 May 1993, which necessitated election of five additional Women Representatives to the Council. Five Youth and three Workers Representatives were later elected.

In 1988, the NRC passed a Constitutional Commission Statute, which created the Constitutional Commission comprising 21 Commissioners. The Commission presented a draft Constitution in December 1993 to the President on behalf of Government. This was to become the document from which a new Constitution was to emerge.

In 1993, the NRC passed the Constituent Assembly Statute providing for elections to the Constituent Assembly in March 1994 to be organised and conducted by an Interim Electoral Commission established by the same law.

The Constituent Assembly was mandated by the Constituent Assembly Statute to:

- (a) Scrutinize, debate and prepare a final draft of the constitutional text prepared and submitted to the Minister by the Uganda Constitutional Commission under the provisions of section 6 (6) of the Uganda Constitutional Commission Statute, 1988; and
- (b) Enact and promulgate a new Constitution of the Republic of Uganda.

The Constituent Assembly accomplished its work and on 8th October 1995 a new Constitution of Uganda was promulgated.

The new Interim Electoral Commission was constituted under the provisions of the Interim Electoral Commission Statute, 1995. In accordance with the provisions of the new Constitution, the Interim Electoral Commission organised and conducted the first direct presidential elections in the country on 7th May 1996. The President elect, Yoweri Museveni, was sworn in on 12th May 1996.

Soon after conclusion of the presidential elections, the Interim Electoral Commission embarked on the organisation and conduct of parliamentary elections, which ushered in the Sixth Parliament of Uganda.

The Sixth Parliament was sworn in on 2nd July 1996. It served a five-year term from 1996 to 2001. During its term of office, it approved the creation of 17 new districts namely: Kayunga, Kaberamaido, Kanungu, Nakapiripirit, Sironko, Yumbe, Kamwenge, Wakiso, Sembabule, Bugiri, Nakasongola, Kyenjojo, Adjumani, Katakwi, Busia, Pader and Mayuge.

Consequently, the number of District Woman Representatives in the Seventh Parliament increased from 39 to 56. The number of Workers Representatives also increased from three to five.

Members of Uganda's Seventh Parliament were sworn in on 3rd and 4th July 2001. The Seventh

Parliament concluded its term on 12th May 2006.

The Eighth Parliament was sworn in on 16th and 17th May 2006. This Parliament was unique because it was the first multi-party Parliament after 20 years under the Movement System.

Following the amendment of the Constitution in 2005, significant changes were introduced to prepare for a multi-party Parliament. These included, among other provisions, the Prime Minister, who was also to hold the portfolio of the Leader of Government Business in Parliament, the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, the Government Chief Whip and the Opposition Chief Whip.

The Eighth Parliament had a membership of 326 elected members.

The Ninth Parliament was sworn in on 16th, 17th and 18th May 2011 with a membership of 375 MPs. Its term came to a close in May 2016.

The current Parliament is the tenth since independence. Election of members was held on 18th February 2016.

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