

# Signing of Memorandum of Understanding for the inter-party organization for dialogue in Uganda



## Introduction

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February 5, 2010, will go down in the history of Uganda as an important day. For the first time ever, officials from the country's major political parties sat together amicably under the same roof and agreed to work towards the consolidation of their multiparty democracy.

Since Uganda's independence in 1962, ruling and opposition political parties have engaged in political battles using missiles of abusive words against one another, sowing seeds of hatred. But with the help, sponsorship and facilitation of the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), all six parliamentary political parties have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) under which they will work together, through dialogue, towards sustainable multiparty democracy and development of Uganda.



*All signatories after the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding*

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# Current political climate

Between 1986 and 2000 Uganda was governed by a political system without political parties. In July 2005, following a 'yes' in favour of multipartism in a popular referendum, Museveni's ruling party accepted multiparty politics. The constitution was amended subsequently and the first multiparty elections in twenty years were held. Although formally, multiparty politics have been re-introduced in Uganda, most political analysts and leaders of opposition parties assert that the political playing field is not level and there is no co-operation between the parties.

Political analysts argue that the opposition parties are disadvantaged in many ways, including a lack of financial support, impeding of party leaders from addressing public rallies and curtailing them from talking freely on FM radio. This has led to a situation where opposition parties and the ruling party are continuously at loggerheads.

When president Museveni won the elections of February 2006 and was sworn in for his third term, he invited opposition parties to the State House for dialogue, however, many of the major parties did not turn up and the dialogue failed. Since then, both the ruling and opposition parties recognise the critical importance of an inclusive interparty platform for dialogue and have explored alternative ways in setting up such a forum outside the formal framework provided for in the Political Parties and Organizations Act (2005). Based on NIMD's track record in the region, NIMD was approached by both the ruling and opposition parties to assist them in this process.

In light of Uganda's volatile political environment, it is therefore no small achievement for NIMD to bring all the major political parties together to sign an MoU for the Inter Party Organisations for Dialogue (IPOD). The process of fostering the inclusive inter-party dialogue in Uganda included NIMD hosting a visit by delegates from Ugandan political parties to Ghana in October last year as well as a return visit by Ghanaian politicians to Uganda in December last year (see photo). The Ghana meeting was the first occasion on which the parties sat down together for discussion and laid the groundwork for the signing of the MoU.

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*Ugandan and Ghanaian politicians*

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# Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding in Kampala

The Memorandum of Understanding signing ceremony held on 5th February 2010 at the Imperial Royale Hotel in Kampala attracted foreign diplomats, cabinet ministers, religious leaders, intellectuals, representatives of non-government organizations (NGOs) and a large media contingent.

The guest speaker, deputy chairman of the NIMD board, Ruud Koole made a moving speech in which he emphasised the need for political parties to engage in dialogue instead of fighting one another.

Ruud Koole said: "As the vice president of NIMD, I feel very honored to be present here at this very important day for the democracy in your beautiful country. I would like to start by offering my heartfelt congratulations on behalf of all the Dutch parliamentary political parties that constitute NIMD on this auspicious occasion as you will sign today the Memorandum of Understanding marking the formal launch of an inter-party dialogue platform.

Moreover I would like to extend the congratulations of all the political parties that have embarked on a similar NIMD facilitated inter-party dialogue in Ghana, Mali, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The Dutch political parties and your fellow Africans have asked me to forward the following message: By resolving to work together, in pursuit of the common good, despite political differences, the Ugandan political parties have once again demonstrated that in Africa, democracy is taking root and that Uganda is truly one of the beacons of hope and source of inspiration on the continent.

We also take this opportunity to welcome each of the member political parties in Uganda who are signatories to this very historic democratic initiative, to the regional network of political parties in Africa that come together under the NIMD Africa regional programme to share experiences, learn from one another and learn together. The aim of the NIMD programme is to strengthen the dialogue between parties and to build a sustainable party system."

Koole went on to say that the dialogue platform will provide an impartial meeting place for parliamentary political parties in a fragile political environment. "Impartial, but not without values, democracy and rule of law. We must agree on the desirability of these values, and the dialogue platform can be a very helpful instrument in promoting these core values," Koole said.

He emphasised that dialogue is very important to Uganda as it prepares for 2011 elections. "The fact that Uganda will be holding its national elections in 2011 makes the signing of this MoU and the dialogue that much more important. Having an election outcome that is widely accepted by all parties must be the first goal for these talks in the months that lead up to this election."

Koole also said that while NIMD is happy to be able to facilitate the dialogue process, "It is you, the political

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*Prof. Ruud Koole, Vice President of the NIMD board, receives a flag from Ugandan NGO Always Be Tolerant, honouring NIMD for facilitating the inter-party dialogue.*

parties of this beautiful country, who will have to do the work of building an inclusive and sustainable democracy in Uganda. As different as you are and will remain, you can do this, together, in a dialogue, respectful and tolerant towards your political competitors.”

He ended by saying, “Today is a very important first step. Take this opportunity at this decisive moment in time. I wish you all the energy and wisdom to continue on this road, that has no other goal than serving the people of Uganda.”

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# Political parties speak out

**Before the signing ceremony, each political party representative was given 10 minutes to make a speech. All the parties welcomed the idea of dialogue as means of solving the country's political problems. But some officials used the occasion to comment on the government's oppression of the opposition.**

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## Conservative Party



*Acting Secretary General Conservative Party and Chairman signing MoU*

The first to deliver a speech was Conservative Party (CP) president John Ken Lukyamuzi. In his speech he requested that one of the first issues to be dealt with by the dialogue should be the re-instatement of presidential term limits.

Lukyamuzi said: "It is a noble exercise. We should collectively discard bad laws. Representation of the army in parliament should be abolished. The dialogue should resurrect debate on president's term limits. In the last elections, the Supreme Court said that the Electoral Commission connived with President Museveni to rig elections. There is need to overhaul the Electoral Commission."

However he also said that dialogue is the answer to the political problems of Uganda.

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## Democratic Party



*Secretary General and President of the Democratic Party signing MoU, while NIMDs local representative Shaun Mackay looks on*

The president-general of the Democratic Party (DP), John Sebaana Kizito, said: "This occasion is very significant. We have in this hall bishops, diplomats, cabinet ministers and political leaders. We welcome the dialogue. It will enable us to rub shoulders with ministers, MPs and this will help us to make decisions in parliament easy after discussing them in the dialogue. We shall do whatever is necessary to see that this icon goes ahead."

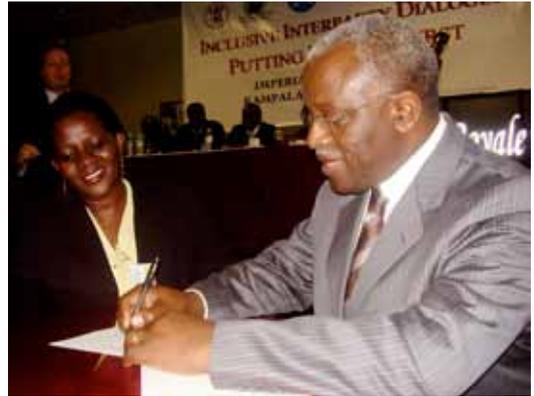
Forum for Democratic Change



*Secretary General of the Forum for Democratic Change giving her speech*

Speaking on behalf of the leading opposition political party, the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), the party's Secretary General, Alice Alaso, said: "The dialogue process is a realization that Uganda is bigger than all of us. Bigger than the ruling party. We will do what it takes to ensure that the process is respected."

National Resistance Movement



*Vice Chairman and Secretary General of the National Resistance Movement signing MoU*

The Secretary General of the ruling party, National Resistance Movement, (NRM), Amama Mbabazi, said: "Let the signing of this Memorandum of Understanding mark a new era of positive engagement between political parties for common good for all Ugandans beyond political affiliations. In our party we believe that opposition is necessary for democracy to grow. The task of building democracy in Uganda lies on shoulders of all Ugandans."

After party officials made brief speeches, each party was called forward to sign the MoU by the master of ceremonies, NIMD's country representative in Uganda, Shaun MacKay. After each signing there was loud applause from the house.

The ceremony was concluded when all political parties' officials received flags from a local NGO which promotes tolerance among all Ugandans called Always Be Tolerant (ABETO).

While handing over the flags, ABETO's director Moses Musana urged the political parties to always carry the flags during the 2011 campaigns so that they remind them to be tolerant of one another under all circumstances.

## Uganda People's Congress



*Secretary General and Vice Chairman of The Uganda People's Congress signing MoU*

Christopher Opoka-Okumu, the secretary general of the Uganda People's Congress (UPC), the party which led Uganda from Independence in 1962 up until its overthrow in 1971, said: "Let this cooperation produce far reaching developments in this country."

## Justice Forum



*Secretary General and National Vice Chairman of the Justice Forum signing MoU*

Justice Forum (JEEMA) Secretary General, Hussein Kyanjo, said: "Our party thinks we have not come here for entertainment or cheap popularity but for a good cause. Uganda today has a bleak future because of what is on the ground. There is need to stop possible anarchy by making sure that there is freedom of the media and people be given opportunity to express themselves freely. The government should stop closing down radio [stations] without proper hearing from those who manage them."

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## What the Memorandum of Understanding says:

“In common objective to foster a strong vibrant multiparty democracy and national development in Uganda, the parties represented hereunder agree to move forward peaceful co-existence and a purposeful dialogue and cooperation.

The parties agree to uphold the following key principles and values;

To pursue and promote fundamental principles of democracy, good governance and non-discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, language, region or political affiliation, to foster confidence, trust and have initiatives as a means of enhancing co-operation and harmony among Ugandan political parties, to promote and uphold rule of law and constitutionalism and to foster, to promote and strengthen political parties as the building blocks of democracy and uphold an environment of democratic control, accountability and transparency.”

## Reactions of other participants

Bishop Zac Nerengiya who represented the Anglican Church of Uganda said:

*“Since the destiny of the nation and the people are in the hands of the political parties, there is a need for tolerance; and therefore it is good that the political parties have agreed to engage in dialogue.”*

The deputy leader of Moslems in Uganda, Shiek Kinene, said:

*“It is good that at last the political parties have accepted to come together and work collectively towards peace and development.”*

Regional Director Africa of NIMD, Jasper Veen said:

*“We recognise that the cause of many conflicts in young democracies is the lack of trust among political leaders and a zero-sum approach to politics, which excludes major sections of the population. Political conflicts thus inhibit the chances for sustainable socio-economic development.”*

Most Ugandans interviewed supported the dialogue. A teacher, Henry Mbaka, 45, said:

*“We are tired of wars brought about by politicians. Sitting at the same table to discuss issues is the best way of solving the country’s political problems.”*

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# Background

Uganda has gone through severe political turmoil: since Independence, it has witnessed five military coups. The first coup took place in 1971 when notorious dictator Idi Amin overthrew President Apolo Milton Obote. Under his regime thousands of Ugandans were killed and many fled into exile.

Amin was overthrown in 1979 by a joint force of exiled Ugandans and Tanzanian forces. Yusuf Lule was installed as the post-liberation president by the groups that fought Amin. His regime was in turn overthrown through a coup after only 90 days. Lule was replaced by Godfrey Lukongwa Binasisa whose regime lasted only 6 months.

In 1981 elections were held and Obote was re-elected as president in elections which all the opposition parties claimed were rigged. That led to disgruntled Ugandans led by Yoweri Kaguta Museveni to go the bush from where a guerilla war was waged against the government.

In 1985 Obote was overthrown by Tito Okello in another coup. Museveni, who was still fighting, refused to join Tito Okello and in January 1986 his guerilla force overran Uganda's capital Kampala and took over the leadership. Since then Museveni has been President of Uganda.



**UGANDA**

**Capital** Kampala, 0°19'N 32°35'E

**Official language(s)** English, Swahili

**Government** **Democratic Republic**  
 – President Yoweri Museveni  
 – Vice President Gilbert Bukenya Balibaseka  
 – Prime Minister Apolo Nsibambi

**Independence from the United Kingdom**  
 Republic October 9, 1962  
 Current constitution, 1995

When fully constituted the **Parliament of Uganda** consists of 332 members, 215 of whom are directly elected by all registered voters through the ballot box to represent electoral constituencies, while the rest represent special interest groups including the army (10 seats), women (79 seats), youth (5 seats), workers (5 seats) and the disabled (5 seats) and are elected by Electoral Colleges. 13 Ex-officio members



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# Memorandum of Understanding

Imperial Royale Hotel, Kampala, Uganda  
5 February 2010

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## 1 Preamble

In our common objective to foster a strong and vibrant multiparty democracy and national development in Uganda, the parties represented hereunder hereby agree to move toward peaceful co-existence and a purposeful dialogue and cooperation to uphold the following key principles and values:

- a) To pursue and promote the fundamental principles of democracy, good governance and non-discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, language, region or political affiliation;
- b) To foster confidence, trust and have initiatives as a means of enhancing co-operation and harmony among Ugandan political parties
- c) To promote and establish national reconciliation, consensus and build national unity;
- d) To promote and uphold the tolerance of different political views and values;
- e) To manage and mitigate political differences through constructive dialogue without resorting to undemocratic and unconstitutional means, including violence;
- f) To undertake to promote and protect the observance of fundamental human rights;
- g) To promote and strengthen political parties as the building blocks of democracy;
- h) To promote and uphold the rule of law and constitutionalism;
- i) To promote the strengthening of state institutions in order to enhance good governance;
- j) To promote and uphold the establishment of fair electoral laws, effective and independent autonomy electoral management bodies and a level playing field in elections;
- k) To ensure free competition among political parties and the participation in free, fair and periodical elections by all the registered political parties as the legitimate way of gaining and ceding political power;
- l) To promote and uphold a strong independent parliament with effective oversight over the Executive with the power to set its own legislative agenda;
- m) To foster and uphold an environment of democratic control, accountability and transparency.

## 2 Name

The name of this dialogue forum shall be the Inter Party Organisation for Dialogue. It shall be known by the acronym IPOD.

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### 3 Mission Statement

The mission of the IPOD is to pursue and foster inter-party dialogue, tolerance and co-operation so as to ensure good governance borne out of sustainable multiparty democracy under a united, free, just, industrious and prosperous Uganda

### 4 Vision

Ugandan political parties working harmoniously together towards attaining sustainable multiparty democracy and the sustainable development of Uganda in peace and security

### 5 Structure

#### 5.1 Summit

There shall be a Summit of Leaders which will be the highest organ of IPOD. In this document this body shall be hitherto referred to as the Summit.

##### 5.1.1 Composition

- i This body shall be composed of the head of the member parties or persons in an analogous position, whether they be the presidents or chairpersons of the party. Each of the party heads will have an alternate drawn from the executive of the party, whom may be delegated to sit in the Summit where he or she is not able to attend a Summit meeting.
- ii The Chair of the Summit shall rotate between the member parties on a quarterly basis in alphabetical order.
- iii The Secretaries General shall be ex officio members of the Summit.

##### 5.1.2 Quorum

- i A duly constituted quorum of the summit shall be at least one member of the Summit from each member party

##### 5.1.3 Functions of the Summit

- i Approve policy
- ii Provide political guidance
- iii Approve annual budgets and programmes

#### 5.2. Council of Secretaries General

There shall be a Council of Secretaries General

who will report to the Summit of Leaders. In this document this body shall be hitherto referred to as the Council.

##### 5.2.1. Composition

- i This body shall be composed of the Secretaries General of the member parties plus an additional two members from each party – to be nominated by the parties themselves.
- ii Each party delegation will be led by its Secretary General

##### 5.2.2. Quorum

A duly constituted quorum of the Council shall consist of at least one member of the Council from each member party

##### 5.2.3. Functions

- i Provision of strategic oversight to the Secretariat to ensure that the political priorities are fully entrenched in the IPOD's strategic plan and programme activities;
- ii Formulation and supervision of the annual work plans, budgets and programmes and their implementation in line with the guiding principles and policy decisions of the Summit.
- iii Financial oversight to ensure the proper use and account of monies including the conduct of periodic reports and an annual external audit on accounts.
- iv Ensuring an active and broad participation of political party representatives, at various levels in the activities of the IPOD in order to assure a profound anchoring of the IPOD's programmes within the respective political parties.
- v Organising the Summit;
- vi Appointing the Administrator;
- vii Approving the appointment of other staff of the Secretariat proposed by the Administrator.
- viii Forming technical committees as and when necessary to help with its functioning.

##### 5.2.3 The Council Chair

- i The Council Chair shall rotate on a quarterly basis between the member parties
- ii The Council Chair shall come from the same party as the Summit Chair.

#### 5.3. Secretariat

A Secretariat will be appointed for the day-to-day running of the IPOD.

## 5.3.1. Composition

- i This body shall be composed of an Administrator, who will be the chief executive of the Secretariat, and any other ancillary staff as may be necessary, approved by the Council, and within the budgetary constraints of the IPOD.
- ii The Administrator shall be a professional appointed on criteria to be decided by the Council.
- iii In the interim period, up to at least December 2011, the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy will act as the secretariat for the IPOD. The parties in consultation with NIMD may extend the period by mutual agreement.
- iv The Administrator shall be an ex-officio member of both the Summit and the Council.

## 5.3.2. Functions

- The Secretariat, headed by an Administrator, will perform the following duties, under the guidance and supervision of the Council:
  - i Run the day-to-day affairs of the IPOD, including its administration
  - ii Prepare and implement the programmes, annual work plans, and budgets of the IPOD;
  - iii Ensure that IPOD funds are employed in line with the budget
  - iv Provide secretarial services to the Summit and Council.
  - v Report to the Council on its activities

## 6 Membership

Membership of the IPOD shall be on the following basis:

- i All registered political parties with at least one member of Parliament will be entitled to membership, if they so wish
- ii Where a party no longer has a representative in the Parliament, the status of that party in the IPOD will be determined by the remaining political parties who are signatories to this memorandum.

### 6.1. Founding Members

The following political parties represented in Parliament shall be founding members of the IPOD and co-signatories to this Memorandum of Understanding.

- i Conservative Party (CP)
- ii Democratic Party (DP)
- iii Forum for Democratic Change (FDC)
- iv Justice Forum (JEEMA)
- v National Resistance Movement (NRM)
- vi Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC)

## 6.2 Other Parties

### 6.2.1. New Membership

- i All registered political parties who have won representation in a general election at the parliamentary level shall be entitled to membership of the IPOD.
- ii The parties to this Memorandum of Understanding will jointly decide the possible representation and status of any other political parties in IPOD and the basis for this representation.

### 6.3 Cessation of Membership

- i Where a party loses its legal status as a registered political party
- ii Where a party, in writing to the IPOD Council, resigns from the IPOD

## 7 Conflict Resolution

- i The parties will explore amicable ways of resolving any conflicts which may arise

## 8 Decision-making

- i Decisions in all fora of IPOD will be made by consensus

## 9 Confidentiality

- i All discussions and decisions of the IPOD shall remain confidential. The flow of information to the press and public shall be via the sitting chair of the Council unless otherwise decided by the Council.

## 10 Dialogue Agenda:

The member parties shall between themselves determine what issues to put upon their agenda for discussion and prioritise these issues accordingly.

The provisional list is prioritised as follows:

- i Election-related issues
- ii Constitutional Issues
- iii Economic Issues
- iv Governance Issues

## 11 Strategies for achieving the Vision

- i Promoting interparty dialogue
- ii Facilitating a consultative process on elections, electoral processes, electoral reform and leveling the political playing field.
- iii Facilitating joint media coverage, debates and press conferences
- iv Facilitating regular interparty workshops and seminars
- v Facilitating regular interparty communication
- vi Building confidence and trust between the participating parties
- vii Facilitating internal capacity building for political parties
- viii Developing an acceptable code of conduct to regulate interparty activities
- ix Ensuring fair rules of political engagement
- x Advocating for state funding of political parties
- xi Facilitating a consultative process on issues of national importance and interest, such as national policy formulation and decision-making

## 12 The rules of engagement and the Code of Conduct

- i The rules of engagement and the Code of Conduct will be determined and detailed by the Council and approved by the Summit.

## 13 Amendments

- i This Memorandum of Understanding may be amended by consensus between the member parties.

## 14 Appendix

Political Party Representatives that Drafted the MoU

### Conservative Party

- Mr. Elis Grace SSebina
- Ms. Nassuuna Asiya, Kamulali
- Mr. Daniel Walyemera Masumba

### Democratic Party

- Mr. Matia Nsubuga
- Mr. Erias Lukwago
- Mr. Deogratias Njoki Hasubi

### Forum for Democratic Change

- Mr. Ruzindana Augustine
- Mr. Mukalazi Kibuka
- Mr. Patrick Ateenyi Baguma

### The Justice Forum (JEEMA)

- Mr. Omar Dawood Kalinge
- Mr. Siragi Balinda
- Mr. Muhammad Kateregga

### The National Resistance Movement

- Mr. Daudi Migereko
- Mr. Kamba Saleh
- Mr. Hippo Stephen Twebaze

### Uganda Peoples Congress

- Mr. Christopher Opoka-Okumu
- Mr. Yonasani Bankobeza Kanyomozi
- Mr. Patrick John Mwendha

### Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy Representatives

- Mr Jasper Veen
- Ms Karijn de Jong
- Mr Shaun Mackay

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) is a democracy assistance organisation of political parties in The Netherlands for political parties in young democracies. Founded in 2000 by seven parties (CDA, PvdA, VVD, Groenlinks, D66, Christen Unie en SGP), NIMD currently works with more than 150 political parties from 17 countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Eastern Europe.

NIMD supports joint initiatives of parties to improve the democratic system in their country. NIMD also supports the institutional development of political parties, helps develop party programmes and assists in efforts to enhance relations with civil society organizations and the media.