

Uganda Urged to End Budget Games and Embrace Fiscal Discipline for Growth.



CSBAG ED Julius Mukunda speaking at the 9th High Level Economic Growth Forum as Prof Nada Eissa and Prof. Vittorio Bassi observe at the Kampala Serena Hotel on 28th July 2025. Source (MoFPED)

“Fixing the budget isn’t just about numbers, it’s about discipline, transparency, and impact. Let’s stop twisting mid-air and start landing where we planned.” Mukunda emphasized at the economic growth forum.

Civil Society leaders are calling for a fundamental shift in Uganda’s financial management, warning that misaligned budget priorities and weak implementation continue to undermine national development. Speaking at the 9th economic growth forum organized by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Mr. Julius Mukunda, the Executive Director of CSBAG, emphasized the urgent need for transparency, discipline, and impact-driven budgeting.

Budgeting Missteps in the Spotlight

Mukunda commended government on several reforms to improve fiscal discipline but also used the same platform to call on government to intensify

reforms that improve budget execution while decisively ending the practice termed “budget games.”

Mukunda pointed to payroll reforms in Karamoja as a success story, where direct verification helped eliminate ghost workers and saved public funds. “Disciplined implementation is key,” he said, urging similar reforms across other regions and sectors.

He cited the troubling examples of budget misallocations, including a COVID-19 era decision where Parliament requested an additional UGX 10 billion for “service” while the Ministry of Health struggled to secure basic protective equipment.

“Fixing the budget isn’t just about numbers, it’s about discipline, transparency, and impact. Let’s stop twisting mid-air and start landing where we planned.” Mukunda emphasized the economic growth forum. He warned that the persistence of “budget games” where funds are shuffled or misused, continues to erode public confidence and productivity. “We cannot continue playing budget games. The government must prioritize clearing domestic arrears, rationalizing borrowing practices, and enhancing transparency to ensure that every shilling counts for citizens’ welfare.”

Commercial Diplomacy: Uganda’s Missed Opportunity

The CSBAG ED also called for a reimagining of Uganda’s diplomatic missions, urging embassies and consulates to take on active roles in trade promotion. “Commercial diplomacy isn’t a side hustle—it’s a game-changer. Our missions must wear trade boots, not just protocol shoes,” Mukunda said.

He argued that Uganda’s embassies and consulates should evolve beyond traditional protocol roles and become active agents of trade and investment signaling a shift toward economic empowerment through global partnerships.

Mukunda stressed that unlocking demand is the key to empowering small and medium enterprises (SMEs). “Access to markets is everything. Once we unlock demand, financing becomes easier. SMEs will chase their own loans if they know buyers are waiting.” He cited examples like Uganda’s dairy exports to Algeria as proof that targeted commercial breakthroughs can ripple across entire sectors.

A Call for Accountability and Results

Despite progress in some areas, Mukunda challenged policymakers to reflect on the effectiveness of current resources. As Uganda prepares its next budget cycle, CSBAG urged government institutions to move beyond rhetoric and embrace a results-oriented approach. The message is clear: fiscal discipline isn’t optional—it’s the foundation for sustainable growth.

Julius Mukunda at the forum asked the government to realign budget execution with Uganda’s long-term economic goals by channeling resources toward sectors that drive productivity. They highlighted Agro-industrialization, Tourism, Minerals, Oil and Gas, Science, and Technology (ATMS) as critical growth engines that must be adequately funded. According to CSBAG, investing in these sectors should go hand in hand with establishing sound monitoring and accountability mechanisms that include civil society, the Office of the Auditor General, Parliament, and development partners. Such a multi-stakeholder oversight framework, they argued, is essential to reduce leakages, promote transparency, and improve service delivery.

Mukunda also urged the government to pursue lowering the cost of credit; he noted that, would create a healthier environment for private-sector-led growth and foster job creation. These proposals align with ongoing government reforms such as the **National Public Investment Management Policy (NPIM)**, which aims to strengthen the management of public investments. CSOs emphasized that these reforms must be complemented by enhanced public participation throughout the budget cycle. Civil Society underscored that stronger institutional frameworks and clear accountability pathways are non-negotiable if Uganda is to realize its ambitious Tenfold Growth Vision and improve the welfare of its people.

Academic Professors **Nada Eissa** and **Vittorio Bassi** shared analyses on productivity gaps, private sector development, and the importance of evidence-driven reforms. Their contributions emphasized that improving execution strategies is not merely a political imperative but also an economic necessity that requires research-backed policies and smarter public investments.

The forum provided a space where government, academia, and civil society converged to rethink Uganda’s growth strategy. Both experts and CSOs agreed that while Uganda has ambitious plans on paper, success will depend on closing the execution gap, aligning budgets with productivity, and eliminating practices that drain public resources.

In conclusion, with fiscal discipline, stronger governance, and a sharper focus on strategic priorities, Uganda can build a resilient economy that not only attracts investment but also delivers broad-based prosperity and sustainable development.