



President Yoweri Museveni greets Eng. Dr. Christopher Ebal (right), the chairman of the board of directors of the National Water and Sewerage Corporation, as German Ambassador Dr. Peter Blomeyer (second right), Ambassador of France in Uganda Stephanie Rivoal (third right) and Head of European Delegation to Uganda Kristian Schmidt (fourth right) look on. This was during the commissioning of the refurbished Ggaba water plant in January. Photo by Roderick Ahimbazwe

Tracing Uganda's relations with EU

By John Semakula

The Government has hailed the European Union (EU) for the cordial relationship that has existed between the two parties for the last 42 years.

Government spokesperson Ofwono Opondo told *The New Vision* that as a result of the cordial relationship, the EU has always supported Uganda.

"Uganda and the EU have enjoyed a long standing relationship since 1975. The country's relationship with the EU has been that of 'a friend in need, is a friend indeed.' The relationship between EU and Uganda is excellent. The EU supports Uganda's political process as evidenced in the 2016 general elections," he said.

Opondo added that the civil society and ministries of finance and judiciary benefit directly from EU's support.

"They also support our economic reforms by encouraging their citizens to come and invest in Uganda," Opondo said.

There are signs that the ties between Uganda and EU are as strong as a rock that not even a

History of EU-Uganda relationship

Uganda's relationship with EU dates back to 1975 when the two parties entered into a solid and vibrant partnership.

According to the EU ambassador to Uganda, Kristian Schmidt, the partnership was underpinned by the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (ACP-EU Cotonou Partnership).

"We are natural partners. In today's world, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for one country alone to deal with all the global challenges in a successful way," he said.

"Therefore, we are ready to co-operate with Uganda and the East African Community to

the deepening of our relations," Schmidt added.

He asked Ugandans to always refer to the EU website to inform themselves about their activities. "It offers many links to other activities and presence of the EU in the world," Schmidt said.

In Uganda, the ambassador and his delegation assume the local Presidency of the EU in Uganda. Schmidt noted that EU's work in Uganda is closely co-ordinated with the member states, particularly those with an Embassy or office in Uganda.

"It means that we are tasked with speaking on behalf of the EU in Uganda, reflecting common EU positions and spearheading EU values on human rights, governance and democracy," he said.

The New Vision has learnt that the EU delegation also plays a supportive role as regards diplomatic and consular protection of the Union's citizens in Uganda. Schmidt arrived in Uganda in November 2013 as the country prepared for the 2016 elections. The EU had an Election Observation Mission and made several recommendations.

The EU ambassador to Uganda, Kristian Schmidt

storm can break. Opondo said EU also supports Uganda's engagement in Somalia.

"The recent visit of the British foreign secretary, Boris Johnson, to Uganda to discuss Somalia issues

speaks volumes of the relations between the two parties," he added. Judiciary spokesperson Solomon Muyita confirmed that EU has been channelling resources to the Justice, Law and Order Sector to promote

good governance. Meanwhile, Cissy Kagaba, the executive director of the Anti-Corruption Coalition Uganda, commended EU for funding a lot of good governance activities in the

country.

"EU has done quite a lot. The EU ambassador has been very vocal on issues of good governance and I am particularly happy that he speaks out," she said.

However, Kagaba urged EU to re-examine its funding to the Government over the quality of governance in the country.

"We keep seeing the same bad stories where the Government is undermining its governance infrastructures," she said. "Much more needs to be done by EU because our performance in good governance is still very low."

But the deputy executive director of the Media Centre, Shaban Bantariza, noted that good governance should not only be looked at in terms of political contestations.

"When EU gives us money and we invest it in building infrastructure, like roads, we are promoting good governance. The problem is that EU's perspective of good governance is partisan and narrow in perspective," he said.

Bantariza noted that there were very few countries in the world which are like Uganda where there is an anti-corruption court that prosecutes people who misuse public funds.

"We also have a Whistle Blowers Act and the Anti-Corruption Act, which may not be anywhere in Europe," Bantariza said.