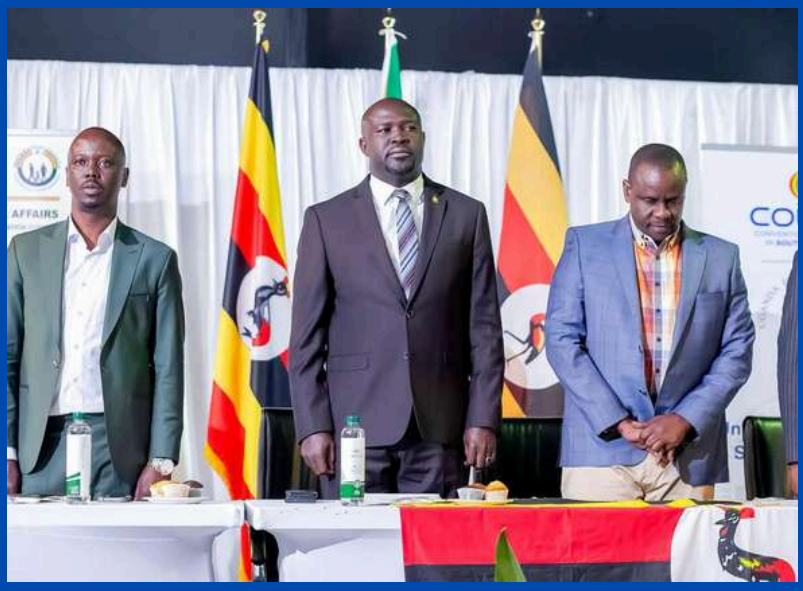
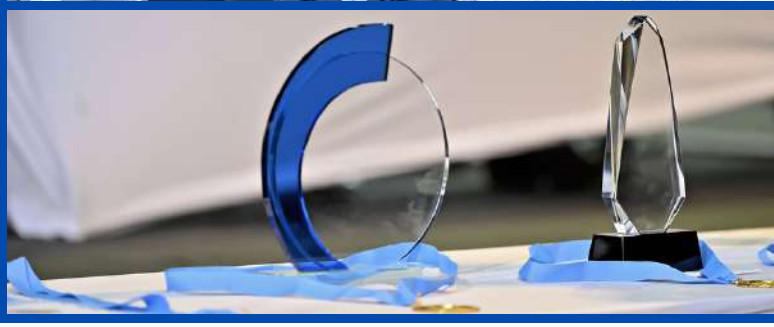
3RD COUSA CONVENTION
REPORT

2nd –3rd August 2025

Birchwood Hotel & OR Tambo Convention Centre
Boksburg, Johannesburg







CONFEDERATION OF UGANDANS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA
UNITY FOR ALL
COUSA

COUSA
CONVENTION of UGANDANS
IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

UGANDA HIGH COMMISSION
PRETORIA

THEME:

Building and Empowering Our Communities for a Better Future.

Prepared by: Bbira Omaar

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1. ABOUT COUSA

The Confederation of Ugandans in Southern Africa (COUSA), established in 2018, is a non-partisan, nonprofit umbrella organization representing over one million Ugandans across Botswana, Eswatini, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, and South Africa. COUSA plays a pivotal role in fostering trade, investment, tourism, and financial services, ensuring that the Ugandan diaspora contributes meaningfully to national development. The Ugandan diaspora in Southern Africa contributes over USD 1.4 billion in annual remittances, highlighting its economic significance. COUSA serves as a strategic bridge between the diaspora and key stakeholders in Uganda and host nations, promoting business partnerships, policy advocacy, and cultural exchange.

2. THE 3rd CONVENTION OF UGANDANS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA (COUSA)

The 3rd COUSA Convention was held on August 2–3, 2025, at the Birchwood Hotel and O.R. Tambo Conference Centre in Johannesburg under the theme “Building and Empowering Our Communities for a Better Future.” The event brought together approximately 1500 Ugandans from across Southern Africa, with participation free of charge to ensure inclusivity.

The convention was officially opened by Hon. Balaam Barugahara, Minister of State for Gender, Labour and Social Development, who represented H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of Uganda, as Guest of Honour. In his keynote address, he highlighted unity, patriotism, and economic empowerment as the pillars of meaningful diaspora engagement.

This year’s gathering placed special emphasis on service delivery, with officials from NIRA and the Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control facilitating ID and passport registration and renewals, while Equity Bank opened diaspora accounts and the NSSF sensitized participants on social security concerns. Federal Foods showcased Ugandan fresh products for international markets, and Jericho Civil Engineering promoted investment opportunities in infrastructure development.

Beyond service delivery, the convention featured cultural showcases, business networking, and the COUSA Awards, which honoured outstanding Ugandans in the diaspora. The event strengthened Uganda–diaspora ties, promoted investment, and reinforced national identity and pride.

3. CONVENTION OBJECTIVES

1. To explore avenues for Ugandan communities to maximize their economic potential, including investment opportunities, entrepreneurial initiatives, and partnerships with businesses in Uganda and host countries.
2. To Foster social cohesion and empowerment among Ugandans in Southern Africa, addressing shared challenges and enhancing quality of life.
3. To engage with policymakers to streamline processes that benefit the Ugandan Diaspora, such as land ownership, investment access, and cross-border collaborations.

4. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The 3rd COUSA Convention was designed to create lasting value for both Uganda and its diaspora communities. The following outcomes were anticipated:

1. Increased engagement between Ugandan diaspora members and stakeholders in Uganda and host countries.
2. Improved financial literacy and expanded access to investment opportunities.
3. Strengthened partnerships in business, education, and cultural exchange.
4. Development of policy frameworks that address diaspora concerns and contribute to Uganda's socio-economic growth.

5. Convention Program/Agenda

Master of Ceremonies: Dr. Martha Ouma & Mr. Omar Bbira

Time	Activity	Responsible person/Agency
DAY 1: 2nd AUGUST 2025 – ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT, COMMUNITY BUILDING AND COUSA EXCELLENCE AWARDS.		
08:00 – 09:30	**Registration & Networking**	
	Arrival of delegates	
	Exhibition booths (Ugandan businesses, NIRA,NSS, diaspora services)	
	Setting Ground Rules.	
09:30 – 11:00	**Official Opening Ceremony**	
	Cultural Performance: Ugandan traditional dance/music	**Opening Entertainment**
	Opening Welcome	Master of Ceremonies
	Welcome Remarks	COUSA President
	Welcome Remarks	COUSA Chairman
	Welcome Remarks	Uganda High Commissioner
	Theme and Convention objective Interpretation.	Board/Executive.
	COUSA Excellence Awards briefing, voting process	Awards Chairperson
	Cultural Performance: Ugandan traditional dance/music	**Closing Entertainment**
11:00 – 11:15	**Tea/Coffee Break & Networking**	
11:00 – 12:00	**Topic 1: Unlocking Economic Opportunities for the Ugandan Diaspora.**	
	Speaker: Senior Presidential Advisor on Diaspora Affairs	**Muhamed Bagonza**
	Speaker: Representative from Equity Bank Uganda	**Ivan Collins Byamukama Manager Cross Border Payments**
	Speaker: National Social Security Fund Representative.	**Mrs. Rebekah Zadok Business Development Manager**
	Topics: ➢ Access to capital & business financing.	
	➢ Access to financial products while in the diaspora	
12:00 – 13:30	**Lunch & Cultural Showcase.**	
13:30 – 14:30	**Topic 2: Strengthening Ugandan Communities in Southern Africa**	
	Speaker: Community Leader, DAWR Representative	**Dr. Julienne Kanku Mbuyi DAWR Deputy Chairperson**

	Speaker: Uganda Diaspora Department	**Ambassador Johnny Muhindo** **Head of Diaspora Department**
	Speaker: Medical Doctor, Mental Health Practitioner	**Dr. Rita Sonko** **Founder & Director Toli Wekka**
	Topics: ➢ Role of cultural associations in community building in Diaspora.	
	➢ Mental health & well-being, handling substance abuse.	
14:30 – 16:00		
14:30 – 16:00	**Topic 3: Inaugural Ugandan Diaspora Awards**	
	Speaker: COUSA Awards Leadership	**Dr. Rebecca Alowo**
	Speaker: NSSF, Equity, ABSA	**Sponsors to announce and handover awards to winners and runners up.**
	Speaker: COUSA Awards Leadership	**Mrs. Winnifred Kabiri** **Ms. Stella Ogema**
	Topics: ➢ Introduction of COUSA awards and the COUSA awards team	**Mr. Simon Wamono** **Dr Rebecca Alowo**
	➢ The importance of profiling, highlighting visibility and emphasising relevancy of Ugandans in South Africa.	**Dr Rebecca Alowo**
	➢ Presentation of awards or recognition of (runners up and finalists) ➢ Thank you note by event organisers and announcement for future events/next steps.	**Sponsors, Winnifred Kibera, Mr. Richard Opio, Mr. Simon Wamono, Stella Makokha Ogema** **Mr. Isma Luzige**
16:00 – 16:30	**Day 1 Wrap-Up & Announcements**	**Master of Ceremonies**
DAY 2: 3rd AUGUST 2025 – POLICY ADVOCACY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP & COUSA ROADMAP 2026		
08:30 – 09:00	**Morning Refreshments & Networking**	
09:00 – 9:15	**Welcome – Masters of Ceremony**	
09:15 – 09:30	**Opening Remarks - Uganda High Commissioner**	
09:30 – 11:00	**Topic 4: Policy Engagement & Diaspora Rights.**	
	Speaker: Diaspora affairs representatives.	**Muhamed Bagonza** **Senior Presidential Advisor**
	Speaker National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA).	**Mr. Edwin Tukamuhebwa** **NIRA Operations Manager**
	Speaker: Admitted Attorney of the High Court of South Africa	**Candice Mahlare** **Founder & Director Mahlare Attorneys Inc.**

	Topics: ➢ Land ownership & investment policies for Ugandans abroad	
	➢ Dual citizenship & passport issues.	
	➢ Advocacy strategies for diaspora-friendly policies.	
11:00	**Tea Break**	
11:00 – 12:00	**Topic 5: Entrepreneurship & Professional Development.**	
	Speaker: FUBSA Chairperson	**Dr. Allen Mutono**
	Speaker: Special Presidential Advisor on Trade	**Mr. Phillip Kakuru**
	Speaker: Successful Ugandan businessman focusing on construction and design	**Mr. Norman Nimusiima** **Director of Monnim Holdings**
	Topics: ➢ Promoting Trade between Uganda and RSA	
	➢ Success stories of Ugandan diaspora entrepreneurs.	
	➢ Mentorship programs for youth.	
12:00 – 13:30	**Lunch Break**	
13:30 – 15:00	**Open Forum: COUSA Action Plan – The Way Forward.**	
	• Facilitated by COUSA Leadership.	
	• **Discussion Points:** ➢ Summary of take home points.	
	➢ Action points and next steps.	
15:00 – 15:30	**Break & Final Exhibition Visits.**	
15:30 – 16:30	**Closing Ceremony**	
	Speaker: Government of Uganda Representative	Hon. Denis Hamson Obua Govt. Chief Whip
	Speaker: Member of Pan-African Parliament	Hon. Felix Okot-Ogong
	Summary of Key Resolutions – COUSA	COUSA Patron
	• Closing Remarks & Vote of Thanks.	Cultural Closing Performance
17:00	**Closing Prayer & Convention Ends**	

Additional Activities:

- **Business Expo:** Ugandan/South African companies showcasing opportunities.
- **Networking Lounge:** Matchmaking for entrepreneurs, professionals, and investors.
- **Sponsor Exhibitions:** Convention Sponsors will exhibit their products & services

6. KEY HIGHLIGHTS

6.1 Speakers



*Hon. Balam Barugahara **Minister of State for Youth and Children Affairs.***

Hon. Balaam was the Guest of Honor at the 3rd COUSA Convention, representing H.E. President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni. Delivering the President's speech, he commended COUSA for promoting unity and Pan-Africanism, while warning against the dangers of disunity and identity politics. The message highlighted Uganda's achievements under the NRM government in infrastructure, industrial growth, education, health, and security, with the economy now valued at over USD 65 billion. He urged the diaspora to remain patriotic, shun sectarianism, and promote Uganda's rich tourism potential across Southern Africa.

The President also reassured Ugandans abroad of ongoing government initiatives to ease access to services such as identity registration and property protection. Finally, he called upon them to seize investment opportunities in oil and gas, housing, real estate, and cooperative schemes, while embracing socio-economic transformation, African heritage, and responsible living.



H.E. Paul Amoru – COUSA Patron and Uganda's High Commissioner to South Africa / COUSA Patron

Ambassador Paul Amoru, Uganda's High Commissioner to South Africa, delivered the opening address at the 3rd COUSA Convention under the theme "Building and Empowering Our Communities for a Better Future." He celebrated the growth of COUSA since its inaugural convention in 2023 and welcomed the launch of the first-ever COUSA Excellence Awards to honor outstanding Ugandans in Southern Africa. The Ambassador highlighted the strong bilateral relations between Uganda and Southern African nations, citing recent high-level visits and cooperation agreements.

He emphasized the vital economic role of the diaspora, whose remittances exceeded USD 1.4 billion in 2023/24, alongside contributions in investment, knowledge transfer, and cultural promotion. Major developments announced included the deployment of mobile e-passport and national ID machines, the introduction of the NSSF Go Mobile App, and 200 PhD scholarships from the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

He urged Ugandans abroad to embrace innovation, with special reference to Uganda's participation in the upcoming Trans-African E-mobility Road Show. The Ambassador expressed gratitude to the Government of Uganda, South African authorities, COUSA leadership, and sponsors such as NSSF, Equity Bank, and UDB for their support. He concluded by saluting the resilience and patriotism of Ugandans in the diaspora, urging them to remain united, innovative, and committed to building stronger communities for a prosperous future.



Mr. Mohammed Bagonza, Senior Presidential Advisor on Diaspora Affairs & Head of the State House Diaspora Unit

Mr. Bagonza reaffirmed the government's commitment to strengthening engagement with Ugandans abroad during the 3rd COUSA Convention in Johannesburg. He highlighted that the Diaspora Unit, established by H.E. President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni in 2023, has grown into a central hub for coordination, empowerment, and service delivery for Ugandans abroad. He outlined key reforms including the forthcoming National Diaspora Policy, the Diaspora Data Management System, the Diaspora Mobile App, and the soon-to-be-launched Diaspora Call Centre. He also flagged off the rollout of National ID services in partnership with NIRA to better serve the diaspora community.

Emphasizing the vital role of Ugandans abroad, he noted that remittances had grown from USD 1.4 billion in 2023/24 to USD 1.5 billion in 2024/25, making them Uganda's largest source of foreign exchange. At the same time, he acknowledged challenges such as high remittance costs and outlined government efforts to reduce these through partnerships with the Bank of Uganda, Ministry of Finance, and international partners. Beyond remittances, he underscored the diaspora's contributions in skills, innovation, cultural diplomacy, and entrepreneurship, with skills mapping exercises already underway in Canada, the UK, and soon the USA. He praised COUSA's leadership for creating a vibrant platform of unity and collaboration, while celebrating the diaspora's role as a powerful driver of socio-economic transformation. Mr. Bagonza concluded with a call for continued connection, engagement, and empowerment of Ugandans worldwide, turning distance into strength and opportunity.



Mr. Moses Ssentongo Kibombo – COUSA President

President Kibombo praised the resilience and unity of the Ugandan community in Southern Africa through community and association leaders. He emphasized the importance of promoting Uganda's image and tourism, noting that the diaspora plays a key role as ambassadors of the country abroad. He also urged the Government of Uganda to be more responsive to diaspora concerns and to strengthen service delivery for Ugandans living outside the country. He further encouraged the community to harness their skills, networks, and resources to support socio-economic transformation both in Uganda and in their host nations.



Dr. Daniel Echun,
Chairman, COUSA Board of Trustees.

Dr. Echun highlighted the importance of unity and collaboration among Ugandans in Southern Africa. He underscored the role of the diaspora in supporting development both at home and abroad, stressing that collective action is key to achieving lasting impact. He further encouraged Ugandans to strengthen networks, uplift one another, and remain committed to building a stronger, more connected community.

6.2 Other Keynote Speakers



Hon. Denis Hamson Obua, Government Chief Whip in Parliament, MP Ajuri County



Hon. Felix Okot Ogong, MP Dokolo South County / Pan African Parliament



Mr. Smith T. Matsiko, Commissioner for Research, Monitoring & Evaluation at the Ministry of Lands.

Representing the Permanent Secretary, Mr. Matsiko urged Ugandans abroad to seize opportunities in Uganda's land and housing sector. He highlighted the Land Information System and UGNLS App as key tools for secure, transparent, and convenient land transactions.



Hajjat Hadijah Namyalo
Senior Presidential Advisor &
Head - Office of the National Chairman (ONC),
National Resistance Movement (NRM).

She emphasized the importance of patriotism, economic self-reliance, and active participation in Uganda's socio-economic transformation.

She also highlighted the vital role of the diaspora in promoting Uganda's global image and supporting national development. Her message was well received, with participants commending her for prioritizing diaspora engagement



Ms. Rebekah Zadok, the Partnerships & Business Development Manager at the National Social Security Fund (NSSF)

We extend our deepest appreciation to the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), the main sponsor of the 3rd COUSA Convention, whose support made this gathering possible. In her keynote address, Ms. Zadok, unpacked the NSSF's new products and services tailored for Ugandans in the diaspora. She stressed how these innovations, including the NSSF GoMobile App, are designed to give members abroad easier access, greater convenience, and long-term financial security.



Dr. Rita Ssonko, founder, Toli Wekka foundation



Mr. Andrew Apedel – Senior Registration Officer (NIRA)



Ambassador Johnny M. Muhindo
Head of Diaspora Affairs Min of Foreign Affairs



Ms. Juliet K. Mwesiga – The Immigration Attache at the Uganda High commission, Pretoria



Ivan Collins Byamukama
Head of Diaspora Banking, Equity Bank, Uganda



Mr. Buyondo–Director, Jericho Civil Engineers & Construction



Mr. Phillip Kakuru
Senior Presidential Advisor on Trade



Mr. Nimusiima Norman (Entrepreneur)
Director MONNIM Enterprises



Advocate Candice Mahlare, Founder of Mahlare Attorneys



Princess Dr. Julienne Kanku Mbuyi.
Deputy Chairperson, Diaspora African Women Renaissance



7. MASTERS OF CEREMONIES FOR THE TWO DAYS

Mr. Bbira Omaar and Dr. Martha Ouma





8. PARTNERS & SPONSORS

Sponsors and partners included

1. National social Security fund (NSSF)
2. Jericho Civil Engineering
3. Equity Bank
4. Federal Foods
5. The Uganda High Commission, Pretoria
6. Uganda Airlines
7. KK Autoparts
8. SONRAY Procurement & Supply
9. And support from Hajjat Hadijah Namyalo (ONC)

9. ATTENDANCE

A total of about 1,500 Ugandans attended the 3rd COUSA Convention from across Southern Africa. Day One attracted approximately 900 participants, while Day Two drew around 600, with no fees charged to ensure inclusivity regardless of financial capacity.







10. SPECIAL ACTIVITIES AND SERVICE DELIVERY

(1) The National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) conducted national ID registrations and renewals during the convention. Many Ugandans in the diaspora took the opportunity to update their details and secure new IDs. NIRA officials guided participants through the process, ensuring smooth and efficient service delivery. This exercise strengthened the link between Ugandans abroad and essential national services.





(2) Passport registration and renewals by DCIC,

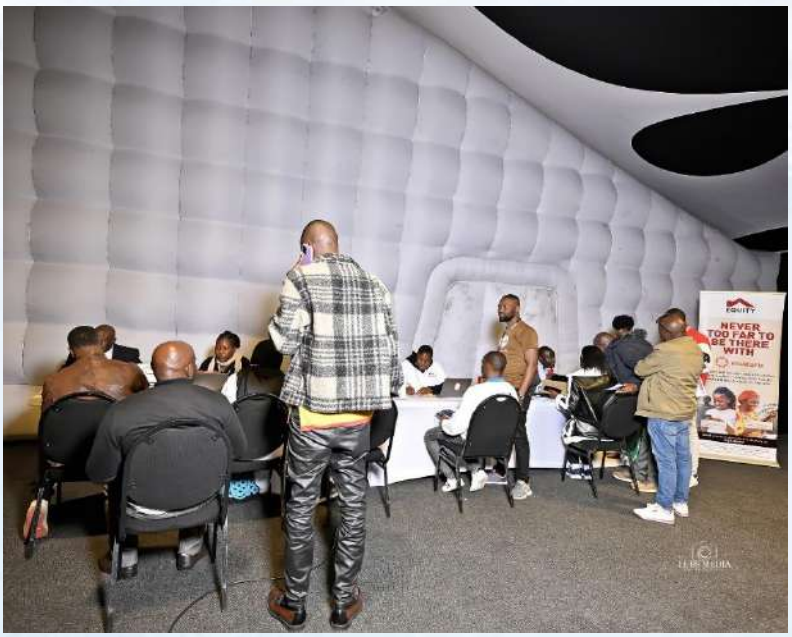


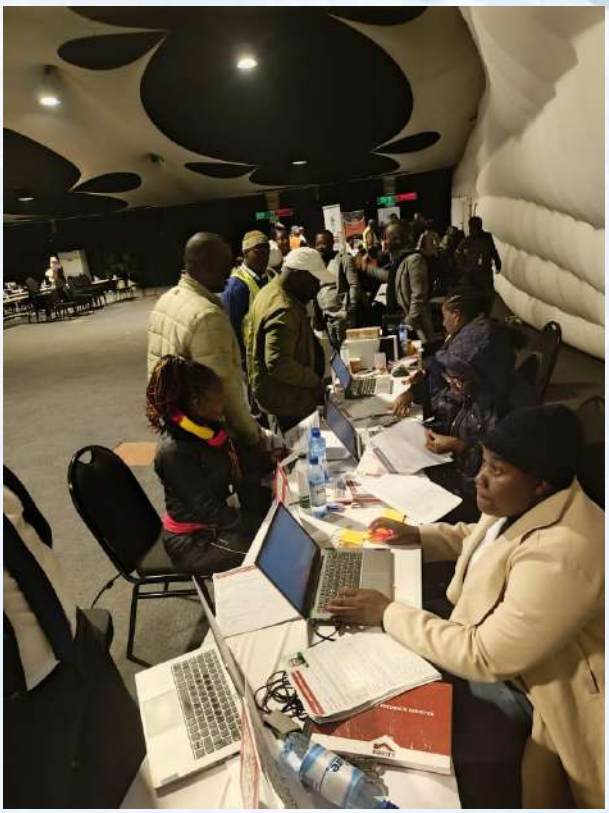




The Uganda Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control facilitated passport registrations for renewals and replacements, while offering consultations and guidance to community members. The exercise was graced by the Head of Diaspora Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador

(3) Equity Bank actively participated in the COUSA Convention, offering financial services tailored for Ugandans in the diaspora. During the event, the bank successfully opened 90 new accounts, issued 76 Visa cards, and reactivated 15 dormant accounts. Their presence provided an opportunity for community members to access convenient banking solutions and strengthen financial ties back home. The initiative was well-received, with many attendees appreciating the ease of registration and on-the-spot support. This partnership added great value to the convention by promoting financial inclusion among Ugandans living in Southern Africa.









(4) During the convention, NSSF officials actively engaged with delegates, offering guidance on savings and account management. Several Ugandans abroad took the opportunity to register their accounts and learn more about the Fund's diaspora services. This interaction highlighted NSSF's hands-on approach in ensuring that members in the diaspora can access clear, reliable, and personalized support for their financial future.





(5) Federal Foods, under the leadership of its Director Mr. Mukiibi, showcased the promotion of Ugandan fresh products for diaspora markets at the 3rd COUSA Convention. The initiative highlighted opportunities to connect Ugandan farmers with Southern African consumers, ensuring access to authentic products from home. This effort was welcomed as a step toward strengthening trade links and supporting Uganda's agricultural sector through the diaspora community.







(6) Showcasing Uganda's agriproducts from a Ugandan Community in Pretoria project





Hajjat Hadija Namyalo's visit to the project site.







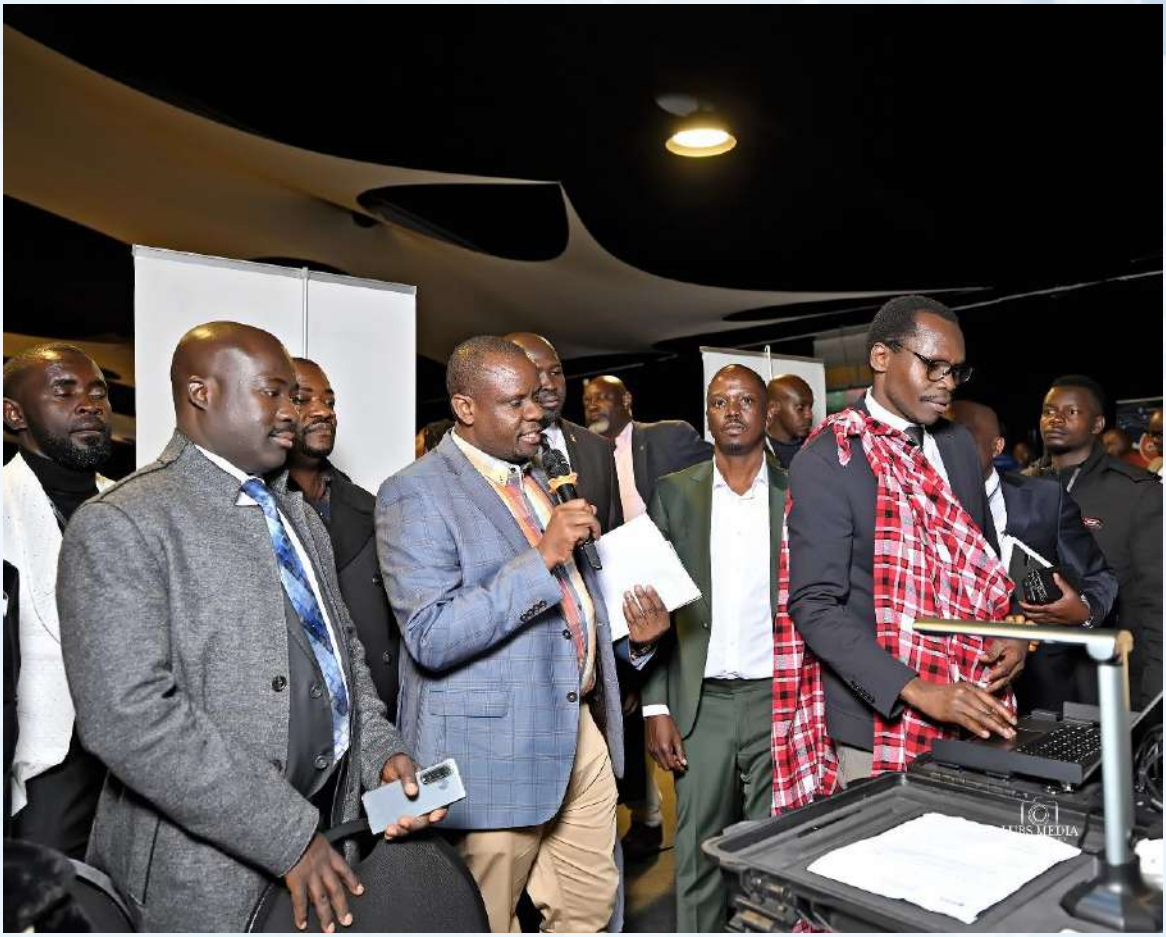





7 weeks af
ter TP

(7) Launching mobile Passport and ID registration machines by Hon. Balam Barugahara

Hon. Balam officially launched mobile bio-data capturing machines at the COUSA Convention. With this innovation, it is now possible to offer passport and national ID registrations, renewals, and replacements beyond the embassy offices in Pretoria. The milestone makes access to essential documentation easier for Ugandans in the diaspora and demonstrates the government's commitment to serving its people abroad.





(8) Uganda Airlines added excitement to the 3rd COUSA Convention in Johannesburg by offering free return tickets to lucky winners through a special draw. Three participants walked away with return tickets, symbolizing the airline's commitment to connecting the diaspora with home. The gesture was warmly received as a contribution to strengthening ties between Ugandans in Southern Africa and their motherland. Uganda Airlines reaffirmed its role as a proud national carrier dedicated to serving the Ugandan community abroad.





(9) Hajjat Hadijah Namyalo, Senior Presidential Advisor on Political Affairs, donated USD 10,000 to COUSA during the 3rd Convention in Johannesburg. The contribution, received by COUSA Treasurer General Mr. Shafik Mukwaya, was made in support of unity and development among Ugandans in Southern Africa, and was warmly welcomed as a strong gesture of solidarity with the diaspora community.



11. ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUTCOMES

1. At the convention, identity and travel services such as national ID registrations, renewals, and passport issuance were delivered directly to the diaspora. This made government services more accessible and cost-effective, while the commitment to mobile bio-data capture machines showed progress in removing barriers to service delivery.

2. Financial inclusion was strengthened as new diaspora bank accounts were opened, Visa cards issued, and dormant accounts reactivated. These initiatives expanded cross-border banking access and improved confidence in tailored diaspora financial products.

3. The National Social Security Fund (NSSF) sensitised and registered diaspora members, giving them practical pathways to secure retirement savings. This encouraged Ugandans abroad to consider long-term financial stability alongside their current income.

4. Business showcases from sectors such as agribusiness, engineering, and trade created viable links between the diaspora and Ugandan enterprises. These interactions generated investment leads and positioned the diaspora as active contributors to Uganda's economic growth.

5. Cultural performances and exhibitions promoted Ugandan heritage while also showcasing tourism opportunities and agricultural products. This not only boosted the country's visibility but also strengthened the diaspora's sense of identity and connection to home.

6. The presence of senior government officials, including a representative of the President, reassured the diaspora of ongoing political support. Commitments such as the introduction of mobile registration services and bursary opportunities reinforced trust and strengthened ties between Uganda and its diaspora.

7. Finally, the recognition of outstanding diaspora members through the COUSA Awards celebrated community contributions. This built morale, encouraged cohesion, and motivated further involvement in national development and cultural promotion.

12. THE HIGH ACHIVERS' AWARDS CEREMONY

The COUSA High Achievers Awards 2025 drew hundreds of nominations from Ugandans across Southern Africa, underscoring the community's talent and commitment to excellence. Out of these, 18 outstanding nominees were selected, with six winners announced. The Awards showcase individuals whose achievements in diaspora service, business, innovation, education and leadership uplift and unite Ugandans abroad. This recognition strengthens the message that Ugandans in the diaspora are powerful agents of change, contributing to both their host countries and Uganda.






















13. TEAMS AND COMMITTEES

A) Cousa Executive Comiittee





B) COUSA BOARD OF TRUSTEES





C) COUSA ACHIEVERS' AWARDS COMMITTEE









D) FORUM FOR UGANDA BUSINESS ASSOCIATION





E) COUSA COUNCIL OF CHAIRPERSONS & COMMUNITY LEADERS





Several individuals were given the opportunity to share their concerns and perspectives on fostering unity and promoting the welfare of Ugandans in the diaspora, as well as contributing to Uganda's development.
















ONFEDERATION OF UGANDANS
IN SOUTHERN AFRICA




CONFEDERATION OF UGANDANS
IN SOUTHERN AFRICA


EQUITY
CON


EQUITY
BANK LIKE
YOU ARE HOM
Diaspora Savings Accou
REQUIREMENTS:
Proof of residence
Colored passport
BIRCHWOOD


EQUITY
CONFED
IN
BIRCHWOOD


EQUITY
HOME


BIRCHWOOD


EQUITY


EDERATION OF UGAN
IN SOUTHERN AFRICA


NDANS
CA
COUSA
25


CONFEDERATION OF UGANDANS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA
COUSA


BIRCHWOOD







14. MEALS MOMENT






























15. OTHER KEY MOMENTS








LIONS
Auto Parts
EQUITY
FEDERAL FOODS LTD
NSSF


NTION OF UGANDANS IN
SOUTHERN AFRICA
NSSF
EQUITY


SOUTHERN AFRICA
EQUITY
Printing
FEDERAL FOODS LTD
LIONS
Auto Parts
AUTO PARTS
NSSF


SOUTHERN AFRICA
Printing
NSSF
LIONS
Auto Parts
AUTO PARTS

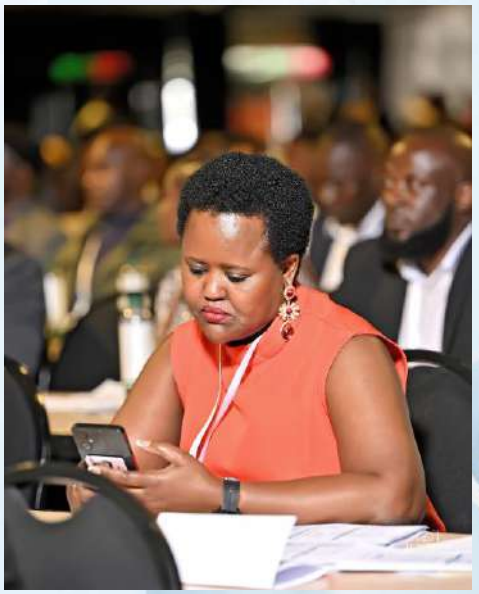

SOUTHERN AFRIC
Printing
NSSF
LIONS
Auto Parts
AUTO PARTS


CONVENTION OF UGANDANS IN
SOUTHERN AFRICA
Printing
NSSF
LIONS
Auto Parts
Uganda Airlines
LUBS MEDIA








VIP Guest







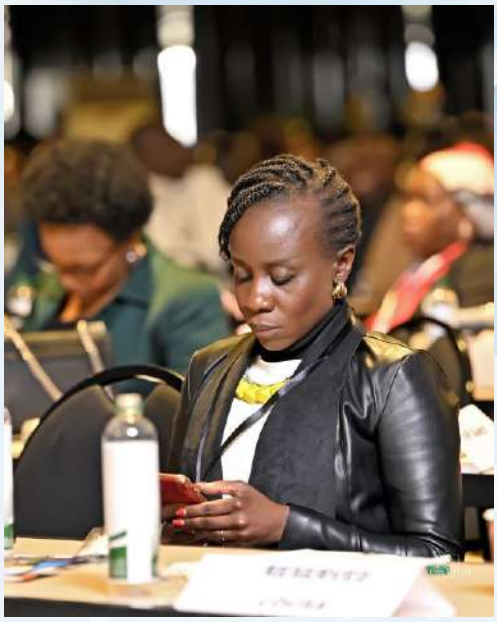



VIP Guest




UGANDA






MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS
e-Passport Procedures
(Diaspora)








EASTWINE
VIBES
RAISED IN VINEYARDS KISSED BY
OCEAN BREEZE. THIS IS EAST WINE.


COUSA


BANK LIKE
YOU ARE HOME

16. STRATEGIC OBSERVATIONS

The convention revealed strong enthusiasm among the diaspora to invest in Uganda, with particular interest in agribusiness, ICT, tourism, and real estate. Delegates welcomed the on-site provision of key government services such as IDs, passports, NSSF registration, and bank account facilitation, which significantly boosted confidence and trust. To sustain this momentum, continuous and stable government support will be critical in building long-term engagement and partnerships with the diaspora.

17. CHALLENGES

Despite the convention's success, several challenges were noted:

1. COUSA continues to depend heavily on ad-hoc sponsorships, which limits financial stability and makes long-term planning difficult. This uncertainty restricts the scale and sustainability of its activities.

2. The demand for national IDs, passports, and NSSF services was very high, but the capacity of officials on-site was not sufficient to serve everyone. Many people left without accessing the services they needed.

3. A significant number of participants could not open bank accounts or register with NSSF because they did not yet have national IDs, which are a mandatory requirement. This left some diaspora members excluded from critical financial services.

4. The business showcases provided valuable exposure, but engagement with South African investors and entrepreneurs was limited. This reduced the potential for stronger cross-border networking and partnerships.

5. Uganda's trade and investment potential was presented, but the overall promotion lacked visibility and consistent branding. The message did not reach as wide an audience as intended.

6. The absence of mainstream media from both Uganda and South Africa reduced coverage of the convention and limited COUSA's visibility. As a result, the impact of the event was not fully captured or shared.

7. Delegates expressed the need for more reliable and consistent communication on government policies, opportunities, and programs. The lack of structured information channels made it difficult to stay connected and updated.

8. Most of the attendees at the 3rd COUSA Convention came from South Africa, while Ugandan communities in other Southern African countries such as Botswana, Eswatini, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Lesotho were underrepresented. This imbalance highlighted gaps in inclusivity and regional participation.

18. RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on the outcomes and lessons from the 3rd Convention, the following actions are recommended:

1. Develop a sustainable financial model that combines membership contributions, sponsorships, and partnerships. This will provide predictable resources to support COUSA's conventions and long-term activities.

2. Expand the number of government departments represented at conventions, including land registry, trade, and education. At the same time, strengthen mobile outreach services to meet the high demand for IDs, passports, and NSSF registrations.

3. Strengthen collaboration between NIRA, financial institutions, and COUSA to ensure that diaspora members can more easily access national IDs. This will remove barriers that prevent them from opening bank accounts and registering for NSSF.

4. Actively engage South African investors and entrepreneurs in future conventions. Their involvement will expand cross-border business opportunities that benefit both Ugandans and host communities.

5. Establish stronger mechanisms for promoting Uganda's image as a destination for trade, tourism, and investment. Exhibitions, targeted campaigns, and business forums should be used more effectively to project opportunities.

6. Prioritize broader media partnerships and advertising campaigns ahead of future conventions. Engaging mainstream media from Uganda and South Africa will improve coverage and raise the profile of COUSA's activities.

7. Create reliable more communication platforms such as digital newsletters, websites, and community radio. These will ensure that diaspora communities receive regular updates on opportunities, policies and government programs.

8. Stronger support should be given to country-level Ugandan associations across Southern Africa to mobilize and engage their members. This will help increase attendance from all COUSA countries and ensure wider representation at future conventions.

19. CONCLUSION

The 3rd COUSA Convention was a landmark success, bringing together over 1,500 Ugandans from across Southern Africa in a spirit of unity and purpose. It not only reinforced national pride but also unlocked pathways for economic collaboration, investment opportunities, and cultural exchange. By bridging the gap between Ugandans abroad and their homeland, the convention set a strong foundation for deeper partnerships that will drive Uganda's development agenda forward. Looking ahead, the 4th COUSA Convention has been confirmed for 23–25 October 2026, promising an even greater platform to strengthen diaspora engagement and partnerships with Uganda. Guided by our motto, *Unity for All*, we move forward stronger together.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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BANKING DETAILS:

Bank: First National Bank (FNB)
Account Name: Confederation of Ugandans in Southern Africa
Account number: 62836482703
Account Type: Business Transactional Account
Branch: 252145
Swift Code: FIRNZAJJ