

Kampala chosen as WFP's emergency response hub

KAMPALA. The Government of Uganda and the World Food Programme (WFP) have signed an agreement that establishes Kampala as the home of the WFP Global Fleet Hub, an initiative designed to strengthen humanitarian logistics and accelerate emergency response across Africa.

Under this arrangement, Uganda will host and manage the Logistics Bureau, including a regional fleet dedicated to responding to crises in Eastern and Southern Africa.

As part of the agreement, the Ministry of Works and Transport has granted WFP distinctive UN/WFP-owned and managed license plates for the fleet. These plates are entirely neutral and are not linked to any country, a move intended to eliminate delays caused by border clearance procedures and to enable fast, unhindered cross-border humanitarian movement.

Speaking at the launch of the licence plates in Kampala yesterday, WFP Deputy Country Director Marcus Prior said the start of the Global Fleet Hub in Kampala, together with the introduction of the special UN/WFP license plates, was the result of close collaboration between WFP, the Government of Uganda, and the East African Community.

"The hub itself will be a strategic centre for rapid humanitarian response across Africa. It will house WFP-owned emergency response vehicles, and they will bear these distinctive United Nations WFP license plates, designed, issued, and managed by WFP," he said.

Mr Prior emphasised that the neutrality of the plates is key to strengthening humanitarian access.

"It's important to underline that the plates themselves are not linked to any specific country. They symbolise humanitarian neutrality and will enable seamless cross-border



Officials fix new number plates onto a WFP truck. PHOTO/COURTESY

operations. This innovation will transform how quickly we are able to respond to emergencies across the continent," he added.

Explaining why Uganda was chosen for this critical role, he pointed to the country's proven logistical capacity. "Uganda's selection reflects real, proven logistics excellence. In 2024, WFP here in Uganda delivered nearly 174,000 tonnes of food to 545 locations, reaching over two million people. We also transported another 10,000 tonnes of partner relief supplies and facilitated 33,000 metric tonnes of deliveries across five neighbouring countries," Mr Prior said.

He added that WFP's strong regional operations rely heavily on Uganda's infrastructure and efficiency.

"We've also deployed 61 mobile storage units regionally and maintained authorised economic operator status for fast-tracked customs clearance. And

UN IN UGANDA

Uganda already hosts the main regional office for the UN, the United Nations Regional Service Centre (RSCE) located in Entebbe, which provides administrative, logistics, and ICT services to UN missions across Africa. Other UN entities have specific offices in Uganda, such as the UNHCR Representation Office in Kampala and various UN offices in Kampala and other sub-offices across the country.

with 90 percent of our food sourced locally here in Uganda, and \$4.5m (Shs16b) injected into Uganda's commercial logistics sector, WFP in Uganda operates as the region's logistics back-

bone."

Mr Prior said Uganda's strategic location, progressive refugee policies, and robust transport systems make Kampala an ideal continental logistics hub.

He noted that the special plates will allow WFP vehicles to bypass the time-consuming deregistration and re-registration processes currently required at international borders.

"This will cut deployment times from weeks to days, sometimes even just hours, ensuring unhindered movement across Uganda and throughout the countries of Africa," he said.

Gen Edward Katumba Wamala, the minister of Works and Transport, in his remarks delivered by Mr Apollo Kashanku, the assistant commissioner in the ministry, said WFP, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, approached the government toward the end of 2024 seeking special number plates for its regional logistics fleet.

"The ministry received a request from the United Nations World Food Programme and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to design special registration plates for the regional logistics vehicles that will deliver relief aid across the Regional Logistics Bureau for Eastern and Southern Africa. This was very much in line with Uganda's objective of supporting humanitarian work," he said.

In response, the ministry constituted a multisectoral team to design the plates and establish a framework for their production, regulation, and implementation. The team included representatives from the Ministry of Works and Transport, WFP, the Uganda National Bureau of Standards, Uganda Revenue Authority, Joint Stock Company, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mr Kashanku expressed confidence that the initiative would meet the WFP goal of improving emergency logistics and said Uganda remains ready to support modifications if required.

Ambassador Charles Ssentongo, head of protocol services at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said Uganda immediately supported the proposal, recognising its potential economic and humanitarian benefits.

He said the logistics hub would bring opportunities for Ugandans, including jobs for drivers, mechanics, fuel suppliers, market vendors, and others involved in the supply chain.

"We saw an opportunity for the country and the region, not only in the facilitation of humanitarian assistance but also in the jobs and learning opportunities it would create," he said.

Mr Ssentongo said the necessary legal clearances were completed by the Office of the Solicitor General and the Ministry of Finance, paving the way for the official launch.

"This morning, we celebrate the launch of this number plate," he said.