

MOVE AIMED AT AVERTING POISONING OF MINDS OF THE PUBLIC, MAYHEM

By Charles Etukuri

The Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) has warned broadcasters against allowing losers in the recent elections to use radio and television platforms to dispute declared election results, saying offenders risk enforcement action for airing unverified claims.

“All broadcasters are hereby directed to refrain from airing content that disputes declared election results without verification. This includes prohibiting programmes that promote unofficial results or unsubstantiated claims. Strict editorial oversight is required to ensure that all election-related information is verified from official Electoral Commission (EC) sources.”

In a public notice yesterday, UCC warned that “it will take decisive enforcement action against any broadcaster violating these laws or guidelines. Media owners, editors and the general public are urged to use broadcast media responsibly and in a manner that promotes national unity and democratic integrity”. Explaining its decision, UCC said they had observed a concerning trend where unsuccessful candidates in parliamentary and local

GOVT **WARNS** BROADCASTERS OVER LOSERS OF ELECTIONS

Express election dissatisfaction in courts of law not media

government elections misuse radio and television platforms to dispute officially declared results through sensational and unverified claims.

The UCC reminded the public and broadcasters that the EC is the sole constitutional authority responsible for declaring election results in Uganda. “Those dissatisfied with election outcomes must seek redress through the courts of law by filing petitions with the legally set timelines,” UCC added.



PHOTO BY NANCY NANYONGA

Baryomunsi addressing journalists during a press conference at the Uganda Media Centre yesterday

“Broadcast media should not serve as alternative venues for litigating election disputes.

Broadcasting unverified results, parallel tallies or speculative allegations is

ICT and national guidance minister Chris Baryomunsi while addressing the media at the Uganda Media Centre yesterday, said in any election, there are winners and losers.

“When you go into any election you either win or lose. There are avenues provided for those who have grievances regarding the outcome or those not satisfied with the outcome of the polls or the process that led to the results. You are always free to challenge everything in courts of law which are open. UCC has noted a trend where those aggrieved are not necessarily interested in pursuing the court process but just want to put their case before the court of public opinion and engage in discussions bordering on inciting the public,” he said.

He revealed this was poisoning the minds of the public and could cause mayhem among the voters and yet the exercise of voting has ended.

“So, this is a word of caution to the moderators, editors and people who hold talk shows. We need decency in the media. You can debate but let us remain decent. If you are unhappy with the results, you can go to court and we trust they can handle any grievances you have,” Baryomunsi said.

REACTION

However, Joseph Beyanga the chief executive officer of the National Association of Broadcasters disagreed with UCC over their position.

“We don’t think this was necessary. We think the existing election guidelines can suffice and as far as this statement is concerned, we are still studying it to see if we need to respond to it formally,” Beyanga said.

unlawful and can lead to public panic, confusion and a loss of trust in democratic institutions. It may also incite unrest and harm Uganda’s democratic reputation,” the statement noted.