

SPEECH BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF KABALEGA FOUNDATION

ON THE OCCASION OF KABALEGA INDEPENDENCE WEEK (KIW) 2026

Theme: “Heritage, Agribusiness Transformation & Regional Enterprise”

Venue: Rukurato Grounds, Hoima City, Bunyoro-Kitara Sub-Region

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PROTOCOL

- Representatives of Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom;
- Honourable Government Leaders and Representatives of the Office of the President;
- Religious and Cultural Leaders;
- Leaders and Representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF), the Uganda Coffee Federation, and the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO);
- Our Corporate Partners, Sponsors, Development Partners, and Civil Society Leaders;
- Distinguished Elders, Farmers, Entrepreneurs, Innovators, and Young People of the Bunyoro Economic Zone;
- Members of the Media;
- Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. OPENING REMARKS: A CALL TO PURPOSE

It is with profound honour, deep humility, and an abiding sense of responsibility that I welcome you to the historic Rukurato Grounds in Hoima City for **Kabalega Independence Week 2026**.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and the Executive Secretariat of Kabalega Foundation, I extend to you our warmest greetings and sincere appreciation for joining us at this important national and regional gathering.

Today, we gather not merely to celebrate a week on the calendar. We gather to affirm a vision, renew a commitment, and mobilise our collective strength towards a more prosperous, productive, and self-reliant Bunyoro.

Our theme, “*Heritage, Agribusiness Transformation & Regional Enterprise*,” is both a declaration of our identity and a call to action.

It reminds us that our heritage must do more than tell us where we have come from; it must inspire us to determine where we are going. Our agriculture must do more than sustain our households; it must generate wealth, create jobs, and open doors to new markets. And our enterprises must do more than survive; they must innovate, grow, compete, and transform the economic fortunes of our people.

Look around these grounds. We see our farmers, who work tirelessly to feed our communities. We see our young people, whose creativity and technological abilities hold immense promise. We see

entrepreneurs, investors, institutions, cultural leaders, and development partners whose combined efforts can unlock the extraordinary potential of this region.

This gathering is proof that Bunyoro's greatest resource is not simply what lies beneath its soil, but the talent, determination, creativity, and enterprise of its people.

The question before us is not whether Bunyoro has potential. The question is whether we can organise that potential, invest in it, and transform it into lasting prosperity for our people. That is the purpose of Kabalega Independence Week 2026.

2. INSTITUTIONALISING THE LEGACY OF OMUKAMA CWA II KABALEGA

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the heart of everything we do as Kabalega Foundation is one fundamental mission: **to institutionalise the legacy of Omukama Cwa II Kabalega and translate its enduring principles into practical action for present and future generations.**

Omukama Cwa II Kabalega occupies a distinguished place in the history of Bunyoro-Kitara and Uganda. His life represents courage in the face of adversity, determination in defence of sovereignty, commitment to his people, and the pursuit of self-reliance.

His legacy challenges us to think beyond the immediate demands of our time. It calls upon us to protect our identity, strengthen our unity, build our productive capacity, and safeguard the economic interests of our communities.

But let me emphasise a fundamental point: **the greatest tribute we can pay to Kabalega is not simply to celebrate his name; it is to put his principles to work.**

We must move from remembrance to implementation, from admiration to action, and from historical pride to measurable socio-economic progress.

In the twenty-first century, the struggle for economic independence is fought not only on the battlefield of history, but also in our farms, factories, laboratories, classrooms, marketplaces, and innovation hubs.

It is fought when a farmer increases productivity and earns a better income. It is fought when a young person turns an idea into a viable business. It is fought when a local entrepreneur adds value to agricultural produce rather than selling it in its raw form. It is fought when communities build enterprises that create employment and retain more wealth within the region.

These are the modern expressions of self-reliance.

Kabalega Foundation is committed to making this legacy a living institution—one that inspires enterprise, promotes agricultural transformation, supports innovation, empowers young people, and strengthens community-driven economic development across Bunyoro and beyond.

Our ambition is clear: we want Kabalega's legacy to be visible not only in our monuments, ceremonies, and history books, but also in thriving businesses, productive farms, skilled young people, stronger households, and resilient communities.

A legacy that does not improve lives remains a memory. A legacy that builds capacity, creates opportunity, and transforms communities becomes an enduring institution.

That is the legacy we are determined to build.

3. KIW 2026: TURNING VISION INTO ACTION

Distinguished Guests,

Kabalega Independence Week 2026 is designed to move this vision from words to action. Through three major pillars, we are creating practical opportunities for trade, agricultural transformation, community participation, and inclusive economic growth.

A. The Kabalega Business and Innovation Expo

First, we have the **Kabalega Business and Innovation Expo**, a three-day commercial trade fair and exhibition hosted here at Rukurato Grounds.

The Expo brings together agribusiness enterprises, technology innovators, corporate institutions, investors, entrepreneurs, and micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises.

It is more than an exhibition space. It is a marketplace of ideas, a meeting point for investment, and a platform for building the partnerships that businesses need to grow.

We want our entrepreneurs to showcase their products, demonstrate their innovations, establish business-to-business relationships, identify new customers, and explore opportunities to access finance and wider markets.

We also want our young innovators to understand that an idea becomes truly powerful when it solves a real problem, creates value, and can be developed into a sustainable enterprise.

To our corporate partners and investors, I extend a special invitation: look at Bunyoro not merely as a place of natural resources, but as a region of emerging enterprises, entrepreneurial talent, expanding opportunities, and a people ready to participate in economic transformation.

Let us build partnerships that go beyond visibility and sponsorship. Let us establish relationships that produce investment, transfer skills, open markets, create jobs, and strengthen local businesses.

Our goal must be to make Bunyoro a region where ideas find support, businesses find markets, investors find credible partners, and young people find pathways to meaningful employment.

That is the promise of the Kabalega Business and Innovation Expo.

B. International Coffee Day 2026: Growing Wealth from the Farm

Our second pillar is the celebration of **International Coffee Day 2026**, through which we are rallying farmers, institutions, and private-sector partners to embrace commercial coffee production and strengthen the coffee value chain in Bunyoro.

Agriculture remains central to the livelihoods of our people. Yet, for agriculture to become a reliable pathway out of poverty, we must move beyond subsistence production and embrace a more productive, commercially oriented, and market-driven approach.

Coffee presents an important opportunity.

But planting coffee alone is not enough. We must plant the right varieties in suitable areas, apply good agronomic practices, manage pests and diseases, maintain quality, improve post-harvest handling, and connect farmers to reliable markets.

We must also think beyond the farm gate.

How do we support farmers to earn more from every kilogram they produce? How do we strengthen farmer organisations? How do we encourage local processing, value addition, and investment across the coffee value chain? How do we ensure that women, young people, and smallholder households participate meaningfully in the opportunities that coffee presents?

These are the questions that must guide our efforts.

We therefore recognise the importance of collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, the Uganda Coffee Federation, NARO, private-sector actors, and other stakeholders in promoting quality planting materials, research-based agricultural practices, farmer education, and access to markets.

To our farmers, I say: **your farm is not merely a place of production; it is an enterprise with the potential to build household wealth, educate children, create employment, and secure your family's future.**

Let us treat farming as a business. Let us invest in knowledge, quality, productivity, and value addition. Let us organise ourselves to negotiate better, access markets more effectively, and capture greater value from our work.

And to our partners, let us ensure that the promotion of coffee translates into tangible support for farmers—not simply awareness, but access to seedlings, practical training, extension services, financing opportunities, and sustainable market linkages.

Our ambition is to see Bunyoro's agricultural potential translated into stronger farm incomes, competitive enterprises, and lasting economic opportunities.

C. The Fourth Kabalega Independence Run: Running for Health, Farming, and Prosperity

Our third pillar is the **Fourth Kabalega Independence Run**, an initiative that brings our people together around health, wellness, solidarity, and social impact.

The Run reminds us that national and community development is not the responsibility of government or institutions alone. It is a shared undertaking that requires the participation of citizens, businesses, organisations, and communities.

This year's Run carries a particularly important development objective.

Proceeds raised through the sale of running kits will support the procurement and distribution of high-quality coffee seedlings, alongside extension training for smallholder farming households across Bunyoro.

This means that participation in the Run can extend beyond the finish line. It can contribute to the establishment of productive farms, the strengthening of household livelihoods, and the expansion of opportunities for future generations.

Every participant becomes part of a broader development effort. Every kit sold contributes to a shared ambition. And every seedling successfully established, nurtured, and managed represents a potential investment in the future of a farming household.

We must, however, remember that the true measure of this initiative will not be the number of people who run alone. It will also be the number of farmers reached, the quality of the training delivered, and the sustainability of the agricultural benefits created.

We are running for more than fitness. We are running for opportunity, for productive communities, and for a future in which our people can turn their labour into lasting prosperity.

I invite our young people, families, public servants, corporate teams, community organisations, and development partners to participate enthusiastically and help us make this initiative a meaningful instrument of social impact.

4. OUR CALL TO ACTION: FROM HERITAGE TO ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The success of Kabalega Independence Week cannot be measured by the number of speeches delivered, the number of guests who attend, or the photographs taken during the celebrations.

Its success must be measured by what changes because we came together.

Do more businesses establish partnerships? Do more young people find pathways into enterprise? Do farmers gain practical knowledge and access to productive opportunities? Do institutions commit resources to initiatives that improve livelihoods? Do our communities become more capable of generating and sustaining their own wealth?

These are the outcomes that should define our collective success.

I therefore wish to make a direct appeal to four important groups.

To our young people: You are not merely the leaders of tomorrow; you are active participants in shaping the opportunities of today. Do not wait for someone else to create every opportunity you need. Develop your skills, embrace technology, identify problems in your communities, and build solutions that people are willing to support.

Be innovative. Be disciplined. Work together. Learn from those who have gone before you, but do not be afraid to challenge old ways of doing things when better solutions are available.

Let the courage associated with Kabalega's legacy inspire you to create enterprises, develop new ideas, and become active contributors to the transformation of our region.

To our farmers: The future of agriculture depends on knowledge, organisation, quality, and productivity. Embrace improved agronomic practices, seek extension support, protect the quality of your produce, and explore opportunities for value addition.

Do not look at your farm only in terms of what it produces this season. Look at it as an investment whose performance can improve through planning, learning, and sound business decisions.

To our business community, investors, and corporate partners: Bunyoro needs more than occasional engagement; it needs enduring partnerships. Invest in local talent, mentor emerging entrepreneurs, strengthen supply chains, support innovation, and help our enterprises connect with wider markets.

Let us build a regional economy in which local businesses participate meaningfully in commercial opportunities and more value is retained within our communities.

To our public institutions, cultural institutions, development partners, and civil society: Let us align our efforts around practical, measurable results. We must strengthen coordination, avoid duplication, invest in skills and productive capacity, and ensure that development initiatives reach the households and enterprises that need them most.

Our people do not need promises alone. They need opportunities that work, partnerships that endure, and programmes that produce visible improvements in their lives.

This is how we transform heritage into development and pride into progress.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF OUR PARTNERS

Ladies and Gentlemen,

No institution can transform a region alone. Lasting progress requires shared purpose, mutual trust, and the willingness to work across institutional and sectoral boundaries.

On behalf of Kabalega Foundation, I express our sincere appreciation to Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom for its cultural leadership and enduring role in preserving our heritage.

We recognise the Government of Uganda, including the Office of the President, for its role in national development, and we appreciate the engagement of the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, the Uganda Coffee Federation, and the National Agricultural Research Organisation in advancing agricultural development and coffee-sector transformation.

To our corporate partners, sponsors, development partners, exhibitors, participating businesses, community organisations, volunteers, and members of the media, thank you for your contribution to making Kabalega Independence Week possible.

Your support demonstrates what can be achieved when institutions and individuals unite around a shared vision.

As we express our gratitude, let us also renew our commitment to partnerships that deliver practical results. May the relationships established during this week continue long after these grounds have emptied and the celebrations have ended.

Let the Expo generate business opportunities. Let the coffee initiative strengthen farming households. Let the Independence Run produce lasting social benefits. And let every partnership formed here contribute to a stronger, more prosperous Bunyoro.

6. THE NEXT CHAPTER OF KABALEGA'S LEGACY

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we celebrate Kabalega Independence Week 2026, I invite us to reflect on the meaning of independence in our time.

Independence is not complete simply because a nation governs itself. Its promise becomes more meaningful when citizens have the opportunity to work productively, build enterprises, provide for their families, educate their children, and live with dignity.

Economic independence begins in the household, grows through productive communities, and is strengthened by institutions that create opportunities for people to prosper.

It is reflected in a farmer who earns a fair return for hard work; a young entrepreneur who builds a successful business; a woman who expands her enterprise; an innovator whose solution improves lives; and a community that works together to secure a better future.

This is the practical meaning of self-reliance.

And this is why the legacy of Omukama Cwa II Kabalega remains so important to us.

He reminds us that the strength of a people lies not only in their history, but also in their determination to shape their destiny.

Let us therefore leave Rukurato Grounds with more than memories of a successful celebration. Let us leave with renewed commitments, stronger partnerships, practical ideas, and a determination to turn our region's potential into measurable progress.

Let us preserve our heritage without being imprisoned by the past. Let us embrace innovation without abandoning our identity. Let us transform our agriculture, strengthen our enterprises, empower our young people, and build an economy that creates opportunity for all.

Let our heritage be our foundation. Let agribusiness be one of our engines of growth. Let innovation be our competitive advantage. Let enterprise be our pathway to prosperity. And let self-reliance be the enduring measure of our success.

Together, we can build a Bunyoro in which our young people see opportunity, our farmers reap greater rewards, our businesses grow with confidence, and our communities pass on greater prosperity to the next generation.

May the legacy of Omukama Cwa II Kabalega continue to inspire our courage, strengthen our unity, and guide our determination to build a more prosperous and self-reliant society.

May Kabalega Independence Week 2026 be remembered not only for what we celebrated, but for what we started, what we built, and the lives we changed.

Long live the spirit of Omukama Cwa II Kabalega!

Long live Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom!

Long live a united, enterprising, and prosperous Uganda!

For God and My Country (HABWA RUHANGA N'IHANGA LYANGE).

Dr. James Isagara Kisoro (Prince)

Executive Director

Kabalega Foundation