

MPs ask CSBAG to induct new legislators on public finance management



Hon. Ssebunya Kasule (center) interacting with Parliament Technical team during the CSBAG breakfast meeting to discuss CSO perspective on macro economy and its Impact on FY 2016/17 held on 7th April 2016

Members of Parliament have called on Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) to induct the 10th Parliament on public finance management and on analyzing the budget. This is after recognizing the wonderful job CSBAG has exhibited in promoting budget transparency and its expertise in budget analysis.

"CSBAG is better placed to initiate new Members of Parliament on the new public finance management act and on scrutinizing the budget," Ssebunya Kasule the Chairman of Parliamentary Committee on Finance said. Kasule was backed by the MP Maxwell Akora (Mazuri County) who said that CSBAG has shown expertise in budget analysis and therefore should engage the 10th Parliament in that area.

This was during a high-level breakfast meeting

held with the Parliamentary Finance committee to discuss issues macro-economic management the 2016/17 budget strategy as well as the revenue mobilization proposals for the same. This was held at Kampala Sheraton Hotel on Thursday April 7.

Civil Society Organizations called on Government on macro policy issues which are critical for consideration in the approval of National Budget Financial Year 2016/2017. Presenting the paper titled: "CSBAG Perspectives on Macro Economy and its Impact on the FY 2016/17 Budget," David Walakira pointed out that the continued need and importance of having citizens participate in the planning and budget processes in Uganda can't be over emphasized.

Walakira a Budget Policy Specialist at CSBAG said: "The health of Macro Economy is crucial to the efficient and effective implementation of the National Budget in any given financial year." In their paper presented to the Parliament Finance Committee, CSOs outlined key variables which Government should pay attention to. These included Gross Domestic Product (GDP), exchange rate, Debt, Fiscal and Monetary Policy management and supplementary budgeting.

On exchange rate Walakira noted that it was important for Government to safeguard UG Shilling against the dollar. He observed that access to credit will have spillover effects. The Budget Policy Specialist emphasized that there is need to have inflation controlled to one digit level. He said this can be achieved by managing the exchange rate.

About the GDP growth the CSOs recommended increasing funding to Agriculture Credit Facility as this will foster inclusive growth in the economy as a whole and ensuring that the Central Bank eases on Central Bank Rate so as to increase access to credit.

In reaction to CSO paper Hon. Okello, expressed concern of the time lag it takes to approve budget loans saying that it takes many processes. "Loan approval is worrying and something should be done," Okello said.

Another reaction was from Bukoto South MP Mathias Nsubuga who urged CSBAG to involve other stakeholders like Uganda Revenue Authority (URA), Bank of Uganda (BoU) among others because the issues CSO raise are of critical concern of which their absence leads to lack of implementation.

On supplementary budgets Walakira emphasized that CSOs are not against supplementary budgets but "a more controlled and regulated supplementary budget would be more meaningful."

He observed that prudent macroeconomic interventions, good monetary and fiscal policy frameworks, corporate governance are crucial in addressing gaps the needs and the aspirations of the marginalized group in the country.

In his remarks Mukunda, the Coordinator of CSBAG informed the lawmakers that Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MOFPED) has taken great strides in opening doors for CSOs to participate in budget processes and this can be one of the reasons, CSOs are becoming more effective in their contributions to this process. "We are not only participants but effective in influencing decisions in budget processes. We wish other ministries and local government to do the same to enhance stakeholder inclusion in the budget process." Mukunda mentioned.