

# Makerere staff divided over strike

**Resolution.** The Friday meeting resolved that lecturers return to work tomorrow.

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A section of Makerere University staff have agreed to report to work on Monday following a two-week standoff between the institution's associations and their bosses over the suspension of their colleagues.

The staff who gathered as concerned members of the community, said they had petitioned the Makerere University Academic Staff Association (Muasa) leadership to hold an emergency meeting to discuss the progress of their strike and agree on new modalities to end the impasse that has seen the 97-year-old university fail to teach since the semester started two weeks ago.

According to Prof Jockey Baker Nyakaana, the chairperson of the Friday emergency meeting, their earlier planned meetings aborted twice in the course of the week because the Muasa leadership was divided.

"We asked the executive to convene a general assembly. The first meeting was called on Tuesday but

it aborted. The general secretary invited members again and the chair cancelled it. Another was called on Wednesday and cancelled again and it was pushed to Friday today," Prof Nyakaana told *Sunday Monitor* after their meeting on Friday.

He said their meeting followed a petition from about 30 members of staff who were concerned about what was happening at the university.

## About the meeting

"When we arrived, the executive either abandoned or boycotted the meeting. That is a sign that the executive is divided. They are not tallying with the general secretary. But the concerned members were there. We said we cannot go back. Let us now meet not as emergency Muasa meeting but as concerned members," Prof Nyakaana said.

Present at the meeting was Dr Michael Walimbwa, the Muasa general secretary and his executive members: Dr Hussein Oria, (treasurer), Dr Arthur Mugisha, (welfare), Dr Geoffrey Niwagaba, deputy general secretary and Dr Amin Kiggundu, (College of Engineering representative). But their vice chairperson, Dr Edward Mwavu was absent.

However, the concerned staff agreed to proceed with the meeting and elected Prof Nyakaana to chair it. Prof Nyakaana heads the Makerere



PROF NYAKAANA

I am genuine to what I am doing. Why was I appointed? To put bread on my table. Why did we go for a strike? We were looking for improvement in our welfare. Government gave us this money. That is why other universities pulled out of the strike after getting the money. After giving me the money, it is the money that bringing bread on my table. What else do I want as Nyakaana? Did I come here to fight other people's fights? No. If you have your fights with the CEO where I am not, do you think I will join you? I left Kitagwenda (Ibanda District) to come here to look for money for my children. Government gave me the money. You won't now mix me in other people's affairs. That is why I accepted to chair this meeting."

Jinja campus on a contractual term. The Muasa executive members who had come were not allowed to contribute to the discussion.

Dr Sarah Ssali, the Dean School of Women and Gender Studies, recorded the attendance which was put at 104. "I received a petition from

concerned members. I don't have the list with me right now. There was no lead petitioner. I called the general assembly but the vice chairman disagreed. We discussed the petition in the executive meeting but the vice chair left before we could conclude," Dr Walimbwa said.

He added: "I feel sad. I think the vice chair disrespected our decision because we had agreed as executive committee. We look divided. It is not the first time he was calling off a meeting."

## Dr Mwavu speaks out

However, Dr Mwavu denied, in a separate interview, that they had sat as an executive to receive a petition from any members of staff. He said their meeting will be held on Monday.

"There is a procedure for a petition. I have not seen any petition. I don't know who the lead petitioner is. You can't call a meeting as executive when you have not shared the information," Dr Mwavu said.

Prof Nyakaana said their meeting resolved that all lecturers return to work tomorrow and those who miss teaching will be held accountable.

The university vice chancellor, Prof Barnabas Nawangwe, has maintained that the lecturers' strike is illegal and they should all report to work.