Kadaga wants public to access parliament library

By Nelson Kiva

The Speaker of Parliament, Rebecca Kadaga, wants the Parliament library to be open to the public.

According to the Speaker, this is one way of taking Parliament to the public, the most pursued goal of the institution.

Kadaga made the suggestion while presiding over the opening of a five-day annual conference of the Association of Parliamentary Libraries of Eastern and Southern Africa (APLESA) 2019 at Skyz Hotel in Naguru, Kampala yesterday.

The conference is structured under the theme; *Taking parliament to the people, the role of parliament libraries in bridging the gap between the people and parliament.* It has attracted participants from over 17 countries.

Kadaga called for the possibility of the public accessing the parliamentary library online to be explored.

Citing herself as an example that she last used a library when she was 10 years old, Kadaga implored African parliaments to encourage people to utilise information in libraries.

"For instance as Ugandans, how often do we use libraries? I must confess I last visited a library when I was about 10 years old to borrow books and this was a library on Buganda Road," Kadaga noted.



Lesedi Gaolaolwe, the deputy clerk of the parliament of Botswana, chatting with Kadaga at the Association of Parliamentary Libraries Of Eastern and Southern Africa annual conference at Skyz Hotel in Naguru, Kampala. Photo by Karim Ssozi.

She expressed concern that out of over 400 MPs and over 1,000 parliamentary staff, only 50 people — MPs, staff and researchers — visit the parliamentary library daily.

The Speaker, however, commended the new innovations by the parliamentary library services, such as continued update of MPs regarding the dates and years different landmark laws were made.

The parliamentary library was re-established in 1999 after the 1971 Idi Amin coup resulted in the abolition of Parliament and the looting of most of the key documents.

According to the director library services, Parliament of Uganda, Innocent Rugambwa, they have since re-established most of the information with the help of Makerere University Public Library.

He said over three million records have since been digitised and can be accessed online.

"For the start you can only access them through intra-internet, but very soon, we shall put them on the public domain, the website, to be accessed by everybody," he disclosed.

Rugambwa said public access to parliamentary library was being limited by lack of space.

"The library is small located on the third floor. What we have done is to make it part of the new parliamentary chambers which are under construction. A floor has been dedicated to accommodate the parliamentary library," he added.

The construction of the new parliamentary chambers is expected to be completed mid-2022.

The president of APLESA, Geraldo Cambiete, from Angola, commended the Parliament of Uganda for supporting and hosting the conference.