



UGANDA SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTS

Bible House 3rd Floor, Plot 38, Bombo Road, P.O. Box 9514, Kampala, Uganda.
Tel: 256 393 264 359 email: secretariat@ugandasocietyofarchitects.com Website: www.ugandasocietyofarchitects.org

Our Ref: USA/23/PS/52

Date: 24th April, 2026

The Office of the Clerk to Parliament,
Room S108, South Wing,
Parliamentary Buildings.

VIA EMAIL: clerk@parliament.go.ug, eopio@parliament.go.ug

Dear Sir/Madam,

SUBJECT: SUBMISSION ON THE PROTECTION OF SOVEREIGNTY BILL, 2026 (BILL NO. 13) — IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ARCHITECTURE PROFESSION IN UGANDA.

Honourable Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

The purpose of this letter is to draw the Committee's attention to Architects, a profession whose interests would, if the Bill is enacted in its current form, suffer severe and unintended consequences: **architects, architectural firms, students of Architecture and allied built-environment professionals** (collectively, "architecture professionals").

Uganda's architecture and construction sector is deeply intertwined with diaspora-funded development, foreign direct investment, international consulting, donor-funded social infrastructure, and cross-border supply chains. Any law that constrains legitimate cross-border contracting and payments can therefore materially affect project delivery, firm viability, employment, and national development targets.

The Bill's extraordinarily broad definitions capture architecture professionals and seem to leave to no space for them to earn a livelihood from their profession. The Committee must consider whether it is the intention of Parliament to criminalize the ordinary practice of architecture in Uganda.

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF CONCERNS

The Bill, as drafted, would:



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Hon. Secretary	: Arch. Pamela Akora	(Tel: +256709146484)	Council Member	: Arch. Constantine Muzaale	(Tel: +256779222326)
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Immediate Past Pres.	: Arch. Jacqueline C. Namayanja	(Tel: +256772928887)	Graduate Member	: Ms. Monica Ahairwehyona	(Tel: +256783358804)
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C/MB. Of Research	: Arch. Clare Ruhweza	(Tel: +256754812380)	Student Representative	: Mr. Lionel Mark Katiba	(Tel: +256705169290)

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Concern	Summary
Criminalisation of ordinary practice	Any architect acting for a foreign client, a Ugandan in the diaspora, or a firm with international funding becomes an "agent of a foreigner" liable to 10 years' imprisonment.
Registration with security services	Architects must register with the Department responsible for peace and security—not the Architects Registration Board—before taking instructions from any foreign-connected client.
Breach of client confidentiality	Registration requires disclosure of all client agreements, fee arrangements, and project details to the Minister, destroying professional confidentiality.
Warrantless inspection of architectural offices	Clause 28 permits inspection of premises "at any reasonable time" without judicial warrant, including seizure of drawings, models, specifications, and client files.
Chilling effect on international work	Ugandan architects engaged by foreign firms, multilateral development banks, or diaspora Ugandans cannot lawfully practice without ministerial permission revocable at will.
Disproportionate penalties	Fines up to UGX 4 billion (approx. USD 1 million) and custodial sentences up to 20 years for vaguely defined offences including "weakening the economic system" by publishing information.

2.0 HOW THE BILL CAPTURES ARCHITECTURE PROFESSIONALS

2.1 The Definitional Net

Clause 1 of the Bill defines an "agent of a foreigner" as any person who acts "at the order, request, or under the direction or control of a foreigner, or of a person whose

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activities are directly or indirectly supervised, directed, controlled, financed, or subsidised by a foreigner."

A "foreigner" includes:

- (a) a foreign government, embassy, consulate, or diplomatic mission;
- (b) an international or multinational organisation (including the United Nations, World Bank, African Development Bank, European Union, East African Community);
- (c) a person who is not a citizen of Uganda;
- (d) a **Ugandan citizen residing outside Uganda** (the diaspora); and
- (e) any person, institution or body that the Minister may by statutory instrument declare to be a foreigner.

2.2 Application to Architecture Professionals

On the plain meaning of these definitions, the following persons are **prima facie** "agents of foreigners":

Scenario	Why Captured
A Ugandan architect retained by a multinational corporation (e.g., Chinese construction firm, European hotel developer) to design a building in Kampala	Acting for a "foreigner" (the corporation, which is either a foreign legal person or a subsidiary controlled by foreign interests)
A Ugandan architectural firm with a foreign partner or investor	The firm is "indirectly financed or subsidised by a foreigner"
A Ugandan architect retained by a Ugandan client in the diaspora (e.g., a Ugandan living in London who wishes to build a home in Wakiso)	The client is a "Ugandan citizen residing outside Uganda" and therefore a "foreigner" under the Bill
A Ugandan architect employed by an international development bank (e.g., World Bank) or UN agency on a housing project in Gulu	The employer is an "international organisation" and therefore a "foreigner"

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<p>A Ugandan architect collaborating with a Kenyan or Tanzanian firm under an EAC professional services agreement</p>	<p>The collaborating firm is a foreign legal person; the Ugandan architect acts "at the request" of a foreigner</p>
<p>A Ugandan Architect retained by a foreign embassy to advise on a new chancery development</p>	<p>Acting for a "foreign government" and "diplomatic mission"</p>
<p>A Ugandan landscape Architect whose firm receives a grant from an international foundation (e.g., Ford Foundation, Rockefeller) for research on climate-resilient design</p>	<p>The firm is "indirectly financed" by a foreigner; the architect is therefore an agent</p>

3.0 CONSEQUENCES FOR ARCHITECTURE PRACTICE

3.1 Mandatory Registration with the Minister of Internal Affairs

Clause 14 makes it an offence, punishable by **10 years' imprisonment or a fine of UGX 1 billion (approx. USD 250,000)**, for any agent of a foreigner to act without a certificate of registration issued by the Minister of Internal Affairs.

For an architect, this means:

- a. No architect may take instructions from any foreign client (including diaspora Ugandans, international organisations, foreign governments, or multinational corporations) without first registering.
- b. Registration is not automatic. The application (Clause 15) requires disclosure of:
 - i. The names and addresses of **all** foreign clients;
 - ii. The character and business of each client;
 - iii. **Copies of every written agreement** (including design contracts, consultancy agreements, retainer letters);

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- iv. The terms of every oral agreement (including fee discussions, scope variations);
- v. The nature and method of performance of every such contract.

3.2 Destruction of Professional Confidentiality

The architectural profession is founded on duties of confidentiality to clients. Drawings, specifications, site plans, feasibility studies, and financial arrangements are commercially sensitive and often subject to non-disclosure agreements.

Clause 15(2)(c) and (d) requires the architect to file these confidential documents with the Minister. Clause 21(2) makes the resulting declarations available for inspection by any member of the public on payment of a fee. Clause 28 authorises warrantless inspection and seizure of records.

An architect who refuses to disclose client confidences commits an offence under Clause 28(2) (7 years' imprisonment, UGX 40 million fine). An architect who discloses them breaches professional ethics and contractual duties to the client. The Bill places the architect in a difficult position.

3.3 Ministerial Discretion Over the Right to Practice

Clause 17(2) allows the Minister to grant a registration certificate "subject to such conditions as the Minister may consider necessary." Clause 20 allows suspension or revocation where the holder "poses, or their activities pose, a security threat to national security" or "engages in disruptive activities" (defined to include "participating in an unlawful demonstration or assembly").

For an architect, this means:

- a. The Minister may prohibit an architect from designing buildings for certain clients, in certain locations, or of certain types (e.g., near "sensitive" installations).
- b. An architect who participates in a professional association's peaceful protest against a planning decision, or who signs an open letter on urban development policy, may be deemed to have engaged in "disruptive activities" and lose the right to practice.
- c. There is no independent appeal to the High Court; Clause 18(3) offers only a vague right to apply to a "court of competent jurisdiction."

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3.4 The Funding Threshold Trap

Clause 22 provides that no agent of a foreigner may receive financial support, donation, loan or other assistance exceeding 20,000 currency points (UGX 400 million / approx. USD 100,000) in any twelve-month period without prior written ministerial approval.

For Architects and Architectural firms, this captures:

- Retainers from foreign clients exceeding UGX 400 million per annum (a modest threshold for a commercial architectural practice handling hotel, hospital, or residential tower projects);
- Grants or research funding from international development partners;
- Loans from foreign banks or development finance institutions;
- Capital contributions from foreign partners or investors.

An architect who receives such funds without prior approval commits an offence under Clause 22(2) punishable by **20 years' imprisonment or a fine of UGX 4 billion.**

3.5 The "Economic Sabotage" Trap for Publishing

Clause 13 creates the offence of "economic sabotage" committed by any person who "publishes information or participates in any act or activity that weakens or damages the economic system or viability of the country causing economic disruption, insecurity or instability."

For architecture professionals, this criminalises:

- Publishing a report criticising the quality of public building construction, procurement irregularities, or cost overruns on government projects;
- Presenting a paper at a professional conference on the economic impact of poor urban planning;
- Submitting a professional opinion to a parliamentary committee on a planning or infrastructure bill;
- Writing an opinion on the effect of land speculation on housing affordability.

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The term "weakens or damages the economic system" is **undefined and effectively standardless**. A negative professional assessment of a government building project could, in the hands of a prosecutor, be characterised as economic sabotage.

Architects sometimes publish or submit reports on land values, construction costs, infrastructure gaps, unsafe buildings, regulatory failures, public-sector project weaknesses or market feasibility. The Bill's "economic sabotage" clause is broad, because it criminalises publishing information or participating in acts that weaken or damage the economic system or viability of the country.

A professionally written report should not normally be considered sabotage. However, the concern is that vague wording could make consultants cautious about publishing negative findings, especially in sensitive sectors such as real estate, public infrastructure, donor projects, public procurement, urban development or national investment climate analysis.

4.0 CONFLICT WITH EXISTING REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR ARCHITECTS

4.1 The Architects Registration Board

The architecture profession in Uganda is regulated under the **Architects Registration Act, Cap. 275**. The Architects Registration Board ("ARB") is the statutory body responsible for:

- a. Registration of architects;
- b. Regulation of professional conduct;
- c. Maintenance of the Register of Architects;
- d. Prescribing continuing professional development.

The Bill makes no reference to the Architects Registration Act, Cap. 275, and does not amend it. It creates a **parallel, duplicative, and contradictory registration regime** administered not by the ARB but by the Department responsible for peace and security under the Minister of Internal Affairs.

An architect may:

- a. Be fully registered with the ARB;

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- b. Hold a valid practicing certificate;
- c. Comply with all professional conduct rules;
- d. Have no adverse disciplinary history —

and yet commit an offence under the Bill carrying 10 years' imprisonment for accepting instructions from a diaspora Ugandan client without first registering with the security services.

This is not principled regulation; it is a regulatory trap.

4.2 Professional Ethics and Client Confidentiality

The Code of Professional Conduct for Architects (issued under Cap. 275) requires architects to:

- a. Act in the client's best interests;
- b. Maintain confidentiality of client information;
- c. Avoid conflicts of interest.

The Bill **compels disclosure** of client agreements, fee arrangements, and project details to the Minister and, through Clause 21(2), to the public. An architect who complies with the Bill breaches professional ethics. An architect who complies with professional ethics commits a criminal offence under the Bill. **The architect cannot lawfully practice.**

5.0 IMPACT ON SPECIFIC ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICES

5.1 International Development and Aid-Funded Projects

A substantial portion of infrastructure, housing, and urban development in Uganda is funded by international development partners:

- i. World Bank (e.g., Uganda Support to Municipal Infrastructure Development)
- ii. African Development Bank (e.g., Kampala-Jinja Expressway)
- iii. European Union (e.g., water and sanitation projects)
- iv. United Nations agencies (e.g., UN-Habitat)
- v. DFID/FCDO (now UK Foreign Office)

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- vi. GIZ (German development cooperation)
- vii. JICA (Japan)

Architects engaged on these projects are, by definition, agents of foreigners (the funding international organisations). Under the Bill, **no such project can proceed** without each architect first registering with the Minister of Internal Affairs, disclosing all project documents, and obtaining ministerial approval for funding received.

5.2 Diaspora Ugandan Clients

Ugandans in the diaspora remit substantial sums to build homes, develop property, and invest in commercial real estate in Uganda. Under the Bill, **these diaspora Ugandans are "foreigners."**

- a. A diaspora Ugandan who engages a Kampala architect to design a family home has engaged an "agent of a foreigner."
- b. The architect cannot accept the instruction without registering with the Minister.
- c. The architect cannot receive fees exceeding UGX 400 million in a year without ministerial approval.
- d. The architect must disclose the diaspora client's name, address, agreement, and fee arrangement to the Minister and to any member of the public who pays a fee.

This is likely to deter diaspora investment in Ugandan real estate, a major source of foreign exchange and economic activity.

5.3 East African Community Cross-Border Practice

Uganda is party to the East African Community Common Market Protocol (Article 13), which provides for the free movement of services, including professional services. A Ugandan architect engaged by a Kenyan or Tanzanian client or firm is acting for a "foreigner" under the Bill. A Kenyan architect practising in Uganda under mutual recognition arrangements is also an "agent of a foreigner."

The Bill makes no provision for EAC obligations and does not exempt cross-border professional services. This is likely to be inconsistent with Uganda's treaty obligations under the EAC Treaty and the Common Market Protocol.

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5.4 Professional Association Activities

The Uganda Society of Architects (USA) is actively involved in international collaboration through its membership in several prominent architectural organizations. These include the International Union of Architects (UIA), the East African Institute of Architects (EAIA), and the Commonwealth Association of Architects (CAA). Ugandan architects benefit from these affiliations by receiving training and sponsorships, which enhance their professional development. For instance, both the CAA and EAIA have provided support to Ugandan architecture students in the form of prizes and financial assistance for international study opportunities.

Engagement in the activities of these international bodies—such as attending conferences, sharing information, and obtaining funding for professional development—may be interpreted as acting as an agent of a foreigner, depending on the application of Clause 2 in the Bill. This ambiguity poses potential risks to participation in these organizations and the benefits they offer.

With the introduction of stricter oversight and limitations on funding, there is a concern that valuable opportunities for capacity building, attending conferences, and facilitating knowledge exchange could be reduced. Such restrictions may hinder the professional growth of Ugandan architects and limit their access to international networks and resources.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMMITTEE

In light of the foregoing, it is recommend that the Committee:

6.1 Specific Amendments

Clause	Proposed Amendment
Clause 1 (definition of "agent of a foreigner")	Insert express exemption: "The term does not include architects, quantity surveyors, planners, landscape architects, construction project managers, or other built-environment professionals acting in their professional capacity, provided that such professional practice is carried out in accordance with the

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	Architects Registration Act, Cap. 275 and any applicable code of professional conduct."
Clause 1 (definition of "foreigner")	Delete sub-paragraph (d) which includes "a Ugandan citizen residing outside Uganda." The diaspora are citizens with constitutional rights under Articles 17 and 18.
Clause 1 (definition of "disruptive activities")	Confine to conduct that is already criminal under the Penal Code Act, Cap. 128. Professional expression, advocacy, and peaceful assembly should be excluded.
Clause 2 (application)	Insert: <i>"Nothing in this Act applies to a person engaged in the practice of architecture, engineering, quantity surveying, planning, landscape architecture, or construction project management where such practice is regulated under the Architects Registration Act, Cap. 275, the Engineers Registration Act, Cap. 276, or the Surveyors Registration Act, Cap. 277."</i>
Clause 13 (economic sabotage)	Delete entirely. The offence is vague, overbroad, and criminalises protected expression.
Clause 14-20 (registration)	If a registration regime is retained, it should be administered by the Architects Registration Board (or a similarly independent professional body), not by the Department responsible for peace and security.
Clause 15 (application)	Exempt documents subject to architect-client confidentiality, or professional ethics rules from disclosure.
Clause 22 (funding threshold)	Raise threshold substantially (to at least UGX 2 billion / approx. USD 500,000) to avoid capturing ordinary professional fee arrangements. Alternatively, delete the clause entirely.
Clause 28 (inspection)	Require a magistrate's warrant for inspection of professional premises, except in genuine emergencies. Expressly preserve architect-client confidentiality.

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6.2 General Recommendations

1. That the Bill be withdrawn for substantial redrafting in consultation with the Architects Registration Board, the Uganda Society of Architects, and other built-environment professional bodies.
2. That, in the alternative, the Committee recommend that the Bill be amended to include express exemptions for regulated professionals acting in their professional capacity.
3. That the Committee request an extension of the consultation period to not less than 90 days from the date of gazetting, to permit full engagement with professional bodies whose interests are affected.
4. That the Committee note the constitutional concerns raised in the attached Memorandum, in particular the infringement of Article 27 (privacy), Article 29 (freedom of association and expression), and Article 21 (equality before the law).

7.0 CONCLUSION

Honourable Chairperson,

The Protection of Sovereignty Bill, 2026, as currently drafted, is a blunt instrument that will cause substantial and unintended collateral damage to the architectural profession in Uganda. It criminalises ordinary professional practice, destroys client confidentiality, vests unfettered discretion in the Minister of Internal Affairs to determine who may practice architecture and on what terms, and exposes architecture professionals to draconian penalties for conduct that is neither criminal nor harmful.

It cannot have been the intention of Parliament to make it a crime, punishable by ten years' imprisonment, for a Kampala architect to accept a commission from a Ugandan family living in London to design their retirement home in Jinja. But that is precisely what the Bill, on its plain language, does.

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I respectfully urge the Committee to recommend substantial amendments to the Bill, including the express exclusion of regulated professionals acting in their professional capacity, and to extend the consultation period to permit proper engagement with the architecture profession.

I am available to appear before the Committee at its convenience to elaborate on any of the matters raised in this submission.

Yours faithfully,



Arch. Kenneth Amunsiimire
President, Uganda Society of Architects.

Copies to:

1. The Registrar, Architects Registration Board
2. The Chairperson, Architects Registration Board
3. The Clerk, Parliamentary Committee on Physical Planning (for information)

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