UN advises Uganda to buy environment friendly goods

KAMPALA. The United Nation Environment Programme has asked Uganda and other African countries to prioritise the green procurement system to achieve sustainable economic development without destroying the environment.

Green procurement means buying products and services that cause minimal adverse environmental impacts. It incorporates human health and environmental concerns into the search for high quality products and services at competitive prices.

"Sustainable procurement is at the heart of achieving sustainable development objectives both at national and global levels. The way societies use, manage and protect natural resources fundamentally shapes the wellbeing of humanity, the environment and the economy," Ms Ernest Kamala, a programme officer for resources efficiency unit at the UN environment agency, said on Monday during a workshop in Entebbe.

Ms Kamala said sustainable procurement is a key enabler to achieving Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goal 12 on responsible consumption and production, which promotes public procurement practices that are sustainable in accordance with national policies and priorities.

Advantage
She also said the system takes up a large portion of the public expenditure in many countries (up to 30 per cent of the GDP in the case of Uganda).

Ms Kamala said since 2015, Uganda has been implementing nine projects to support micro, small and medium entrepreneurs on greening businesses through the application of sustainable consumption and production practices.

Up to 3,000 such entities have benefited under the SWITCH Africa Green project, providing 10,000 jobs for mainly women and youth.

In 2015, the UN offered $11.5m (Shs43b) grant for 34 projects across six African countries, including Uganda.

Uganda’s accountant general, Mr Lawrence Semakula, said at least half of the country’s budget is channelled through public sector procurement.

“This clearly indicates the potential that exists to leverage public spending in order to promote social, environmental economic policies,” Mr Semakula said.

He said the country’s Vision 2040 and Uganda’s National Development Plant II advocate for sustainable and equitable development as well as sustainable wealth creation.

“This vision is in line with UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals agenda. It is government’s responsibility to create and maintain healthy local economies, improved social welfare, and ensure stimulation of employment, innovation and environmental protection. To support this goal, government needs to incorporate programmes that are part of the country’s sustainable development strategy,” Mr Semakula said.

Mr Allan Kasagga, the director for Finance and Administration at the National Environment Management Authority, said the body has already incorporated green procurement by public and private sectors in its 2018 National Environment Policy currently in Parliament.