

AFRICA OIL+GAS REPORT · UGANDA

Fred Kabanda Appointed Executive Director of Petroleum Authority of Uganda

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Uganda's oil and gas regulatory landscape has shifted with the appointment of Fred Kabanda as the new Executive Director of the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU), succeeding Ernest Rubondo, who had long served in the role. The change at the top of Uganda's upstream regulator marks a significant moment for one of East Africa's most closely watched emerging petroleum provinces.

Fred Kabanda brings a dual professional background to the role, having worked as both a geologist and a banker — a combination that positions him to navigate the technical and financial complexities that have defined Uganda's upstream development journey. Rubondo, often referred to as a "long timer" in the sector, oversaw the PAU during a period that included the negotiation and progression of Uganda's landmark Lake Albert basin developments, making his tenure one of the most consequential in the authority's history.

The leadership transition comes at a critical juncture for Uganda's petroleum sector. The country's upstream ambitions — centred on the Lake Albert basin — have been years in the making, with major infrastructure decisions, including pipeline routing and field development planning, having required sustained regulatory engagement. A change in executive leadership inevitably introduces questions around regulatory continuity, stakeholder relationships, and the pace of remaining project milestones, particularly as Uganda moves closer to eventual first oil.

For international oil and gas service companies monitoring Uganda, the identity and priorities of the PAU's executive director carry practical weight. The regulator plays a central role in licensing, environmental oversight, local content enforcement, and the approval of field development plans. Kabanda's background in geology suggests familiarity with subsurface matters, while his banking experience may indicate an orientation toward commercial and financing frameworks — both relevant as Uganda's projects seek to finalise investment structures and move toward execution.

The appointment also signals a generational shift in how Uganda manages its petroleum governance. As the sector matures from exploration and appraisal into development and eventual production, the PAU's leadership will need to balance investor confidence with national development objectives, including local content requirements that affect how international service companies structure their Ugandan operations. How Kabanda interprets and enforces these frameworks will be closely watched by operators and service providers alike.

Why this matters to partners and clients of Saga

Norwegian service companies with existing or prospective positions in Uganda should monitor Kabanda's early regulatory signals, particularly around local content enforcement and field development plan approvals, as these directly affect contract structuring and market entry. Companies not yet active in Uganda should treat this as a moment to initiate or refresh stakeholder engagement with the PAU under new leadership. The transition warrants a watch-and-engage posture rather than immediate action.

PARTNER ANGLES

- **Drilling:** Monitor whether the new PAU leadership accelerates or adjusts the timeline for remaining drilling campaign approvals in the Lake Albert basin, which affects rig demand planning.
- **Subsea/FPSO:** Track Kabanda's stance on field development plan approvals, as these govern the infrastructure configurations — including any floating production concepts — that service companies would bid against.

- **Pipeline:** The PAU regulates midstream elements of Uganda's export infrastructure; understanding the new director's priorities on pipeline-related permitting is relevant for any pipeline service or inspection firms.
- **Service:** Local content compliance is a PAU enforcement area — Norwegian well services and support firms should assess whether Kabanda signals stricter or more pragmatic implementation of local content rules.

[Original source: Africa Oil+Gas Report →](#)

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