



Eulogy for Hon. Dr. Tom Walter Buruku (1943-2021)

The late Hon. Dr. Tom Walter Buruku was a person who struck a chord with all, high and low in society. He inspired those who he led through exemplary living.

By the testament of friends and associates, Hon. Tom didn't give himself any airs and graces when he served the country in different capacities including in the diplomatic community.

“He served the country with great dedication. He brought to the organization for whom he served a unique professionalism and political acumen,” says, Dr Eric Tiyo Sekebuga Adriko, the Chancellor Muni University where Hon. Tom was a distinguished Council Member and Chairperson of Estates and Works Committee

Muni University Vice chancellor Prof. Christine Dranzoa said the late Hon. Tom lived a selfless life. “He never abandoned his people and friends”.

Born on April 6, 1943 in Pakao village in Kijomoro subcounty in Maracha District, Hon Tom attended primary school at Mvara in Arua city, before proceeding to King's College Budo for secondary education on a district scholarship. As put in his family biography, “for the son of a peasant to attend Budo was a great achievement and an early sign of his illustrious future”.

In 1968 he obtained Bachelor of laws degree, LLB (Hons) EA, University College Dar es Salaam, a qualification that made him the first lugbara lawyer. In 2010, he was awarded the Honorary Doctor of Philosophy in Humanities from United Graduate College in the USA in recognition of his international Humanitarian service.

Hon. Tom worked with the British American Tobacco from 1968 to 1980. He began his distinguished career as a diplomat and humanitarian in 1981 where he served as the Secretary General of Uganda Red Cross up to 1984. From 1985 to 1990, he served as the Director for Africa, International Federation of Red Cross, Switzerland.

Between 1990 and 1994, he served as the Head of Delegation, International Federation of Red cross and Red Crescent Societies, South Africa during a transition to a post-apartheid society. One of his key roles in this assignment was assisting the South African Red Cross to reform its internal practices from based on apartheid principles to democratic ones. In the last year of this assignment, he was selected as a Member of Delegation, Mission to the UN General Assembly, New York, a three-person team assigned to lobby the United Nations for Red Cross Observer Status.

From 1995 to 1996, he served as the Head of Delegation, International Federation of Red cross and Red Crescent Societies, Sierra Leone.

He received several awards to his honour including the prestigious Henry Dunant Medal which he received in 2013, the highest award given by the International Red Cross and awarded to those who have faithfully served the cause of Red Cross even in the face of personal danger. In 2010 he was awarded the Uganda Red Cross Award for Outstanding Contribution to the service of vulnerable people in Uganda. Others include; the Venezuela Red Cross Humanitarian Service award, in 2009; the Rotary Club of Kiwatule Vocational Award for Service to disadvantaged communities in Uganda, in 2008; the Order of Meritorious Service, Finnish Red Cross, 1997; and Meritorious Service Award, King College Budo for which the year of award could not be readily established.

He was a well-travelled man, travelled to over 80 countries, including all but one in Africa.

Upon retiring to Uganda in 1996, Hon. Tom ventured into business, becoming the Founder and Proprietor, Heritage Courts Hotel and Conference Centre, one of the first and prominent facilities in the hospitality sector in Arua city.

From 2001 until his death Hon. Buruku, as he was fondly referred to by friends, was the Honorary consul General, Ghana Consulate, Uganda. He also served as one of the seven Commissioners of the Uganda Electoral commission between from 2002 to 2016.

From 2005 until his death, he was the Chairman, New Partnership of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (NEPARC), a group of 30 National Red Cross and Crescent Societies in Africa founded for mutual support and strengthening of governance and Management.

On top of his intellectual prowess and outstanding leadership qualities, Hon. Tom was a religious a person. He contributed land and resources for construction and the development of Calvary Church, Kagave, in Entebbe municipality, Wakiso district. This church was started by his elder brother, the late SemeiOsoa.

Rev Fr. Professor Odubuker Picho Epiphany, MIDM, the Muni University Deputy Vice Chancellor in charge of Finance and Administration, described the Hon. Tom as a “a gift to the people of West Nile”.

The Vice Chairman of Muni University Council, Hon. Tibrichu Habib Amin, says they were already friends with Hon. Tom before joining Muni University. “That was way back while I was working with a World Bank funded project – BUDS under Private Sector Foundation of Uganda. We used to meet to discuss about how to support and develop his dream of modernizing the hospitality industry, which he has successfully established. He was also a colleague and a friend of my late daddy, Hon. Amin Onzi Ibrahim, former Deputy Minister of Works and Transport who died in 2002,” says Hon. Amin.

According to the deceased’s family, he grew up without knowing sickness like flu and malaria. It was until when he was in his 40s that he was diagnosed with diabetes and high blood pressure. He managed these very well until he was forced to begin dialysis at the age of 72. Despite best efforts, he succumbed to kidney failure, November 9, 2021, at his residence in Entebbe.

He was laid to rest at a family burial ground in Congo cell, Mvara ward, Ayivu Division in Arua city, November 14, 2021. May His Soul Rest in Peace.