

EU bans foreign travels over coronavirus disease

Reason. Mr Pacifici said they abide by the regulations and laws of this land (Uganda), something that explains why some delegates missed the conference.

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The European Union (EU) has banned its officials from travelling over the outbreak of coronavirus that has hit several countries mostly in Asia and Europe.

The EU decision comes when Uganda is hosting the first Uganda EU business forum (March 9 to March 10). Officials from the union say the decision was taken as a measure to save the virus from escalating.

Ambassador Attilio Pacifici, the head of EU delegation to Uganda, confirmed the development and said though it was a tough decision, EU felt it was necessary to act.

“On Friday, a decision was made by all European institutions to cancel immediately all missions abroad from travelling notably particularly to those countries where the virus is not yet present. In gesture of responsibility, we stopped all missions until such a time when this crisis will be over,” he said.

Government of Uganda banned all international conferences on Saturday and said such gatherings would only be allowed when the coronavirus threat is eliminated.

Officials from both the EU mission in Uganda and the government of Uganda spent the weekend trying to put in place safety measures against the spread of the disease.

On Saturday, 22 foreigners who had landed at Entebbe International Airport, were deported on arrival over fears of spread of the virus after they rejected self-quarantine, which government had imposed on all passengers from category one list of those countries it said had high prevalence rates.

Dr Ruth Aceng, the Minister of Health, said the passengers were asked to go back because they had refused to be self-quarantined for 14 days as required by the guidelines.

Mr Pacifici said those who were deported were not those coming to attend the Uganda EU business conference. He said many tourists had come to Uganda from several



Delegates. Left to right: Uganda's Prime minister Dr Ruhakana Rugunda, Head of the EU delegation to Uganda Attilio Pacifici, Trade minister Amelia Kyambadde, Uganda's ambassador to Belgium and the EU Mirjam Blaak, and other officials during the business forum conference at Munyonyo, Kampala, yesterday. PHOTO BY RACHEL MABALA

countries.

“I know that there has been some problems at the airport because people have to be told in advance, but this decision was made on Friday.

“I think we are talking about such people, tourists who were not aware that such a decision had been taken,” he said.

“As far as those coming for the conference, I can confirm that none of the people who had registered to come here have been rejected.

Those who wanted to come following the guidelines issued by the minister were informed and they did not come,” he added.

The head of EU delegation to Uganda also thanked the Health ministry for taking extra measures to safeguard those attending the conference by deploying more health officials to do the screening.

Notable among those who missed the conference are the director general for development and co-operation of the European Com-

mission, Mr Koen Doens, and Jutta Urpilainen, the EU commissioner for international Partnerships.

During the two-day conference, the Sustainable Business for Uganda Platform will be officially launched and relevant cooperation programmes signed between government and the EU.

“This is to say that this Forum is not a one shot event but rather that the initiative will provide a joint platform to discuss and advocate issues of importance for private sector development and investments,” Mr Pacifici

President Museveni also asked the EU businesses to invest in Uganda, saying the investment climate is good. In a speech read by Dr Rugunda, the President said: “The government of Uganda and development partners including EU have laid a strong foundation for investment, industrialisation and international trade.”

RENEWED PARTNERSHIPS

Milestone. Ambassador Pacifici said the forum marks a milestone in the economic relations between Uganda and the EU. He said over the last year, the EU delegation to Uganda partnered with Private Sector Foundation Uganda to work together with

the private sector, from both Uganda and Europe, in order to assess the main constraints hampering new, sustainable investments in the country and propose measures that can improve the investment and the business climate.