

ACTS SUPPLEMENT*to The Uganda Gazette No. 45, Volume CXIX, dated 8th May, 2026*

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Act 6 *Magistrates Courts (Amendment) Act* **2026****THE MAGISTRATES COURTS (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2026****Arrangement of Sections**

Section

1. Amendment of Cap.19
2. Amendment of section 2 of principal Act
3. Repeal of section 3 of principal Act
4. Substitution of section 4 of principal Act
5. Repeal of section 8 of principal Act
6. Amendment of section 161 of principal Act
7. Amendment of section 162 of principal Act
8. Repeal of section 173 of principal Act
9. Amendment of section 203 of principal Act
10. Amendment of section 206 of principal Act
11. Insertion of section 217A in principal Act
12. Amendment of section 218 of principal Act
13. Amendment of section 219 of principal Act
14. Amendment of section 227 of principal Act
15. Repeal of Schedules 2 and 3 of principal Act
16. Consequential amendment of Cap. 19 and any other enactment
17. Transitional provision

THE MAGISTRATES COURTS (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2026

An Act to amend the Magistrates Courts Act, Cap. 19 to increase the pecuniary jurisdiction of magistrates courts; to enhance the powers of magistrates to impose higher fines; to abolish the position of magistrate grade II; to provide for the designation of magisterial areas; to provide for transitional provisions and for related matters.

DATE OF ASSENT: 29TH APRIL, 2026

Date of Commencement: 8th May, 2026

BE IT ENACTED by Parliament as follows:

1. Amendment of Cap. 19

The Magistrates Courts Act, in this Act referred to as the “principal Act”, is amended in section 1(2) by repealing paragraphs (a) and (c).

2. Amendment of section 2 of principal Act

The principal Act is amended by substituting for section 2, the following—

“ 2. Magisterial areas

The Chief Justice may, acting on the advice of the Judiciary Council and by statutory instrument, designate magisterial areas and magistrates courts for the purposes of this Act.”

3. Repeal of section 3 of principal Act

Section 3 of the principal Act is repealed.

4. Substitution of section 4 of principal Act

The principal Act is amended by substituting for section 4, the following—

“4. Appointment of magistrates

(1) There shall be appointed such number of magistrates of such rank as the Chief Justice shall, in consultation with the Judiciary Council and in accordance with the approved structure of the Judiciary, determine.

(2) Magistrates shall be of the following ranks—

- (a) chief magistrate; and
- (b) magistrate.

(3) The power and jurisdiction of a chief magistrate or magistrate shall be the powers and jurisdiction vested in the chief magistrate or magistrate under this Act and any other written law.”

5. Repeal of section 8 of principal Act

Section 8 of the principal Act is repealed.

6. Amendment of section 161 of principal Act

Section 161 of the principal Act is amended in subsection (1) by repealing paragraph (c).

7. Amendment of section 162 of principal Act

Section 162 of the principal Act is amended in subsection 1—

- (a) in paragraph (b), by substituting for the words “two hundred forty currency points”, the words “five hundred currency points”; and
- (b) by repealing paragraph (c).

8. Repeal of section 173 of principal Act

Section 173 of the principal Act is repealed.

9. Amendment of section 203 of principal Act

Section 203 of the principal Act is amended—

- (a) in subsection (1), by repealing paragraph (b);
- (b) in subsection (4), by repealing paragraph (b);
- (c) by repealing subsection (5); and
- (d) by repealing subsection (6).

10. Amendment of section 206 of principal Act

Section 206 of the principal Act is amended—

- (a) in subsection (1)—
 - (i) in paragraph (a), by substituting for the words “fifty million shillings”, the words “ten thousand currency points”;
 - (ii) by substituting for paragraph (b), the following —

“(b) a magistrate shall have jurisdiction where the value of the subject matter does not exceed five thousand currency points;”;
 - (iii) by repealing paragraph (c); and

- (b) by inserting immediately after subsection (1), the following—

“(1a) The Minister may, acting on the advice of the Chief Justice and with the approval of Parliament, by statutory instrument, alter the civil jurisdiction of magistrates prescribed under subsection (1) (a) and (b).”

11. Insertion of section 217A in principal Act

The principal Act is amended by inserting immediately after section 217, the following—

“217A. Power of chief magistrates court to withdraw and transfer cases

(1) On the application of any of the parties to a suit, appeal or other proceeding and after notice to the parties and hearing any of the parties that desire to be heard, or on its own motion, for just cause, without that notice—

- (a) a chief magistrates court may transfer any suit, appeal or other proceeding pending before it for trial or disposal to the High Court;
- (b) a chief magistrates court may withdraw any suit, appeal or other proceeding pending before a magistrate in the same court or magisterial area, and—
 - (i) try or dispose of it;
 - (ii) transfer it to the High Court for trial or disposal; or
 - (iii) transfer it to another magistrate for trial, or return it to the magistrate from whom it was withdrawn, for disposal.

(2) Where any suit or proceeding has been transferred or withdrawn under this section, the court to which it is transferred may, subject to any special directions in the order of transfer, either retry it or proceed from the point at which it was transferred or withdrawn.”

12. Amendment of section 218 of principal Act

Section 218 of the principal Act is amended by repealing subsection (2).

13. Amendment of section 219 of principal Act

Section 219 of the principal Act is amended—

- (a) in subsection (1), by repealing paragraph (b); and
- (b) by repealing subsection (2).

14. Amendment of section 227 of principal Act

Section 227 of the principal Act is amended by repealing subsection (2).

15. Repeal of Schedules 2 and 3 of principal Act

Schedules 2 and 3 of the principal Act are repealed.

16. Consequential amendment of Cap. 19 and any other enactment

The Magistrates Courts Act and any other enactment in force at the commencement of this Act is amended—

- (a) by substituting for the words “magistrate grade I”, wherever the words appear, the word “magistrate”; and
- (b) by deleting the words “magistrate grade II” wherever the words appear.

17. Transitional provision

(1) Where, by reason of the amendment made under section 10 of this Act to section 206 (1) (a) of the principal Act, any cause that

is pending before the High Court at the commencement of this Act, that would otherwise have been triable by a chief magistrate court, if such cause had commenced after the coming into force of this Act, any such cause shall be transferred to the court presided over by a chief magistrate and be heard by that court if, the hearing of the case before the High Court has not commenced or if the High Court is satisfied that it is fair for such transfer to be made.

(2) Where, by reason of the amendment under section 10 of this Act to section 206 (1) (b) of the principal Act, any cause pending before the High Court or a court presided over by a chief magistrate at the commencement of this Act, would have been triable by a court presided over by a magistrate, if such cause had commenced after the coming into force of this Act, any such cause shall be transferred to a court presided over by a magistrate to be heard by that court if, the High Court or the chief magistrate has not commenced hearing the case, or if the High Court or the chief magistrate as the case may be, is satisfied that it is fair for such a transfer to be made.

(3) The Chief Justice shall issue practice directions on the transfer of the causes referred to in subsections (1) and (2).