

2014-12-13

A lot more needs to be done to create awareness of EAC issues

Ligami, Christabel

The East African

<http://hdl.handle.net/11671/1676>

Downloaded from EAC IRC Repository, East African Community's institutional repository

EAST AFRICAN
VOICES



PROTOCOL **watch**

Federation being pushed from top

The Political Federation is the final stage of the EAC integration process. This includes having a central political authority as well as common foreign and security policies. The ultimate aim of the EAC integration process is the attainment of the 4th pillar i.e. a Political Federation.

However, so far this is being discussed at the very top level i.e. by the Summit of the Heads of State through recommendations made by the Council of Ministers. The process is not shrouded in mystery but it has no public input since in Article 123 (6) it is provided that "the Summit shall initiate the process towards the establishment of the Political Federation of the Partner States by directing the Council of Ministers to undertake the process."

>> Common Market has made doing business simpler, faster

Common Market is a second stage of the EAC integration process. As a trading bloc, the Customs Union allows for common policies on product regulation, free movement of goods, services, labour and capital. The other major characteristics of a Common Market are harmonisation of the legal framework for capital markets (common goals approach); free mobility of capital, strong institutions to monitor decisions; and harmonisation of monetary and fiscal policies.

The East African Community Common Market Protocol was signed on July 1, 2010. The overall objective of the Common Market is to widen and deepen co-operation among the Partner States in the economic and social fields for the benefit of the citizens of the Community.

>> Customs Union has been smooth and has grown cross-border trade

The Customs Union is the first stage of the EAC integration process. The EAC Customs Union was launched in 2005 to liberalise intra-regional trade in goods on the basis of mutual beneficial trade arrangements among the Partner States; promote efficiency in production within the Community; enhance domestic, cross-border and foreign investment in the Community; and promote economic development and diversification in industrialisation in the Community. The Union is characterised by same import tax on all goods from outside East Africa and removal of all taxes on goods between the countries.

>> Monetary Union on its way despite nationalistic hurdles

The Monetary Union is the third stage of the EAC integration process. It is characterised by a common currency with a centralised monetary authority; co-ordinated macro-economic policies; strong central institutions and common policies for structural change and development.

The envisaged EAC Monetary Union is expected to adhere to these characteristics in broadening and deepening the integration process, and smooth trading activities between and among the peoples of the region.

A lot more needs to be done to

As per the EAC Treaty, each Partner State has established a Ministry in charge of Community Affairs to co-ordinate its affairs at the national level

By **CHRISTABEL LIGAMI**
Special Correspondent

The Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community underscores the people-centred and market-driven co-operation and emphasizes on multilevel participation and the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders in the process of integration.

The Treaty also cites the principle of complementarity whereby people will participate in the Community activities at all levels: Partner States, individual, company, association, group, non-governmental organisations and other interest groups like women, youth and others.

The primary objective of the EAC integration is to raise the living standards of the people through promotion of entrepreneurial skills and collaboration in trade and business.

"For this to take place, the EAC must uphold good governance, free market economy and rule of law as pre-requisites for regional development and global partnerships," said the EAC Secretary-General Richard Sezibera.

"The successful implementation of the Treaty requires total co-operation of the residents of East Africa; and the willingness, commitment and action of states, markets and civil society towards total social inclusion."

Dr Sezibera said that when all citizens are involved in decision making or the Community, it promotes and builds national trust which improves

the image of the country. "Through having strong citizen participation, countries will automatically adhere to the rules of democracy in governance," said Dr Sezibera.

Article 7 of the EAC Treaty on the Establishment of the EAC provides for a people-centred and market driven economy.

However experts say that there is a lack of knowledge about the EAC among the masses.

In an effort to create and improve on integration awareness, the East African Community secretariat in June this year launched an awareness programme in a bid to ensure border residents understand better the regional bloc's integration agenda.

The programme dubbed "EAC Regional Programme for Sensitisation of Border Communities" started on June 24 at the border of Rwanda and Tanzania and is to cover all the borders in EAC Partner States.

Besides raising general awareness among border communities of the EAC region, it specifically focuses on small-scale traders to enhance their understanding of the bloc's integration agenda since they are at the core of cross-border trade and drive integration in the grassroots.

As per the EAC Treaty, each Partner State has established a Ministry in charge of East African Community Affairs and the Ministries co-ordinate the affairs of the Community at the national level.

The Ministries are also charged with sensitising and



popularising the regional integration activities at the national level.

Partner States are tasked with broadening and deepening their consultation processes to ensure inclusive decision-making, policy formulation and implementation.

As a result, stakeholders are informed and fully engaged in shaping the Community.

The East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) is currently pushing for the enactment of a law that will ensure that East Africans are actively involved in the integration process.

EALA members have forwarded the proposed Civic Education Bill to all National Assemblies for scrutiny by member states before it is passed into law.

Once the law is enacted, the EAC Partner States and stakeholders will be required to sensitise their citizens on the integration matters.

The aim of the Bill is to ensure that citizens can understand EAC matters and get involved in the integration process. This will make them know that EAC is people-centred and a market-driven Community.



EAST AFRICAN
VOICES

create awareness of EAC issues

zens and that they are aware of new developments about the integration process. This must be communicated to citizens so that we are integrating as one," said Ms Zziwa.

The EAC Treaty recognises the role of civil society organisations (CSOs) in promoting EAC activities.

Yet, the rules regulating CSOs activities limit them only to an observer status. Moreover, the rules set stringent requirements for CSOs to be recognised as partners in the framework of the EAC and, as a result, only a few organisations have been granted the observer status.

The media has also been at the forefront in raising public awareness about the EAC integration process through extensive coverage.

The EAC organises annual EAC Media Awards ceremony, where journalists are evaluated and honoured for reporting on EAC issues and the integration process as part of their daily coverage of the Community.

The EAC country study conducted by the Secretariat last year on the status of regional integration awareness in the Partner States proposed some strategies that could be used in raising the currently low levels of awareness of various aspects of current EAC integration process. These include: involving non-state actors to promote awareness among the people; strengthening civil societies to ensure inter-country co-ordination; involving the media in cascading the EAC agenda; having democratic structures that will involve the election of Members of EALA directly by the people.

It was also observed that EALA ought to be a true representation of the people, rather

than being a representation of member countries' parliaments. In this case the people should vote directly for their EALA representatives thus making the body more democratic. This will provide a democratic counter to the current situation that is characterised by power being exclusively concentrated in the offices of the presidents of the EAC member countries.

"Although Partner States are supporting market-driven economy, the people-centred aspect of the integration process has not received enough attention," said Betty Maina, the chief executive officer for the Kenya Association of Manufacturers.

"As a result, the people of East Africa remain fundamentally ignorant of the Treaty and the whole integration process," she said.

She further said that as per the Treaty, East African residents can input into the EAC processes through civil society organisations, private sector

organisations and other organised groups to ensure that they are part of the policy and decision-making processes and their concerns are taken into consideration.

"Governments at national and regional levels have a duty to provide an enabling environment for active participation of the residents of East Africa. They also have a duty to provide avenues for dialogue such as laws, institutions, and democratic space in a manner that respects the principles of social justice, good governance and universally accepted human rights standards," said Ms Maina.

"In my view, this question extends beyond citizens being informed and becoming knowledgeable about the EAC. It has more to do with democratic politics and citizen participation."

The EAC, she said, must be driven by a "grassroots" ethos and thrust based on broad citizen participation at all levels of the East African society.

According to Ms Maina, lack of strong political will, lack of strong participation of the private sector and civil society in the co-operation activities, the continued disproportionate sharing of benefits of the Community among the Partner States due to their differences in their levels of development and lack of adequate policies to address this situation.

"With efficient and effective institutions at the regional level, there is bound to be major economic and social benefits to the entire East African Community both in the informal and private sector.

This will also promote good regional relations, as well as enhanced peaceful co-existence," said Ms Maina.

Many of the regional projects such as infrastructure are decided by presidents and at ministerial level

work permit, push Northern Corridor projects

parties," said a joint communiqué. Journalists were not allowed to cover the discussions that started late in the afternoon. They were only briefed by a team of ministers led by Kenyan Foreign Affairs Cabinet Secretary Amina Mohammed.

The summit discussed need to facilitate smooth flow of cargo across the borders. The Northern Corridor links East African countries rail, oil pipeline, road and inland water transport. Apart from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi, other countries that are part of the EAC are Ethiopia and South Sudan.

The Heads of State also directed the Minister of Infrastructure of Rwanda to convene an

airline industry stakeholders meeting to finalise the 5th freedom traffic rights on Entebbe-Nairobi-Juba-Nairobi by end of this month.

Through the joint communiqué the Heads of State noted that the conclusion of power purchase and wheeling agreements and the signed memorandum of understanding on management of Northern Corridor airspace bloc. "The memorandum we have signed is significant as we now have single airspace that comprises four states. The bloc will now go into specifics of management and the air fares," said Louise Mushikiwabo, Rwanda's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Co-operation.

She added that it was hoped that other countries such as Ethiopia will join the single

airspace to facilitate faster movement within the region. She said civil aviation authorities will address the required agreements. Uganda and South Sudan had complained of high air fares its citizens were forced to pay when travelling in the region.

On the standard gauge railway, the states noted that the section between Mombasa and Nairobi had commenced and directed the Ministers of transport and infrastructure to expedite ratification of the SGR Protocol and together with Ministers of Finance, Infrastructure and attorneys-general and Ministers of Justice to mobilise financing for the North corridor projects and report to the next Summit.



WORD ON POLICY

EAC Secretary-General
Richard Sezibera

The successful implementation of the EAC Treaty requires total cooperation of the residents of East Africa; and the willingness, commitment and action of states, markets and civil society towards total social inclusion. The primary objective of the EAC integration is to raise the living standards of the people through promotion of



Former EAC Secretary-General
Juma Mwapachu

The EAC Treaty needs to be amended to establish an East African Citizen Initiative. Also we need a "Year for the East African Citizens" which will focus on encouraging citizen participation in the integration process. The citizens should be enabled to vote directly for Members of the East African Legislative Assembly in order to instil participation.



Embattled EALA Speaker
Margaret Zziwa

There is a lack of awareness on EAC matters. We need to do more to ensure that information on EAC is available to all citizens and that they are aware of new developments about the integration process. This must be communicated to citizens so that we integrate as one. The media has at the forefront in raising public awareness about the integration process.



Betty Maina, CEO, Kenya
Manufacturers Association

Although partner states are supporting market-driven economy, the people-centred aspect of the integration process has not received enough attention. As a result, the people of East Africa remain fundamentally ignorant of the Treaty and the whole integration process. As per the Treaty, residents can take part through the civil society organisations, private sector organizations among others.



ON THE GROUND

Nairobi meeting agrees on no

By **STAFF WRITER**
The EastAfrican

Citizens of East Africa now be able to work in any of the East African countries without incurring any extra costs starting from next year. Currently it is only in Rwanda where people from within the region obtain a work permit without paying a fee.

However during the eighth Northern Corridor Infrastructure Project Summit in Nairobi on Thursday, Presidents Uhuru Kenyatta, Yoweri Museveni and Paul Kagame of Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda respectively noted that free movement of people within the region had improved trade. The presi-

dents directed their ministers in charge of Immigration to conclude the Agreement on Total Liberalisation of Free Movement of Labour and Services agreed upon at an earlier meeting.

Other leaders present at the meeting were South Sudan Vice President JAMES IGGA and officials from Burundi, Tanzania and Ethiopia. The summit was a follow-up of another one in Kampala in October.

The leaders also ordered the operationalisation of one network area for the region starting from next year to facilitate easy communication. "The Summit has further directed removal of all non-tariff barriers and emphasised the need for compliance by all

