US, EAC sign $194m partnership agreement to strengthen regional development

By Guardian Reporter

The US government and the East African Community (EAC) yesterday launched a Regional Development Objectives Grant Agreement at the EAC headquarters in Arusha.

On behalf of the US government, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) will contribute approximately $194 million over a five-year period for shared development goals, deepening the partnership between the two organisations.

About $30 million will fund institutional strengthening within the EAC Secretariat, while the remainder will support other development partners in their efforts to contribute to the EAC regional integration agenda.

Charge d'Affaires of the US embassy to Tanzania and US Representative to the EAC Virginia Blaser, USAID Mission Director for Kenya and East Africa Karen Freeman, and EAC Secretary General Ambassador Liberat Mfumukeko signed a memorandum of acknowledgment to affirm the agreement.

Charge Blaser noted the tremendous value of fostering regional cooperation, saying that the United States supports "governments and regional bodies such as the EAC in their collaborative efforts to unlock this region's full potential for the benefit of its people." USAID Mission Director Freeman emphasized the joint achievements of the EAC and USAID over the past two decades. "By simplifying customs and border procedures, we have facilitated faster, more affordable and predictable trade. We have increased investment by facilitating the closure of more international deals, which are expanding local industries and manufacturing."

Under this agreement, the EAC and the United States will work together to advance regional economic integration; increase trade and investment between member states and with the United States; improve the sustainable management of natural resources in the Lake Victoria Basin and Mara River ecosystems; improve access to integrated health services in border areas and strengthen the EAC's organisational leadership.

EAC Secretary General Amb. Liberat Mfumukeko thanked USAID for its continued support to the EAC integration agenda, saying that the EAC's partnership with the United States dates back to the Community's inception. "The partnership continues to expand and be strengthened through mutual development objectives and funding for programmes such as trade and investment, biodiversity, climate change, agriculture, food security, water supply and sanitation, and institutional support," said Amb. Mfumukeko.