



EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

WELCOMING SPEECH BY RT. HON. DANIEL F. KIDEGA, SPEAKER OF EALA AT THE STATE OF EAC ADDRESS BY H.E. JAKAYA KIKWETE, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA AND CHAIRPERSON OF THE SUMMIT OF EAC HEADS OF STATE, MARCH 19TH 2015 - BUJUMBURA, BURUNDI

Your Excellency, Jakaya Kikwete, President of the United Republic of Tanzania and the Chair of the Summit of EAC Heads of State

Rt. Hon Pie Ntavyohanyuma, President of the Burundi National Assembly,

Rt. Hon Gabriel Ntisezerana, President of the Burundi Senate

His Excellency Gervais Rufyikiri, 2nd Vice President of the Republic of Burundi,

H.E. the Ombudsman of Burundi, Dr. Muhammad Rukara,

Hon Members of the Bureaus of the Parliament of Burundi

Your Excellences, Former Heads of State of Burundi

Hon. Dr. Harrison Mwakyembe, the Chairperson, EAC Council of Ministers,

The Hon. Ministers and Members of the Council of Ministers,

Amb Dr. Richard Sezibera, the Secretary General of the East African Community,

Hon. Members of the East African Legislative Assembly and the Parliament of Burundi,

Excellences Ambassadors and Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good Morning.

Your Excellency; I take this opportunity to warmly welcome you to Bujumbura on this occasion of the State of EAC Address and to thank you for gracing us with your presence.

I also take this opportunity to warmly congratulate you following your assumption to Chair of the Summit of EAC Heads of State and to assure you of our total support as an Assembly.

Before I proceed, let me reassure you and all East Africans that the Assembly which bore, a tumultuous 2014 is now back on track and stronger than before.

I thank Your Excellency and the Summit for the concern and support but above all, for giving us democratic space to “clean our house” by upholding and maintaining the principle of separation of powers. We are absolutely optimistic that we shall deliver on our promise - for in any case, our constituents, East Africans, expect nothing less.

We have also picked up on some very useful and vital lessons that shall indeed strengthen the resolve to carry on with our mandate. Such include measures to strengthen EALA by amending the Rules of Procedure and integrating a Code of Conduct as part of the governance systems.

My administration is keen to do three things to leverage our scorecard; as we continue to put ‘brick to mortar’ in the integration process;

- a)** to reconcile and re-unite the Assembly to enhance teamwork, collegiality and create a cordial working environment
- b)** to revamp and reposition the image of EALA as the People’s Assembly and;
- c)** to prioritize the backlog of the pending work.

Two days ago, we were privileged to have H.E. Pierre Nkurunziza, grace the special sitting of the Assembly and in his remarks offered us words of counsel and policy directives.

Today presents yet another occasion for us to listen in to the State of EAC Address, which is a hallmark and a fundamental activity in the annual EAC calendar. Even more important is the dual uniqueness with which the occasion presents. The first is that, the Address as delivered, provides the EAC with the impetus and the direction for its Organs and Institutions to pick their cue from while outlining strategic challenges which require the attention of stakeholders to stimulate progress.

The second concerns its rotational nature, which is similar to the very cardinal principle of EALA. In most instances, the occasion calls upon the Chairperson of the Summit to deliver the speech in a neighbouring State from where EALA is sitting. This aspect evidences the progression of the EAC integration process.

The novelty of the State of EAC Address dates back to the year 2008 when H.E. President Yoweri Museveni made the inaugural Address to this Assembly in Arusha. It has since been institutionalized and we are grateful that all Heads of State have continuously honoured their respective invitations.

The EAC journey has no doubt been marked by a series of interesting, engaging and challenging events. Above all, such experience has proven right - the foresight of the founding fathers of the EAC who saw the unique value of regional integration.

Today, the political will is palpable and I congratulate the Summit for the support and direction availed to ensure stability of the integration process, the challenges notwithstanding.

Similarly deemed worthwhile is the determination with which the citizenry attach to the successful implementation of the integration process. The private sector and the civil society have on the one hand demanded and rightfully so, their place within the fulcrum of integration. On the other hand, they now play a watchdog role in line with the Articles 127 and 128 of the Treaty.

A quick glimpse at some of the benefits of integration reveals;

- a) the rising trade volumes which has witnessed the expansion of intra-regional trade from US 1.6 Billion in 2008 to US 3.8 Billion in 2010. This is coupled by a balanced trade relationship with various partners which similarly focuses on new and emerging markets;
- b) an upward trend in Foreign Direct Investments in 2013 with an increase of 6.6% to 3.7 Billion dollars compared to what was registered a year before;
- c) the entry and implementation of the One Area Network in Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda that has seen significant drop in the calling charges to about 12 US Cents per minute. We are indeed looking forward to July this year when Tanzania and Burundi shall be on board;

- d) visible progress with regards to movement of goods in conformity with the Rules of Origin principle;
- e) visible progress in roads, ports, airways and railways subsector and the bold decision to introduce the modern standard Railway gauge. We look forward to the time when the critical infrastructure system shall reach Kampala, Kigali and Bujumbura, to further open the interior to greater trade and development;
- f) the determination to implement the incremental approach to the integration process in line with Article 5(2) of the Treaty.

Such developments can only reinforce what **Jennifer Blanke**, a leading Chief Economist and member of the World Economic Forum whose writings are insightful, opines. She says and I quote:

“Regional integration is key to addressing economic growth and that any existing weaknesses may be addressed through the delivery of wider social and economic benefits and should be prioritized by Africa’s leaders as they look to ensure that Africa delivers on its promise in its wider context. (end of quote).

Your Excellency; Hon Members, distinguished ladies and gentlemen;

Generally, I am proud that we have not looked back since we re-kindled the integration process. Indeed, the process has sometimes been punctuated by occasional stagnations or reversals in a few cases and modest achievements at best in others. But we have kept the faith and hope alive at all times.

We could indeed have done better had we not let the scourge of NTBs encumber on the smooth operations of the Customs Union and the Common Market. But all is not lost. In this regard, I am particularly happy that the Council of Ministers has introduced the Elimination of NTB Bill, 2015 at the Assembly. This is one of the priority Bills for the Assembly this year.

I am further pleased to state that Council of Ministers has assured us of tabling at least 4 Bills this calendar year. This is vital for the integration process.

As EALA, we are alive to what citizens of the EAC continuously craving for; an enabling legal and regulatory environment for integration that is meaningful, that is respectful, is inclusive, adheres to international best practices and that is capable of positioning them to take advantage of the available opportunities. This is heavily loaded but the reality!

EALA is also very elated by the recent pronouncement by the Summit in Nairobi that all Bills due for approbation in accordance with Article 63 of the EAC Treaty be assented to by 30th July, 2015. EALA congratulates the

Summit for the pronouncement which puts to rest public criticism over the perceived delay in the assent of Bills despite the safeguard and provision of a timeframe within the Treaty.

Of equal importance, **Your Excellency**, is the enforcement of the Acts of the Community by the Partner States. While there is goodwill on the part of each Partner State to implement the Community laws, the hitherto different levels and tiers of bureaucracies encumber the process. There is need for the Summit to direct the policy authorities within the respective Partner States to move with haste in this direction.

We as an Assembly on our part, shall also pick up the matter with our counterparts – the National Assemblies in the Partner States.

Your Excellency, permit me to bring to the Summit's attention three issues to chew on;

1. The first been our keenness to see the EAC Treaty amended to reflect the current status of implementation. There is already some work in this direction – but EALA pleads that we speed up the process. Let us remain open to the hard fact that integration is living and that the process of amendments should be living as well.
2. Secondly your Excellency, we appreciate very much the fact that once a year, we have the State of EAC Address as evidenced here today. We are also very privileged to have the Heads of State open

the EALA Sittings whenever we visit the Partner States. However, we now need to take this level of collaboration to the next level. It is important for us to explore for an avenue or possibly mechanism that enables the Assembly to interface with the Summit and to exchange experiences. Our view would be a carefully thought out regional dialogue/forum that brings together the Summit, EALA and key stakeholders to the roundtable.

3. Thirdly Your Excellency, let me speak to the issue of full autonomy of the Assembly – which I know is also the very intention of the Summit. At the moment, the Assembly is semi-autonomous – the ideal scenario would be full autonomy including the direct funding by Partner States. This is absolutely necessary for the betterment of the EAC.

These areas can be addressed by constant engagements between the Assembly and the Summit.

Your Excellency; the matter of elections is key. The cycle of elections begins here in Burundi in May. The United Republic of Tanzania shall hold its referendum in April 2015, then hold actual elections in October 2015. The Republic of Uganda goes to the polls a year later before the culmination of the same in the respective Republics of Rwanda and Kenya in 2017.

Our clarion call as EALA is for all Partner States to conduct credible, free and fair elections in line with the respective constitutions and devoid of violence and malpractices. At this juncture, permit me to congratulate you as you head to the finish line. You not only retire as a statesman but you leave the mantle with your head high and with an indelible legacy.

Your Excellency,

Before I invite you to address this Assembly, may I briefly introduce to you some of the dignitaries present.

Finally, Your Excellency, it is now with singular pleasure and honour that I execute my humble duty to welcome you to address this *August* Assembly, today, Thursday, the 19th of March 2015.

I thank you for your kind attention.