



EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

WELCOMING REMARKS BY HON. ABDIRAHIN H. ABDI, SPEAKER OF EALA AT THE ADDRESS TO EALA BY H.E. PAUL KAGAME, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF RWANDA, TUESDAY 6TH SEPTEMBER, 2011

Your Excellency, Paul Kagame, the President of the Republic of Rwanda;

H.E. President of the Rwanda Senate;

Rt. Hon. Speaker of the Rwanda Chamber of Deputies;

The Chief Justice of Rwanda;

The Prime Minister of Rwanda;

Chairperson, EAC Council of Ministers;

Hon. Ministers;

The Secretary General of the EAC;

Hon. Members of the Rwanda Parliament and EALA;

Your Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Your Excellency, it is with great honour and humility that I warmly welcome you to yet another Special Sitting of the East African Legislative Assembly. This Special Session is held in your honour. Your Excellency, we are deeply humbled by your continuous acceptance to always avail yourself, despite your busy schedule to address us each time we come for our Sessions here in Kigali, Rwanda. Your Excellency, you may recall that the 2nd East African Legislative Assembly was inaugurated on 5th June, 2007 and will conclude its five year tenure on 4th June, 2012. Therefore, this is probably the last time you will be addressing Members of the 2nd Assembly. Nonetheless, in all the occasions you have addressed us, we have been inspired by your words of wisdom; and this has galvanised our resolve to work closely with you and Members of the Summit to spur the EAC integration agenda. For this Your Excellency, we remain truly gratified and indebted.

May I use this opportunity to confirm to you that Kigali has always presented itself as one of the cities in the EAC region which EALA MPs would like to frequent. This is the 2nd Session we are holding within one year, the first being in March/April 2011. We have still found it conducive to come back after four months because we have fond memories of the place, with nice and very friendly people, a clean environment and ever changing beautiful skyline

Your Excellency, it is therefore with some sadness that we are coming to the end of our term and this is the last Session in Kigali. However, the strong point is that we have come to say goodbye to you in a formal EALA Session. On behalf of the Members and my own behalf, please accept our gratitude. Your Excellency, I would like to inform you that Members have already indicated to me that they will continue to explore new opportunities here even after the 2nd Assembly.

Your Excellency, may I also extend our gratitude for the spirit of East Africanness you continue to exude, particularly in the following:-

1. Your sterling effort to steer the Republic of Rwanda to join the EAC fraternity. Your stewardship together with your other colleagues of the Summit was indeed brilliant and historical giving EAC a wider market, geographical coverage and a stronger negotiation ability.
2. Your continuous support in realising the pillars of integration namely; the Customs Union, the Common Market, Negotiations for the Monetary Union and the Political Federation. I request you and other Members of the Summit to continue offering wisdom in the process, particularly the last two which, are yet to be concluded.
3. Your positive outlook towards women empowerment which is reflected in all structures of your government and other institutions. It is of great interest that you reflected on the role of women in the EAC integration process and in leadership roles during the recent EAC Women's Conference in Kigali held in August, 2011. As an Assembly, we totally concur with you on the approaches you proposed, namely; to invest in and equip our youth, women, PWDs to increase productivity and business acumens; and Government support to avail various interests with the necessary resources and tools of trade.
4. You introduced the Kigali spirit within our management ethos by urging all those with leadership positions in the EAC to work towards EAC's objectives as enshrined in the EAC Treaty. Since then, a number of developments have taken place such as the EAC Heads of Organs and Institutions quarterly meetings, a streamlined calendar of activities, and a common approach to EAC-wide solutions. For all these, we thank you and continue to urge you and other Members of the Summit, to give us guidance on this matter.

While I could go on and on, allow me to share with you what we intend to achieve during this EALA meeting:-

In the course of the next two weeks, the Assembly shall consider important business for the Community including the EAC Trans-boundary Ecosystem Bill, the East African Parliamentary Institute Bill, the Election of EALA Members Bill, the EAC Control of Polythene Materials Bill, the EAC Human Rights Bill; debate and adoption of various Committee Reports as well as Resolutions of the Assembly to further deepen and widen EAC's integration agenda.

Finally, Your Excellency let me take this opportunity to extend special thanks to my brother, H.E. Dr. Vincent Biruta, the President of the Senate. I take cognizance of the fact that the term of H.E. Dr. Vincent Biruta and Members of the Senate will come to an end in October, 2011. We will surely miss his very good and accomplished work as the President of the Rwanda Senate, and as a Member of the EAC Speaker's Forum. We sincerely wish him the very best in his future endeavours. The short of it is that since 2007 when we first visited Rwanda, we have worked well and closely and therefore he is more than a friend.

H.E. Biruta and Rt. Hon. Mukantabana have particularly established a memorable and good working relationship with EALA and we have often felt at home in the Parliament of Rwanda. May I also extend the same gratitude to the entire Government of Rwanda including the Members and Staff of the Parliament of Rwanda for whole heartedly supporting EALA Sessions.

Your Excellency, it is now with great pleasure and honour that I execute my humble duty to welcome you to address this August House today, Tuesday 6th September, 2011.

Karibu Mheshimiwa Rais.