



East African Legislative Assembly, Nairobi, Kenya: September 11, 2012: EALA has today debated and adopted the Report of the Committee on Regional Affairs and Conflict Resolution and that of the Committee on Legal Rules and Privileges.

The Report of the Committee on Regional Affairs and Conflict Resolution was presented by the Chairperson, Hon Zein Abubakar Zein. The Report summarises the functions of the Committee noting that it is charged with a mandate to legislate, oversee and represent provisions under Chapter 17, 23, 26 and 27 of the Treaty for the establishment for the EAC. The Chapters deal with matters on free movement of persons, labour, services and the rights of establishment and residence as well as co-operation in political matters. Also under scrutiny by the Committee are relations with other regional and international organizations and development partners as well as co-operation in other fields.

The Report takes note of security concerns following a rapid assessment study of the likely implications of the Common Market on Security and vice-versa and the appropriate measures deemed necessary to contain the same. The Report cites threats in maritime security, xenophobia, cattle rustling, fraud and cyber-crime as some of the areas that need immediate tackling. Other threats include environmental crimes, laxity in border management and vandalism as well as theft of infrastructure components.

The Committee thus wants the issue of shared sovereignty discussed especially with regards to defence, security and foreign affairs. This matter, the Committee suggests, shall have a positive effect and act as a requisite condition for realizing the political federation.

It recommends the fast-tracking of an EAC Constitution and enhanced strategies to enable all East Africans to understand issues related to EAC integration in general and the stages of integration in particular. At the same time, the Report urges the EAC Partner States to ratify the Peace and Security Protocol that was approved by the EAC Heads of State during the April 2012 Summit held in Arusha, Tanzania. The ratification is expected to enable the EAC to

negotiate the EAC Mutual Defence Pact, which shall see the region act together and in a co-ordinated manner on all matters concerning security in the region.

The Report summarises the proceedings of the capacity building workshop held for Members of the Committee on August 22-23, 2012, in Nairobi, Kenya.

During debate, Hon Abdulkarim Harelimana called for more funding especially in matters of peace and security while Hon Pierre Celestin Rwigema urged the region to put in place concerted efforts to see peace prevail in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo.

Hon Sebalu noted that it was time for the EAC to establish a security architecture to contain threats in the region. On his part, Hon Emmanuel Nengo called on the Assembly to ensure the needs of the vulnerable groups are taken in to consideration. "It is unfortunate that they continue to be marginalized and excluded, a trend we must change", Hon Nengo stated.

Hon Bernard Mulengani and Hon Isabelle Ndahayo similarly threw their weight behind the Report. Kenya's Assistant Minister for EAC, Hon Peter Munya said it was vital for the region to enhance its sensitisation programmes noting that the Council and the Secretariat had whenever possible undertaken joint programmes.

"Madam Speaker, we have also engaged EALA Members and I assure the House that whenever funds become available, we shall engage all concerned stakeholders ", the Minister remarked.

On curriculum matters in the education sector, Hon Munya clarified that a number of institutions had already embarked on teaching subjects related to regional integration and noted that harmonization of the curriculum in education was on its way towards full attainment.

The Report of the Committee on Legal Rules and Privileges presented by the Chairperson Hon Dora Byamukama emphasizes on the need to spur and facilitate enactment of the EAC Constitution in the quest for the region to realize a Political Federation.

At the same time, the Committee wants elections observation and monitoring to be enhanced in order to oversee implementation of the EAC Elections Act bearing in mind that the next cycle of elections in the region starts early next year with the Republic of Kenya expected to go to the polls. Just yesterday, the EAC Deputy Secretary General in charge of Political Federation, Dr. Julius T. Rotich disclosed at a meeting in Nairobi that the EAC would deploy both short- term and long-term Election Observation Missions to the general elections in Kenya scheduled for March 2013. The deployment is geared towards helping the Mission to appreciate and understand the dynamics on the ground and facilitate credible assessment of the elections.

In addition, the Committee proposes to assess operationalisation of Chapter 24 of the Treaty on Legal and Judicial Affairs issues which inter alia obliges Partner States to take steps to harmonise their legal training and certification; and to encourage standardization of judgements of Courts within the Community. In the regard, the Committee proposes to continue pressing for the extension of the jurisdiction of the East African Court of Justice (EACJ) and related concerns.

The Report follows a capacity building workshop held on August 26-29, 2012 in Nairobi, Kenya. The objectives of the workshop were to orient the new Members of the Committee on the functions of the Committee in the execution of the EAC Integration process.

Contributing to the motion during debate, Hon Judith Pareno called for harmonization and review of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly to act as essential guiding tools. Hon Joseph Kiangoi, Hon Zein Abubakar Zein and Hon Susan Nakawuki shared in the same sentiments.

Hon Taslima Twaha remarked that the use of Kiswahili in the region was important and urged legislators to undergo lessons in Kiswahili in order to appreciate what the language had to offer.

'We need to take more seriously the development of Kiswahili as the "lingua franca" as envisaged by Article 137 of the Treaty', Hon Taslima remarked. Hon Mike Sebalu said it was important for staff of the EAC to benefit from work-permits tied to their entire term of contracts as opposed to the existing modality of the annual renewals of permits. "It is not in order for senior officials of the EAC including the Secretary General to have to be subjected to the process of renewing their permits bearing in mind he has a five year contractual period", the legislator said.

Ho Abdulkarim Harelimana stated that the use of Information, Communications and Technology (ICT) should be explored in the House. Other Members who spoke in favour of the motion were Hon Jeremie Ngendakumana and the Assistant Minister for EAC, Hon Peter Munya.

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