

**East African Legislative Assembly, Kampala, Uganda; June 8, 2015:** The Federal Parliament of Somalia is keen to establish relations with the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) as the country keeps pace with developments at the EAC.

Friday last week, EALA Speaker, Rt. Hon Daniel F. Kidega held talks with the Speaker of the Federal Parliament of Somalia, Rt Hon Mohammed Osman Jawari in Kampala, Uganda. The historic meeting took place on the sidelines of the State of Nation Address delivered by the President of the Republic of Uganda, H.E. General Yoweri Museveni at the commencement of the 5th Session of the 9th Parliament of Uganda.

EALA Speaker, Rt. Hon Daniel F. Kidega was emphatic that the EAC was concerned about finding permanent solutions to the issues in Somalia.

“When we look at a bigger picture and within the framework of integration, we can certainly find solutions to problems in Somalia just like in all other Partner States. The more we are, the better for the region”, Rt. Hon Kidega said.

He said both Houses (EALA and Federal Parliament of Somalia) needed to commence the process of co-operation and to maintain interaction as a precursor to addressing insecurity matters, occasioned by the constant threats of the Al-Shaabab and banditry among other concerns.

The Speaker rooted for enhanced economic development in the region saying that Somalia had a long coastline and this would make access to the rest of the world easy.

Both Speakers reiterated the need to ensure information flow and exchange between their respective Parliaments. Rt. Hon Jawari stated that such a move would equip legislators in the Federal Republic of Somalia with best practices and to boost their understanding on regional integration.

“Keeping our communication lines open is vital as there are many aspects that we can learn from each other and likewise benefit from”, Rt. Hon Jawari said.

He said Parliament of Somalia would consider sending a delegation of legislators at the next EALA Plenary so as to benefit from the deliberations in the regional Assembly.

Rt. Hon Jawari said the Somalia Parliament had forged close working relations with the Parliament of Uganda and the relationship had proved to be mutual.

“We likewise have a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Pan African Parliament (PAP) and the Parliament of Finland” the Speaker added.

In attendance was the Chairperson of the Committee on Human Rights, Gender and Humanitarian Affairs at the Federal Parliament of Somalia, Hon Mariam Aweis Jama, Director of Protocol, Ali Mohammed and the EALA Senior Public Relations Officer, Bobi Odiko.

The Speaker of the Federal Parliament of Somalia remarked that Parliament had three main areas of focus as it continues to undertake its mandate.

He cited constitutional review, federalization of the country and economic development as the centres of focus in rebuilding the Republic of Somalia.

The Speaker maintained that peace was key for development noting that the threats of terrorism were retrogressive to progressive change and advancement.

Somalia which has endured long periods of instability and insecurity is steadily coming out of the precipice of war. Right after independence in 1960, Somalia was one of the most promising African countries with a democratically elected government, had stability and was developing fast. This changed several decades later in the 1990s and since then, the country has not enjoyed total peace.

The Horn of Africa nation submitted its application in February 2012 to be a member of the EAC Community which currently brings together Republics of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

The EAC has since constituted a team of experts to a verification committee to assert the country's preparedness to join the Community. However, the preparations with the Government of the Republic of Somalia has not yet been finalised to pave way for the verification exercise.

At the 16th Summit of the EAC Heads of State, the Summit directed the Council of Ministers to undertake the verification exercise and to report at the next Summit.

According to analysts, Somalia's admission at the EAC is important to security in the East African region as they have been a source of small arms that have contributed to insecurity in the region and especially Kenya.

Somalia's Ambassador to Kenya, Amb Mohamed Ali Noor was recently quoted exuding confidence that the country was considered a prime candidate to the EAC following a raft of key initiatives that he believes have lifted the country's profile in the eyes of the international community.

Two years ago, Kenya was forced to send its armed forces to Somalia after Al Shabaab militia attacked tourists along the coast resulting in issuance of travel advisories by European countries to their citizens.

The Kenya Defence Forces joined a UN security mission in Somalia that has helped to stabilise the Horn of Africa nation.

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