



...Hon Sirma assures legislators of Council's support to the process

East African Legislative Assembly, Nairobi, Kenya, August 6, 2012: Regional legislators are calling for concerted efforts by all stakeholders in the strengthening of the EAC integration process. At the start of a four-day sensitisation workshop for the 3rd

Assembly on the Customs Union, Common Market and the Monetary Union, the EALA Members noted that the EAC was at a defining moment.

In his speech, the Chairperson of the Council of Ministers and Minister for EAC, Hon Musa Sirma noted that the region was on track with regards to the pillars of integration leading to the unprecedented increase of trade over the years. Hon Sirma remarked that the corresponding free movement of persons, goods and services was on progress despite the existing hitches and noted that the Council of Ministers was keen on addressing the hiccups.

Hon Sirma further stated that plans were underway to institute an exchange programme involving government officers of the Republics of Rwanda and Kenya.

'We are at inception stages and you shall soon see immigration officers from Rwanda serving at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) and vice-versa all these, in a bid to strengthen the integration process', the Minister noted.

He noted that discussions on the Monetary Union were on course and hoped this would cement the integration process further. The Minister re-affirmed the Council of Ministers' commitment to the integration process.

'I want to confirm that the Council of Ministers shall continue to work closely with EALA to spearhead the integration process and in this regard I shall be following up on all the pending Bills', Hon Sirma said.

On the application of South Sudan to the Community, the Minister noted that the assessment of the application had been undertaken and that the Council of Ministers was expected to deliberate on the matter at its next meeting.

The Speaker of EALA, Rt. Hon Margaret Nantongo Zziwa urged the Partner States to fully embrace the Common Market Protocol and fervently ensure its execution.

'The Protocol spells out various benefits including the merger and integration of the five countries into one single market where factors of production move freely. The EAC has not taken full advantage of the freedoms and rights envisaged in the Protocol and in this regard, the unexploited potential of the region remains, Rt.Hon Zziwa remarked.

She noted that the Customs Union on its part, had realized a number of successes including creating a level playing field for the private sector, imposing uniform competition policy and law and the introduction of a Common External Tariff (CET). She however lamented on the existence of the Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) which she termed detrimental to business.

'EALA takes cognizance of the challenges we must collectively address to ensure all ranks of the people of East Africa enjoy the benefits of integration. Top on this agenda is the NTBs barring the free flow of business in the region and the lack of awareness among the citizens of the EAC' the Speaker remarked.

During the workshop, EALA Members are set to benefit from presentations on the progress of implementation of the Customs Union and Common Market as well as the process of negotiations of the Monetary Union. At the same time, Members are to be taken through the procedures and processes of oversight which includes public hearings, committee meetings and the right of access to information.

The presentations are been made by EAC Officers, representatives of the Ministry of the East African Community in Kenya and in-country consultants.

Ends

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