



EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, Arusha, Tanzania; July 12, 2012: Women Parliamentarians from the EAC region are emphatic that the issue of gender must be taken into consideration and brought forth in the pecking order so as to create a just and democratic society.

The move arises from the fact that generally, women outnumber the male gender in terms of population, statistically and in the demographic representations. Consequently, any attempts by any practical thinker and/ or promoter of democracy to ignore such a fact would be a big anomaly.

Opening a two-day workshop (July 12-13, 2012) in Arusha themed: Creating a Gender Responsive Assembly, the Speaker of EALA, Rt. Hon Margaret Nantongo Zziwa noted that the time for a gender responsive Assembly had come and urged legislators to fight the bad existing practices in the society.

‘We as women legislators must stand up for the vulnerable and the marginalized groups like the children, People With Disabilities, the poor or those politically oppressed like the prisoners’, Rt. Hon Zziwa remarked.

The Speaker urged women to be aggressive advocates in the anti-HIV and AIDS campaigns and to ensure related policies take into consideration all matters around health and social issues.

‘My take on this is that we must understand issues better from the regional perspective and to advocate with a common voice. For example, the reproductive health issues in our Partner States may be the same but the social issues which affect the reproductive factors may be different and the provisions of amenities and infrastructure from our governments to support this cause may vary. We need an East African perspective in order for us to launch a joint campaign which will help us deliver a better people of East Africa’ the Speaker added.

In attendance are women Members of EALA, former Members of EALA, and Chairpersons of Women Caucuses in the national Assemblies. The meeting is being facilitated by Prof Ruth Meena, Board Member at the Gender Training Institute (GTI) and the Tanzania Gender Network Programme (TGNP) and Ms. Nivatiti Nandujja, Project Officer from the Eastern African Sub-Regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women (EASSI).

The meeting seeks to promote the unity and sisterhood among women EALA Members, identify existing opportunities for women legislators in EALA for better performance and make suggestions and draw an action plan for the proposed Gender Agenda within EALA.

Some of the key topics to be discussed include health as a key component for effective performance in the Assembly, the values, principles and expectations envisaged of the EALA woman Member and sharing of personal testimonies, valuable lessons and experiences. At the end of the workshop, EALA shall elect a Women Caucus who shall deliver on the mandate over the next five years.

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