

SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON. MWAI KIBAKI, C.G.H., M.P., PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA DURING THE FIFTH MEETING OF THE THIRD SESSION OF THE SECOND EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, NAIROBI, 24TH MAY, 2010

Honourable Speaker,

Distinguished Members of the East African Legislative Assembly,

It is my great pleasure to address you on this auspicious occasion of the inauguration of the meetings of the East African Legislative Assembly here in Nairobi. Allow me to extend to you my warm welcome and that of the Government and people of Kenya. Feel free because you are in the company of a people who today feel like true East Africans.

I assure you of the high value which Kenyans place on the East African integration process. We also appreciate the role of the East African Legislative Assembly in the integration of our region. I have no doubt in my mind that the founding fathers of our Community, would be proud of the steps we have taken to grow their original vision of an integrated East Africa.

Honourable Speaker,

You have come to Kenya with an elaborate agenda. The Plenary and Standing Committee Meetings that you will hold in Nairobi and Mombasa, have an extensive agenda addressing important issues affecting our Community. Indeed, the meetings include the major items on the Assembly's annual calendar of activities. These include presentation of the State of the East African Community Address by the Chairperson of the EAC Summit and presentation of the Budget Speech by the Chairperson of the Council of Ministers.

These items have great significance in ensuring that the EAC remains focused on its strategic mission. They will provide an opportunity for detailed discussion and analysis of the achievements, challenges and future prospects of the EAC.

Honourable Speaker,

The EAC has had an impressive year. In particular, the Community's strategic development plans have been taken to higher stages of implementation with priority being placed on infrastructure projects. These are in the area of roads, railways, inland waterways, ports and harbours, Information and Communications Technology as well as energy and civil aviation.

I am glad that construction works on the East African Road Network Project and a number of other critical infrastructure projects have commenced. These include the Arusha-Namanga-Athi River road, the Power Interconnection Project between

Kenya and Tanzania at the Namanga border post and the ambitious East African Railways Master Plan.

In Kenya, we are moving fast with the development of the second port in Lamu as well as revamping Mombasa Port facilities, which forms part of the East African infrastructure upgrade program. You will also appreciate the great works we have undertaken on the Mombasa to Nakuru Highway while upgrading of the Nakuru to Malaba Highway has commenced. In addition, we landed fibre-optic cables and connected our region to the world in a seamless manner that promises to revolutionize the ICT sector in our region.

Honourable Speaker,

We have recorded encouraging progress in other areas as well. The EAC Investment Conferences that have so far been held in Kigali, Nairobi and Kampala have become key Community programmes. The conferences have realized great success in promoting the region's economic potential and investment opportunities. Moreover, the enactment in 2008 of the EAC Trade Negotiation Act was a major breakthrough in the longstanding endeavor by the Partner States to negotiate as a bloc in the multilateral trade fora.

These achievements have leveraged the Community's image and position in the international trade and development arena. All Partner States are jointly participating in the negotiations of the Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union.

We are also at the forefront of the Tripartite EAC-COMESA-SADC initiative towards the establishment of a Free Trade Area of the three major African regional economic communities. This larger trade area will further boost the East African Community market advantage and strength.

Finally, the signing of the EAC Common Market Protocol, targeted to come into force on 1st July this year, has coincided with new momentum towards establishment of the East African Monetary Union that the EAC aims to establish by TWENTY TWELVE.

Mr. Speaker,

Honourable Members,

Our Community today represents perhaps one of the most comprehensive and far reaching regional integration arrangements in the developing world. Few other regional organizations in Africa or indeed other parts of the world envision, as the EAC does, the eventual full unification of the Partner States as a single political entity.

Indeed, the regional co-operation and integration arrangement envisaged in the EAC covers most sectors of human endeavour. The East African Legislative

Assembly is the body that is entrusted with the powers and responsibilities to drive our integration process. In this connection, I commend this Assembly for its commitment to putting in place an appropriate legislative framework for the Community. Several bills to further the agenda of integration are awaiting discussion by the Assembly.

As Members of the Assembly, you have the unique opportunity and duty of promoting the EAC integration process. It is this assembly that will come up with programs to take the spirit of East Africa from our summits and boardrooms to the furthest points of our region. After all it is our people who must see and feel the benefits of integration.

Honourable Speaker,

The Community is set to expand in its scope and mandate in the period ahead. The implementation of the Common Market Protocol will make our region more attractive. Our people will be able to reap the benefits of increased market access and expanded trade within our region. Investors, on the other hand, will access more investment opportunities and be able to move their capital freely across borders. The labour markets will be more liberalized, thus benefiting both employers and employees from the Partner States. Cumulatively, it is expected that benefits from the Common Market will stimulate and strengthen our economies, while enabling us to achieve our long term goals of reducing poverty and improving the living standards of our people.

The Common Market Protocol will require that we amend certain national laws and policies. Towards this end, my Government has constituted a Legal Reform Task Force to identify the necessary legal, administrative and institutional reforms. I urge this Assembly to be at the forefront in ensuring that implementation of the Protocol is smooth. I have every confidence in your commitment and preparedness for the historic tasks ahead.

In conclusion, I wish to state that I am personally looking forward to the expansion of our Community. We are proud that during our time in office Rwanda and Burundi joined the EAC. Their membership has made us stronger and more vibrant. We wish to invite other African states to join the EAC. I am aware that some countries have already expressed their interest in joining. We welcome them and assure them of our support because our vision is to make the East African Community the most successful and integrated bloc in Africa .

Let me once again thank you for your commitment and wish you great success in the discharge of your mandate. You should always be assured of our support and encouragement.

Thank you and God bless you all.