



**SPEECH BY H.E PAUL KAGAME, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC
OF RWANDA, AT THE MEETING OF THE EAST AFRICAN
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
KIGALI, 6th SEPTEMBER 2011**

- + Honourable Abdirahin Abdi, Speaker of the East African Assembly;**
- + Honourable Vincent Biruta, President of the Rwandan Senate;**
- + Honourable Rose Mukantabana, Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies;**
- + Honourable Ministers of the East African Community;**
- + Honourable members of the East African Legislative Assembly;**
- + Members of the Diplomatic Corps;**
- + Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:**

I am very pleased that the East African Legislative Assembly is hosting another session in Kigali. Meeting in partner states is a good idea because it gives the people of East Africa the opportunity to witness at close quarters and understand the workings of organs of the Community. More importantly, it

should give them the opportunity to input into your deliberations.

Over the last ten years, the people of East Africa have made significant strides in the integration process of the region. The different organs of the East African Community, including EALA, have made important contributions to this process.

However, more still needs to be done, and this morning I wish to discuss how the various organs of our community can perform better, by delivering as one, and enhancing cooperation and collaboration with national institutions.

In the particular case of EALA, this could be achieved through greater collaboration and more linkages with National Parliaments. For instance, it may be useful to hold special joint sessions to debate Community agenda.

This way, the community will be brought closer to the people for whom it is intended. Equally important, through their elected representatives, they would have a direct contribution and claim ownership of the integration process.

The necessity for the different legislatures to work together and harmonise legislative processes becomes more urgent

when we recognise that laws enacted by EALA supersede national laws of Partner States.

Similarly, we should see greater cooperation between organs of the community for more efficient implementation of protocols and programmes of the EAC.

In the past ten years we have passed and signed important protocols and Partner States have made various commitments with regard to integration. However, in their implementation, we have not moved at the pace our citizens desire.

I believe this Assembly has the right and duty to hold us more accountable in implementing these commitments, so that we deliver in a meaningful way to our citizens.

It is imperative, therefore, that this Assembly and the Council of Ministers collaborate more on mechanisms to initiate laws to enforce the expeditious implementation of the Customs Union and the Common Market Protocol so that East African citizens can reap benefits accruing from them.

Similarly, East African Business people, investors and ordinary citizens still find non-tariff barriers and obstacles to free movement across the region an impediment to the operation of the two protocols.

The short answer to this problem will be the establishment of a single customs authority. This Assembly should follow up on the expeditious set up of such an authority.

✚ Mr Speaker;

✚ Honourable members:

As you are all aware, our region continues to experience periodic droughts, floods, other natural disasters and food shortages, owing in part to effects of climate change and poor management of the environment. The argument for the sustainable management of our natural resources, many of them shared, could not be made more forcefully than by these periodic changes. Equally, the need to develop agricultural policies and practices, and land management systems that ensure food security in this region is most urgent.

We have a duty, therefore, to ensure that there are mechanisms of better environmental management so as to mitigate effects of climate change. As legislators, you have a critical role to play in this respect.

In conclusion, I return to the point that our region's process of integration should be citizen-centric, and foster their active participation.

East African Community issues should not be confined to legislative chambers but must extend to the public through the media, public discussions and other forums of consultation. That way, ordinary East Africans have a voice in matters that affect them and organs of the community gain their rightful relevance to them.

With these brief remarks, I wish you fruitful deliberations during this session.

Thank you for your kind attention.