



...Budget Speech expected to be delivered on May 14th, 2015

East African Legislative Assembly, Arusha, May 6, 2015: The East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) shall hold its sitting in Arusha, Tanzania next week. The Plenary which takes place from Monday, May 10, 2015 to Friday, May 22, 2015, is the Sixth Meeting of the Third Session of the Third Assembly.

The Assembly is to be presided over by the Speaker, Rt. Hon Daniel F. Kidega. Top on the agenda during the two week period is the EAC Budget Speech which is expected to be delivered on Thursday, May 14th, 2015 by the Chair of the Council of Ministers, Hon Dr. Harrison Mwakyembe. The Assembly is then expected to debate and approve the Budget as part of its mandate.

The Budget speech is a key activity of the EAC calendar. Last year, (June 2014), EALA approved the bloc's budget totaling USD 124,216,995 for the Financial Year 2014/2015.

The 2014/15 Budget prioritized on the operationalization of the Single Customs Territory (SCT) including the setting up of an institutional framework to manage it, the full implementation of the EAC Common Market Protocol with particular focus on free movement of goods, services, labour and capital as well as the implementation of the EAC Industrialization policy.

In January this year, EALA further approved a Supplementary Budget of to the tune of USD 2,040,520 out of the budget for the Financial Year ending 30th June 2015.

The Supplementary Budget allocated USD 919,413 to undertake mediatory and confidence building activities prior to the upcoming elections in the region while USD 295,000 was earmarked for the expenditure incurred on maintaining the EAC Regional Food balance sheet and trade help desk. Another USD 170,000 was set aside to be utilised for the development of the EAC-African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Strategy and Sensitization.

The Supplementary Budget further provided an amount of USD 150,000 to be used for

conducting EAC HIV and AIDS Symposia during the period, USD 50,000 for the formulation of the EAC Vision for 2050 and a similar amount for the review of the existing e-Passport issuance legal frameworks.

Two key Bills on the cards at the EALA meeting are the EAC Creative and Cultural Industries Bill, 2015 and the EAC Electronic Transactions Bill, 2014. The EAC Creative and Cultural Industries Bill 2015, sailed through the First Reading in January this year.

According to the mover of the Bill, Hon Dr. James Ndahiro, creative and cultural industries are considered one of the fastest growing sectors in the global economy and contribute significantly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of many developed and developing countries. The object of the Bill is to promote the creative and cultural industries at the EAC.

The Bill seeks to establish the Creative and Cultural Industries Council that shall provide an environment conducive to the enhancement and stimulation of creativity and innovative endeavours among the citizens of the Community. Once formed, the Council shall provide high quality training for skills and creativity development and formulate policies and strategies that shall stimulate creativity and innovations among the youth to ensure long term supply of talents.

The EAC Electronic Transactions Bill, 2014 on its part, seeks to meet the need of exploiting electronic transactions in the modern day business transactions. The Bill further wants to promote technology neutrality in applying legislation to electronic communications and transactions and to develop a safe, secure and effective environment for the consumer, business and the Governments of the Partner States to conduct and use electronic transactions. EALA has already undertaken a series of public hearings to source for views from stakeholders on this particular Bill.

During the Plenary meetings, the House is also expected to receive and to debate on a number of reports. They include that of the Committee on General Purpose on the Oversight activity on the Legal Framework and implementation of policies on the Rights of the Child in the EAC Partner States and the Report of the Agriculture, Tourism and Natural Resources Committee on the On-Spot Assessment of the 2nd Lake Victoria Water Supply and Sanitation Programme (Programme II).

In addition, the Committee on Legal Rules and Privileges shall present its Report on the On-Spot Assessment on the implementation of the EAC Laws within the Partner States in the context of the Common Market Protocol.

Also on the menu is the debate on the State of EAC Address, which was delivered by the President of the United Republic of Tanzania and the Chairperson of the Summit of EAC Heads of State, H.E. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete on March 19th, 2015 in Bujumbura, Burundi.

At the Address, President Kikwete urged Partner States to spare no efforts in ridding the region of Non-Tariff Barriers in order to spur the integration process. He re-affirmed his commitment during his term as Chairperson of the Summit to ensuring total removal of all

barriers to trade. The President noted that improved infrastructure would bring down the costs of doing business.

He said poor infrastructure had resulted in the upward and spiral effect of transportation costs resulting in skyrocketing of between 30-40% of the price of goods especially in the landlocked countries.

The State of EAC Address is delivered annually by the sitting Chairperson of the Summit of EAC Heads of State and it reflects on matters of policies related to the Community. At its last Sitting in Bujumbura in March this year, the Assembly passed three Bills, the EAC Customs (Amendment) Bill 2015, the EAC Elimination of Non-Tariff Barriers Bill, 2015 and the EAC Civic Education for Integration Bill, 2015. The Assembly also adopted the Rules of Procedures for its Committees and passed key reports.

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For more information, contact:

Bobi Odiko,
Senior Public Relations Officer;
East African Legislative Assembly;
Tel: +255-27-2508240
Cell: +255 787 870945+254-733-718036;
Email: bodiko@eachq.org
Web: <http://www.eala.org>
Arusha, Tanzania