



Key Bunge committee censured for suggesting EAC 'mutiny'

By Henry Mwangonde

A suggestion by the Parliamentary Committee on Infrastructure that Tanzania needs to exit the East African Community (EAC)'s single customs territory has drawn a negative reaction from various stakeholders, who argue that it goes against the spirit of regional integration.

Moreover, the single customs territory alone can't be blamed for rapidly declining transit cargo figures currently being experienced at the port of Dar es Salaam, some stakeholders argue.

They say a more valid reason for the cargo traffic drop at the country's main sea-port is the government's 18 per cent Value Added Tax (VAT) imposed on transit goods; a tax that does not apply to the rival ports of Mombasa in Kenya or Beira in Mozambique.



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The proposal for Tanzania to remove itself from the EAC single customs territory (SCT) was made by members of the parliamentary watchdog committee when meeting with officials from the Ministry of Works, Transport and Communication in Dodoma on Monday.

"We have already lost a lot of cargo at the port as a result of implementing the single customs territory...in fact, we have been reduced to a mere tax collection agent for other countries," committee vice-chairman Selemani Kakoso asserted during the meeting.

But among those who strongly faulted the committee for coming up with such a proposal when contacted by The Guardian yesterday - saying it was tantamount to abandoning the EAC as a whole - were prominent opposition member of parliament Zitto Kabwe and former EAC secretary general Juma Mwapachu.

According to Zitto, the Kigoma Urban MP from the ACT-Wazalendo party, the foundation of the envisaged wider EAC Customs Union requires a single customs territory in place which Tanzania can't get out of unless it quits the regional bloc altogether.

"What the parliamentary committee is proposing is tantamount to exiting

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