

EAC in cost cutting measures

BY ELISHA MAYALLAH

■ ARUSHA, TANZANIA—The cash-strapped East African Community Secretariat wants to make cuts of \$6 million this financial year.

In a news conference last week, Dr. Libérat Mfumukeko said, "Since taking over the office in May this year, I instituted several reforms in the EAC Organs and Institutions aimed at cost reduction in the EAC projects and programmes. The reforms target savings to the tune of \$6 million in the Financial Year 2016/2017 alone."

However, he said the European Union, the EAC's leading multilateral donor, still considers the Secretariat an entity worthy of support on the basis of better accountability.

He said, "The implementation of these reforms are going on very well and already some positive results are being received. For example, for the first three months of implementation (May to August 2016), the first estimates point to savings of \$588,768 in travel expenditures alone."

"We shall calculate again for the months September to October. The reforms focus on cutting any wastage, containing and reducing travel where all EAC Staff must spend 50 percent of their time in Arusha and also hold 25% of the meetings via video conference facility. We have also reduced the number of days for



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our meetings to a maximum of four. Dear friends it is no longer business as usual.

The European Union, through a consultancy firm, Moore Stephens LLP based in London, undertook a Fiduciary Risk Assessment (FRA) on the EAC Secretariat's operations in five Pillars, namely, Internal Con-

trol System; Accounting Systems; Independent External Audit; Procurement; and Sub-Delegation. The firm checked on our procedures and processes on the mentioned pillars.

According to the findings, the EAC Secretariat has met the internationally acceptable standards and successfully undergone the assessment

as required by the European Union. The conclusion was that EAC applies appropriate rules and procedures in all material aspects for providing financing from European Union funds through procurement and in accordance with the criteria set by the European Commission (the EU executive).

Dr. Mfumukeko said efforts are being made to raise money to bolster Secretariat operations in light of the strained financial situations of the member governments. "One of these high level missions include negotiation with the EU in Brussels and where the future cooperation between EAC and EU was discussed and a grant totaling 85 million euro was committed to our work. These funds will support the following key priorities i.e. Peace and Security, Regional Integration, Natural Resources, Institutional Strengthening and Partner States will access 40 million euro for trade facilitation," he said.

Dr. Mfumukeko has also held strategic discussions with all Development Partners contributing to the EAC Partnership Fund, USAID, Trade Mark East Africa (TMEA), KfW, Aga Khan Foundation and United Nations, with the aim of cementing the relationship between EAC and the Development/bilateral Partners.

Further bilateral discussions have been held with Ambassadors from Germany, USA, Belgium, France, Brazil and Ireland.

During all these high level discussions, the Development Partners reaffirmed their strong commitment to supporting EAC, financial and technically to achieve its overarching mandate and ambition.

He said, "I wish to remind you that EAC is the only block in the continent that has a dream of walking the whole journey of integration. Our ultimate dream is to be in a political federation which is the most unique feature of our integration process."

EAC has more than 45 different projects and sub sectors that we are involved in (from road construction, energy, culture, citizen sensitization, immigration etc.)

To eliminate duplication, poor reporting and enhance coordination with development partners who contribute more than 50% of the EAC budget we established the Project coordination unit to enhance how funds are managed and other funding from Development Partners.

A multi-disciplinary team has been appointed initially to serve on an interim basis as the EAC Projects Coordination Unit. This Unit is now functional and monitoring all EAC donor funded projects and has already created a database for all these projects and can produce a single report for all projects. The Unit serves as a one-stop desk for information on EAC projects both internally and externally and we are working on full time staffing modalities to be considered in the near future.

Regional legislators want more for agriculture

BY ELISHA MAYALLAH

■ ARUSHA, TANZANIA—The East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) last week added its voice to the push for more budgetary allocation in the agricultural sector in Partner States and to ensure legal and regulatory frameworks are responsive to the needs of the smallholder farmers, youth, women and other sectors.

According to a press release, the increase in budgetary allocations is in line with the Malabo Declaration and the Assembly says the target which is pegged at least 10%, needs to be met annually or progressively.

The legislators are similarly urging the EAC Secretariat to institutionalise a Regional Agriculture Advisory Council to advise on the harmonization of the regional agriculture policy frameworks and programmes. Such a Council, EALA says, could comprise of EAC/EALA Secretariat and representatives from Partner States, academia, regional Farmer Organisations and Civil Society as well as consumers.

At the same time, Partner States need to increase the quality of investments by addressing national priorities connected with farmers while addressing existing challenges. Consequently, increase in the absorption rate in the agriculture sector with a correlation between budget allocation, agriculture returns and sectoral growth targets is absolutely necessary.

The recommendations are contained in a report arising from the Agriculture Budget Summit, 2016 held in Arusha on June 4th, 2016. The meeting, then, opened by EALA Member, Chris Opoka and themed "Increasing Public investment in Agriculture towards Ending Hunger and Poverty by 2025 in the EAC" was organized to support the implementation of the Malabo Declaration of 2014-2025.

The meeting among other things, sort to increase public awareness on the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Results framework and importance of public financing of agriculture that supports smallholders as catalyst for improved Private Sector investment. It further wanted to enhance Civil Society Organizations,



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small scale farmers' involvement in agriculture financing policy processes for improved public financing for agriculture at national and the East African Community level.

The Summit was attended by EALA Members from the Committee on Agriculture, Tourism and Natural Resources, Committee Chairpersons from Partner States' National Parliaments and CAADP Focal points from EAC Partner States. Other Partners were from various organizations such as Trust Africa, ActionAid International, Agriculture Non-State Actors Forum (ANSAF) and the Coalition of Non-State Actors on CAADP amongst others.

The meeting underscored the need for the EAC/EALA to expedite the domestication of the Malabo

Declaration 2014-2025 by putting in place a regional legally binding Protocol or instruments to ensure regional realization of its goals.

In the past, EALA has contributed significantly to the discussions in the region by ensuring formulation of key recommendations to strengthen the agriculture sector, in line with the Maputo Declaration on "Agriculture and Food Security" and Malabo Declaration on "Accelerated Agricultural Growth."

The Assembly is also keen on taking up the issues of land rush which is a hindrance to agriculture development in the region and in Africa, in general as well as in overseeing development of a regional legal framework on sustainable investment in agriculture.

The report of the meeting which was tabled in the House by Hon Patricia Hajabakiga on behalf of the ATNR Committee further takes an incisive analysis of the Partner States' situations.

During debate, Maryam Ussi called on the region to support the small scale farmers by implementing the 10% budgetary increase as per the Malabo Declaration.

Mike Sebalu remarked the relations between the Assembly and farmers' organisations were very cordial and that the voice of the farmers continued to be championed by EALA. He said it was time for agriculture to be prioritized and that a value system that inculcates agriculture should be embraced.

Shyrose Bhanji said agriculture if well boosted by sufficient budgets, would ensure the youth, women and other stakeholders are catered for through employment opportunities. "At the same time if land is well allocated, and utilised then it would go a long way in eradicating poverty. To ensure this, finances in terms of credit is to be output," the legislator said.

The legislator challenged the small holder farmers to take advantage of the Customs Union Protocol that offers with it free taxes on local products.

Mumbi Ngaru informed the House to step up efforts to reach out to stakeholders in the agricultural sector especially during its (EALA) Sensitisation activities while Nancy Abisai said it was necessary to curb corruption if resources were to be made available.