

# EALA to enact law on cross-border practices

By Guardian Reporter

THE East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) is to enact legislation on cross-border practice of professional services and on social security portability.

"This shall address regional services' market which is currently fragmented by restrictive policies, many pegged on nationalistic requirements, in licensing, qualification, regulatory and educational requirements," said EALA Speaker, Daniel Kidega.

Kidega was speaking to journalists in Kampala, Uganda on the 4th Meeting of the 5th Session of the 3rd Assembly which commences here in Kampala, Uganda, from yesterday up until January 26, this year.

The EALA boss said: "Such legislation would institute a framework for Professional workers across many sectors - be they legal, medical, education and others to move freely in the region thus operational Article 76 of the EAC Treaty."

According to him, the EAC is at an important period in the integration dispensation.

Under the Customs Union, the region is implementing the Single Customs Territory regime which essentially enables faster movement

of goods while enhancing the flow of transport from the ports to the Partner States.

He explained that the Common Market Protocol on its part, provides for free movement of goods, persons, services, labour, capital and the right to establishment and the right of residence.

Some successes have been realised since the entry of the Common Market Protocol in 2010. Such include the introduction of the International E-Passports, movement using identity cards in some of the Partner States and reduction in Non-Tariff Barriers.

The second EAC Common Market Scorecard 2016, launched last October in Kampala, while revealing a number of reforms realised since 2014, still depicts non-conforming measures especially on trade liberalisation of services and general compliance to the tenets of the Protocol.

He said all Partner States have shown political will to enforce the Protocol but there are still some fears and suspicions hampering the freedoms and the rights alluded to above. EALA and other stakeholders remain concerned over the delays in implementation of the Protocol.

The demands for reduction (or abolition altogether) of work permit

fees, the need for standardisation when it comes to issuance of the said permits and smoother and easier movement of persons from one Partner State to another, need to be speedily addressed.

The harmonisation/ approximation of Laws in the EAC context is also fundamental for the region to move in tandem.

A report of the Committee on Rules and Privileges of the Oversight activity on approximation of national laws in Partner States adopted by the Assembly in November 2016, indicates that Republic of Rwanda and Uganda have each harmonised 10 laws, Tanzania (6 laws), Kenya (4 laws) and Burundi (3 Laws).

On the Monetary Union, EALA boss pledged to work closely with the Council of Ministers to enact necessary legislations establishing the East African Monetary Institute, East African Financial Services Commission and the East African Surveillance, Compliance and Enforcement Commission among others.

He noted that the partner states' Central Banks have made tremendous progress with regards to financial sector integration, including commencing the harmonisation of payment systems and financial markets.

In order to attain the Monetary Union, the region should harmonise monetary and fiscal policies; and policies and standards on statistical information as well as establishment of an East African Central Bank.

"We expect processes of some of these key pieces of legislation to be moved within the next few months before we wind down our tenure in June 2017," he said.

EALA is also looking forward to the next Summit of EAC Heads of State that shall conclude among other matters, the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs).

"As an Assembly, we want the EPAs handled with utmost care taking into consideration our quest for industrialisation so that a suitable decision that takes into consideration what is best for the region is achieved," he added.

On matters of peace and security, the EAC is yet to be fully secure given the recent political and insecurity challenges.

It is important to silence all guns in order to concentrate on developmental matters including the elimination of poverty.

We also appeal to the Partner States to be more vigilant to contain terrorism which is still a challenge within the bloc.