

You have a key role in African Union agenda, Kagame tells EALA

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PRESIDENT PAUL KAGAME has said the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) will be called upon to play multiple roles as the African Union (AU) undergoes reforms, including championing cooperation.

The President made the remarks Monday while addressing a special sitting marking the start of a two-week session of the regional Assembly in Kigali.

Kagame said that as the AU undergoes reforms the regional assembly will be charged with more responsibility as the African Union – a continental union consisting of all 55 countries on the continent – delegates implementation of development agenda to regional economic communities, including the East African Community.

“Of particular note for the EALA is the decision to direct more responsibility for the im-

plementation of Africa’s common development agenda to the Regional Economic Communities,” Kagame said.

The reforms process, Kagame said, will also see the annual AU Summits held in July transform to serve as coordination meetings with the various regional economic communities.

“To that end, the Heads of State decided that the annual July Summit of the African Union will be transformed into a coordination meeting with Regional Economic Communities,” the President said.

He explained that this means that greater contributions will be needed from “all of you as East Africa’s legislators, both as strong advocates for the imperative of reform and as champions for closer cooperation between the East African Community and the African Union Commission.”

Kagame in January – during the AU Summit in Ethiopia – presented reforms which were

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adopted by African leaders aimed to make the Union fit for purpose in addressing the continent’s concerns.

The presentation came after about six months of a task entrusted to Kagame to carry out a study and propose recommendations for institutional reforms to improve the efficiency of the Union.

The President, however, cautioned regional legislators that the much sought progress both at regional and continental level will not be attained if countries engage in counterproductive di-

visions and prioritise narrow interests over the common good.

“Whether at the continental or the regional level, our goals will not be attained if we get lost in counterproductive divisions and prioritise narrow interests over the common good, as we keep seeing in various contexts. It is really about working together to advance everybody’s interests,” he said.

Calling for continued integration, he said that progress within countries results in benefits for all regional citizens.

“Integration is not a zero-sum game. When we work together, we are all better off. When we work against each other, everyone is worse off and a loser. So let’s empower our institutions to do what they are supposed to do in support of our collective prosperity. The East African Legislative Assembly clearly has an important role to play,” Kagame said.

“There is no disadvantage from

minding each other’s business, which simply means taking our respective needs and interests seriously and indeed adopting them as common objectives,” Kagame added.

EALA Speaker Daniel Kidega said that, while in Kigali, EALA members will consider three bills; the EAC Polythene Materials Control Bill, the EAC Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Bill, and the EAC Gender Equality and Development Bill.

As the term of the Third Assembly comes to an end, lawmakers have already passed 27 Bills, debated and approved 80 reports, adopted 63 key resolutions and processed five petitions.

Going forward, Kidega said, it was time to fully implement decisions such as the Common Market Protocol, to ensure that the region harmonises its labour, employment, education and social policies, among others.