



EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

ADDRESS BY

**HON. JESCA ERIYO,
DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL, PRODUCTIVE AND
SOCIAL SECTORS**

AT THE COMMEMORATION OF

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY 2013

12th August 2013

AT

EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY HEADQUARTERS, ARUSHA

Representatives from the Arusha City Council
Representatives of the Vision for Youth
Youth Organisations from Arusha and the EAC in general
Colleagues from EAC Secretariat
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to the EAC Headquarters for the UN International Youth Day being celebrated today 12th August 2013. Allow me to take this opportunity to wish all the youth of East African a wonderful International Day celebrations.

I would like to congratulate thank Arusha City Council and Vision for Youth, for having initiated this activity which brings together more than 200 young people of Arusha City.

Guest of Honour
Distinguished Participants
Ladies and Gentlemen

The theme for this year UN Youth International is International “**Youth Migration: Moving Development Forward**”. This theme recognises that youth are not only among the most mobile social groups in the world but also that the development of society depends on them. We therefore take this day not only to celebrate the achievements of the youth as the fabric of today’s society but to also recognise that in moving forward, the youth hold the steering wheel.

From subsequent World Bank *Africa Development Indicators* reports; ¹ it is now acknowledged that the youth constitute over 60% of the total population in the region and are also the driving force behind the economy in East Africa.

Distinguished Participants
Ladies and Gentlemen,

¹World Bank *Africa Development Indicators* 2013 Data accessed on 7th August 2013 from <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/africa-development-indicators?print>

Celebrating this day here today demonstrates our firm commitment to involve the youth not only in the integration process and but also in all efforts to move development forward. We are sure that the Youth of the East African region can transform this region considerably and for the better.

Statistical projections from the United Nations and the African Development Bank show that East Africa is destined for a youthful future.^{[2][3]} In the next 20 years, 3 of every 4 people will likely be young person. Given the youthfulness of today's and the population tomorrow, we need to harness our future. The Community therefore recognises the need for developing young people of quality. Through education and gaining the right skills needed in today, it is our hope that we shall have youth who can ably compete in today's fast changing world. We shall have youth who can create their own opportunities and combat unemployment. Then, young people will no longer need to move to foreign lands to be exploited and discriminated but will find pasture greener here in our region.

It is my hope that we can use today's theme to reflect on all this such that even when we migrate, we move as people of substance, able to contribute to society.

**Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We must appreciate that the future will only get brighter for the young people. The integration process is premised on improving the situation of the youth in the region. Through the operationalization of the Treaty for establishment of the EAC and the subsequent Protocols, the Customs Union and the Common Market, many opportunities will be availed for the youth to utilise and develop themselves. Strengthening youth service programmes and the introduction of community-based initiatives to offer young people life-skills training and entrepreneurship training is our priority in order to boost economic growth, increase

² United Nations, "World Population Prospects: The 2002 Revision", United Nations Population Division, ST/ESA/SER.A/236, New York, 2004 accessed on 07 August 2013 from <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/longrange2/WorldPop2300final.pdf>

³ African Development Bank, "Africa in 50 Years' Time: The Road Towards Inclusive Growth" Tunis, September 2011 accessed on 07 August 2013 from <http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/Africa%20in%2050%20Years%20Time.pdf>

employment and reduce poverty in all partner states the ultimate goal. The youth must be assured of sustainable livelihoods, healthy lives, competitiveness and wealth.

The young people should therefore be confident and know that they are empowered by the treaty and the various constitutions of partner states to participate fully in building a better life. At the East African Community we pledge to continue supporting these efforts.

Distinguished Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Having mentioned the work being done to improve the lives of our youth, we must bear in mind that the youth of today still face many challenges. Most especially, there is need to combat alcohol intake, drugs and substance abuse including SHISHA, crime, prostitution and teenage pregnancies and various kinds of human rights abuses including domestic violence, child sacrifice, child trafficking, trade in human body parts, robbery, murder etc. Truancy is still the biggest setback to the progression of young people. Let us together fight the common challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality and most of all the HIV and AIDS scourge that has persisted in our region. Surely, if the youth are the future of East Africa, then we need healthy, vibrant and productive citizens to move development forward.

Distinguished Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let us together embrace education, strive to build ourselves, and participate actively in the economy and in democratic governance. Let the young people be conduits of change, together let us advocate for of a region free from corruption, societies that respect our elders, women and children and uphold the rights of all people. It is my assurance that the East African Community is ready to support these efforts and fulfil the potential of the young people in the region. We are a region blessed with many resources and are striving to continuously develop and implement the right strategies and meaningfully engage the workforce we have who are mainly the youth; we can only hope to reap the benefits of our treasures.

Here at the East African Community Secretariat, we continue to make the pledge to prioritise the participation of youth in all programmes and policies at all levels. It is in this regard that a Consultative Dialogue Framework for Civil Society, Private Sector and other interest groups was adopted by the Council of Ministers last year. This kind of activities we are conducting

today is part of this consultative process. Furthermore, the Sectoral Council on Gender, Youth, Children, Social Protection and Community Development has already endorsed an all-encompassing Social Development Framework together with the EAC Youth Policy to guide the efforts and progress of the youth in the region together with a five year strategic plan.

Guest of Honour

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be part of today's event and witness the zeal the young people in Arusha and certainly the whole region have shown to the East African integration process. As a region we can only compete within the global economy when we are also united and build a resilient economy like the USA, EU, China, India, Brazil etc. So please work hard and take advantage of the provisions of the EAC Customs Union, Common Market Protocol and the Treaty for the establishment of the EAC. Participate in Public hearings, ask questions, use the social media e.g. Twitter, Facebook etc. to contribute your ideas, enhance your knowledge and voice your concerns.

I wish you and all the youth in the region an enjoyable, successful and productive International Youth Day!

Thank you.