

# EALA 10TH ANNIVERSARY SYMPOSIUM CATALYZING THE EAC INTEGRATION PROCESS: A RECIPE FOR REALIZATION OF THE EAST AFRICAN POLITICAL FEDERATION

**Keynote address by Amanya Mushega, Former Secretary General of the East African Community**

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I am very honoured and pleased to deliver the Keynote Address to this session which I am sharing with former EAC Secretary Generals, Ambassador Francis Muthaura, Juma Mwapachu and the current Secretary General, Amb. Dr. Richard Sezibera.

I would like to thank the Speaker, Rt. Honourable Abdirahin Abdi and Members of the Assembly for linking the present and the past and a representation of the broad spectrum of East African society at large to sit together in this very well organized Symposium and, so to speak, plot a better future for our region.

During the earlier session of the Symposium we have listened to very moving and wise statements by His Yoweri Kaguta Museveni (who was very ably represented by the Rt. Honourable Prime Minister, Amarna Mbabazi) and our *Wazee*, H.E. Daniel arap Moi and H.E. Al-Hajj Hassan Mwinyi. We were deeply touched and inspired in the presence of these great leaders. I was reminded of the African saying that where old people speak and are listened to, things cannot go wrong.

In the topic I have been given for my presentation, the key words are Catalyst, Recipe and Political Federation. Catalyst: is defined as something or someone that causes an important thing or event to happen. Recipe: a set of instructions for cooking a particular type of food. So what set of instructions do we need in order to make this important thing, the Political Federation happen and how quickly or how fast?

We need to understand what we are trying to change; the nature, character or the magnitude and composition of the things we want to catalyze. If we want things to move or mature fast. the person fertilizing a mahogany plant must know that it will take longer than maize or *mchicha* to mature and be consumable.

The process of fertilizing a cow, however quick it might be, will be longer than that of broiler chicken. Turning around a trailer will take a bit longer and more space and tilne than a mini car. Turning a tanker at sea will take more space and time than a boat.

Construction of a railway line will take longer than a village road even when all are being fast-tracked. East Africa is diverse in cultures, climate, history, resources and experiences. These should be looked at as assets rather than liabilities. and challenges to be overcome in order to build a richer and stronger unit for the people in the region. We should take into account and face openly, squarely and frankly the following, if we are to succeed.

1. There was an exciting and promising East African Community before which broke up. The breakup was caused by human beings local and external. It was excruciating, devastating and left a bad taste and bad blood, especially between Tanzania and Kenya. Uganda, although equally badly affected, was under its own excruciating pain under Field Marshall Idi Amin to fully appreciate the tremors at that time.

Some of these forces were domestic, policy. but others were foreign. We need to identify them and be on our guard lest they come back in sheep's clothing as friendly forces when they could be Trojan horses. Not all that glitters is gold and actions speak louder than words. I prefer people like Mzee Charles Njonjo who tells you why they don't support the integration process. Then you can deal with their concerns or be on your guard.

We need a forum where these issues can be openly discussed and resolved, rather than glossing over them and putting on an appearance that all is well, while at home people have real fears that things could repeat themselves. History never repeats itself. It is people who gloss over these issues by either being shy or thinking they are wiser and when similar occurrences happen, they are too shy to admit the consequences of their omission and commissions and blame history instead.

While we should not dwell too much on the past, or worst still live in the past, it is unwise to ignore the past lest similar things occur with worse consequences. It is not enough to say that the Community will never break up again. What is important is to put in place measures and mechanisms to ensure that those who may, presently or in future, have intentions to sabotage the Community will not succeed.

Many studies of experts point out that there are fears and concerns real or perceived. Let these fears and concerns be put on paper. Who fears who and why and the way forward. At what level should these open and frank discussions take place? At Summit or Ministerial level? My view is that leaders should not be involved in the kitchen process though they can inform what should be on the menu.

To start with, at Partner States and regional levels a forum of academicians, professionals, private sector and some political leaders should be commissioned to identify the fears concerns real or perceived. This forum at the Community level should discuss these matters frankly but behind scenes. This frank and open discussion painful as it might be at certain stages will ultimately build trust which is essential before plunging into the Federation. Point out who fears who and on what and come forward with solutions for Council of Ministers and Summit.

2. When we talk of the EAC being private sector driven what is the nature of this private sector. Who are the dominant forces? Are they domestic or foreign? What is to be done policy and resource-wise, in a known and institutionalized way, to promote a real East Africa rooted private sector. Can the private sector alone really advance this process or we need some interventions at state and regional levels.

3. On the issues of good governance, democracy, the rule of law, human rights, social justice, Transparency and Accountability, the question is, will these be better achieved at Partner States level or under the wider federation of East Africa. My view is that the realization of these goals will be achieved faster under the border East African framework.

However, in the meantime Partner States should work on these issues so that each State brings to the Community the best practices. Each Partner States should tidy up its act in accordance with the treaty and other decisions of the Community rather than wait to clean up matters after the Federation has been formed. Respect is earned. We have to respect ourselves first. Respect the ideals, pronounce, and advance the rule of law that applies to all. Respect and treat our citizens and those within our borders humanely, before we expect and request others to respect us.

One of the constantly expressed fears is that there is unequal development among the Partner States. My question is: Is there any Partner State where there is equal development within their borders? Aren't we talking of the general state of underdevelopment that prevails in the entire region, and aren't we in a better position to address this problem and put our region faster on the development path through pooling our human and natural resources?

4. We have to cultivate and strengthen our own ethos and values as East Africans. When the old Community broke up, the spirit and the feeling of the people of the region as East Africans suffered a huge setback. Things like East African syllabi, common research institutions, East African driving licenses, post office banking system,

movement across borders without passports, and East African Airways moving around as a domestic flight within East African had promoted this spirit.

The collapse of the old Community has led to entrenched national feeling and the defense of national sovereignty in international fora. Yet the nations and the borders that we so jealously espouse and protect were never made by us or our participation sought with the exception of the case of Tanzania in the making of the Union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar. But are we as sovereign as we imagine? As one writer said, the tiger doesn't sing its tigress. Those who are really sovereign don't sing it. They just move around and you see, feel and times suffer their sovereign weight. Why do we worship what was created and achieved by others and play down what we ourselves have put together. India is more diverse in culture, religion, climate, race etc than East Africa.

Yet they have pulled and developed their subcontinent. As a region, are we better off moving into the Federation straight away or fast tracking the process as we develop along? We need an East Africa that is strong and respected. That will survive and prosper. We need the huge market for our own produced goods and services rather than a market or dumping place for other people's products some substandard and harmful.

In order for the eventual Federation to take root, survive and be of value to the people by transforming and improving their quality of living we need to urgently attend to the following:

First and foremost, we need to invest as Governments in Education and instill values and skills in the young generations, fully aware that we are not building the Federation for ourselves but for a better life for future generations. If we are lucky we shall also have some harvest.

We need skills to convert our potential and idle resources into quality goods and services that can compete. We need a skilled work force that will attract and retain investments, domestic and foreign, a skilled work force in the area of food processing, leather, textile, ceramics, research centers, etc that will harness the vast solar and wind energy potential, a skilled workforce that will build and maintain our infrastructure.

Recently I visited a place where a mini hydro plant was being built by young men from Sri Lanka . They were engineers in their late 30's and early 40's; surely born when we were already independent and sovereign. To invest in quality high tech skills we need to

pool resources and build real centers of excellence like Institutes of Technology and Technical Colleges.

We need well resourced and commonly funded research centers in critical areas for us to wake up and catch up. Instead of fighting for posts in the Secretariat we should be discussing where each of these technical institutes should be located but accessible to all.

This will call for prioritizing our resources allocation, we need to invest as a region and model our common railway system and water ways along regional lines. This will require financial discipline, prioritizing resources allocation and direction. Cut down on conspicuous consumption and waste.

We need to entrench the culture of saving right from the top organs of our States and Regional bodies, and invest the scarce resources in well researched critical areas. Successful nations have developed on the basis of the quality, values and strength of their Education and Skills which have resulted into the development of Science and technology. Their military strength has been as a result of their investments in the above. An educated and skilled population will expect, plan for and agitate for jobs, quality life and other rights not as favors. It is not just good pay but the quality, values, zeal and skills of the men and women behind the wheels that ultimately spur development. East Africans and their leaders at all levels should promote in words and in actions, the development and unity of this region, in domestic and foreign policy.

Others can only assist in this effort. If someone else cares for you more than you care for yourself then there is a problem. There is need to strengthen the office of the Secretary General and other East African Institutions, cede more powers and resources. Equip them so that they can act more effectively.

Cede resources, as was commended by the Wako Commission, to the Community so that the Secretary General and the East African Legislative Assembly can actually budget and determine the priorities of the Community.

We should not treat the Community Headquarters and Institutions, as outposts or extensions of Partner States. Let us give the regional body the authority and respect it deserves. We should not expect that suddenly things will be transferred from the Partner States who are now reluctant to cede even small things like percentages of their budgets or jurisdiction to the Court, when the Federation is formed.

It will be unwise to expect this sudden transfer of power and resources to happen, without causing friction and problems. There is need to create and mandate an institution to enforce compliance with decisions taken at the Community level. Leaving implementation to volunteerism and goodwill of the Partner States will not do. Even worse, making big and serious decisions in Arusha, and when we return to our respective Partner States we act small or contrary to what we agreed in Arusha, is a major weakness. What is the point of agitating for immediate Federation when implementation of decisions taken could be faster and better and hence oil the process of Political Federation?

Secondly, more responsibilities should be given to the Court of Justice by extending its jurisdiction so that it is gradually empowered to become the actual Court of last instance in the Community.

Finally, there are stringent conditions for admission of new members. Do these conditions continue to apply to existing members as well? If so, where is the mechanism to ensure compliance? We need to move fast on this so that these requirements apply to all members at all times.

In conclusion, let me state that to hasten the process of a Political Federation and ensure that it will survive the shocks of integration, local and foreign unintended and intended, we need frank and candid discussions of the breakup of the old EAC and the fears and concerns, real and perceived, that exist today. This should be broad both at national and regional levels.

We need to facilitate and encourage thinktanks at national and regional level. Critical thinking and analysis is essential at personal, national and regional levels, for meaningful and beneficial development to take place. The integration process should not be a part time engagement. We need bodies of informed, objective and committed persons to research analyze think and re-think. and propose concrete ways forward for decision makers.

We need to invest massively in quality education and selectively in the skills that are critical to turn our potential in actual wealth. We need critical regional centers of excellence in areas of resources, science and technical skills.

Thank you for listening to me.