



EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

**SPEECH BY AMB. DR. RICHARD SEZIBERA, EAC
SECRETARY GENERAL AT THE REGIONAL EAC SG CEO
FORUM**

**27TH FEBRUARY 2013
KAMPALA, UGANDA**

- **The Guest of Honour, Hon. Eriya Kategaya, First Deputy Prime Minister & Chair EAC Council of Ministers,**
- **Senior Government Officials,**
- **The EABC Chairman, Hon. Gerald Ssendaula,**
- **The Executive Director EABC, Mr. Andrew Luzze,**
- **The CEO Trade Mark East Africa, Mr. Frank Matseart,**
- **The Business Community,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen.**

I bring to you warm greetings from the East African Community Secretariat Headquarters in Arusha, Tanzania. I am greatly delighted and pleased to be with you here today on this auspicious occasion of the first Regional CEOs Forum in this beautiful city of Kampala.

Before I start, let me take this opportunity on behalf of the EAC Secretariat and on my own behalf, to extend my heartfelt condolences to the President of the Republic of Uganda, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni for the untimely demise of his late father Mzee Amosi Kaguta last week. "Mzee" a firm believer in the EAC Integration process, has left a legacy of producing a son who has tremendously transformed the EAC Community.

We had expected to present a regionally agreed plan to the chair of the EAC Summit of Heads of State President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and it is our hope that he will be able to join us today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Private Sector accounts for over 80% of the Regional GDP in terms of job creation, skills development, tax revenue and foreign exchange earnings. The Mission of EAC aims at improving the quality of life through increased competitiveness; value added production and enhanced trade and investment. Private sector therefore is an essential element in the sustainability of the EAC integration plans.

One year ago, the Secretariat in partnership with East African Business Council (EABC) and the Trade Mark East Africa (TMEA) put in place the Private Sector CEOs Forum at the national level. A simple and noble event we thought it would be that kicked off in earnest in Nairobi, Kenya- 16th April 2012; Kigali, Rwanda- 23rd July 2012; Dar es Salaam, Tanzania 24th August 2012; Kampala, Uganda- 8th October 2012 and Burundi - 22nd October 2012 courtesy of the EABC and TMEA culminated into this regional forum that we are attending here today.

Our Journey has seen EABC with the support of the EAC and TMEA bring together, at the EAC regional level, the broadest membership of businesses from various sectors, drawn from the 5 EAC Partner States. This has included 52 Associations under 5 national private sector umbrella bodies; manufacturers, employers, bankers, transporter and women associations; Chambers of Commerce; SME associations and the Confederation of Informal Sectors in the EAC. EABC has also managed to bring to this forum representative of over 120 individual corporate companies, drawn from the 5 Partner States. Please join me in giving a round of applause to the entire key stakeholders that have worked towards making this event a success.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As required by the under Article 127(4) of the EAC Treaty, I can confidently say that this SG CEO forums have given the Private Sector and Non State Actors a platform

to participate more effectively in various EAC policy formulation processes, especially in the on-going trade negotiations such as monetary Union, COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite FTA Agreement, the proposed U.S.-EAC Trade and Investment Initiative, and the Economic Partnership Agreements. In the past one-year since we started this initiative, we have seen commendable improvement on a number of institutional reforms in the Partner States and adaptations of domestic laws related to the Common Market Protocol including the removal of some existing restrictions with regard to the free movement of labor, goods, capital and services. We have also seen more than 36 Non -Tariff barrier to trade resolved.

The 2012 CEO National Forums identified Infrastructure as one of the most critical enablers of a successful regional integration, taking into account its importance in facilitating activities such as trade, agriculture, tourism and the movement of labor and or other resources.

As we meet here today, Key issues discussed by stakeholders at the national level are reflected in the program laid before you focusing in a nutshell on implementation of two of our key pillars of integration agenda namely the Customs Union and Common Market. As a community we realize that in order to fully implement the provisions of the Protocols establishing the two, improvement of infrastructure has been identified as a vehicle towards reducing the cost of doing business in the Community.

Today's forum will critically examine the constraints facing the EAC private sector at a national level, identify the remedies to the bottlenecks in question and agree on how the remedies can be implemented in order to improve the region's business environment.

Way forward

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we come to the end of our first round many of you will ask what next remains to be done. This is not the end but just the start, I would like to assure you that this year 2013 we will go even deeper. We intend to conduct similar forums at sectoral

level; together with Key stakeholders have agreed to focus on the Manufacturing Sector. We expect that this will give the captains of specific sectors the confidence and venue to continue to articulate issues affecting the sector as well as providing policy review suggestions.

Fellow EAC Citizens I believe we can even take this further, a Consultative Dialogue Framework for the Private Sector, Civil Society and other Interest Groups in the EAC Integration process has now been put in place and we therefore expect that this initiative will only get stronger.

I would like to inform you that we are also about to conclude a Public-Private Partnership Framework for the EAC, which will also go a long way to enhance private sector participation in public enterprises. The World Bank in consultation with EAC, which presented a “needs assessment” on the formulation of a suitable policy framework and strategy and only awaits Council consideration and guidance, has completed a study. The proposed framework will facilitate private sector participation in public enterprises with a regional dimension particularly in industrial and infrastructure projects.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as I conclude and in the true spirit of public –private sector dialogue, I wish to call upon each one of you to participate in this forum with a view of finding solution to issues that hamper full private sector engagement in the EAC integration agenda. I challenge the private sector to generously contribute to the EAC Partnership Fund whose role is to implement integration projects and programs in order to reduce our reliance on foreign Aid.

I wish you fruitful discussions during the forum and thank you most sincerely for listening to me and for making this even a success.