

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON. MWAI KIBAKI, C.G.H., M.P., PRESIDENT AND
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA
DURING THE ADDRESS AND OPENING OF THE 2ND MEETING OF THE FIRST
SESSION OF THE EAC ASSEMBLY, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS,
4TH SEPTEMBER, 2012**

The Speaker of the Kenya National Assembly,

The Speaker of the East African Assembly,

Honourable Members of the East African Legislative Assembly,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you all to Nairobi for the 2nd meeting of the 1st Session of the East African Legislative Assembly.

May I take this early opportunity to congratulate you, honourable members, for electing the Right Honourable Margaret Nantongo Zziwa the first Lady ever to be elected as Speaker of the Assembly. I wish madam speaker and all of you members much success in the years ahead. I also welcome you all to Kenya.

Holding Meetings in Partner States is a good idea because it gives the people of East Africa the opportunity to witness at close quarters and understand the workings of the organs of the Community. More importantly, it gives them the opportunity to input into your deliberations. This meeting is, therefore, an integral part of our efforts towards deepening the integration of our region.

Madam Speaker,
Honourable Members,

Over the last ten years, the people of East Africa have made significant strides in the integration process. The different organs of the East African Community, including the assembly, have made important contributions to this process. However, more needs to be done. Indeed, I wish on this occasion to draw your attention to several ways in which the various organs of our community can perform better, and enhance cooperation and collaboration with national institutions.

In this connection, greater collaboration and more linkages between the East Africa Legislative assembly and National Assemblies can go a long way towards improving the performance of our Community. For instance, it may be useful to hold special joint sessions to debate Community agenda. This way, the community will be brought closer to the people for whom it is intended.

The necessity for the different legislatures to work together becomes more urgent when we recognize that laws enacted by this assembly are expected to enhance and compliment National Laws. Similarly, we should see greater cooperation between organs of the community for more efficient implementation of Laws, Protocols and programmes of the EAC.

Since the establishment of the EAC, we have passed and signed important protocols and Partner States have made various commitments with regard to integration. However, in

their implementation, we have not moved at the pace our citizens desire. I believe this Assembly has the right and duty to hold us more accountable in implementing these commitments, so that we deliver in a meaningful way to our citizens.

It is imperative, therefore, that this Assembly and the Council of Ministers collaborate more on mechanisms to initiate laws to enforce the expeditious implementation of the Customs Union and the Common Market Protocols. This will enable our people to reap benefits accruing from them.

In addition, the East African Business people, investors and ordinary citizens still find non-tariff barriers and obstacles to free movement of persons, labour, goods and services across the region an unnecessary impediment to the operation of the two protocols.

The EAC organs and relevant institutions, including the assembly, must start to seek solutions to these impediments to our integration. Working together to remove fear of loss of sovereignty should be central to all our deliberations.

Here in Kenya, we have reduced the number of police stops for transit cargo to ensure speedy movement of goods and services to East African Community member countries. We are also ensuring smoother operations at the weighbridges. Let us also work towards the smooth operation of a single entry.

Madam Speaker,
Honourable Members,

As you are aware, our region continues to experience periodic droughts, floods, other natural disasters and food shortages. In part, this is due to effects of climate change and poor management of the environment. The need to sustainably manage our natural resources, many of them shared, could not be made more forcefully than by these periodic challenges. Equally, the need to develop agricultural policies and practices, and land management systems that ensure food security in this region is most urgent.

We have a duty, therefore, to ensure there are mechanisms for better environmental management so as to mitigate effects of climate change. As legislators, you have a critical role to play in this respect. This is especially critical as more of our countries discover mineral resources. Let us put them to good use for present and future generations.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that our region's process of integration should be citizen-centered and should also seek to foster the active participation of the people of East Africa. East African Community issues should not be confined to Legislative chambers but must extend to the public through the media, public discussions and other forums of consultation. That way, ordinary East Africans will have a voice in matters that affect them.

Personally, I would like to see you encourage the use of the Kiswahili language among citizens of East Africa. I am also looking forward to the future expansion of the EAC. We welcome the interest of Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Somalia in joining the EAC. We should facilitate their membership. A strong and prosperous EAC is the pillar to the stability of our region. Let us all play our roles in strengthening and expanding the EAC.

We should also work together to fight agents of terror and those who threaten our security. Peace and security are paramount to our development agenda. In this connection, we wish

our brothers and sisters in Somalia all the best as they prepare to embrace a period of reconstruction.

With these remarks, I wish you fruitful deliberations during this session.

Thank you and God bless you all