

**A PAPER ON "THE EAST AFRICAN POLITICAL FEDERATION; ADDRESSING
FEARS, CONCERNS AND CHALLENGES - PRESENTED BY HON. ABDULKARIM
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The East African Community (EAC) is the regional economic bloc comprising the Republic of Burundi, Republic of Kenya, Republic of Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania, and the Republic of Uganda. The Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community was signed in Arusha on 30th November 1999 and ratified on 7th July, 2000. The Republics of Burundi and Rwanda joined the rest of the countries in 2007.

According to the EAC Treaty, the mission of the Community is to be realized in an incremental progression through the stages of a Customs Union, a Common Market, a Monetary Union, and ultimately a Political Federation of the East African states. At a special Summit held in Nairobi on 27 - 29 August, 2004, the Heads of State expressed concern at the slow pace of integration and resolved to examine ways of expediting the process so that the ultimate goal of a Political Federation is achieved through a Fast Track Mechanism.

1.1 OVERVIEW

A federation can loosely be defined as a form of Government or country where there is territorial distribution of power between one central or a common government and subordinate or lower Governments. The elements of a federation therefore include shared powers and responsibilities defined by law and practice. It therefore goes without saying that in order to federate, federating units should be prepared to cede certain powers to one common centre. This perhaps is the most important of all prerequisites for a successful federation to take place.

The visionary purpose for the establishment of an East African Federation is the accelerated economic development for all, to enable the region to move away from a Least Developed Region to a Developed Region, in the shortest possible time. The purpose of an East African Federation is best described by the following quotations:

"The balkanization of Africa into 53, mostly sub-optimal States, has meant that Africa cannot have a large internal market under one Political Authority; have no

power to negotiate with the rest of the world. This balkanization must stop”- H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni President, Republic of Uganda

“We have everything to gain in East African Federation in terms of political stability, greater feeling in safety in numbers and as an economic entity better able to fight poverty” - H.E. Benjamin William Mkapa President, United Republic of Tanzania

“I firmly believe that regional integration is not a choice but a necessary strategy for sustainable development. On a cultural level, regional integration solidifies the unity of communities with personalities and common history, language and culture” - H.E. Mwai Kibaki President, Republic of Kenya

There is a general appreciation for a United East Africa with a stronger economy that would guarantee the people jobs, better standards of living and pride of belonging to such an ideal State. In the age of information technology, the people are increasingly exposed to the conditions of life in the developed parts of the world, which at best they can only imitate. The people express, therefore, a brave and bold vision of the Federation that would be competitive in the era of globalization. In order to realize high and sustainable growth trends in the Federation, there should be commitment to timely, effective and time-bound decisions together with their implementation.

2.0 ARGUMENTS FOR A POLITICAL FEDERATION

When societies merge to form one large economic and political entity, issues of tribalism, religious and other socio-cultural problems tend to disappear; this has proven difficult under each separate country.

The Federation will also remove any possibilities of Partner States fighting each other and as more countries later join the Federation and the political stability of the region will further be entrenched.

A Political Federation is imperative in this global environment. But for federation to survive there must be an environment that enables people to participate in an accelerated economic development process, and economic development can be made faster within a Political Federation than when it is done under totally separate state governments just like the case of the great United States of America.

3.0 EXPECTATIONS OF POLITICAL FEDERATION

3.1 Political Expectations

The expectations with regard to the political aspects relate to pride in belonging to a vast and powerful Federation that would command respect and stronger voice in the world community; and that would be secure, peaceful and prosperous. The Federation is expected to get rid of all manner of ethnic and sectional conflicts. The people expect the Federation to address, more effectively the issues of security, governance, etc in the EAC, and establish lasting solutions.

3.2 Economic Expectations

a) The expectations with regard to the economy relate to acceleration of economic growth with the resultant benefits of uplifting the standards of living for all. Further, there would be efficient management of resources and economies of scale, which should generate wealth and create employment. The Federation would stimulate development and sharing in the field of education, science and technology which is at the cutting, edge of socioeconomic transformation.

b) Lake Victoria would be managed as a single and indivisible resource, equitably shared among the East African people. The Lake would be rationally managed, particularly with regard to the imperative to protect and conserve its environment.

3.3 Social Expectations

a) The people of East Africa look forward to improved social interaction, peaceful coexistence and harmony among neighbours, particularly border communities, with tribalism and ethnic conflicts receding into the past. In particular, they anticipate better governance, democratic and accountable institutions. Education and health services are among the important areas where the Federation is expected to make a positive impact.

b) Federation would pave the way for the rule of law and a strong sense of constitutionalism to take root. The sovereignty of the people over the Federation should be entrenched through, among others, the institution of Referendum to establish the East African Federation.

3.4 Expectations of ordinary citizens

- a) Free movement, right to employment, residence and ownership of property.
- b) Non-discrimination in service provision and fee payments (e.g. school fees, medical and hotel accommodation etc).
- c) Re-unification of communities and families living along the borders
- d) Peace and Security for the pastoralist communities along borders by way of reduced crime, amelioration of economic hardships, and assurance on food security.
- e) The Lake Victoria communities expect beneficial and sustainable utilization of the Lake Victoria resources.
- f) Improved governance through wider democratization, freedom of speech and association.
- g) Standardized education systems.
- h) Participation in the Federal process through a referendum and subsequent direct elections.
- i) Food security.
- j) Single currency.
- k) Use of a common language, Kiswahili.

3.5 Expectations of the governments and the bureaucrats

- a) Opportunity to address social and economic imbalances thus generating economic benefits,
- b) Stabilization in security matters (Terrorism, Crime and drugs and arms illicit traffickers),
- c) Exploitation of synergies and removal of duplications,
- d) Macroeconomic convergences and harmonization of policies, standards, laws and regulations.

3.6 Expectations of the politicians

- a) Political and social stability, in particular elimination of tribalism.
- b) Alliances between political parties across borders.
- c) Federation forming the nucleus in the integral process towards the realization of the African Union.
- d) Common foreign policy.
- e) Retention of some political power at the State level.

3.7 Expectations of the Business Community

- a) Bigger markets for trade and investment.
- b) Increased competition and competitiveness.
- c) Reduction in business costs.
- d) Increased business opportunities.
- e) Free movement of goods and services.
- f) Elimination of NTBs.
- g) Price Stability.
- h) Ease of access to services at Mombasa and Dar es Salaam for landlocked Partner States.

3.8 Expectations of Civil Society and Professional Societies

The Civil Society and Professional Associations expect to play robust roles in:

- a) Advocacy and sensitization of the citizenry towards the Federation,
- b) Ensure entrenchment of Human Rights, Environmental Conservation and setting up of conflict resolution mechanisms.

4.0 FEARS, CONCERNS AND CHALLENGES (FCCs)

4.1 Political and Legal FCCs

- a) Sovereignty and Nationalism. The fear is manifested in a number of ways including; notions of loss of political power, loss of decision making, and loss of flexibility in exercising powers at the national level;
- b) Collapse of the earlier EAC. This is still fresh in the minds of some people and there is no adequate assurance yet that the past experience will not reoccur;
- c) The disparities in the national constitutions and practices of democracy, good governance, anti-corruption, human rights, constitutionalism and the rule of law;
- d) People need assurance that they will be involved in the process of making major decisions that touch on their livelihood, including electoral processes;
- e) Lack of uniformity in doctrine, discipline and accountability among agencies dealing with peace, security and defense in the Partner States;
- f) Concern that the political federation agenda is driven by the political leadership to satisfy political motives;
- g) Fear of increase in cross border crime including Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), illicit drugs, human trafficking;

h) The concern that over emphasis on political federation may obscure other stages of integration, as provided for in the Treaty, which are the foundation for a firm Political Federation;

4.2 Economic FCCs

- a) Financial sustainability of the proposed Political Federation with the implied increase in taxation to run one additional tier of government;
- b) Weak economies will be dominated by the stronger economies in the region in the absence of a mechanism to address imbalances and ensure equitable distribution of benefits;
- c) There is a concern that the differences in the levels of economic development, entrepreneurial skills and competitiveness in the manufacturing and service industries will disadvantage some Partner States.
- d) The need for a mechanism to address purchasing power parity as we move towards the monetary union;
- e) Domination in the labour market by more skilled and qualified labour force to the disadvantage of nationals;
- f) The need to establish mechanisms for sustainable utilization and conservation of the environment;
- g) The need for mechanisms for sustainable exploitation of natural resources and equitable distribution of benefits thereof;
- h) People were concerned about the differences in the land tenure systems obtaining in the Partner States and how they will be addressed;
- i) The need for mechanisms for addressing liabilities contracted by the Partner States before the federation i.e. debts;
- j) The Customs Union is faced with a number of operational problems that need to be addressed; and
- k) The need to harmonize economic policy reforms;

4.3 Social-Cultural FCCs

- a) In the absence of national Identification documents for some Partner States' citizens, it will be difficult to establish the identity of East Africans;
- b) The fear of losing the gains already made in affirmative action for marginalized groups in the bigger entity;
- c) There is a concern that fewer women than men are involved in the decision making of the integration process;
- d) Differences in education systems, curricula and academic/professional qualifications

and social welfare schemes among the Partner States;

5.0 SOLUTIONS TO OVERCOME THE FCCs

- a) Continuous sensitization programmes about the EAC integration process;
- b) Embark on the process of drafting an East African constitution to clearly define the model of the federation and the distribution of power at various levels;
- c) Accelerating and fast tracking of the Customs Union, Common Market, Monetary Union and finally the Political Federation;
- d) Promotion of close cooperation in culture and sports and development of indigenous languages;
- e) Elaboration of the East African civic education and sensitizations programme to promote the East African identity and solidarity;
- f) Promotion of the alternative/home-grown dispute resolution and peace building mechanisms;
- g) Restructure and transform the EAC secretariat to be able to enforce implementation of decisions of policy organs;
- h) Develop a mechanism for equitable distribution of economic benefits to the grassroots;
- i) Consolidate and strengthen the relevant polices aimed at building a strong, credible and sustainable federation;

6.0 CONCLUSION

Political integration is a qualitatively deeper form of integration than economic integration. Achieving it requires the pillars of political federation, that is, a common foreign policy, peace and security, and good governance to be established and strengthened. It also requires structural transformation of regional policies, institutional arrangements and capacities to support the deeper goal of development.

However, the legitimacy and sustainability of the East African Political Federation will depend on the extent to which development is achieved. What is critical for a successful federation is a positive environment characterized by among other factors, a strong political will, commitment and the existence of viable regional structures.