

## **EAC executives exchange views with experienced British Peer on integration philosophy**

***EAC Headquarters, Arusha, Wednesday 30 July 2008:*** The Secretary General of the East African Community, Ambassador Juma Mwapachu held a meeting with the British Peer, David Edward Lea, Lord Lea of Crondall who called on him at his office in Arusha on Monday, 28 July 2008.

The Secretary General was accompanied during the meeting by the Deputy Secretary General (Finance and Administration) Dr Julius Tangus Rotich, the Deputy Secretary General (Political Federation) Ms Beatrice Kiraso, EAC Director of Trade, Dr Flora Musonda, Head, EAC Directorate of Corporate Communications and Public Affairs, Mr Magaga Alot and the Chef de Cabinet, Mr Henry Obbo. The discussions centred on an exchange of views and experiences of the EU and EAC integration processes.

### ***Lord Lea says EU is rooted in pragmatism***

Lord Lea, a Labour Peer, recalled that the European Union has its genesis in the post World War era and the polarization of the world between two main contending ideological blocs of East and West. He said the driving force for the evolution and development of the EU was political but its engine was propelled by a pragmatic focus on the economic necessity. The EU, he said, was launched more with economic expression than political fanfare. It was a trade-off between political abstraction and the push to get things done, particularly on the economic front.

Lord Lea observed that in spite of its structure of strong political authority and emphasis on sovereignty of the Partner States, the EAC was not short of things that could be done outside the purely political considerations. He said the EAC could identify and focus on the practical issues, among them immigration, the free movement of persons, environment, infrastructure, health, education and social security, without getting distracted or bogged down with lengthy conceptualization and indulgence in metaphysics over intricate political and sovereignty issues. He said African regional economic communities needed to go for “opt outs” on some of the sticking issues, and concentrate on the areas of “intermediate comfort” where movement would be demonstrated without compromising the unity of the regional economic blocs. He said there was need for resolute action to get things done and demonstrate concrete benefits and achievements of integration while using the success stories to get the people more interested and deeper involved in the regional integration process.

### ***Amb Mwapachu reaffirms step by step approach to EA integration***

The Secretary General of the East African Community, Ambassador Juma Mwapachu said that after the collapse of the predecessor East African Community (1967-77), the sense had prevailed with the revival of the Community in 1993 that regional integration would proceed more cautiously, on the step by step basis, with consensus and confidence established at every stage of the integration march.

He said that the overall political vision for continental union existed, emanating from the early pan Africanist ideals of the early sixties. He said that during about three decades that ensued, the debate over how fast to realize continental union had abated but was resurrected with the resurgence of the continental union demand under the African Union Constitutive Act of 2000. “Today, we are getting caught up again in that old argument about how quickly we should move to continental union”, Amb Mwapachu said.

Amb. Mwapachu said the EAC was concentrating on building robust economic communities as the building blocks of the African continental union. He noted that the National Consultative Process of Fast Tracking East African Federation conducted in the EAC Partner States in 2007 returned a verdict of overwhelming acceptance of the idea of Federation and equally overwhelming preference for a step by step approach towards political federation. He said the EAC was currently committed to re-engage the East African people about the whole question of political federation through deeper sensitization of the people on the benefits of integration.

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