



**EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY**

**EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**WELCOMING SPEECH BY RT. HON. DANIEL F. KIDEGA, SPEAKER  
OF EALA AT THE ADDRESS OF H.E. PIERRE NKURUNZIZA,  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI ON MARCH 17, 2015 -  
BUJUMBURA, BURUNDI**

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**Your Excellency, Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of  
Burundi,**

**Rt. Hon Pie Ntavyohanyuma, President of the Burundi National  
Assembly,**

**Rt. Hon Gabriel Ntizezerana, President of the Burundi Senate**

**His Excellency Prosper Bazombaza, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President of the Republic of  
Burundi,**

**His Excellency Gervais Rufyikiri, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President of the Republic of  
Burundi,**

**Hon Members of the Bureaus of the Parliament of Burundi**

**Your Excellencies, Former Heads of State of Burundi**

**Hon. Dr. Harrison Mwakyembe, the Chairperson, EAC Council of Ministers,**

**The Hon. Ministers and Members of the Council of Ministers,**

**Amb Dr. Richard Sezibera, the Secretary General of the East African Community,**

**Hon. Members of the East African Legislative Assembly and the Parliament of Burundi,**

**Your Excellencies Ambassadors and Members of the Diplomatic Corps,**

**Distinguished guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen;**

Your Excellency, it is with profound humility that I stand here to warmly welcome you to deliver your address at the commencement of the 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Session of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Assembly.

Your presence here today exemplifies the deep commitment and sense of duty you hold to the citizens of Burundi and to East Africans as we advance the integration agenda. Thank you for positively responding to our invitation.

In a very special way, allow me to sincerely thank Your Excellency for sparing the better part of your Friday morning to see me when I paid you a courtesy call at the Executive Office of the President.

I am happy to note that the EALA is now back on track after a tumultuous 2014. We have embarked on catching up with the backlog of activities in this newly found spirit. At the 4<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting of EALA held in Arusha in January 2015, we passed two Bills, three Resolutions and several Reports. We also committed another six Bills to relevant Committees.

Of the six Bills, I am particularly elated that the region is keen to address NTBs through a regulatory framework. Indeed, we have talked for far too long about weighbridges, police roadblocks, non-recognition of the EAC certificates of origin, lack of mutual recognition of quality marks, among others. It is now time to reverse the trend and the campaign can and should be strengthened by championing for and anchoring relevant legislation.

At this Plenary Session, we shall be considering and hopefully passing three Bills, analyzing several oversight reports of the Committees of EALA and debate specific Motions and Resolutions. The Bills we shall be debating on are the Elimination of NTBs Bill, 2015, The EAC Customs Management (Amendment) Bill, 2015 and The EAC Competition (Amendment) Bill.

Let me also inform your Excellency that the Council of Ministers has assured us in our discussions of tabling at least 4 Bills this calendar year. I have taken stock and noted that there are 14 Meetings left to the end of our mandate in 2017.

With the support of my colleagues and that of the Council of Ministers, we should be able to debate on and to enact at the very least - one key Bill per Meeting. If we do so, then we shall have passed at minimum, 14 Bills and this would put us back on good stead.

The Assembly shall also scale-up the area of sensitization to increase the citizens' level of awareness on the benefits and opportunities of the EAC integration.

Later on this week, we shall be meeting with representatives of the youth in Burundi and the EAC Youth Ambassadors to listen to, discuss and strategise with them on key issues around integration. This is a critical group to reach out to strengthen integration given the fact they account for over 60% of the total population. Outreach to the youth is also on our menu as it is envisaged by our Strategic Plan (2013-2018). We are also going to meet with representatives of the employers and the Trade Union movement who also have a formal petition to make to the Assembly.

Our message to the groups is clear, that we need to close ranks, and to keep the conversations alive to strengthen the process of regional integration. We shall keep avenues open for deeper consultations and receipt of petitions with the diverse stakeholders including the business community, academia, civil society and opinion leaders. In this way, we believe we can create a spiral effect in the dissemination of information of EAC to the citizenry.

Your Excellency, I congratulate you for the exemplary leadership that has seen the country leap to greater heights thus far. I wish you good health and prosperity as you continue to lead the country.

Burundi continues to realise steady yet upward economic growth by leveraging on regional investments. Today, Burundi is a peaceful country. I am happy to

note that you chose the path to peace akin to **John F. Kennedy** who once said (and I quote): **Mankind must put an end to War or War will put an end to mankind**" (end of quote).

The landmark achievements of this beautiful country, a few years after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement have been hailed far and beyond. We now constantly see new developments around Bujumbura and the countryside that did not exist before and it is only natural that we too add our voice in heralding these great achievements that are resultant from choosing the path of peace. Allow us therefore to celebrate with you on the achievements. We commend the people of Burundi for putting their country first and for working for the cheaper option of peace and stability.

I recognize the fact that the Republic of Burundi shall be going to polls in the next two months. This is a period to secure the future of the country through the ballot box. Elections anywhere tend to stir uncertainty, and investors traditionally withhold decision making until the aftermath, to see if and when the effect of any radical shift in policy becomes apparent. This uncertainty is not new to Burundi, as it is a common phenomenon. On behalf of EALA, let me wish you successful, peaceful and credible elections.

As EALA, we are keen to see the country go through this electioneering period peacefully. We are also keen to see a process that is credible and devoid of malpractices. We appeal to the citizens of the country to exercise their just and democratic right. We further appeal to the Electoral Commission to institute the internationally agreed normative base for free and fair elections. I am happy that in my meetings with Your Excellency, the Ombudsman, Dr. Mohammed Rukara and the President of the Burundi National Assembly, Rt. Hon Pie

Ntavyohanyuma, the trio have all given the assurances over holding credible elections. Of essence really is the total adherence to principles of democratization and constitutionalism. I urge you to defend this to the hilt and not to let any infiltration of undue interference.

I wish to state that the EAC shall be sending an Elections Observer Mission which shall be steered by EALA. I need to add here that elections generally present a challenge for many young and developing democracies. The EALA meeting here coincides with the period and this is a good thing given the fact that in the African setting, a true friend is one who sticks through the challenging times. There is no better place to be than in Burundi because as they say; **“A friend in need is a Friend in deed”**.

Before I invite you to address this Assembly, may I briefly introduce to you some of the dignitaries present;

**(LIST TO BE AVAILED)**

Finally, Your Excellency, it is with great pleasure and honour that I execute my humble duty to welcome Your Excellency to address this August Assembly, today, Tuesday, the 17<sup>th</sup> day of March 2015.

I thank you for your kind attention!