



## **EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY**

### **EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

#### **REMARKS BY HON. ABDIRAHIN ABDI, SPEAKER OF THE EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AT THE INTERACTIVE MEETING BETWEEN EALA AND MEMBERS OF KENYA NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON FRIDAY 28<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2011: INTEER-CONTINENTAL HOTEL, NAIROBI, KENYA.**

- Rt. Hon. Kenneth Marende, Speaker of the Kenya National Assembly
- Hon Hafsa Mossi, Chairperson of the EAC Council of Ministers
- Hon. Hellen Sambili, Minister of EAC Affairs, Kenya
- Hon Ministers
- Hon Members of Kenya National Assembly and EALA
- The Secretary General of EAC
- Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

The Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community takes cognizance of the role of EALA and National Assemblies in deepening and widening the EAC integration process. The Treaty makes provision by which the East African Legislative Assembly may interact with Members of National Assemblies to discuss matters pertinent to the developments in the Community. However, the Treaty is silent on how this liaison should be done. EALA has had to come up with various mechanisms to put these provisions in effect. The mechanisms currently employed by EALA are; the now famous annual Inter-Parliamentary Relations Seminar, commonly known as the 'Nanyuki series", Inter-Committee activities between Committees of EALA and National Assemblies; rotational sittings in Partner States and interactive sessions like this one, with Members of National Assemblies whenever it is feasible.

It is on this account that the Speaker of the Kenya National Assembly, the Hon Minister of EAC affairs and I have organised this interactive meeting between Members of EALA and those of the Kenya National Assembly to discuss developments in the EAC. May I therefore on behalf of the East African Legislative Assembly and on my own behalf express our gratitude to the Rt. Hon. Speaker Marende and Members of the Kenya National Assembly for accepting to grace this very important. We are indeed deeply honoured and privileged to address you.

We have deliberately designed a programme through which all the key organs of the EAC shall make presentations on their operations as well as the prospects and opportunities arising from their respective

mandates. Accordingly, you will benefit from presentations from a Member of the Council about the dynamism of handling EAC affairs in the Ministry of EAC; from the Secretary General of the EAC; from the Registrar of the East African Court of Justice; and from EALA's representative. I therefore implore you to utilise the plenary session as much as possible to seek clarifications from each of them and to ensure that at the end of the meeting you are very well informed about the Community as it stands now.

I wish to implore you the Members of the Kenya National Assembly to utilise the Treaty provisions related to Parliaments to forge stronger links between EALA and the National Assembly of Kenya, and with the other National Assemblies/Parliaments of the EAC Partner States. As you may be aware, the EAC is an inter-governmental organization of five Partner States, namely; Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda; and the Treaty recognises the role National Assemblies/Parliaments of the Partner States in the furtherance of the objectives of the Community. Notable provisions which you could utilise include:

- Article 8 (5) *on making the necessary legal instruments to confer precedence of Community organs, institutions, and laws over similar national ones;*
- Article 49 (2) (a) *which is instructive on the Assembly to liaise with the National Assemblies of the Partner States on matters related to the Community;*
- Article 65 *which provides an added emphasis on the manner of relating with National Assemblies, exchange of information and enhancing the spirit of popular participation by the public through their elected representatives; and*
- Article 123 (4) (f) *on the promotion of co-operation among the National Assemblies of the Partner States.*

On our part and in a bid to operationalise some of the above provisions, the Assembly has in the past and continues to pursue this through: -

- The proposed establishment of the EAC Speaker's Forum/ Bureau as a formal body by which decisions relating to National Assemblies and EALA within the context of the EAC may be made.
- The holding of inter-parliamentary relations seminars (Nanyuki series) for EALA Members to brief their counterparts in the National Assemblies on pertinent issues before the Assembly and the EAC in general;
- The establishment of Inter-Parliamentary Liaison Committees to spearhead developments in the sectors they represent. It entails close working cooperation between committees of similar mandates working with the respective Committees of EALA on pertinent matters in Partner States and in the Community. Presently, there is an East African Association of Public Accounts Committees; An inter-parliamentary Liaison Committee on Extractive Industries; an East African Parliamentary Committee on Population, Health and Development; and an East African Committee on Trade. Other cooperation committees are also being considered and may become operational in the nearby future;
- We are working towards the establishment of an East African Parliamentary Institute for capacity building for Members of Parliament in the region, staff and technocrats in various Ministries and Local Governments in the region ; and

- The regular exchange of information between the respective Parliaments – Treaties, Hansard, Bills, Acts etc.

As I conclude, allow me to affirm that the East African Legislative Assembly is committed to executing its legislative, oversight and representative role at this stage of integration for the good and benefit of all the people of East Africa. We only seek your continued support in this endeavour.

With those few remarks, I wish you fruitful deliberations.

Thank you.