



**EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY
EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**WELCOMING SPEECH BY RT. HON. (DR) MARGARET NANTONGO
ZZIWA, SPEAKER OF EALA AT THE ADDRESS OF H.E. PIERRE
NKURUNZIZA, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI -
OCT 22, 2013, BUJUMBURA, BURUNDI.**

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

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

**His Excellency Bernard Busokoza, 1st Vice President of the Republic
of Burundi,**

**His Excellency Gervais Rufyikiri, 2nd Vice President of the Republic of
Burundi,**

Hon Members of the Bureaus of the Parliament of Burundi

Your Excellency, Ombudsman of Burundi,

Your Excellencies, Former Heads of State of Burundi

Hon. Shem Bageine, 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 before this *august* House to warmly welcome you to address the 2nd Meeting of the 2nd Session of the 3rd Assembly. I wish to sincerely thank you for once again, accepting to host the session in Bujumbura.

Your Excellency, today, we are honoured to have you in our midst, exemplifying the importance that your Government attaches to the Assembly and indeed to the entire EAC integration efforts. Bujumbura continues to be an attractive capital and one that EALA Members often find to be enticing, owing to its pleasant weather and hospitable people. I thank your government and the people of this beautiful country for your warm reception at all times.

The 3rd Assembly began the series of its 2nd Session in July 2013 and I am happy that the 2nd Meeting is again being held in Bujumbura.

This Session is taking place at a time when our region is on an irreversible movement towards deeper integration and increased socio-economic prosperity. Today, the EAC can bask in glory owing to successes realised in the Customs Union and the Common Market even as it addresses existing bottlenecks.

Your Excellency, we are pleased that you and your colleagues at the Summit shall in a matter of weeks sign the Monetary Union Protocol thus ushering in the third tier of the integration process. The people of East Africa have patiently waited as the process of weaving through the complex processes of bringing the hitherto disparate economies together continued. We remain

confident that after years and months of the complex negotiations and boardroom trade-ins, the people of East Africa shall in the near future be able to hold on to a **SINGLE CURRENCY** and similarly benefit from wide range of economic gains that the Monetary Union offers. As EALA, we are very supportive of this pillar and shall do all that is within our domain to ensure the Monetary Union succeeds.

It is imperative that we do more with regards to realizing the tenets of the Common Market Protocol which is now in the 3rd year of implementation. A week ago, I and a few of my Members were privileged to participate in the 129th Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference in Geneva, Switzerland. Aside from the usual courtesies that come along with meetings of such magnitude, the one thing that we witnessed as outstanding concerned the actual free movement of persons within the Schengen area. The ease of movement typically means one can transact business and enjoy dynamic provision of services across a number of countries without hindrance. One can easily move from Geneva, have dinner in France and return back to Geneva to 'retire in bed' as some of my colleagues experienced. We could only but admire and hope that at one point in our history at the EAC, we shall duly replicate the same.

Generally, for such opportunities to be realized, Partner States need to review their domestic laws to conform to the commitments and undertakings made in the Protocol. We must also deliver on all the promises including issuance of machine readable cards, mobility of workers/opening of the labour market and in the harmonization of social benefits. A framework for monitoring and evaluation of the Common Market Protocol has been rolled out in the Partner States. I am happy to note that the Republic of Burundi has also established the National Implementation Committee in respect to a directive from the

Council of Ministers and that it has started work. The Republic of Burundi has also agreed to the use of Identity Cards for their nationals to travel between four Partner States.

The Customs Union on its part has led to significant increase in intra-regional trade. In 2011, intra regional trade in the region rose to 23% of the total values of exports – according to the **Doing Business Report of 2012**. This is by far the highest increase in African economic blocs and we need to take pleasure in the fact that it is happening in one of the fastest growing and reforming economic blocs of the world. However, the region should now operationalise the single Customs Union territory. This is expected to eradicate barriers to trade by adopting a central model of clearance of goods, whereby taxes and other assessments shall be done at the first point of entry and thus ensure faster clearing of goods and reduction in the costs of doing business.

Your Excellency, I am pleased to share with you our scorecard since we last met in Bujumbura in January 2013 for the 4th meeting of the 1st Session. Since that period, EALA has held three other plenaries in Kigali (April 2013), Kampala (May-June 2013) and Arusha (August 2013) respectively.

The Assembly has enacted 4 critical Bills (One Stop Border Post Bill 2012, EAC Vehicle Load Control Bill, 2012, EAC Appropriation Bill, 2012 and the EAC Public Holidays Bill, 2013). We have further adopted 5 Reports and 8 Resolutions – all key to the integration dispensation.

The EALA Committees have also continued to engage the region, in useful meetings and stakeholder hearings. The constant dialogue has given EALA an

opportunity to enact relevant legislation and to ensure that we all move together and collectively share our achievements.

In August this year, the Assembly held a very successful conference on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Conference that also served as an occasion to mark the silver jubilee for the Global Parliamentarians on the Habitat (GPH) reiterated the need to re-double efforts in meeting the MDGs and the HABITAT agenda.

In as much as EALA and other stakeholders continue to play their part, we have to 'walk the talk'. We should strive 'to take integration a notch higher'. We should strive to see to it that the citizens of the region enjoy the real benefits of integration. In this regard Your Excellency, the need for further sensitization of key stakeholders: the Parliamentarians; Academia; Youth; Women; Media and Civil Society is paramount. It is time to 'shore up' the numbers of ambassadors for the EAC who can then market the benefits of integration and become our emissaries to the rest of the citizens.

Indeed your Excellency, my Members and I are alive to "constructive criticism" coming from the citizens that we touch base with regularly. Many of the citizens constantly lay claim to the fact that the EAC is 'merely a talk-shop' and that they are yet to see any tangible benefits. I share in the school of thought – that the EAC has realized enormous progress. However, we have fallen short and are perhaps handicapped when it comes to cascading the benefits to the citizens. This is perhaps an area we must re-double our efforts to achieve. It is thus in the best interest of the implementing Ministries of EAC of the five Governments, EALA, National Assemblies and the civil society to spur the realization of this enviable task. The Chair of the Summit, H.E. President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni urged the EALA to focus on sensitization and this we are committed to realizing in the coming year.

The same zeal is necessary when it comes to addressing and resolving some of the challenges such as the menacing Non Tariff Barriers and the speed of implementation of agreed decisions by the Partner States if the regional bloc is to be seen to be pulling together in the same direction.

Since the last infrastructure Summit in November 2012 in Nairobi, discussions have commenced around the construction of the Railway and Ports especially those to serve the hinterland of EAC and beyond. We call for speed in these activities in order to realize the desired goal of access of our agricultural products to wider markets and to enhance linkages between the cities and regions. The One Stop Border Post 2012 Bill is further envisaged among other things to facilitate transport at border posts. The Bill has already started its process for assent to some Partner States and we expect that in a few days time, it shall be brought before Your Excellency.

Your Excellency, EALA has recently completed its Strategic Plan (2013-2018). The new Strategic Plan is seen as a tool that shall facilitate EALA to address some of the integration challenges including enhanced oversight to tackle the NTBs, enhancing linkages with other Parliaments as well as promoting and branding the corporate image. I thank Your Excellency for accepting to launch the Strategic Plan at this Sitting.

Your Excellency, permit me also take this opportunity to congratulate you and your government for the progressive development in this great Republic. It is our prayer as a people of the region that your continued wise and pragmatic leadership will continue watering the tree of peace in Burundi and in laying the foundation for democratic governance.

Yesterday, EALA joined Burundians in commemorating the assassination of President Ndadaye and many other leaders of Burundi. While we condole with you and condemn those atrocitic brutal acts, we salute those democratic leaders of Africa and Burundi who have shed their blood to plant the seed of democracy in our countries. This seed has now fully germinated and we are certain that now East Africa is on its right path.

When we were last here in Bujumbura, we were saddened by the fire tragedy that gutted the *Marché Central de Bujumbura* (Central Market of Bujumbura) resulting in casualties and destruction of property worth millions of francs. We note the steps being taken by the Government in providing an alternate market for its citizens in the interim. EALA further supports efforts by the Burundi Government to alleviate suffering including efforts to work with financial institutions to prepare financial facilities to restart their livelihoods.

Mid-last year, Burundi celebrated 50 years of Independence. It now has a steady economic growth and is a peaceful country. Today, to name but a few successes, Burundi stands as an 'icon for investments in the region according to the **Doing Business Report, 2012**. The landmark achievements of this beautiful country, a few years after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement have been hailed far and beyond and it is only natural that we too add our voice in heralding this great achievement. Allow us therefore to celebrate with you the achievements for choosing peace. We constantly see new developments around Bujumbura that did not exist before, the fruits of peace. We commend the people of Burundi for putting their country first and working for peace and stability.

We also salute the wider efforts of the Summit of EAC Heads of State including that of collaborating with the International Conference on the Great

Lakes Region (ICGLR) headquartered here in Bujumbura that has seen the scaling up of peaceful efforts. Today, Burundi has some refugees of the region owing to instability in the neighbouring region and we must ensure we do not digress further into turmoil. We recall during your speech to the House at our last sitting here, you were emphatic that we must transform our region into a peaceful region so we may be united and prosperous.

EALA wishes you the best and assures you of its unequivocal support in building the Republic of Burundi and the EAC.

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 22nd of October, 2013.

Karibu Mheshimiwa Rais!