



EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**WELCOMING SPEECH BY RT. HON (DR) MARGARET NANTONGO
ZZIWA, SPEAKER OF EALA AT THE ADDRESS OF THE ASSEMBLY
BY H.E. PRESIDENT PIERRE NKURUNZIZA, AT THE BURUNDI
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, BUJUMBURA, BURUNDI.**

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

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

**His Excellency Therence Sinunguruza, 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 4th Meeting of the 1st Session of the 3rd Assembly. I wish to sincerely thank you for once again responding to our invitation. Indeed, in welcoming you to today's Special Sitting of the House, may it please you to note that you have consistently taken time off your busy schedule to address EALA whenever invited.

We congratulate you upon completion of 2012. We thank the Lord for his providence and sustenance and wish you many happy returns in 2013. May this year also bring better health to you, prosperity and growth to the people of the Republic of Burundi and the EAC.

Permit me at this juncture Your Excellency, to congratulate you, the Government and the people of the great Republic for attaining 50 years of independence last year. We wish you all the very best in your endeavours in the years ahead.

Your Excellency, the EALA and the EAC in general ended the year 2012 successfully with the major highlights being: the successful election and inauguration of the 3rd Assembly of which I am pleased to note that the Republic of Burundi sent to the Assembly a strong and cohesive team of Members. The completion of the EAC headquarters and the relocation into the Headquarters by the 3 Organs of the EAC signifies a milestone for the Community and we are pleased and proud of the new and magnificent home.

In the first 3 meetings, the 3rd Assembly has also been able to ensure the passage of key Bills and Resolutions including the Customs Amendment Act, 2012 and the Supplementary Appropriation Bill, 2012.

We congratulate the Summit of the EAC Heads of State upon the successful Summit meeting in Nairobi in November 30th 2012 and the tangible decisions registered notably: the recommendations of the Retreat on infrastructure where the Summit adopted a clear list of priority projects in infrastructure, especially in rail transport, energy, ports and harbors as well as inland waterways. The Summit also received reports with regards to negotiations on the implementation of a Single Customs Territory and the corresponding progress on negotiations of all Articles of the East African Monetary Union Protocol at a technical level thus, committing to signing the East African Monetary Union Protocol on November 30, 2013.

We note that the official unveiling of the Arusha- Namanga-Athi River road was a very important landmark in the integration process. We salute the Summit for taking cognizance of the fact infrastructure is key to the economy of the region. We are grateful that the establishment of the East African Railway Authority has been approved and we now await the Bill that shall establish its legal regime at the EAC.

We however realise that just as is the case in every process of regional integration, the successes were not without challenges – majority of which, bordered on the implementation of the pillars of integration. Non-Tariff Barriers, lack of adequate funding and lack of awareness amongst the EAC citizens of the benefits of integration are some of the challenges we faced in 2012. We look towards the Summit for further guidance especially where the Partner States' involvement will produce better results.

Your Excellency, what remains of absolute importance as we start the year 2013 is the undertaking that we strive to harness the challenges into opportunities and that we utilize the prospects to strengthen the integration process and enthuse a people-centred approach. How for example, can we streamline and rationalize the whole area revolving around funding? We must also firmly undertake to address the NTBs which continue to have disastrous effects on the business environment in the region.

The Assembly remains dedicated and committed to its role as the legislative Organ of the Community. We pledge our continued commitment to work closely with you; with the EAC Summit; the Council of Ministers and other Organs/Institutions of the Community until the EAC dream of a united East Africa is realised.

It is on this premise that over the next two weeks, we shall debate the following:

- receive and debate reports of Committees namely: the Committee on Agriculture, Tourism and Natural Resources on Climate change, the report on the workshop on Good Governance in Natural Resources and the Committee on Communication, Trade and Investment on Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)
- pose questions to the Council of Ministers, debate and adopt various Motions and Resolutions.

Previously, we have appealed to the Council of Ministers to bring forth more Bills for debate. I have recently touched base with the Chair of the Council of Ministers on matters of relevance to both themselves and to the Assembly. I am pleased to note that the Council of Ministers has finalized its legislative calendar and has identified key Bills to be brought before the House for debate

soonest. This is positive development since earlier on, the Council was slow in bringing forth Bills. Consequently, it lays emphasis to the comprehensible fact that the Executive and the Legislature are partners in development and it is necessary that we work together.

Your Excellency, the EALA Commission met in Arusha last week to review its Plan of Action occasioned by the fact that EALA's Financial Year ends in June. The results of the mid-year review make positive reading and I am happy to report that we remain on course.

Over the next six months, we expect to receive several Bills for debate and to pass legislation at the forthcoming plenaries in Kigali, Rwanda and Kampala, Uganda in April and June 2013 respectively. I am aware that the Council of Ministers is preparing to introduce the One Stop Border Post Bill, 2012 and the EAC Vehicle Overload Control Bill among others. We will also undertake on-spot assessments in the region, the key ones being in the area of Non-Tariff Barriers and another on the EAC projects related to the implementation of the Common Market Protocol. EALA shall also hold public hearings within the purview of the Committees' mandate. EALA is also expected to observe the elections in the Republic of Kenya as citizens embark on the democratic exercise in early March.

EALA also undertakes to do all that is within its powers in collaboration with various stakeholders to address challenges in the integration dispensation and to ensure all citizens of East Africa reap the full benefits of integration.

At the same time, we shall collaborate with the Council of Ministers to see to it that legislation around crucial matters of integration that stabilizes the EAC are enacted. This Assembly shall no doubt need an expanded mandate as the

region moves to fast-track the Monetary Union and sets the basis for the Political Federation. In this regard, we call for the amendment of the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community at an opportune moment.

Your Excellency, I wish to applaud your visionary leadership that has enabled the Republic of Burundi to remain steadfast towards the objective of integration and improved the citizens' well-being through optimising the benefits of the EAC.

We appreciate that you graciously agreed to our request revising the plenary schedule allowing us to hold the 3rd meeting in Arusha in November 2012 as opposed to Bujumbura, given the importance of the function of the official opening of the EAC Headquarters on November 28, 2012. I wish to sincerely thank you for hosting my delegation and myself at the Office of the President on November 5th 2012 and for the wise counsel you imparted.

Your Excellency, May I take this opportunity to congratulate you for steering the Republic of Burundi to greater heights. Development in the great country has been tremendous since the Ceasefire Agreement was signed.

Again, it is important to note Mr. President that in 2005 you inherited a country devastated by over a decade of civil war and dictatorship. In spite of those difficulties, you have been working hard to restore peace and harmony among the Burundian people. Your policy that is aimed at reconstruction and reconciliation, economic recovery and political stability is laudable. We particularly admire your desire to empower the people which has made pulling Burundi out of poverty as one of the key priorities.

Burundi is today a stable country economically. Burundi's exports within the East African region have continued to increase by more than 15% while imports have been declining. This is a clear indication that there is improved peace and security in the country enabling citizens to enjoy the dividends of peace through reconstruction of local production base. Permit me also to credit your leadership for the on-going reforms in all sectors. Burundi is lauded as one of the top ten countries in the continent that has reformed according to the World Bank Doing Business Report 2012. Your government's commitment to improving the investment climate is strong.

We are proud of the Community works that you initiated to be carried out every Saturday. Some of us, who were present during the 2nd Assembly, participated with you in building the Ngozi District headquarters during the *Ibikorwa Rusangi* in Ngozi District on November 26, 2011.

The courageous but otherwise important measures you have taken in favour of children and women: free education for primary school children and free health care for those under five and the maternity programmes, are simply remarkable.

Regionally, Burundi's contingent continues to serve in the African Union Peacekeeping Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and remains undeterred by the insurgent attacks, vowing to stay in Mogadishu until it restores peace and stability.

EALA feels proud to be associated with you following this profound transformation. I am very confident that this country shall continue to be progressive with increased space and freedom of expression, better economy and infrastructural development that came with your tenure as the President.

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 January 2013.

Karibu Mheshimiwa Rais!