



EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, NAIROBI, KENYA: September 5, 2012: EALA has today commenced on its proceedings by debating and adopting two crucial Committee Reports. The Reports are on the Committee of Accounts and the Committee on Agriculture, Tourism and Natural Resources (ATNR).

The Report on Committee of Accounts was presented to an attentive House by Hon Jacqueline Muhongayire, the Chairperson. The Report followed a capacity building workshop recently held in Kigali, Rwanda. The objectives of the workshop were to understand the Audit Commission Report, acquire knowledge on audit processes and methodology aiming at carrying out a comprehensive review of the EAC Audited Accounts and to appreciate the role of the Committee on Accounts in the Accountability process.

The Committee recommends that the EAC's scope of audit be expanded to include management audit, environmental audit and value for money audit. It further wants the Audit Commission to expedite the Protocol on the operationalisation of Article 134 of the EAC Treaty, with regards to the establishment, role and independence of the Audit Commission. The Committee further observes that the interactions between the Audit Commission, the EAC internal Audit Unit and the EAC Monitoring and Evaluation Unit are not sufficient and emphasizes the need for regular and enhanced working relationships.

At debate time, Hon Abdullah Mwinyi called for more funding to enable the Committee execute its mandate more effectively. Hon Bernard Mulengani on his part remarked that it was time the EAC Secretariat established a fully-fledged Office for the Audit Commission. In response, the EAC Secretary General Amb Dr. Richard Sezibera stated that the Secretariat had already set

aside office space for the Audit Commission and remarked that the new EAC Headquarters had provision for more space for the same.

Amb Sezibera also informed the House that an Audit and Risk Committee had already been established and added that with it, the Internal Audit function at the Secretariat was now strengthened.

The Report of the Committee on Agriculture, Trade and Natural Resources (ATNR) presented to the House by Hon Isabelle Ndahayo brings to fore the gaps, challenges and opportunities for scrutiny by the Assembly and other stakeholders. Key among the recommendations is the need to fast-track issuance of a single visa to enhance marketing of the region as a single tourism destination.

The Committee further urges the Partner States to allocate additional budgets to key sectors like agriculture. 'Governments should at least implement the Maputo Protocol, to which they are all signatories, which requires all Governments to allocate 10 per cent of their budgets to the agricultural sector', a section of the Report read in part.

The priority areas include implementation of the comprehensive EAC Food Security Plan 2011-2015 adopted by the 9th Extra-Ordinary Summit of EAC Heads of State, livestock development and enhanced Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in agriculture.

On Tourism, the Tourism and Wildlife Bill and the sector familiarization of the EAC Hotel classification were termed as key components of the Committee to deliberate on.

The Committee further calls for an Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and the possibility of legislation in the mining, gas and oil sectors.

The Report summarises proceedings arising from a Capacity building workshop on the mandate of the Committee held in Moshi, Tanzania on August 12-15, 2012. The workshop was held to build the capacities of the Members following the inauguration of the 3rd Assembly in June this year. The resource persons included the former EALA Members and officials of the EAC Secretariat. At the meeting, the 15 person Committee constituted themselves into four Sub-Committees in order to effectively undertake their mandate. They are the Sub-Committee on Agriculture and Food Security, the Sub-Committee on Tourism and Wildlife, Sub-Committee on Environment and Natural Resources and the Sub-Committee on Extractive Industries and Energy.

During debate, Hon Christophe Bazivamo urged Partner States to create more markets for agriculture in the region as opposed to food bans especially during the period of droughts and hardships. Hon Saoli Ole Nkanee lamented that the region and Kenya in particular was facing a new viral disease that was affecting maize crop production that could affect the grain reserves.

Hon Dr. Odette Nyiramilimo supported the Report while Hon Leonce Ndarubagiye urged Partner States to develop the rural areas and to improve agriculture in a bid to scale up economic

growth.

The Counsel to the Community Hon Wilbert Kaahwa reiterated that EALA's mandate was to enact legislation as spelt out in Article 49 of the EAC Treaty. He remarked that a number of regional laws shall need to be enacted to address matters around natural resources as a matter of paramount importance.

Hon Joseph Kiangoi called for the speedy implementation of the Protocols noting that none other than the Summit of the EAC Heads of State had called for the same. He called for increase in research in the Partner States. I urge the House to legislate to cater for the sharing of research, Hon Kiangoi stated.

The Chairperson of the Council of Ministers, Hon Musa Sirma said the oversight role of EALA and its Committees was a necessity and a legislative requirement of the Committee. He urged the Assembly to strengthen the role and ensure the monies voted for Community activities were properly utilized. Hon Sirma noted that legislation was necessary to curb Non Tariff Barriers. 'We must remove unnecessary taxes that our Partner States are subjected to in order to check competition. This is unhealthy and EALA must check the same in form of necessary legislation or enlighten the Partner States about the need to curb NTBs' Hon Sirma remarked.

The Minister maintained that one single tourist visa was fundamental. He further called for the domestication of regional travel by harmonizing airfares in order to fully market the region.

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