

SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON. UHURU KENYATTA, C.G.H., PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA DURING HIS ADDRESS TO THE EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AT PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, NAIROBI, ON 26TH NOVEMBER, 2013

The Speaker, East African Legislative Assembly,

The Speaker, Kenya National Assembly,

The Speaker, Senate of the Republic of Kenya,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to be with you all. I am glad to see everyone assembled in this Chamber for such an important occasion.

Madam Speaker,

We consider this occasion important for all the people of **East Africa**, and as a special honour for **Kenya** to have you, and the Members of your Assembly who have accompanied you. I thank you for visiting us, and on behalf of my Government, extend a warm welcome to all of you. *Karibuni Nairobi; Karibuni Kenya.*

Madam Speaker,

The rotational meetings of your esteemed Assembly in member States are an admirable innovation in integrating consultation and interaction to enrich legislative deliberations. The people of **East Africa** are thereby afforded an opportunity to witness at close quarters the workings of the Assembly. In turn, they get good understanding of the organs of the **East African Community**. On your part, the chance to receive contributions directly from the people enhances both the quality of legislative output, while strengthening and promoting the integration process.

Madam Speaker,

My Government not only supports the Assembly's working tours; we have committed ourselves to facilitate your tour of our country. If East African integration is to be truly people-centered, the Assembly must be able to fully discharge its responsibility of sensitizing the Community's citizens.

I encourage you to make the best of this opportunity and do an excellent job in this Session. Our integration should be accompanied with the most intensive and interactive civic education exercise spearheaded by the Assembly.

Madam Speaker,

Your Assembly's role is critical to the well-being of our Community. Ever since the inauguration of the **East African Legislative Assembly**, expectations over its role in the affairs of the Community and potential to accelerate integration have been rightly high. These expectations have kept growing year after year. Today, the Community stands at the door of great promise – of peace and security, economic development and better standard of life for all our peoples.

The Assembly holds the key to this door. This session in particular, is expected to chart the course for an efficient and better- functioning Community to deliver the integration agenda. This expectation should inform your deliberations on the various Bills before you. Additionally, it is vital for the Assembly to find innovative and purposive means of eradicating the weaknesses and deficiencies in the Community's Statutes and Protocols that affect the pace of integration.

The laws enacted by this Assembly are intended to enhance and complement national laws and ease integration. It will be useful for the Assembly to enhance collaboration with national parliaments so that the Community can benefit from exchanges and experiences from various domestic mechanisms.

Madam Speaker,

East African integration is firmly on course. Over time, we have mustered such an unstoppable momentum that we are now assured of realizing it not too far in the future. The people of East Africa are interacting at such a rising rate, and exchanging information, goods and services in such growing volumes, that our borders have become mere formalities. The growing benefits of interactions across our various borders have catalyzed East Africans' desire for integration. This popular desire makes integration inevitable in due course. However, the pace of integration has not been even.

A particular obstacle has been **non-tariff barriers** which continue to plague the competitiveness of our region by raising the cost of doing business. These barriers have hindered the exploitation of market opportunities otherwise available to East African Businesses. Most certainly, **non-tariff barriers** significantly erode the mutual competitive advantage expected from integration.

Kenya is cognizant of this setback, and is fully committed to the elimination of non-tariff barriers. In the recent past, we have demonstrated this commitment by taking several administrative measures to significantly reduce the time taken between off-loading cargo at the Port of **Mombasa** and reaching the **Malaba** border crossing.

We have also removed all road-blocks and reduced weigh-bridges to only **two**. The security along the Northern Transport Corridor is now greatly enhanced, with more highway police patrols ensuring the safety of cargo and crew. In this way, we have made tremendous progress in availing the **Gateway to East Africa** for easier movement of cargo of the business community in **Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi**.

Progress has also been made in significantly easing the movement of people within the Community. We hope that this progress will be sustained to realize the full potential of integration.

Madam Speaker,

As partner States find political means of boosting integration, it is important for the Community's Legislature to assist in devising complementary mechanisms. In particular, I urge the Assembly to keep its eye firmly on the implementation of the Common Market provisions, whose achievement will increase the benefits of integration, and promote progress to subsequent phases in integration.

Madam Speaker,

As you are aware, the establishment of the East African Community Customs Union and Common Market led to negotiations towards the creation of a Monetary Union. I am happy that this month, the **East African Community Monetary Union Protocol** will be signed. In many ways, the Monetary Union is the logical culmination of integration efforts. All the things we seek in integration will be multiplied in the Monetary Union. We expect, under the Union, a strengthening of competition in respective domestic markets as well as the efficiencies arising out of greater economies of scale.

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Moreover, the costs of transacting in different currencies and the risks associated with adverse exchange rate movements in respect of intra-Community trade will be eliminated. Besides widening trade opportunities within the Community, the regional market will offer a stepping stone for local producers to access global markets.

Globally, the East African Monetary Union will send a strong statement of our long-term commitment to deepen regional investment. Such a statement will assure investors that East Africa is a genuine single market and an attractive place for business. Politically, the Monetary Union is a statement of our Partner States' commitment to a shared destiny as East Africans and not just a group of neighbouring States.

Madam Speaker,

Without a doubt, it is our common duty to institute mechanisms for the effective implementation of the Monetary Union. As legislators, you have a critical role – to enact robust enabling laws and exercise diligent oversight. Your oversight is a critical function; it is central to the satisfactory functioning of the Community. Please enable the Community maximize the benefits of a stronger bargaining position afforded by the Monetary Union.

As I conclude, I urge this Assembly to do all it can to keep the integration process truly people-centred. To facilitate the full and thorough participation of our peoples, and to maintain our **unique, shared identity**, I urge you to encourage a widespread use of **Kiswahili** by East African citizens. God has given us a voice that can **unite** all the people of East Africa, and we should deploy it through various media to actualize integration.

Madam Speaker,

I wish this distinguished Assembly fruitful deliberations and successful work during this Session.

Thank you very much.

God Bless you.