

**SPEECH BY H.E PAUL KAGAME,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF RWANDA,
AT THE MEETING OF THE EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY,
KIGALI, 29TH MARCH 2011**

- + Honourable Abdirahin Abdi, Speaker of the East African Assembly;**
- + Honourable Vincent Biruta, President of the Rwandan Senate;**
- + Honourable Rose Mukantabana, Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies;**
- + Hon. Juma Mwapachu, EAC Secretary General;**
- + Honourable Ministers of the East African Community;**
- + Honourable members of the East African Legislative Assembly;**
- + Members of the Diplomatic Corps; Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:**

Thank you Mr Speaker for inviting me to address the East African Legislative Assembly as you begin consideration of important bills and reports that will help further consolidate our efforts towards fuller integration of the East African Community.

I also wish to thank members of this Assembly for joining your Rwandan brothers and sisters in *Umuganda* and contributing to better housing for our citizens.

Your participation is an expression of solidarity among East Africans and makes the East African Community more meaningful.

The government and people of Rwanda appreciate the efforts of the East African Legislative Assembly in promoting the EAC's integration process, especially by enacting enabling legislation, and in your oversight and representative roles.

As the EAC progresses along our integration trajectory, we are now focusing our energies on implementing the Common Market, which should serve us with a larger market for both East African and foreign investors through the free movement of factors of production across the region. To do this effectively, we will need the continued commitment of all stakeholders. Obviously, the East African Legislative Assembly has the unique responsibility to promote the benefits of the common market to your respective constituencies.

✚ Mr Speaker;

✚ Honourable Members;

✚ Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

There is no doubt that the East African Community Partner States, through their individual and regional development agendas, are making efforts to create a better social and business environment in the region.

However, we must also recognise that there are still a number of challenges that slow down the process and therefore require our urgent and concerted attention.

First among these is our limited financial capacity, which hampers the development of a wide range of activities and services that are the basis of greater integration. Among these we can mention infrastructure linkages for ICT, transport, energy and financial services; human resources, rural sector development and cross-border trade and investment.

Of equal concern is the lack of an integrated East African strategy and framework for Public-Private Partnership investment in infrastructure and utilities that is crucial to the economic development of the region.

Inadequate infrastructure and high non-tariff barriers in our region continue to lead to high costs of doing business.

The limited level of awareness of the East African Community Common Market Protocol by regional and international investors means that they have not taken full advantage of it, and as a result the potential for investment is not maximised.

Finally, until we sufficiently strengthen the institutional capacity of our Community's organs and institutions, we will not proceed at the pace we would like.

It is evident that in order to drive our integration agenda forward, we must urgently find solutions to the challenges we are facing in its implementation.

We have to recognise the interdependence of the different stages of the integration process and note that delays in effecting one affects progress in others. It is important, therefore, to undertake an in-depth analysis of the institutional requirements in order to address the linkages between the Common Market and other stages of integration, and the various challenges we are facing.

In this regard, I am pleased to note that in this session in Kigali, you will be considering a draft East African Community Service Commission Bill and briefs from the respective Deputy Secretaries General on the status of implementation and programmes in different areas of cooperation.

The effective implementation of the Common Market Protocol calls for increased trade, research and statistical capability, and the development and enforcement of harmonised regulatory systems and authorities across the Partner States.

This in turn will require that we devise mechanisms for achieving a fully-fledged Customs Union, one of whose key prerequisites is the removal of non-tariff barriers. I must say that progress in this area is there, but has been slow and more work needs to be done as a number of these barriers remain in place.

I believe the area with the greatest potential for advancing the East African Community integration agenda is infrastructure development. We have already designed a number of very important infrastructure projects such as the East African Roadmap Network Project, the East African Trade and Facilitation Project and the East African Community Railway

Project. It is now time to move from the drawing board and on to the next level that should see results on the ground.

✚ Mr Speaker;

✚ Honourable Members;

Let us not forget that it remains our responsibility to keep the process of integration on track, and for this to happen we need to adopt certain regional strategies as a matter of priority.

We have to establish sustainable funding of the integration process. In addition, and as I alluded to earlier, we must promote public-private partnerships in financing regional projects.

It is also necessary to prioritise areas of common interest to address regional problems and sequencing of regional projects, taking into account initiatives which can be implemented using available resources within the Partner States.

In conclusion, let me restate that we have chosen the path of integration as the means to develop our region and it will take all our efforts and commitment- as political leaders, different organs of the Community, and above all the citizens of East Africa - to make it succeed. There can be no room for wavering or delay.

I thank you for your kind attention and it is now my pleasure to declare this meeting of the East African Legislative Assembly open.