

SPEECH by His Excellency **Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta, C.G.H., President and Commander in Chief of the Defence Forces of the Republic of Kenya**

OCCASION: **EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY 5<sup>TH</sup> MEETING 2<sup>ND</sup> SESSION OF THE 3<sup>RD</sup> ASSEMBLY**

VENUE: **ARUSHA, TANZANIA**

DATE: 25<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2014

**Madam Speaker,**  
**Chairperson of the EAC Council,**  
**Honourable Ministers,**  
**Honourable EALA Members,**  
**Members of the Press,**  
**Fellow East Africans,**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**I** begin by applauding the East African Legislative Assembly for upholding its tradition of inviting the chair of the Summit to the state of the EAC Address.

The occasion affords the chair a singular opportunity to inform the citizens of EAC – as well as our friends, and our partners – of progress in the journey to full integration. **I** am gratified to have been asked to give a broad outline of our principal priorities, while focusing on the part that the Assembly, in collaboration with the Council and the Secretariat, must play if our destination is to be reached.

For my part, I must admit that it is a pleasure to speak both to the Assembly, and to all East Africans wherever they may be. **When** I last spoke to you, during the Assembly sitting in Nairobi in **November 2013**, I pledged that my country would arrange a tour of Kenya by Members of the Assembly. **I** trust you found it useful in informing your legislative and representative responsibilities.

**My** Cabinet Secretary says it was a very successful tour. **We** hope to arrange further tours to other parts of Kenya in the coming months.

**Madam Speaker,**

**Africa** still slumbers. **It** is time to wake up! **We** have it within our power to assault poverty, if only we can muster the self-belief.

In the last **five** years, our region has seen discoveries of new mineral and fossil deposits. **Yet** we have hardly scratched the surface of our wealth creation, while the number of our

poor remains unacceptably high. **It falls to us to manage our natural bounty; we must learn from best practices pioneered elsewhere, adapting them to our circumstances.** Our people demand no less.

Madam Speaker,

I wish to challenge the Council to seriously consider the complete harmonization of community laws and regulations on exploitation of natural resources.

The EAC has made great strides over the past thirteen years, especially since the coming into effect of the Customs Union in **2005**. Trade within the community has surpassed expectations.

We have seen a deepening of cooperation across a number of sectors: in education, in our infrastructure, and in the defence of the freedoms and rights provided for under the Common Market Protocol.

Madam Speaker,

In the last year, we have significantly reduced police roadblocks along the main EAC transport corridors. But police roadblocks, irksome as they are, do not exhaust our non-tariff barriers. There remain barriers to trade, movement of capital, labour and people that still frustrate the fulfillment of our potential, so ably recognized by the framers of the Customs Union and the Common Market Protocols.

Vigilance – in the removal of the bureaucratic red tape that chokes our trade, and our movement of goods, services and people – must be the watchword.

Last year, **2013**, marked another milestone in the Community's journey to full integration: you will recall that we signed the Monetary Union Protocol. It is no mere milestone – no mere requirement ticked on the EAC integration checklist.

It was rather a critical stage – a challenging one even – but we will not tire in our efforts to bring it completion.

Our resolve is expressed in the theme of the Financial Year **2014/2015** Budget, which glories in the title **Consolidating the EAC Common Market Protocol and Commencing the Implementation of the Monetary Union Protocol**. It is the duty of this Assembly therefore to devote itself to guarding the gains we have made.

Madam Speaker,

The Assembly must also push for the prompt, effective enactment of the provisions of the protocols. It may be a cliché, but it is one worth repeating: the Community will never meet the aspirations of its youth if our comparative advantage in global trade remains our primary commodity production.

**O**ur exports too often leave our shores with little value added; our economies are inadequately diverse; we remain too loosely linked to make the most of our diverse strengths.

**We** have no choice in the matter; we must industrialize to build the wealth that will bring dignified work to our people, sustain our growth and abolish poverty.

**The** Customs Union and Common Market framework that we have put in place is but the first step to realizing that objective. **This** Assembly and the Council are charged with converting the dream into concrete reality this decade.

**Madam Speaker,**

**To** secure our economic, social and political cooperation, the Community is on course to cement our political unity through the establishment of an EAC Political Federation.

**Already,** we are seriously considering the suitability of various model structures against the political realities in our region.

**Though** East African Federation is the ultimate goal of the Community integration, I must emphasize that political federation is a process, not an event. **O**ur standing cooperation in our common life – in economic affairs; in good governance; in security; and in education, and many others – constitutes the foundation necessary for the federation we desire.

**I** know that a Committee of this Assembly has already expressed its views on the Revised Draft Model Structure, Road Map and Action Plan for East African Political Federation that was developed by experts for consultations at the partner-states level. **A**fter several past studies of the alternatives available to us, I am confident that the Summit, after thinking carefully about our responses to the plans proposed, will issue clear directions for the road ahead.

**I** must urge the Assembly to widen its consultations, and infuse its spirit of solidarity into our citizens, our youth, our religious leaders, and all our people. **Let** our integration be **centred in the hopes of our people, as we promised it would be.**

**Madame Speaker,**

**I**t is my duty to mention some challenges to our region. **F**ew fill me with as much disgust as the recent upsurge of illicit trade in wildlife products, especially ivory and rhino horn. **T**his, in spite of our firm new anti-poaching measures. **S**adly, East Africa has been identified as a major source region and a favourite transit route for this callous commerce. **I**n the period between **January** and **October 2013** alone, over **ten tones** of ivory were intercepted at the port of **Mombasa.**

The latest Interpol report, for instance, estimates a **68%** increase in **2013** over the total tonnage seized in **2012**. These developments represent a deadly threat not only to the livelihoods of communities that benefit directly and indirectly from wildlife, but also to our tourist industry which in some of our partner states contributes more than **10%** of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Even more worrying is the reasonable concern that the proceeds of this illicit trade may be feeding terrorist activities. It is time for our security agencies and regional wildlife management authorities to tighten their cooperation, and stem the menace. It will not have escaped any of us that terrorism remains a serious security threat to the Community. Keeping the community safe will remain a key priority.

Any approach to the problem that concentrates on keeping an individual country safe offers only the illusion of security. The transnational nature of terrorism vividly illustrates that my neighbour's peace is my concern as much as his. The community is admirably placed to contribute to the joint search for peace and political stability in our neighbourhood, especially in the Republic of **Somalia, South Sudan** and in the **Great Lakes** that are currently experiencing serious conflicts.

In deepening our cooperation in defence and security, we have signed **two** protocols on Cooperation in Defence and Peace and Security, which we expect to come into force this year. We are also establishing a Panel of Eminent Persons, which, together with EAC Early Warning Mechanism, will complement our capacity to respond firmly and quickly to potential conflicts in our region. I hope these instruments will be finalized before end of this year.

I am equally glad that the Assembly initiated a Bill on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management, to mitigate the frequent loss of lives and property through natural and man-made disasters that have become a frequent occurrence in the Community. It would be to our advantage if that bill were passed before the end of the year.

Madam Speaker,

As the poet reminds us, our community is not an island, entire unto itself. Attention to the community's economic engagement with third parties is not idle. While we vigorously pursue integration, we remain equally aware of the great gains to be found in deeper Africa-wide market integration; in infrastructure development to enhance connectivity; and in industrial development to unfetter our continent's productivity.

It is for this reason that the Community attaches great importance to the ongoing Tripartite Negotiation for the Common Market between the East and Southern Africa

(COMESA), East African Community (EAC) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC).

The proposed grand Free Trade Area comprises **26** Countries, with a combined population of nearly **600 million** people – accounting for nearly **57%** of Africa's population – and a total GDP of about **One trillion dollars**. Once complete, it will be the engine of the continent's economic and political empowerment. **I** am satisfied with the pace of the negotiations. **I** look forward, as I am sure we all do, to the conclusion of these negotiations before the last quarter of **2014**.

Similarly, we have been deep in negotiations with the European Union for over **six** years on an Economic Partnership Agreement. These negotiations, we must hope, will soon come to a mutually satisfactory agreement. The theme I wish to sound, in reviewing our efforts here, is confidence. The time when we were weighed down by pessimism is behind us; in engaging our external partners, we must look to the near future when the Community will be a vibrant and strong player in global trade.

**Madam Speaker,**

The Treaty for the Establishment of East African Community has served us well for more than a decade. **But** like our national constitutions, it is a living document, to be reviewed from time to time, in tandem with the community's progress.

**It** is my hope that the present examination of the Treaty will be hastened, to align it to the realities of our present experience, and our hopes for the future.

Likewise, I would urge you to weigh any legislation for the expansion and creation of new institutions against the Community's financial capacity. The lion's share of our resources must go to our development priorities, not our recurrent administrative costs. **Prudence** will prefer the strengthening and improvement of existing partner states' institutions to the inauguration of new ones.

That same prudence also warns us against the great temptation to peg our Community's performance on the number of Decisions and Directives made, and laws passed by the Assembly. The Decisions, Directives and legislations will not serve the community's interest if we can neither enforce nor evaluate them. **We** must mean what we say.

This concern prompted the Summit decision at the **Kampala** meeting in **2013** directing an audit of all directives and decisions pending implementation. **It** is my hope that at the

**Finally,** Madam Speaker, let me pay tremendous tribute to the EAC Secretariat, Secretary-General Ambassador **Richard Sezibera** and his team for the sterling job they are doing. This team is at the heart of our success as a community. **I** encourage them to do even more as we strive to grow our community to realize integration.

**I** am aware of the challenges the Secretariat staff team faces. **As** we move into the future, our pledge is to work with other partner states to improve the Secretariat's financial standing. **I** am also supportive of institutional reforms necessary to deliver prudent and expert discharge of their duties.

**I** now wish you a fruitful year in building East African Community. **Long live EAC!**  
**God bless !**