

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE EAC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, HON. PHYLLIS KANDIE, MINISTER FOR EAST AFRICAN AFFAIRS, COMMERCE AND TOURISM OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA DURING THE 4TH MEETING OF THE 2ND SESSION OF THE 3RD EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY IN KAMPALA IN THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA ON 22ND JANUARY 2014

Madam Speaker,

Honourable Members,

May I wish you and the people of East Africa a happy new year!

As I rise to support the motion on the floor, and this being my maiden address to the august house since assuming the seat of the Chairperson of the Council, I beg to make a brief statement.

First, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Government and the people of the Republic of Uganda for the warm welcome and their traditional hospitality extended to us since the beginning of the 4th Meeting of the 2nd Session of EALA in Kampala. I particularly wish to thank His Excellency Hon. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda for graciously accepting to preside over our special sitting yesterday. True to the characteristic of his well known passion for EAC integration, his address did not disappoint. I wish to further add my voice to that of the honourable Speaker in congratulating His Excellency and the Republic of Uganda on the successful hosting of the Summit in November 2013.

Madam Speaker,

Allow me to take this early opportunity to also applaud the honourable members for having passed the resolution on rotational sittings of the Assembly. By this resolution, honourable members have lived up to the principles and expectations of the Treaty by taking East African integration process closer to the people thus fostering a truly people centred integration.

I wish to further personally and on behalf of the Council of Ministers thank my predecessor Hon. Shem Bageine for successfully steering the Council in the last one year and I hope to continue benefiting from his guidance from where he left. I want to observe that I am fortunate that His Excellency the President of the Republic of Uganda yesterday addressed many of the issues that were raised during the press conference which I had wished to respond to. That

address gives me the confidence therefore to unequivocally assure this august house that the Council of Ministers and the Summit will continue to support and facilitate EALA in discharging its mandate in EAC integration.

Madam Speaker,

As the process of regional integration deepens and widens, there will be moments of anxiety especially on EAC decisions and directives that are perceived to infringe on Partner States' national sovereignty. Moving forward, to paraphrase the words of His Excellency President Yoweri Museveni, we must pull our collective strengths together as a Community if we are to remain relevant in the fiercely globalized world and not be content with our dwarf status as individual Partner States on our own. This may require that Partner States cede or pull together part of their sovereignty and place it in our trusted regional institutions if we are to deliver the promises the founding fathers of the Community made to our peoples upon its revival in 2000.

As I take over as Council chair, I am critically aware of some of the challenges and sensitivities that are involved in the implementation of the pillars of integration, the Customs Union, the Common Market Protocol, the Monetary Union and more so, the negotiations towards a Political Federation. The latter two pillars of integration are especially bound to elicit anxiety, extensive and at times it may perhaps lead into divisive debate on the direction and pace of the East African Community integration. This of course is likely to slow down the pace of implementation of some of the decisions and directives as stakeholders and citizens consultations widen. The success or failure of EAC integration is therefore going to be our collective responsibility. The credit or blame must never be attributed to just the Council, the Assembly, the Summit or any one of the EAC organs or institutions.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members,

I belabour this point because in their wisdom, the drafters of the Treaty uniquely gave a pivotal responsibility to this Assembly. The EALA Sessions is a unique mechanism through which the Community is expected to maximize on the complementarities between its institutions and organs, working in concert with the policy and decision making institutions of the Partner States.

There is no doubt that one of the greatest challenges to implementation of the directives, decisions, Protocols and EALA Acts is the slow pace at which Partner States are moving towards the review, amendments and harmonization of their national laws to align them to those of the Community. In many respects, these are political processes in which honourable members in liaison with their respective national assemblies should actively participate. I do appreciate that for the Assembly to effectively engage in that process, we have to continuously review and strengthen the working relations between the Assembly and the Council, not just at the regional level but also through the coordination of EALA activities at the country levels.

I acknowledge that for this to be achieved, honourable members have to be adequately briefed on regular basis on the progress made in implementing the directives even before such matters are brought to their attention through the Assembly. Such information the honourable members must demand. **Madam Speaker**, in a recent retreat I had with honourable members of EALA Kenya Chapter, for instance, I realized that members lack adequate vital information regarding such important matters as the ongoing EAC-EU EPA negotiations on which they ought to be regularly briefed as a matter of routine. Let us change that trend for the better.

Madam Speaker,

In response to the challenge of slow pace of implementation of EAC decisions, directives and protocols, the 15th Summit considered and adopted a mechanism for implementation of outstanding Summit decisions. The Summit, among others, directed the Ministers responsible for East African Affairs in the respective Partner States to put in place structured, regular and enhanced follow-up mechanisms.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members,

I realize that some of the issues that honourable members and indeed the people of East Africa are eager to get explanations about, judging from the questions the members of the press raised during the press conference on Monday 20th January 2014, are going to be raised as substantive questions and motions during this 2nd session of the Assembly. I would therefore at this point wish not to delve into details on such important matters as the EAC

institutional review which has taken inordinately long time to conclude; and the slow pace of implementation of Common Market Protocol, among others.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members,

I wish however to highlight some of the Summit directives and decisions over which I would be seeking the active support of the Assembly. We all know that greater EAC integration will be achieved through the full implementation of a Single Customs Territory and the Common Market Protocol. The Summit during its meeting in November 2013 adopted a Framework for the Operationalization and a Roadmap on the implementation of the Single Customs Territory and directed its commencement effective 1st January 2014 and is expected to be fully operational by 30th June 2014.

The approval and signing of the Protocol on the Establishment of the EAC Monetary Union (EAMU) during the same Summit was a major milestone. I wish to implore honourable members to actively engage the relevant national constituencies in the Partner States to ensure that the ratification of the East African Monetary Union Protocol is concluded by 1st July, 2014 as directed by the Summit.

I challenge you to actively engage in the implementation of these directives. In addition, I will be counting on your support to the on-going consultations on the revised Model Structure of EAC Political Federation, the Roadmap and Action Plan which is due for consideration by the next Summit meeting in April 2014.

Madam Speaker,

Notwithstanding the challenges occasioned by the slow implementation of Common Market Protocol, looking back where we were in slightly more than a decade ago, we must acknowledge that we have made commendable strides. This is apparent in the free movement of goods across the region, the reduction of non-tariff barriers (NTBs) as was highlighted by His Excellency the President, especially along the Northern Corridor, movement towards a Single Customs Territory, and use of national identity cards as a valid travel document, among others. However a lot remains to be done.

Madam Speaker,

You will recall that during our press conference, the members of the press raised concerns over the implication to EAC unity of the trilateral cooperation arrangement between the three Partner States of Uganda, Rwanda and Kenya. It was therefore reassuring for the Assembly to have heard it firsthand from a member of the Summit, His Excellency Hon. Museveni that leaders are actually in regular consultations on those matters. This puts to rest the suspicions that the leaders of the Community are working at cross purposes in the integration process.

Honourable members,

As chairperson of the Council therefore, I wish to further reconfirm that during the 15th Summit in November 2013 there were consultations between Partner States which dealt conclusively with the issues that fueled suspicions which threatened to divide our people. As a consequence of the consultations, it was decided that all Partner States and the Secretariat are to be invited to future infrastructure meetings of the Northern Corridor. The consultations made clear that the initiatives handled under the trilateral arrangement are part of areas of EAC cooperation as provided for in the Treaty. Partner States shall therefore continuously make close and regular consultations in that process. I wish therefore to assure you all that the Community is moving on in unity and that there is no cause for alarm. This Assembly must therefore be part of that drive towards strengthening that unity.

Madam Speaker,

Honourable members are all aware that the Republic of South Sudan applied for admission to the Community. I wish to confirm to members that the process of consideration of the application is already at an advanced stage as you were told yesterday. The ongoing internal conflict in that country may however temporarily disrupt the negotiation process but will not end it. Taking cue from the address by His Excellency the President of Uganda yesterday on this matter, I can only wish the people of South Sudan a quick return to normalcy. Indeed the East African Community as a good neighbour shall not desert the people of the Republic of South Sudan at this critical hour of need.

Finally, I wish to echo the commendation of the East African media by the Summit for their robust support and role in highlighting current topical EAC integration issues and concerns. On behalf of the Council and as a member of EALA, I wish to urge the media to continue engaging with the Community, especially by emphasizing the positive things that unite us rather than those that divide us

Madam Speaker, honourable members, with these remarks, I wish to take this opportunity to officially invite all honourable members to the Kenya Country Tour in February 2014.

I wish you good deliberations and a fruitful year.

PHYLLIS KANDIE (MRS)

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REPUBLIC OF KENYA

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