



**EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY**  
**EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**REMARKS BY RT. HON. DANIEL F. KIDEGA, SPEAKER OF EALA AT  
TH 7<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF SPEAKERS OF AFRICAN  
PARLIAMENTS, MIDRAND, SOUTH AFRICA, AUGUST 6-7<sup>TH</sup>, 2015**

**Theme: 2015 The Year of Women's Empowerment and Development  
towards Africa's Agenda 2063**

**H.E. Roger Nkodo Dang, President, Pan African Parliament (PAP)  
Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union  
Commission  
Speakers of the Regional and National Parliaments/Assemblies  
Clerks to respective Parliaments/Assemblies  
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;**

It is indeed a great honour and privilege for the East African Legislative Assembly to participate in this important 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Speakers of African Parliaments here in Midrand, South Africa. I thank you for extending the invitation.

On behalf of EALA, I take this singular honour at the outset, Mr. President, to congratulate you following your ascension to the Presidency of PAP. I wish you all the very best in your endeavor as you lead PAP to greater heights.

As Speaker of EALA, which is the regional Parliament of the East African Community, I assure you of our collaboration now and always.

The theme of the Conference is timely. I salute the RECs and the African Union for the tremendous achievements on Women empowerment and development in our quest towards Africa's Agenda 2063. It needs to be understood that the role of women is crucial as we strategically position ourselves to realise social transformation in the continent over the next 50 years.

1. Since the post-independence era, the lives of African women have undergone profound changes at both national and regional levels. There have been a number of challenges as well. It is vital for the Continent thus far, to learn from the lessons of the past, build on the progress now underway and exploit the forthcoming opportunities.
2. Speaking of the East African Community, today we realise significant strides in women empowerment in the decision making spheres including; Legislature, Executive and the Judiciary. The Republic of Rwanda is a shining example in our region having achieved 56% when it comes to integrating women in positions in the institutions. The region has likewise made some significant strides in the desire to empower the women at the very basic level which is – the Family. I congratulate all women for the feat. **Ladies and Gentlemen;** where would we be today without our Women?
3. Many African governments have enshrined gender equality in to their Constitutions, domesticated international human rights instruments, promulgated gender-friendly legislation and policies and put in place national machineries with a mandate to promote gender equality. This is commendable. However, we must **'live the talk'**
4. When we track back Gender equality right from the times of the women's decade (1975-1985), to the Beijing period in 1990, and Beijing +5, we appreciate that it has been a long walk. We acknowledge the Beijing Platforms where themes to Achieve women equality were disaggregated and ranked and States tasked to implement decisions. In other major UN Conferences and Summits, the 'drums for women empowerment never went quiet', and indeed in Year 2000, under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), women empowerment was embedded in MDGs 2, 3, 4 and 5. I am pleased that as we move towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), women issues will continue to be a major area of focus as one of the key goals. I can only congratulate the women and the Gender sensitive men for coming thus far.

5. Development can be realised through several platforms including: Girl education, upholding women's rights, reproductive rights and rights to factors of Production as well as security of tenure and land rights. The demand for equal access to health, education, safe water and sanitation, safe and cheap energy among others is key.
6. Article 5 (3) (e) of the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community, stipulates that: **the Community shall ensure the mainstreaming of gender in all its endeavors and the enhancement of the role of women in cultural, social, political, economic and technological development**".
7. Further, Provision 6 (d) of the same Treaty calls for, among its objectives, **"promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights in accordance with the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' rights."** This aspect makes it understood that equal opportunities and gender equality are within.
8. Moreover, Articles 121 and 122 of the same Treaty point out measures to be taken to redress historical imbalances observed by East African societies to allow women to benefit from resources and opportunities in the region.
9. Fairly good attempts have been carried out to mainstream Gender. The EAC has carried out a Gender Audit in its Institutions and Organs to review the state of empowerment of women among other areas. The audit reports of fairly good attempts to mainstream gender in the various instruments as the Customs Union and the Common Market Protocols and the 4<sup>th</sup> EAC Development Strategy. However, gaps exist in terms of skills for mainstreaming and outreach to the rural and poor women.
10. The sub-sectors analysed include: Trade and Customs, infrastructure development including roads, agriculture and food security, regional industrial development, tourism as well as productive and social sectors. The gender analysis indicates that most projects and programmes were designed and implemented with limited strategy that ensures gender equality outcomes. This may infer that such programmes lacked a systematic integration of critical gender issues in the sub- sectors at onset. Urgent steps are needed to reverse the trend.

## **The Role of Parliament**

As Parliamentarians, using our cardinal roles of legislation, oversight and representation we should strive to:

1. pass legislation that ensure women stand equal opportunities and have the same rights like the men-folk;
2. urge Governments to open up choices for women through policies and create opportunities for women to enter paid workforce;
3. advocate for women education to spur upbringing of children in terms of health care, nutrition, immunization and enrolment in school. Analysts often contend that when you "educate a woman, you educate a nation";
4. advocate for women's access to sexual and reproductive health services to allow them plan for their families, expand opportunities and further reduce maternal and child mortality;
5. ensure that women farmers have equal access to agricultural resources to boost incomes and status thus contribute to country's agricultural sector;
6. advocate for women to be able to own/inherit land and property and have access to credit to play a greater role in the development of their societies;
7. Strengthen/integrate legislation that prohibit and outlaw gender violence in all forms such as Female Genital Mutilation, rape and battering.

The EAC (and EALA) are now working on a regional Gender Policy. The EAC Gender Policy aims at establishing a regional framework to address gender deficits. It also reinforces a common appreciation of gender equality and gender parity within the EAC as a means to attaining meaningful and sustainable development.

Finally, I congratulate you once more for hosting this successful 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Speakers of African Parliaments. I thank you all for your kind attention.