



**EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
PRESS STATEMENT**

**FIRST MEETING – FIFTH SESSION – SECOND ASSEMBLY
(BY RT. HON. ABDIRAHIN HAITHAR ABDI – SPEAKER EALA)**

Ladies & Gentlemen of the Press

I welcome you all to this press briefing convened to notify you of the 1st Meeting of the 5th Session of the East African Legislative Assembly scheduled to take place at the Parliament of Rwanda here in Kigali from today 5th September 2011 to September 15, 2011.

On behalf of the Assembly and on my own behalf, allow me to salute His Excellency, President Paul Kagame for accepting once more again to host the EALA in Rwanda and to address us on Tuesday, September 6, 2011. EALA appreciates and takes cognizance of the wise and able leadership of President Kagame and that is why we always call on him to give us inspiration.

Rwanda confidently stands out as a true role model for peace, reconciliation and good governance. The country has set an internationally commended example through the empowerment of women and in its fight against corruption.

The Assembly is also grateful and thanks our host, Rt. Hon. Rose Mukantabana, the Speaker of the Parliament of Rwanda and H.E. Dr. Vincent Biruta, President of the Senate for granting us access to the Parliament for our session. We hail

the existing warm and cordial relations between the Rwanda National Assembly and EALA.

Meetings of the Assembly are now frequently held in all the Partner States as per the Provisions of Article 55 of the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community. In exactly two months time, we shall be holding a similar Sitting next door in Bujumbura, Burundi.

Over the two-weeks, the Assembly will conduct its Plenary and Committee Sessions. Notable business for consideration shall include:

The First reading of four new bills introduced as Private Members' Bills. The respective Bills are:

- The East African Parliamentary Institute Bill (EAPI) 2011
- The East African Community Human and Peoples' Right Bill 2011
- The East African Community Polythene Materials Control Bill 2011
- The East African Legislative Assembly Bill 2011

The Bills form part of the seven Private Members Bills expected to be introduced in the House.

EALA shall also deliberate on the following

- the Inter-University Council of East Africa (Amendment) Bill -2nd & 3rd reading
- EAC Transboundary Ecosystem Management Bill 2010 -2nd & 3rd Reading

Generally, EALA has taken centre stage in the integration process by providing the required legislative framework and oversight to ensure the integration agenda continues to be a priority. The involvement of East Africans in the process is fundamental given the fact that it is very much "a people centred process". As such, the Assembly has and will continue to engage the citizens of the region by taking their comments into account when enacting legislation.

Just last week, Members of the Communications, Trade and Investment Committee carried out site assessments in the Partner States including here in Kigali with the overall mission of assessing progress of regionalization of capital markets. This is one of the reports expected to be brought to the house during the sitting.

EALA shall continue to provide the much needed impetus to spur regional integration. The EAC is at an important phase in the integration process. We continue to support the process fully, the challenges notwithstanding.

Beyond that, the Assembly keeps site of the issues that affect the day to day lives of the citizens of the region. An area of concern for EALA now is the looming famine in the region which is by far the worst in over six decades. In this regard, EALA has recently joined hands with the global parliamentarians from 30 countries under the aegis of the Association of European Parliamentarians with Africa (AWEPA) in appealing for aid to address the extreme hunger threatening lives of more than 10 million people in the Horn of Africa.

We as East Africans must find collective ways and means in finding lasting solutions to famine and drought and especially in becoming food sufficient. We must improve agricultural systems, modernize crop production and find better storage systems to improve food security. The EALA Committee on General Purpose recently held a workshop to engage experts in development issues exploring how policies revolving around innovation and appropriate technologies can be improved including food production. As EALA, we are looking forward to the contribution of science and technology to economic development and how to harness opportunities and resolve challenges for the region.

In terms of the integration process, our appeal is for the Partner States to keep the “gas on the integration pedal” alive by implementing decisions of the Council of Ministers.

It is important to note that the laws enacted by the EAC have the full force of law and take precedence over similar laws in the Partner States on matters related to the Community.

Finally, I wish to bring to your attention that EALA is marking its 10th Anniversary celebrations. The commemoration which commenced here in April 2011 has seen us carry a number of activities so far including the 10th EALA Symposium, the launch of *Bunge la Afrika Mashariki* magazine, tree planting and participation in the anit-nyakatsi campaign. There are a series of other activities on-going with the climax set to be observed in Bujumbura, Burundi on November 29, 2011. EALA shall thus use the celebrations to reflect on the various achievements (and challenges) realized over the past ten years and appraise its own effectiveness as it sets the mood for the next decade.

END

September 5, 2011