



**EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY
EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**WELCOMING SPEECH BY RT. HON. (DR) MARGARET NANTONGO
ZZIWA, SPEAKER OF EALA AT THE ADDRESS OF H.E. PAUL
KAGAME, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF RWANDA - APRIL
16, 2013, KIGALI, RWANDA.**

**Your Excellency Paul Kagame, the President of the Republic of
Rwanda;**

Rt. Hon Jean Damascene Ntawukuriryayo, President of the Senate;

**Rt. Hon. Rose Mukantabana, Speaker of Rwanda Chamber of
Deputies;**

Your Lordship Sam Rugege, the Chief Justice of Rwanda;

Hon Shem Bageine, Chairperson, EAC Council of Ministers;

Hon. Ministers of Rwanda;

The Secretary General of the EAC;

Hon. Members of EALA and Chamber of Deputies and Senators;

Your Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners;

Distinguished Guests; Ladies and Gentlemen:

Your Excellency, It is with profound humility that I stand before this *august* House to warmly welcome you to address the 5th Meeting of the 1st Session of

the 3rd Assembly. I wish to sincerely thank you and your government for hosting this session in Kigali.

We are honoured to have you in our midst today, exemplifying the importance that you and your Government attach to this *august* House and indeed to the entire EAC integration efforts. May I use this opportunity to confirm to you that Kigali has always presented itself as one of the cities in the EAC region which EALA MPs like to frequent owing to its nice and friendly people, a clean environment and an ever changing beautiful skyline.

This Session, which is the inaugural one for the 3rd Assembly in Rwanda, is taking place at a time when our region is on an irreversible movement towards deeper integration and increased socio-economic prosperity.

Your Excellency, the decision to be in Kigali on these dates was intentional by the Assembly to enable us join our brothers and sisters of Rwanda in commemorating the 19th Anniversary of the genocide. Your Excellency, we continue to express our condolences and sympathies with the victims of this horrendous act. To make our imprint as an Assembly, we intend in the course of this meeting to adopt a Motion to commemorate the genocide as well as to express our disappointment with the UN over its failure to support the victims.

Your Excellency, the 3rd Assembly has consolidated on the gains made by our predecessors - the first and second EALA and continues in its quest to take the integration process to the next level through legislation, oversight and representation.

Since January 2013, EALA has had a busy calendar. The 4th meeting of the 1st Session took place in Bujumbura, Burundi from January 22nd, 2013 to

February 1st, 2013. At this particular Sitting, EALA adopted a number of Reports and Resolutions key to the integration dispensation.

The EALA Committees have in the last four months also continued to engage the region, Rwanda included, in public hearings and stakeholder meetings on key issues and on Bills presented by the Council to the Assembly. We believe that the constant dialogue with citizens of the region is of utmost importance to ensure that we all move together from one stage of integration to the next so that ultimately, we all own and share in our achievements.

In this regard, over the weekend, EALA Members toured the beautiful countryside of Rwanda courtesy of the Office of the Prime Minister. The visit took us to among other places: the Muhanga Concession mining plant in Muhanga District and the Kinazi Cassava Plant in Nyanza District. We also toured the East Africa Granite Industries in Nyagatare and the Kitazigurwa model village in Muhazi sector. We also participated in commemorative activities at the Gisozi Genocide Memorial Museum and at Rebero. We were indeed privileged to interface, meet and join citizens of Rwanda in their daily undertakings. We thank your Government for the broad policies that have resulted in successful organization of the activities visited. The visits definitely open 'our eyes and ears' to development placing us at a vantage position so that when it comes to legislation and to further strengthen our collaboration with citizens of this great Republic, our Members are knowledgeable.

It is evident that EALA's mandate of Representation remains pivotal in contributing to the significant and positive change in the lives of the ordinary citizens of the region. It is however necessary for the key players to 'take integration a notch higher' by ensuring implementation of decisions and

enforcement of legislation. That way, we can collectively strive to see to it that the citizens of the region enjoy the real benefits of integration.

Your Excellency, the Assembly further commits itself to ensuring that we realize the pillars of integration as envisaged by the Treaty for the Establishment of the EAC (Article 5 (2)). The incremental approach in the pillars is intended to harmonize and balance the integration process as each stage builds the solid foundation for and feeds into the subsequent stage. The EAC should do more especially with regards to realizing the tenets of the Common Market Protocol which is soon approaching the 3rd year of implementation.

Partner States need to review their domestic laws to conform to the commitments and undertakings made in the Protocol. The Common Market Protocol spells out a number of benefits for the region including free movement of persons, labour, goods and services among others. We recognize the steps being taken by the Republic of Rwanda to this effect. However, the uptake of the said Protocol within the Partner States can be more encouraging and we remain hopeful this will allow our region to deepen the integration. I assure you of EALA's support with regards to required legislation to support this pillar.

Allow me Your Excellency to congratulate You and Your colleagues on the recently concluded Summit of November 30th 2012 and the Retreat on Investment and Infrastructure held in Nairobi where strategic interventions were proposed for the infrastructure sector. Recognizing the importance of this sector in the integration process, this requires direct commitment in terms of actions on the part of the Summit. Notably, the railway sector which is deemed an economic lifeline for the giant economies like China needs to be

bolstered with direct implementation and targets per year. We await to see clear targets say in terms of distance per period. For instance, construction of 100 kms of railway-line per year with a clear roadmap and an institutional mechanism to enforce the implementation would be absolutely ideal. EALA looks forward to the realization of its Resolution on Establishment of the East African Railway Authority in the bid to implement the EAC Railway Master Plan.

The Non Tariff Barriers continue to pose a big threat to the free flow of business in the region and this limits the people of East Africa from enjoying the benefits of integration. The time has come for the EAC region to collectively seek permanent solutions to the removal of NTBs.

The aspiration to establish a single Customs Territory should be kept highest on the EAC agenda and there must be drastic steps taken to effect it. This may be one of the quickest ways to fight the NTBs. We urge the Summit to cause the Revenue Authorities and Customs Departments to move with haste to implement the above.

Your Excellency, May I take this opportunity to congratulate you for steering the Republic of Rwanda to greater heights. Rwanda celebrated 50 years of Independence mid last year (2012) and it has now embarked on a steady economic growth and is a peaceful country.

Much of what has been realised is due to your outstanding personality. Your consistent yet focused, steady yet soft-spoken approach to issues has contributed to raising the self-esteem of the citizens of Rwanda on the one hand and the profile of the country on the other.

Today, to name but a few successes, Rwanda stands as an 'icon and hub' in the ICT sector in the region. Due to your techno-savvy abilities, the internet continues to be a mode of communication between leadership and the people. I for one have been a keen follower of your personal website, blog and twitter accounts.

In the aviation industry, only a few years back, Rwanda had a few leased aircrafts plying the region. Today, courtesy of your foresight, Rwandair, the national airline carrier has been revamped. In fact, with the recent introduction of the new modern aircrafts – the Boeing 737 New Generation, the airline is geared to be very competitive in the industry. We continue to seek your support towards the establishment of a common East African Airspace so that the airline industry can thrive even better.

The country is environmentally conscious, clean and beautiful, thanks to the decision of the leadership to rid the use of polythene bags. The landmark achievements of this beautiful country, coming 19 years after the horrendous genocide, have been hailed far and beyond and it is befitting that we too add our voice in heralding this notable achievement. Further, your Government's desire to invest in people is remarkable and deserves accolades particularly in the sector where the universal education programme and the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) is now emulated in East Africa. In addition, your Government's desire and consistent spirit to fight corruption has bore fruits on the economic index of Rwanda.

Your positive outlook towards women empowerment which is reflected in all structures of your Government and other institutions needs to be hailed. In the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Rwanda's rating of women in decision making remains highest. EAC should emulate Rwanda's example by constantly

reflecting on the role of women in the EAC integration process and in leadership roles. As an Assembly, we totally concur with you on other social development approaches undertaken like: investment in our youth, women and People with Disabilities (PWDs) to increase productivity and business acumen; and in the Government's pledge to avail all the stakeholders with the necessary resources and tools of trade.

Such are the ingredients that have spurred development and created an impetus in the country and the EAC at large.

EALA wishes you the best and assures you of its unequivocal support in building the Republic of Rwanda and the EAC.

Finally, Your Excellency, before I welcome you, I wish to recognize the following special dignitaries who are in attendance. In our midst today, we are privileged to have (see other list).

Your Excellency, it is with great pleasure and honour that I execute my humble duty to welcome Your Excellency to address this August Assembly, today, Tuesday, the 16th of April, 2013. **Karibu Mheshimiwa Rais!**