

**ADDRESS BY H.E. PRESIDENT PAUL KAGAME, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF RWANDA  
AND CHAIRMAN OF THE SUMMIT OF EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY HEADS OF STATE AT THE  
2<sup>ND</sup> MEETING OF THE SECOND SESSION OF THE EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**Chamber of Deputies, Kigali, Rwanda, 11 September 2008**

It is an honour for me to address you on this occasion of the Second Meeting of the Second Session of the East African Legislative Assembly sitting in Kigali.

I welcome you and hope you enjoy our Rwandan warmth and hospitality.

I take this opportunity to congratulate you, honourable Speaker, and members, on your election to the Second East African Legislative Assembly. I am sure the new legislators from the new partner states - Burundi and Rwanda feel very welcome in the Assembly.

I wish you all a fruitful term in the service of the people of East Africa.

Honourable Speaker,

This Assembly is meeting at a time when I have assumed the Chairmanship of the EAC Summit, thereby providing an occasion to share thoughts on the direction of our Community.

To begin with, the accession of Rwanda and Burundi into the EAC family offers many opportunities and benefits as we seek to deepen our integration. The challenge is to ensure that the citizens of the two new partner states are equally and equitably represented in the organs of the Community.

This means that the structures and systems of the EAC should accommodate the needs of the enlarged community. It is therefore critical that we urgently articulate a roadmap for achieving these objectives.

Second, we are reviewing the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community. This Treaty has served the Community for the last eight years and now needs to be updated to meet the demands of deeper integration, and to govern robust and timely delivery of our obligations.

Third, our Community is in the process of negotiating a Common Market Protocol. Negotiations started here in Kigali in February this year and I am informed they are proceeding well. The Protocol will contain important provisions that will facilitate free movement of goods, persons, labour, services and capital. It is also expected to include the rights of establishment, and of residence. These negotiations are set to conclude early next year so that we can reach our goal of a Common Market by June 2009.

Fourth, our Community will address the creation in East Africa of world-class infrastructure necessary for regional and international trade. It is fundamental that we solve the crippling shortfalls in rail, roads, ports and harbours as well as telecommunications facilities.

This is not enough however.

While for example the Customs Union is enabling some free movement of goods across our borders, a host of non-tariff barriers continue to raise the cost of doing business and render our region uncompetitive.

On this matter, I wish to note the commendable progress that has taken place in partner states starting with measures taken by the Government in Kenya and other states continue to take steps in this direction. We, in Rwanda are committed to this path and stand ready to have our border crossings open twenty-four hours.

Honourable Speaker,

As we move forward on a deeper and wide ranging integration agenda, it is important that we enhance cooperation with other Economic Communities within our continent, as well as with our major trading partners in Europe, the United States and beyond.

In this context, an EAC-SADC-COMESA Tripartite Summit of Heads of State is scheduled for October this year in Kampala, to examine how these three regional economic communities can speedily move towards a free trade area, promote transport corridors and joint infrastructure initiatives.

With regards to Europe, since the signing of a framework Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union last November, progress has been made in developing a roadmap for full negotiations. An EAC-European Union meeting will take place in Bujumbura this month to finalise the implementation plan.

The EAC has also signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement with the United States aimed at improving US-EAC trade and investment and a comprehensive plan to take this forward is underway.

Let us bear in mind that East Africa's socioeconomic integration can only be realised with the business community spearheading innovation, generating wealth, creating employment and expanding the tax base of our region.

It is in this respect that we are encouraged by various efforts by the private sector in facilitating dialogue for promoting home-grown businesses and also to attract foreign investment into our region.

A case in point is the recent East African Investment Conference held in Kigali and similar initiatives planned for the coming months. I encourage all organs of the Community to work closely with the business sector in East Africa in order to make our region an attractive destination for domestic and international investment.

Honourable Speaker:

Let me now turn to some aspects relating to the East African Court of Justice.

The Court, as you know, has been restructured through the creation of two Chambers, a Court of First Instance and an Appellate Division. During the last Summit held in Kigali, Judges of the two Chambers were sworn in and have already gone through a strategy induction programme in Arusha.

The Court will require attention to enable it to exercise its duties efficiently. There is a need to revisit the terms and conditions of service for the Judges, as well as to clarify issues of the permanent seat of the Court and the reporting relationship between the Court and the Summit.

With regards to the East African Legislative Assembly, I appreciate the fact that you have an extensive agenda dealing with a number of important bills. I am confident you will examine them carefully and pass them expeditiously.

The EAC cannot achieve its vision of a dynamic, progressive and prosperous region without a strong oversight body to guide its healthy development and hold it accountable on behalf of East Africans.

It is therefore imperative that the East African Legislative Assembly is empowered and appropriately supported to fulfil its mandate. I am aware that you operate under budgetary and other constraints. I intend to consult with my colleagues to explore possibilities of addressing this important matter.

Honourable Speaker,

The issues I have raised require that all of us in the East African Community work towards the same vision. In this regard, I am in consultation with the Secretary General to organize a Strategy Retreat at an opportune time in the near future, which should bring together all the key EAC organs, to exchange views on how to strengthen our resolve and commitment to forging a common purpose. It will be my pleasure to participate in this retreat.

In conclusion, let me once again emphasize that integration is not an option but a vital instrument for growth and socioeconomic transformation.

Our region is not an exception.

We must move confidently into a higher stage of integration, based on bold and steadfast implementation of our East African development agenda.

I wish to thank you Honourable Speaker, for the invitation to address this august House. It is now my great honour to declare open the Second Meeting of the Second Session of the East African Legislative Assembly.

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION.