

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON. UHURU KENYATTA, C.G.H.,
PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE
FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA DURING THE ADDRESS TO
THE EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, PARLIAMENT
BUILDINGS, NAIROBI, 14TH OCTOBER, 2015**

Mr. Speaker,

It is a pleasure, as always, to visit this House and to see so many distinguished members in attendance. **I** would like to welcome the East African Legislative Assembly members that are from our neighbouring countries to Kenya.

Mr. Speaker,

For a decade, I had the privilege of representing my constituency, **Gatundu South**, in Parliament.

Discussion in the house was intense and incisive; it taught me the importance of Parliament in a democracy and in shaping the destiny of a nation. **I**t is Parliament that determines the rules that govern the life of the nation. **T**hat is, indeed, a high calling.

It is an especially high calling when the assembly must consider rules that will bind an entire Eastern African region.

The weight of your responsibility is only magnified by East Africa's history,

and the prospects and challenges that lie before us. The heroes of the past won our freedom. **But** we dishonour their sacrifice if we do not add to our inheritance. **To** do that, we must stand together as a community. **Our** unity is the vital precondition of our prosperity and freedom.

That unity is not a matter of interest only to those who live in this part of the world: we all know that given its strategic position and the gifts of its people, **East Africa** is as important to the world as it has ever been.

It should be clear, then, that you bear exceptional obligations. **I** have already said that yours is a deliberative body. **I** am an **East African**, and an interested observer in your debates. **Let** me share some thoughts with you.

I will begin by repeating my Government's complete commitment to East African integration. **I** know that the future of each of us in the region is bound up with the fate of all the rest. **Leaders** must create the laws, the institutions, and the framework that will help us face that future together. **Kenya** will play its part in that great task.

The second point I wish to make is that we who are convinced of the imperative of integration must communicate it better to our people. **Too** often, the integration of East Africa is taken to be merely a political matter - a job for politicians, not ordinary people. **True**, leaders must lead. **But** we have failed to spark the imaginations of East Africans when it comes to integration.

Mr. Speaker,

Some might say that this is not really a problem, for integration will be

quicker if we leave it to the authorities. **But** they are wrong. **We** can avoid division by giving East African citizens a more direct say in the task of integration.

It may be that we shall have to modify treaties and laws - that is best left to the judgement of relevant experts. **What** cannot be doubted is that the job of winning our citizens' complete trust in this project of integration must start *now*.

The third point – if I may speak directly to the assembly, Mr. Speaker – is its own performance. **Your** mandate ends soon. **In** the last few months, under the wise leadership of Speaker **Kidega**, you have done much: new Bills, reports, and resolutions have flowed at a steady pace. **But** if I may say so myself, we would all like to see you leave a legacy: a set of measures that will be remembered as long as this community lasts.

It seems to me that the best way to do this is to hasten the process of legislating the Common Market Protocol, and anchoring the right to freedom of movement. **I** know that there has already been work done in these areas; I am sure that in the remainder of your term, you will want to finish the job.

Mr. Speaker,

Let me dwell on this. **The** fact is that our union needs the free movement of goods and people, and of capital and services.

We must allow our people to take their skills wherever they will be best rewarded. **Why** confine the energy and innovation of our young people to the countries of their parents? **In** any case, how can we achieve our

ultimate goal of political union if we will not even allow our people to move freely across the region?

All the same, it is a pleasure to note that there has been rapid progress in the infrastructure aspect of the matter.

Some of you will recall that several of my brothers came to the signing and witnessing of agreements for the **Standard Gauge Railway,** some time ago. **Others** – perhaps more, given that it was earlier this month – will recall that my brother **Jakaya Kikwete** of **Tanzania** visited Kenya to commission the **Taveta-Arusha road.**

These projects are representative of the hard work that has gone into knitting the nations of the community together by road, rail and air.

The rewards are already apparent: we see shorter travel times, and more investment in the region. **It** remains only for us to encourage you to play your role in these developments; for my part, I will do what I can to advance the cause of infrastructure at this weekend's Summit.

Now, there remains the matter of sustainability. **It** has been proposed that partner states of the community show their commitment to your goals by funding you directly.

Direct funding would strengthen the capacity of the community to deliver its mandate. **It** would also hasten the day of complete integration. **It** has my complete support, and I will be happy to consult with you to see it

introduced quickly and effectively.

Mr. Speaker,

I could say more, but it is time to let the assembly get on with its deliberations. **B**efore I do, let me recognize the Secretary-General of the Community who is with us today, and whose term is drawing to its close.

His leadership has been astute, his commitment to the union absolute. **I** thank **Dr. Sezibera**, and wish him well for the future. **L**et me close with a word of thanks for your visit, and for your commitment to the great task of integration.

God bless you all. God bless our union.