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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 – PARLIAMENT OF RWANDA, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2014, KIGALI, RWANDA

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

Senator Bernard Makuza, President of the Senate;

Rt. Hon. Donatille Mukabalisa, Speaker of the Parliament of Rwanda, Chamber of Deputies;

Hon. Phyllis J. Kandie, the Chairperson, EAC Council of Ministers;

The Hon. Ministers and Members of the Council of Ministers;

The Secretary General of the East African Community;

Hon. Members of the East African Legislative Assembly;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Your Excellency, it is with profound humility that I stand before this *August* House to warmly welcome you to deliver your Address at the commencement of the 2nd Meeting of the 3rd Session of the 3rd Assembly. I thank you for positively responding to our invitation and salute you and the entire Government of the Republic of Rwanda for accepting to host EALA.

At this Plenary Session, EALA shall receive Bills and analyze several oversight reports of its Committees. We shall also put important questions to the Council of Ministers, debate crucial Motions and pass Resolutions.

The Plenary shall be followed by the eighth Inter-Parliamentary Relations Seminar, commonly referred to as the Nanyuki Series. The Seminar themed: **Insecurity and Terrorism as threats to EAC integration: How can EAC develop a common position?** takes place on October 31st, 2014 to November 2, 2014. The Nanyuki Series brings together over 100 Parliamentarians from EALA and the EAC Partner States' Parliaments.

On behalf of EALA, I wish to underscore our collective confidence in you and in your colleagues' as the EAC Summit of Heads of State to positively advance the East African integration agenda, now and in the future.

I wish to congratulate the Summit for their support and direction that ensured the successful negotiations and conclusion of the Monetary Union Protocol, signed on 30th November, 2013. I further congratulate the

Republic of Rwanda following Parliament's debate and approval of a law enabling the country to ratify the Protocol.

As EALA, we are fully in support of the pillar and shall work closely with the Council of Ministers on the envisaged roadmap including consideration of the Bills establishing the East African Monetary Institute, East African Financial Services Commission and the East African Surveillance, Compliance and Enforcement Commission among others, to spur the operationalization of the Protocol.

Looking closely at the implementation of the Common Market Protocol; there is considerable progress, in amending national laws to conform to the Protocol, albeit, slow. The Republics of Rwanda, Kenya and Uganda have however abolished work permit fees thus encouraging workers to move freely in search of opportunities. The region continues to contend with surmountable challenges – a notable one being the slow pace with which Partner States are "opening up" thus denying citizens the tangible benefits of free movement.

East African citizens further contend with bureaucratic processes, administrative restrictions and misuse of the Rules of Origin principle among others, which hamper free movement of goods – and as such should be speedily addressed.

Your Excellency, with regards to the Customs Union Protocol, I congratulate you upon the operationalization of the Single Customs

Territory. In August during the last Plenary in the United Republic of Tanzania, we were privileged to visit the Tanzania Ports Authority in Dar es Salaam. In addition to appreciating the efficiencies registered in cargo handling, we witnessed the presence of Revenue Offices (and Officers) of the Republics of Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and the DRC while Kenya was preparing to follow suit. This in effect means that goods destined for those countries in the interior shall be directly handled by the respective Revenue Officials thus streamlining and enhancing clearance of goods.

Hitherto, a transaction which necessitated the filing of 30 documents for one transit cargo item now takes filing of a single form and this is a milestone. The improvement at both the Dar and Mombasa ports will make both the Central and Northern Corridors attractive in terms of facilitation of trade. The enhancement and recent commissioning of the Standard Gauge Railway in Kampala is further expected to spur business and to reduce the number of days for goods coming to Kigali.

Last week, Kigali successfully hosted the investment forum. I congratulate you for the feat. Investment is very key for the region. It is time for the region to reap from investments. These are opportunities that we cannot permit others to benefit from, more than us. However, to get maximum benefits from this situation, we must create conducive environment for doing business. It further demands that we increase the level of intra-African trade and investment and extend integration across the continent. We must of course strengthen the EAC first even as we look outwards to

Pan-Africanism. We expect that soon, a Private Members Bill on Investments shall be brought to the House for debate.

Another challenge is that of Non Tariff Barriers. The NTBs include weighbridges, police roadblocks, non-recognition of the EAC certificates of origin, lack of mutual recognition of quality marks, re-testing of products, delays by statutory boards in releasing the results of analysis of samples and delays in issuance of import licenses among others.

A report titled the "***Current Status of NTBs in East Africa***" that was released here in Kigali, in August, indicates the continued existence of unjustified and improper application of Non-Tariff measures such as sanitary and phytosanitary measures and other technical barriers to trade. On a more positive note however, the report shows that Rwanda is leading having resolved up to 72 % of documented NTBs and that work is ongoing to remove the balance of 28% of the barriers to trade.

While lauding the country for the significant steps taken, I appeal that Kigali shows the way by speedily aiming for zero sum. Other Partner States should likewise replicate the move.

Your Excellency, it is necessary that we reinforce the NTB Monitoring Committees so they can be effective and felt on the ground. EALA is supportive of the campaign to rid EAC of all NTBs and is eagerly awaiting for the Council of Ministers' NTBs Elimination Bill, 2014 for consideration.

I salute you and the Summit for focusing energies on cross-border infrastructure development in railways, energy, ports and harbours, roads and ICT.

Your Excellency, the integration endeavours have come a long way and as we deepen and widen this scope, the issues which EALA is called to address are also becoming complex. The last few months have been challenging for EALA but nevertheless, rewarding, in terms of refining us to carry on with the work ahead. Since January 2014, the Assembly has passed two Bills namely;-

- a) The East African Community Supplementary Appropriation Bill, 2014;
and
- b) The East African Community Appropriation Bill, 2014.

The Council has also introduced;-

- a) The East African Community Trade Negotiations (Repeal) Bill, 2014;
and which is before the Committee of the CTI.

We have four pending Private Members Bills which are:

- b) The East African Community Electronic Transactions Bill, 2014.
- c) The East African Co-operatives Societies Bill, 2014.
- d) The Education (Integration) Bill 2014 that is undergoing public hearing and
- e) The EAC Cross Border Legal Practice Bill, 2014.

We continue to undertake our oversight and representative functions with due diligence.

We appreciate the Council of Ministers for earmarking USD 255,000 in this Financial Year (2014-15) for the Assembly to kick-start its sensitization program which shall increase citizens' level of awareness.

We are first and foremost targeting to reach out to key stakeholders in the integration process, namely, the Members of Parliament, Heads of Government departments and institutions, local Government leaders, the business community including the Chambers of Commerce and the Private Sector foundations, Academia, Students, Youth, Women, Civil Society and opinion leaders. We call on Partner States to also compliment on this effort. In this way, we shall have created a spiral effect in the dissemination of information of EAC to the citizenry.

Your Excellency, permit me albeit belatedly, to congratulate you and the people of this great Republic, following last year's 50th independence celebrations which was an opportunity to share the joyous memories and to reflect on the future of the young nation.

May I also take the opportunity to congratulate you for steering the Republic of Rwanda to greater heights. Rwanda enjoys peace and stability, two decades after the horrendous Genocide against the Tutsi. Rwanda is the ICT hub of the region and the country is environmentally conscious and clean and this is reflected in the peoples' attitudes.

Your Excellency, you continue to be an inspiration to many given your focus to addressing national and regional issues. Under your leadership, Rwanda's vision to prioritise national development including the launch of a programme aimed at progress to a middle income country by 2020, remains on course. As of late 2013, Rwanda had realized growth indicators in health care and education with annual growth over the last eight years recorded at average of 8% per year. EALA too, adds its voice in heralding you for the great achievement.

On a more personal note, I want to acknowledge your tech-savvy approach of using the internet as a means of communications to bridge interaction with the citizenry. Recently while undertaking some research online, I was pleasantly surprised to discover that you have several accounts; - including a personal website, blog, Flickr, Facebook and Twitter. Today, you have close to 550,000 followers on Twitter and you are one of the most followed leaders in Africa.

Your Excellency, there are a number of other accolades under your belt including the prestigious Andrew Young Medal for Capitalism and Social Progression by the Georgia State University. Four years ago, I recall a British magazine, New Statesman, named you as one of the 50 most influential figures of the year.

Closer home in my household, I have keen football followers who follow a number of tournaments including the prestigious Kagame Interclub Cup,

which incidentally, this year, was held here in Kigali where Rwandan Champions APR lost narrowly to El-Merrikh of Sudan in the finals. You have continued to personally support the tournament and I thank you for using football to strengthen integration in the region.

Your contribution towards overseeing genuine democracy, peace and tranquility in a continent facing a myriad of challenges is outstanding. I urge you to continue to steer the Republic of Rwanda and the EAC region to even greater heights. I wish you good health and prosperity as you celebrate your birthday in the next two days but more so as you reflect on the country's development in the coming years ahead.

Before I invite you to address this Assembly, may I briefly introduce to you some of the dignitaries present;

Finally, Your Excellency, it is with great pleasure and honour that I execute my humble duty to welcome Your Excellency to address EALA, today, Tuesday the 21st of October 2014.

I thank you for your kind attention.