



EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY
EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**WELCOMING SPEECH BY RT. HON. DANIEL F. KIDEGA, SPEAKER OF
EALA AT THE ADDRESS OF H.E. PAUL KAGAME, PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF RWANDA, MONDAY, MARCH 6, 2017, KIGALI,
RWANDA**

**Your Excellency Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda;
Rt Hon Bernard Makuza, President of the Rwanda Senate;
Your Lordship Justice Samuel Rugege, Chief Justice of Rwanda
The Chairperson and Council of EAC Ministers
The Secretary General of the East African Community,
Hon. Members of the East African Legislative Assembly and the
Parliament of Rwanda,
Members' *Emeritus* of EALA
Members of the Diplomatic Corp
Senior Government officials in attendance
Representatives of the Private Sector and Civil Society
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:**

Your Excellency, it is with profound humility, that I welcome you to address EALA at the commencement of the 5th Meeting of the 5th Session. I thank you and the entire Government of the Republic of Rwanda for accepting to host EALA. At the outset, I wish you a progressive year and one full of good health, tidings and prosperity as you lead the Republic of Rwanda to greater heights.

EALA is pleased to be back again to the beautiful city of Kigali, which is effortlessly considered as our second home.

At this Plenary Session, EALA seeks to debate on three Bills; the EAC Polythene Materials Control Bill, 2016, the EAC Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Bill, 2016 and the EAC Gender Equality and Development Bill 2016, in addition to other key reports and Motions.

Excellency, the World Bank's African Regional Integration 2016 Index, lists EAC as one of the top performing blocs in the Continent. Such positive scorecard calls on us not to entertain complacency but rather to re-double our efforts. This is something the Assembly has always been keen on to achieve.

Excellency, we are grateful to you for your support to the integration process and for the greater and common good of the African Continent. Indeed, you have been previously quoted as **urging the Continent not to let its story be written by others but rather to own our own**

problems and therefore write our own story. Recently in February (Feb 13th, 2017) when addressing thousands of residents in Nyagatare District, you remarked and I quote: **We were not created to remain poor. We may have a history of poverty but we must work to leave it in the past.**

Both pronouncements are replicable in our context as we strive to consolidate on the integration agenda. Ideally, time has come for the EAC to draw on its collective economic, social and intellectual resources to address the imminent challenges it faces. **Excellency**, of equal importance is tolerance by Partner States within the framework of the integration process, to tackle the region's pursuit for peace and security, drought, Climate Change, the unemployment bulge and other pressing issues.

Similarly, there is need to resolve underlying currents preventing the efficient and smooth operations of the Customs Union Protocol. Time and again, EAC citizens contend with bureaucratic processes, administrative restrictions and misuse of the Rules of Origin principle among others, which hamper its implementation.

There is need to embrace industrialization by instituting supportive trade related policies and frameworks that grant Partner States the right to nurture nascent industries in order to develop their competitiveness and grow economies. The region is likely to benefit a great deal from operationalization of the Single Customs Territory resulting in increased intra-regional trade. In

this regard, we must emphasise building investor confidence, enterprise and creation of a conducive environment to spur trade.

Excellency, under the Common Market Protocol, the EAC is yet to realise harmonization of its labour, employment, education and social policies among others, despite the political will at the top.

EAC citizens need to enjoy the tangible benefits of free movement of labour, services, goods and capital as well as rights to establishment. Few years ago for example, the Republics of Rwanda, Kenya and Uganda abolished work permit fees thus encouraging workers to move freely in search of opportunities and implemented Inter-State passes to promote free movement of citizens.

The harmonization/approximation of Laws in the EAC context is also fundamental. A report of the EALA Committee on Legal Rules and Privileges on an Oversight activity on approximation of National laws in Partner States adopted by the Assembly in November 2016, indicates that Republic of Rwanda and Uganda have each harmonized 10 laws, Tanzania (6 laws), Kenya (4 laws) and Burundi (3 Laws). **Excellency**, this is an area that can and should be improved.

With regards to the Monetary Union, EALA is keen to see the establishment of the EAC Central Bank to backstop fiscal and monetary harmonization. As an Assembly, we are ready to enact relevant legislation including the EAC

Monetary Institute Bill, the EAC Financial Services Commission Bill, and the EAC Surveillance and Enforcement Commission Bill.

Excellency, it is also perhaps time the debate on the Political Federation, a stage we cannot wait to witness, was resuscitated. The Assembly would be keen to sensitise citizens of the region on this important pillar.

Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, a Pan-Africanist while addressing participants on the topic on Stability and Change in Africa at a Symposium (University of Toronto) on October 2, 1969 said:

"If a door is shut, attempts should be made to open it; if it is ajar, it should be pushed until it is wide open. In neither case, should the door be blown up at the expense of those inside."

Inevitably, differing levels of development among the Partner States, their respective economies, as well as differing policies in the various sectors, have and will result in short-term imbalances. However, it is how we manage these asymmetries in the distribution of benefits and costs, and the sensitivity we demonstrate when they occur, that will determine the constructive effect of integration. It is necessary for EAC technocrats to shorten the long tapes associated with bureaucracies and strive for service delivery. The Council of Ministers has for example, instituted a matrix that reviews status of implementation of the decisions arrived at – this is positive, but, a more results-oriented approach is necessary. Ultimately, the integration process is steadfast and there should be no going back.

Excellency, this is perhaps your last official Speech to the Assembly before its dissolution on 4th June 2017.

Therefore, permit me quickly to present to you our scorecard over the last 5 years –which reads as follows:

- a) Passage of 27 Bills, many of which, are currently undergoing assent by the EAC Heads of State.
- b) Debate, approval and passage of 80 Reports.
- c) Adoption of 63 key Resolutions. One of the key Resolutions we have recently passed is that of recognising Kiswahili as one of the Official languages of the Community. **Excellency**, I wish at this juncture to congratulate the Republic of Rwanda for recently approving the use of Kiswahili as an additional official language.
- d) Receipt and processing of 5 Petitions.
- e) Enhanced oversight of the EAC programmes and projects.
- f) Enhanced sensitization activities in the Partner States.
- g) Revision of the Rules of Procedure and other instruments of governance to strengthen service delivery.

The fourth Assembly has its work cut-out in terms of consolidating on the gains of the third EALA as well as in enacting legislation to further anchor the pillars of integration.

Excellency, let me now take the opportunity to congratulate you for steering the Republic of Rwanda to greater heights. Under your leadership, Rwanda enjoys peace and stability. Rwanda has realised significant progress by investing in ICTs, science and innovation as a springboard to growth and diversification of its economy in line with its 2020 Vision. Over the years, its *Per Capita* GDP has more than tripled (about US\$1,700)—outpacing bigger and more resource-rich African countries. Rwanda continues to be steadfast in tackling corruption.

The opening of the country's fourth national park, Gishwati-Mukura and that of the vast hospitality facility, Kigali Convention Centre are laudable initiatives that shall drive revenue growth in the tourism sector. We thank **Your Excellency** for the guidance, leadership style and governing philosophy.

I wish you well as the Republic of Rwanda goes to the Presidential polls in August 2017. Excellency, the Republic of Kenya will also elect new leaders in August. Kindly do extend our message of goodwill to your colleague and brother, H.E. Uhuru Kenyatta.

Finally, I want to thank you for sending a dedicated and supportive team of Members to EALA under the Chair of Hon Patricia Hajabakiga. In addition to the Chair, Hon Hajabakiga, the Hon Dr James Ndahiro, Hon Straton Ndikuryayo, Hon Dr Odette Nyiramilimo and Hon Valerie Nyirahabineza have duly served their two terms and are not eligible for re-election. They join

myself and others in retirement. I urge them to continue to be good Ambassadors of the integration process. **Excellency**, four other Members, Hon Martin Ngoga, Hon Oda Gasinzigwa, Hon Dr Francois Xavier Kalinda and Hon Pierre Celestin Rwigema are still eligible for a second term and I wish them well.

I know we can always rely on the Republic of Rwanda to send a committed and dedicated team of legislators to the 4th Assembly.

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

LIST TO BE AVAILED

It is with great pleasure and honour that I execute my humble duty to welcome Your Excellency to address EALA, today, Monday, the 6th day of March 2017. I thank you for your kind attention.