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**REMARKS BY THE RT. HON. JOSEPH NTAKIRUTIMANA, speaker of the east African legislative assembly (eala), AT THE 146TH ASSEMBLY of the ipu in MANAMA, BAHRAIN: 11TH - 15TH MARCH 2023**

* **The President of the IPU;**
* **Our host, the Rt. Hon. Speaker, Parliament of Bahrain;**
* **The Secretary General of the IPU;**
* **Distinguished Speakers and Heads of delegation;**
* **Legislators, Ladies and Gentlemen.**

**Good morning/afternoon!**

* I am delighted to be here today to address you all, and I thank the government of Bahrain for the excellent organization of the 146th IPU Assembly and for making our stay memorable here in Manama.
* This year’s IPU Conference is anchored on the theme: *Promoting peaceful coexistence and inclusive societies: Fighting intolerance.* The theme is quite timely because it reflects the current issues that are affecting our human population. It further reflects the issues that my Parliament, the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), is dealing with as top agenda items.
* The Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community (EAC) recognizes the significant contribution that women make towards progress of socio-economic transformation, gender parity, the inclusion of people with disabilities (PWDs); and democracy in all areas of cooperation and good governance.
* The EALA Elections Act, further directs Partner States to elect Members of EALA who represent all shades of opinion gender and special interests. The ratio of female to men is 50 per cent to 50 per cent. The Community also operates on a Gender Policy which advocates for women and girls’ equal rights, combatting discrimination practices. This policy has helped us in ensuring that gender equality and empowerment of women are integrated into every aspect of work to eradicate poverty and reduce inequalities.
* The EALA is made up of seven Partner States: Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda. One of our member states, DRC, is facing conflict. In an effort to restore peace, the EAC deployed forces to one of its seven members states for the first time since 1999, in what has proved to be a good test of ability to respond to violence in the region. The EALA, in its oversight mandate continues to impress upon the Council of Ministers to implement measures to ensure peace and security in the region.
* In December, 2022, the EAC Heads of State held peace talks, seeking a permanent solution to the conflict in DRC. The leaders encouraged dialogue and cessation of hostilities as they push for a lasting solution. Other interventions by the EAC have been the EAC-Led Nairobi Peace Process on restoration of peace and security in the Eastern DRC.
* In times of conflict and war, women and children are the most vulnerable and suffer excessively. Those who survive often have to live with the vivid and terrifying images of rape, war and death for the rest of their lives. Women also suffer from sexually transmitted diseases, stigmatization and sometimes unwanted pregnancies and yet they have to continue providing food, clothing and housing for their families.
* ***Fellow Delegates;*** proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) is a major cause of instability and insecurity especially in developing countries. There is need to eradicate illicit flows of weapons that have massively destroyed lives.
* In some countries especially in East Africa where I come from, there is serious drought that has affected agricultural productivity. Many people are going to bed hungry as a result. The drought situation has caused a lot of negative environmental, economic and social impacts.
* I cannot help but; to wonder whether the issues that are affecting my region are not examples of *exclusion* and *an infringement on human rights*. I call upon you all, to look into the real issues affecting humanity and come up with concrete resolutions that will restore hope to the citizens globally.

*I thank you all, for your kind attention and wish you fruitful deliberations!!!*