



EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (EALA)

Official Report of the Proceedings of the East African Legislative Assembly

35TH SITTING – SECOND ASSEMBLY: SECOND MEETING – SECOND SESSION

Thursday, 18 September 2008

*The East African Legislative Assembly met at 2.30 p.m. in the Chamber of Deputies,
Parliament of Rwanda, Kigali.*

PRAYER

(The Speaker, Mr. Abdirahin Abdi, in the Chair)

The Assembly was called to order.

BILLS

Second Reading

The Inter-University Council for East Africa Bill, 2008

(Resumption of Debate interrupted on Wednesday, 17 September 2008)

Mr. Abdul Karim Harelimana (Rwanda): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I take this opportunity, first of all, to congratulate EALA and the Speaker for taking the good and wise decision to convene this Session here in Kigali. There are so many benefits which come, first to Members of EALA, for they see where Rwanda is now in as far as development is concerned, and they see what the population of Rwanda, which they represent in this House, looks like and what they are doing. They will also see the difference between the pre- and post-1994 era. The people of Rwanda will also benefit by knowing the East African Community in general, but more especially, the EALA. They have been following events at the EAC, and they are working together with the Committee on fast-tracking of East Africa Community. But this Session will be an addition to what they already know.

I take this opportunity also to commend the Council, especially the Chairperson, for the report she gave us yesterday. I also wish to congratulate the Committee, which worked day

and night until they brought us this report, which I see is very comprehensive. However, there are some few things which I want to comment on.

In Paragraph 3.8 where they talk about the establishment of an East African Community Examinations Board, the IUCEA said it was not within their competence to establish that examinations board. I think this is a very important point. If they cannot do it, isn't anyone else in the Community, perhaps the Council of Ministers, who can follow up on that? If we are talking about cheating and corruption here and there in our institutions of higher learning, I think that is one of the parts which can help to at least stop this corruption in education. That is why I would request the Council of Ministers, in their competence, to see who can take on this issue and establish an East African Community Examinations Board.

In the report which was given to us by the Minister, in point number 6, the objectives of the Council shall be: *“(f) to promote curriculum reform in order to equip graduates with the skills and knowledge which meet the needs of employers and conform to the development plans of the Community.”* Here, I think we need to go further than meeting the needs of employers. Why can't we think of creating people who will be employers themselves, instead of people who will only meet the needs of employers? I think this is one of the biggest problems in our region, and maybe in Africa as a whole, where people are just thinking that they will go to university and then seek jobs and not create jobs themselves! So, I think we can make an addition in this point to the effect that we will create people who will create jobs themselves.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill has come at the right time. If our local universities are collaborating with other universities as far as the USA, Canada, China, UK and other places, why can't we do the same amongst ourselves in the region?

Mr. Speaker, I support the Motion but I would like to request that the comments I made will appear somewhere at the end of the day.

Murakoze chane. (Applause)

Ms. Catherine Kimura (Kenya): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to contribute to the Motion that is under discussion. But let me for a start thank the Government of Rwanda for accepting EALA to hold its meetings in this very wonderful chamber. I also want to thank them for the hospitality we have received since we came to this country. *(Applause)* Mr Speaker, allow me also to thank the Rwanda Electoral Commission for having accepted for us to be observers in the on-going elections.

At this juncture, Mr Speaker, let me also congratulate the Members from Rwanda in this Assembly for having more ladies in the Assembly. Mr Speaker, this has now also extended to their national parliament where we understand that the women are going to hold 58 per cent of the seats. Congratulations! *(Applause)* It is our hope that the rest of the countries in this region will take the example of Rwanda and, indeed, put women where they should be in positions of leadership, because in certain countries, we are still lagging very much behind.

So, thank you Rwanda for setting the example, and we look forward to taking the challenge in the other parts of the region.

Hon. Speaker, let me congratulate the Council of Ministers for bringing this Bill to this Assembly, and for giving the IUCEA a new lease of life, for, indeed, this is one of the surviving institutions of the collapsed former Community. I take pride that I am a product of the University of East Africa. I recall with nostalgia my days in the university. If Hon. Kategaya were here...he is a colleague whom I am sure I graduated from the University of East Africa. I am reminded that indeed, Amb. Mwapachu is also a product of the University of East Africa. We are proud to be the products of that prestigious institution. *(Applause)*

Those were the days when one chose whether to go to Makerere, Nairobi or Dar-es-Salaam universities at no extra cost, and it was one's choice which university one wanted to attend. Indeed, this is what we would hope to see in the education sector of this region. We want to see that when people finish high school, they get the opportunity to make a choice as to which university within the region they will be able to attend without having to pay any extra fees.

Having said that let me now turn to the objectives of this Bill, and to the aspirations our leaders had when they drew up the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community. In Article 102, one of the fundamental issues they wanted to see in education and training was the development of common programmes in basic, intermediary and tertiary education, and also a general programme for adult and continuing education in the Partner States as would promote the emergence of well trained personnel in all sectors relevant to the aims and objectives of the Community. I take note of the fact that, indeed, any country is judged in its development agenda on the human resource capacity that it has. The human resource capacity is paramount for the development of any country. For our region, we have seen a drain of our foreign exchange resources by people seeking education elsewhere. It is, therefore, gratifying that in this Bill we are looking at quality assurance so that we can offer quality and relevant education. One would hope that somewhere along the line in this Bill, as was pointed out by various Members, including the hon. Abdul Karim, the issue of training that is relevant to our economy will be pursued by the IUCEA.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge the Council of Ministers to look at the areas that have been pointed out for improvement. When I look at Article 102, there are areas there that are not well articulated in the Bill. It is also very important that as this Assembly passes this law, it should pass a law that creates an institution that is relevant, workable and one that will stand the test of time. Therefore, we would seek the indulgence of the Council of Ministers to take the issues raised by the hon. Masha to heart, and to rethink and review this Bill in accordance with some of those issues. The institution being created is not amorphous, but one that is focused and will indeed respond to what was envisaged in Article 102.

Honourable Speaker, I would therefore urge the Council of Ministers to look beyond this Bill and see which areas of our education can be improved in order to bring quality education to our institutions. We know that there is cross border education - one could almost call it trade -

particularly between Kenya and Uganda, and also between Kenya and Tanzania. This is happening because the citizens of these countries are looking for quality education, but in doing that, some of the countries have to pay heavily because of the disparity in fees. As we move towards the Common Market, we would hope that these are issues the Council would respond to.

As I end, let me congratulate the Council for bringing this Bill. I hope that the issue of this institution as serving posterity will be looked into.

I beg to support the Motion. (*Applause*)

Mr. Leonce Ndarubagiye (Burundi): Honourable Speaker, I thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to contribute to this Bill. I am a Member of the General Purpose Committee, and I am a signatory of the report that was presented by our Chairperson. After the speeches of my colleagues, I don't think there is any need for me to underline the importance of education in the development and elevation of the welfare of our people. However, I would like to add my voice to those of my colleagues to appreciate, highly, the hospitality of our Rwandan colleagues and their government. Our presence here at this specific time was a blessing because we were authorised to witness the smooth and peaceful elections as observers. I also congratulate the Council of Ministers for their submission.

Mr. Speaker, today's world is a world of competition and globalisation. We therefore find ourselves in a situation where we have to compete with some very old graduates from these universities and we have to match their level of education so that our people can compete.

I just want to emphasise the long standing cooperation of the universities of East Africa. Although Burundi and Rwanda joined the Community very recently, the cooperation between our universities has been progressing year after year. I am very glad to report that we have many graduates from the universities of the three original Partner States, and we look forward to welcoming your students to our universities as well; they may also learn some French. (*Applause*)

With those remarks, I agree with what has been said before me, and I beg to support the Motion.

Mr. Pierre Damien Habumuremyi (Rwanda): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you very much for giving me the Floor to say a few words on this important Motion.

Let me first of all start by thanking the Chair and the entire House for accepting to hold this Session in Kigali. Secondly, I would like to congratulate the General Purpose Committee for this very good report. I also wish to thank those Members who spoke before me for their contributions in order to improve this Bill.

Regarding the Bill, a lot has been said, but I just want to highlight one point about the activities of higher institutions, which include the research component, which should make a difference in changing the living conditions of the people of East Africa. The IUCEA should play a bigger role so that its activities have a positive impact on the entire population.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot pretend to achieve good results in institutions of higher learning if the working environment of our teachers is not addressed. That is why, in playing its role, the IUCEA should think on how to give incentives to the teachers and provide good working conditions for them.

Finally, I would like to suggest that student representatives should be part of the board of IUCEA for the interest of their colleagues who are the main beneficiaries of this body.

With those remarks, I beg to support the Motion. (*Applause*)

Ms. Nusura Tiperu (Uganda): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker for giving me the opportunity to contribute to the Motion on the Floor. I would like to join my colleagues to be counted among those who have supported this Motion.

Allow me to thank hon. Eriya Kategaya, in absentia, who introduced the Bill for the first time while we were in Nairobi. Allow me to also thank the ministers present for having ensured that the Bill does not remain behind, but it is brought and passed by this House.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the committee for doing a wonderful job and also to welcome them back from the “Pearl of Africa”, my country, Uganda, where it did its work from. Considering the output that we can see in the report, I am sure they did not have time to visit the outskirts of Kampala so as to appreciate the country. Nevertheless, we hope that the next time they will have the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be associated with this Bill because I feel it forms part of what constitutes the desires of the people of East Africa. As we all know, the IUCEA has been in existence, and it has done a commendable job. It has been tested, and it has shown that it is really East African because it continued even when the Community had collapsed. It is, therefore, only fair that we pass this Bill so that we give it the supra-national status provided in the Bill and give it the legal status to achieve even more.

Mr. Speaker, sir, a few years ago when I was joining university, I wanted to apply to go to Dar-es-Salaam University because there was an opportunity to do so. But the intake requirements were so high that the number of students to be taken from Uganda was very small. With the proposals that I have seen in this Bill, I feel this is going to be an opportunity for more students within East Africa to have an opportunity to move to the different countries within East Africa and to acquire the education that they aspire to have. I also feel that this will help us to improve on our cultural diversity of the students within the region and they will be exchanging some of the progressive cultures from those countries they come from.

I also support this Bill in particular because of the recommendation that the Committee has come up with to harmonise and ensure that there is no segregation or discrimination when it comes to the issue of school fees. We got an opportunity to visit Makerere University, and we got a lot of complaints from many of the foreign students there from Kenya and Tanzania, who pay more than the local students. So, in the spirit of East Africa, I feel that through this Bill and after the Committee recommendations are considered, for the first time the students who have already integrated within the region, those who are already enjoying the education

facilities, for example, in Uganda, are going to jubilate if a harmonised fees structure is put in place within the region, maybe with the exception of those students who come from outside East Africa.

I, therefore, want to conclude by thanking the Council of Ministers, once again, and the draftsmen of the Bill for a wonderful job.

I beg to support the Motion. *(Applause)*

The Speaker: Honourable Members, I see no other Member interested in debating this Motion. However, before I adjourn the House, I would like to report that hon. Bilal is doing well. He is held in hospital for 12 hours observation, and he should be discharged this afternoon – *(interruption)* -

Mr. Abdullah Mwinyi (Tanzania): On a point of information, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member will be staying in hospital until at least tomorrow for further examination.

The Speaker: Well, that is new information. But he is doing well. I think he is only being held for observation.

ADJOURNMENT

The Speaker: I will now adjourn the House until Tuesday, 2.30 p.m.

(The House rose at and adjourned until Tuesday, 23 September 2008.)