**EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY**

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**ADDRESS BY THE RT. HON. MARTIN K. NGOGA, SPEAKER OF THE EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY TO THE 145TH ASSEMBLY of the ipu AT THE KIGALI CONVENTION CENTRE, KIGALI, RWANDA, 11 - 15 OCTOBER 2022.**

* ***The President of the IPU;***
* ***Madame Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of Rwanda and host of this distinguished gathering;***
* ***The Secretary General and the Leadership of the IPU;***
* ***Distinguished Speakers and Leaders of Parliamentary delegations;***
* ***Legislators, Ladies and Gentlemen:***

1. It gives me great pleasure to participate in the 145th IPU Assembly, taking place in this beautiful city of Kigali, the capital of the Republic of Rwanda, my home country, and one of the Partner States of the East African Community (EAC).
2. I would like to register my thanks to the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Rt. Hon. Duarte Pacheco PEREIRA for this opportunity to address this august gathering.
3. At the outset, I wish to appreciate the selection of the conference Theme of the 145th IPU on ***“Gender equality and gender-sensitive parliaments as drivers of change for a more resilient and peaceful world”*.** This theme is discussed at a time when the World is witnessing a roll back of four decades of hard-won progress in the fight against inequalities between women and men.
4. **Distinguished delegates,** the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report 2022 projected that, at the current rate of progress, it will take 132 years to reach gender parity globally. The report further cites that as crises are compounding, women's workforce outcomes are suffering and the risk of global gender parity backsliding further intensifies.
5. **Distinguished participants,** we cannot overemphasize the centrality of parliamentary action in addressing the various challenges and to advance gender equality if our respective countries, regions and the world are to attain the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals - especially Goal 5 - which calls for achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls.
6. I therefore underscore the point that this meeting offers us an opportunity to deliberate openly and share experiences of our respective Parliaments, not only in respect of advancing gender equality, but also to ensure a gender-responsive recovery amidst the health crisis, climate change crisis and security threats at hand.
7. **Ladies and Gentlemen**, turning to the 10th anniversary of the landmark IPU Plan of Action for Gender -Sensitive Parliaments (GSP), permit me to highlight the achievements recorded by the East African Legislative Assembly in its endeavor to drive the necessary change towards gender equality.

1. In the EAC, we are pleased to inform you that Partner States have undertaken to abide by the **principle of gender equality** as one of the Fundamental Principles of the Community under Article 6 (d) of the Treaty for the Establishment of the EAC. The Partner States also recognize **the indispensable role of women** in socio-economic development and in business (under Articles 121 and 122 of the Treaty), and have committed (under Article 5(3) (e) of the Treaty) to ensuring **gender mainstreaming** in all the Community’s endeavours.
2. Building on the aforementioned enabling legal framework, the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) has continued to discharge its legislative, oversight and representation functions to strengthen the EAC legal and policy framework for gender equality. In this regard, key actions undertaken by the Assembly include the following: -
3. The Assembly enacted a law on “East African Legislative Assembly Elections Act, 2002 stipulating **a quota of one third for either gender**:” At least one third of the elected members shall reflect either gender”. The Bill aimed at improving women’s representation and leadership in the regional parliament.

It has been indeed observed that gender inequality in politics correlate with broader gender inequalities in society, and thus improving women’s representation and leadership in parliaments is closely intertwined with supporting parliaments’ role -through their legislative, budgetary, oversight and representation functions -to make societies more inclusive and equal. In this respect, it is my pleasure to inform you that, following the enactment of that law on affirmative action, women representation in the Assembly has been increasing **beyond the established 1/3 quota** and **far beyond the global average share of women in parliament (14.9% to 22.9%** between 2006 and 2022).

The first Assembly (2001 – 2006) had 9 women out of the 27 elected members (30%); the second (2007-2012) and third Assembly (2012-2017) comprised of 18 women out of 45 elected members (40%); and the current (fourth) Assembly (2017-2022) has 22 women out of 54 elected members (40.7%). These developments have been made possible by our Treaty in Article 50 which calls for a sizeable representation of either gender in the Assembly.

1. Likewise, due to a number of climate change crises which have caused draught and floods, the Assembly adopted a specific resolution targeting the work that women do: such as urging the EAC Council of Ministers to urgently establish an **Emergency Response Fund to assist victims of floods and other environmental disasters;** a resolution urging the Council and Partner States to **conserve forests and promote policies that make the Community a green region; a** resolution urging the Council to **expedite the introduction of the Climate Change Bill in the Assembly,** and a resolution urging the Council to recommend the Partner States **to enhance gender equality in access to food and nutrition security in the Community.**
2. To streamline and enhance its actions towards gender equality, the Assembly recently established **the East African Legislative Assembly women’s caucus as a forum for members of the Assembly to promote the full participation of women in programmes and activities of the community. The membership includes all EALA Women MPs and Ex-officio Members.**

**In addition, we have 6 male MPs who work to advance the cause of women. In the recent past, the same caucus organized a conference at continental level for women leaders across Africa and this is in line with their strategic plan. As an Assembly, we are now moving to include the caucus in our Rules.**

1. The Assembly has also continued to engage with the EAC Council of Ministers to ensure full and adequate implementation of the EAC **Gender Policy** which was adopted to ensure an inclusive Community which guarantees **equal rights and opportunities** for women and men, boys and girls.
2. **Distinguished Participants**, despite our good regional performance on the front of putting in place an enabling legal and regulatory framework for gender equality, we have not yet achieved the principle of parity and a number of the above-mentioned Resolutions of the Assembly have not yet been implemented.
3. **Ladies and Gentlemen,** as I conclude, allow me to reiterate that the East African Legislative Assembly supports all efforts towards advancing gender equality and gender-sensitive parliaments as drivers of change for an equal and peaceful world. Our future endeavour will be focused on the implementations of the legal and policy measures already put in place. I have no doubt that from this meeting, we will learn and gain much insight in what further steps we may need to take to achieve gender equality and most importantly to deliver gender responsive, transformative leadership able to uplift the living conditions of all women and men.

I thank you all for your kind attention!!