EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

REMARKS BY RT. HON DANIEL FREDE KIDEGA, SPEAKER OF EALA AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE EAST AFRICAN REGIONAL BUSINESS LEADERS SUMMIT WITH EAC POLICY MAKERS - 1st MARCH 2016, ARUSHA, TANZANIA

Chairman of the EAC Council of Ministers, Hon. Amb. Augustine Mahiga

Secretary General, East African Community, Amb. Dr. Richard Sezibera

Chairman, East African Business Council, Mr. Dennis Karera

Distinguished Champions and Members of the Private Sector

Ladies and Gentlemen;

I am pleased to join you here this morning and to share with you brief

reflections at the commencement of the Regional Leaders Summit with the EAC Policy Makers.

At inception, let me congratulate EABC for the successful feat in putting together this noble Summit. I am a believer in the notion that Private Sector is the engine of economic growth and is one of the avenues through which citizens of EAC will realise prosperity. Let me also congratulate you for putting together the EABC Code of Conduct which, post the launch tomorrow, aims at providing common values to support regional integration, corporate governance and enhance ethical business practices across board.

The Private Sector continues in its quest to strengthen the Integration process and achieve economic gains. Essentially, for growth to be driven, realized and sustained, Private sector and policy makers need to close ranks.

On the one side, Economic development is resultant from the extent to which we mobilise both domestic and external private sector investments, enhance capital formation, utilize technology transfer, and introduce better products and services for consumers. On the other side, the EAC needs to expeditiously implement the agreed commitments under the pillars of Integration.

I am therefore particularly pleased that this Summit brings together the key stakeholders to discuss the nuts and bolts on how to transform lives of citizens in the region and to continuously ease the manner and cost of doing business in our region.

We at EALA look at the Private Sector as a critical stakeholder and partner in economic development, as well as a provider of income, jobs, goods and services to enhance people's lives.

Hon Minister, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;

From the legislative perspective, I wish to reiterate that EALA is committed to partnering with the EABC. I see EALA continue in its quest to support Private Sector Development through its traditional roles of Legislation, Oversight and Representation. Secondly, and of importance is for we as legislators, to be more proactive and to be the Advocates of the Private Sector at the EAC. Here is where our Oversight role plays a key part to ensure we put in place appropriate legal frameworks that directly meet the interests of businesses and their consumers.

It is perhaps time for both parties to institutionalise an annual activity such as a RoundTable that brings us together every so often to deliberate on progress at the EAC.

In 2015, EALA has passed 4 key pieces of legislation that enhance role of Private Sector in driving the integration process. They include:

a) The EAC Electronic Transactions Bill, 2014 –which seeks to exploit electronic transactions in the modern day business transactions and

develop a safe, secure and effective environment for the consumer, business and the Governments of the partner states to conduct and use electronic transactions;

b) The EAC Cooperative Societies Bill, 2014 - Provides a legal framework for Co-operative Societies in line with Article 128 of the EAC Treaty;

c) The EAC Elimination of Non-Tariff Barriers Bill, 2015 - **The** Bill seeks to give effect to Article 13 of the Protocol on the Establishment of the EAC Customs Union and provide a legal mechanism for the elimination of identified Non-Tariff Barriers in the Partner States.

d) The EAC Creative and Cultural Industries Bill, 2015, which promotes creative and cultural industries in the EAC and provides an environment conducive to the stimulation of creativity and innovative endeavors.

EALA has also undertaken On-Spot Assessment on the One Stop Border Posts in EAC Partner States, the most recent been in the months of April and September 2015, in order to find out the status of implementation of the OSBP initiative projects and effects on the movement of people and the EAC business environment.

The 2014/2015 Budget passed by EALA further prioritizes the operationalization of the EAC Single Customs Territory including the setting

up of an institutional framework to manage it, as well as the implementation of the EAC Industrialization policy necessary for Private Sector thrive.

We as stakeholders have different roles to play in the integration dispensation. But I am convinced that we can and must work harder to be more competitive in attracting investments to drive regional prosperity. In this regard, the Private Sector must continue to stand for and claim what belongs to it. Under the EABC banner, the Sector must demand that Governments address and rapidly so infrastructure shortcomings that range from insufficient energy, poor transport networks, to inadequate connectivity.

As long as these challenges remain, we will not be competitive.
Private Sector must also look inwards given that this is the era of competitiveness.

Private Sector must promote science, technology and research, not only as tools for business but also to nurture innovation necessary for faster economic development. It is also important to develop a conducive business culture underpinned by high standards of service, and in the value addition to the goods and services.

One of the areas that we seem to have faltered on is that concerning free movements of labour and services in advent of the Common Market Protocol. As an Assembly, we are concerned that the region has not fully exploited the tenets of the Common Market protocol. We are looking at coming up with key legislation to anchor the Protocol.

I therefore wish you all the best as we dissect the issues before us. I thank you for your kind attention.