

EALA 10TH ANNIVERSARY SYMPOSIUM

THEME: CATALYSING THE EAC INTEGRATION PROCESS: A RECIPE FOR REALISATION OF THE POLITICAL FEDERATION

CONTRIBUTION BY: AMB. JUMA V. MWAPACHU

**FORMER SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY (2006 -
2011), MOUNT MERU HOTEL, ARUSHA, 30TH JUNE 2011**

Rt. Honourable Speaker, Abdirahim Abdi,
Rt. Honourable Speakers of the National Assemblies;
Honourable Ministers, Members of Parliament and EALA
Honourable secretary General, Dr. Richard Sezibera
Honourable former Secretaries General of the EAC, Amb. Francis Muthaura and
Amanya Mushega
Distinguished Participants
Friends

Mr. Moderator, my colleagues the former secretaries General have covered much ground on the topic set for us and I agree with most of the ideas, opinions and proposals they have advanced. As such, my intervention will focus on what I regard to be some of the burning challenges that impinge and impact the lofty goal of East African Political Federation. I wish to raise eight points in this regard:

First, there is a fast changing national political culture in the EAC Partner States, with the entry and consolidation of multiparty political systems. This is a political system that is more engrossed in national, political and economic issues than on original or EAC matters. This is quite understandable after years of monolithic political party systems (dejure and defacto). The struggles for political Visibility, relevance and legitimacy have demanded a dominant national thrust.

It is thus axiomatic, that apart from the NRM of Uganda, none of the political parties in the other EAC Partner States have had an election manifesto or party programme that outlines their policy on East African integration or, for that matter, on the East African Political Federation. It follows that even in the National Assemblies, EAC integration has featured as a subsidiary matter even where, uniquely in Africa, there are Ministries of EAC Affairs with Cabinet Ministers who are sitting Members of Parliament, in the case of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, and responsible to National Assemblies in the case of Rwanda and Burundi which did not follow the Westminster model of governance.

Clearly, there is need to see a changing political culture in the Partner States, a point I shall revert to later, as a critical factor in the process towards a Political Federation.

Second, as the EAC proceeds to give closer and deeper attention to the process towards the realization of East African Federation, it is imperative that the form of how representation in the East African Legislative Assembly is structured is reviewed. The EAC Treaty invokes the principle of "people centeredness" in the assumption that the organs of the Community shall translate such objective in their structures and operations.

Indeed, EALA is probably the organ to best translate that objective in both its representation and operations. However, the Members of EALA are elected by the National Assemblies. This means that there is a disconnect between the EALA Members and the citizens of East Africa to whom they should rightly be accountable and responsible for the realization of deeper integration, more especially of the political federation.

In my view, the realization of a political federation will be best ensured when the citizens of East Africa are enabled to exercise the right to vote for its representatives to the EALA. This system is applied in the European Union in the election of their Members of EU Parliament. Taking such a course would help to stimulate greater sensitization and conscientisation in the East African people about the EAC generally and about the rationale for a political federation in particular.

The process would also force political parties at national levels to see EAC integration project as one deserving their attention and for which they can advance their positions within national electoral and governance processes. But there is another objective perspective and that is, the system of a directly elected EALA would enable private candidates to participate in becoming regional representatives.

Third, the changing demographic profile in the EAC region with an average of 70% of the population being between 15-30 years means that East African integration politics must heed the views, perceptions, concerns and aspirations of this group of citizens. In my encounters and engagements with this group of young people, in Tanzania, I have come to be seized of what they think. They are not concerned about history; the history of independence struggle; of Tanzania's blood having been spilt to liberate fellow Africans from white minority rule and apartheid; or Tanzania's Pan-Africanist ideals.

Their interests are focused on how their national economies can assure them of adequate decent and well paid jobs; of better quality education and of risk capital to

start businesses. They do not view with any confidence that the EAC Political Federation is a panacea for the realization of their interests.

Unless this challenge is addressed squarely, the youth bulge will not only become a serious source of social terrorism in the region but may also precipitate a new wave of zero sum nationalism that undermines the broader goals of EAC integration. Of course, there are measures that can be taken at both the national and EAC level to thwart these negative but real concerns. One measure is to speed up the process of industrialization in the EAC region. Improving agricultural productivity would be a catalyst in this industrialization process.

Unfortunately, agriculture production remains largely backward. There is lack of applied science and technology innovations in the region's agriculture. The politics of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) have, for example, been embraced by most of our national governments, literally playing surrogate to European Civil Society activism. Yet the US and many developing countries apply GMO to promote agricultural productivity as a way to confront the adverse effects of climate change and crop diseases. Biotechnology could thus be an economic liberator and a major stimulant and catalyst of economic growth and job creation. But this is allowed to bypass us through lack of boldness on our part to take political decisions that we own.

Another measure is to spur private sector development by celebrating firms that are regional champions. Former Tanzania President, Ali Hassan Mwinyi mentioned some of them in his statement at the opening Plenary of this EALA celebration today. They include Azam of Tanzania, Bidco of Kenya, Transcentury and Nakumatt of Kenya.

Our region must catalyse and incentivize the growth of regional companies that should cross listed in our stock exchanges to promote broad ownership which in turn, dampen the concerns about one country monopolizing regional business. Jobs then created in all Partner States and exchequer revenues become regionally shared through local operations of such companies.

Fourth, there are serious inequalities taking root in the EAC Partner States. A recent book of the Society for International Development (East Africa) shows that Kenya manifests a particularly worrying situation in this regard, cutting across different sectors of the economy. Tanzania's household budget surveys equally point an almost similar picture. In sum, there is a North - South wealth divide emerging in East African societies largely driven by neo-liberal policies being implemented.

These inequalities which are partly gender and region-based, will increasingly be accentuated by climate change. As it is, the declines in the quality of life in rural areas where on average 70% of East Africans still live, is triggering increasing migrations into urban areas and especially major cities. This unorganized urbanization is a recipe for social tensions and strifes which inevitably dovetail the regional integration perspective, giving greater focus on national solutions.

The erosion of rural development policies and programmes with probable exception of unsustainable (aid driven education and health programmes under the framework of the MDGs, partly explains why life in rural areas has become unbearable to young East Africans coming out of primary and secondary schools. Achieving high enrolment rates in primary schools in the region is celebratable.

However, getting these young people to settle in rural areas has become huge challenge for which the solution lies squarely in right national economic policies. The EAC deeper integration agenda can only succeed therefore, if national economic policies are right and appropriate. If they are not, they will undermine the cause of integration and political federation.

Fifth, as alluded to earlier, multiparty politics has had its boon but also liabilities. My concern is that there is much that is going on in many of our leading national economies in the EAC that reflects politics of warfare. There is growing dissent. There is an enduring struggle for political power. What President Daniel Arap Moi stated this morning that our East African Unity must be for strength and not for power is not reflected at national levels. In this process, the lofty goal of East African integration and political federation plays second fiddle. In the Tanzanian context, the National Assembly is overly focused on "ufisadi".

There is little focus on how to tackle real development issues such as the gross adverse impact of serious power shortage on the economy. As a result, Tanzanians would be least interested to think of East African Political Federation much as some of us may hold that in a federation, Tanzania would not in this case, face such serious power blues. Personally, I do not believe so. It does not require a political federation for Tanzania to sort out such challenges.

Tanzania is richly endowed with energy resources, more than any of the East African Partner States. The solution of Tanzania's power difficulties lies in right policies and better management and utilization of its natural resources in the energy sector. Tanzanians are aware of this reality and would not view an East African Federation as a

panacea in sorting out what are fundamentally national policy and leadership shortcomings.

Sixth, the idea of a political federation requires greater commitment on its key organs, in this regard, the East African Court of Justice (EACJ). East Africans are watchful. They look at how the Partner States, for example, continue to hoard powers, especially those that ordinarily affect the rights of citizens to seek recourse in a regional court of law. These are rights that should rightly be exercisable pursuant to the Customs Union, its Protocol and Management Act, the Common Market and other laws like the Competition Law passed by EALA and assented to by the EAC Heads of State.

But such recourses are closed by the EAC Treaty which limits the EACJ's jurisdiction to interpretation and application of the EAC Treaty. How can the EAC be serious about the process towards a Political Federation when it inhibits, at a lower stage of integration, federation the rights of East African citizens to petition their own regional court for redress on matters that are already governed by Protocols which the Treaty forms an integral part of the Treaty and also by laws which, pursuant to the Treaty, take precedence over national laws?

Seventh, with the integration of Rwanda and Burundi, the question of EAC's official language has become an issue. The EAC Treaty provides that English shall be the official language and Kiswahili shall be the lingua franca. Rwanda has of course transformed significantly and English is now the official language but with French still being widely used. As for Burundi, French remains dominantly the official or working language.

Experience shows that since Burundi's accession into the EAC, its officials have found it difficult to fully participate in official proceedings, some of them of a highly complex nature like negotiations of the Common Market and Monetary Union Protocols. It is not right to be simplistic that a condition precedent to Burundi's accession was its acceptance of English as the official language of the EAC. The real issue is how to secure Burundi's full and informed participation in critical integration discussions in the EAC.

Moreover, by strictly adhering to English as an official language, a wrong signal may be sent out to countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo that may wish to join the EAC. How does a country join an institution where its role and effectiveness may not be realized due to a language limitation? It is important, therefore, as part of EAC's objective of widening and deepening integration, that the Treaty is amended to

incorporate French as another official language. There is a cost to it but it is worth its while.

Of course, ultimately, the EAC must promote Kiswahili to become the working language. Finally, there is the broad question about how EAC builds a sense of "Community". A Community implies, by definition, a Community of Peoples and not narrowly, a Community of trade and economics.

The EAC has so far engendered a Community that identifies itself more with the Customs Union and the Common Market. It is not yet a Community of East African people. And it could not be when the citizens of East Africa have to move across borders with passports and visas. The EAC has to borrow a leaf from ECOWAS where, in a larger and more diverse geographical space, there is free movement of persons. Surely, this is a cause that needs immediate implementation in the EAC.

Mr. Moderator,

I wish to thank EALA for associating me with this important event of historic proportion. I wish EALA a happy 10th Anniversary and a greater role in advancing the cause of deeper EAC integration.

I THANK YOU.