



THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

THE EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (EALA)

Official Report of the Proceedings of the East African Legislative Assembly

64th SITTING – SECOND MEETING – FOURTH SESSION: FIFTH ASSEMBLY FIFTH ASSEMBLY (Under Rule.10(2))

Wednesday, 26 November 2025

The East African Legislative Assembly met at 2.37 p.m. at the Parliament of Uganda Chamber, Kampala, Uganda.

PRAYER

(The Speaker, Hon. Joseph Ntakirutimana, in the Chair.)

(The Assembly was called to order.)

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

The Speaker: Honourable colleagues, good afternoon. Once again, I seize this opportunity to welcome you back to Uganda, the Pearl of Africa, since our last sitting here in October last year. I also extend my greetings and gratitude to HE Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, the President of the Republic of Uganda, for his exemplary leadership and to the people of Uganda for their warm hospitality since our arrival.

I thank our gracious host, the Rt Hon. Anita Annet Among, Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda, as well as the Members and the staff of the Parliament of Uganda for their

warm reception and facilitation, which has ensured the smooth start of our business.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate HE President Samia Hassan Suluhu on her re-election as President of the United Republic of Tanzania in the recent general elections. *(Applause)*

We extend our congratulations to our former colleagues at the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), Hon. Dr Ngwaru Maghembe and Hon. James Millya, on their election as Members of Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania. They have also been appointed as deputy ministers. *(Applause)*

We also congratulate the Rt Hon. Mussa Azan Zungu on his election as the ninth Speaker of the Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania. We also congratulate the Speakers of Burundi; Speaker of the Burundi National Assembly, Rt Hon. Gelase Ndabirabe, and the Speaker of the Senate, Rt Hon. Gervais Ndirakobuca, who were elected in the June elections. For Uganda, we have our colleagues who are campaigning: Hon. Denis Namara,

Hon. James Kakooza, and Hon. Rose Akol . We wish them the best.

Honourable members, the approved programme for this meeting and the business to be transacted have been circulated to all of us. I, therefore, urge all committees to finalise their respective agenda and report to the plenary in accordance with the programme. Preparations for the 15th Inter-Parliamentary Games are progressing well. Members are reminded to be available for the training sessions in preparation for the event.

Honourable colleagues, some Members approached me and raised the matter of payments. I request the commissioners and the chairpersons of committees to meet tomorrow at 12.00 noon so that we can consider their issue.

For outreach activities: a capacity-building activity on agro-ecology hosted by Agroecology Learning Centre will take place on Friday, 28th November 2025. Members are scheduled to depart from their hotels at 8 a.m. A tour of Kapeeka Industrial Park in Nakaseke District is planned for Monday, 1 December 2025. We shall depart at 7:30 a.m., and breakfast will be taken at the park at 9:30 a.m. The visit to the Office of the Inspectorate of Government has been withdrawn.

Honourable members, we had the 20th meeting of the Bureau of Speakers on 14th November 2025 in Kampala. That meeting followed the meeting of Clerks that had taken place from 12-13 November 2025. The outcomes were that the next games would take place in Somalia. (*Applause*). This means that Somalia has taken the chair of the Speakers' Bureau.

I attended the 151st Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), accompanied by Hon Dr Abdulla Makame, representing the Members, Joyce Uloy, Senior Assistant Clerk, representing the clerks, and Ms Priscilla Amoding, representing the secretaries to assist me.

Honourable members, I have sad news for you. Some days ago, our Clerk, Mr Alex Obatre, lost his young brother and aunt on the same day, 14th November 2025. May their souls rest in eternal peace.

We also have guests in the public gallery this afternoon. We have a delegation of students and lecturers from the Faculty of Law, Kabale University, which is located in Kabale District in the western part of Uganda. They have come to observe the proceedings of the Sitting this afternoon. Please join me in welcoming them. (*Applause*)

We have more guests, the Ag. Executive Secretary of the Inter-University Council for East Africa, Professor Idris A. Rai (*Applause*) - and Professor Michael Mawa, Principal Quality Assurance and Qualifications Framework Officer. (*Applause*). These are our guests today.

The Speaker: There is a motion.

2.50

Ms Jacqueline Amongin (Uganda): Mr Speaker, I take this opportunity to commend you for the communication that you have given to this House. Being a Member of Parliament representing Uganda in the East African Legislative Assembly, I take this great opportunity to overwhelmingly welcome you to the Pearl of Africa, the Republic of Uganda. *Karibu sana.*

From your communication, I have sought it right to move a motion under Rule 30 of this House. You started by congratulating the newly elected leaders of the East African region, and recently, one of the great countries within the East African Community (EAC) held elections and a member of the Council of the EAC was re-elected to that particular office.

I, therefore, move a motion that this House officially, following your communication, congratulates HE Suluhu-

The Speaker: We have – Hon. Jacqueline, there is a point of procedure. We have to give him the Floor.

Dr Adbulla Makame Hasnuu (Tanzania): Mr Speaker, before we convene plenary business, it is procedural that we invoke the procedure to be here in Kampala. Therefore, before we start any other – even dealing with a motion – we have to justify our existence here in Kampala and not any other city or town in East Africa through the procedure of the House. I beg to move.

The Speaker: You are right. Let us proceed. You will bring the motion later.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Speaker: Chairperson, Committee on Legal, Rules and Privileges, please move the motion.

2.53

Dr Adbulla Makame Hasnuu (Tanzania): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am standing here on behalf of the Chairperson of the Committee on Legal, Rules and Privileges to move a motion for the

resolution of the Assembly to hold Sitings in the Republic of Uganda. I beg to move.

The Speaker: Seconders – (*Members rose.*) The entire House. You can proceed.

Dr Adbulla Makame Hasnuu (Tanzania): Mr Speaker, “*WHEREAS Article 55(1) of the Treaty provides that meetings of the Assembly shall be held at such times and places as the Assembly may appoint;*

AND WHEREAS Rule 2 of the Rules of Procedure provides that the seat of the Assembly shall be at Arusha in the United Republic of Tanzania;

AND WHEREAS Rule 10 (5) of the Rules of Procedure of the House provides that the meetings of the Assembly shall be held at such times and places as the Assembly may appoint and shall meet at least once in every year at Arusha in the United Republic of Tanzania and at a time to be determined by the Assembly;

NOW THEREFORE, this Assembly do resolve as follows;

1. *That pursuant to the provisions of Rule 10 (5) cited above, the Assembly shall hold Sitings in Kampala in the chamber of the Parliament of Uganda from today, Wednesday, 26 November up to Friday, 5 December 2025.”*

I beg to move.

The Speaker: Proceed.

Dr Makame: Thank you, Mr Speaker. There is no need for justification because the motion is self-explanatory. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you. Honourable members, the motion on the Floor is that this House do resolve to hold sittings in Kampala in the Republic of Uganda. The debate is open. Since – that is what I am doing. I now put the question that this House resolves to hold its Sittings in Kampala, in the Republic of Uganda.

(Question put and agreed to.)

The Speaker: Yes, Hon. Jacqueline Amongin.

2.56

Ms Jacqueline Amongin (Uganda): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I move a motion arising from the communication of the Speaker of this East African Legislative Assembly to formally congratulate Her Excellency *Mama* Suluhu, the President of the United Republic of Tanzania. I am not able to pronounce the other name very well, but you know our President.

This motion – I would have loved that – *Mama* Suluhu has been an inspiration to the young women in the world. She, being among the first African women to assume the office of the presidency, and the fact that she comes from within our region; since this is our first Sitting since the elections in Tanzania took place, it would be prudent for us to officially send her a congratulatory message. I beg to move under Rule 30 of our Rules of Procedure. Thank you.

The Speaker: Do you have seconders? *(Members rose.)* Hon. Makame – there are many. You can proceed.

Ms Amongin: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am one of those people who is very

passionate, especially when women rise to the top. It is a pride for those women who have never thought that they would ever assume any office. You know the history of Africa as a continent. The place of the woman had been in the kitchens. Therefore, when a woman of the African soil rises to the office of the presidency, I think all of us must celebrate – other factors held constant.

In the whole of Africa, at my age, I think I have only heard about Her Excellency Sirleaf Johnson from Liberia, West Africa, HE Joyce Banda from Malawi, and the only other that has followed is Samia Suluhu of the great United Republic of Tanzania. That is a big statement for young girls aspiring for higher offices in the world.

I think it is imperative that this House – the fact that she is also a member of our Council of the East African Community. *Mama* Suluhu has done quite a lot in her first term as the President of Tanzania that we need to applaud. The fact that she has reassumed that office is not a mean achievement, especially for a woman. This is because in most circumstances, the office of the President is expected to be only for – most especially – men. There are many stereotypes when a woman assumes such a big office.

Therefore, to me, it is a celebration because this is not just for us as the East African Community, but also for our children in Africa who aspire to these offices in future. Therefore, this being our first Sitting, in the Republic of Uganda, which happens to be one of the East African Community member states, and Her Excellency Suluhu being one of the

members of the East African Community with a high ranking –

When you look at the eight countries of the East African Community – we have eight member states – but with one female president. Please let us applaud the President of the United Republic of Tanzania. (*Applause*)

Therefore, it is a big statement not only to the community of the East African people but to the whole world. It is now upon us to congratulate the people of the United Republic of Tanzania in a special way; but also congratulate the President of the United Republic of Tanzania for the zeal and determination to make sure she is at the helm of the leadership of the East African Community as a region.

When you look at the curriculum vitae of the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, it is very rich, and when you look at her journey, it has not just started yesterday. It has been a step-by-step – a thousand miles starting with the first step. That is something that we have to emulate. As young people out there who watch her, whom she inspires to reach for – it may not necessarily be for the presidency, but for any other leadership position –

Therefore, Members of this East African Legislative Assembly, I humbly move a motion as one of the members of this Community for this House to officially congratulate and appreciate Her Excellency Suluhu for having been re-elected as the President of the United Republic of Tanzania. I beg to move. (*Applause*)

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Jacqueline.

3.03

Ms Mary Mugenyi (Uganda): Mr Speaker, whereas I stand to appreciate and congratulate the Hon. Jacqueline Amongin for this very important and timely motion, I would also like to say that this motion should have been given the substantial weight it deserves, by properly going on the Order Paper. This is so that Members can prepare themselves, do enough research, contemplate on the achievements of this great lady of East Africa, and come and make substantial contributions to this motion. When it comes on the Floor by surprise, I think that this Assembly has not given it the substance that it deserves.

That is not to say that it is not important to congratulate Her Excellency Samia Suluhu, but that we should really give it time, put it on the Order Paper, get ready, do research and contribute substantially. I beg to move.

I also take the opportunity to welcome colleagues to the Republic of Uganda, your home away from home. Uganda is always happy to have not only East Africans but also Africans and guests from all over the world. *Karibu*.

The Speaker: Hon. Makame, if you need to contribute, you know the rules. You raise your hand and I give you the Floor. You have the Floor.

3.05

Dr Adbulla Makame Hasnuu (Tanzania): Mr Speaker, having listened to the motion from my sister, Hon. Jacqueline Amongin, I would like to thank her for this timely motion. As explained and submitted by Hon. Mary Mugenyi, we will not do justice to this motion now.

I wanted to inform my sister, Hon. Mary Mugenyi – and now because I am on the Floor – that we can invoke Rule 30(c) which is – now this motion is open but before we debate it, we can adjourn the debate for another date so that it can come on the Order Paper and we allocate it sufficient time so that Members can contribute to it. I beg to move.

The Speaker: Bring a motion.

Dr Makame: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The motion is -

The Speaker: Have you been seconded?
(*Members rose*)

Dr Makame: Yes.

The Speaker: Yes, you are. Proceed.

Dr Adbulla Makame Hasnuu (Tanzania): The motion on the Floor is to adjourn the debate to congratulate Her Excellency Dr Samia Suluhu Hassan, the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, for winning the 2025 general elections to another date to be determined by the commission. I beg to move.

The Speaker: Hon. Makame, I think that I had not opened the debate. I would have maybe proposed the question, and we would have proceeded that way. Therefore, honourable members, if you allow me, honourable mover, I can propose the question, and then we will proceed with Hon. Makame's proposal.

3.09

Ms Jacqueline Amongin (Uganda): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I appreciate Hon. Mary Mugenyi and the Chairperson

of the General Purpose Committee, my Chair, for those proposals and the motion. However, I would love us to have a time frame. I would rather amend the motion that he has brought instead of saying, 'Until it is determined'. I propose that this motion be considered in the plenary sitting tomorrow. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you. We have a Commission meeting tomorrow. We will consider this and we will decide. How do we proceed now, Hon. Makame?

3.09

Dr Adbulla Makame Hasnuu (Tanzania): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am rising on a motion under Rule 30, motions without notice and Rule 30 (c), Motion for adjournment of debate. The motion, which is now on the Floor, that the debate for congratulating the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Her Excellency, President Samia Suluhu Hassan be adjourned until tomorrow or as may be determined by the Commission. Thank you.

The Speaker: You had seconders. Now, honourable members, let us -

3.10

Mr James Kakooza (Uganda): Mr Speaker, I want to -

The Speaker: Hon. James Kakooza, we have now -

Mr Kakooza: It is a procedural matter, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay, you have the Floor.

Mr James Kakooza (Uganda): For the record of the Hansard, if you are moving under Rule 33, I can read it verbatim. It says, “withdrawal of motions. A notice of motion may be withdrawn by the Member who gave the notice –” (*Interjection*)

Dr Makame: Mr Speaker, it is 30 (c), not 33.

The Speaker: He is on the Floor.

Mr Kakooza: I am on the Floor. If you want to withdraw 33(1). The headnote. I have the rules –

The Speaker: No, that is not what Hon. Makame –

Mr Kakooza: Mr Speaker, he wants to withdraw a motion under Rule 33 – (*Interjections*) – Can I be protected and I explain. The motion, which was on the Floor, was moved under Rule 30 without notice. Another motion was brought by the procedure brought by Hon. Mary Mugenyi.

If it has been accepted, the withdrawal of motions on the Floor of the House is under Rule 33, which says verbatim, “*a notice of a motion may be withdrawn by the Member who gave the notice, but notice of the same motion may be given again either by the same Member or by any other Member.*” Therefore, if you are moving to withdraw a motion and you are accepted, you go under Rule 33. You do not go back to Rule 30.

The Speaker: Honourable members, we are now losing a lot time. Let us proceed so that we can continue our proceedings. I give the Floor to Hon. George Odongo.

No, Hon. George Odongo, you can hold. I had Hon. Dr Blacks, who was there before you. Then you will follow. Try to be brief.

3.12

Dr Gerald Blacks Siranda (Uganda): Mr Speaker, the motion is not being withdrawn. We are only deferring the debate and it is properly articulated under Rule 30 (c). That is what we have done and I think Hon. Kakooza is coming with a different thing, contrary to what we are moving.

Hon. Kakooza is my coach. I find it difficult sometimes to put him on order because he is my coach but I think the right thing we are doing is that Hon. Makame has moved properly; only adjourned the debate under Rule 30 (c).

The Speaker: Thank you. Hon. George?

3.13

Mr George Stephen Odongo (Uganda): Mr Speaker, there is a difference between a motion and a debate. Once a motion has been moved and has been seconded, it becomes property of the House and once the debate has started, then subsequent intervention is only to adjourn the debate. Hon. Makame did that correctly when he said under Rule 30(c).

Therefore, Hon. Kakooza, hold your fire for now. The Hon. Dr Makame is right because he is trying to make use of the proposal that came from Hon. Mary. Can we just proceed as proposed by Hon. Makame? Thank you.

The Speaker: Honourable members, I now put the question.

(Question put and agreed to.)

(Debate adjourned.)

The Speaker: We proceed.

REPORT OF THE EALA WOMEN'S
CAUCUS ON THE CHALLENGES
FACED BY WOMEN IN CROSS-
BORDER TRADE IN THE EAC
REGION

Dr Makame: Mr Speaker, the Clerk skipped item three for laying of the paper.

The Speaker: Honourable Chairperson of the EALA Women's Caucus, move the motion.

3.14

Dr Anne Itto Leonardo (South Sudan): Mr Speaker. I beg to move a motion that the *(Interjection)* – it was already laid. I beg to move a motion that the report of the EALA Women's Caucus on the challenges faced by women in cross-border trade in the EAC region be adopted.

The Speaker: Seconders? *(Members rose_)* You are seconded. We can proceed.

Dr Itto: Thank you. Mr Speaker, I want to join my colleagues in thanking the Republic of Uganda for hosting us for the third time, counting from EALA IV. As always, we are looking forward to a good time and we are looking forward to the outreach programme, meeting the Ugandan people and seriously integrating in this region.

Please allow me to appreciate the incredible members of EALA Women's Caucus and in this, we include the HeForShe –

(Applause) – who successfully contributed to conducting these activities at the four border points and who today I am proudly representing in presenting this report to this august House.

The Speaker: You can now justify your motion. Did you justify it?

Dr Itto: I am reading the report.

The Speaker: Proceed.

Dr Itto: Introduction of the report

The East African Legislative Assembly Women Caucus was established –

The Speaker: Microphone, please.

Dr Itto: This is high for me. *(Dr. Itto moved to the dispatch box.)*

The East African Legislative Assembly Women's Caucus was established to champion gender equality and the empowerment of women in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community. Through its co-parliamentary functions, which include representation, legislation, and oversight, the caucus is committed to promoting gender sensitive governance and fostering an inclusive society in which women and men enjoy equal status and opportunities.

The caucus actively addresses gender disparities through strategic interventions aimed at ensuring equal access to opportunities, comprehensive protection against discrimination and increased participation of women in political, governance and economic spheres. In

addition, it advocates for the rights and welfare of vulnerable groups, including children, persons with disabilities, and the elderly.

In line with this objective, the EALA Women Caucus conducted an oversight mission from the 12th to the 13th of September 2025 at selected One-Stop Border Posts within the East African Community. The purpose of this activity was to assess the challenges faced by women engaged in cross-border trade and to identify policy and programmatic interventions that can enhance their participation and protection within the regional trading framework.

1.1. Background and Rationale

Women play a pivotal role in the economic landscape of the East African Community, particularly within the informal sectors such as agriculture, retail and artisanal arts. According to UNCTAD (2018), over 75 per cent of women traders operate informally, with women constituting the largest share of participants in informal cross-border trade. Their contributions are vital to local food security, employment generation, and the broader goals of regional integration and economic growth.

However, despite the commitments outlined in the treaty for the establishment of the East African Community, Customs Union and Common Market Protocols and the East African Gender Policy, access to formal financial services remains disproportionately low. Only 22 per cent of women entrepreneurs have access to bank loans compared to 37 per cent of their male counterparts.

Women traders continue to face a multitude of barriers, including limited access to markets due to inadequate infrastructure and bureaucratic procedures. Clearance delays at border posts disproportionately affect women, with up to 70 per cent experiencing extended processing times.

Additionally, gender-based violence and harassment at border crossings remains a significant concern, with 40 per cent of women traders reporting such encounters. Furthermore, many women lack access to crucial information regarding trade regulations, market prices, quality standards and border procedures. Lack of information can lead to exploitation, financial losses, and inability to capitalise on market opportunities.

Moreover, many women have limited formal education and business management skills, including financial literacy, marketing, and record keeping. These factors collectively hinder their ability to access credit, navigate complex market dynamics, and grow their businesses. Difficulties in accessing finance remain a major barrier for women traders primarily because they lack collateral, credit history, and awareness of available financial products.

Nevertheless, promising developments are emerging. Capacity building initiatives such as the East African Women in Trade Network have led to a 25 per cent increase in income among trained women traders. Trade facilitation measures, including the implementation of the Single Customs Territory, have reduced border-crossing times by 30 per cent. Technological advancements, particularly in mobile money, have further expanded financial

inclusion with a 45 per cent increase in women's mobile account ownership over five years.

These gains underscore the importance of sustained policy reforms, infrastructure investments, and targeted capacity development to meet the region's gender equality targets.

Gender-friendly initiatives such as Table Banking championed by Kenya's first lady have significantly contributed to women entrepreneurs' access to financial services. In addition, products such as the Group Investment Schemes offered by some commercial banks in Uganda have notably increased entrepreneurs' access to financial services without the traditional requirements such as collateral, business records, TIN numbers, etc.

The above positive developments in the financial sector have made significant contributions to the realisation of Articles 121 and 122 of the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community, which affirm the critical role of women in socioeconomic development.

2.0 Objectives of the field visit

Specifically, this oversight intended to:

- i. Review existing national programmes and institutional frameworks governing women's participation in cross-border trade.
- ii. Identify available opportunities and challenges affecting women traders at the major One-Stop Border Posts.
- iii. Enhance EAC's visibility and awareness through border community support.

3.0 Methodology

The oversight exercise utilised mixed participatory approaches, including site observations, stakeholder consultations, and desk review of relevant documents. This activity was conducted in two days from 12th to 13th of September 2025 – there is a mistake there – at three One-Stop Border Posts and a border point as follows:

- i. Namanga One-Stop Border Post, which is between Kenya and Tanzania;
- ii. The Gatuna-Katuna One-Stop Border Post, which is between Rwanda and Uganda;
- iii. Elegu-Nimule One-Stop Border Post, which is between Uganda and South Sudan; and
- iv. Kamvira-Gatuna border post, which is between DRC and Burundi.

We will correct that. Let me move on.

Members of the women's caucus were divided into the respective One-Stop Border Post and border point. Clerks accompanied each group.

In each of these border points, consultative meetings were held with ministers responsible for East African Affairs, trade, agriculture, revenue authorities, immigration, security agencies, border management officials, women cross-border traders associations, women traders and truck drivers. Information gathered was triangulated through interviews and desk reviews of EAC legal and policy instruments.

In addition, Her Excellency the Secretary-General, members of the EALA Women Caucus, EAC staff and other key

stakeholders undertook a community-focused corporate social responsibility initiative and this involves sanitary pads, baby wipes and soaps, which were distributed to female students and women traders at Namanga, demonstrating a commitment to community welfare.

4.0 Findings

4.1 Institutional frameworks and programs at the national levels of the four Partner States.

Findings from document review revealed that there is sufficient institutional framework and programmes in Partner States hosting the border points visited. Generally, they have aligned national frameworks with regional commitments on gender and women's empowerment as listed below.

Table 1 describes the different national institutional frameworks and programmes supporting women entrepreneurship. This table is six pages and since we have provided a document for you to look at instead of reading through, I will allow you to do that by yourself. So I will be moving to 4.2.

The Speaker: Sorry, excuse me.

Honourable members, we had insisted and agreed on summaries. With this, we will have to take one hour to read this summary. I suggest you take us directly to the common non-compliance issues, which – we need to know the issues that you have observed there so that we can handle them together.

The other things we have to read ourselves. Otherwise, we will – if you are willing to do this, you will go to page 14 and then we will maybe save time and give a chance to others who will follow.

Dr Itto: Thank you for your guidance. I was just about to do that -

The Speaker: Thank you.

Dr Itto: This is the first-ever report presented by the Women Caucus, and the issue is not just related to women – I think it is common – and we are really for the first time we are looking at these issues, I thought there was a need for details. Though of course, I tried to skip some of the sections because you have the report, but we thought it was very important to give these details.

I will skip that. I go to 4.2, which is related to goods traded across the borders and is presented in the table available for you.

4.3 is about initiatives supporting women cross-border traders, and this report divides the initiatives into two.

4.3.1 Initiative by EAC

From the EAC, the initiative that we, the Women Caucus, found important was the One-Stop Border Posts, which we thought – the establishment of One-Stop Border Posts at Nimule, Eregu, Namanga, and Gatuna/Katuna, has been a cornerstone of East Africa's trade facilitation strategy by bringing together officials from adjacent Partner States under one roof. I think that the one-stop border works.

The second is simplified procedures and regime and the importance of this regime is that it helps to reduce the time taken for processing goods and papers.

Number three is the Single Customs Platform. This was also very important in the sense that all passenger documents are put on this document so that both sides can sit together and clear very quickly, either goods or people moving across the border. Number four is the Joint Border Committee. Correction. It is not post, but the Joint Border Committee. The Joint Border Committee meets monthly, which is a mechanism for coordination and resolution of disputes. This is very significant because it offers an opportunity for stakeholders and particularly women, to participate in governance and administration of the borders.

Apart from the East African-related initiative, there are bilateral initiatives, and it is in 4.3.2. You can read that for yourself. It goes up to page 13.

4.4 is very important for you to know; read it through. There are common non-compliance issues. Through stakeholders' consultation, the caucus learned that there are serious compliance issues affecting women cross-border traders. The most frequently cited issues were smuggling, which is on page 14, through porous borders.

A significant number of traders attempt to bypass the official border points, opting for the numerous and often dangerous unofficial or un-gazetted routes. This is very important for women because, in the end, they are not only cheated, they may also fall into physical danger.

Number two is the absence of official commercial transaction documents. Many of the informal traders very often do not keep receipts, do not have invoices, and transport documents. Very often, no TIN numbers and this actually works to delay the passing through of goods; it may even earn penalties and sometimes they lose their goods totally.

Number three is fragmented movement and concealment of tactics. Just because most informal traders are not aware of the single simplified trade regime, some of them believe taxes are very high. Instead of going through the normal procedure, they decide to divide their goods and make repeated crossovers to appear as if they are taking personal goods and sometimes, of course, they fall victim.

Number four is non-compliance with the certificate of origin requirements. There are many issues of compliance among small-scale traders.

1.5 Challenges facing women traders at border posts. There are many; I will not go into details.

1. Exploitation by middlemen
2. Security and social protection. That is an issue.
3. Misconception about taxation. People think taxes are high and yet they do not know.
4. Lack of access to and use of relevant trade documents and information.
5. Reluctance to engage directly with customs officers because they are

afraid of the customs officers, and very often, they believe they are cheated, but also, there are many agents around the customs office who misinform them, making them believe that if they use these agents, they may escape taxes and therefore pay less, but of course, they end up paying more than double.

6. Limited infrastructure and facilities;
7. Financial constraints. This is very important because at the Elegu side, we found that the only bank that existed was closed because of frequent floods. There are also some very opportunistic financial agents who came in. The problem with these people is the interest rate ranges from 10 to 20 per cent. Very often, the women are forced to pay daily or even weekly, making them almost like financial slaves because they use what should be used for eating for paying these very unscrupulous lenders.
8. Capacity gaps;
9. Governance and participation;
10. Lack of formal and suitable identification was also an issue. The cross-border women traders need to move around two, three or four times a day across the border to the different markets. What happens is, once they get a pass and it is full, they will then be forced to bribe somebody to give them another one. Because the national IDs sometimes do not work and it is quite an issue, women fall victim because of the need to have a long-term ID that helps them to cross the borders very easily and safely; and

11. Lack of information; it is very serious.

I will let you read point 4.5. In the interest of time, I will go to observations because they summarise all that we have seen at each border point but they are also related to either security, taxation or crossing borders. So, observations are on page 22. Can we move to page 22?

The Caucus commends the efforts by government agencies and other stakeholders in facilitating smooth cross-border trade, reflecting and growing commitment to inclusive economic participation and regional integration. In addition, the Caucus commends the effort of women cross-border traders in organising themselves and participating in mechanisms and initiatives intended to increase their participation in the administration of border posts.

1. Despite efforts to establish frameworks such as the Simplified Trade Regimes and Joint Border Committees, significant regulatory, procedural and bureaucratic hurdles persist. Trading procedures remain complex and intimidating for informal women traders, while information gaps on trade policies and customs processes expose them to exploitation by corrupt officials and brokers;
2. Further compounding these challenges are lack of harmonised customs and trade institutional frameworks among Partner States, including disparities in road user charges, customs procedures and standards. These inconsistencies create confusion, elevate business costs and subject women traders to unofficial fees, multiple taxation points, and arbitrary charges, undermining

- profitability and discouraging formal trade participation;
3. There are ongoing efforts by the Council of Ministers to eliminate Non-Tariff Barriers between Partner States. However, there are still existing Non-Tariff Barriers which limit trade performance;
 4. Financial constraints remain a major barrier to women participation in cross-border trade. Many women traders lack access to financial services due to the absence of collateral and unavailability of banking services at the border post. This limits their ability to expand or formalise their businesses;
 5. Infrastructure at border markets is often inadequate and gender-insensitive. Many of these infrastructures are insecure, unhygienic and in bad condition. There is unreliable water supply at One-Stop Border Posts which undermines hygiene and food safety, while the absence of childcare facilities forces women to bring their children to markets, reducing productivity and safety. Poor storage facilities, including cold storage, make it difficult for women to keep their goods safe and the required quality standards, while poor lighting increases the risk of theft, harassment, and gender-based violence, particularly for women trading during early and late hours;
 6. Harassment and gender-based violence by officials and security personnel are common, prompting some women to use unofficial *panya* routes that exposes them to robbery, assaults, and trafficking;
 7. Exploitation by middlemen persists due to limited awareness of rights and trading procedures. Many traders rely on costly and sometimes misleading intermediaries to navigate procedures, exacerbating marginalisation;
 8. Information and capacity gaps further hinder women's participation in cross-border trade. Low levels of formal education, limited digital and financial literacy, and language barriers combined with lack of relevant information prevent effective engagement with trade systems;
 9. The lack of targeted training on customs procedures, business management, financial planning and legal rights remains a critical gap. Moreover, limited access to real-time update on border regulations, market prices and trade opportunities impairs decision-making and responsiveness to changing conditions. Addressing these multifaceted challenges is essential to unlocking the full potential of women traders in cross-border trade;
 10. Additionally, most border posts do not operate on a 24-hour basis, restricting trade flow and limiting opportunities for women who rely on flexible trading schedules.

I will go to the recommendations, which are on page 23.

Recommendations

In view of the foregoing, the Caucus urges the Assembly to adopt the following recommendations:

1. Urge the Council of Ministers to prioritise the completion of the One-Stop Border Post on the Nimule side of the Nimule-Elegu border and initiate the construction of the - this is One-Stop Border Post I cannot pronounce the name – Kamvira-Gatumba One-Stop Border Post, and ensure they include infrastructure facilities and services that are gender-sensitive and ensure effective participation of women in cross-border trade;
2. Urge the Council of Ministers to urge Partner States to support capacity building programmes targeting women and youth involved in trade;
3. Urge the Council of Ministers to urge the Republic of South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo to expedite the domestication of East African laws, and ensure they are fully integrated into the Single Customs Territory;
4. Urge the Council of Ministers to direct the Secretariat to conduct extensive sensitisation and training programmes to create awareness on customs border requirements and procedures, enhance digital and financial literacy, and promote business formalisation;
5. Urge the Council of Ministers to urge Partner States to harmonise customs and clearance procedures, sanitary and phytosanitary standards, and quality standards between Partner States to reduce harassment, overcharging and delays;
6. Urge the Council of Ministers to urge Partner States to direct customs offices at One-Stop Border Posts to optimise staffing at peak hours or surge capacity to reduce long queues and excessive processing times;
7. Urge the Council of Ministers to urge Partner States to ensure availability of adequate public services such as schools, health facilities, daycare centres, space for lactating mothers, financial institutions and hygienic toilets at border posts to ensure affordable services for border communities;
8. Urge the Council of Ministers to direct the East African Community Secretariat to ensure establishment of anonymous, confidential and accessible harassment reporting toll-free hotlines or secure suggestions boxes at every border point, managed by an independent or trusted body, to enable traders to report incidences of harassment, corruption and other misconduct without fear of retaliation;
9. Urge the Council of Ministers to direct the East African Community Secretariat to consider the following as minimum requirements for infrastructure, facilities and services at all One-Stop Border Posts in the East African Community. These include:
 - a) Daycare centres and nursery schools;
 - b) Rooms for lactating mothers;
 - c) Clean and hygienic toilets and

- washrooms;
 - d) Modern markets;
 - e) Women desks within the One-Stop Border Posts to cater for the needs of women, so that they can report on things that are not favouring them;
 - f) Trade information desk or office;
 - g) Hospitals with maternity facilities;
 - h) Schools;
 - i) Banking facilities;
 - j) Storage facilities, including cold storage for perishables;
 - k) Anonymous confidential harassment/corruption/misconduct reporting toll-free hotlines;
 - l) Holding grounds for animals;
 - m) Tourism desk.
10. Urge the Council of Ministers to urge Partner States to ensure easy movement for women cross-border traders by recognising photo identity cards for members of women cross-border traders associations or cooperatives within a 15-kilometre radius, as provided by East African Community laws.

Acknowledgement

The East African Legislative Assembly Women Caucus extends sincere appreciation to the Development Partners, the East African Community Secretariat which funded the activity, Partner States, border authorities and the women cross-border traders' associations for their active engagement and cooperation during the oversight mission.

Special gratitude goes to the ministries responsible for East African Affairs, trade, gender, and security in the Partner

States for facilitating field visits and helping in the stakeholder dialogues. This report reflects collective efforts towards achieving inclusive and gender responsive regional integration. We thank all of you for making it possible for us to report here. This is our first time to do this report.

We thank the Clerk and the Rt Honourable Speaker for giving us this special time to be able to present the report to this august House. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Dr Itto for this good report. I will immediately proceed. The motion on the Floor is that the report of the EALA Women's Caucus on the challenges faced by women in cross-border trade in EAC region be adopted. We open the debate. This is good; even men are supporting debate on this motion. We will start with Hon. Makame, then Hon. Clement, Hon. Ntangiza, Hon. George, Hon. Francoise, Hon. Gladness and Hon. Dr Woda in that order. Please give me the list.

3.54

Dr Abdulla Hasnuu Makame (Tanzania): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for allowing or granting me this space to contribute to this very important motion and report on the Floor generated by the women's Caucus of the House. I would like to thank this Caucus for undertaking this important task of visiting the borders to identify the challenges that are facing the females while conducting cross-border trade. As alluded to by the chairperson of the caucus, this does not only affect the females but extends to all informal traders who are conducting trade across the borders.

Mr Speaker, from the presentation by the chairperson of the women's Caucus, it is very clear that the issue of sensitisation to the stakeholders, specifically the traders and border agencies, is still wanting. This is because of the challenges which were raised. You will note the issue of breaking the bulk that was presented; the issue of documentation and using *panya* routes. These are all matters that imply or are a clear indication that there is an issue of sensitisation.

If a trader intends to cross the border with goods that originate from the EAC Partner States and is avoiding the border or debulking, yet these goods attract zero rates, we need to do more on this. It means that we have not done the sensitisation that is required. Our people are not benefiting much from integration, yet the facilities that have been provided in the policy.

For that reason, it would have been very useful for this motion if the Council was here. But now, for reasons that are known to us, the Council will be having a meeting in preparation for an activity of the Heads of State. Usually, business for the Heads of State takes priority and we understand that. However, I would like that we forward this report and the recommendations to the Council, so that we act on the recommendations appropriately.

Mr Speaker, I do not want to take up much time on the Floor because I see you have a very long list. I beg to move and conclude here. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Makame. Honourable members, let us be brief because we have two more items on the agenda.

3.59

Mr Clément Musangabatware (Rwanda): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for granting me this opportunity to support this motion on the challenges faced by women in cross-border trade within our region. First and foremost, I would like to commend the Executive Committee of the Women Caucus, all members of the Caucus, HeForShe and all Members of Parliament. They compiled a great report on this item.

Women are key drivers of trade and economic growth in the EAC. They contribute significantly in a number of sectors like industrial, banking and informal sector trade, among others. Besides the remarkable work they are doing, as it was mentioned by the presenter, they face a number of barriers in trade such as corruption, gender-based violence and exploitation. They are not even familiar with bank documents and procedures as well.

To underscore the importance of women in cross-border trade, allow me to use a quote from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). "Cross-border trade plays a crucial role in economic growth and development. Women constitute a significant portion of cross-border traders engaging in small-scale importation, exportation and informal trade.

According to various sources, between 70 per cent and 80 per cent of informal cross-border traders in Africa are women. This portion is very important and contributes significantly to the economic growth of our Community -

The Speaker: Excuse me, Hon. Makame, you have to be in order. Why are moving all the time from place to place, when you know that it is not allowed? *(Laughter)* Please return to your seat and stay there. You can proceed.

Mr Musangabatware: Mr Speaker and honourable members, as EALA, we should give justice to this motion. EALA should champion policies that enhance gender equality and women's economic empowerment. Supporting this motion is investing in regional prosperity, women empowerment and social transformation. With these few remarks, I declare again that I support this motion. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Clement. Who is the next? Hon. George Odongo.

4.03

Mr George Stephen Odongo (Uganda): Thank you, Mr Speaker. At the beginning, when the Caucus was being formed, there were those doubting Thomases. Today, you have your answer.

The report has spoken for itself and reinforced the argument that we have always been making that we cannot integrate without integrating women. Once the women get integrated, the EAC will even be more integrated. Our integration is driven by trade within the cross-border areas, which is mainly done by women.

This report has amplified some of the findings that the Committee on Trade and Investment has done before, but this time, with very powerful voices. There are existing frameworks that facilitate trade across our borders and under the Simplified Trade Regime, any goods up to about \$2,000 are not subject to any taxes.

But this information is not available to the women who are participating in this trade.

How I wish the members of our Council were here because we are always telling them that one very powerful function of this Assembly is to do sensitisation because without it, most of our people feel they are left out. This is a people-centred integration, so we need to get out of our boardrooms and engage the actual East Africans that are making the Community work. So, this report should be translated into some action by the Council of Ministers but importantly, by the Department of Trade of the EAC Secretariat in identifying some of those critical areas that require our intervention.

Mr Speaker, maybe we need to do this more. My call is for us to support the Women's Caucus extensively and thank those agencies and organisations that supported this Women's Caucus activity. I call upon all the people out there who want to see the EAC integrate that the women are making the right decisions at the moment and are trying to do their best, and the Assembly is 100 per cent behind them.

So, I support the report and propose that we get specific recommendations of this report; maybe the Women's Caucus working together with the Committee of Trade. We can identify specific recommendations and then, again, process them very strongly and see how we can engage with the Council of Ministers to do something.

We can start with some cross-border OSBPs - We can start with this specific OSBPs. Recently, I had the privilege to travel with our technical team of the

Secretariat that was mapping out Uganda-Congo OSBPs and I moved from Ntoroko up to the other side of the DRC.

One of the things that we identified is that the women traders have some unique – In order for you to facilitate trade, particularly the participation of women, you need to identify their unique requirements and you find that these OSBPs, I think during the time of their design, did not anticipate or envisage some of those.

Therefore, we requested that in the new ones that they are trying to do now, they should integrate these recommendations that the women's caucus has identified. Those should have them, but also for those ones that the women's caucus has already visited, that have so many women doing business, it is not asking too much for us to put in some resources to ensure that we put infrastructure that can support the women.

Thank you so much, Mr Speaker and I support the report.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. George. Who is the next? No, we are proceeding. Is it procedure?

Ms Uwumukiza: I am the one to follow, Mr Speaker. *(A Member rose)*

The Speaker: No, which motion? Yes, you can move it.

MOTION FOR CLOSURE OF DEBATE

4.08

Dr Gerald Blacks Siranda (Republic of Uganda): Mr Speaker, we all support this debate and idea. You can see that all of us

want to speak. I now move a motion under Rule 48 that you put the question for us to adopt, and then we close this debate. We all support it.

The Speaker: Do you have seconders?

Dr Siranda: I do. *(Members rose)*

(Seconded by Hon. Dr. Hasnuu Makame, Hon. David ole Sankok, Dr. Saidi Kibeya and Hon. Amb. Dr. Mathia Harebamungu)

The Speaker: Oh, very good. You are seconded. Honourable members, I now put the question that those supporting this motion that we stop the debate here say 'aye'. Those against say 'nay'.

(Question to close debate put and agreed to.)

Amb. Fatuma Ndagiza (Republic of Rwanda): Procedure, Right Honourable.

The Speaker: Honourable members, what we have to do is to put the question for the report to be adopted.

I now put the question that the report of the EALA Women Caucus on the challenges faced by women in cross-border trade in the EAC region be adopted.

(Question put and agreed to.)

(Report adopted.)

The Speaker: We will go now to the next item on the Order Paper.

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION OF
THE ASSEMBLY COMMENDING
THE SECTORAL COUNCIL
ON EDUCATION, SCIENCE,
TECHNOLOGY, CULTURE AND
SPORTS (SCESTCS) ON THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF EAST
AFRICAN COMMON HIGHER
EDUCATION AREA (EACHEA)

Dr Woda Jago (South Sudan): Procedure, Rt Hon. Speaker. You have put the question but the Mover did not even conclude on the responses. That is the practice, Mr Speaker so procedurally, we are not moving rightly.

The Speaker: But the debate has been closed.

Dr Woda Jago (South Sudan): She can respond and then the motion be put, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: On which rule? Once the debate is closed, it is closed. Let us proceed.

We were on item number five and I now call Hon. Dr Makame to move the motion.

4.14

Dr Abdulla Hasnuu Makame (Tanzania): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I am rising -

Amb. Ndingiza: Point of procedure, Mr Speaker. There is an issue that was raised by hon. Dr Woda that our Chairperson of the Women Caucus never had time to respond. Allow her - because this is procedural - before we go to another item. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, hon. Sankok.

Mr Sankok: Thank you very much, Rt Hon. Speaker. The procedure of this House is that after the Members have contributed, the mover of the motion must be called to reply. Therefore, there was an opportunity for Dr Anne Itto to come to the Floor of the House and reply on the motion. Otherwise, when it goes to the HANSARD without any reply, I think it will not be procedural. Thank you, Rt Hon. Speaker.

The Speaker: I can – I think you ...

Mr Ngole: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Who is raising a point if order? I think that -

Mr Ngole: Mr Speaker, I need your guidance. Is it in order that once the Speaker has made a decision, a Member can stand up and raise another issue in respect of what has already been decided by the Speaker of this House? Is it in order?

The Speaker: Honourable Members, as the Speaker, I have already ruled and I will not go back. If we go to Article 48(2), *“If the question of closure is agreed by a majority, the motion which was being discussed when the closure motion was moved shall be put immediately without further discussion.”* Let us proceed, I have given the floor to Dr Makame.

4.15

Dr Abdulla Hasnuu Makame (Tanzania): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I am rising here to move a motion to commend the Sectoral Council on Education, Science, Technology, Culture

and Sports sector on the establishment of the East African Common Higher Education Area. This motion is being moved under Articles 5, 9, 16, 49, 59, 76, 102, 103, 104, 119 of the Treaty and Rule 26 of the Rules of Procedure of the House. I beg to move, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Seconders? (Members rose_)

(Seconded by Hon. David ole Sankok,
Hon. Amb. Dr. Mathias Harebamungu,
Hon. Aisha Nyiramana, Hon. Amb.
Fatuma Ndongiza)

You can proceed.

Dr Makame: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Before I move the motion, you already recognised the presence of the Executive Secretary of the Inter-University Council of East Africa, Prof. Idris Rai and Prof. Mawa who are here from the Inter-University Council of East Africa to listen to this motion as key stakeholders in the sector of higher education. We really thank them for making time to be with us here today.

“WHEREAS Articles 5, 76 and 104 of the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community enjoin Partner States to promote and facilitate free movement of persons, labour, services, and right of establishment and residence through the implementation of the EAC Common Market that all Partner States enjoined via the Common Market Protocol since July 2010 and;

COGNISANT that education is a fundamental pillar in the realisation of the

objectives of the Community, particularly in building a skilled, competitive and innovative human resource base for sustainable development as envisaged by Chapter 16 of the Treaty for Establishment of the EAC vide Articles 102 and 103;

APPRECIATING the commendable decision of the Sectoral Council on Education, Science, Technology, Culture and Sports to establish the East African Common Higher Education Area, which is a critical step towards harmonisation, mutual recognition of qualifications and mobility of students and academic staff within the region as envisaged by Articles 10, 11 and 47 of the Common Market Protocol;

FURTHER APPRECIATING the Kampala ministerial communique of the First Ministerial Conference of the East African Common Higher Education Area, held in Kampala on 11 September 2025, and;

NOTING that higher education builds on the input from the lower education system and that harmonisation of curricula, standards and quality assurances at both the middle and primary education levels is equally vital as they form the input into the tertiary or higher education, and;

CONSCIOUS that the desired realisation of the EAC Common Market will become a reality only if other sectoral councils emulate the positive initiative of undertaking harmonisation and approximation measures in their respective dockets under their mandate;

NOW THEREFORE, this Assembly resolves to:

1. *Commend the Sectoral Council on Education, Science, Technology and Sports for initiating the East African Common Higher Education Area that was ably coordinated by the Inter-University Council of East Africa, that was ably coordinated by the IUCEA and;*
2. *Urge the Council of Ministers to ensure effective and timely implementation of this framework through the Inter-University Council of East Africa and other relevant organs and institutions;*
3. *Implore the Sectoral Council on Education, Science, Technology and Sports to equally prioritise approximation and harmonisation of both primary and secondary curricula and standards across the region so as to have a robust East African Common Higher Education Area;*
4. *Call upon other sectoral councils within the EAC to emulate this initiative through adopting common sectoral approaches and frameworks that would facilitate achievement of the crucial steps of the EAC integration as envisaged under Article 5 of the Treaty;*
5. *Urge the Council of Ministers to heighten efforts of implementation of the EAC Common Market Protocol, especially through implementation of Articles 50 and 51, that envisage monitoring and evaluation of the Common Market and issuance of activation of the regulation directives and decisions respectively."*

Mr Speaker, I beg to move. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Dr Makame. Have you justified?

Dr Makame: Mr Speaker, as the motion is very straightforward, I will not take much time to justify. Allow me just two minutes to do that. I would like to thank my brother, Hon. Musangabatware for seconding, and the entire House. This action of having the higher education area comes from the Common Market Protocol and the Treaty.

However, what is not written in the motion is that the Summit of the Heads of State took a decision in 2017 to have a higher education area and the Sectoral Council for Education had a ministerial conference and issued a communique this September. Much as it took time, they say, better late than never. Mr Speaker, it is very clear that this Sectoral Council for Higher Education is very keen to implement the protocols and decisions in their sector to achieve integration and as prayed in the resolutions, we should have other sectoral councils doing the same harmonisation and approximation of laws and all other requirements in the protocols we have in the Community.

Now that this sectoral council is setting the pace, the other sectoral councils have to come in. You will very much appreciate, Mr Speaker, that we have so much to do in the integration. Earlier, we had the Women Caucus report also highlighting very important issues of sensitisation. Mr Speaker, let me end here. Thank you very much for this opportunity and I beg to submit. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Makame. Honourable Members, the motion on the Floor is that the Assembly do resolve to commend the Sectoral Council on Education, Science, Technology, Culture, and Sports on establishment of the East African Common Higher Education Area.

Debate is open and we will start with your seconder who is Hon. Musangabatware Clement. After Hon. Musangabatware – my Clerks, please give me the list. Hon. Clement, you can proceed. I hope that the Clerks have listed the Members.

4.25

Mr Clement Musangabatware (Rwanda): Mr Speaker, thank you very much for granting me this opportunity to second a motion moved by Dr Makame, a motion to commend the Sectoral Council on Education, Science, Technology, Culture and Sports on the establishment of the East African Common Higher Education Area.

It is very important to harmonise education. Harmonisation enhances mobility of students, lecturers, and researchers across Partner States. It creates a seamless academic space, making it easier for learners to pursue education everywhere within the Community. It strengthens the EAC's global competitiveness as a knowledge-based region.

The second benefit is a mutual recognition of qualifications. It ensures that degrees and diplomas issued in one Partner State are automatically recognised by other Partner States.

It removes barriers faced by graduates seeking employment or further studies

within the Community. It promotes trust in academic systems across the entire region. Mr Speaker, it also contributes to human capital and economic transformation.

Lastly, this motion promotes opportunity, regional identity and long-term transformation. I beg to submit, Mr Speaker and declare that I support this motion as the seconder.

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Clement, the seconder. After you, the list I have has Hon. Kachwamba, Hon. Maina, Hon. Falhada, Hon. Gladness, Hon. Dr Aisha, Hon. Sankok, Hon. Saidi Kibeya, Hon. Mathias. That is the list that I have, so, we will go to the next; Hon. Kachwamba.

Please be brief, as we have a good number of Members who want to contribute.

4.28

Mr Ansar Abubakar Kachwamba (Tanzania): Mr Speaker, I would like, first of all, to extend my gratitude to you for allowing me to debate on this motion before the House.

Similarly, special gratitude goes to Al Haji Dr Makame for moving the motion.

However, all the appreciation, recognition and credit should go to IUCEA. Why? Because of the central role they played in developing the policy tools and instruments.

Mr Speaker, if we were to draw a pie chart on the pillars of integration, a bigger portion of the chart – 60 per cent – will go to the Common Market Protocol. Two major objectives of the Common Market Protocol are, one, free movement

of people, goods, services, and capital and the second one is harmonisation of policies and regulations. These two major objectives are found in the establishment of this higher education area.

In another sense, it means that if this higher education area is enacted, we will not use a lot of effort to make sure that we are vividly graphic as a Community. That means our observability will be obvious through the enactment of this higher education area.

Mr Speaker, there is some confusion. The masses at the grassroots interpret the East African Community as EALA and employment. Why? It is because that is where we are visible. For example, the elections in Somalia and Uganda are what catch the attention of the media. So, people think that EAC is about EALA and employment. This is not true. These are not objectives of the EAC. These are just drivers to propel the objectives of the East African Community.

Now, what next? Suppose we are creating a human being – I will tell you why. I know a committed Catholic like Hon. Nkurunziza will say that I am blaspheming – No, I mean a robotic human being. I do not mean the real human being. Now we have created the brain. We still have not created the limbs, the legs, and other organs. So, we have a serious problem now to harmonise all other sectors in order for this enactment to work out.

I know of my colleague in Tanzania, one of the famous researchers, a guru in research, who has 19 children. I do not know how many wives, but he has 19 children. Suppose he pops up at the border with

his family and he is moving to Makerere University after getting employment. That means you will have to harmonise –

The Speaker: Hon. Kachwamba, did you verify that he has 19 children?

Mr Kachwamba: Yes, those are very few children in Tanzania. Yes, I can verify. My father had 40. Thank you for – So, my point is that we shall have to harmonise the free movement of people at the border so that people can cross without many conditions.

Similarly, we shall have to harmonise the calling tariffs. The father in Dodoma will have to call daily and that means the call tariff will have to go down.

Similarly, we will have to harmonise the retirement benefits, health insurance, and all other things. However, the punishment comes when it comes to the salary, where we have a serious problem.

The exchange rate is a punishment. Mr Speaker, if you tell Members of this House that you are going to pay them \$200 as transport back home, the first thing they will do is, everyone will pick his cell phone from his pocket and straight away go to the calculator and try to convert those US dollars into their local currency. We have eight local currencies in one Community. Therefore, my prayer is that these things should go as a body. We should not harmonise only one area because it will not work. Let us work and fast-track the single currency issue.

Lastly, I support the motion. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon Kachwamba.

4.34

Mr Godfrey Maina Mwangi (Kenya):
Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I rise on a joke that has been said, that I will not reach this because of my height (*Laughter*) Thank you for this opportunity. I want to first congratulate the Hon. Makame for pushing this motion together with Hon. Clement. I declare that I fully support it.

Other than the recommendations that have been given by honourable members that we are going to ensure that people can have what you would call recognition of education qualifications, this particular motion will also help us in terms of ensuring that we have harmonised social cultures, political systems, and economic values that we hold together. Education is a key driver towards building cohesive and harmonised societies.

Mr Speaker, when we - and it is not a matter of if; it is a matter of when – when we harmonise and creation of higher education areas such as the one that is being pushed by the Hon. Makame, we are going to harmonise our social values; we are going to harmonise even our economic systems.

Mr Speaker, you realise one of the barriers and hurdles that are pushing back our integration process is that our value systems around the economy and social systems of the countries in our region are yet to be harmonised.

I believe education serves as a key driver to harmonise our values and our belief systems around the economics and the social aspirations of our people.

I challenge the Hon. Makame to push this particular motion to become a law. And you have my full support so that we can have or we can push, progressively, the harmonisation of this area from the legal point of view, because with a motion, we are just urging. So, I would want us to anchor this in law, Hon. Makame, and I believe each one of us here is going to support us or to support you when you push this particular motion or this particular issue into legislation that can govern our region.

Mr Speaker, I come from the understanding that we have been told that in the next few years, the biggest population in the world will come from Africa. I believe East Africa, being a very stable region compared to other regions of Africa, you can be sure that the biggest percentage of Africans will be in this region.

That tells us that it is time that we created new opportunities and created new frontiers of opportunities for our people. You and I understand that the biggest percentage of the population in our region is young people. So, for us to manage our political issues within our respective partner states and even within the region, we must create opportunities for our young people.

I always joke – because I come from an urban area in my country – I always tell people in my area that when the Government of my country comes to speak about bonuses of tea, coffee or sugarcane, when they come to my town of Thika, they don't speak about bonuses of tea and coffee. The only bonus we understand in my town is the bonus of jobs. So, when we create opportunities, like the ones the Hon.

Makame aspires to create through this particular motion, we must put jobs at the centre of our legislation. We must put jobs at the centre of motions and every other policy and legal proposals that we seek to create within the East African Region.

So, Mr Speaker, I know this particular motion seeks to create jobs for our people so that now when I am in my country Kenya, I can start thinking of earning a job in Burundi. I can start thinking of earning a job in the United Republic of Tanzania. That should be the driver of these motions and the legislation that we are creating in this August House.

Mr Speaker, I fully stand to support this motion because it is a motion for creating jobs, it's a motion of creating new frontiers of opportunity for the young people in the East African region. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. The next is Hon. Falhada.

4.39

Mr Falhada Dekow Iman (Kenya): Mr Speaker, thank you, for giving me the opportunity. I stand to support the motion moved by my brother, the Hon. Makame, seconded by the Hon. Clement.

Mr Speaker, the reason I support this initiative is that this is not just a milestone for the education sector, it is a bold statement for our collective ambitions, as a Community. It also signals our readiness to harmonise our academic system to promote the free movement of learners, professional positions in East Africa as a globally competitive knowledge hub.

Mr Speaker, education is the backbone of any prosperous region. By creating this institution, we are setting the foundation for, one, the mutual recognition of academic qualifications, and two, standardised quality assurance systems, and the integrated mobility of students, lecturers and researchers across the Partner States. This is how we build a truly integrated East Africa, by not just opening our borders but by opening minds. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Falhada, for being brief and giving a chance to others to contribute. Now, let us have the Hon. Gladys.

4.41

Dr Gladness Ladislaus Salema (Tanzania): Thank you so much, Mr Speaker. I also support the motion, and coming from an academic background, I think this is a very important motion that we, as Members of Parliament, have to push because, for a long time, we have been trapped in what we call academic protectionism within the region. That is, even if we collaborate or try to cooperate, at the back and deep down, you see everyone trying to protect. So, I think this is a very topical motion, which will support us to have talent sharing instead of talent draining, where we will reach a point and accept our own talent.

However, I think this is a very important motion because it is going to unlock the potential that we have in our regional value chains. Why am I saying that? With this motion, having this, we can say this is the area in which we are harmonised, or this is an area where we recognise, but at the same time, we prioritise what we

think is the right skill set for our region to specialise in. So, I see the opportunity of specialisation and removing, or I can say, minimising overlaps. As you go across the region now, each university will have the same programmes, although we have comparative and competitive advantages, which are different within the region. For example, in Zanzibar, we can say that this region will specialise in marine sciences because of their comparative and competitive advantages; we are really going to benefit from it. But at the same time, we can say that Uganda can specialise in the agriculture skills set. So, I see this as a very topical motion that is going to unlock even our regional value chains, which are not speaking to each other and are not even well established.

Therefore, having these skills development, which is kind of being acceptable and prioritised across the region, and I need to emphasise the word “prioritisation” because if we are not going to prioritise based on the needs of the regional market, then we are not going to see the benefit of this particular motion.

It is until we prioritise and identify where we want to see this region at, let’s say, according to the vision 2050, what are the skill sets? What are the regional value chains that we think really need to be strengthened, and we develop our capacities in those particular areas to be able to benefit from this particular motion that we intend to pass.

But at the same time, I think it is high time now the East African - what can I say - experts or we say “our youth” because this is mainly going to address those - it will benefit the ones that are still going

for their university or college studies because they are still developing their skill set - is the issue of uh intellectual identity because currently we cannot easily identify ourselves. So, having this particular motion - and I really urge not only the Council of Ministers but also the actors to make sure that we really look at it at a very strategic point. So, that is what I would say; it is really topical and quite important for our region at this particular time. And in that case, I support this particular motion. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Dr Gladness. We now give the Floor to Dr Aisha.

4.45

Ms Aisha Nyiramana (Rwanda):

Thank you, Mr Speaker, for giving me this opportunity. I would like to first of all congratulate Hon. Makame, on this interesting motion.

Mr Speaker, we all know that this economy of serving in a developed country is not only linked to research and innovation but also to knowledge creation.

And why we are looking at the East African Community is because we cannot be globally competitive without having universities, which are together; today, we are fragmented. So, Mr Speaker, this motion on the common education area is very important.

We are talking about people who have been in research but also in teaching at the University of Rwanda, especially the University of Rwanda - we all know how we are struggling to secure funds for research. We also have the problem of

duplication of programmes, but also, we can also think about how it is very difficult to share data while we are talking about science and research.

So, by having this kind of motion on the common education area, we think is really a good tool, which can help us to pull all resources for research, including creating regional centres of excellence where we can do research that is well organised - you can see some strategic plans in health and agriculture, as well as in climate resilience, and in innovative action.

This is very important, Mr Speaker, because, for example, in Europe, where we have the Bologna system, we have seen that collaboration among researchers is very important because they are getting money from the European Union and they can make research that can help industries in Europe and the ultimate development of the economy.

So, Mr Speaker, I think this is a good practice, which can be used in the East African Community to develop our industries and definitely our economies. I support the motion and thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you, Hon. Aisha. Now let us listen to Hon. Sankok.

4.48

Mr David Ole Sankok (Kenya): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, and from the onset, I do support this very important and timely motion as moved by The Hon. Dr Makame, and seconded by Hon. Clement.

Mr Speaker, I think we are a bit late because Julius Nyerere, the late President of the United Republic of Tanzania, studied here in Makerere University Kampala, the late Benjamin Mkapa studied at Makerere University Kampala, and the late Mwai Kibaki studied at Makerere University, and Gen. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni studied in Dar es Salaam.

Mr Speaker, also the current finance minister of Uganda studied in the University of Nairobi, His Excellency, Gen. Kagame studied in a school called Ntare School in Mbarara, which is in Uganda. Prof. Governor Anyang' Nyong'o of Kisumu from Kenya, was actually a Guild President of Makerere University.

Mr Speaker, we have had a common education area before independence and some few years after independence. Mr Speaker, Makerere University was a university of East Africa in charge of medicine. The University of Nairobi was the university of East Africa in charge of engineering. Dar es Salaam University was the university of East Africa in charge of law. Mr Speaker, I don't know where the rains started beating us from. Therefore, this is a timely motion whose idea should have been yesterday but since it is today, we will do 100 per cent support.

Mr Speaker, if you want to destroy a nation or a community, just mess up with its education system. That is how our Community was disintegrated and all the infrastructure that we had, as a Community, went to waste. Some of it might be surviving, but it is because we did not really understand the importance of the education system.

Mr Speaker, I am pleased today that we are jumpstarting this very important sector, in terms of our integration. Mr Speaker, if you want true integration, integrate the young people. How do you integrate the young people? Long time ago, they used to go to the army, NYS, and others used to go to be *Morans* if one was a Masai for that matter, and *Manyattas*.

However, Mr Speaker, our *Manyattas* in their current scenario are in schools. Mr Speaker, if we integrate them in schools, then true integration of East Africa will take place.

Mr Speaker, I want to specifically thank Prof. Idris, I think he is still around, because of all the institutions that we did oversight on, as EALA, I can say, without fear of contradiction, that IUCEA is the best. (*Applause*) I was there as a member of the committee of accounts.

Mr Speaker, from how they use their finance and how they are organised, you can really tell how education is very important.

Mr Speaker, I was in a hall that had the highest concentration of professors in the world. I can tell you all of them were introduced: as Prof. Idris, Prof. so and so, until I feared speaking in front of them. And you know that a professor will always remain a professor. And a professor will never retire. And if they retire, they don't tire. And if they tire, they don't die. And if they die, they don't rot. And if they rot, they don't smell. And if they smell, they smell rose flowers. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I support the motion 100 per cent.

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Sankok. We can go now to Hon. Saidi Kibeya, and later, Hon. Mathias.

4.53

Dr Saidi Kibeya (Burundi): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing me to add my voice in backing this motion submitted by my brother, Hon. Dr Makame, the Chairperson of the General Purpose Committee. For matter of recalling the establishment and operationalisation of a common higher education area within the East African Community.

My comment here is: join the principle raised by the main seconder of the motion, Hon. Musangabatware, to allow the EAC to achieve the common market by the principle of free movement of people, the principle to develop capacity in research and development, which are through higher education.

This matter of establishing and operationalising a higher education common area is key. However, my comment is to request maybe a light amendment, because as you may recall, the Heads of State declared already, in 2017, the EAC as a common higher education area. But in commending the Sectoral Council on Education, Science, Technology, Sports and Culture, for initiating the East African Common Higher Education Area, we might miss to appreciate the key role played by our Heads of State. That is why I request that we make a short amendment to allow the Sectoral Council to express a key action through the first ministerial conference on common higher education, because it is a key action in the operationalisation of the common higher education area, without

missing the policy role of the Sectoral Council and the Main Council to advise the Summit. That is my proposal for a slight amendment. I submit, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Saidi Kibeya, the mover; I have followed you. The next is Hon. Mathias.

4.57

Amb. Dr. Mathias Harebamungu (Rwanda): Thank you, Mr Speaker -

The Speaker: Excuse me! On the list I have, I am not seeing Hon. Mary Mugenyi. I think after Hon. Mathias, you could have the Floor.

Mr Harebamungu: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to echo what my predecessors have highlighted well. One, I have to thank our brother, Hon. Dr Makame, the mover of this motion.

The motion comes, I would say, a bit late. It would have already been moved and debated, and why not appreciated, because our higher education is really suffering from many challenges.

I would say that the creation of the East Africa Common Higher Education Area will really allow enhanced student and staff mobility. And students and academics will move freely across East African countries. This will help us to create a larger pool of educational opportunities and allow students to access specialised programmes that may not be available in their home countries.

When we look at the harmonised quality standards, you will notice that a common

framework for quality assurance and accreditation will ensure that degrees and qualifications are recognised across the member states. This will eliminate the barrier of credential recognition and make it easier for graduates to work anywhere in the region.

When we look at the cost efficiency and resource sharing, we notice that our higher learning institutions will be able to share expensive infrastructures, research facilities, libraries and online resources. This will reduce duplication of efforts and allow smaller institutions to access resources they couldn't afford independently.

When we look at research collaboration, researchers from different countries may collaborate more easily on regional challenges such as health issues, agriculture, climate change and economic development. This pulling of expertise leads to more impactful research outcomes. Now, within the region, we will have increased competitiveness. By creating a larger, integrated higher education market, East African institutions will become more competitive globally. The region can also attract international students and faculty, generate revenue and build its reputation.

Targeting a labour market, which is really strong - our higher learning institutions and universities will better align their programmes with regional labour market needs, producing graduates with relevant skills across East Africa. This will support the broader East African Community integration agenda and economic development. And this, finally, will lead to economies of scale with joint programmes, shared curriculum development and

collaborative training initiatives will reduce costs while improving quality across the region.

Mr speaker, I once again support this motion and would recommend that the high education council, our higher learning institutions, really work on this matter and allow the Community to improve our education and economic systems, and fast-track our integration. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you, Hon. Mathias. The last is Hon. Mary.

5.02

Ms Mary Mugenyi (Uganda): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I won't take a long time because a lot has been said about this important motion.

However, first and foremost, I also stand to support the motion but with amendments. Mr Speaker, we are talking about the higher education area, a common East African Higher Education Area, but I really think that it is important to argue, and even put in law, a common education area for East Africa.

Why am I saying that? First, when you look at the motion itself, you realise that the first paragraph on the second page recognises exactly what I am saying. It says: "Noting that higher education builds on the input from the lower education system and that harmonisation of curricula, standards and quality assurance at both the middle and primary education levels is equally vital as they form the input into the tertiary higher education..."

If I can go back to what the Hon. Dr Sankok said, very eloquently - he actually

recognised that at one time, when East Africa was small, the first East Africa, we had a common education area. Actually, my year in education was the first to do the Ugandan education certificate, or examination board. That is when East Africa now was disintegrating. During Amin's time, we started having different education boards. But we had had an East African education board with an East African certificate of education, O'level or A'level. And we could go on as we grew to even think about a common curriculum in even primary education. I recognise that it is more difficult because we have different languages and cultures, but the ultimate goal is to harmonise and have common standards as East Africans.

The second argument I have, Mr Speaker, is that the main reason we want standardized education is to be able to have a common space for free movement of our workers; labour movement. The labour that we are talking about is not only for the holders of degrees or diplomas. We are actually talking about the semi-educated, you know, O'level dropouts, but who can read and write these common languages that we have, maybe be able to read in English and French and Swahili. Those kinds of standards are what we are looking at as East Africans, so that a dropout of O-level, A-level can cross over to Kenya or to DRC or to Rwanda, Burundi and so on, and be able to work and eventually get into a tertiary education institution and be able to be accepted because of the lower education level that he carries from the country that that person is coming from. Therefore, Mr Speaker, I want to make a small amendment and say that we establish an East African Common Education Area. If that is accepted. I beg to move.

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Mary Mugenyi. Now the mover. Hon. Makame.

5.06

Dr Abdulla Hasnuu Makame (Tanzania): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for calling me to conclude the motion. From the outset, I would like to thank all the Members who got the opportunity to contribute to this motion by doing justice to it and thank the other Members who did not get the opportunity because they also had a desire and wish to contribute to the motion, but because of time. We thank you, Mr Speaker.

I would also like to thank the Inter-University Council (IUC) for being here. They have listened to the matter and the motion. While my brother, Hon. Karobia, was speaking, he spoke about legislating the common higher education area. I can tell you, Hon. Karobia, while you were speaking, I was looking up there, and the IUCEA team was nodding in approval to your submission.

I think that should be the direction. Without much ado, I would like to thank all the Members, but allow me to mention them by name. The seconder, Hon. Clement Musangabatware, Hon. - Mr Speaker, I take the information.

The Speaker: Yes, who is bringing information? You have the floor.

Mr George Stephen Odongo (Uganda): Mr Speaker, I am rising on a point of information because earlier on, in her submission, Hon. Mary Mugenyi had proposed the amendment of the motion.

Whereas I am very much passionate about her proposal, but going by the strict sense

of this motion, the motion is very specific to what the Sectoral Council has done and it is within the presence of the Protocol that establishes the Inter-University Council. The Sectoral Council on Education, Science and Technology, Culture and Sports has moved ahead to establish the East African Common Higher Education Area.

This is within the Protocol, but what we can do in order to give import to that proposal is to give a recommendation that, in the future, let us look into it, but not to amend this specific motion. I beg to submit.

The Speaker: Thank you. Hon -

Dr Saidi Kibeya (Burundi): I propose an amendment to be accepted for resolution number one, instead of initiating to amend this to express clear action toward the establishment of the common higher education area. The Heads of State Summit had already declared that EAC is a common higher education area in 2017, eight years ago. Putting the word initiating here may be confusing for us. Thank you.

Dr Abdulla Hasnuu Makame (Tanzania): Thank you, Mr Speaker. Now, before I proceed with the- because the plan was that as I am mentioning the names of the members, then I would, where necessary, if there was an issue of amendment, have recognised it at that stage.

For the record, the issue raised by my sister, Hon. Mary Mugenyi, is very pertinent and it is contained in the resolution number three, which reads “implore the Sectoral Council on Education, Science, Technology, Culture and Sports to equally

prioritise approximation harmonisation of both primary and secondary education curricula and standards across the region to have a robust higher education area". So, that is contained. I am allaying your fears. The issue of higher education, the middle and the lower.

Ms Mary Mugenyi (Uganda): Would you allow me to respond to that, Mr Speaker? Actually, I should have said it but that is said but not reflected in the motion.

The Speaker: We are not hearing you.

Dr Abdulla Hasnuu Makame (Tanzania): Mr Speaker.

Ms Mary Mugenyi (Uganda): Can you hear me now, Mr Speaker? I was saying that yes, I saw it; resolution number three. However, that is not reflected in the motion. That was my point. You have recognised the importance of lower levels of education to the East African Common Market Integration. However, you have not reflected that in the motion.

Dr Abdulla Hasnuu Makame (Tanzania): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would like to allay the fears of my sister, Hon. Mary Mugenyi. If you read on the second page of the motion, it says, *"NOTING that higher education builds on the input from the lower education system and that harmonisation of curricula, standards and quality assurance at both middle and primary education levels is equally vital as they form the input into the tertiary or higher education"*.

It is there. Therefore, I just wanted to allay the fears and the issue of my brother,

Hon. Prof. Dr Eng. *Alhaji* Saidi Kibeya, *Nyakubwabwa*. That one is procedural and I can assure him that- because you see, when I was moving the motion, I spoke about the matter of the summit in the justification. Why I did not want to put it initially -

Now I am accepting and we are going to put it, but I just want to say why I did not put it initially was to portray the importance of the role played by the Sectoral Council in actually implementing that decision of the summit, and the issue of the common market.

You see, there are other Sectoral Councils, which are also supposed to implement decisions. Once the summit signs a protocol, it means it is ready for implementation, but they are taking- this is the 15th year now since the common market was implemented. Therefore, what I wanted to do was to laud this issue of the Sectoral Council of Education, Science and Technology so that the other Sectoral Councils hear that we are commending this Sectoral Council, we are recognising the work it is doing, and they have to pull their socks up.

That is, it, but we are taking that, and we will amend. Mr Speaker, allow me to proceed now to recognise the Members. I had already mentioned my brother, the seconder, Hon. Clement Musangabatware. Hon. *Omukama* Ansar Kachwamba, Hon. Godfrey Maina Karobia Mwangi, Hon. Falhada Iman Dekow, my sister, Hon. Dr Gladness Salema, Hon. Dr Aisha, Hon. Dr Ole Sankok, Hon. Prof. *Alhaji* Dr Kibeya *Nyakubwabwa*, Hon. *Nyakubwabwa* Amb. Dr Mathias and Hon. *Owekitiibwa* Mary Mugenyi.

Mr Speaker, while having recognised that, I also like to once again recognise the presence of the honourable, the chairperson of the Uganda Chapter, the mobile directory and encyclopaedia, Hon. George Stephen Odongo.

The Speaker: Encyclopaedia.

Dr Abdulla Hasnuu Makame (Tanzania): Yes. *Owekitiibwa.* After having said that, we also have to thank the stakeholders, the Inter-University Council, headed by the acting Executive Secretary, Professor Idris Rai. With that, I beg to move and thank you for this opportunity.

The Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Dr Makame. This institution has become not only an East African one, but intercontinental. No one mentioned that the African Union has recognised the officer who was to be leading this institution. He has been picked as one of the seven commissioners who are in the African Union. This is a signal that what we are doing here is right.

With this, I urge you, dear colleagues, to explore the way that we can have a Bill. We need a law in this area. Honourable members, I now have to put the question that this Assembly do resolve to commend the Sectoral Council of Education, Science, Technology, Culture and Sports on the establishment of the East African Common Higher Education Area, to be adopted.

(Question put and agreed to.)

Motion adopted.

The Speaker: Let us proceed to the next item, which is the last one on the Order Paper.

MOTION FOR RESOLUTION OF THE ASSEMBLY URGING THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AND PARTNER STATES TO DEVELOP A REGIONAL POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR REGULATING AND PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

The Speaker: Hon. Falhada Dekow Iman, the mover, you have the floor.

5.19

Ms Falhada Dekow Iman (Kenya): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I rise to move a motion for a resolution of the Assembly urging the Council of Ministers and Partner States to develop a regional policy and legal framework for regulating and promoting responsible use of social media platforms, moved under Articles 6(d) and (e) and 49(2)(d) of the Treaty and the Rule 26 of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Do you have seconders on this motion? *(Members rose.)*

(Seconded by Hon. David ole Sankok, Hon. Suleiman Shahbal, Hon. Kanini Kega and Hon. Veronica Kadogo)

Proceed.

Ms Falhada Dekow Iman (Kenya): Mr Speaker, I beg to move that: “*WHEREAS the Community agreed the Article 6(d) and (e) of the Treaty for the establishment of East Africa Community to abide by the principles of good governance, including adherence to democracy, the rule of law, accountability, transparency, and the recognition, promoting, promotion and protection of human rights in accordance*

with the African Charter on Human and People's Rights;

AND WHEREAS Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and Partner States Constitutions guarantee freedom of expression, including the right to receive information and to express and disseminate opinions within the law;

RECALLING that in 2019, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted a Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa, establishing key rights and principles aimed at enhancing freedom of expression and access to information across the continent;

ACKNOWLEDGING that through the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights provide guiding standards for balancing regulation, rights and security;

ACKNOWLEDGING that the East Africa Vision 2050 seeks to build a secure, stable and innovative digital economy supported by open, inclusive and rights-based communication systems;

COGNISANT that social media platforms have become essential tools for communication, information sharing, civil engagement, innovation and economic growth across the East African Community;

CONCERNED that while social media enhances connectivity and expression, its misuse has contributed to the spread of misinformation, disinformation, hate

speech, cyberbullying and extremist narratives, threatening peace, national security and social cohesion within the region;

FURTHER CONCERNED that the divergent legal and policy approaches on social media regulation adopted by the Partner States have resulted in inconsistencies that undermine both the protection of digital rights and effective cross-border enforcement.

AWARE that Article 49(2) (d) of the Treaty, the Assembly may discuss any matter pertaining to the Community and make recommendations to the Council.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE ASSEMBLY AS FOLLOWS:

THAT in accordance with Articles 6(d) and (e) and 49(2) of the Treaty, the Assembly urges the Council of Ministers and the Partner States to:

- (a) Fast-track the adoption and implementation of a Regional Policy and Legal Framework for the Regulation on Social Media Platforms within the East African region that promotes responsible online conduct while safeguarding freedom of expression and media independence.*
- (b) Adopt and implement measures to combat online hate speech, misinformation, and disinformation through harmonised legal measures, public education, and regional cooperation, while ensuring such efforts do not unduly restrict legitimate expression.*

- (c) *Consider establishing an EAC Multi-Stakeholder Digital Governance Forum, comprising policymakers, regulators, civil society, academia, and the private sector, to guide continuous dialogue, policy coherence, and human rights-centred digital governance.*
- (d) *Direct the Secretariat to work with relevant stakeholders, such as the East African Communications Organisation, to conduct a comprehensive study on the impact of social media in the EAC, including its socio-economic benefits, challenges, and policy gaps.*
- (e) *To invest in digital literacy and awareness campaigns, particularly targeting youth and vulnerable communities, to promote responsible digital citizenship, media literacy, and online empathy.”*

Mr Speaker, I beg to move. *(Applause)*

The Speaker: Thank you. You can now justify your motion.

Ms Falhada Dekow Iman: Mr Speaker and honourable members, I rise today to move this motion of great urgency and profound regional importance, calling upon the Council of Ministers and our Partner States to develop a comprehensive regional policy and legal framework for the regulation and promotion of responsible use of media platforms across the East African Community.

Our region is in the midst of digital renovation. Social media has connected our people in a way previously unimaginable.

It has created opportunities for innovation and expanded trade, empowered youth voices and opened new avenues for regional integration. Today, social media is not just a communication tool; it is an economic engine and political space, a learning platform and a social lifeline.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, this great progress comes with equally great challenges. Across East Africa, the unregulated and inconsistent use of social media has exposed our citizens, especially women, children and youth, to unprecedented risk. We are witnessing an alarming rise in misinformation, cyberbullying, hate speech, digital fraud, online radicalisation, identity theft and the widespread violation of privacy.

Most painfully, women and girls in our region are being attacked in the digital space with a level of cruelty and harassment that silences their voices and discourages their participation in public life. Online gender-based violence is now one of the fastest-growing forms of violence, and its borderless nature means that no single Partner State can confront it alone.

The digital threats we face, whether it is misinformation during elections, extremist recruitment online or cross-border financial scams, do not respect national boundaries, yet our laws do. That mismatch has created dangerous gaps in protection and enforcement of accountability. Some of the Partner States have developed strong cyber laws, but others are still at the early stages of developing these laws or maybe implementing. This unevenness creates confusion for users and loopholes for offenders, and obstacles for cross-border investigation.

Mr Speaker, I think I am going to leave it there because the motion speaks for itself as well. I will let others to contribute. I beg to move.

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Falhada. Honourable members, the motion on the Floor is that this Assembly do resolve to urge the Council of Ministers and Partner States to develop a regional policy and legal framework for regulating and promoting responsible use of social media platforms. Debate is open. I will start with the seconder, who is Hon. Mashaka Ngole, then others will follow. Hon. Ngole, you have the Floor.

5.28

Mr Khalfan Mashaka Ngole (Tanzania): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to air my voice. I also thank the mover of the motion for giving me this opportunity to be the seconder. I will address myself to this motion before the House from a legal point of view.

Mr Speaker, reading the motion by the mover, I understand that the objective of the mover is to first have a policy and also a legal framework to regulate and promote the use of social media platforms. To me, this is a very important move due to the current misuse of social media platforms.

In every society, you must have a legal framework in place. The reason why we have legal frameworks in place is, first, to provide guidelines which guarantee fairness and also protect the rights of the members of society. On the other hand, it provides the responsibility to the members of society. We are also a society, as the East African Community. Therefore, there

is a need to have a legal framework within our society.

There is a legal maxim which says, “Where your right ends, the other people’s rights start or begin”, which has an implication that individual rights and freedoms must be balanced against the rights of others. They are not absolute. So, if these individual rights and freedoms are balanced, you will also be able to protect persons’ actions against infringement by others. The protection will be there if you have a legal framework in place.

Mr Speaker, what do we mean by “legal frameworks”? Legal frameworks are there to define the entitlements of individuals. They are there to set boundaries for the behaviours of members of society, and also, provide mechanisms for resolving disputes between members in a society. This is in order to achieve stability within the society. Having a legal framework in a society is an important matter, and therefore, the motion came within our Community at the right time.

I also noticed that in the motion, the mover indicated that one of the objectives of the motion is to implement measures to combat online hate speech and misinformation. You can see how it is important to have this framework in a society. But I understand that within our EAC, we already have the mother framework, which is our Treaty. The Treaty is our Constitution. All the other frameworks are creatures of the Treaty that we have. That is why the mover of the motion has moved the motion in line with the provisions of our Treaty and the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly.

Mr Speaker, with this, I beg to support the motion. I humbly submit.

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Ngole. We can take the names of seconders. Clerk, take the names. We have Hon. Kadogo, Hon. Shabhal, Hon. Jacqueline, Hon. Dr Black, Hon. George Odongo and Hon. Maina. That is all. Let us start with Hon. Kadogo.

5.35

Ms Veronica Babirye Kadogo (Uganda): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for giving me an opportunity to contribute to this very important motion. I stand here to support the motion; it is very important in regulation.

First of all, social media platforms are very important in communication and also connecting with the rest of the world, but they come with their shortfalls, which we need to regulate. Once social media platforms are not regulated, they are harmful, and their content comes with hate, misinformation and cyberbullying, which can cause harm.

Another big problem that we need to look at is the importance of regulating social media platforms. There is a very big problem with social media addiction. You will realise that many people are addicted to social media, especially the young generation. They have reached a level where some of them are even being taken to rehabilitation centres because they are addicted to social media. It is not only the young generation, but also the older people. Even in this room, you realise that there are those who are addicted to social media 24 hours a day.

Being addicted also limits people's productivity, and young people being addicted to social media stops them from doing productive work. Addiction to social media stops school-going children from schooling and even doing other productive work. So, we need to regulate social media platforms.

On those very points, I stand here to support the motion and also thank the mover, Hon. Falhada, for bringing such an important motion, which will protect our people from being addicted and avoid misuse of social media, which is very harmful to our people once it is not regulated. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Kadogo. We will now have Hon. Shabhal, Hon. Jacqueline, Hon. Maina, Hon. Black and then Hon. Odongo.

5.37

Mr Suleiman Said Shahbal (Kenya): Mr Speaker, thank you for this opportunity. I stand to support this motion, with a caveat. Social media is a direct byproduct of the internet. The internet has come with a lot of positive and negative things, and social media is something that cannot be stopped now.

We have seen the positive things: information, education and now the youth have turned social media into a powerful platform for expression, social change and even business. We also know the negative impacts of social media: pornography, radicalisation, false news and all that, but let us not lose sight of the benefits by focusing more on the negatives.

There is a very interesting debate going on in Australia right now. Parliament voted to

ban social media for people under sixteen, and it has created a massive debate on where the limits of a free speech are and at what age people can start expressing themselves.

There is a very interesting book that was published recently called “An Anxious Generation” by a writer and researcher called Jonathan Haidt. He warned of a great rewiring of childhood and says that it is causing an epidemic of mental illness and a decline in adolescent mental health. He noted that all these problems - the anxiety, depression and even self-harm that children are doing - largely started after 2010 to 2012 when smartphones were introduced.

So, his research shows that there is a huge amount of social deprivation. Social deprivation, being interaction between people, is declining. Children spend more time on their phones; during dinner, they spend time on their phones. Parliamentarians, instead of listening to these important words, are on their phones.

You will often walk into a restaurant and find people on a date, and both people are on the phone. So, you wonder why they are there at all. Why didn't they stay home and continue with their phones? We see children are suffering from sleep deprivation; they are on the phone the whole night watching TikTok. How do they go to school the next day and perform the way they are supposed to be performing?

There is what they call “cognitive fragmentation”, a total loss of focus. You find that people are unable to focus for more than five minutes, and this is largely

related to excessive use of phones because of social media. Of course, this leads to an addiction. So, these are issues that need to be carefully monitored because our children are going down a very slippery slope.

As Hon. Falhada noted, it affects girls and young women more because of the bullying that they face on social media. There are a number of proposals that have come up; no smartphones before high school, no social media before sixteen, like the Australians are trying, and making schools a phone-free environment. The same should maybe be applied in Parliament. Allow children an opportunity to play more and spend less time on the phones.

So, I stand to support this motion. I think it is important that we find a way to control the negative effects of social media. It is very important that these new laws we are trying to introduce do not end up becoming instruments of censorship. Control is important, but if we do not watch out, it will lead to censorship. We are seeing these types of laws slowly being sneaked into parliaments, so we have to be careful that we, as the East African Parliament, do not contribute to that negative trend.

Mr Speaker, I stand to support this. Hon. Falhada has raised a very important point. These laws should be across our region, and for the third time – I am repeating this - let us be vigilant in making sure that in our attempts to control the negative impacts of social media, we do not end up becoming instruments of censorship. Thank you. *(Applause)*

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Shahbal. Next is Hon. Jacquiline.

5.43

Ms Jacqueline Amongin (Uganda):

Thank you so much, Mr Speaker. I would like to commend Hon. Falhada for bringing such an important motion to this House. This motion should have even come prior because we have moved from analogue to digital, and we are living in the digital world in a way that we cannot underestimate the role of social media.

I would like to give my example. Very early in the morning, between five and six o'clock, social media informs me better than going to buy the newspapers on the streets or even watching all these channels on different media houses.

On a positive note, social media is very good. It has advantages, just like my other colleagues have mentioned. But while we look at social media, as the East African Community, we need to deal with issues of data governance and data protection. That is very critical, as we debate the issue of engagement on social media.

We are talking about emerging technologies like the Internet of Things. We are talking about AI and block chain. All these are part of social media and can be merged together to improve our legislation within the East African region. So, harmonisation of all these emerging technologies with engagement in social media will help us pave the way for a very favourable law for the region.

I will definitely talk about the advantages of social media; they are immense. I have personally benefited from social media, but I also know that there are immense disadvantages. So, we need to strike a balance between innovations, the use of

the new emerging technologies and what we need to achieve as a continent, not only as East Africans, but as Africa.

I would like to emphasise to the Council of Ministers that while we engage on social media within the EAC - because the communities that we represent are all on social media - we need to make sure that we come up with a framework. I know that most of the East African member states - I know Uganda does - have some data protection laws in place, but they need to be revamped to fit the current situation. The same applies to Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania and most of the EAC member countries.

This particular motion is very important for an Assembly like the East African Legislative Assembly to come up with a harmonised data protection law, which will actually delve into social media. That will guide the *modus operandi* on how the East Africans operate in regard to the emerging technologies.

We also need to note that if you look at all of these social media apps, most of them are not generated in Africa. We are only end users, so they are more detrimental to us than even those who benefit from them. You realise that people are making a lot of money from Facebook, Twitter and all these apps. When you look at the users, there are more from the African side than even from the other side, so it is beneficial to them. It is also beneficial for us, as Africans, but it is, to a large extent, also detrimental.

In regard to this motion, I strongly call upon the Council of Ministers to expedite the process of having a harmonised data

governance law in place to reduce the increasing risks of breaches and misuse of data within the East African Community.

There is also a need to talk about data governance and cybersecurity issues within cross-borders because I can do something on TikTok. I can commit a crime in Uganda and cross to Rwanda, South Sudan or DRC. Which regulation is in place in regard to that? So, it is very important that we come up with cross-border harmonised EAC regulations for seamless, secure exchanges, especially in regard to cross-border data flows.

In a nutshell, Mr Speaker and honourable members, I would imagine that the Council of Ministers will take this as a matter of urgency because when we have a harmonised framework and regulation in place, we will be able to save our future generation. I have heard Hon. Shahbal talk about us being here, but we are on our phones. Sometimes, we are on our phones doing research because it is easier. I just use my phone and get all the information; I do not need to run to our research department here in Parliament when I want to immediately debate on an issue.

So, topmost, harmonise laws for cross-border data, which will also emphasise the area of social media. There is also a need to ensure innovation balance, public awareness and capacity building within the East African Community so that we strike a balance, in regard to engagement on social media.

Otherwise, I would like to second Hon. Falhada and support her motion. Thank you very much. (*Hon. Mukulia: Procedure?*)

The Speaker: Procedure, Hon. Kennedy?

5.50

Mr Kennedy Ayason Mukulia (South Sudan): Mr Speaker, I rise on a procedural issue. We have been discussing motions and reports since the beginning of the plenary this afternoon. One critical sector where our motions and reports go is the Council of Ministers. I am wondering if we are only talking to ourselves without the Council of Ministers on a resolution that requires their approval or presence.

Mr Speaker, I would like to ask procedurally whether it is right for us to pass a resolution in the absence of the Council of Ministers, who are responsible for the affairs of this Community. While we are passing and talking about very important elements, we lack even a single minister among us. I need that procedural guidance. Thank you.

The Speaker: Do you propose to interrupt, to stop here, or what do you propose?

Mr Mukulia: Mr Speaker, I propose that such important elements are discussed in the presence of the ministers because that will give weight to what we are talking about. Talking to ourselves is like us meeting in a small group, and then we agree there and conclude. But important matters of this Community must be discussed in the presence of the policy makers, and the Organ responsible for policy making is the Council, which is not present, so we are talking to ourselves. What are we doing?

I propose that such matters be deferred to an appropriate time where we have the responsible policy-making Organ in this House. I submit, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Honourable members, we have complained many times about the absence of ministers, especially at this time when they are now heading to Nairobi for the meeting. It has been very difficult for them to be present here, but regarding everything we discuss and debate here, there are many ways that can be used for all of these reports to reach the ministers. They should be here.

We have always responded that they will go back to discuss these issues among themselves. So, these reports, resolutions and recommendations that we have here will reach them. That is why I ruled that we should consider everything we have done from the beginning, so that we do not lose time. I think it will not be wise for us. Let us continue our proceedings, and then we will take our decisions to the Council. Yes, Hon. Sankok?

5.54

Mr David Ole Sankok (Kenya): Mr Speaker, I sympathise with Hon. Mukulia because you have raised a very valid point. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, the third most powerful person in East Africa, for that very good guidance.

Mr Speaker – (*Interruption*)

The Speaker: Hon. Mashaka Ngole?

5.54

Mr Mashaka Ngole (Tanzania): Mr Speaker, once the matter has been decided by your seat, Members have to respect your decision, and this is in our rules. If you read our rules properly, including rule 38, you will find it there. Hon. Sankok is opening up a discussion on a matter which you have already decided on. Are we

challenging your decision, Mr Speaker? This is not orderly.

The Speaker: Everyone knows that he can have the Floor, but I will not go back on what I have said. No one knows what he was bringing here, but if he is trying to bring up a debate, it will not take place.

Mr Ole Sankok: I will not even try to challenge your decision, Mr Speaker. I was just informing you, after making groundwork, that the Heads of State Summit has been postponed. So, the Council of Ministers should be told to be here. Thank you, Mr Speaker. (*Applause*)

The Speaker: No, the ministers are meeting. The meeting has not been postponed, so they are meeting in Nairobi, I think, from today or tomorrow. Honourable members, let us proceed. The next is Hon. Maina.

5.56

Mr Godfrey Maina Mwangi (Kenya): Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mine is to support the motion by my good friend, Hon. Falhada.

Just like my good friend and senior, Hon. Suleiman Shahbal, was talking about not censoring in the digital space, I come from a generation that believes that the way to the future is the digital space. I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that before I decided on my investment opportunities, I went to social media. I Googled, sought information and did a comparative analysis on the investment portfolios where I need to put my resources.

I look at social media as a space that we, as East Africans, can use to economically

and socially change our societies, nations and even our region. As much as we view social media space in bringing fundamental changes that we, as politicians and people, would call the gatekeepers of our society, and as much as we feel uncomfortable with the kind of speed that this space is catalysing our young people, it is good to look at it from a positive side, in terms of social and economic change.

Mr Speaker, it is said, particularly from the Kenyan experience, that averagely, Kenyans spend eight hours out of 24 hours on social media –(*Interruption*)

5.58

Mr Mashaka Ngole: Mr Speaker, a motion without notice under the provisions of Rule 11.

The Speaker: Rule 11?

Mr Mashake: Mr Speaker, our rules provide that we debate matters up to 6.00 p.m., and it is now one minute to 6.00. Under the provisions of Rule 11, I move a motion that we decide to extend time by up to 30 minutes, so that we finish this business.

The Speaker: No, Hon. Ngole. I will not take your motion because the rule says that we do not go to 6.00 p.m. but 6.30 p.m., and we are still in order. Let us proceed, Hon. Maina?

Mr Maina: Mr Speaker, I think we can use this social media as a driver of social change, but thoughtfully. I know when this motion was being brought up by Hon. Falhada, she had her thoughts, which might not have been written on paper.

Mr Speaker, it is good that we are debating such motions. I am one keen follower of the European Parliament, and they are very serious about governing and regulating the social media space. In fact, I remember they had to have a serious negotiation as the European Union Commission with Apple, regarding the type of charging system Apple was providing because they thought it was even a threat to their own national security.

In line with the thoughts and unwritten reasons as to why this motion is coming on board, it is good that we govern and regulate this space, so that we do not find ourselves not having governed and stable Partner States. In my estimation, as the chairperson of the Regional Committee on Conflict Resolution within the region, my experience is that if you do not govern social media, it can bring serious political issues in our region.

It is good that we regulate this space so that, as much as people air their opinions, they can do so with responsibility. It is one thing to have freedom of expression and another to be responsible for what you are saying, so that we govern our nation responsibly and air our views responsibly.

I remember an experience with the Nigerian space on former Twitter, which is now currently called X. The company was protesting why the Government of Nigeria was trying to switch off Twitter, now X. The Government of Nigeria was very serious and strict, and told them, “If you want us to switch on X in our country, bring your offices here. Do not govern Twitter in the US. Govern it or create regional offices within the country”.

As much as we feel very comfortable having Facebook, Twitter and the likes, it is good that we get serious and tell them to bring those offices here in the East African region, so that we can also create jobs for these very young people who are talking on social media. They can create jobs in this country or region.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, and I rise to support this motion in the interest of creating jobs. (*Applause*)

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Maina. Next is Hon. Dr Black. Hon. Francoise, I am not seeing you here; they did not put your name down. Hon. Odongo comes after but be brief.

6.03

Dr Gerald Blacks Siranda (Uganda): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am rising here to say a few things, in support of the motion to regulate the responsible use of social media.

Social media has become a serious economy. It influences and employs people. It also shows direction; it mobilises people. As a community like our region that has majority of people who are young, we cannot leave social media usage or platform ungoverned or without regulation on how it should be used.

Mr Speaker, social media is a very good thing, like very many people have said, but it can also burn a country or a region in a day. We were in an election, and I was an observer, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: I am sorry, but our colleagues are disturbing us from outside. Instead of coming in, they only make

noise there. Please tell them to be in order. Proceed.

Dr Siranda: Thank you, Mr Speaker. A region that is very vibrant, that is people-led and youth-led like our region – Mr Speaker, because of social media, one of our constituencies nearly burnt, and if you do not have a law on regulation in terms of how you can do that, it is very difficult. I know that a lot of our Partner States have these laws. For instance, Uganda has the Computer Misuse Act, which many of us have challenged, but I think it is important that we have a regulation and eventually come up with a law.

We can first of all start by harmonisation; getting a policy that will drive us in terms of getting a law that regulates us in the region. Otherwise, it can be a very good thing, but then you will be overthrown in less than a minute. I am sure if that particular country had not dealt with the question of social media, the country would have burnt down more than at that time they switched off social media.

Mr Speaker, as I said, this is a big industry. There is no industry that employs many people which does not have regulations. Social media now has become - there are people that have alternative channels which they use as news channels. Everybody is an authority, and whatever they want to say becomes news. There is no editor, there is no chief editor, there is nobody who collects news. Everybody publishes, and that is news.

For instance, they have said that some leaders have died and eventually they announce that a person is dead, even when a person is not dead and such people go unaccountable.

Mr Speaker, this motion is very timely for us, as a region, to have a regulation on how we use social media. A bloc like the European Union has come up with regulations on how to govern social media, the Digital Use Act. We can come up with something like that. What are they looking at? They are looking at regulating what goes out to the media, they are looking at the issues of hate speech, they are looking at lies, which can taint your name for generations. Your name will be tainted, and you have no opportunity to go out to explain yourself because this thing runs so fast that you have no opportunity to even go and explain yourself.

They are using issues of safeguarding our children, and the generation that will come. If we do not have a regulation on how to do that, our children will be in a position to access every garbage that comes their way because of this platform.

I think we will also have to check on what kind of platform do we allow. If I have committed a crime under cybercrimes within Uganda, I should be in a position, when I go to the United Republic of Tanzania, to be held accountable. The same should apply when I go to the Republic of Rwanda, the Republic of South Sudan and everywhere in the region. I should be in a position to be held accountable because we are looking at ourselves as one Community heading in one destiny, deepening and widening and tightening. We cannot run free, and then we think that because it has brought a good thing, it is bringing jobs, therefore, we leave it.

Mr Speaker, we can say a lot of things about social media, but I think the spirit is to have a regulation so that you have a

right and an obligation as well. We always talk about rights and what we can get, but most of the time, we do not talk about the obligation that comes with the right. I think this motion is timely for us to have a policy that will give us the obligation side as well as the rights, but also, eventually come up with a real Act that will help us in managing and governing this new, growing industry that is unstoppable, and we cannot do anything about it apart from finding means to regulate it.

Mr Speaker, I beg to submit and appreciate our colleague, Hon. Falhada and the seconder for coming up with this motion. I beg to support.

The Speaker: Thank you. The last one to contribute is Hon. Françoise. Hon. Odongo has gone.

6.10

Ms Francoise Uwumukiza (Rwanda):

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for this opportunity. At the onset, I would like to congratulate Hon. Falhada for this important motion to regulate social media, but also technologies, because they go hand in hand.

Social media has transformed communication across not only East Africa but also across Africa, enabling civil activism, information sharing, and economic opportunities with over 44 million users projected not only in Nigeria alone by 2025, but also in East Africa- you have huge data. However, it is also amplifying challenges like misinformation. We are having a lot of misinformation, hate speech, foreign disinformation campaigns, especially when we talk of global initiatives like what

is happening between Russia, Ukraine, the US, but also, here we have many examples in Africa. These are examples that we really need to regulate.

Also, as the mover of the motion that will come very soon, in hand with the GP Committee, EAC Cultural Heritage Bill, we are talking of culture, values and traditions. How are we going to insert our values in social media as we protect our young generation, but also as we hold ourselves accountable for this? We have challenges in regulating social media, for instance, political securitisation, where we can have messages that give information. After that message, another one comes in saying 'fake news'. These things of fake news - you know, sometimes citizens are confused. Who says the right thing? There are many of them.

We have content moderation gaps. For instance, Mr Speaker, global platforms like Meta and X (former Twitter) struggle with African languages and context. That is why I am putting everything in the context of our culture and values.

For instance, our young generation is talking of Kinyarwanda. You know, YouTube normally regulates pornography, but you can have people talking about pornography in words. They don't have pictures; they are talking about those things the way they do them practically, and it is in the local language. How is YouTube going to regulate that? So, I think we really need regulation in our region because it is paramount.

We also have access and equity issues in terms of data cost and management, and taxes. They are also impeding on how to

really use this properly because you can just take what you can afford when you can have better within the means that are offered by your government.

We also have enforcement barriers. Most platforms are foreign-based, and it is a big problem. How can we have our own platforms at our level? We have engineers of ICT, but they are just retrieving from these foreign platforms. They cannot be innovative, but we know we have a clever young generation; they are IT-oriented, and we can support them by adding some funds to regulate social media and also technology, so that we can have our own social media platform and also technologies for the young generation.

Regarding the digital divide, what is good is that we have some countries that have specific examples of current laws that are emerging. In Kenya, they have the Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act of 2018 and the Online Safety Guidelines of May 2025. It is just contemporary, requiring age verification for CSPS information and the Communication (Amendment) Bill is also pending.

The EALA can borrow a leaf because we already have some countries that have these initiatives. Maybe my honourable brother can proceed with the Bill on this because this is really a serious matter that we need to regulate. Without taking much time, we have strategies for effective regulation like assessing and prioritising harms contextually, developing balanced legal frameworks like principle-based laws, platform accountability, anti-disinformation measures, and promoting co-regulation and self-governance. These will help to enhance enforcement and

education, like you have been advocating for.

We have to monitor and adapt all these things that are moving around towards a right-respecting digital future, but also protect our young generation. Currently, I have been seeing babies really eager to pick up the phones of their mothers on breastfeeding. You know, they want to read through what the mother is reading. I think this is something we have to give very special and due attention to, and move on as we change, amend and also correct the mess that is in the social media use. Thank you, Mr Speaker. I beg to move and I support. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Françoise. Hon. Falhada, you have the Floor.

6.16

Ms Falhada Dekow Iman (Kenya): Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity once again. I just want to tell the House that Hon. Sadia has just told me that yesterday, South Sudan passed a law on cybercrime and computer misuse. I congratulate them.

In a nutshell, Mr Speaker, social media should build communities and not break them. We must choose engagement over outreach.

Allow me to appreciate the following Members, even though the time was limited, and Members would have loved to contribute to this timely motion, because, as we are all politicians, our names have been dragged either in a positive way or in a negative way on all social media platforms.

Allow me to appreciate the following Members: the seconder of the motion, Hon. Ngole, Hon. Kadogo, Hon. Shahbal, Hon. Amongin, Hon. Maina, Hon. Siranda Blacks, and lastly Hon. Françoise. Thank you so much, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Falhada. This issue of social media is very complicated to me, maybe to elders. What I know is that even my phone and what I am watching on it - I don't know where they come from and who is putting them there. I wish I could meet that person and discuss with him because I have my culture, I have my roots, and what he is sometimes bringing are against my life.

So, you who are maybe qualified to engage him, please, do it in a way that we keep uniting our people but also keep our people accountable. It is very complicated. I do not even know how to use all of these all of these social media apps; TikTok and many things but please, help us. Help our community, help our region and we hope that you will be capable to overcome these. You did not talk about cybercrimes. They talk about cybercrimes - I do not understand.

Honourable members, it is now 6.00 p.m. We are still in time. Hon. Ngole, we are in time.

Honourable members, I now put the question that this Assembly do resolve to urge the Council of Ministers and Partner States to develop a regional policy and legal framework for regulating and promoting responsible use of social media platforms.

(Question put and agreed to.)

Motion adopted

The Speaker: Where is Hon. Ngole, who was bringing the motion? Look, we are on time. Honourable Members, we have to register for these sports disciplines. I have seen some Members have already registered, especially women, but I did not see a good number of men. Please register, and our comrade, Dr Black, will be happy. The other thing is that I would like to remind you again that we have a Commission meeting with the chairpersons tomorrow at 12.00 p.m., and we will discuss this matter of payment. Please, if you could come to the meeting after having consulted your chapter, that would help us a lot. You know what I mean.

Honourable members, the training for the IPG starts tomorrow. Pick up will be at 5.30 a.m. and training at 6.00 a.m.

Honourable members, I adjourn this plenary to tomorrow afternoon at 2.30 p.m. Thank you.

*(The House rose at 6.21 p.m. and
adjourned until Thursday, 27th November
2025, at 2.30 p.m.)*