

**REMARKS BY H.E. SAMIA SULUHU HASSAN, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA AT THE 9<sup>TH</sup> INTER-PARLIAMENTARY RELATIONS SEMINAR (NANYUKI IX SERIES), DAR ES SALAAM, UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA – MARCH 3, 2016**

**Rt. Hon Daniel Fred Kidega, Speaker of EALA**

**Rt. Hon Job Ndugai, Speaker of the Parliament of Tanzania**

**Hon Ministers present**

**Honorable Parliamentarians of EALA and National Parliaments**

**The EAC Secretary General**

**Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners present**

**Representatives of the Academia, Private and Civil Society Organization sectors**

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Good morning:**

It gives me great pleasure to officiate at the opening of the two-day 9<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Relations Seminar commonly referred to as the *Nanyuki Series*.

At the outset, permit me, Rt. Hon Speaker, to welcome you and all our visitors to the United Republic of Tanzania and to Dar es Salaam in particular, often christened as the 'haven of Peace'. I trust that you shall not only find your stay

here in Dar es Salaam pleasurable and enjoyable, but that you shall also transact your business in a comfortable and hospitable environment befitting of its name.

Allow me to welcome all visiting Legislators from the National Parliaments of the Partner States. I am indeed extremely pleased to be addressing you for the very first time since my election as the 5<sup>th</sup> Vice President of the United Republic of Tanzania. Rt. Hon Speaker and Members, I thank you for your very kind words of encouragement and assurances of support as we delve in to building our country and great region.

At the very outset, let me take the opportunity to assure this *August* gathering that we remain committed to ensuring elections in Zanzibar are eventually concluded later on this month.

I thank EALA for putting together the important Nanyuki Series. Deliberately, the EALA was given Legislative and Oversight roles, which has made it to properly function. To this extent, the East African Community is unique on the Continent. I do not know of any regional integration arrangement or Community in the Continent yet, whose Parliament has vested legislative powers like this one.

Rt. Hon Speaker, I dare say, without hesitation or reservation that the EALA has done well as far as the discharge of its mandate and authority is concerned. You have done a commendable job in your oversight role about the Community's programmes and activities. In addition, the EALA has acquainted itself admirably in the legislative function, thus giving legal effect to several EAC policy decisions. I congratulate you for the new found resilience and energy that the Assembly has employed over the last one Year in particular.

Back to the matters that bring us here today, I am reliably informed that this is the 9<sup>th</sup> such Nanyuki Series, with the name emanating from the 1<sup>st</sup> such Seminar which was held in Nanyuki, in the Republic of Kenya in June 2004.

The Nanyuki series presents an opportunity for Members of EALA and the National Parliaments to share information on key matters that affect integration. This is a laudable contribution to EAC Integration process for which the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania holds dear to heart.

I congratulate you for choosing the theme: "*Compliance with the African Union and Sub-Regional Blocs' Election Benchmarks: the case of the EAC*" which in itself is very timely.

Various literature on elections show that there have so far been about forty five (45) democratic elections in Africa since the return to the multi-party era in the Continent. Unfortunately, twenty years down the road, electoral trends in our continent paint not an entirely rosy picture. In few countries, we have witnessed credible electoral processes taking place. In other nations, there are a number of cases that depict retrogressive elections. The EAC region has similarly had its fair share of challenges in the past elections and such call for remedial measures.

Mr Speaker, as you have rightly indicated in your remarks electoral conflicts often scar the momentous steps that Africa has made in the transition from authoritarianism and despotism since the independence of many of our countries well over fifty years.

Mr Speaker, distinguished guests ladies and gentlemen: indeed by holding the Seminar on the thematic area of elections, EALA has taken a strong resolve to aptly remind governments, electoral management bodies and all stakeholders engaged in electoral processes to “walk the talk”. I for one support this initiative and find such ethos to be perfectly in order.

The issue of credible elections in Africa and the attendant sub-regional bodies and the smooth transfer of power is one that we cannot and must never wish away. I can confidently say the Continent (and sub-continent) has realized one part of the equation above and religiously so; that of holding regular elections whenever due.

It is a fact that since the winds of change brought the one-Party State to an end in the late 1980’s and that multiparty elections have been held regularly in Africa and in the EAC sub-region in particular.

However, we can and should do better when it comes to the second part of the equation – which is the smooth transfer of power.

It may be argued that peaceful transfer of power from one President or ruling majority to another may not necessarily be the only *sine qua non* for democratic consolidation, but it nevertheless testifies to the fairness of elections.

Democracy, rule of law and elections are key in any dispensation. Member States of the African Union are clear and committed to promoting the very universal principles of democracy and good governance. This is to stem the cases of unconstitutional changes of governments that are often the causes of insecurity, violent conflict and instability in the Continent.

It is important that we in the region and Continent for that matter, strive to enhance and to strengthen good governance through the institutionalization of accountability and participatory democracy. It is on this vein that the Member States negotiated the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance that was adopted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in January 2007.

**Mr Speaker, Members, ladies and Gentlemen;** I want to assure you that the United Republic of Tanzania will do all that is possible in the not-too-distant future to sign, ratify and deposit the said instrument.

Democracy and human rights are today key precepts that are close to development. Political, social and economic governance of our countries and blocs would be ideally affected and negatively so, if we ignore the adherence to the universally agreed principles.

At the EAC, I am proud that all the Partner States undertake to promote rule of law as entrenched in Article 7 of the Treaty for the Establishment of the EAC.

I am a firm believer that separation of powers and accession through regular, free and fair elections and the prohibition of undemocratic means of ascension to power need to be the order of the day. But this is a role that encompasses a number of stakeholders.

The Election Management bodies for example, should maintain credible registers and conduct the polls in a transparent manner while upholding the declaration of results. Then there are the actual principles that perhaps dictate the conduct of any elections. I would probably think of full participation of citizens, freedom of

association, tolerance and voter education. They are intertwined and interdependent on one another.

**Rt Hon Speaker, Hon Members, Ladies and Gentlemen:** Whilst, I have tried to briefly state the facts as they are, I need to state that addressing the matters of compliance with the African Union and sub- regional benchmarks call for concerted efforts between all stakeholders. Perhaps permit me quickly to prescribe some quick thoughts for you as legislators, by suggesting the following:

- Parliaments must consistently enact laws that are for the benefit of the people. There is need to tighten the laws on elections to promote peaceful and political competition.
- **Advocacy is critical.** Legislators need to assess what has been achieved, where the failures are with respect to elections and the reasons whether they resulted from inadequate resources, misplaced priorities, lack of guidance or they simply point to governance.
- **Oversight:** Governments expend resources on behalf of the citizenry, but more often than not, effectiveness in implementation is never attained. Parliaments need to follow up on the commitments of the National Election management Bodies with regards to building electoral systems that shall underpin Africa's democracy. At the same time, Political Parties must take the lead in ensuring their own internal systems promote peaceful competition.
- **Appropriation:** Funds are scarce thus entitling Parliaments to ensure fairness in allocation of resources for holding credible elections are critical.

Looking through your program over the next two days, I am impressed that you shall be discussing a wide spectrum of issues on electoral laws, preservation of data as well as on strengthening electoral management processes in East Africa. This is besides the keynote address and an overview of compliance of AU benchmarks and that of the EAC sub-region. The presenters are knowledgeable and I anticipate a mixed yet rich grill of ideas and sharing of experiences.

Since this is a 'meeting of great minds', I am sure the discussions shall be frank, thought provoking and interesting. The outcomes of the deliberations over the coming days shall be useful in charting the map for the electoral benchmarks.

**Finally, Rt Hon Kidega, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen:**, it is now my singular privilege and pleasure to declare the 9<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Relations Seminar officially open. I thank you for your kind attention.