



EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**REMARKS BY RT. HON DANIEL FRED KIDEGA, SPEAKER OF EALA
AT THE SPECIAL SITTING OF THE FOUNDING FIRST LADIES OF THE
EAC, AT THE EALA CHAMBERS ON MAY 31ST 2016 ARUSHA,
TANZANIA**

**Your Excellency Ngina Kenyatta, former First Lady, Republic of
Kenya**

**Your Excellency Miria Obote, former First Lady, Republic of Uganda
The Chair and Members of the Council of Ministers**

Honorable Members of EALA

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, all protocols observed

Good Afternoon. Let me take this singular opportunity to welcome you all to the second and the last week of the 6th Meeting of the 4th Session of the 3rd Assembly.

I am particularly grateful to the founding First Ladies of this great region – Their Excellences, Mama Ngina Kenyatta and Mama Miria Obote for gracing EALA at this unique occasion, which is a first for the Assembly since it was inaugurated 15 years ago.

Today presents a special occasion for the Assembly to benefit from the collective experiences of the region's founder first ladies. Looking through this Chamber, a few of the Members here today may have witnessed your work back then. Some of the Members of the Assembly were yet to be born, while others, were perhaps too young to comprehend and only read about your deeds later in history books. In this regard, we therefore truly feel privileged to have the opportunity to listen to your counsel this afternoon.

Few Political analysts have in the past contended that back then, it was the duty of a wife to a Head of State to merely interest herself in whatever her husband was involved in and agree to travel the long and sometimes lonely road. And for the husbands who were not mere ordinary ones but freedom and independence fighters, the road must have been really long and lonely in most cases.

But Eleanor Roosevelt, the longest serving First Lady of the United States of America (March 1933 to April 1945) discounted the theories when she said: **Start of quote: "As life developed, I faced each problem as it came along. As my activities and work broadened and reached out, I never tried to avoid issues. I tried never to evade an issue. When I found I had something to do—I just did it." end of quote.**

In many ways, you opted not to be really contented to take your place by the fireside and simply look on. Instead, you took your place in society and opted to go above and beyond the call of duty. You took time to mid-wife and nurture the foundational processes of building the young Partner States and the EAC then. We acknowledge your instrumental contribution to the

birth of the EAC in 1966, and the several hours you logged in besides their Excellences Jomo Kenyatta and Apollo Milton Obote to ensure the realization of the 1st EAC.

Today, we celebrate you. You are walking encyclopedias in your own rights and repositories of information, who despite ageing gracefully, still credit, follow developments of this great region, and are supportive of the EAC unto this day. Late last year for example, Mama Ngina Kenyatta met with the EALA Kenya Chapter in Gatundu, Kenya, while in August 2014, a group of EALA Women Members paid a courtesy call on Mama Maria Nyerere in Dar Es Salaam. Mama Obote on her part, is still involved in the political spheres in Uganda and continues to follow developments at the EAC closely from Uganda House in Kampala.

The Assembly at its Sitting 5th Meeting of the 4th Session on March 16th, 2016, passed a Resolution recognizing the role you all continue to play in galvanizing East Africa in the integration process and in the service of East Africans as “informal Institutional Memory”.

We are happy that you still show leadership in your own rights and continue to be involved in numerous humanitarian causes throughout the EAC region much akin to your active and prolific years when you worked for political and social justice and advocated for a wide range of human rights issues.

Excellences, Hon Members

I am obliged, to briefly state the history of integration in order to bring the perspective of this day into focus. East Africa is credited with one of the

longest experiences of regional integration predating the colonial state. As early as 1900, Kenya and Uganda had agreed to establish a Customs Union between them. Tanzania, then Tanganyika joined the Customs Union in 1922.

Integration arrangements were achieved early in the dispensation including: The East African High Commission (1948-1961) the East African Common Services Organisation (1961-67) and the East African Community (1966-1977). As at the time of its collapse, the Community had made great strides and the benefits to the people were immense including free movement of people, opportunities for employment and viable institutions that provided effective and efficient services to the citizens of the region.

Indeed, in retrospect, the collapse of the Community in 1977 was a sad and catastrophic affair, a great loss in opportunities and setback for the region. But today, I stand here convinced that the steps we have taken as a Community since its re-establishment are fundamentally underpinned on the Treaty for the Establishment of the EAC and we are on course for full integration of the region.

Integration continues to proceed apace with major achievements recorded including the entry of Rwanda and Burundi in 2007, and that of South Sudan this year. We enjoy a fully-fledged Customs Union, are implementing the Common Market and there is desire to ensure the Monetary Union is achieved.

As EALA, we are supportive of the integrative pillars and are the link between the institutions of the EAC and the people of East Africa.

Excellences, distinguished Members, Ladies and Gentlemen:

As the region progresses towards a Political Federation, the role of EALA shall be to close ranks with all stakeholders to ensure the dreams of all East Africans become a reality. Today, we engage one of the unique category of stakeholders whose supportive role they played in the independence of our respective countries and later formation of the first EAC may never be qualified. But we as an Assembly, truly know the role you played.

Excellences, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me therefore take the opportunity once again to sincerely thank the First Ladies and to invite you to share your insights with us. We shall begin with Mama Miria Obote.

I thank you for your kind attention.