

**EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY
EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**



**REMARKS BY EALA SPEAKER, RT HON DANIEL FRED KIDEGA
DURING THE 2ND ANNUAL CONFERENCE WOMEN BUSINESS
LEADERS CONFERENCE, NOVEMBER 20th, 2015, KAMPALA,
UGANDA**

DELIVERED BY HON DORA K. BYAMUKAMA

**Dr Gudula Basaza, Chairperson, UWEAL and Members of the Board
present**

Ms. Christine Kyeyune Kawooya, CEO, UWEAL

Distinguished women Business leaders

Ladies and Gentlemen (if any)

I salute you on behalf of the Speaker of the East African Legislative Assembly and on my own behalf. Rt. Hon Daniel Fred Kidega would have loved to have been here in person but he is currently involved in similarly important engagements. He has nevertheless sent heartfelt congratulations to the Uganda Women Entrepreneurs Association Ltd at the occasion of the 2015 Women Business Leaders Conference – Business Achievers Dinner.

At the very outset, I congratulate UWEAL for the initiative and for the preceding conference which I am informed brought Women Entrepreneurs and Business Executives all over Africa to be empowered, forge powerful networks across regions and leverage their individual and corporate strength to champion change in their countries. I am reliably informed and convinced that the conference was very successful. I congratulate you for achieving the feat.

Distinguished Women leaders

Women constitute over 60% of the EAC population. It is therefore imperative that they are not only informed about the progress but that they are party to the implementation activities and initiatives at the Community.

I am a firm believer that Women have a fundamental role to play in boosting social and economic development of the Community through entrepreneurship and trade across the region. They must rise up to the occasion by taking advantage of the Customs Union and Common Market integration phases that open up borders and unlock opportunities for East Africans to freely move across the borders.

Furthermore, Article 122 provides for enhancement of the Role of Women Business leaders where Partner States recognise the importance of women as a vital economic link between agriculture, industry and trade.

Distinguished Guests, without sounding too theoretical, Articles 5, 3 (e); 6 (d); 121 of the Treaty for the establishment of the EAC, places gender mainstreaming and respect for women's rights at the nexus of the EAC integration process.

To this end, the EAC Partner States committed themselves to enact appropriate legislative and other measures to among other things: (a) promote the empowerment and effective integration and participation of women at all levels of socio-economic development especially in decision -making; (b) abolish legislation and discourage customs that are discriminatory against women; (c) promote effective education awareness programmes aimed at changing negative attitudes towards women.

In the foregoing, I want to encourage you all to increase your participation as Business leaders at the policy formulation and implementation levels and to strive to promote special programmes for women in small, medium and large scale enterprises. **The time for the womenfolk to climb up the ladder is now!! There is no and can never be a tomorrow in this matter!!**

On the opposite side of the coin, let women continue to play a critical role in advocacy to eliminate laws, regulations and practises that are obsolete. Here I am talking about prohibitive laws on credit or the very dangerous yet retrogressive practices on land and wife inheritance among others.

And now speaking as one of you and as a Legislator of EALA

I am pleased to report that Members of the EALA long identified the gender disparity in leadership across the EAC Organs and Institutions and the fact that certain policy gaps to date, portray oppressive nature to women in the Partner States.

Against this background, the EALA Women's Forum was formed to provide a powerful voice in the articulation of the East African women's agenda of justice, equality, equity and accountability in the whole EAC integration process. It has a clear vision of creating an integrated East African where all women participate in the decision- making processes, enjoy and fully exercise their rights with a view to achieving sustainable

political and socio-economic development as enshrined in Articles 5 (3e), 121 and 122 of the East African Community Treaty.

The EALA-Women's Forum provides for space and opportunity to take on board and articulate women issues in all EAC business, be it at policy formulation and legislation; recruitment and human resources development; projects and programmes; networking and capacity building.

Other than successfully lobbying for increased numbers of women in Parliament and staffing of the Gender office, the Women's Forum also successfully ensures significant representation of women in the EAC institutions, notably the Commissions and institutions established by the East African Community Joint Negotiation Act 2008 and the Inter-University Council of East Africa Act 2008 among others. There are deliberate efforts to ensure that there is adequate representation of women in EAC institutions and Organs charged with steering the EAC integration process.

Women empowerment is neither a simple task of UWEAL, Uganda or the EAC for that matter, but the initiative goes beyond the region and is a global phenomenon. As you may be aware, Article 13 (b) of the UN Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) gives mandate to UN Member States to promote Women's rights to Bank loans, mortgages and other forms of Financial Credit.

There are a number of International Instruments including the The Beijing Declaration and Program for Action on the necessity to promote women's economic rights and independence. The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the rights of women in Africa (2004) which articulates, in Article 19 Women Rights to Sustainable Development at rural and urban levels in order to provide women with a

higher quality of life and reduce the level of poverty among women is another. The list of instruments is too long and is perhaps a subject for another day.

In the midst of this, I wish to call for unity among the women to enable us to realise progress, access to regional and international markets and in promotion of women in trade negotiations.

Back to the matter at hand, I appreciate and thank all the women for turning up today. I am amazed at the beauty in the room this evening. Just see for yourselves how beautiful and wonderfully you are made!!

Finally, let me conclude my remarks by expressing appreciation to all partners and stakeholders who have made the dinner successful. I thank you very much for your kind attention.