

GOODWILL MESSAGE BY RT. HON NGOGA KAROLI MARTIN, SPEAKER OF EALA AT THE 50TH COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION AFRICA REGION CONFERENCE: 2ND SEPTEMBER 2019, ZANZIBAR - TANZANIA

- **H.E. Dr. Ali Mohammed Shein, President of Zanzibar and the Chairman of the Revolutionary Council;**
- **Rt. Hon. Zubeir Ali Maulid, Speaker of the Zanzibar House of Representatives and our host;**
- **Rt Hon. Job Ndugai, Speaker of the Parliament of Tanzania and the Chairperson of the Conference of Speakers' and Presiding Officers;**
- **Rt. Hon. Rebecca Alitwala Kadaga, Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda and President, CPA International;**
- **Rt. Hon. Justin Muturi, Speaker of the Kenya National Assembly and Chairperson of the CPA Africa Executive Committee;**
- **Distinguished Speakers, Presiding Officers and Leaders of Regional and National Parliaments/Assemblies;**
- **Hon. Monjowa Lifaka, Deputy Speaker, Cameroon and EXCO International Chairperson;**
- **Hon. Members attending the Commonwealth CPA 50th Africa Region Conference;**
- **Government Officials in attendance;**
- **Excellencies, Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen.**

I convey to you, warm greetings from the East African Legislative Assembly at the commencement of this important session of the 50th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Africa Region Conference, taking place here in the beautiful coastline of Zanzibar. I thank Your Excellency, Dr Ali Mohammed Shein, President of the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar for taking time off your busy schedule to grace this important occasion. Your Excellency, on behalf of the EALA, EAC and on my own behalf, I wish you every success in your endeavour to lead Zanzibar, the United Republic of Tanzania and the EAC to greater heights.

Your Excellency, Speakers, Members of Parliament, I am pleased and honoured to deliver this brief message of solidarity on behalf of EALA.

I sincerely thank the hosts and the CPA leadership for extending this invitation to EALA, signifying our growing warm and cordial relations.

Permit me, therefore, to thank the entire panel of Speakers who serve in the various capacities at the CPA and the leadership of the Association, for their successful record and demonstrated ability in steering this *august* body.

I congratulate the CPA Africa region as it observes its golden jubilee in serving Africa and the various legislatures in Commonwealth countries, which subscribe to parliamentary democracy. Excellency, Hon Speakers, Members, no doubt, the founding fathers (and mothers) of CPA (Africa region) upon its establishment 50 years ago, envisioned a body that promotes respect for human rights and freedoms and pursues democracy and good governance. Progress has definitely been made even though certain challenges have to be overcome. I am confident the CPA Africa region is destined to continue with its quest to promote and front the principles we all affirm in - notably, respect for the fundamental tenets of rule of law, Parliamentary democracy, human rights and freedom of association.

Your Excellency, distinguished guests, the conference theme "**E-Parliament: Seamless Platform for Facilitating Democracy**" is timely, more so, as we utilise ICTs in strengthening public participation in our Parliamentary processes. **"It is a debate that we can no longer ignore, leave alone forget – but one we must confront and take head on"**. A healthy and credible legislature is indispensable for democratic governance. Representation involves informing citizens. However, many parliamentary institutions lack the effectiveness to inform and to interact with constituents and such results in citizens-legislators' disengagements. Leveraging on the exponential growth of ICTs and particularly on e-Parliament, may therefore, make democracy more inclusive, prudent and transparent. The responsibility lies on us to embrace e-voting, e-democracy and e-campaigning, among others, which reflect on the new thinking, understanding and practices of how Parliaments must operate in the ICT dispensation. This is therefore, the right time to scale-up this discourse at the continental level. Initiatives by this *august* body to discuss modalities of E-Parliament at this level are therefore very commendable.

Let me further extend hearty congratulations to all the Members of the CPA for their exemplary performance here and back home. In order to realise integration of this great continent to its fullest, we now have an opportune moment for us to take full advantage of the recently launched African Continental Free Trade area (AfCFTA). As legislators, we have to play our rightful and expected role to harness our continent through this historic milestone.

I am confident that together we will steer our various regions and the continent to the much-cherished unity and prosperity. Excellency, Speakers, distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, in conclusion, I wish the 50th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Africa Region Conference fruitful deliberations.

I thank you all for your kind attention.