



EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**REMARKS BY RT. HON DANIEL F. KIDEGA, SPEAKER OF EALA
AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY
EXCHANGE WORKSHOP, 10-11, FEBRUARY, 2015, ARUSHA,
TANZANIA**

**Rt.Hon. Vincent Mavongou-Bouyou, Speaker of the CEMAC
Parliament;**

**Hon John Corrie, President, ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary
Assembly;**

Hon Johan Van Hecke, Former MEP, AWEPA,

**Hon Dr. Odette Nyiramilimo, Chair of the Committee on
General Purpose and Chair of the Network of African
Parliamentarians,**

**Hon Henry Benyanzaki, MP, Parliament of Uganda and
Secretary General, African Network of Parliamentarians,**

Honorable Members of Regional and National Assemblies;

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning! On behalf of EALA and indeed on my own behalf, I welcome you and sincerely thank you for finding time to attend the Parliamentary Exchange Workshop called to learn and to share experiences on strengthening our Parliamentary institutions and examining our role in development processes.

This is indeed my first official engagement outside of the Assembly since been elected Speaker of EALA in December 2014, but one that is nevertheless, timely.

I thank and welcome all our colleagues who have travelled from far and wide to join us. This exemplifies the degree to which we attach to the subject matter of institutional capacities of our Parliaments.

I wish to record my deepest appreciation to our Partners, the Association of European Parliamentarians with Africa (AWEPA), for their strong and unfettered support over the years. The relations between EALA and AWEPA are very warm and cordial. The high level of representation here today attests to this very fact. Kindly extend my deepest appreciation to the AWEPA President, Hon Ms. Miet Smet.

I also appreciate the presence of my colleague from CEMAC Parliament, Rt Hon Vincent Mavongou–Bouyou and that of the Members from the ECOWAS Parliament and the Pan-African Parliament. We are also very privileged to be joined by legislators from the Partner States' National Assemblies. This is indeed a historic setting as it brings together the crème de la crème of the continent's legislators.

Honourable Members, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

The theme of this workshop which is "***The Institutional Strengthening of International Parliamentary Bodies (IPBs) and their role in Development***" could not be more apt and timely.

Today, Parliaments are at the cornerstone of development given their mandate which traditionally revolves around legislation, oversight, representation and on appropriation of budgets.

I have leafed through the programme and find it to be very comprehensive and exciting. This workshop is for example, not complete without looking at the Global Development Framework given the fact that the timeframe within which to realise the Millennium Development Goals is soon lapsing. The time has ticked on the eight MDGs and the UN Millennium Declaration, which represented an unprecedented global partnership to meet the needs of the world's poorest populations, adopted by all Member States fifteen years ago.

Despite all concerted effort, we have not fully realized what was anticipated for the 2015 Agenda. Part of the reason perhaps, may also be attributed to our very own shortcomings as Parliaments. I say so in good faith since Parliaments have a crucial role to play, particularly in improving their country's ability to assume full ownership of national development policies and programmes. As representatives of the people, Parliamentarians speak on behalf of the poor and other vulnerable groups, ensure that development plans are informed by the real priorities on the ground, adopt requisite legislation, approve budget allocations, and exercise oversight over expenditures. If we were to soul search, can we affirmatively respond to the begging question of how much have we achieved?

But this should not discourage us from plotting for the future. The time is ripe and opportune for us to map out on the post 2015

agenda. National development approaches cannot and should not be shaped and driven purely by Governments and Development Partners as Parliaments also have a fundamental contribution to make. Part of the solution to the challenge here lies in strengthening the ability of Parliaments to engage in planning and assessment of development policies and programmes.

Parliaments and Parliamentarians should be empowered to positively influence the architecture of the post-2015 development agenda. The need for country ownership, government accountability, and national policy should feature during the MDGs design and implementation. I see Parliaments focus on a number of priorities for the post-2015 development agenda such as fighting inequalities, ending poverty, instituting a human rights-based approach, and a variety of social, economic, and environmental development issues. This is evidenced by a key Researcher Eberlei Walter (2001) as well as analysts from the World Bank Institute, Cindy Kroon and Rick Stapenhurst (2008).

I am aware that the EU Parliament has made some headway in this direction and recently (in December 2014) passed a Resolution to this effect. I am confident that our good friend Mr. Dick Toonstra, former Director, Office for Promotion of Parliamentary Democracy at the EU Parliament, will enumerate more on this aspect to enhance our learning.

I am happy that we shall find an opportunity to digest the strengths and comparative advantages of each Parliamentary institution. There is also an opportunity for us to debate on strengthening our interactions at different levels – be they at national, regional and continental. I hope we can further enhance our linkages and areas of co-operation and use it as a gateway of information sharing.

In this time and age, Parliaments are also increasingly been recognized worldwide as playing a crucial role in the achievement of democracy and good governance. Indeed, it is Parliament's

traditional responsibility to debate and to pass legislation that provides a legal framework for good governance and the rule of law. Besides, Parliament, through its oversight function, ensures accountability which is also an indispensable ingredient of good governance.

Parliaments need the required independence, resources and ability to perform their mandate. We must as Parliaments also look inwards and be open about strengthening our institutional advancements. Parliamentary reform efforts need to recognize the fact that parliaments consist of multiple intersecting institutions and this should be reflected in project design.

Parliamentary strengthening should be part of wider governance reforms. They should also demand-driven and the design and delivery should be strictly non-partisan. One area that is sometimes forgotten is that of staff. Due to the high turnover of Members of Parliament, staff acts as the corporate memory of the institution; therefore, their inclusion is critical for the sustainability of Parliamentary transformation efforts.

This two day meeting of great minds, is therefore expected to enhance discourse while examining avenues of harnessing collaboration to enable us to take common positions in the aforementioned matters. Though majority of the EALA Members present are from the Committee on General Purpose, we shall ensure the lessons are shared with the whole House. I therefore wish you all fruitful deliberations.

With these few remarks, it is now my singular honour and privilege to declare the two day Parliamentary Exchange Workshop officially open.

I thank you for your kind attention.