

REMARKS AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 5TH MEETING OF THE 3RD SESSION OF THE 3RD EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (EALA)

1. First and foremost, let us thank God, the Almighty, who has blessed this important Activity of the East African Community to take place in Burundi, and particularly in Bujumbura, the Capital City.

2. It is my singular honour to take the floor before this Majestic Assembly, formally opening plenary ceremonies of the Fifth Meeting of the Third Session of the Third East African Legislative Assembly.

3. I am delighted for the kind invitation of the Right Honourable Daniel F. KIDEGA, Speaker of the East African Legislative Assembly, and thank him for having provided Me with this opportunity to meet again and address this August House.

4. Allow Me at this juncture, to congratulate him for his brilliant election as Speaker of the East African Legislative Assembly, and wish him all the best at the service of the East African Community, and for the benefit of the Peoples of East Africa.

5. I wish therefore to take this opportunity, on behalf of the People and the Government of Burundi, and on my own behalf, to warmly welcome Members of EALA, and wish all and every one a pleasant and comfortable stay in the Republic of Burundi.

6. I am also taking this happy opportunity to extend to all of you present my best wishes for the Year 2015 ; a year of good health, happiness, prosperity, success and greater achievements.

Honourable,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen ;

7. The Fifth Meeting of the Third Session of the Third East African Legislative Assembly takes place, today, when the East African Legislative Assembly has undergone significant changes in its Leadership, following some harsh times it went through. But I am informed and happily note that the hard period is now a thing of the past.

8. Let Me also take this opportunity to commend Members of the East African Legislative Assembly for the wisdom, willingness and commitment they have shown in resolving the matter and provide the Community with a youthful Speaker of this important body.

9. I am happy therefore to welcome once again the EALA Speaker and reiterate our full support to the East African Legislative Assembly and its new Leadership, and reassure you that we shall spare no effort in supporting your activities in the Community in general ; and in Burundi in particular.

10. We are all aware that the East African Legislative Assembly plays a key role in bringing the People of East Africa on board of the integration process, through the Public Hearings on Bills and Nanyuki series that are conducted throughout the Region. It is crystal clear that the achievements by the East African Legislative Assembly in this area would not have been possible without its Members' outstanding leadership.

11. Our Community, bound by historical ties and geographical proximity, shares unique warmth and friendship built on a common vision and values which ultimately are the cornerstone for sustainable social and economic development of our Peoples in the respective EAC Partner States.

12. Performance wise, we are gratified to note that much progress has been made by the

East African Legislative Assembly in terms of legislating, representing our Peoples, approving the EAC budgets, providing oversights in many activities as well as establishing linkages between National Assemblies of the East African Community Partner States. I congratulate the EALA for these achievements.

Honourable,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen ;

13. The present sitting of the Fifth Meeting of the Third Session of the Third East African Legislative Assembly occurs when we are in full preparations for the forthcoming 2015 General Elections. Much has been done to pave the way for peaceful, free and fair elections.

I would like to sincerely thank the East African Community and the Region for the strong support and commitment towards Peace and Stability in Burundi.

14. In this perspective, I wish to commend the Joint Initiative of the East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) aimed to supporting the consolidation of Democracy, Reconciliation and Tolerance among Burundians and Political Actors, in view to achieving transparent and credible 2015 Elections.

15. I also wish to put on record my high appreciation of the Programme of Round Tables, which was launched in Burundi on 15th January 2015, and attended by a large number of stakeholders. It was indeed a special occasion for Burundians and eminent personalities of the Region, to tackle issues related to Elections and Electoral processes in view to consolidating regional stability through peaceful elections in Burundi.

16. Those meetings which brought together targeted groups, drawn from different walks of life, have borne strong messages of peace and coexistence, which can help prevent electoral conflict.

17. From where I stand, allow Me once again to address our Partners and the International Community, and call for observers before, during and after the elections. I am pleased to recall that parliamentary elections will be held on 26th May 2015, and Presidential Elections on 26th June 2015.

Honourable,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen ;

18. Going back to EALA Business, I have also been informed of progress made in the area of cooperation between the East African Legislative Assembly and National Parliaments of East African Community Partner States. I am of the strong view that such cooperation will continue to make it easy for the East African Community to work together and in doing so, be able to achieve integrated and harmonious development.

19. The EAC Region faces a number of emerging challenges. It is therefore vital that we constantly work together to strengthen peace and security, and stand solid as a rock against terrorism, piracy and transnational crime. There is also need for our region to actively sustain disaster preparedness and management. This is extremely important today, and even more tomorrow, as our ultimate goal as East Africans is to achieve a Political Federation.

Honourable,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen ;

20. The East African Community Partner States long for the eradication of poverty and illiteracy in our Region. To this effect, the East African Legislative Assembly has a key role to play in overseeing that EAC Partner States fully implement the stages of integration, so that

the Peoples of East Africa genuinely enjoy the benefits of integration.

21. I am pleased to note that the East African Community has been engaged in a number of activities which translate wider and deeper integration, for example the Single Customs Territory, which has sharply improved trade in general, and reduced time and cost for transit goods in particular. There is a need to strengthen the trend and reach total elimination of non tariff barriers.

22. For land-linked countries like Burundi, free circulation of goods goes along with the mobility of people and trade in services. It is important that we reinforce the transition from the Single Customs Territory to a fully fledged Common Market, which will eventually lead us to implement the Monetary Union Protocol.

23. It is my conviction that our integration agenda is all about the answers to the challenges we face, and the problems we are called upon to sort out. Our real challenges are therefore fighting against poverty and raising the living standards of our citizens.

24. To this effect, the East African Community projects and programmes, whether in infrastructure, energy, transport, communications, or in social and productive sectors, are vital and their implementation critical, if we are to deliver and show the intended results.

25. Another top priority is the speedy implementation of Decisions at the EAC Partner States level and the implementation of the Protocols and commitments agreed upon by Partner States, if the benefits of regional integration were to be achieved.

26. It is imperative, therefore, that the East African Legislative Assembly and the Council of Ministers collaborate more on mechanisms to initiate laws to enforce the rapid implementation of the Single Customs Territory and the Common Market Protocol so that East African citizens can reap benefits accruing from them.

The Right Honourable EALA Speaker,
Honourable,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen ;

27. You will allow Me to congratulate once again EALA for holding their Plenary Session in Bujumbura. Just like establishing the East African Court of Justice sub registry in the capital cities of EAC Partner States, rotating the EALA sittings is one way of ensuring visibility of the Community and its Organs, and allowing the citizenry to follow EALA proceedings.

28. I wish to call for the citizen involvement in order to foster active participation in the regional integration process. In doing so, ordinary East Africans will have a voice and EAC Organs their rightful relevance.

29. I would therefore like to assure this August House that the citizens of the Republic of Burundi appreciate the East African spirit and are always ready to offer their steadfast contribution to the realization of the objectives of the Community.

30. To conclude, I wish to take this opportunity to reiterate once again the commitment of the Republic of Burundi to the integration process, and wish EALA Members a pleasant stay and fruitful deliberations all along the ten days during which the Sitting will take place.

31. With these remarks, I declare the Fifth Meeting of the Third Session of the Third East African Legislative Assembly officially open.

Long Live the Republic of Burundi ;
Long Live the East African Legislative Assembly ;
Long live the International Cooperation ;
May God bless you ;
Thank you for your kind attention