

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen;**

1. First and foremost, let us give thanks to the Almighty God who has allowed this important Event of the East African Community to take place in Burundi.
2. Before I proceed further with my Remarks, I would like to extend my sincere condolences to the family of Ms. Eunice Kilonzo, who recently breathed her last. My heartfelt condolences are also extended to her colleagues of the National Oil Corporation of Kenya as well as to the Government and the people of Kenya.

Eunice is, as you know, one of the founding mothers of the EAPCE. Let us devote one minute to her remembrance in a standing ovation. Thank you for the tribute.

3. On behalf of the Government and the people of Burundi and in my own name, I take this opportunity to greet and extend a warm welcome to all the delegations from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda; to the 8th East African Petroleum Conference and Exhibition 2017 that is going to be held here in Bujumbura from the 7th to the 9th of June 2017. Welcome and feel at home in Bujumbura and in any other area of Burundi. Karibuni Sana, Kaze!
4. I am delighted that you have chosen Burundi to host this important Rendezvous. The Government and the people of Burundi do not take your attendance for granted, especially at a time of disparaging rhetoric and literature against our country.

5. My sincere thanks go to the East African Community Officials for having made this choice and to you all distinguished participants to this Conference.

Your presence in Bujumbura is an additional indication of your interest in the development of the oil and gas industry within the EAC and of your commitment to a sustainable development of the region.

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6. Since the beginning in 2003, the East African Petroleum Conference and Exhibition initiative has gone a long way so far. EAPCE'17 event is therefore another opportunity to examine, as a region, where we come from, where we are and where we are heading vis-à-vis of the development of the Oil and Gas sector.
7. The selected theme for this Conference is both inspiring and challenging: **“East Africa - An Emerging Hotspot for Oil and Gas Exploration, Infrastructure Development and Commercialization”**. It is inspiring because, for long time, some East African countries did not know they were so wealthy in terms of petroleum resources.

Now exploration has shown that all of our countries have either Oil or Gas reserves. This discovery raises our awareness on the fact that we can no longer continue to depend on imported petroleum products. Indeed, development involves creativity and innovation.

8. The theme is also challenging because it appeals to decision makers, investors, enterprises, researchers, academia, and the civil society and to all the peoples of the region to a change of mindset. Indeed, making the region a Hotspot for Oil and Gas exploration, infrastructure development and Commercialization requires our joint will, effort and action. It is no simple task indeed, but together as one we can.
9. The will is required to develop policies and make decisions likely to encourage stakeholders who are involved in oil and gas sector to make massive investments in the exploitation of Oil and Gas. The effort is needed to collectively develop suitable technologies and share information on the construction of oil and gas processing plants in each and all the countries of the East African Community. We need to take actions on how to promote and take advantage of both renewable and non-renewable energy sources.
10. In order to achieve this goal, peace and security are fundamental in each one and all of the EAC member countries. I therefore welcome the efforts by EAC countries to maintain peace and security not only within the Community but also outside the Community such as in the CAR, the DRC, Somalia, and South Sudan.

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11. Oil and Gas infrastructure development and commercialization requires networking among members States. But this is impossible if each one and all of us do not do our best to solve small and large

scale conflicts existing between and among us.

12. Fuelling conflict among our peoples does not help the region to move forward. Instead, this hinders the development of cross-border services and the construction of oil and gas pipeline networks in the EAC region. Leaders and people of the East African Community should bear in mind at all times that they are **One People bound by One Destiny**.
13. With a market size of more than 150 million people across the EAC, and in all need of energy on a daily basis, it is an additional motivation for promoting oil and gas exploration, production and processing in the region by fast-tracking research activities and information sharing, by stimulating investment in the sector and by establishing a petroleum industry that can meet the energy demand within the EAC and beyond.
14. The development of the petroleum industry will certainly have an impact on the environment. I call upon the investors involved in oil and gas sector to work closely with the Ministries and other Organizations in charge of the environment sector to ensure that we do not destroy our forests, our water, and our biodiversity.
15. In fact, refining petroleum creates air pollution. On one hand, transforming crude oil into petrochemicals releases toxins into the atmosphere that are dangerous for human and ecosystem health. On the other hand, burning gasoline releases CO₂. As most of you probably know, although oil doesn't produce the same amount of CO₂ that coal burning does, it still contributes greenhouse gases to the atmosphere and increases global warming.

16. Worth noting is also the fact that oil spills cause great environmental damage. Large oil spills sometimes occur during drilling, transport, and use, which of course affect the surrounding environment. But these spills aren't the only risk. Most of the oil spilled into ecosystems is actually from oil that leaks from cars, airplanes, and boats, as well as illegal dumping.

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17. There are solutions to the above listed challenges. All we need to do is to apply them as an EAC pro-active programme. We have to be very careful, in order to minimize the risks of the oil and gas exploitation on our environment, to make sure that our offspring will inherit a safe and clean region to live in. Development is a good thing, quick development is even better, but sustainable development is the best thing we all strive for.
18. The East African Community needs to develop as an integrated whole. United we stand, but divided we fall and fail. Each country has freely chosen to join the East African Community, but as soon as we become a State Member, there are responsibilities we have to assume together. Differences do exist depending on our cultures and history. But as EAC Member States, we have to try and find a common ground on development issues. This is a make or break.
19. The Heads of State and Government of the region have made it clear during the 18th EAC Ordinary Summit, that the East African Community is One and the same family, and subsequently

advocated for the respect of this reality.

Burundi is very grateful for this advocacy and for the strong support and commitment to Peace and Stability in Burundi by the countries of this Community.

20. I would like to call upon the International Community in general, and particularly the former colonial powers, to respect the sovereignty of African countries, and to refrain from influencing the march of history of our peoples.

Let us do business together through mutual respect and tolerance, and avoid social and political interference.

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21. When the Cold War ended, there was some initial optimism that armed conflicts in Africa would decline with the absence of the old ideological divides between East and West. While some conflicts did gradually wind down, new ones also erupted, often insurgencies or civil wars among contending political forces within the same country. Conflicts are currently fuelled by non-ideological factors such as economic competition.
22. Indeed, there is strong correlation between the outbreak of armed conflict and a country's dependence on one or two readily exploitable natural resources, such as diamonds, gold or oil. As leaders and decisions makers, we should do whatever it takes to ensure that our natural resources constitute blessings rather than curses.

23. This can be achieved through nationalistic policies that put the interests of our citizens first. We want foreign corporations to be fair and respectful of our interests while seeking theirs. Together, let us get our natural resources fuel our economies and growth rather than fueling conflicts. Stop blowing the gifts of nature.
24. As I conclude, I wish to draw the attention of all the EAC States Members and all the partners in the region involved in the exploitation of petroleum on a fact that may seem trivial: oil reserves are the subject of a great lust throughout the world. From now on, we should know that our security implies protecting our oil reserves against international predators that fear neither God nor man. With all this wealth, there is a risk of spending decades in turmoil because there are multinationals that do not tolerate that such manna escapes their control.

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25. I would also like to thank you once again for attending this Conference. I hope that you will find some spare time to relax and enjoy fresh air on our beautiful beaches and hills, to visit different attractions across Burundi, to mingle with the Good People of Burundi whose legendary hospitality has no point to prove.

This would help you shrug off the defamatory narrative you have certainly heard about Burundi, and henceforth learn several success stories about Burundi to share with your compatriots once back home.

26. I wish to take this opportunity to reiterate once again the commitment of the Republic of Burundi to the integration process, and wish EAPCE'17 participants a pleasant stay and fruitful deliberations during the three days of the Conference.
27. With these remarks, I declare the **8th East African Petroleum Conference & Exhibition 2017** officially open here in the Capital City of Burundi.

**God bless the East African Community;
Thank you for your kind attention!**