

SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY UHURU KENYATTA, C.G.H., PRESIDENT AND
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE KENYA DEFENCE FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF
KENYA DURING THE 3RD MEETING OF THE EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY, 5TH SESSION OF THE 3RD ASSEMBLY AT PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS,
NAIROBI ON 29TH NOVEMBER, 2016

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Members,
Distinguished Guests,

Hamjambo

I am pleased to address this 5th Session of the 3rd Assembly of the East African Legislative Assembly.

Allow me from the onset to warmly welcome you to Nairobi city, a green city under the sun. We are always proud to host you in the only city with a National Park. It is also the gateway to the Eastern, Central and the larger great lakes region as well as the Horn of Africa. So, welcome home, the cradle of mankind. ***KARIBUNI SANA.***

This Session comes at a critical moment in the life of the East African Community, when the pace of integration has gained momentum with the implementation of the Customs Union in 2005, Common Market in 2010 and coming into force of the Protocol for the establishment of the Monetary Union in 2015. I also note that substantial progress has been made in the implementation of EAC projects and programmes. In March, we welcomed our newest member state, the Republic of South Sudan earlier this year. We remain keen on expanding and deepening our union.

Honourable Members

The Assembly is a key organ of the Community whose primary mandate is to legislate and undertake and oversight. I note with appreciation the legislative achievements this august Assembly has made.

These achievements go a long way to deepen and widen the integration process.

In this regard, the people of East Africa have a lot of expectation on the Assembly especially in ensuring that the integration process is not only on course, but is geared towards meeting their aspirations and high expectations. Indeed, the EAC citizenry want nothing, short of a Community that works for all and is effective. Their desire is to see integration that is bringing positive

changes to their lives; a Community that works to unite the people; a Community that puts available resources into optimal use to the benefit and prosperity all. That is the Community we, who have the great honour and opportunity to serve in this Assembly need to work together in building.

In particular, there is need to ensure timely and effective implementation of the EAC projects and programmes that have been prioritized for the purpose of boosting the intra-EAC trade, regional competitiveness and easing of movement of goods and services across the region.

Mr. Speaker,

This is also an occasion to loud the EAC achievements. I note with appreciation the progress that the Community has made to date. Eleven (11) years ago, we established the EAC Customs Union. It has generated positive results. This is clearly demonstrated by the trend in intra-EAC trade over the period. For instance, the value of the total intra-EAC trade rose from US Dollars 1.8 billion in 2004 to US Dollars 5.1 billion US Dollars in 2015 representing a significant growth of 190 percent. A closer look at both the exports and imports of each one of the Partner States reveals similar upward trends.

We continue to enjoy greater integration of our region through the Common Market and we look forward to harnessing our union with the strides we are talking towards monetary union in 2024. Our desire is to cement this in greater cooperation through political confederation.

We look to augmenting and strengthening our trade ties with all partners of EAC within the continent and friends from beyond the Continent.

Mr. Speaker,

Our business community has been a keen partner and driver of our integration process. I sincerely laud and commend them for their efforts in boosting our

investment profile and partnership in creating jobs for our people. We are therefore duty-bound to support them in addressing the challenges they face in conducting and expanding their businesses in the region.

There still exists a considerable number of trade restricting measures that are a hindrance to actualizing free trade in the EAC. Among the obstacles, include long clearing procedures; road blocks and changes in applicable regulations, which together, contribute to impact trade negatively.

While I note the progress made in bringing the Community NTBs Act into force, this is a critical area that needs concerted efforts of all of us in bringing a long-lasting and sustainable solution to the problem.

The Summit remains committed to ensuring our region emerges as a very competitive trading area. Indeed, significant budgetary allocation and resources have consequently been invested in expanding and modernizing our infrastructure.

We have every reason to take pride in what we have achieved in here in Kenya. We have commenced work on the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) and we

expect it to be operational by the middle of 2017. On-going development works on the Port of Mombasa and regional roads confirms Kenya's commitment to building and achieving sound infrastructure for the greater benefit of the region.

While keeping up our focus on infrastructural developments, we need to ensure that the goods that are carried on these roads and on the railway are made in East Africa. Towards this end, we all need to re-double our efforts in ensuring greater industrialization and in boosting Agriculture so that the direction of trade can be reversed with greater volume of EAC exports. Our people have the necessary will and are capable of producing enough for our consumption and

surplus for other markets. It is our responsibility to urge and support them to take-up this challenge.

Mr. Speaker,

To achieve the set objectives of the Treaty for establishment of EAC and address the various challenges facing the Community the contribution of all organs, institutions and stakeholders is paramount and this must be discharged with dignity, integrity and excellence.

The EAC cannot achieve its vision of a dynamic, progressive and prosperous region without a strong oversight body to guide its healthy development and hold it accountable on behalf of East Africans. On this score, the 3rd Assembly has indeed risen to the occasion.

For example, among the notable achievements of this Assembly include the passage of over 20 Bills cutting across various areas of integration. The Assembly's legislative priority and performance in the last four years has indeed exhibited clear appreciation and understanding of matters that are of great relevance and urgency in deepening and widening the EAC integration.

Mr. Speaker,

On facilitating the Assembly's legislative role, you will recall in my last address to this Assembly in 2015, I committed to support your proposal for a review of the process of assenting to Assembly Bills to shorten the period it takes to bring them into force. The Summit in February 2016 decided to be signing EALA Bills collectively on the same day during the Summit meetings.

Let me, however, hasten to add that as the modalities for operationalization of the decision are implemented, there will be need to ensure exhaustive consultations

and engagement with stakeholders on the regional laws enacted by the Assembly to reflect the interest and general good of majority of EAC citizens.

Related to this process, I would like to urge and encourage EALA to strengthen stakeholders' consultations on the legislative process, including engagement with the Partner States National Assemblies as envisioned under Article 65 of the Treaty.

Honourable Members,

It is worth noting that EALA has actively been participating in public sensitizations on EAC integration in the Community. The significance and importance of public awareness cannot be over-emphasized.

A significant proportion of EAC population is still not adequately informed of the benefits of the EAC cooperation and how they can effectively participate in the process. As the 3rd Assembly completes its term, it will be a great legacy to entrench the on-going sensitization initiatives into the programmes of the Assembly. Such programmes serve to effectively promote a people-centered integration process as per the objectives of the Treaty.

Equally important is the fact that EALA must continue to take lead in ensuring the resources of the Community are prudently utilized. As we continue to invest public resources in the integration process, this places enormous responsibility and calls for noble stewardship role in all organs and institutions that undertake oversight in EALA to put the budgeted resources to proper use in order to achieve the intended objectives.

Mr. Speaker, as I move to conclude, I would like to re-affirm the commitment of my Government to the EAC integration process. We are certain that this is an effective vehicle for the economic development and prosperity of the people of

East Africa. We, therefore, continue to give priority to the Community agenda in the operation of our Government.

Finally, I take this opportunity to wish EALA members who are completing their second and final term the best in their future endeavours and good luck to those who will be seeking re-election to the 4th Assembly.

I thank you all for your kind attention.

God bless our Community. God bless Africa

