REPUBLIC OF RWANDA

SENATE

ADDRESS TO EALA AT THE OCCASION OF ITS 3RD MEETING OF THE 4TH SESSION OF THE 3RD ASSEMBLY

OPENING REMARKS

**BERNARD MAKUZA**

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

24 November 2015

© KIGALI

**Rt. Hon. Daniel KIDEGA, Speaker of EALA,**

**Rt. Hon. Donatille MUKABALISA, Speaker of Parliament of Rwanda, Chamber of Deputies,**

**Hon. Chairperson of the EAC Council of Ministers;**

**Honorable Ministers,**

**Hon. Deputy Speakers of Parliament of Rwanda,**

**Hon. Members of East African Legislative Assembly,**

**Hon. Members of Parliament of Rwanda here present,**

**Honorable Secretary General of the East African Community,**

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. On behalf of H.E. President Paul KAGAME, I am delighted to welcome the Assembly and the entire EALA Family to Rwanda, and I take this opportunity to convey to you his very warm greetings and best wishes.
2. I would like to let you know that **the Parliament of Rwanda** **appreciates** the opportunity to host these meetings of EALA, and may our hospitality provide a perfect environment. We all wish the days ahead bring the Assembly successful deliberations.
3. The agenda of the meetings, which features among other issues - ***Forest Management, One Stop Border Posts, East African Community Vision 2050, Financial Sector Integration, and Disaster and Risk Management***, - represents the determination of our Community to address important matters of integration and cooperation, with the conviction that our Region can overcome challenges, which Partner States would not easily overcome alone.
4. These challenges **–** be they related to good governance, democracy, the rule of law, human rights, economic and social development, defence, security, or international relations **–** these challenges are easily overcome when we agree upon common approaches to address them, taking into consideration our own realities. That is the powerful strength of cooperation and solidarity, and it is the expectation of the people of East Africa.
5. The steps we have made together so far, demonstrate that, with political will and hard work, we can do more and accomplish the results our people expect and deserve. To attain sustainable growth, and reach the level of development and prosperity we want in the Vision 2050, we have to collaborate effectively, to address together issues such as insecurity, bad governance and corruption. We, legislators and in complementarity with our Governments and all Community organs, we have to play our role, so that nothing can get in the way of development as intended in the Treaty.
6. However, as we all know, dreams of East Africans cannot come true unless we eradicate the “business-as-usual” mindset. As legislators, we must ask questions and keep searching for solutions **for and on behalf of** our people. We must identify and address whatever may divert the progress of the Community, and ensure that there are no obstacles to our cooperation for integration. And to start with, procedures and processes governing Organs of the Community should not be themselves an obstacle to the growth of the Community.

**Rt. Hon. Speakers,**

**Honorable Ministers,**

**Hon. Members of EALA,**

**Hon. Members of the Parliament of Rwanda,**

1. One of the challenges the Community faces, is related to inadequate involvement of the people of East Africa. It is indeed common sense that our people must be consulted and involved in each step of integration programs as much as possible. The fact of the matter is that, the cost of failing to involve people widely enough, ultimately is much higher than what is required to invest, for people’s participation in the decision-making processes.
2. We, as leaders, before we go out formulating explanations and finding excuses, we have to ask ourselves, as people’s representatives: are we doing the best we could? Are we not engaging debates just for the sake of it, rather than debating pragmatically, aiming to come up with real solutions for results? Do we not allow administrative and procedural considerations, to stand in the way of development and growth of East Africa?

Actually, it is with these kind of questions that the homegrown solutions are born in Rwanda.

1. For us in Rwanda, we recognized our national values as the guiding principles which define who we are as a people. We have learnt to our great advantage, that traditional mechanisms can be adapted to provide adequate solutions to our unique challenges.
2. After the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, the challenges we faced as a nation have taught us lessons, and they became our motivation to transform the socio-economic situation of the people of Rwanda. We understood that UNITY, SECURITY, and GOOD GOVERNANCE were very critical for survival and sustainability as a nation. We are a nation that has been built from ashes. Today, Rwanda stands for something: **AGACIRO** – **RESILIENCE** and **DIGNITY**.
3. That is why Rwanda is very committed to the objectives of a people-centered Community. Rwanda will continue to stand for “**a prosperous, competitive, secure, stable and politically united East Africa**”, because that vision represents the aspirations of East Africans.
4. For this same reason, EALA and national Assemblies, we need to enhance cooperation and work more together, to ensure that laws and policies are harmonized and implemented effectively and efficiently, for the benefit of our people. We need to keep improving. Together, there is no doubt we shall give our contribution, towards realizing our people’s aspirations for stability and prosperity.
5. Among the areas of cooperation we need to focus on, in an effort to consolidate the momentum towards regional integration, we need to focus together on embracing the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** adopted by UN Member States in September this year, while placing **people** and the **environment** at the center of policies and priorities. The agenda of your meeting is actually timely, and it clearly reflects the concerns raised in the Sustainable Development Goals.
6. As we all know, sound and effective implementation of Sustainable Development Goals, will require different amount of attention to different goals and targets, depending on where we stand in terms of priorities, capabilities and resources.
7. Basing on our experience as Rwanda, we believe that we should develop ambitious, comprehensive and achievable development plans, which recognize the importance of national ownership; because when citizens are on board, they do the work themselves. **In this regard**, we have to draw the lesson from MDGs. As we have seen, the MDGs had to be locally adapted and owned, otherwise they were delayed.
8. **Therefore**, the activities of this Assembly, but also our national Assemblies in general, should articulate the new Sustainable Development framework, with a genuine effort to involve the citizens.I appeal to you to ensure that our people are fully and genuinely involved in governance.
9. For us the Parliament of Rwanda, we hear the people; and recently we have listened to Rwandans’ specific aspirations, in consideration of Rwanda’s supreme interest ***regarding Constitutional revision***. As legislators, there is no other voice to hear, other than our people’s will, both in decision-making and in accountability. People’s aspirations are the only argument against intimidations and prejudices. **National sovereignty belongs to our people.** We cannot afford to apologize for the very things that work for our people, and which make us stronger. This is the real expression of democracy.

**Rt. Hon. Speakers,**

**Honorable Ministers,**

**Hon. Members of EALA,**

**Hon. Members of the Parliament of Rwanda,**

1. With regard to environment issues, I would say that your Assembly is convened at a critical turning point, just days before the start of the UN Climate Change Conference, in Paris (widely known as COP21).
2. I would like to recall the remarks H.E. President Paul KAGAME addressed to EALA a few years ago. He said, and I quote, “**Our Region continues to experience natural disasters and food shortages, owing in part to effects of climate change and poor management of the environment. The need to develop agricultural policies and practices, and land management systems that ensure food security in this region, is most urgent”**.
3. As legislators, we understandably have a critical role to play,so as to mitigate natural disasters, food and water insecurity, and other effects of climate change, in the context of the [Agenda for Sustainable Development](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/). I particularly appreciate the attention given to the issues of “**Natural Resources, Environment Management, Food Security and Rural Development**” in the EAC Vision 2050.
4. These particular issues stipulated in the EAC Vision 2050, are obviously linked to the Sustainable Development Agenda. As we address them, we should always keep in mind that development is not a miracle; ***we have to work for it to the point it may even hurt***, and of course it depends on a people-centered leadership that owns its agenda, with citizens on board.
5. Finally, I would like to stress once again that security and good governance will be the “*sine qua none*”, to achieve our Community’s Vision 2050, if we are really determined to make East Africa more visible, competitive and relevant to the global economy.
6. With these few remarks, on behalf of H.E. President Paul KAGAME, I declare the 3RD MEETING OF THE 4TH SESSION of this Assembly, officially open.
7. I thank you for your kind attention. ASANTENI SANA.