



EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY
“STRENGTHENING THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY
THROUGH DEVELOPMENTAL LOCAL
GOVERNMENT”

Key Note Address by

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Ambassador

Secretary General –East African Community

MAY 14, 2013

COMMONWEALTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT FORUM

**H.E. President Yoweri Museveni (Uganda),
H.E. President Mahinda Rajapaksa (Sri Lanka),
H.E. Vice President Teima Onorio (Kiribati),
Mr. Chairperson, Honorable Adolf Mwesige (Minister of Local
Government, Uganda and CLGF Vice-Chairperson),
Government leaders present,
Members of the Diplomatic corps,
Director Generals and Executive Directors of International
Organizations, Members of NGOs & Civil Society Organisations
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen**

First and foremost, I wish to thank the Organizers for inviting me to this important Conference. I would like to commend the work that the Commonwealth Local Government Forum is doing in making a contribution to, the strengthening of democracy through support to local governments in the Commonwealth.

Permit me also to congratulate HE Yoweri Kaguta Museveni President of the Republic of Uganda and the People of Uganda for hosting this 2013 conference, becoming the first country in East Africa to host the forum.

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

The East African Community (EAC) is a Community aimed at achieving economic, social and ultimately cultural integration within the East Africa region. The EAC integration process is divided in four stages namely establishment of a Customs Union, Common Market, Monetary Union and Political Federation. The aim of our integration is the Socio Economic Development of the people of East Africa, and provide a strong building block for a strong, vibrant African Union.

I salute the people of East Africa for the strong support they have given the integration agenda, including support for a Political Federation in East Africa.

Local governments in the East Africa have provided critical inputs not only when Partner States were negotiating the relevant Protocols but also play an important role in the process of local ownership of the EAC integration agenda. Local governments provide a primordial role of engaging with and educating the local communities on the implications of regional integration on the lives of the citizens. For example, with regard to the EAC Common Market Protocol, local governments have a role to explain to the communities the implications of free movement of goods, labor, services and capital, as well as the right of residence and establishment and overall the rights that each citizen acquires in this phase of integration.

It seems to me that there are two exciting processes currently underway in our Region. On the one hand is the accelerated journey to East African Integration, and on the other, a renewed commitment to devolution and decentralization. The two are mutually reinforcing. One strengthens our capacity to deal with the strategic imperative of a viable internal market that can lay the basis for our capacity to participate in the global political and economic arena. The other brings decision making and development where they should be: in the hands of the communities and the people of East Africa. One celebrates our East Africanness, and indeed our Africanness, the other anchors this celebration in our own individual and Community empowerment.

The two processes complete and complement one another, because devolution and decentralization is not balkanization. It is empowering citizens to take charge of their destinies within strong States, united and vibrant. And in our Region, empowering them to construct a strong, prosperous and Politically United East Africa.

But how can we celebrate and construct unless we roll up our sleeves and get to work? East Africa has decided on a path to middle income status in the next few decades. This will not come about through dreams. It will only come about when we get up and work, work day and night, work until it our muscles ache and our brains feel it. And when I say we must work day and night, I mean it. I am concerned that East Africa is closed for business at night.

Our roads are empty. Our shops are closed. Our banks are barricaded. Our tailors are asleep. Our road constructors are off duty, and our Local leaders make sure that East African nights are calm!

Excellencies, we shall not, and cannot develop as fast as we must with this mindset. I urge that East Africa removes barriers to trade, does away with roadblocks and other impediments that make the movement of goods, people and capital in our region.

I call upon all Local leaders gathered here today to deliver what the people expect from all of us. They expect that their leaders will be competent, honest, clean, committed, and visionary. They look to them for empathy yes, but most importantly for solutions to their problems. They expect decent infrastructure, working schools and clinics, employment, clean water, energy as well as the space and freedom to live and grow as human beings, enjoying the rights responsibilities that define their humanity.

EAC Supporting the Local Government,

I am glad to note that Within the East African Community, Local Governments have become one of the major pillars of the Consultative Dialogue Framework for Private Sector, Civil Society and other interest groups in the EAC integration process.

This is an important opportunity for them to fully participate and make an input in the EAC integration agenda. I am well informed that Local government in the EAC region face many challenges, which can only be addressed by working together with local citizens, communities, businesses and adopting a developmental approach and we as a secretariat will give all the support we can towards ensuring that the Local government play their role in the integration process.

On this same note, let me take this opportunity to congratulate the Republic of Uganda its commitment to implementation of the decentralization policy, having allocated in 2012 sh1.8 trillion, up from sh31b in 1999 towards its decentralization policy.

I am glad that Local Governments have organized to participate in the integration agenda. I look forward to closer cooperation with the East African Local Governments' Association as well as the the East African Local Governments' Forum. These Partnerships are critical if we are to meet the Millenium Development Goals and participate fully in the post 2015 development agenda.

Finally, I look forward to working with all of you to advance gender equality in our region. Investing in women is not an act of altruism. It is smart politics and smart economics. East Africa has close to 70 million women and girls. If only half of these were as productive as the average Chinese worker, they would be a 320 billion dollar economy. Therefore, when we say we must invest in East Africa, surely we must mean invest in these people. When we say East Africa is at the forefront of an emerging, assertive Africa, surely we must be talking predominantly about these millions of women and girls. When we assert, as we most certainly must, that We are an emerging market, surely we must mean that the Women of East Africa are the emerging market.

I am glad that the Women in East Africa have formed Women in Business Platform within the East African Business Council. I urge the leadership of the East African Development Bank and other Financial Institutions to open windows geared at supporting Women headed businesses. I urge Corporate East Africa to develop deliberate strategies to have gender equality on their Boards.

Working with a gender and social equity perspective provides new opportunities for democratization of municipal governance and reducing poverty through provision of quality, relevant and effective services and opportunities for both women and men. I believe that the Local Government in East Africa and across the Commonwealth has a vital role and responsibility in engaging women and men as equals in municipal decision-making.

When I call for an East Africa open for business twenty four hours a day, I expect that women will play their rightful role in this round the clock economy. That is why we must invest in the security required for this to happen, and commit to eradicating those retrograde actions that dehumanize East Africa's women including FMG, wife battery and rape. These activities are inhuman and criminal. We must fight them. However we must also fight Society's low expectations around women and the girl child that raise the bar and multiply barriers to their success.

Your commitment to dealing with these barriers as Local leaders is smart politics, smart economics, and smart integration. It simply is SMART, period! You have all our support.

With these remarks, I look forward to a successful conference. I thank you for your kind attention.

East African Community Secretariat

Arusha, Tanzania

14th May 2013