



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON. WILLIAM
SAMOEI RUTO, CGH, PHD, PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF KENYA, MADE DURING THE
OPENING OF THE 3RD SITTING OF THE 3RD
SESSION OF THE 5TH EAST AFRICAN
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

MARCH 5TH, 2024

PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, NAIROBI

Hon. Joseph Ntakirutimana, Speaker of the East African Legislative Assembly,

Hon, Moses Wetang'ula, Speaker of the Kenya National Assembly,

**The Secretary-General of the East African Community,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,**

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen;

1. I am delighted to join this august assembly today to preside over the official opening of the 3rd sitting of the 3rd session of the 5th East African Legislative Assembly, and to have the honour of welcoming you back to our Parliament's chambers in Nairobi, after 6 years.
2. It is immensely gratifying to note that the work of intensifying the integration of the East African Community has proceeded at an encouraging pace so that while much remains to be done for us to accomplish our aspiration, the progress we have made has taken us closer to it. It is no overstatement to acknowledge the contributions of this Assembly towards making this progress possible.
3. At the beginning of this session, it is appropriate to reaffirm our collective devotion to the constitutive aspirations of our community and, therefore, the objectives of East African regional integration. There is no denying that our vision, to be a prosperous, competitive, secure, stable and politically united East Africa is taking shape at a higher rate than before. The ultimate aim of this noble enterprise is to transform and translate economic, political, social and cultural integration into a positive impact on the well-being of every citizen of East Africa.



4. Our common agenda, therefore, is to set out optimal policies and strategies which unite us firmly in the singular pursuit of positive transformation in the political and economic, social and cultural, research and development as well as technology and innovation, defence and security and also the legal and judicial sectors.
5. It is fair to say that much of our efforts cannot proceed, let alone succeed, without the loyal contribution and hard work of our community's legislative organ. This Assembly accentuates the direct linkage between common regional and specific intra-member state policies by performing the vital and simultaneous functions of embedding regional integration agenda at the heart of domestic policymaking, while also ensuring that the EAC represents, articulates and projects the interests of member states as well the entire collectivity of our community.
6. Our peoples' journey to a prosperous, competitive, secure, stable and politically united East Africa entails the implementation of policies and establishment of institutions under the four well-known pillars of integration, namely: a customs union, common market, monetary union and political federation.
7. The instruments and frameworks needed to bring into operation our semi-autonomous institutions, delineate our areas of cooperation and attend to the pillars of integration, are promulgated under the exclusive mandate of this Assembly, which has demonstrated exemplary dedication to its legislative function, conscientious deference to important lessons from the history of our regional integration efforts, and a vigilant commitment to deliver a robust architecture for the successful delivery of an ambitious programme of action.



8. By dint of a consistent drive to implement our collective vision for integration, this Assembly has enabled us to overcome the shortcomings which rendered the first East Africa Community so vulnerable that it ultimately collapsed, and to make significant progress on each pillar of integration, thereby making EAC a resilient, dynamic and progressive region on the threshold of historic transformation.
9. Our customs union is on the move, with this Assembly creating legislative frameworks to establish a common external tariff, uniform customs rules and procedures, and common rules of origin. These frameworks also provide for the elimination of non-tariff barriers and the implementation of a single customs territory, and one-stop border posts, as well as the facilitation of the development of regional and national trade information portals. Similarly, the Assembly has provided the framework to conclude the COMESA-EAC-SADC tripartite free trade area, the signing of the agreement establishing the Africa Continental Free Trade Area, and the adoption of the EAC e-commerce strategy.
10. Consequently, the turn-around time for trucks has reduced significantly along all our transport corridors and the clearance time at border crossings has reduced by 84%, making trade more efficient in our region. This is why intra-EAC trade is the highest of the trading blocks in our continent at 25%. With a collective GDP of \$350 billion, a population of 350 million and an area of 5 million square kilometres, the EAC member States are an attractive investment destination. EAC's total trade in 2022 stood at \$74 billion. In the same year, Africa accounted for 44% and 25% of EAC's total exports and imports respectively.



11. This Assembly likewise has enabled the community to implement the common market protocol which guarantees free cross-border movement of persons, labour, services and capital, as well as the right of establishment and residence, through the use of standard identification systems, harmonised travel documents, mutual recognition of qualifications, and harmonised labour and social policy frameworks. The EAC e-passport is now internationally recognised, while several member states now permit citizens to travel using the national identity card. Visa fees for cross-border movements have mostly been eliminated, and cross-border communities now enjoy free movement. Students can enrol and transfer with greater ease, and regional institutions now implement mutual recognition agreements for various professional qualifications.
12. To actualise the East African Monetary Union by 2031, this Assembly must provide the necessary framework to anchor the full implementation of the customs union and common market protocols, especially through the establishment of vital organisations such as the Monetary Institute, Bureau of Statistics, financial services as well as the surveillance and enforcement commissions. Additionally, the Assembly should facilitate the convergence of criteria for macroeconomic governance, and provide for the harmonisation of both fiscal and monetary policies.
13. The fourth pillar of East African integration, the political federation, depends on effective cooperation in the fields of political affairs, regional peace and security, as well as defence cooperation. The transitional model for our federation is already in place, in the form of the East African Political Confederation, under which we have been able to deploy the East African Community Regional Force (EAC-RF) to restore peace and security in Eastern DRC.



Other achievements under the transitional model include the chief justice forum to strengthen the rule of law, enhance access to justice and facilitate the evolution of a distinct East African jurisprudence.

14. Similarly, other platforms have been established to enable progressive engagement between national institutions through the exchange of information, skills and capacity, and developing common regional standards in such diverse fields as good governance, election management, human rights institutions and anti-corruption.
15. We now have in place protocols on defence as well as peace and security, together with the EAC Mutual Defence Pact, the EAC Early Warning Mechanism, protocol on combating illicit drug trafficking, an EAC inter-religious council and a framework for conducting public participation on the establishment of the political federation, which is concluded in Kenya, Uganda and Burundi and now continuing in the other member states.
16. There is no doubt that as a result of the progress made in entrenching our regional integration as a social, cultural, political and economic reality, East Africa is emerging as a beacon of unity, stability, security and progress, the beating heart of Pan-African integration and engine of the AfCFTA, as well as the epicentre of Africa's move to position itself as the next frontier of global investment and industrial transformation.
17. That is why we have grown tremendously, from 3 founding partner states to 8 countries connecting the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean, serving 310 million citizens and forging a major market. These achievements are chiefly due to the contributions of this Assembly.



18. The work that this Assembly does matters. We must therefore remain focused on what is at stake, committed to completing the outstanding work, and determined to do our best at all times when called upon to serve the people of East Africa.
19. Peace, stability and security must remain our foremost concern because they are the foundations that underlie all pursuit of growth, development and prosperity. A peaceful, stable and secure East Africa is a competitive and prosperous East Africa.
20. As we continue to work on such challenges to the growth of trade and investment as persistent non-tariff barriers, distracting and costly trade disputes, conflicting tax regimes, weak enforcement and inadequate resources, we must also take seriously the fundamental shortcoming to our agenda that is low involvement of the private sector, even as we prepare to get and stay on top of emerging threats in the digital space, as well as climate change.
21. Now that we have adequately established that this Assembly possesses what it takes to drive our vision of a prosperous, competitive, secure, stable and politically united East Africa, I take this opportunity to pose a couple of challenges to the Honourable Members gathered here.
22. It is important for us to lay a strong foundation for East Africa to make a transformative contribution to Pan-African integration and the emergence of the AfCFTA as the next hub of global investment, trade and industry. In order to do this, we have to complete the implementation of all the pillars of EAC integration urgently, and, equally, critically align our integration agenda with the broader African transformational paradigm under the Africa We Want.



23. Secondly, we must provide a strong framework for achieving rapid leap-frogging and the development of sustainable competitive advantage in emerging hi-tech fields like the digital economy in general, and artificial intelligence, automation, robotics and machine learning, in order to stay ahead of both threats and opportunities that will continue to unfold in a rapidly digitizing global economy.
24. Thirdly, there is a need to lend your support to the African Leaders' Nairobi Declaration and Call to Action, which defines a strong and distinctly African contribution to the global discourse on humanity's foremost existential challenge, by affirming the nexus between climate action and sustainable development, and calling for increased investment in Africa to kick-start a green industrial revolution.
25. To ameliorate the resource constraint which persistently hampers our progress, this Assembly is called upon to reflect deeply on the range of opportunities, and the various ways in which it can complement national and regional efforts to mobilise and allocate more resources to the regional integration agenda.
26. In particular, I challenge you to apply your deliberative bandwidth to the forthcoming World Bank Group's International Development Association (IDA) Summit. I am delighted to announce that Kenya will be hosting this year's Summit on 29th April 2024. East Africa will therefore have the opportunity to witness from close quarters and contribute to important deliberations with critical implications for our growth and development.
27. At this event, African leaders will articulate a strong case for an ambitious and robust 21st Replenishment of the IDA, which is the largest source of development assistance, and donor funding



for basic social services for the world's 75 low-income countries, to support economic transformation in Africa and throughout the Global south.

28. The last IDA Replenishment in 2021 raised USD 91 billion, which was disbursed to eligible beneficiary countries over a period of 3 years. The Kenya Summit aims to highlight to donors and other development partners critical priority target areas of development financing in Africa, make the case for a significantly higher level of financing in the IDA21 cycle and support African countries to effectively address development challenges and exploit opportunities.
29. I have invited my fellow Heads of State and Government to participate in this highly important platform. Being confident of this Assembly's capacity to facilitate transformative interventions, I urge you to join this cause and formulate your contributions to this endeavour with urgency, imagination and ambition.
30. I am highly obliged to you, Hon. Speaker, for inviting me to address this Assembly. I do not take your consideration for granted.
31. I wish you all productive engagements, insightful debates and fruitful deliberations as you usher in the 3rd Session of this Assembly. Feel at home in Magical Kenya, the home of all humankind. I urge Hon Omar Hassan, Chair of the Kenyan chapter of the Assembly, to use this session to introduce you to the warmth and hospitality of our country. Thank you God bless you God bless Kenya.

I thank You.

