



**EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY
EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**REMARKS BY THE RT. HON. MARGARET NANTONGO ZZIWA,
SPEAKER OF EALA ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF THE
2013 SID REPORT ON THE STATE OF EAST AFRICA, HILTON
HOTEL, NAIROBI – NOVEMBER 22, 2013**

The Regional Director, SID East Africa

My fellow Members of EALA

Directors of TradeMark East Africa

Representatives of the Private Sector and Civil Society

Distinguished Guests; Ladies and Gentlemen;

On behalf of EALA and on my own behalf, I thank and congratulate the Society for International Development (SID) for this special invite at the launch of its flagship report: the State of East Africa Report 2013.

The timing is perfect since EALA is currently sitting in Nairobi for its 3rd Meeting of the 2nd Session. The fact that you have deemed it fit to engage us at this time is therefore collegial and heart-warming.

The relations between SID and the EAC are at the very least, cordial. I am reliably informed that Amb Juma Mwapachu, EAC's Secretary General *Emeritus* currently heads this important think-tank as its President. The current Secretary General, Amb Dr. Richard Sezibera is also a close ally of the institution.

The State of EAC Report - is first becoming a must read publication due to its authoritative and objective analysis of the socio-economic and political situation in the region. I want to laud SID East Africa for constantly remaining focused and on the cutting edge of issues in East Africa.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen: What makes the publication all the more remarkable is the fact that it arrives on the scene at a time when the EAC is also "tightening the screws" in ensuring socio-economic development remains a priority.

Hon Members, Ladies and Gentlemen:

This year, the Report's theme revolves around inequalities in the region raising a number of strategic economic, social and political questions with an aim of engaging all East Africans in a robust and enriching discussion about the East African Community integration process. The Report explores one of the most important but perhaps least understood challenges of contemporary society. I am referring to inequality.

Integration is becoming the buzz word in the globe today. I am proud to be East African for a number of reasons. It is often stated that the region is the fastest growing regional economic hub, which is true. Today, the region continues to record impressive growth. For example, evidence shows expansion in terms of total trade by from \$ 37 billion in 2010 to \$45 Billion in 2011. The inflows in terms of Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) also rose from \$2.6 Billion to \$ 4 Billion in 2012. A casual glimpse of the Nairobi city reveals development in terms of sky-scrappers, improved infrastructure and an optimistic people going around their day to day duty of economic building.

That aside as SID says in the Report, we need to pay more attention to the emerging inequalities which are more or less cross-cutting. On Wednesday this week, we were privileged to meet with the Governor of Nairobi, H.E. Dr Evans Kidero, who shared with us statistics about the Nairobi County, some of which are grim. Accordingly, 7 out of the 10 persons you see walking out there in the streets are jobless, while another 6 out of 10 live in informal settlements. The largest population, the youth, constitute about 8 out of 10 persons and their age range is below 30 years. Many are jobless and live below a dollar a day.

This analogy somewhat compares to the other Partner States too. If we do not address the under-lying issues, then we are in grave danger of not meeting the Millennium Development Goals on the one side and disintegrating our socio-economic fiber on the other side. The macro level data masks a sobering reality with recent polls showing that many East Africans are not feeling the benefits of growth. This therefore means that a lot more should be done to reverse the trends.

Hon Members, Ladies and Gentlemen

The task of securing our economic future is not the exclusive responsibility of the EAC alone but it extends to all stakeholders the civil society included, since it must be people-centred.

As the region continues to develop, we must seek solutions to the challenges that arise in any such process. Economic stimulus programmes that address social challenges and support local value chains shall help to narrow the widening poverty gaps. This is why I find the recent launch of the UWEZO Fund by H.E. Uhuru Kenyatta, an example of how the country

and region can incubate enterprise, catalyse innovation, and create employment for the youth. Such measures should be replicated in the region to spur industrial revolution to power the ambition of becoming a middle income region by 2030.

The region needs to ensure that quality is not compromised when it comes to the education standards. While we appreciate that free and universal education is noble – we must strive to improve on the quality.

Then there is the effervescent ghost called corruption which the SID Report terms as blighting and damaging to all, including the regions important institutions responsible for security and justice. The time for the corrupt is over. It is now time to put our “money where our mouth is” Taming corruption starts with the individual. You and I must say no to the cancer of corruption which ravages our constituencies. It further calls on us to stiffen and enforce legislation to tame the vice and to appropriate additional budgets to support strengthening of the Anti-Corruption agencies to be able to do their work.

As EALA, the launch enables us to join the on-going debate in addressing the challenges and arms us with the data necessary to enact people-centred legislation, undertake representation and oversight that meet the aspirations of the citizens.

Ladies and Gentlemen

There is much in the State of East Africa Report 2013 to challenge perceptions, reflect on and debate. A typical example is the structure of East Africa’s economy which is changing from agriculture to service based.

For example in Burundi, in just seven years, the service industry has overtaken agriculture as the biggest contributor to the economy. Yet only 4% of the population work in the formal sector with a minimum wage pegged at \$3.10.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

I wish to say that the launch of the Report is thus a major milestone in the life and times of the SID to be proud of. EALA is challenged by what we have heard and we look forward to absorbing the full richness of the Report. We join in congratulating you for producing this compilation. SID can count on EALA to be a strong partner as you roll out your series of encounters, discussions and debates with East Africans.

May I also acknowledge, with much appreciation, the valuable support provided by the TradeMark East Africa in making this project viable.

Let us begin the dialogue in this very room. In order to set the ball rolling, it is now my singular pleasure to officially launch *The State of the East African Report 2013*. I thank you for your kind attention!