



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

MINISTRY OF EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

OEPNING REMARKS

BY

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1ST DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER/MINISTER OF EAC AFFAIRS

AT MPONDWE ONE STOP BORDER POST

24TH MARCH 2023

The Minister of State for ICT & National Guidance;

The Area Members of Parliament;

The Permanent Secretary, MEACA;

The Resident District Commissioner –Kasese;

The Chairperson LCV-Kasese;

The Mayor-Mpondwe-Bwera Town Council

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I take the honour and pleasure to welcome you to this community engagement activity that we are having today at Mpondwe.

I am happy to be here even after the commissioning of the One Stop Border Post by H.E, the President. I am happy because the OSBP is one of the commitments by the Government of Uganda to fast track the EAC integration, specifically the Customs Union and Common Market Protocols.

In order to develop, African countries will need to trade more, both with one another and with the rest of the world.

We need to appreciate that the East African Community is contributing to meeting Uganda's public policy objectives and national aspirations in the National Development Plan III and Vision 2040.

There are still gaps around awareness and knowledge regarding the EAC among small and medium enterprises. Knowledge about customs, standards and other regulatory processes involved in cross

border trading. There is need to provide and avail information to SMEs about trade facilitation documents that are required to trade across the borders.

There are enormous opportunities for SMEs to reap from the EAC Common Market Protocol hence resorting to protectionism will only restrict our SMEs from the benefits of integration.

I am also glad to note that our borders have evolved over time within the EAC. We now have border agencies from neighbouring partner states working together and exchanging ideas. It is not yet working in Mpondwe because DRC is not yet fully integrated specifically into the Customs Union and Common Market protocol. However those process are on going and very soon we shall be like other OSBPs.

One of the principles of EAC is people centred and market driven cooperation. In order for us to realise the full potential of regional Integration, there is need to get a buy-in from all the stakeholders and especially the local communities. This can only be realized if we find answers to the critical issues that affect them.

Having personally participated in many meetings of the Council of Ministers EAC, I have no doubt that this engagement will give me grass root insights that will empower me during policy discussions.

Why Integration

a) Creation of a Large Regional Market

As a community, prosperity can be achieved through an expanded regional market which supports production of goods and services, increases the purchasing power of the people, and propels good quality products which are competitive in the regional, continental and international markets. Therefore, as members of the Council of Ministers, through deliberate regional efforts, we push for cooperation in developing regional capabilities in industrialization, standards, infrastructure and accessible markets. In this effort, we deal with the obstacles that have slowed down our integration agenda especially Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs). Once the Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) are reduced or completely removed from our Partner States, then this regional Market with an estimated 300 million people will experience a positive trend in Regional trade and thus spur prosperity for our people.

b) Strengthening the Security of the Community

Like many other regions in the world, but Africa in particular, there are security threats in the EAC. Strategic Security for the Community is a priority and reality today more than ever. EAC Countries have to act together to decisively defeat the pockets of insecurity in the region. The responsibility of guarding and protecting the region cannot be delegated. Therefore, the region's effort to cooperate in defense and security matters provides bedrock for further and deeper need for integration.

c) Enhancing Fraternal Relations

The fraternal relations of the people of East Africa is a key area in the integration agenda. The historical, cultural and language links among the Countries have to be deliberately harnessed to provide a bedrock of our Integration. Our people have relatives across borders, others sleep on one side of the border and wakeup in the morning to dig, go to school, go to work on the other side of the border. To such people the border line is not only imaginary but divisive to their cultural connection. The more we integrate and enhance deeper cultural connectivity, the more we break such barriers.

d) Political Unity

Political Union is the ultimate goal of our integration as per the Treaty. If regional blocks unify and agree on the Political systems, then the various blocks will unite the whole of Africa and the Pan African dream will become a reality. With the Vision of the EAC as “a prosperous, competitive, secure, stable and politically united East Africa”, Political Federation is a target that must be achieved.

Once again I thank you all for coming here and I look forward to the discussions. I call upon all of us to share pertinent issues affecting our border to enable us come up with recommendations that can inform policy.

For God and my Country