

# EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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## SPEAKER'S CHAMBERS

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### REMARKS BY RT. HON. JOSEPH NTAKIRUTIMANA, SPEAKER OF THE EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (EALA), AT THE 149<sup>TH</sup> IPU: GENEVA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE

- Madam President of the IPU, Rt. Hon. Dr. Tulia Ackson;
- Speakers and Heads of Delegation, here present;
- Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

#### Good morning/Afternoon!!

I take this opportunity to address this esteemed Assembly and extend warm greetings from the East African Legislative Assembly to you all.

**Madam President**, the theme of this 149<sup>th</sup> IPU focuses on the profound impact of Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) on our world and underscores its essential role in fostering a more peaceful, sustainable, and equitable world which emphasizes everyone's right to partake in scientific progress and its benefits.

The East African Community aspires to be a world leader in this respect and has gone ahead to establish specialized and purposeful institutions and centres of excellence to harness its credentials. It has established the East African Science and Technology Commission; the East African Health Research Commission; the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization; the Lake Victoria Basin Commission; the East African Civil Aviation, Safety and Security Oversight Agency; all aimed at promoting scientific knowledge, research, innovation and development. The work of these specialized institutions' are shared with leading world bodies and other national bodies in the EAC partner states because they seek to mitigate challenges that affect our everyday living.

Further, in East Africa, we have made notable strides in embracing technology and our parliaments have recognized the importance of digital transformation; we are actively working to bridge the gap between our institutions and the people we serve. We have implemented various initiatives to enhance public engagement, improve transparency, and increase accountability. However, we are also aware of the challenges that lie ahead, particularly in terms of resource allocation, gender disparity, capacity building, including dual-use technologies, the global technology

divide, regulatory lag, technological unemployment, data privacy concerns, misinformation, rising inequalities, and cybersecurity. We therefore pay great attention to emerging technologies, data sharing, data effects, local content and standardization, social media, online survey and virtual representation; among others.

We are also in the process of leveraging digital tools to streamline the legislative process. For example, in some partner states in the EAC, electronic voting system is used to speed up voting procedures, while digital databases are used to provide instant access to legal precedents and research materials, improving the quality of legislative drafting;

And in the oversight role, in the near future, we strive to use technologies such as data analytics and artificial intelligence to help in monitoring parliamentary activities more efficiently.

On Transparency, EALA is keen to promote this as a precursor to achieving accountability. Therefore, the use of modern technologies is paramount in enhancing parliamentary proceedings to be more accessible to the public. Live streaming sessions, publishing digital records are all instrumental for secure and transparent record-keeping.

However, to realize best results, we also seek to promote efficiency and cost-effectiveness in what we set out to do. Automating and digitalization of our administrative tasks is at the core of the reforms we are implementing, thus; allowing parliamentarians to focus more on their core duties. By integrating these technologies, parliaments can become more reliable, responsive, transparent, and effective in fulfilling their roles.

As I conclude, it is crucial for us to collaborate internationally, promoting equitable access to the benefits of STI. Our regulatory frameworks must remain adaptable to the rapidly evolving technological landscape. We must also prioritize preparations for potential socio-economic impacts of technological unemployment, particularly for vulnerable demographics. We must continue to play a pivotal role in fostering a safe and inclusive environment in which technology supports rather than undermine human rights and also to ensure inclusivity and diversity by broadening access to STI careers, particularly for women and youth, so that they can engage in these fields meaningfully.

***Madam President, distinguished delegations,*** this is our opportunity as parliamentarians to shape a peaceful, sustainable, and just world for future generations.

I thank you all, for your kind attention!