

# 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 151<sup>ST</sup> IPU: GENEVA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE

- **Madam Vice President of the IPU, Rt. Hon. G. Morawska-Stanecka;**
- **The Secretary General of the IPU, Mr. Martin Chungong;**
- **Speakers and Heads of Delegation, here present;**
- **Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:**

#### **Good morning/Afternoon!!**

It is an honor to address you at this 151<sup>st</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly in Geneva. Each year we gather to discuss matters that shape our world, and this year we confront heightened humanitarian need and deep geopolitical crisis.

**Madam Vice President;** the theme for the General Debate: "*Upholding humanitarian norms and supporting humanitarian action in times of crisis*", offers an urgent mandate to reaffirm our commitment to International Humanitarian Law, safeguard principled humanitarian action, and mobilize parliaments as active stewards of humanity in times of crisis.

I speak today not only as the Speaker of the East African Legislative Assembly but also as a citizen of a region deeply affected by humanitarian crises. The East African Community has learned that humanitarian principles are not just for peaceful times, they are essential for protecting dignity when people are most at risk. As we think about the role of national and regional parliaments like ours, several key priorities stand out. I will share them clearly, with a plan for action that we can carry out both in our own parliaments and international partnerships.

The Middle East conflict highlights the urgent need to protect civilians and ensure humanitarian access in war zones. As global partners broker steps toward peace, we must translate International Humanitarian Law into robust domestic legislation, enforce accountability, and guarantee safe, transparent delivery of aid and essential services to those most affected, especially women and children.

Parliaments must protect humanitarian efforts during crises by making sure policies focus on health, food security, education, water, sanitation, and climate resilience, even when budgets are tight or security is a concern. They should protect aid routes, ensure safe access for aid workers, prevent interference in relief work, and use diplomacy to find solutions. Parliaments should also bring together civil society, faith groups, businesses, academics, and youth to work on humanitarian responses. A Humanitarian Forum should be set up to coordinate planning, protection, and funding, with youth and women-led initiatives to make sure aid is fair and helps the most vulnerable

We must support the most vulnerable and address unfair systems. Groups like women, children, the elderly, people with disabilities, religious minorities, and political opponents suffer most during crises. Humanitarian aid should reach them without political influence and be used only for relief and protection. National and regional laws must ensure these groups are prioritized, aid is distributed fairly, and misuse of aid is prevented.

Finally, we need to strengthen our parliaments by training members on international humanitarian law, humanitarian diplomacy, budget oversight, and how to respond to crises. We should create regional statements and use parliamentary diplomacy to work with the United Nations and other global partners to uphold humanitarian standards and gain support. It's also important to include gender analysis and protection measures in all humanitarian actions and laws across our member states.

In conclusion, as the East African Legislative Assembly, we strongly reaffirm our commitment to international humanitarian law and principled humanitarian action. We are ready to lead a regional, inclusive, and gender-sensitive approach to crisis response. We promise to make sure aid reaches the most vulnerable and that humanitarian values are upheld, even in the hardest times.

***Madam Vice President, distinguished delegations,*** in the spirit of global unity and regional cooperation, let us turn these commitments into clear, honest, and accountable actions. Let Parliaments lead the way in guiding governments toward compassion, protection, and a stronger future for all communities in East Africa and beyond!

**I thank you for your kind attention!**