
Your Excellency Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta, C.G.H., President and Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces of the Republic of Kenya,

Co-Presidents of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly,

Fellow Speakers of Parliament,

Ministers of Government,

Members of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly,

Honourable Members of Parliament,

Clerk of the Senate and National Assembly,

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Parliament of Kenya and on my own behalf, I welcome you to Kenya and to the 32nd session of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, being held in this beautiful City of Nairobi.

Your Excellency,

As you are aware, the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly was created out of a common desire to bring together the elected representatives of the European Community – the Members of the European Parliament – and the elected representatives of the African, Caribbean and Pacific States (ACP) that have signed the Cotonou Agreement.

The Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA) continues to make an active contribution towards implementing and reinforcing successive ACP-EU Conventions. The Assembly has put forward numerous proposals, including mainstreaming the role of women in development process; the integration of environmental issues in development; promotion of trade as a tool for development, particularly by way of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs); the drawing up of rural development programmes and micro-projects tailored to meet the needs of specific communities, and the promotion of regional, political and commercial cooperation. It is with this in mind that I take this earliest opportunity to convey my heartfelt gratitude and sincere appreciation to the Co-Presidents and members of the JPA Bureau for their active role in enforcing the
Cotonou Agreement and preparing new initiatives aimed notably at reinforcing and improving cooperation.

Your Excellency,

The Parliament of Kenya has been an active member of the JPA, and I am delighted to highlight that Hon. Joyce Laboso, MGH, MP, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Kenya, was the first African woman to represent the ACP - EU JPA as a Co-President and she currently chairs the JPA Committee on Economic Development, Finance and Trade.

Additionally, the Committee on Political affairs recently appointed Sen. Kembi-Gitura, MGH, MP, the Deputy Speaker of the Senate of Kenya, as co-rapporteur on the topic, “Improving Participatory Governance through Decentralisation and Strengthening Local Governance”.

The resolutions adopted in the report recognised the critical role of Members of Parliament in creating modalities for enhancing public participation in the activities and operations of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly.

The role of decentralization has also been recognized in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals as an essential instrument for promoting inclusive development.

Your Excellency,

Most recently, the JPA has been involved in the negotiations on Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). The unwavering support from the Assembly accorded to Kenya recently, in engaging the EU to immediately re-establish duty and quota-free access for Kenyan goods to the EU market, was invaluable in advancing not only the position of Kenya but also for many other developing countries in the ACP. I humbly applaud and express our sincere gratitude to the JPA for being very instrumental in negotiating the EPAs.

On our part, the Parliament of Kenya has since approved the ratification of the EPAs pursuant to Section 8 of the Treaty making and Ratification Act of 2012. Further, in order to improve administration of tax as envisaged in the Cotonou Agreement, Parliament enacted the Tax Procedures Act, 2015 that harmonizes and consolidates the procedural rules for the administration of tax laws in Kenya.

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Parliament of Kenya, by domesticating international agreements has been very instrumental in incorporating relevant laws for building a sustainable and resilient economy which are prerequisites for development.
I am delighted to report that according to the 2016 World Bank Ease of Doing Business Report, Kenya's ranking improved by 21 places, signalling that legislations initiated by Parliament are already bearing desirable fruits.

**Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is needless to overemphasize the fact that there can be no democratic system of government without transparency and accountability. Subsequently, Members of Parliament should radically reform the existing oversight mechanisms by putting into place an effective monitoring framework for successful tracking of public funds including those accessed through Cotonou Agreement and Donor funds channeled through the civil Society. As the representatives of the people, it is imperative to ensure successful implementation of national development plans that are commensurate with the needs of the public, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

**Honourable Members,**

Parliaments should continue playing a key role in forming partnerships among relevant stakeholders including civil society organisations, academicians, faith-based organisations and the business community. It is also important to encourage their active participation, as appropriate, in processes that contribute to decision making, planning and implementation of policies and programmes for sustainable development at all levels. As one renowned English politician said the other day, it is not only development that counts, people world over want their views to be considered when matters affecting them are being decided. Thus, there is no better way to do this than through meaningful public participation.

**Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

To conclude, Parliamentarians should endeavour to translate resolutions made by multilateral organisations into enforceable laws that respond to country-specific development priorities and regulations. In this regard, Parliamentarians must escalate into the national and global arena the views and aspirations of their citizens to promote a more equitable and sustainable future.

I wish you fruitful deliberations.

**Thank You**