

Ladies and Gentlemen, I take this opportunity to welcome Makerere University Students to Kenya and to the University of Nairobi in particular. I also take this opportunity to pay gratitude to Nairobi University Political Science students for hosting your Makerere counterparts.

In the recent past, there has been a flurry of activities in the area of regional integration in various parts of the world. The upsurge of interest in regional integration is both a response to, and the result of, fundamental transformation of the international order. There have been attempts to revive dormant regional integration schemes, resurrect failed ones, reorganize and strengthen existing ones, and initiate new schemes where none existed. The promulgation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the transformation of the European Economic Community (EEC) into European Union (EU), and the re-energization of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) testify to this increased interest in regional integration. Other regions of the world also boast at least one regional scheme, including the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Latin American Free Trade Area (LAFTA), the Arab-Maghreb Union (UMA) in North Africa, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The current resurgence of regional integration is both a consequence of, and a reaction to, emerging trends in the global political and economic order. On the one hand, the trends towards regionalism are in themselves currents in the process of the transformation of the international system, in so far as regionalism is a recognizable feature of the contemporary global system. On the other hand, today's regional integration efforts may also be regarded as part of the calculated collective responses by countries in specific regions to new realities of the contemporary international political economy. The big question, however, is whether the global political economy—its structures and principles—presents an enabling (or disabling) environment for these regional schemes in the Third World which, faced with the increased possibility of marginalization, especially due to increased protectionism in the North, have sought strength in regional trading blocs.

As different regions have sought to integrate, East Africa has not been left behind. The long history of collaboration between the original three East African states of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania has served as a foundational base for the current integration process in the region. More relevant to university students is the fact that

1950s to the 1960s was integrated under one East African Community with campuses in respective partner states. Under this arrangement students in the humanities and social sciences went to Makerere University, those doing Law went to University of Dar-es-Salaam while those taking Architecture and Engineering came to the University of Nairobi. Education to this end was truly East African.

Although there is no denying that a historical legacy exists, the current situation is fundamentally different from that obtaining nearly 30 years ago. There have been numerous developments including the fact that the East African Community now has five partner states with Rwanda and Burundi having been admitted more than five years ago. Likewise there are new applicants such as the newly independent state of South Sudan that is waiting to be admitted into the community. Similarly, the thrust of the new Treaty has assumed an entirely different orientation, largely reflecting the changing trends of political and economic reform in the past two decades. Governance issues have moved higher up on the agenda while the role of civil societies and the private sector have been enhanced.

The East African regional integration project has to this end progressed considerably. The major achievements have been the conclusion of a customs union protocol which entered into force at the beginning of 2005 and the common market protocol which came into force in 2010. In other fields the rate of progress has also been impressive, albeit variable. As the treaty envisages, the next two stages should see the partner states enter into a monetary union and ultimately a political federation.

These next two stages cannot be realized unless all East Africans put their energies and heads together. It is in this regard that I and the University of Nairobi fraternity wholeheartedly support this initiative by the Makerere University International Relations and Diplomacy Students Association together with your hosts, Nairobi University Political Science Students Association for this timely symposium on East African Integration. During the two days you will not only share ideas on the subject between yourselves but you shall also benefit from presentations from staff from the Department of Political Science and Public Administration of the University of Nairobi as well as officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and East African Community of the Republic of Kenya.

I have no doubt that at the end of the two day symposium you will be more enlightened about East African integration issues and will thereafter play your rightful roles towards helping in the attainment of EAC objectives.

With these few remarks I now declare this symposium officially opened



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