



**...House also grants leave to Hon Christopher Bazivamo for introduction of a Private Member's Bill on Forestry Management**

**East African Legislative Assembly, Arusha, Tanzania; January 23, 2015:** The regional Assembly is on the verge of enacting the EAC Cooperative Societies Bill, 2014. EALA Members late yesterday extensively debated the Bill, before passing it through its second reading.

The debate which resumed following interruption on October 28, 2014, was preceded by the presentation of the Report of the Committee on Agriculture, Tourism and Natural Resources (ATNR) by the new Chairperson, Hon Abdulkarim Harelimana.

The Report followed the Public hearings which took place on September 12th – 22nd, 2014 in the EAC Partner States and that involved technical presentations and national stakeholder consultations. Participants at the public hearings included various co-operative organisations from different sectors including representatives from co-operative organisations who made significant contributions.

The Report observes that there is need to have a regional bill to promote the integration of co-operatives in the region. The Members proposed a raft of changes on the Bill right from the formation and registration of Societies, democratic member control, concern for the community in general, autonomy and independence all considered and deemed to be key to the existence of the Bill.

The Report notes that there is need to have specific clauses that allow for the co-operatives to promote and benefit the regional integration agenda. According to information obtained from public hearings, a Bill of this nature would go the mile in enabling regional responses to challenges facing the sector.

The Bill is based on the understanding that each Partner State shall undertake to encourage the efficient use of resources and to promote the development of private sector organisations which are engaged in all types of economic activities, such as the chambers of commerce and industry, confederations and associations of industry, agriculture among others. At national level, co-operators bear the primary responsibility to develop themselves but it is worth mentioning that regional and international support and cooperation may be needed to supplement domestic efforts. During debate, Hon Nancy Abisai noted that the Bill was holistic as it cuts across the needs of all sectors.

“The idea of pulling together of resources through cooperatives has seen many, especially women fundamentally progress and develop. People within co-operatives are today able to borrow funds based on low interest rates and this is very key,” Hon Abisai said.

Hon Leonce Ndarubagiye termed co-operatives as ideal stating they were the hallmark in communist and capitalist countries alike. The legislator remarked that many successful stories had been realized through creation of co-operatives and said a regional bill regulating cooperative societies was timely.

Hon Patricia Hjabakiga noted that the Bill was at the very core of every co-operative society since it enhances development and added that it touches on the interests and pockets of beneficiaries.

She hailed the mover of the Bill, Hon Mike Sebalu for his commitment and appreciated the role of Hon Isabelle Ndahayo, the Chair Emeritus of the ATNR Committee, which was associated with the Bill.

Hon Saoli Ole Nkanae said co-operatives were key in integration. “We need to move with haste to pass this key Bill” he remarked.

Hon Nusura Tiperu said the passage of the Bill would positively impact on the local citizens. “It is a key piece of legislation that is in partial fulfilment of Article 105 and 128 of the Treaty for the EAC”, she said.

Hon Maryam Ussi, Hon AbuBakr Zein, Hon Peter Mathuki, Hon Celestine Kabahizi, and Hon Dr. James Ndahiro all supported the Motion. On his part, the Counsel to the Community, Hon Wilbert Kaahwa said the Bill in its various clauses met the values and ethos of co-operative principles. The Bill, Hon Kaahwa also added, is in tandem with the legislation on co-operatives in the Partner States.

The Council of Ministers through the Chair, Hon Dr. Abdallah Saadala was emphatic that common consensus had been arrived at in their deliberations with the ATNR Committee.

The mover of the Bill, Hon Mike Sebalu termed the Bill demand driven and one that is a tool of transformation and empowerment for primary producers.

Next week, the Assembly is expected to re-constitute itself into a Committee of the whole House to scrutinise through the Bill clause by clause.

Meanwhile, the Assembly has granted Hon Christophe Bazivamo leave to introduce a Private Member’s Bill entitled “The East African Community Forest Management and Protection Bill”. This is pursuant to the provisions of Article 59(1) of the Treaty and Rule 64 of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly.

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