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*Eastern Africa Subregional
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**Meeting of Experts from Regional Economic Communities in Eastern Africa
on Multi-year Programmes of RECs in Eastern Africa with SRO-EA**

Kigali, Rwanda

20-22 November 2007

Opening Statement
by Mr. Patrick K. Bugembe, Director of UNECA/SRO-EA

Your Excellency Ambassador Richard Sezibera, Special Envoy of The President of the Republic of Rwanda in the Great Lakes Resgion.....
Your Excellency Ambassador Toyi Executive Secretary of CEPGL
Distinguished participants,

Let me first of all welcome you all to this beautiful city of Kigali which has just celebrated its hundred years of existence. I hope you will find occasion to visit some of its many enchanting hills, enjoy their magic and cleanliness.

Let me also convey to you the warm greetings of the Executive Secretary of ECA and his best wishes to the meeting. He is particularly grateful to the Chief Executives of your respective organisations who accepted to send you as representatives of the different organisations. He hopes that, at some time in the very near future, he will be able to meet them in person.

On my own behalf I am happy and honoured to welcome you to this very important meeting. In many ways, it is the first of its kind since this is the first time that all the Regional Economic Communities in Eastern Africa as well as regional organisation have assembled under one roof with ECA to deliberate on the important issue of the integration of the subregion. You will therefore understand that I am very optimistic that the present meeting will be a memorable milestone in the process of forging closer, more meaningful and more synergetic collaboration between ECA and its sub regional office for Eastern Africa (SRO-EA) on one hand and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and regional organisations on the other.

The meeting also offers another rare opportunity for the RECs in Eastern Africa to interact among themselves and get to know better who is doing what and how in the Eastern African subregion. And perhaps also better understand why each REC is doing what it is doing! In this respect, I should stress that the need for concerted effort of organisations working on African development issues in

general and regional integration in particular cannot be over emphasised. It is through serious partnership that we shall be able to achieve our goals and ensure that the people of Africa see a better life in the shortest possible time. We as agents of change collectively, carry a heavy burden. I have no doubt that we, at this meeting, shall live up to the challenge.

Distinguished participants,

I am keenly aware that each REC and each regional organisation at this meeting already has a commendable development programme for its respective constituency. But, equally, I am very conscious that there is need for enhancing collaboration so as to speed up the regional integration of Eastern Africa and Africa at large. Indeed, it is under this very context that we are meeting here in line with UN General Assembly Resolution 60/235 of 2006, which called for ECA sub regional offices (SROs) to work closely with RECs. According to these resolution subregional offices of ECA, including SRO-EA would sign partnership agreements with each of the RECs in their respective subregions. These agreements would take the form of multi-year programmes based on priority areas of the subregion and the respective RECs as well as the work programme of the repositioned ECA and its SROs. The programmes would also be buttressed by the AU agenda and the NEPAD priorities.

As you all know, you, the Regional Economic Communities are the building blocs for the realisation of the African Economic Community. Your present meeting is therefore to find ways and means of scaling up efforts aimed at regional

economic integration. Therefore, your active and constructive participation at this meeting is extremely important as we now constitute a potentially powerful mechanism of collaboration among all stakeholders in any given subregion including in particular the RECs, ECA through its SROs, subregional organisations and development partners.

Distinguished participants,

Let me now turn my focus on the multi-year programmes which are the centre piece of our meeting. Indeed, we have programmed your work such that the whole day of tomorrow will be consecrated to discussing multi-year programmes in break-out sessions or caucuses. First, I need to emphasise a working premise namely that the preparation of multi-year programmes might require a series of interactions and exchanges between a given REC and our SRO. This clearly means that we do not expect that all multi-year programmes shall be concluded at this sitting. We might be able to conclude some but what is important is that we start on all and reach some stage of a draft proposal.

Second, I wish to outline what the task of preparing a multi-year will involve. Overall the following steps will need to be covered:

- Defining possible areas of cooperation;
- Identification of activities and indicators of implementation;
- Determining key role players and stakeholders;

- Indicating budgetary requirements and mechanisms for resource mobilisation;
- When a multi-year programme has been finalised a Memorandum of Understanding will be signed between the concerned REC and ECA/SRO-EA.

Here, let me inform you that some work has already been done with respect to some draft multi-year programme proposals for some RECs while in other cases we are just going to start the process. This is the case with the East African Community (EAC), COMESA and the Indian Ocean Commission (OIC). Whatever the status, I have no doubt that we shall make a lot of progress at this meeting with all RECs here represented. What we need and I believe we possess is interest, commitment and hard work.

Let me take this opportunity to inform you that our colleagues from ECA headquarters in Addis Ababa are here to share with you some information which could be very useful in the preparation of multi-year programmes. They will give us inputs on the progress of integration in Africa and on NEPAD programmes and how RECs together with other institutions can effectively implement them.

At this juncture allow me also to express my profound gratitude to the regional organisations which have graciously accepted to be with us today. We have with us representatives from the Northern Corridor (TTCA), Central Corridor

(TTFA), and the Nile Basin. In the case of the Port Management Association of Eastern and Southern Africa (PMAESA), the Executive Secretary, Mr. Jerome Ntibarekerwa, is here in person.

I have no doubt that these organisations will provide very useful inputs in our work. Since they are on the ground, operating in the field, they have first hand knowledge and unique insights about the various problems and constraints to regional integration.

Distinguished Participants,

My expectations are that in the following few days some major work will be accomplished. I also hope that this will mark the beginning of intensive collaboration and cooperation among all stakeholders. This is because realising regional integration and hence improved standards of living for the people in the sub region is a serious 'exercise in cooperation' among all concerned.

I wish to emphasise the importance of preparing realistic, feasible and multi-year programmes that can and will be implemented and evaluated. The activities in these plans should have outcomes that could lead to positive impacts on the people in the sub region. It is therefore not an exercise for producing documents to be put on shelves to gather dust and eventually to be forgotten. We better err on the side of caution of very limited but implementable activities than on the side of ambition of grandiose programmes that will not see the light of day.

In conclusion, let me wish you very fruitful deliberations and once again, I thank all of you for having accepted to be here despite your several other commitments. One thing I assure you is that our cause is noble and your time and efforts at this meeting shall be nobly spent.

With these few words, I declare the meeting open.

I thank you