



CLOSING REMARKS BY HON. JUSTICE BART M. KATUREEBE, CHIEF JUSTICE OF UGANDA, AT THE 13TH EAST AFRICAN MAGISTRATES AND JUDGES ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE ON 3RD NOVEMBER 2016 AT SPEKE RESORT MUNYONYO, KAMPALA

Your Excellency the President of the Republic of Uganda

My Lords, the Chief Justices of the EAMJA Member States present

My Lords the Deputy Chief Justices of the EAMJA Member States present

The President of the East African Court of Justice

The President of the East African Magistrates and Judges Association

My Lords, the Justices and Judges from the EAMJA Member States present

Registrars and Magistrates from the EAMJA Member States present

The Secretary General of the Commonwealth Magistrates and Judges Association

Distinguished Speakers at the Conference

Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the East African Magistrates and Judges Association, on behalf of the Uganda Judiciary, on behalf of all the Delegates and invited guests here present, and on my own behalf, I warmly welcome Your Excellency to this Conference. We always appreciate you

Your Excellency when you honour our invitation especially on an occasion such as this when we have convened in the spirit of the East African Co-operation.

For the last three days Your Excellency, we have been gathered here and have held a very meaningful interaction under the theme “*Transformation of Judiciaries in East Africa for Improved Service Delivery: Strategies, Successes and Challenges.*” It requires no emphasis that the Judiciary is indispensable in the transformation of society. But before the Judiciary can become an effective vehicle of transformation, it has to undergo its own transformation. We have agreed that the degree of relevance of any Judiciary will depend on its responsiveness to the needs of the society it serves. The obvious implication therefore is that given the nature of the legal system we have operated under for the last so many years, we need a fundamental transformation of the justice processes and products that we offer.

On the other hand, it has also been underscored that for the Judiciary to achieve meaningful transformation, it needs the support of the other arms of the State, the civil society and the general public. Your Excellency, the realisation that investment in the judicial arm of the State is no longer a luxury but a pre-requisite to all development efforts by any State ought to be entrenched in the minds of all key stakeholders in Government, Civil Society and the public at large. Our interaction and deliberations here have therefore been central to the aspirations of not only every individual Judiciary and State in the region, but also of the entire East African Co-operation.

In the course of our discussions, we have had serious focus on issues of integrity and accountability. Integrity is the bedrock of justice and all judiciaries in the region are committed to maintaining high levels of integrity and to inspire public confidence in the judiciaries.

Our discourse has also concentrated on issues of gender equality. The Judiciary must, as an obligation, be sensitive to the rights of vulnerable groups like women and children, among others. Under the **Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol)**, all State parties have the obligation to combat all forms of discrimination against women through appropriate legislative, institutional and other measures. The state parties are also enjoined to take deliberate steps to

eradicate all forms of sexual and gender based violence against women. We have the opportunity to remind ourselves of this duty at this forum.

The regional Judiciaries are also looking at prioritising the use of informal systems to decongest the judicial system. In Uganda, we need to operationalize the Local Council Courts and to empower tribal systems to be able to handle local disputes that would ordinarily not need to come to the formal courts.

The other pertinent issue that was discussed during the Conference was the need for the Executive to work hand-in-hand with the Judiciary to address the challenges encountered in the enforcement of judicial decisions.

Your Excellency, the delegates here underscored the importance of automation of court processes as one of the most efficient and effective means of promoting productivity and accountability by the courts. As you recall Your Excellency, during your engagement with the Judges in September last year, you promised to fully support Judiciary's Five-year ICT Strategy costed at US\$4.2 billion. We are still counting on your support to have this process expedited.

Going from here therefore, we look forward to strong and independent Judiciaries in the region; where independence does not mean absence of checks by the other stakeholders but connotes capacity to do what is expected of the judicial officers and of the Judiciary as an institution whatever the circumstances. It also connotes a well-supported Judiciary, a Judiciary that embraces and practices integrity as the bedrock of justice and a Judiciary that is capable of inspiring public confidence and satisfaction.

We have had opportunity to assess where we stand, what we need to do and the kind of support that we need. While we have committed ourselves to do our best in the process of transformation, we need to be assured of availability of the necessary support. Your Excellency, in addition to the present political will on the part of the Government of Uganda to see a transformed Judiciary, we need to see this will translated into improved resourcing and other necessary support to the Judiciary. We expect and ask for the same treatment for all Judiciaries in the region if our co-operation is to have meaning to the people of the East African region.

On our part, we commit to the protection and upholding of the rule of law and the independence of the Judiciary under all circumstances, for, this is our sworn mandate. We should operate under the conviction that it all starts with us and the support that we ask for should find us on the move. I therefore urge all delegates from the different member states to take the deliberations we have had seriously. Let the issues discussed not remain theories but be taken as realities and be used to create an impact to society.

I wish to thank all of you for the able and candid discussions that we have witnessed. I thank my Lords, the Chief Justice of the Republic of Tanzania and the Chief Justice of the Republic of Kenya who managed to make it to this Conference. I also thank all of you the delegates and invited Guests for attending and participating in the Conference.

With these remarks, I now take the honour and privilege to invite Your Excellency to address this honourable gathering and to officially close the Conference.

For God and My Country.

Bart M. Katureebe

CHIEF JUSTICE OF UGANDA