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**A SPEECH BY MR. JUSTICE LUKA KIMARU,  
PRESIDENT EAST AFRICAN MAGISTRATES' ASSOCIATION  
AT THE 2016 EMJA ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND ANNUAL  
GENERAL MEETING,  
HELD AT SPEKE'S RESORT MUNYONYO, KAMPALA  
UGANDA ON 1<sup>st</sup> NOVEMBER 2016.**

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Welcome to the 2016 EAMJA Conference and Annual General Meeting. Since its formation, the EMJA annual conference and AGM has become an ever-present feature in our calendar. Over the years, the association, despite many challenges, has grown from strength to strength. I wish to acknowledge and appreciate the previous office bearers and members who guided and supported the association from its nascent and humble beginnings to the strong association that it currently is.

Throughout the period, the association has provided a platform in which judicial officers from county associations have interacted, learnt from each others experience and exchanged ideas on how to do better their work and deliver justice to our people. In many instances, judicial officers from the region have encouraged each other to overcome their respective challenges and unique circumstances that each country has faced in the administration of justice. In those times, we have learnt from each other that to engender respect for the rule of law in our respective countries, we must strive to be good stewards of the law. This is especially the case in most African countries where we are facing transitional constitutional challenges.

Since your Executive Council took office a year ago, we have held four meetings with a view to addressing the affairs of the Association. We have interacted with other stakeholders who want to partner with the association for the purpose of encouraging capacity building among our members. During the year, several non-governmental organizations have requested to partner with us. Some of their requests have been favourably considered, while others are under consideration by the council.

The South Sudan judiciary had indicated its interest to join our association as an associate member. However, due to political challenges currently facing the country, the interest was not followed through by a formal request. Nevertheless, we have invited Judges from South Sudan to attend this conference. I am happy that two delegates from South Sudan are with us today. We pray that our sister country will enjoy peace and tranquillity in the not too distant future so that they can participate fully in the integration of the political, social and economic life in our region. Although Burundi Judicial Officers Association is a full member of EAMJA, for the past two years, they have not participated in the Annual Conference. I am aware that the country is facing political challenges. Hopefully, those challenges will be overcome soon so that we can have our brothers and sisters from Burundi participating fully in the activities of our Association.

Member countries of the association participated in the tri-annual CMJA conference held in New Zealand. They also participated in the recent CMJA conference held at Georgetown in Guyana. Reports will be presented during the annual general meeting to be held during this conference. Such participation enriches and builds capacity and confidence of our judicial officers.

One of the hallmarks that define our association is the opportunity to learn and appreciate new areas of the law. I wish to thank our hosts UJOA and the Uganda Judiciary for inviting majority of the facilitators who will make presentations during the conference. The theme of this year's conference is "Transformation of Judiciaries in East Africa for improved service delivery." I hope that you will be able to build your respective capacities during the conference. I am sure that you will be able to appreciate that the concerns and challenges that we face in our respective courts are more or less the same. Let's learn from the best practices from

the member countries and internationally. It is by adopting best practices, both regionally and internationally, that we are able to deliver justice to our people in a manner that will build confidence in the courts of justice.

An important aspect of the presentations made is that it will enable us to have a change of attitude and appreciate that the decisions we render have positive or negative impact. Sometimes, we make these decisions without the benefit of current knowledge and recent trends in the development of jurisprudence in the world. This forum offers an opportunity for all of us to retool and reboot our knowledge and understanding of the law as is currently is.

I wish to thank all the partners who have assisted us in making this conference a success. In particular I wish to thank ICJ (Kenya Section) and Equality Now for facilitating the Pre-conference Executive Council meeting. In particular, I wish to thank our gracious hosts, the Uganda Judiciary and the Uganda Judicial Officers Association for the excellent organization and hospitality that they have accorded us. We look forward to further fruitful interaction with our hosts and those organisations wishing to partner with us to advance the regional integration and capacity building of our members.

With those few remarks, I wish all of you fruitful deliberations. My plea to you is that each one of you should aspire to learn something and to make at least two friends from a country other than your own. It is by such interactions that we are able to build bonds that will last a lifetime. I am a living witness to that.

God bless EAMJA. God bless the East African Community.