

Opinion on [President Jakaya M. Kikwete's speech](#) to the First Meeting of the Third Session of the East African Legislative Assembly, August 7, 2009 in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania)

Kimbowe Richard, UCSD / East African Sustainability Watch Network,
Email: ugandacoalition@infocom.co.ug

[President Jakaya M. Kikwete addressed the EALA session](#) that is currently sitting in Arusha - Tanzania yesterday. Being one of those with institutional memory of the EAC, he gave a historical account, his views on the EAC integration process, the Common Market Protocol to be signed in November 2009 pointing out opportunities and (country specific) challenges

He also dwelt more on the **Wako Committee** that sought to examine ways and means to expedite and compress the process of integration, so that the ultimate goal of a Political federation is achieved through a fast track mechanism, which submitted its report to the Heads of State in November of 2004. He devoted a lot of time explaining the view of Tanzanians (also a sizeable percentage of Ugandans and Kenyans), who said no the fast tracking, though they in principle support the political federation of East Africa.

President Kikwete also mentioned that one of the contributing factors to the collapse of the EAC Treaty (1999) was the inadequate provision of the private sector **and other stakeholders** in shaping the Community. He added that the current EAC Treaty (1999) has drawn from this experience and has therefore **placed greater emphasis on fostering regional development that is private sector driven and internationally competitive.**

Dismay and Contraction in JK's speech

In reality, compared to other actors (like private sector) **Civil Society participation in EAC affairs remains a slow process that is on the fringes despite the good intentions as set out in Cap. 25 Art. 127 (3) and (4) of the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community, on Private Sector and the Civil Society:**

- The Partner states agree to **promote enabling environment for the participation of civil society in the development activities within the Community**
- The Secretary General shall **provide the forum for consultations between the private sector, civil society organisations and other interest groups and appropriate institutions of the Community.**

To my dismay, JK took the usual *neoliberal tone* to recognise and to fully defend only one of the stakeholders of the Community (Private sector) without a single mention of the citizens / civil society that are also tirelessly working in support of the integration process. President JK actually went to great length to elaborate how the EAC Treaty places Private Sector Development at the heart of its strategy for accelerating regional growth, creating wealth, reducing poverty and enhancing international competitiveness.

Also, JK did not 'dig deep' into *why the Tanzanian (Ugandan and Kenyan) Citizens spoke the way they did in the Wako Report on fast tracking the process of the East African integration.* He ought to have clearly added the one way out is to advocate for *fora, mechanisms and process* that can enable East Africans (Tanzanians, Kenyans and Ugandans) to feel that in addition to private sector that cannot totally drive it all alone, Citizens and civil society are *shareholders* (for lack of a better word where business lingua seems to be main) in the EA integration process.

For JK to ask the media '*to help inform and educate our people about the integration process and not to stoke emotions and create a storm in a cup of tea*' is not the issue any more. Rather, the EAC should innovatively work with media and civil society to innovatively build and sustain confidence in the integration process (given the Wako Committee report findings); and to regularly capture the diverse (and divergent) views and actors.

In sum, the EALA, other EAC institutions and actors should realise that a feedback mechanism (from the regional to national and local levels and vice versa) involving citizens, civil society along with private sector is still weak.