

EACSOF E-Newsletter

October 2008

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the fourth edition of the East Africa Civil Society Organisation Forum (EACSOF) E-newsletter. This month, we bring you exciting news on the outcome of the Tripartite Summit of the EAC-SADC-COMESA that took place in Kampala on the 22nd October 2008 as you will read elsewhere, the recently concluded Roundtable on the Civil society engagement with the RECs pre-ceding the Tripartite Summit that took place in Kampala, and the up dates of the Steering Committee meeting that was held in Nairobi at the end of September 2008. Other areas of interest include the East Africa Law Society Annual Conference and General Meeting in Zanzibar, and the first woman parliamentary speaker in Africa, plus many more as captured in the Newsletter.

I wish you a happy reading.

Newsletter Editor.

NEWS MAKING HEADLINES

THE TRIPARTITE SUMMIT OF THE EAC-COMESA AND SADC IN KAMPALA.



On 22nd October 2008, Heads of State from three regional economic organisations (RECs) of the East Africa Community (EAC), the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern African Development (SADC) Summit came together in their first tripartite summit in Kampala to “decide on matters related to enhancing cooperation among EAC, COMESA and SADC, including deepening trade, investments, and infrastructure, linking transport corridors, promoting joint projects to boost of industrialization agriculture and food security as well as enabling free movement of people between the three RECs”. Twenty-six Heads of State attended the meeting that took place at Speke Resort, Munyonyo, Kampala.

According to the Daily Monitor Thursday, 23rd October 2008, the 26 African countries belonging to the three regional economic blocs in East and Southern Africa resolved to merge the blocs into a single regional market, which will lead to the creation of the largest free trade area in Africa, with a population of over 527 million people and a combined GDP of \$ 624 billion. The Summit also agreed to work towards the establishment of a single customs union.

The African leaders directed the Tripartite Summit task force to develop a road map for the implementation of the merger within six months.

In conclusion, the RECs called for collective action to help African developing and least developing countries to address the adverse impact of the financial crisis and the global economic melt down according to the same.

**ROUNDTABLE ON CIVIL
SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT WITH
RECS AHEAD OF THE
COMESA/EAC AND SADC
TRIPARTITE SUMMIT IN
KAMPALA**

The East Africa Law Society (EALS) and International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI) came together and organized a pre-tripartite forum, on the 18th –19th October 2008, which presented an opportunity for civil society organizations from the region to exchange experiences and lessons learned around successful engagement with the RECs. The meeting further discussed key cross cutting issues facing the region from freedom of movement/xenophobia to peace and security and the responsibility to protect among others. The meeting whose theme was *“Leveraging the Mechanisms of the Regional Economic Communities to Enhance Human Rights and Economic Justice: A Civil Society Consultation ahead of the EAC, COMESA and SADC Tripartite Summit”* issued a final Communiqué setting out civil society recommendations with respect to the prospects for greater coordination and integration. The Communiqué has been publicized at a press conference on Sunday, 20th October 2008, prior to the opening of the Summit on Wednesday, 22nd October 2008.

The Roundtable was based on the premise that, civil society organisations working with the three RECs have successfully engaged both the political and legal mechanisms of the RECs on human rights and democracy issues, but there has been little sharing of experience, and contemplation of joint strategy across the sub-regions.

Thus the Summit presented an opportunity for civil society from the

two regions to come together to exchange experiences and lessons learned around successful engagement with the RECs; discuss key cross cutting issues facing the region from freedom of movement/xenophobia to peace and security and the responsibility to protect; and to develop potential litigation and other strategies before the REC mechanisms.

About 53 leading law and regional integration oriented civil society from the region from Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) South Africa, Botswana, Zambia attended the historic Roundtable on civil society engagement with the RECs in Eastern and Southern Africa.

Among the topics discussed at the meeting included the followings:

- Introduction to the key norms and mechanism of the three RECs
- Introduction to the International Conference on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes region
- The RECs as “building blocks” of the AU: civil society engagement in the mechanisms and policy formulation processes at the SADC/EAC/COMESA.
- The Union Government and the RECs: challenges and opportunities – freedom of movement and citizenship
- Economic integration in East and Southern Africa: recent progress, prospects and Economic Justice imperatives.

The RECs judicial organs in East and Southern Africa: enforcement, end to impunity, complimentary relationship with the continental judicial organs

The RECs peace and Security organs:
Options for Sudan, Zimbabwe,
northern Uganda.

Please visit the East Africa Law
Society Website:
www.ealawsociety.org or contact The
International Refugee Rights Initiative
on Telephone: +256 41 4340274

**THE EAST AFRICA LAW
SOCIETY ANNUAL
CONFERENCE AND GENERAL
MEETING IN ZANZIBAR.**

EALS is pleased to welcome you to its
2008 Annual Conference and General
Meeting, which will take place in
Zanzibar between Thursday 27th and
Sunday 30th November 2008 (travel
dates inclusive). The conference will
be held at the Bwawani Hotel in
Zanzibar. The theme of this years'
AC/GM is "*EAC: Towards 10 years of
progressive development*"

The Conference Programme shall
include presentations on various
relevant topics of interest. Among the
areas that the AC/AGM shall discuss
include:

1. Recent developments at the EAC
2. Dispute resolution mechanisms
3. Gaps and challenges on laws on
HIV and AIDS in East Africa
4. Institutional deficiencies in the rule
of law in East Africa
5. Challenges of litigating at the
Regional Economic Courts (RECs)
6. Recent jurisprudence at the East
African Court of Justice (EACJ)

There shall be break-away sessions as
well.

The conference shall have the
following though provocative topics
and lively presenters:

Mr. Aidan Eyakuze, Regional Director,
Society for International Development,
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. On the topic
entitled: "**What does East Africa**

**Want? What might it become?
Imagining the future of East Africa"**

Dr. Fred Ringo, Advocate, Ringo &
Associates Advocates, Dar es Salaam,
Tanzania. On the topic entitled
"**Developing Dispute Resolution
Mechanisms in East Africa: A case
for enforceable Non-Court
Mediation Settlement**"

Ms. Grace Nekoye Katasi, Senior
Analyst, Kenya Anti Corruption
Commission, Nairobi, Kenya on the
topic entitled "**The Anti-Dumping
Legal regime in the East African
Region: Is it necessary?**"

Ms. Nankunda Katangaza,
International Policy Manager, Law
Society of England and Wales, London
on the topic entitled "**The EU
Experience and the Clash of the
Civil and Common Law Traditions
with regards to In-house Counsel**"

Ms. Shabana Osman, Advocate,
Behan and Okero Advocates, Kisumu,
Kenya on the topic entitled "**The
Essence of tax harmonization within
the East African Community**"

Opportunity still exists for members
and non-EAL members as this is based
on first come first serve.

The Final Programme of the EALS
Annual Conference & General Meeting
shall be available on the Website
shortly. Please remember to visit
www.ealawsociety.org for more
information regarding registration,
Hotel and accommodation in Zanzibar
for both members and non-members.
We look forward to seeing you all in
Zanzibar.

**THE EACSOFT STEERING
COMMITTEE AGREES TO
REGISTER THE FORUM.**

The Steering Committee meeting took
place in Nairobi on the 28th -29th
September 2008. A number of key

issues affecting EACSOF were discussed and recommendations made among these is the registration of the Forum as Non-Governmental Organisation in Tanzania. The Committee also charged themselves with a number of activities aimed at improving the forum. Among these tasks were working on the strategic plan, key Forum documents like a comprehensive MoU for new and old forum members, Forum Brochure and development of the forum web page in a bid to ease mobilisation of resources for the Forum. Also discussed was the upcoming Annual Forum in the first quarter of 2009 including the CSO Roundtable Forum pre-ceding the tripartite Summit in Kampala where the Forum and Committee was represented by Ms. Joyce Kevin Abalo, Forum Co-ordinator.

The Steering Committee also worked a brief EACSOF work plan from September –December 2008 and agreed to share pertinent information for the benefit of the CSOs in the region.

THE FIRST WOMAN PARLIAMENTARY SPEAKER IN AFRICA.

Rwanda's newly elected Members of Parliament voted in the first ever woman Speaker. The elected woman speaker is a former Executive Director of HAGURUKA, Ms. Mukantabana Rose setting a record as the first female-majority parliament in the whole world. Ms. Christine Tuyisenge the current Executive Secretary of Haguruka has been nominated by the Government as the Executive Secretary of Women National Council making Rwandese Women very proud and happy with the new developments. The Government of Rwanda has also just funded a project aiming at fighting violence

against women and children especially those living with HIV AND AIDS worth \$646,000 for first 2 years. President Paul Kagame of Rwanda presided over the swearing in ceremony in Kigali, which saw 45 women-taking oath in the country's bicameral parliament of 80 Deputies. After last month's parliamentary elections, the tiny East African country after the swearing in ceremony officially became the first nation in the world to elect a majority of women to its Legislative Assembly.

Fourteen years after the genocide, Rwanda's established constitution adopted after a referendum held in 2003 guarantees 30 per cent quota of the 80 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, for women.

In last month's elections, an unprecedented 20 of the 53 seats went to women after the ruling RPF party headed by President Kagame, endorsed 35 female candidates in an inter-party coalition.

Rwanda's elections made the tiny East African country the first in Africa to meet the 50 per cent quota as stipulated in the AU's Protocol to the African Charter on Rights of Women in Africa. The Inter-Parliamentary Union, which advised Rwandans on how to write a 'gender-sensitive' constitution, also reportedly said that, "No other country is doing what Rwanda is doing to bring women into the political process."

Today, women in Rwanda also account for 36 per cent of President Paul Kagame's Cabinet, holding the top jobs in the ministries of commerce, agriculture, infrastructure, foreign affairs and information.

This is something that won Rwanda's President Paul Kagame accolade of the African Gender Award in Dakar, Senegal in 2007.

Please visit www.AllAfrica.com for more information on the above.

Should you have any comments related to the EACSOE E-Newsletter, do not hesitate to contact the Forum Coordinator on JAbalo@ealawsociety.org.