



**EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY  
EAST AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**SPEAKING NOTES FOR RT. HON. DANIEL FRED KIDEGA, AT THE 134<sup>TH</sup>  
IPU ASSEMBLY ON 21<sup>ST</sup> MARCH, 2016 AT MULUNGUSHI  
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE, LUSAKA, ZAMBIA**

**H.E the President of the IPU**

**The Speaker of the National Assembly of Zambia**

**The Secretary General of IPU**

**Rt. Hon Speakers, Members of Parliaments and Heads of delegations**

**Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen:**

1. Extend greetings from the EALA in particular and the EAC in general.
2. Thank the President, Government, the National Assembly and the people of the Republic of Zambia for the warm hospitalities accorded to the EALA delegation since arrival.
3. Acknowledge and thank the IPU for the invitation to attend the 134<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union and related meetings. Congratulate the organizers of the IPU Meeting for the choice of the Republic of Zambia as the venue.

The theme of the 134<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly which is: **Rejuvenating Democracy, Giving Voice to Youth** is absolutely vital and timely. I laud the IPU for the

choice of topic. IPU similarly holds discourse with the youth through the IPU Youth Parliament. I am very pleased that deliberations from the Young MPs' Conference shall feed into this General Assembly.

4. Youth are a critical mass in the EAC and in the continent. In East Africa, youth make up about 65% of the populace which now borders on 165 Million (following the recent admission of the Republic of South Sudan). This equals to over 100 Million. Permit me to state with certainty the time for the Youth to be leaders in the continent is now and not tomorrow as is always indicated by pessimists.
5. The African Youth Charter provides for the full participation of youth in all spheres of society including Parliament and in other decision making bodies (Article 11). In many African countries, youth either remain marginalized or their attempts to rise to echelons in political processes/arrangements are often strangled. In certain instances, this is largely due to institutional and policy constraints of the state, party or society, in other cases, it is sometimes a DELIBERATE MOVE!
6. The fact may explain why there is waning youth interest in formal politics. The dissatisfaction with politicians, together with lack of trust towards Governments, are seen as strong barriers to participation of the young people. We need to safeguard youth interests as a critical step towards safeguarding and strengthening democracy in all cultures.
7. It is a fact that since the winds of change brought the one-Party State to an end in the late 1980's, multiparty elections have been held regularly in

Africa. It is also a fact that democracy in Africa is growing but going through a rough patch. The expectations of the citizenry for now outweigh the growth curve. Where citizens succeed in driving autocrats out of offices, in-coming opponents many at times fail to create viable democratic regimes perhaps arising from the failure to crack the roots of the previously entrenched systems or the cancer has spread out too far by then! Even in established democracies, flaws in the systems at times are worryingly visible and often disillusion those with dynamic ideas. But many also, fail to tap into the potential of the Youth.

8. Yet just a few years ago, democracy looked as though it would dominate the world. Today, Citizens' desire to be governed democratically, remain strong but the disappointing reasons above render confidence in democracy very low. This is very true for the young generation. Nevertheless, policy makers, politicians and anyone who cares about their country or region should never let themselves to be struck by these low levels of trust.
9. Perhaps this is the time for a paradigm shift; and to let the re-birth and rejuvenation of democracy be one that is driven by a true change agenda. An agenda that is youth friendly. To rejuvenate democracy, we must fix broken political systems, change policies and deliver Constitutions that hold Governments and those in leadership more accountable. That will drive the youth to regain lost interests.
10. Legislatures have a key role to play. In addition to our mandate (Legislation, Oversight, representation and Budget appropriation), we must take a new advocacy role, that of promoting democracy. Parliaments and

political parties should ensure democracy thrives right from the very basic levels of administration. If democracy is rejuvenated, young people are more likely to fortify their full participation and to contribute to development. It is necessary to legislate to strengthen National Youth Councils for example. The idea of creating slots for youth in Parliaments is also welcome. Youth make up about 60% of the world's population but unfortunately, disparity in representation in Parliaments is extremely undesirable.

11. In addition, I propose the following issues: improving youth mobility, enhanced education, youth employment as well as implementing civic education as key ingredients that contribute to the rejuvenation of democracy.
12. The youth should be fully engaged in implementation of the SDGs. They need to lead the way in the delivery of the new generation of development goals. They are at the forefront of embracing new technologies, including social media platform and are eager to speak out their minds.
13. The Youth know their rights, they are keen about local issues, networking and are inspirational. They need to use the skills to take advantage of emerging opportunities.

## **Conclusion**

Let us unite to revamp democracy and give youth their say. I part with the words of Theodore Roosevelt, author, explorer, and reformer who served as the 26<sup>th</sup> President of the United States (1901 to 1909) who once said: **"A great democracy has got to be progressive or it will soon cease to be great or a democracy."** I thank you for your kind attention!