Acceptance Speech by Mumo Matemu, MBS, Chairperson of the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) during the Ceremony for Assumption of Office as President of the East African Association of Anti-corruption Authorities (EAAACA) on Tuesday, 25th February, 2014, in Kampala, Uganda

Former EAAACA President, Justice Irene Mulyagonja;
Executive Committee Members;
Past Leaders of EAAACA;
Government Dignitaries from the Republic of Uganda;
Distinguished Guests;
Our friends from the Media;
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am humbled and privileged to accept the Presidency of the East African Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities (EAAACA). I am especially honored and humbled to have been chosen to lead EAAACA through unanimous endorsement by all the eight member countries; honored because this endorsement came along with another unanimous election of Lawyer Kossy Bor of EACC, as the first President of the newly established Asset Recovery Inter-agency Network in East Africa (ARIN-EA). I am therefore deeply moved and thank the distinguished men and women of the EAAACA fraternity for this great honour. For us in Kenya, this is a clear demonstration of exceptional confidence of the East African region not only in me or the EACC but in the entire government of the Republic of Kenya. On behalf of EACC and the Republic of Kenya therefore, I accept the position with humility and pledge to work with all of you in achieving the objectives of this important Association.

I will endevour to provide the leadership the Association requires in order to listen and respond to the cry of our people who continue to be impoverished by the effects of corruption.

Gratitude to the Former President and other Past Leaders

Ladies and Gentlemen; let me at this juncture congratulate the outgoing President and her team together with other past leaders for the tremendous achievements we have witnessed during their tenure of office. Through their stewardship, EAAACA has implemented numerous programmes through which significant development has been experienced in the war against corruption.

Madam Former President and your team, we thank you for your exceptional leadership and commitment. For a long time to come, EAAACA will benefit from your service and the achievements of your tenure.

The challenge of being President of EAAACA and appeal for inter- agency synergy

Ladies and Gentlemen; I formally take the office of EAAACA President well aware of the daunting challenge of living up to the expectations of the region. This is especially so given my other national duties as Chairman of EACC in the Republic of Kenya. However, through innovation, commitment and best efforts of all of us, I am certain that we will meet and even exceed the expectations of our people.

Further, in my many years of public service as a Commissioner at the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) and now Chairperson of Kenya's anti-corruption body, I have found again and again that while people with good intentions for their nations zealously embark on the fight against corruption, there is always another group which vigorously and robustly embarks on fighting the fight. For this reason, our strategies must of necessity not only target the fight against corruption but we must also aim our guns at those fighting the fight. Such people can be vicious; and in many ways. Indeed, they are known to have succeeded in making the hunter become the hunted. We therefore have to stand in solidarity at all times.

Significance of the Association

Ladies and Gentlemen; we are living in an interdependent and rapidly changing world, a world in which information and communication technologies are constantly evolving and creating new and sophisticated ways of perpetrating corruption with transnational aspects. All of these affect our anti-corruption strategies most profoundly hence the inevitable need for nations to work together. This Association therefore underscores the growing need for anti-corruption agencies to synergize in adapting to the evolving challenges of combating corruption. By increasing interaction among countries with low levels of corruption and those where corruption is endemic, EAAACA has great potential to enable those countries most afflicted by corruption to know and import best practices in dealing with the vice in their respective polities. By intensifying our mutual cooperation, EAAACA members could effectively address the challenges brought about by the trans-national nature of some forms of corruption.

We will therefore work out strategies for intensified sharing of best practices through study visits and joint anti-corruption activities. This is in recognition of the fact that each agency within EAAACA has unique and sound initiatives that others could learn from and implement in their nations. All members should thus open their doors to each other. I have tremendous faith that EAAACA has what it takes to play a pivotal role in transforming governance in our nations.

What we are doing in Kenya

For us in Kenya, we are banking on this Association with the hope that it will positively impact on current developments that we are undertaking in the history of our nation. You may be interested to know that at the moment, Kenya is:-

i) Implementing far reaching public service reforms in line with our new Constitution such as vetting of all judges and magistrates; vetting of all police officers among other institutional reforms;
ii) Implementing a devolved system of government in forty seven counties;
iii) Planning to exploit massive minerals including coal and oil recently discovered on our soil;
iv) Spearheading opening of the East African Region through infrastructural development such as the Construction of Standard Railway Gauge.

We therefore find this Association a useful vehicle in supplementing effective and efficient implementation of these reforms.

Increasing Clamour for Good Governance and the Need for Commitment of all to the Objects of the Association

Ladies and Gentlemen; I become President of EAAACA at a time when there is unprecedented clamour from citizens of our nations for firm action against corruption in all its facets. In such difficult times, if anti-corruption agencies do not stand up for the furtherance of good governance in response to the suffering of our people, who will? There is therefore need for us to proceed on the believe that fighting corruption could significantly mitigate other cross- cutting challenges faced by our nations including terrorism, drug trafficking, poverty, piracy, low foreign investment, among other ills. Under my stewardship, EAAACA will be guided with the specific goal of ensuring that each member country records significant success in the anti-corruption war. This is necessary in order to grow our economies and enhancing quality lives for our people.

My Vision for EAAACA

Allow me to put to you some ideas on what I think we should prioritize in the next two years. First of all, I pledge to build on the successful initiatives from our outgoing President and other leaders to further strengthen the mission of the Association. What we have already achieved gives us hope of what we can and must achieve tomorrow. As members of this noble Association, we have gone so far, we have seen much, but there is still much more to do. In this regard, I pledge to work with the Executive Committee to bring the dream of our region to reality.

My broad strategy for steering the Association will be two-prong. The first leg will be a sharp focus on mainstreaming integrity among the youth through curriculum development and integrity clubs in the formal education sector. As you are aware, education is the primary means of producing the human resource that drives the socio-economic development of the country. But even more importantly, education has a major role to play in producing citizens who appreciate that what happens in one generation shapes the destiny of successive generations. Consequently, infusing integrity among young people will not only develop a national character founded on integrity but also of a society that upholds values and principles that promote public good at all times.

Secondly, we will together champion for enhanced use of technology in law enforcement against corruption in our nations. This could include investment in long range zoom equipment and enhanced capacity for undercover operations.

Other Strategies Characterizing My Vision

Besides the above key strategies, I will work with you to prioritize the following strategies in tackling corruption in the region:

i) ***Innovating and implementing strategies which address public ignorance and apathy in order to empower citizens to proactively participate in anti-corruption processes.*** We have all heard of the famous challenge that President, John F. Kennedy, once issued to Americans: *"Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country."*

These values seem to have less influence today than they once did. Today, it often seems the prevailing philosophy is "get what you can from your country any time you can."

Members of the public are a central pillar in fighting corruption. When people who witness corruption taking place are not willing to come forward to report and later testify in court, law enforcement agencies will not be able to deal with it. The upshot of that failure in civic responsibility is the crumbling of cases through which corrupt persons would otherwise have been held to account.

ii) ***Establishing formal partnerships with key regional stakeholders and implementing programmes which enable anti-corruption agencies to enlist their respective governments support;***

iii) ***Operationalizing and continuously strengthening the recently established ARIN-EA to ensure that it achieves its objectives;***

iv) ***Formulating and implementing strategies that strengthen independence of anti-corruption authorities.*** While most if not all anti-corruption agencies are declared by the relevant national laws as independent and not subject to the direction or control of any authority or person, this does not in reality happen. It is therefore necessary that we work out strategies for engaging our respective national governments to review these institutional frameworks including entrenching anti-corruption agencies in the national Constitutions;

v) ***Work out and implement strategies for fostering ethical leadership in public service as a strategy against corruption.*** While integrity is the most important quality of leadership, absence of this quality remains a great challenge in our public institutions thus breeding and tolerating corruption The morality and ethics of the modern public service are products of the **minds of the** leaders of the organization through **the policies they formulate and the behavior they model.** Leaders at all levels set the ethical tone for subordinates in their organizations and have a significant impact on how their subordinates act and perform. We will thus need to formulate strategies that foster and promote ethical leadership. This will ensure that those entrusted with pubic leadership operate within the dictates of our national Constitutions and other laws.

Strengthening the Capacity of EAAACA to Deliver on its Mandate

Ladies and Gentlemen; for us to succeed in implementing the above strategies, EAAACA will remain conscious of the fact that the best way to ensure maximum productivity of its employees is to implement strong welfare schemes which would ensure that members of staff are not in any way distracted from their calling to serve.
We will therefore implement appropriate mechanisms to make EAAACA an attractive workplace that would not only attract but also retain competent and highly experienced staff.

Regarding insufficiency of resources which remains a big challenge to the EAAACA strategy, we will strengthen the existing and develop new strategies to mobilize for funds to enable it achieve its objectives. It is imperative to note that resources would automatically follow sound planning of activities and demonstrated commitment to executing the same.

As I conclude:
I once again thank you for your confidence and appeal for support to the incoming Executive Committee. Your support for all the Association's endeavors and activities will be your best contribution in making this a successful regional Association. While failure can be accidental, being the best is by no means accidental. Apart from being the best as the ideal state, it is also a choice to be the best, and to effectively make that choice is one step to being the best.

I urge all of us to join hands in making EAAACA a hub for integrity and anti-corruption activities where other nations would come to learn best practices.

United We Stand; Divided we fall

Thank you all; God Bless Us, God Bless EAAACA.

MUMO MATEMU, MBS