SECRETARY GENERAL’S NEW YEAR MESSAGE

I wish you all as well as all your loved ones a prosperous and peaceful New Year. May it bring you success, joy, and strength.

The end of the year and the beginning of a new one is a time for celebration, for reflection, and for renewal of vows. I thank you all for your invaluable contribution to East African Integration during the year just ended. When I joined the team in 2011, I outlined five priorities among the many other priorities for the next five years. I thank you for working hard to achieve all of them.

You have brought to fruition the Single Customs Territory. I look forward to its implementation beginning 2014. We have seen significant and sustained removal of Non Tariff Barriers to trade - and the results thereof are beginning to be felt by East Africans.

Implementation of the free movement of persons and labor provisions of the Common Market Protocol has received a major boost by the agreement on the use of Identity Cards as travel documents within East Africa for Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda. I look forward to the beginning of implementation in 2014. This will also be the year we finalize all preparations and Procure the Next Generation Internationalized East African Passport which will be issued in 2015. These are exciting times. Progress has been recorded on Mutual Recognition of Qualifications in East Africa and preparations for turning our region into a Single Higher Education Area by 2015 gained momentum. The year also saw deepening of financial integration. Our Central Banks started implementation of an East African Payments System, allowing East Africans to use their local currencies for transactions within the region.

2013 saw East Africa reach a critical integration milestone with the conclusion and signing by the Heads of State of a Monetary Union Protocol. I wish to congratulate our Partner States for this historic milestone event. I thank all of you who worked hard to make this possible, under the direct technical leadership of Dr Enos Bukuku, Deputy Secretary General (Planning & Infrastructure) and Mr Tharcisse Kadede, Director - Planning. We now have to redouble our efforts to make sure the provisions of the Protocol are implemented on time. The clock is ticking on our journey towards a Single Currency for East Africa.

Our Infrastructure program saw accelerated implementation in 2013. Investments in Rail, Energy and Ports and Harbors increased. Construction of the Standard Gauge railway started, the Ports of Mombasa and Dar es Salaam received increased attention, Financing for critical energy projects was secured and construction on a number of them started. Our One Stop Border Post construction Program is in high gear, and a number of them will be inaugurated in 2014.

And finally, our determination to reach out to, and involve the people of East Africa in the integration agenda gained momentum, although there still is a lot to do. Media Owners and
Practitioners committed to promoting Integration during the Media Summit, which they themselves organized and owned for the first time. The Secretary General's Forum with Civil Society, Private Sector, and other Interest groups is proving to be an important engine for involvement of ordinary East Africans in the integration process. Separate meetings with the Private Sector, focusing mainly on the Manufacturing Sector, are providing useful ideas for growing this critical sector. Children through their Summit, have been brought on board. The Youth are being mobilized, including through the Youth Ambassadors program. Local Government Authorities, farmers associations, and professional associations are increasingly becoming actors and allies in the journey to integration. Legislators, both within the EALA and the National Parliaments are mobilized and are beginning to be engines of mobilization. The East African Court of Justice has brought justice closer to the people through the opening of sub registries in all the Partner States. I congratulate all of you for making a deliberate choice to reach out to the people of East Africa and to involve them in building our Region. We should redouble our efforts in this area in 2014, reach out to University Students, the Faith Based Community, Women groups and the Diaspora.

All this would not have been possible without the involvement of the support sectors of the Community. Reforms in Financial Management, Procurement, Budgeting, Audit and risk function, and Human Resource Management including Performance based Management are beginning to bear fruit. They give confidence to all our Partners that we are committed to robust and transparent management systems. During the coming year, we shall have to strengthen and deepen these reforms and renew our determination to be an Organization committed to Accountability for Resources and Accountability for Results. I am glad that transparency in recruitment will be given a boost by the involvement of a professional firm to help manage the process. I look forward to conclusion of the Institutional Review Process, a Review of the terms and conditions of service for Staff of the Community, as well as an Alternative Financing Mechanism for our Community. I also look forward to the rolling out of the Quality Management System across the Organization as we work towards ISO certification.

The past year has shown us that our Community can achieve much, but that it is also fragile. We have seen East Africans suffer the indignities of being "illegal immigrants" in East Africa, and the challenges of differentiated implementation of decisions in our region. I commend all of you for the manner in which you faced these challenges. However, they also exposed the need for proper structures, processes, and procedures to deal with such issues. I urge those directly concerned to expedite work in this area.

My condolences go out to all of you who lost their loved ones this past year. We lost members of staff, and my heart goes out to their families. Their loss should only inspire us to work harder to achieve East African Integration.

I look forward to negotiations with the Republic of South Sudan on the terms of accession into the Community. The year ends with insecurity, and instability in South Sudan. Our condolences go out to those who have lost their loved ones and livelihood, as well as the thousands displaced and living in fear. We urge the Government of South Sudan and its opponents to firmly commit to the IGAD led process and return the Country to Peace and Stability.
During 2014, the Community will start the verification process for the accession of the Federal Republic of Somalia to the Community. I take this opportunity to wish the Government and People of Somalia Peace, Stability, and Prosperity.

Congratulations for a very successful year to all the Staff of the Community. On behalf of the Executive Staff, I can say we are proud to lead you. We commit ourselves to do even better in 2014. Do not hesitate to let us know where we can do better. We certainly will not be shy to let you know where we expect you to do better.

East African Integration is pivotal for a resurgent, dynamic, prosperous, confident, Africa. We all can be proud to be part of this historic Mission. Africa cannot and should not continue to simply agonize. It needs to Organize, and in many ways, East Africa can be the beacon for this organization. Let us all vow and determine to make it happen!

A Happy and Prosperous 2014 to you all.

*Aluta Continua*

Dr Richard Sezibera  
Ambassador  
Secretary General