



**THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA
OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT**

**OPENING SPEECH BY H.E. DR. PHILIP ISDOR MPANGO, VICE PRESIDENT OF
THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF
THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY EDUCATION CONFERENCE**

**AICC, ARUSHA
13TH AUGUST, 2024**

- *Hon. Prof. Adolf F. Mkenda (MP), Minister of Education, Science and Technology, Tanzania;*
- *H.E. Amb. Veronica Nduva, Secretary General, East African Community;*
- *Hon. Paul C. Makonda, Regional Commissioner, Arusha;*
- *H.E. Prof. Mohammed Belhocine, Commissioner of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, African Union;*
- *Hon. Dennis L. Londo, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation, Tanzania;*
- *Hon. Ministers and Permanent Secretaries here present;*
- *H.E. Amb. Christine Grau, Head of EU Delegation Accredited to Tanzania and the East African Community;*
- *Madam Etleva Kadilli, UNICEF Regional Director, Eastern and Southern Africa;*
- *Mr. Albert Nsengiyumva, Executive Secretary, Association for Development of Education in Africa (ADEA);*
- *Delegations from EAC Partner States;*
- *Heads of EAC Organs and Institutions;*
- *All our partners in Education here present;*
- *Distinguished Participants,*
- *Ladies and Gentlemen.*

Good morning!

On behalf of H.E. Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, I wish to extend a proudly Tanzanian welcome to all our guests: **Karibuni sana**. Her Excellency had wished to personally grace the opening of this Education Conference, but could not be here due to other pressing national commitments and hence tasked me to stand in for her. I therefore, wish to express the appreciation of the Government for choosing the United Republic of Tanzania to host this conference of great value. I also take this opportunity to thank the EAC Secretariat for bringing together education sector stakeholders and experts, to reflect on key issues pertinent to the development of the education system in our region, to match the needs of current times and beyond.

Distinguished Participants,

As you are all aware, the AU designated 2024 as the Year of Education in Africa. This August conference is therefore an opportunity to reflect on the EAC progress and challenges in education in connection with the continent's Agenda. The theme of this conference, which is "...**Educate an African Fit for the 21st Century: Collective Action for Quality, Inclusive and Life-long Learning in East Africa...**" resonates with and underscores some of the pertinent issues and challenges facing our region. I

am therefore delighted to note the presence of distinguished dignitaries including H.E Prof. Mohammed Belhocine, the AU Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation.

This Conference is taking place in the wake of the Africa Human Capital Heads of State Summit that H.E. Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, hosted in Dar es Salaam in July, 2023. That, Summit endorsed the Dar es Salaam Human Capital Declaration which constitutes concrete commitments to prioritize investments in people, with specific targets in health, education and jobs. Today's conference, therefore, avails us an opportunity to reflect on our performance and renew our commitments, concomitant to our collective aspirations in education in light of the Africa Year of Education and the Dar es Salaam Human Capital Declaration. In particular, we need to carefully interrogate the extent to which we have made use of the EAC framework to advance our goals in education, be it national goals or continental commitments.

Distinguished Participants,

At the moment, our region is making significant progress in education, notwithstanding some impending challenges, which act as hindrances in attainment of the intended goals. As EAC Partner States, under Article 102 and 103 of the EAC Treaty, we have committed ourselves to cooperate and undertake joint efforts in education, training and human capital development, for the benefit of our region and our individual countries. In this respect, we have made commendable progress in the harmonization of our education systems, leading to the development of a number of strategies. Furthermore, we have developed frameworks to facilitate mobility of students and staff; regional quality assurance standards and benchmarks; mutual recognition of academic and professional qualifications; and harmonized efforts to enhance access, equity and quality of our basic education systems. The realization of the best education system is not only important to us as the EAC region, but also to the whole continent.

Despite the efforts that have been made, much still needs to be done. The education systems in EAC Member States are faced with several challenges nearly at all levels, related mainly to access to education, quality of education systems, teacher quality and capacities, financing, learning and integration of ICT, digitalization of education systems, and coping with emerging issues in education, like development of Artificial Intelligence and greening education. Since most of the above challenges are common to EAC Partner States, they can be better addressed through joint and concerted efforts under regional platforms of the East African Community.

Distinguished Participants,

At this point, let me mention broadly the challenges that we must confront and overcome in the education sector, and highlight the measures that Tanzania is taking in this regard.

East Africa, just like the rest of Africa, has a very youthful population with the highest fertility rate in the world! This population structure and dynamics can be a huge blessing. It means that we will continue to have a young and dynamic population to build our economies. If we harness our human resources fully, we will enjoy the fruits of our youthful population through what is called the Demographic Dividend.

However, in order to enjoy the demographic dividend, we must significantly invest in the education and health of our children. High fertility rates in our countries imply that we must set aside more resources, both financial and human, to cater for the ever-expanding needs for quality education and health. Estimates by the World Bank indicate that Africa has the largest return on education compared to any other continent. The estimates show that for each additional year of schooling, the average earning of the youth rises up to 14%.

Unfortunately, in the EAC region and the entire continent, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, education remains highly underfunded. The World Bank has developed an index that gives a score reflecting human capital attainment of a country, an index that largely reflects investment in education. Using this index, Sub Saharan Africa has the lowest score of all regions in the world. Sub Saharan Africa scores an average of 0.4 in the human capital index compared to the global average of 0.57. In the East Africa Community, six member states have human capital index score that is below the 0.4 average score of Sub-Saharan Africa.

This is a very gloomy picture. It is also a call for action. Fortunately, there is a renewed focus on education both globally and regionally. The 2022 Transforming Education Summit in New York, was an initiative in the right direction. Similarly, the 2024 Africa Year of Education, is a reminder of the urgent need for us to take action. In all of our efforts, we must remember that the challenges of education in Africa stem largely from under-investment in the sector, which makes it very difficult to offer quality education infused with necessary skills to cope with three main developments, namely: (i) population structure and dynamics (ii) globalization and (iii) technological development.

Distinguished Participants,

The challenges that we are facing must inspire us to work harder. In Tanzania, the government has initiated major reforms in the education sector to further promote access, improve quality and infuse necessary skills to our youths. Currently, compulsory schooling in Tanzania is seven years. We have resolved that by the year 2027/28 it will

be compulsory for each child to be in school for ten years. Further, we have undertaken a major curriculum review with the aim to improve quality of education and also to take on board such developments as digital transformation and other new technological developments. Within the education system, we have divided secondary education into two streams, one focusing on general education and the other on vocational education. To this end, we will have some students who will graduate with both a secondary school certificate and also a Vocational Training Certificate. We are doing this to ensure that our education system offers sufficient opportunities to those students whose aptitude is more on skills, rather than just academic pursuit. We did this, cognisant of the fact that one of the impediments to attracting investment in our country, is the lack of sufficient skills.

These reforms will also involve more investment in education infrastructure such as class rooms and houses for teachers, improvement in teaching environment, improving quality and quantity of teachers and ensuring availability of teaching aids and materials such as books and computers. The overall aim is to improve quality, expand access and ensure that education is relevant in this world of globalization and rapid technological progress.

The educational reforms we have embarked on, will surely require massive financial commitments. Our President, Her Excellency Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan is determined to ensure that we forge ahead with this reform agenda and has directed that significant resources be set aside to ensure that this reform package is implemented successfully. This is obviously a very demanding undertaking, but as the saying goes, if you think education is expensive, try ignorance! It will be even more costly for us not to pursue these reforms. We have a noble obligation to ensure that our youthful population and the demographic trends are a blessing, and not otherwise.

Distinguished Participants,

We are grateful to our international partners who are joining hands with us in the pursuit of education reforms. We are also eager to learn from other countries. More importantly, we are ready to work together within the framework of the East Africa Community to advance our goals in education. There is no doubt that efforts that are currently being made by the EAC member states to strengthen education systems and enhance coordination of efforts, require adequate financial resources. In this regard, I welcome the new funding program by the EU (PEERS) which will support the coordination of our education systems as a region. I am also pleased to note the impressive representation of regional and international development partners in this conference. We acknowledge the role that our partners such as the EU, UNICEF, ADEA, GIZ, the Regional Education Learning Initiative (RELI) partners; the African Curriculum Association, PAL Network, Alive; and others have played in supporting the development

of education in our region, in addition to the support rendered in organizing this conference.

Let this conference renew our commitment to working together in advancing education in our countries, and within our community. Rest assured that Tanzania remains committed to strengthening our community in all aspects and certainly in education.

Distinguished Participants,

To conclude, I wish to thank you all for making time to participate of this important EAC Education Conference. I once again thank the African Union for giving us the wake-up call to put education first in our agenda. I do hope that the outcomes of this conference will form part of the transformation of our education systems for a prosperous and secure future. I also sincerely thank the EAC Secretary General, EAC Secretariat and all the Partners who joined efforts to ensure that this important conference is held successfully.

With these remarks, it is now my singular honour and pleasure to declare the EAC Education Conference officially opened.

Thank you for listening.

Asanteni sana