1.0 Introduction

The first Consultative meeting of political parties in East Africa took place in Nairobi, Kenya on the 15th and 16th September 2011. It was held at the Hilton Hotel. The theme of the consultative meeting was ‘Exploring the role of Political parties in EAC integration’.

1.1 Official Opening and Attendance

The Right Honorable Raila A. Odinga, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kenya, officially opened the first consultative meeting of political parties in East Africa. Hon. Beatrice Kiraso, EAC Deputy Secretary General for Political Federation and the Assistant Minister for EAC affairs Hon. Peter Munya and Dr. David Nalo, Permanent Secretary for EAC Affairs, Republic of Kenya, also addressed the Opening Session. The meeting brought together leaders and representatives from sixty political parties drawn from the partner states, Ministers, Honorable Members of Parliament, Registrars of Political
Parties, National Election Management Bodies, National Human Rights Commissions, internal security sector and law enforcement representatives from the EAC Ministries. Also in attendance was the former Secretary General EAC Hon. Amanya Mushega, as well as representatives from regional organizations and various media houses. The List of participants is attached.

1.2 Objectives of the Meeting

The main objective of the meeting was to bring together political parties from East Africa in a consultative platform that would promote dialogue and shared understanding of their role in the EAC political integration process. The meeting was also to explore opportunities for regional cooperation among and between political parties with a view of expanding the political party discourse from national boundary confines to the regional level.

2.0 Summary of Presentations made at the Meeting

The meeting adopted a three pronged approach to the discussions; presentations on key topics, expert discussions and interactive plenary feedback and debate.

The following were the presentations made at the meeting;

i. Internal Governance Structures of Political Parties in Democratic Governance – by Dr. Sallie Simba, Makerere University, Uganda

ii. Exploring the role of political parties in regional integration – presented by Hon. Hassan Omar on behalf of Hon. Zitto Kabwe, MP, Tanzania

iii. Mitigating electoral violence: the role of political parties – by Mr. Barak Muluka, Political Analyst Kenya

iv. Exploring the significance of interparty relations/dialogue and shared values from various perspectives - made by representatives of political parties, National Human Rights Commissions, Electoral Commissions, law
enforcement Agencies and the registrars of political
parties

v. **Experiences from other Jurisdictions outside East Africa** – By Mr. Job Ogonda and Mr. Don Deya

vi. **Interactive session amongst political party members;**
this was an open session for purposes of interaction and sharing platform

### 3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS OF THE MEETING

The meeting made a number of observations and recommendations, and agreed on several resolutions:

- a) The meeting discussed at length the nature and operations of political parties in the region. There was focus on the existence of enabling legislative frameworks and national political environments. It was observed that there were some challenges from these. The meeting agreed on the need to abide by the principles of constitutionalism and rule of law that is adopted through consultative processes. **It was recommended that Partner States should review their legislative frameworks, including national Constitutions to ensure adherence to principles of democratic governance including term limits for elective positions.**

- b) The delegates noted that in countries where inter party and intra party platforms were in place there was a better mechanism of resolving conflict and advancing policies. The **meeting agreed that it is necessary for political parties to create inter and intra party dialogue platforms to enhance cooperation and peace building. The meeting recommended that a regular platform for the meeting of political parties at regional level is necessary and should be structured and**
in institutionalized within the EAC. These should be complete with follow-up mechanisms. The EAC secretariat was tasked with coordinating and providing the platform for this.

c) It was agreed that Political parties should identify their role in the EAC integration process; what are the precise roles expected of them. There is need for political parties to look beyond intra national party policies towards supra national policies and ideologies. It was observed that political parties often have shared or similar ideologies and these should be coalesced to forge national and regional networks for collaboration and cooperation. The meeting recommended that in the development of their manifestos political parties should capture the regional integration process and reflect the regional political agenda.

d) While discussing the role of political parties in election related violence, it was noted that the lack of credibility, non-acceptance of election outcomes is prevalent in the region. The meeting then observed the need for post election dialogue forums by political parties. The meeting adopted and recommended the establishment of a regional election observation forum by political parties. Following deliberations on the need to have homegrown solutions for arbitration of disputes arising from outcomes of democratic processes, The meeting recommended the establishment of an East African Independent Electoral Commission. In addition there is need to establish a Panel of Eminent East African Persons to arbitrate electoral disputes.

e) Extensive discussions on the harmonization of standards, criteria and benchmarks with which to assess and set performance indicators for political parties took place. The meeting recommended that there is need to establish a regional political party centre of
excellence; this will incorporate learning platforms for best practices and a capacity building platform aimed at strengthening party management and leadership.

The meeting further recommended the development of an audit tool to facilitate peer review and measure the performance of political parties across the region, with the possibility of an annual award for the best performing political party as an incentive. It was proposed that indicators for this tool could be drawn from the pillars of the draft protocol on good governance, as well as adherence to constitutions, rules and regulations of the parties

f) The meeting discussed the importance of realistic and well developed policy frameworks for political parties with clear manifestos and ideology. It was observed that most parties have these tools but do not implement or abide by the guidelines. It was agreed that apart from legitimizing parties, the Manifestos should be genuine tools of policy. They should be visionary and institutionalized. It was recommended that political parties should review their manifestos to reflect a regional outlook that incorporates the regional integration agenda

g) Following intense discussions on the challenges faced by women and youth in the political party affairs, the reality of attaining affirmative action was underscored. It was noted that countries that provide best practices should be emulated. The meeting resolved that there is the need for affirmative action to ensure the full representation and participation of women and youth in political party affairs and management. The meeting resolved that there is need for political will within party structures to mainstream women and youth; and Partner States that have not adopted the principle of affirmative action should do so.
In addition, it was recommended that platforms targeting special interest groups such as women and youth should be created in order to have forums where issues specific to these categories are discussed. The EAC secretariat was tasked with the organization of these platforms.

h) The meeting discussed at length the main challenges faced by political parties and highlighted lack of adequate finances for operational, development and expansion purposes; limitation of constant membership that is reliable; poor governance and leadership practices; lack of accountability and transparency; poor networking and no linkages created with civil society; poor managerial capacity; non-adherence to set rules and regulations and prevalence of ethnicity and tribal make-up in the formation of these parties. It was recommended that the EAC develops training and capacity building programmes and to profile political parties and players in order to identify and enable those with similar ideas to establish networks across borders and information sharing. Documentation and sharing of best practices from the region and other jurisdictions should be adopted for parties to learn how to deal with the challenges. Following deliberations on the challenges faced by parties related to funding, and the variance in resource base of ‘ruling’ vis a viz ‘opposition’ parties, It was recommended that there is need to establish common standards for funding of political parties.

i) In order for parties to have the moral authority to question government excesses or shortfalls, it is critical for them to have internal governance standards. They should adhere strictly to their national constitutions, rules and regulations and other legal frameworks of operation. It was recommended that political parties should develop an internal self assessment
mechanism that addresses issues of their internal governance; including management of elections, accountability, transparency, consultations and sharing of opportunities.

j) While discussing the regional integration, it was agreed that it is important to begin ceding national sovereignty towards political integration. It was noted that political parties play an intrinsic role in shaping political decisions in our countries, as well as formulating laws and being the watchdog for the public good. It was therefore critical that they adopt a regional outlook. It was observed that Political parties are critical in advocating for the EAC integration, upholding fundamental principles and fostering regional shared values. It was agreed that there should be networking and cross-pollination of ideas across national borders. It was then observed that Political parties should have responsibility of building a strong EAC by providing information and awareness amongst the party members in a manner that inspires the EA identity. The meeting recommended the establishment of a regional forum that brings together national executive committees of political parties to enhance information sharing and exchange of ideas.

k) The meeting deliberated the question of the EAC political federation. In order for this process to have a solid foundation and legitimacy the meeting recommended on the need to have a Referendum. It was further recommended that this process should involve public education and awareness up to the grassroots levels. A wide stakeholder approach should be employed during the sensitization, awareness and civic education process.

l) Given that political parties are the main stakeholders in elections they should desist from actions that precipitate
violence. They should lead reforms and educate the public against violence. It was recommended that political parties should sensitize and carry their members along. Government institutions should also play their role in ensuring peace, law and order during electoral processes. There has to be political will, tolerance and positive management of the diversity of political parties. **It was recommended that the principle of zero tolerance to violence should be adopted and that political parties in East Africa should embrace more formal party structures with set standards and sanctions against electoral malpractices as a deterrent.** It was further recommended that the jurisdiction of the EACJ should be extended to cover gross violations of human rights; including electoral violence, as well as other crimes against humanity.

m) The meeting also discussed general issues affecting and related to the integration agenda. **The following observations were made; that there is need to consider the direct election of Members of the East African Legislative Assembly through universal suffrage, as this would enhance representation and accountability and there is need to share and build a resource base on information on the integration process and to popularize the EAC.** The meeting observed that the speedy ratification and adherence by partner states of the African charter on democracy, elections and governance would strengthen political parties’ institutional governance and acceptance of democratic outcomes. **It was recommended that the EAC should expedite the adoption of the draft protocol on Good Governance.**

DATED this 16th day of September 2011 in Nairobi – Kenya