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### **PRESS STATEMENT ONB THE SIGNING OF THE MUTUAL RECOGNITION AGREEMENT FOR ADVOCATES; 18<sup>th</sup> February 2017-ARUSHA TANZANIA**

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The Governing Council of the East Africa Law Society and the national bar associations in East Africa have been at the forefront of steering the process of negotiations to present a framework that governs cross border legal practice within the East African Community under the Mutual Recognition Agreement for Legal Professionals. This is in conformity with the provisions of Article 11 the Protocol on the Establishment of the East African Community Common Market related to harmonization and recognition of academic and professional qualifications. Partner States have undertaken to mutually recognize the academic and professional qualifications of professionals in the region. This initiative commenced in 2012 and has involved national bar associations in East Africa and comprised national consultations with competent regulatory authorities. The stakeholders have included governments, lawyers and educationists with the view to create a vehicle that would create mutual recognition of academic and professional qualifications for advocates in East Africa.


East Africa Law Society and the bar associations, with the support of the Secretariat of the East African Community, and in consultation with experts from the legal and educational sectors negotiated and drafted a Mutual Recognition Agreement in pursuance with its mandate to improve the speed and depth of the integration process in the region among its membership. It has been a long five years of intensive commitment to the ideal of ensuring that our membership can freely move within the region. The Agreement intends to create harmonization of standards and is a very good tool to create regional advocates that can move freely and practice without hindrance, subject to relevant minimum qualifications. The document which was meant to be signed today passed through country consultations in all the five Partner States and underwent a rigorous validation process in Nairobi in August 2016 attended by representatives from the competent authorities of all Partner States.

Today the President of the East Africa Law Society accompanied by the Presidents of the six national bar associations of East Africa congregated in Arusha Tanzania on the invitation of the East African Community at the EAC headquarters, to witness the signature by the competent authorities and regulators of the Partner States of the Mutual Recognition Agreement of Academic and Professional Qualifications for Advocates in East

Africa, on the sidelines of the 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Sectoral Council on Legal and Judicial Affairs attended by all the Attorney Generals of the East African Partner States.

Notwithstanding that the Attorneys-General and Ministers of Justice in their informal consultations showed support to the Agreement in principle, they did not sign the MRA citing the need for further review of the document.

The Presidents reiterated their commitment to the process leading to the conclusion of the MRA. They offered to support the Attorneys-General in any way possible. While noting the delay caused by the competent authorities not signing, the East Africa Law Society and the national bar associations are taking steps geared towards effecting the implementation of the Common Market Protocol on the free movement of persons.



**Mr. Richard Mugisha**  
**President, East Africa Law Society**



**Mr. Isaac Okero**  
**President, Law Society of Kenya**



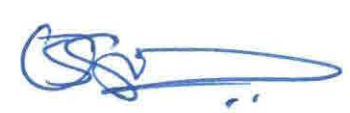
**Mr. Julien Kavaruganda**  
**Batonnier, Rwanda Bar Association**



**Mr. Salvator Kiyuku**  
**Batonnier, Burundi Bar Association**



**Mr. John B. Seka**  
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**President, Zanzibar Law Society**



Ms. Alice Namuli  
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