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**KENYA NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
EIGHTH PARLIAMENT – SIXTH SESSION**

**REPORT OF THE
DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE
ON DEFENCE AND FOREIGN RELATIONS
VISIT TO RUSSIA**

JUNE 08 – 14, 2002

**Clerk's Chambers
PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS
NAIROBI**

JULY, 2002

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REPORT OF THE VISIT TO THE EMBASSY OF KENYA, MOSCOW AND THE STATE DUMA OF RUSSIA BY THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE AND FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. Speaker Sir,

On behalf of the Departmental Committee on Defence and Foreign Relations, I beg to lay on the Table of the House the Report of the Committee on its tour to Moscow, Russia, pursuant to provisions of Standing Order No. 162.

1.0. MEMBERSHIP OF THE DELEGATION

1.1. The Parliamentary Departmental Committee on Defence and Foreign Relations left the country on Saturday 8th June, 2002 aboard Sabena Airways for a five days long visit to the Parliament of Russia (State Duma) and the Embassy of Kenya in Moscow, Russia.

The delegation comprised of:-

Hon. David Musila, M.P.	-	Chairman/Leader of the Delegation Mwingi South Constituency, (KANU)
Hon. Zipporah Kittony, M.P.,	-	Nominated Member
Hon. Jimmy Angwenyi, M.P.,	-	Kitutu Chache Constituency, (KANU)
Hon. Patrick Muiruri, M.P.,	-	Gatundu South Constituency, (SDP)
Hon. Paul Kihara, M.P.,	-	Naivasha Constituency, (DP)
Hon. Rashid Shakombo, M.P.,	-	Likoni Constituency, (Shirikisho Party)
Hon. (Dr.) Mukhisa Kituyi, M.P.,	-	Kimilili Constituency, (Ford-K)
Hon. (Dr.) Oburu Oginga, M.P.,	-	Bondo Constituency, (KANU)
Mr. A.M. Mwendwa	-	Secretary to the Committee

2.0. FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

- 2.1. Pursuant to Standing Order No. 15(e) the Committee has the function to *“investigate, inquire into and report on all matters relating to the mandate, management, administration and operations of the assigned ministries and departments as it may deem necessary and as may be referred to it by the House or Minister”*.

The Committee deals with the following ministries:-

- (i) The Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- (ii) Office of the President, specifically the Department of Defence.

Standing Order No. 151(f) States that another function of the Departmental Committee is *“to make reports and recommendations to the House as often as possible including recommendations of proposed legislation”*.

In this respect, the Committee has closely followed the activities of the above ministries.

3.0. BACKGROUND TO THE RUSSIAN VISIT

- 3.1. In September 2001, a Russian Delegation consisting of about 60 deputies of the State Duma made an official visit to Kenya. During the tour, it held various meetings with various committees and personalities and subsequently invited a Kenya parliamentary delegation to make a return visit.
- 3.2. It is in this regard that the Committee made the tour to Russia. The Committee held meetings with the Kenyan Ambassador to Russia, H.E. Dr. Meshack Nyambati, the Rector of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Prof. Dmitir Bilbin, the Chairman of Defence Committee, Hon. (Gen.) Andrey Nikolayev, the Vice-Chairman of International Affairs Committee, Hon. Alexei Shabanov and the Chairman of the Deputies Group on cooperation with African Parliaments, Hon. Vladimir E. Kapev.

In addition the Committee was given a conducted tour of Moscow.

4.0. **COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND VISITS**

4.1. **MEETING WITH THE AMBASSADOR, H.E. DR. MESHACK G. NYAMBATI (MONDAY, 10TH JUNE, 2002)**

4.2. On Monday 10th June, 2002, the Committee met the Kenyan Ambassador to Russia, H.E. Dr. Meshack G. Nyambati. The Ambassador briefed the Committee on the current political, social and economic situation in Russia.

The Ambassador informed the Committee that the Embassy was opened in 1964 and was the second Kenya Embassy to be opened abroad. In 1997, the then Minister for Foreign Affairs Hon. Kalonzo Musyoka signed a Protocol with Russia.

4.3. The Committee was informed that Russia was the biggest country in the world in area with a population of 146 million, which is mainly of the Russian Orthodox Christianity. The average family is 2 children and the life expectancy is seventy years (70).

4.4. The economy nose-dived in 1998 with the rouble dropping from 6 to a dollar to 30. Main products are gas, gold and aluminium. However, Russia is not a member of World Trade Organization.

4.5. Politically Russia is no longer the super power it used to be and that it recently became affiliated to the NATO without voting power. It is also poised to join the Group of G8. Russia does not have a very specific policy towards Africa.

4.6 On trade, Russia imported 5000 tones of tea in 2001 up from 500 tonnes in 1999. It is estimated that after the Kenya Tea Delegation that visited Russia early in the year, the amount of tea sold to Russia is set to increase. For this to be achieved, there should be a direct or reliable air service between Nairobi and Moscow. This would also substantially increase the amount of flowers sold to Russia.

- 4.7. On education, the Committee was informed that Kenya's quota for scholarship at the Friendships University of Russia was 25 places. However the menace of skinheads was starting to discourage students from taking up the scholarships.
- 4.8. During the meeting the Members wanted to know the trade situation between Kenya and Russia, especially concerning tea, coffee and flowers. The Committee members were of the view that a way should be sought to ensure that Kenya flowers were sold to the Russian market directly without having to go through the middlemen at Amsterdam, which is considered the flower trading capital.

4.9. CONSULAR MATTERS

- 4.10. The Committee was informed that the Embassy establishment was seven in number i.e. the Ambassador, the First Secretary, the Second Secretary, the Commercial Attaché, Administrative Attaché, Financial Attaché and the Confidential Attaché.
- 4.11. The Committee was further informed that the Chancery and the Ambassador's residence was in the process of being rehabilitated though the building did not belong to Kenya but was leased at a cost USDollars240,000 (approximately Kshs.18,720,000) per annum at current rates.
- 4.12. The Ambassador informed the Committee that the Moscow Embassy is also accredited to most of the former Soviet Union republics such as Ukraine, Belarus, Latvia, Azeirbjan and Uzbekistan.
- 4.13. Financially the Rouble devaluation had led to sky rocketing of cost of goods and services which has impacted negatively on the living costs/standards of the Embassy staff.

5.0. MEETING WITH THE RECTOR OF PEOPLES' FRIENDSHIP UNIVERSITY OF RUSSIA,(TUESDAY 11TH JUNE, 2002)

- 5.1. The Committee was welcomed cordially by the Rector of Peoples', Friendship University, Prof. Dmitri P. Bilibin. They held very informative discussions concerning African and

especially opportunities for Kenyans to study at the University. The Rector praised the Kenyan students for maintaining exceptionally good grades. He said that the number of scholarship offered was 25 per year, but that only 20 had been taken up so far.

- 5.2. The Committee was informed that there were over 200 Kenyans who graduated from the university with 21 Kenyans having obtained Phd's. The Rector assured the Committee that the university was willing to extend co-operation especially in the training of specialists, and that it will continue to offer more scholarships.
- 5.3. During the meeting, it was noted that Kenyans had to undergo one-year preparatory course in the university in order to learn the Russian language, which is the official and academic language. This added to the overall educational cost. The Rector suggested that a preparatory center would be opened in Kenya at an appropriate time. This would cut down the costs and the length of stay for students in Russian universities.
- 5.4. The Committee Members applauded the university for the historical role played by the university from its inception as Patrice Lumumba University in educating Kenyans who are now involved in leadership and development activities in Kenya.
- 5.5. The Members expressed a lot of concern over the insecurity of foreign students especially Kenyans, of whom 22 had been assaulted. The Rector was at pains to assure the Committee that the university had established a comprehensive security system within its campuses. However, he could not guarantee their security outside the campus.
- 5.6. During the meeting the Rector specially commended Hon. (Dr.) Oburu Oginga, M.P. for having kept in contact with the university from which he graduated in 1970.
- 5.7. Finally, the representatives of students from Kenya and Africa thanked the Committee and requested it to continue to press for measures that will ensure their security and well-being.

6.0. MEETING WITH THE KENYAN NATIONALS AT THE KENYAN EMBASSY (WEDNESDAY, 12TH JUNE, 2002)

6.1. The Committee held a lively, informative and generally a very cordial meeting/reception with Kenyan students in Moscow universities.

The students eloquently explained their problems which *inter-alia* included:-

- Inadequate stipends that ran out before the next trache.
- Alcoholism and drug abuse.
- A high drop out rate from colleges and universities.
- Constant assaults by skinheads groups.
- Anxiety about future employment opportunities in Kenya.
- Inability to afford proper medical services.
- HIV/AIDs problem.

6.2. On the issue of assault by skinheads groups, the students gave chilling accounts on the menace they were facing from the skinheads groups who were particularly targeting Africans due to their skin colour prominence as compared to the other foreigners who were also targets.

6.3. The Committee members in turn up-dated the students on the current political, social, cultural and economic situation in Kenya. A lively question/answer session followed, during which the Committee members clarified on the issues raised by the students and other Kenyan nationals living in Russia.

6.4. The Committee noted with appreciation that the students had expressed a lot of confidence in the current Embassy staff, whom they described as being accessible and sympathetic to their numerous problems.

6.5. The Committee counseled the students against the vices of alcoholism and drug abuse and encouraged them to have fortitude in the face of the many problems and ensure they completed their studies.

7.0 MEETING WITH GEN. ANDREY I. NIKOLAYEV, CHAIRMAN, DEFENCE COMMITTEE (THURSDAY, 13TH JUNE, 2002)

- 7.1. The Committee met the Chairman of the Defence Committee of the State Duma, Gen. Andrey I. Nikolayev who gave a short exposition on the operations and mandate of the Russian Defence Committee.
- 7.2. The Committee raised the issue of insecurity of Kenyan nationals in Russia whereby two diplomats and 21 students had been assaulted in Moscow since 2000. The Committee expressed its grave concern that the Russian authorities seemed unwilling to stem the escalating cases of assault.
- 7.3. In response, Gen. Nikolayev said that he was aware of the insecurity faced by Kenyan nationals and other Africans and said that steps were been taken to enhance their security. He regretted that Russia had over the last ten years been concentrating on Europe and Asia, but has now realized that Africa was also crucial as a political and economic partner.
- 7.4. The leader of the Kenyan Delegation made reference to the documents presented to the Parliament of Kenya by the State Duma, regarding the ongoing global warfare against terrorism. He said that Kenya had suffered horrendous damage during the August 1998 terrorist attack in Nairobi. He added that Kenya was in full support of the US initiative on wiping out terrorism in the world.
- 7.5. In reply, Gen. Nikolayev said that Russia was committed to fighting terrorism although their concept of what constituted terrorism was radically different from the one espoused by the United States of America. He added that terrorism was an instrument of war backed by politics, radical groups and organized crime organization.

He proposed that the war on terrorism should start by fighting politics that cause terrorism especially in the Middle East and in particular Afghanistan. He noted that the U.S.A. had committed too many excesses in the name of rooting out the *Al-Qaeda* terrorist group.

- 7.6. The Committee, while noting the position adopted by Russia on terrorism was nevertheless, of the opinion that terrorism was a singularly evil activity no matter its causes and no efforts should be spared in rooting it out whether by diplomacy or by military means.
- 7.7. Finally, the Chairman stated that Russia was keen to cooperate with Kenya on defence and military matters such as arms supply and training of Kenya's Armed Forces.

The Kenya delegation thanked him for the offer and suggested that the matter could be communicated to the relevant Kenyan authorities.

8.0. MEETING WITH THE VICE-CHAIRMAN OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, HON. ALEXEI SHABANOV

- 8.1. The Committee met the Vice-Chairman of the International Affairs Committee of the State Duma, Hon. Alexei Shabanov. He said that the committee gives technical advice to the government on how to handle international relations; prepares all foreign affairs documents to be signed by the President; approves the appointment of Ambassadors; liaises closely with Foreign Affairs Ministry; deals with issues of Russian nationals abroad; approves major projects such as the Russian space programme; and it liaises closely with the committee on Defence and Security on issues such as terrorism. The Committee also discusses and approves the budget for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- 8.2. The Leader of the Delegation said that they were extremely concerned by the frequent attacks on Kenyan nationals residing in Russia by skinheads groups who so far had assaulted 26 Kenyans in Moscow. The Vice Chairman blamed the present regime for having allowed hooligans to rule the streets of Moscow and that it was saddening that the police could watch openly without assisting the victims. He said that there was hope that with the Extremist Bill that will be enacted soon, these racist-motivated attacks would soon be reduced.

- 8.3. The Kenyan Delegation raised the issue of how more Russian tourists could be enticed to Kenya since the number of Russian tourists currently visiting Kenya was abysmally low.
- 8.4. Furthermore, the Delegation expressed dismay over the unfair balance of trade between Russia and Kenya, which was about sixteen (16) times in favour of Russia.
- 8.5. The Vice-Chairman responded by saying that these were basically issues which the Kenya's investors could try to resolve by having more intense promotions of the country's attraction in tourism and its products such as tea and flowers.
- 8.6. During the discussion it was noted that Kenya could benefit from cheap fertilizers and machinery manufactured in Russia and its former states such as Belarus.
- 8.7. The Committee was informed that the Duma was currently involved in intense and extensive discussions on the issue of Russia's involvement with NATO.

9.0. MEETING WITH THE DEPUTIES ON CO-OPERATION WITH PARLIAMENTS OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES (MEMBERS OF THE UNION OF THE RIGHTIST FORCES FACTION)

- 9.1. The Committee held discussions with five Members of the Group on Cooperation with Parliaments of African countries (Members of the Union of the Rightist Forces Faction) The Group was led by Mr. Vladimir E. Kapev, Chairman of the Group, and by Mr. G.M. Amnuel, the Executive Secretary. The Chairman was among the Russian delegation that visited Kenya early last year.
- 9.2. Mr. Kapev said that the Duma was very keen to establish closer ties with African countries in view of the historical ties between the two regions.
- 9.3. The Kenyan delegation raised the matter of insecurity of Kenyan nationals living in Russia including the diplomats who were often attacked by the so-called skinheads groups in full view of security authorities.

- 9.4. In response, Mr. Kapev said that a law against extremism was in the process of being enacted by the Duma and expressed his concern over the attacks while assuring the Delegation that the government will do everything to stamp out the menace.
- 9.5. The delegation requested the deputies to assist in reducing the huge imbalance of trade between Kenya and Russia, which favoured Russia. Russia could reduce the trade imbalance by buying more Kenyan coffee and flowers. In response, Mr. Kapev assured the delegation that his group would do everything to encourage trade between the two countries in the areas of tourism and tea as it is already happening with Tanzania.
- 9.6. The Committee finally concluded its tour and returned to Kenya on June 18, 2002.

10.0. **COMMITTEE'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee, after evaluating the reports and information received, wishes to make the following observations and recommendations:

10.1. **Embassy Concerns**

- 10.2 The Committee noted with concern the difficult conditions under which the Embassy staff is operating under such as; instability of the exchange rate, harsh weather conditions, insecurity and high cost of living.

The Committee therefore recommends that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation should classify Moscow as a hardship station such as it has done in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria.

- 10.3 The Committee also noted that the Kenyan Ambassador to Russia was also accredited to Slovenia and Poland yet these would be better and efficiently served by the Kenyan Ambassador to Germany.

The Committee recommends that rationalization and harmonization of Embassies as regards accreditation system should be done so that Embassies are accredited to countries which can be served conveniently.

10.4. The Committee noted with concern that since 1964 to-date, the Kenya Embassy Chancery and residence is still rented with the current rate being US\$240,000 (Kshs.18,720,000) per year.

The Committee strongly recommends that the government should acquire its own Chancery and Ambassador's residence, which will in the long term be of benefit to the country. This recommendation should not be confined to Moscow but to other major countries where Kenya continues to rent office accommodation.

10.5. Insecurity of Kenya Nationals

The Committee would like to strongly point out that the issue of insecurity of Kenyan Nationals in Russia was causing utmost concern. It was noted that 26 Kenyans had been assaulted in the past two years. This included three diplomats and their dependants and 21 students. According to the information received by the Committee, these attacks were carried out by gangs called skinheads, and who appeared to have the tacit support of the authorities since the police apparently ignored reports by victims of the racially instigated attacks.

The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should take up the issue of these attacks with Russian government with a view to getting a firm assurance from the Russian authorities that the attacks would forthwith stop and that compensation will also be paid to the victims by the Russian government.

The Committee further recommends that Kenya should seek a unified stand against Russia on these issues in international fora, including at the African Union meetings.

10.6. Students' Issues

The Committee noted with concern the growing trend of Kenyan students in Russia universities of dropping out of college without completing their courses, and of engaging in destructive activities such as alcoholism and drug abuse. The Committee also noted that the current student population in Russia numbered three hundred and fifty (350).

The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should immediately appoint and post an educational attaché to Russia. The educational attaché should be a mature, and experienced officer in view of the complex nature of the Russian situation.

The Committee further recommends that the parents of Kenyan students in Russia should always ensure that they keep in constant touch with their children especially on matters concerning finances. The parents should also endeavour to assist the Embassy by contacting the latter in case of doubt on their children's performance.

10.7. The Committee noted with concern that some students received large sums of money in form of stipends while in others, mostly those who were in need, received very little.

The payment of stipends was also noted to be irregular thus subjecting students to serious financial hardships.

The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should review its bursary disbursement procedures to ensure that the bursaries are distributed fairly and in time.

10.8. Trade

10.9. The Committee appreciated that the posting of a commercial attaché had led to a significant increase of the amount of tea sold to Russia from Kenya. However, it was noted that Kenyan

tea was being blended with other brands by foreign traders and therefore lost its superiority.

The Committee recommends that the Kenya Tea Board should seek all ways of ensuring that Kenyan tea is sold directly to the Russian market and to do intensive promotional campaign for the tea to further increase the amount sold.

1010 The Committee observed that the balance of trade between Kenya and Russia was heavily in favour of Russia, i.e. approximately 16 times. In addition it noted that the world famous Kenyan flowers were exported to Russia via the middle market of Amsterdam, thus obscuring the origin of the flowers. Furthermore, the Committee observed that the price of fertilizer in Russia was significantly cost effective when compared to fertilizer obtainable from other countries.

The Committee was of the opinion that more aggressive trade promotions should be carried out to create awareness of the potential products that Russia could import from Kenya. The Committee further recommends that the Government in conjunction with Kenya Airways should explore ways and means of creating direct air links between Nairobi and Moscow to boost flower exportation and tourism. The Committee also recommends that the Ministry of Agriculture explore the possibility of importing cheap fertilizer from Russia.

11.0. Conclusion

11.1. The Committee regretfully points out that the reception accorded to it by the State Duma was less than expected for such reciprocal visit especially at the airport where the Committee was unduly delayed and inconvenienced.

11.2. The Committee would like to commend the Ambassador, H.E. Meshack Nyambati and the Embassy staff for the most cordial welcome and assistance rendered to it during its visit.