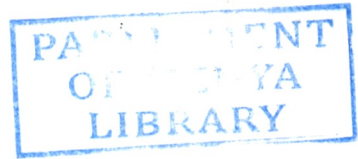


PARLIAMENT OF KENYA



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Eleventh Parliament

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**OFFICIAL OPENING SPEECH BY THE HON. JUSTIN B. MUTURI, EGH,
MP SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, DURING THE 16TH
ASSOCIATION OF PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARIES IN EASTERN AND
SOUTHERN AFRICA (APLESA) CONFERENCE AT THE STANLEY
HOTEL, NAIROBI ON 20TH APRIL, 2015**



Clerk of the Senate, Mr. Jeremiah Nyengenyé, CBS
Director General, Joint Services, Mr. Clement Nyandiere,
APLESA President,
APLESA Executive Committee,
Invited Guests,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I stand here this morning to welcome you to the sixteenth APLESA conference. It is humbling to see participants converge in our beloved country to deliberate and chart the future of our libraries in the twenty first century which has been marked by remarkable technological milestones – *Karibuni Sana*.

May I therefore, from the onset, take this opportunity to thank your respective Parliaments for the selfless sacrifice they have made by facilitating and allowing you to attend this conference. I personally and on behalf of the Parliament of Kenya commend and thank each one of you for taking a proactive commitment to participate in this important event in the calendar of APLESA.

Professions have indeed become second nature to those ready to scale greater heights, and are genuinely willing to enhance the visibility of their chosen careers. This conference and your participation is testimony of the strong resolve you have endured over the years to make this a reality, not only for librarians in Parliaments but also for library fraternity in other similar pursuits

of the library information science in various organization within the public and private sectors.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The myriad avenues of opportunity information technology has generated for overall library services is enormous to ignore. This forum provides us with an excellent opportunity to exchange ideas, share our experiences and best practises in a way that shapes our global awareness and perspectives of the emerging trends. I am persuaded to belief that the outcomes of our weeklong interactions will immensely contribute towards redefining the role of parliamentary libraries in the advent of global information trends and how to

utilize and take advantage of the emerging opportunities in the new information era.

Indeed, when I received this invitation, the idea of the place of Parliaments in the unfolding trends of today's digital era crossed my mind. It did occur to me that while much public attention has focused on the traditional constitutional mandates of legislatures and how Parliament in its plenary dispenses its roles, there is less credit attributed to some silent key drivers to the parliamentary discourse which revolve around the provision of timely information to Members and the legislature as a whole.

Needless to overemphasize, the theme of this conference, that is, “*redefining the role of parliamentary libraries in the advent of global information trends and the emerging opportunities in the information world*” aptly proclaims the appreciation of the shift in global information trends that gravitate around an information society. It tells me that parliamentary libraries are alive to the growing shift away from traditional information resources. This transformation borne out of rapid advancement in information technology is fast creating a global village and a citizenry that is more informed and ready to engage in any form of discourse.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The shifting ground skewed towards information trends does not in any way relegate library services to the periphery. The reality remains that the transformational power of libraries in the world cannot be gainsaid. Human development and the overall political and economic development have traditionally relied on past knowledge that demands meticulous documentation of information, and allows for ease of access and retrieval for reference and attendant usage such as research. Its contribution to posterity is invaluable.

Access to reliable and timely information is therefore essential to the proper functioning of a parliamentary democracy. Historically, the role of parliamentary libraries has included collecting, cataloguing, conserving

materials and providing an information service function. These services have in many places evolved greatly in recent decades, in parallel with new information and communication technologies that have fundamentally changed how parliaments manage knowledge and information.

In their legislative role, parliamentarians need information as they monitor issues, develop policy solutions, predict consequences, and influence government decision-making. In their role of oversight of the executive, legislators need information in order to monitor the success of ongoing programs and to identify areas of weakness.

The unique value to parliamentarians of dedicated library services is growing. A growing volume of information can be found through search engines and other sources, but often the motives of those providing the information are about the promotion of a point of view or a specific course of action. And as such, Information from a trusted source carries an increasing premium – parliamentary libraries ably fit into this category.

Depending on which side you look at the present day information trends, the explosion of information made available by the internet revolution makes the role of parliamentary libraries more important. Busy parliamentarians need information in a timely, accurate, and politically neutral way. Understanding

and responding to the changing needs of parliamentarians is vital to discern and reorient parliamentary library services in a manner relevant to the clients.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The ensuing trends beckon parliamentary libraries to adapt well to this new environment, create practical, client-oriented information products and services that anticipate clients' needs as well as training programs to help parliamentarians circumvent any difficulties in computer based information access and use. These services should be supplemented by other information and documentation functions, such as digital archiving of parliamentary proceedings, reports and media monitoring.

Most of our parliamentary library services in Africa have remained within the more traditional confines as suppliers of books, journals and documentation and often lack the capacity, resources or institutional support to build an enhanced service model in light of global information trends. Perhaps the existing legislative framework impedes the speed with which technology is mainstreamed. To respond fully to the challenges and opportunities the information world offers, libraries, whether in academia, research, parliament or other organizations need to operate within the comfort of enabling laws and regulations by which to streamline their operations in order to reap the benefits of the emerging opportunities. Such laws should establish benchmarks for greater library responses to trends.

The emergence and extensive availability of internet online information resources has meant that libraries rethink and consolidate their services to conform to global information and technological trends. This rekindles my first time experience as a Member of Parliament in Kenya when coming up with comparative precedence in areas such as parliamentary practice and Speaker's ruling over matters would take weeks to materialize owing to the long process accessing response from the respective Parliaments. Today, parliamentary websites have emerged to provide detailed literature on the various aspects of each Parliament.

To this end, one risk confining themselves on the wrong side of the information technology Broadway is the handicapped in the skill of accessing information through the various gadgets that have been invented – from the cell phone to the computers. Various other derivatives of the common information channels have been developed and deployed in the markets and need to be mainstreamed into librarians operations.

Distinguished Participants,

The hard realities of the present day information revolution are hard to ignore. Parliaments today are epicenters for the convergence of the varied information that circulates in the political, academic, public policy research, and now the social media.

Redefining the role of parliamentary libraries in the digital age is in your hands. As I alluded to earlier, libraries remain a dominant thread in the overall evolution of humankind. In fact, you cannot isolate knowledge from the entire generation without occasioning some form of 'generational extinction'. This fact should ever reside at the back of our minds as we seek to deploy resources

to harness the opportunities global information trends have bestowed upon the library profession.

Ultimately, proactive actions must translate to the effectiveness of parliament through provision of authoritative, independent and non-partisan information. This must never be a one-off intervention but a continuous and targeted upgrade to live up to the rapid library resources technological innovations.

Distinguished Participants,

As we enrich our skills and knowledge from the interactions at this week-long conference, our singular goal should be to build the capacity to deliver sustained support tailored to the specific information requirements of our parliamentary clients. In the same vein, best practices should emerge from this forum to contextualize our converging here in Nairobi.

It is hard to summarise the timely and very relevant theme for this conference, suffice to say that we all stand to benefit from the fruitful deliberations that the conference is going to offer. The lessons learnt should inform strategies for the future of parliamentary libraries bearing in mind that the “one size fits all” mantra may not be applicable. My challenge to you today is; are parliamentary

libraries up to the challenge? Recalling the words of one **Nido Qubein**, a penniless refugee to America, who spoke no English, but went on to become an internationally successful business leader. He said, and I quote, “*Your present circumstances don’t determine where you can go; they merely determine where you start*”. Simply put, the future is yours to create. Technology is here with us, here to stay. How we take advantage of the opportunity it sends in our direction and mainstream it in our operations as parliamentary libraries is for us to decide.

Allow me, finally, to recognize the efforts of the conveners of this conference and to once more thank you for finding time to participate in this conference. I

further urge you, before taking your flights back home, to spare time to sample the rich heritage this country has in terms of wildlife and beaches.

At this juncture, ladies and gentlemen, it is my singular privilege to declare the 16th APLESA Conference officially opened. I thank you.

GOD BLESS YOU.

**THE HON. JUSTIN B. MUTURI, EGH, MP,
SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

20TH APRIL, 2015