



**Speech
by Federal President Joachim Gauck
to the East African Community
during the state visit to Tanzania
5 February 2015, Arusha**

I am extremely honoured to have been invited to your Legislative Assembly. This building is home to a large family – that of the East African Community. And not only that – it is a building where the commitment to peace and freedom, to democracy and the rule of law, and to human dignity and humanity has found a home.

You asked me if I would like to speak both as a German guest and a European. I am happy to do so, and I speak both as a German and a European out of profound conviction. After all, the East African Community and the European Union are very similar in many ways, particularly as regards their political integration aims. And so I am happy to share with you some of the experiences we have had as Germans and Europeans. It is plain to see what we have in common. And I am also aware, ladies and gentlemen, that you are working on your own solutions, that you are pursuing your own agenda in your own time. East Africa is seeking its own path. That is what is happening at the moment – and that is the way it should be.

I have come as a partner – a partner in the true sense of the word when we speak about encounters between Africans and Europeans. Thabo Mbeki, whom I met in Berlin in January, wrote about the fundamental nature of the relationship between Africans and Europeans a few years ago. I quote: "Both sides need to accept – and to express via their conduct – that a new age has now dawned, an age of equal partnerships." True enough, and an important maxim on which we should base our conduct. Working together as partners means looking, listening and learning to understand. It means only expressing an opinion when one has recognised that there is more than one's own view. This is the approach that the European Union and the East African Community should take towards each other. This

approach also stems from the respect for the complex conditions that bring about regional alliances between nations.

Experts say that the East African Community could become a role model and a pacesetter in Africa thanks to the very ambitious goals it has set itself. The results to date are certainly encouraging. The member states of the East African Community have enjoyed continual average economic growth of over six percent during the past ten years. Moreover, the 145 million people in this economic area speak a common language, Swahili, although they are culturally very diverse. We do not have this luxury in Europe.

It would be worth sharing our experiences in many areas, such as customs union, currency union and political union. However, it seems more important to me that we discuss a fundamental issue, namely why it is worth investing so much energy in integration. For decades, the answer to that question in the European Union has been to foster stability, growth and prosperity for all members of the community. This was the motivation behind our close cooperation based on democratic principles and the rule of law. Shared convictions have also preserved our cohesion in difficult times. We know that these values make it worth seeking compromises, remaining patient and if need be, putting our own interests aside.

I do not want to conceal the fact that there have repeatedly been – and are – conflicts in this process, as well as crises that are a huge test of our strength. We often grappled over the speed and extent of integration in the EU, and we continue to do so today. However, we also sense that the commitment to peace, the rule of law and cooperation is valuable. Putting this into practice makes us strong.

Those who only observe the EU from a distance might have had the impression every few days since 2010 that we are on the point of collapse. Apocalyptic thinkers regularly predict the end of the euro or even the complete downfall of Europe. Please do not trust those who propagate such doom and gloom. They have always been wrong so far. The truth is that Europe's family of states continues to exist. And it is larger than ever. It demonstrates solidarity by helping members in need to help themselves. It is willing to look at itself constructively. Despite all the difficulties that we need to overcome, there is no doubt whatsoever that never before have so many people had it so good in Europe.

I hope that it will be possible to further a similarly successful development in East Africa. The ambitious aims of the East African Community deserve the greatest respect. I suspect that you too, ladies and gentlemen, have already had to battle with setbacks, scepticism and self-doubt, as well as with public criticism. Please do not allow yourselves to be discouraged by these difficulties! The European Union

also had to face all these challenges. And it did not fail as a result – it grew.

As early as the 1970s, Julius Nyerere said: "If real development is to take place, the people have to be involved." That is exactly what we have seen in Europe. The more ambitious a project, the greater the need to reach out to the people. The European Union is always successful when large majorities in the member states support important decisions. EU enlargement in 2004 was a good example of this. It was spurred on by the will of millions of Europeans to overcome the division of the continent once and for all. In other cases, where endeavours to explain a reform to the general public failed, it ultimately proved impossible to achieve change. One such case was the draft of a European constitution, which could not be fully implemented as a result.

Many people were disappointed in 2004 because we did not agree on a text that everyone could support. When we were shocked by the attacks in Paris and millions of people, not only in France, took to the streets to show their solidarity with the victims and to defend democratic values, I thought that we may not have a shared constitution, but so many Europeans are standing up resolutely for their shared values. I believe this is what unites us in Europe.

Russia's violations of international law in Ukraine have also made us move even closer together recently. What the European Union means for each and every individual has only become completely apparent to many Europeans once again since the outbreak of this conflict. When I speak with young people, I often realise that peaceful coexistence in Europe was simply normality for most of them. Now the current situation is teaching them that nothing can be taken for granted. Family relations must be nurtured. And so must relations with neighbours.

I think it is very far-sighted of the East African Community to focus on the young generation in its five member states. After all, it will be this generation for whom many of today's promises may become reality. It takes time to achieve such a huge undertaking as East African union. And it takes young people who say, "We'll try out new ways, even if we stumble every now and then." And above all who say, "We'll try together."

In Europe, it has also proved helpful that pupils and students from different countries meet on exchange programmes at a young age. Going from Berlin to London at the age of 15, or to Madrid or Riga at 21 – experiences like this create a sense of community that cannot be decreed by any law. I am glad that we do our utmost to support this "growth from below" every year because enthusiasm comes from experience. And one can only gain experience by spending time with other people, not by reading legal clauses.

Turning now to the EAC Youth Ambassadors here in the chamber, you have decided to help shape the future of East Africa. The alliance between your countries is a good place for this. However, it will not be easy. Politics is often hard work. Solutions have to be discussed, negotiated and achieved over and over. This takes time and effort, but it is worthwhile because those who negotiate learn how to put themselves into another person's position. Those who negotiate accept that both sides have interests and that compromise must be sought. And those who negotiate show that their strength lies in arguments, not weapons.

Integration policies can – and in my opinion, must – be both economic and peace policies. Conflicts between countries must be resolved peacefully, and this is why we need reliable rules for dealing with each other on the international level. To my mind, human rights form the most important basis for all agreements because they are universal. They are not based on origin, religion, or social or material status. Without exception, human rights belong to each and every person, regardless of where and how he or she lives.

I know that such statements sound familiar here in this chamber. Almost all African countries have ratified the United Nations' International Bill of Human Rights, and have created their own African human rights charter in the Banjul Charter. However, we are aware of the great gap between aim and reality in some places. I would like to express my solidarity with the victims today. Their message is clear. Human rights violations must not be tolerated! And those who violate human rights must be held to account. This applies as much to Strasbourg as it does to Arusha.

There are as many as three important tribunals here in Arusha: the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the East African Court of Justice and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. It is very important to me to affirm my respect for all three institutions – both on my own behalf and on behalf of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda has played an invaluable role in reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. I am grateful that Germany was able to support this important work.

The East African Court of Justice monitors adherence to the treaties entered into by the East African Community. This is certainly a key task.

And it is now also impossible to imagine a world without the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, as became very clear to me during my visit there this morning. In the meantime, half of the member states of the African Union have recognised the Court's jurisdiction. Germany and the European Union welcome all endeavours

to persuade further member states to follow suit. They also promote the Court. For example, the Federal Republic of Germany is supporting the development of the Court here in Arusha.

However, for the Court to be able to rule on human rights violations from Cape Town to Cairo and from Dakar to Djibouti, it is not only vital that it be widely recognised and run smoothly. It is equally important that each and every citizen of Africa actually be granted access to this Court, as the real achievement of an international human rights court is that it can help each and every individual to achieve their rights and that it can protect their rights.

Seven African countries already grant their citizens this right. May other countries follow suit! We must not weaken our resolve on this issue. Human rights policies are an ongoing task. We also had to fight for human rights in Europe – and to overcome fierce resistance. And human rights are not yet a matter of course in Europe either.

What makes me optimistic is that I am here among allies. All of you are not only ambassadors of the East African Community, but also members of the African Union, of the largest continental family in the world, a union committed to peace, stability, cohesion and human rights.

It is you who are drawing up an African security architecture. It is you who call for joint action at critical moments – be this before, during or after a conflict. It is you who are setting the benchmarks for good governance. And it is you who are looking for African ways to answer these questions.

Many people are counting on you as regards problems that can only be solved internally, by Africa itself. When I visited the African Union in 2013, we spoke about such tasks. Corruption, police and judicial arbitrariness, poorly functioning administrations – I know these are not new items on your agenda. Let me assure you that Germany is well aware of your endeavours and that it respects each and every one of them. And Germany will support you in furthering these endeavours.

Your success means a great deal to me, ladies and gentlemen, because I am your partner as a German and a European, because we share goals and are pursuing shared interests, because as human beings we are striving together to ensure that people's universal rights are upheld. Nina kushukuru sana!