

## Editorial

The  
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RWANDA'S LEADING DAILY

# Anti-xenophobia law for EAC is worth considering

**A SUGGESTION** by East African Legislative Assembly member Nancy Abisai that the East African Community considers passing an anti-xenophobia law to avoid getting caught off guard in eventuality could pass for an emotional run-of-the-mill triggered by the situation in South Africa.

But that is not entirely true. If any, xenophobia, the fear of foreigners often characterized by attacks on migrants, is not a new phenomenon to our region. Hundreds of regional citizens were, two years ago, evicted from Tanzania. Rwandans, most of whom had lived all of their lives in Tanzania and acquired citizenship, were among those affected. Others were from Burundi and Uganda.

This rather sad turn of events happened despite the sustained push for regional integration that has been achieving so many gains in the recent past.

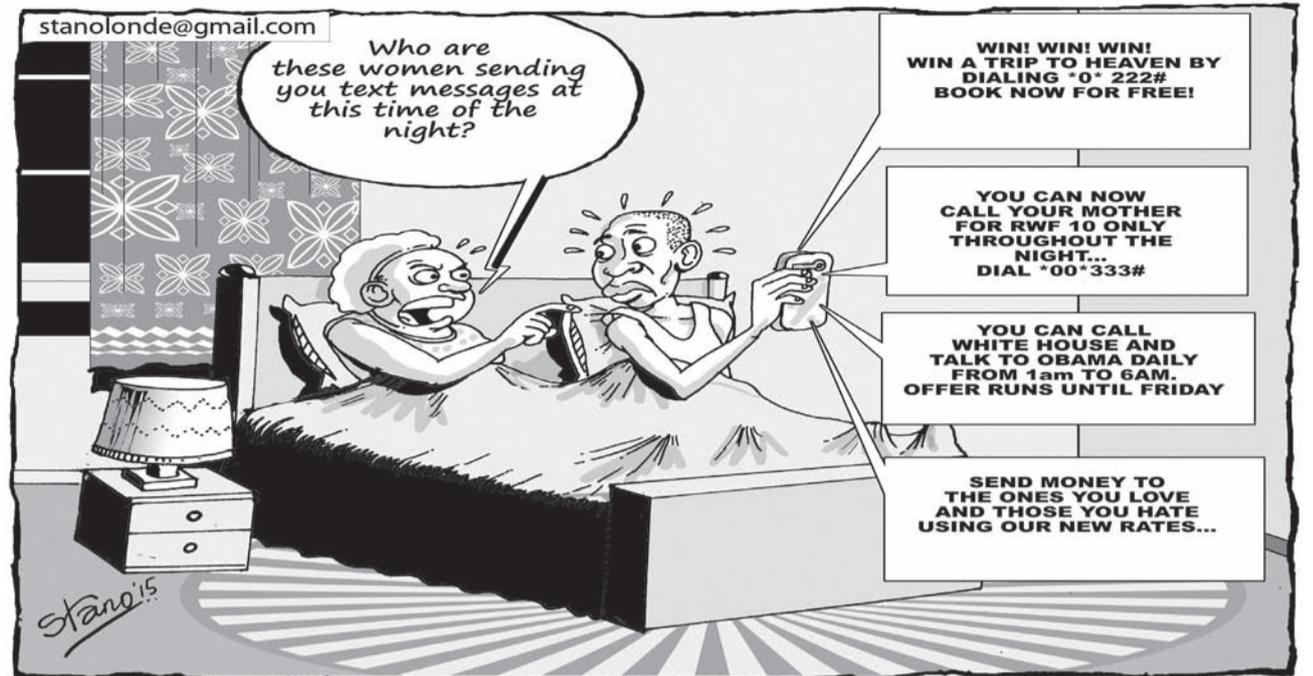
This is why it makes sense when Abisai, the Kenyan EALA member, said the region should take xenophobia with the seriousness it deserves.

MP Abisa, a member of the EALA Committee on Communication, Trade and Investment, was speaking in Kigali where a two-day plenary session of the committee was reviewing partner states' national investment codes and policies with the view to harmonise them into a single regional investment code.

Fredrick Owiti, the principal economist on investment and private sector development at the EAC Secretariat, had earlier noted that failure to sensitise and involve citizens in the integration process could lead to possible conflicts.

The spirit of the EAC integration, as enshrined in the Common Market Protocol, says the right to free movement of persons entails the abolition of any discrimination based on nationality. Certainly, this translates into a no to xenophobia but considering that it is not clearly spelt out in the legal framework that guides the bloc, one cannot rule out nationals of one partner state turning against other citizens in their country in the future.

This is why the legislator's suggestion makes sense. More than putting citizens at the forefront of the integration process, EALA should consider adding into the Common Market Protocol clauses that tackle xenophobia to try and avert future calamities.



Rwanda Utilities and Regulatory Authority has warned local telecom firms against sending unsolicited text messages to their subscribers in blatant disregard of the law on electronic messages, electronic signatures and electronic transactions.



DEVELOPMENT Bjørn Lomborg

## Smartest targets for the world decided by youth in Rwanda

**IN SEPTEMBER**, 193 governments will announce a set of targets to improve the world between now and 2030. Now young people from Rwanda, at multiple youth forums in Kigali discussing the post-2015 development agenda, have decided what they think should be at the top of the global priority list.

At four events of a worldwide series of Post-2015 youth forums, 115 Rwandan youth read and discussed research from 82 of the world's top economists and 44 sector experts, organized by the Copenhagen Consensus Center and with the help of the Mount Kenya University Kigali Campus, they prioritized which targets attain the most value for money.

Their assessments are really needed, because the United Nations (UN) ambassadors still have an implausibly long list of 169 targets, and not all of these are great. Some targets generate high economic, social and environmental benefits for their costs, while some cost a fortune and do little good.

It is appropriate that young people should help guide the final choice of priority targets, because it is their future.

Many major challenges are particularly acute in Africa, and so it is not surprising that the Rwandan youth focused on some of these regional realities. In total, the youths chose not 169 targets but said a much smaller set of nine were the most important ones for the world.

Offering basic health services to people of a country is important and in an age where diseases, like HIV, plague societies killing millions, offering medicine is of prime importance. Globally 35 million people live with HIV and in Rwanda 200,000 carry the disease.

With so many people both acquiring the disease and dying from it, it's no surprise that the young people of Rwanda agreed that "doubling HIV medication" is one target the international community should adopt.

Though providing medication is beneficial, it is a relatively minor problem compared to ensuring women's reproductive health.

The UN expects 2.4 billion more people by 2050. Supporting this rapidly growing population is the people of Rwanda with a current population of 12 million that is increasing. Women who on average give birth to five children in a lifetime are facing a social crisis which contributes to other issues.

If families have fewer children, they can invest more in their future giving them much greater earning potential. This is why Rwandan youth chose "universal access to contraception" in their top nine – its positive impact is 120 times larger than the cost, and would be one answer to establishing social equality.

The youth forums also chose to "eliminate violence against women and girls" as a priority. The total cost of violence against women is tremendous, globally it costs \$4.4 trillion per year and in sub-Saharan Africa 28% of women have reported partner violence.

Negative effects both physically and mentally on women and children from this violence greatly reduce efficiency in the workplace and in other factors so it's clear why the young people chose this as one of their priorities for enabling social equality.

Violence holds a huge cost for our world. With so many experiencing conflict globally, it's self-explanatory why the Rwandan students chose "reduce civil wars" as one of their top three priorities.

Civil wars and conflicts have rumbled far too long in many countries across Africa. Their consequences are devastating therefore they make the headlines and are often the focus of international peacekeeping efforts via the UN and other organizations. Reducing wars would reap innumerable benefits and with a gain of 5 Rwandan francs per one franc spent, its impact as a priority (even if not as significant as others) is still noteworthy.

But perhaps most importantly, the youth emphasized that poverty is at the root of many of these problems. People struggling to live day to day can't afford enough nutritious food or good healthcare and often suffer most from violence.

That's why the young Rwandans put "end extreme poverty by money transfers" as the top target to focus on. Not only would this transform people's lives, but spending one Rwandan franc to do so would pay back five in social benefits.

The concept of achieving social value for money is influential in the decision of the Rwandan youth to select the priorities that they did. Making such a prioritization is brave of these young men and women, both because it's hard, but also because it's necessary to show what is most important.

It is, after all, their future. I look forward to taking their list, along with those from other youth forums from Africa, Asia and Latin America to the UN in New York, to help the ambassadors make better choices.

**Dr. Lomborg heads the Copenhagen Consensus Center, which works with more than hundred of the world's leading economists and seven Nobel Laureates to identify the smartest global solutions.**

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