

Unite to Tackle Hunger: A Call for Borderless Cooperation

By Hon. Françoise Uwumukiza

Member of Parliament, East African Legislative Assembly (EALA)

Chairperson, Committee on Agriculture, Tourism and Natural Resources

Introduction

Hunger knows no borders. Yet too often, our responses to food insecurity remain fragmented by national boundaries, policy silos, and short-term interventions. Across the East African Community (EAC) and the African continent at large, millions of citizens continue to face food and nutrition insecurity despite the region's vast agricultural potential, rich biodiversity, and resilient farming communities.

Ending hunger requires more than isolated national efforts. It demands **borderless cooperation**, coordinated policies, and collective political commitment anchored in regional solidarity.

The Regional Nature of Hunger

Food systems in East Africa are deeply interconnected. Climate change, cross-border trade barriers, conflicts, environmental degradation, and price volatility do not stop at national frontiers. Droughts, floods, pests, and market disruptions affect entire regions simultaneously, with **women, smallholder farmers, and vulnerable communities bearing the heaviest burden**.

As Chairperson of the EALA Committee on Agriculture, Tourism and Natural Resources, I have witnessed firsthand that hunger is not merely a production problem. It is a **governance, equity, and systems challenge**. Addressing it requires harmonized regional action across agriculture, trade, climate policy, gender equality, and natural resource management.

Why Borderless Cooperation Matters

Borderless cooperation strengthens food security in four critical ways:

- 1. Harmonized Agricultural and Trade Policies**

Removing non-tariff barriers, simplifying cross-border trade procedures, and supporting

small-scale and women cross-border traders can significantly improve food availability and affordability across the region.

2. **Climate-Resilient Food Systems**

Climate change remains one of the greatest threats to food security. Regional collaboration enables shared early-warning systems, coordinated climate adaptation strategies, and joint investments in sustainable and agroecological farming practices.

3. **Gender-Responsive Food Systems**

Women dominate agricultural production and food systems, yet they face systemic barriers to land, finance, technology, and markets. Borderless cooperation must intentionally integrate **gender equality** as a cornerstone of food systems transformation.

4. **Shared Knowledge and Innovation**

Regional platforms allow countries to exchange best practices on agroecology, food loss reduction, renewable energy for agriculture, and responsible investment in land and food systems.

The Role of Regional Parliaments

Parliaments play a decisive role in translating commitments into action. Through legislation, oversight, and representation, regional assemblies such as EALA can:

- Advocate for **adequate budgetary allocations** to agriculture and food systems;
- Promote **rights-based approaches**, including the Right to Adequate Food;
- Hold governments accountable for implementing regional agreements and declarations;
- Ensure that food systems policies are inclusive, sustainable, and climate-resilient.

At EALA, we have advanced motions and resolutions urging Partner States to enhance food and nutrition security, prevent food loss and waste, promote renewable energy, and recognize agroecology as a strategic priority for sustainable development.

From Commitments to Collective Action

The goal of ending hunger cannot be postponed. The region is racing against time, and incremental progress is no longer sufficient. What is required now is:

- **Stronger political will** at national and regional levels;
- **Integrated regional food systems planning** aligned with the CAADP agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals;
- **Partnerships with civil society, farmers' organizations, development partners, and the private sector**;
- **Empowerment of women and youth** as central actors in food systems transformation.

Conclusion: A Shared Responsibility

Hunger undermines human dignity, social stability, and economic development. It is incompatible with our shared vision of an integrated, prosperous, and people-centered East African Community.

Unite we must — beyond borders, beyond sectors, and beyond short-term interests — to build food systems that are **just, resilient, inclusive, and sustainable**. The fight against hunger is not the responsibility of one country alone; it is a **collective regional and continental obligation**.

Only through borderless cooperation can we ensure that no one is left behind.