

## STATEMENT BY NATION MEDIA GROUP ON THE SUSPENSION OF THE EAST AFRICAN NEWSPAPER IN TANZANIA

The Government of Tanzania, on January 21<sup>st</sup> 2015, advised the Management of the Nation Media Group that it had come to its knowledge that *The EastAfrican*, a regional weekly publication owned by the media house, had “been in circulation in the country without registration contrary to Section 6 of the Newspaper Act No 3 of 1976”. The letter then instructed NMG “to immediately stop publishing, printing and circulating the said newspaper until it has officially been registered by the Newspaper Registrar, the Tanzania Information Services”.

The Management of the NMG is surprised and disappointed with the decision by the Government to ban a highly-respected regional newspaper that has been circulating in the East Africa and beyond for the last 20 years. Indeed, the Tanzania Government has been a regular consumer and advertiser in *The EastAfrican*, which clearly discredits the reasons given for the ban.

Describing the move as surprising and unwarranted, the NMG Group chairman, Mr Wilfred Kiboro, said: “Surely, they just can’t wake up now and declare us illegal. If it is the issue of regularising files, that does not require such a draconian measure as banning a newspaper”.

Before the letter enforcing the ban was released, the Director of Information In Tanzania, Mr Assa Mwambene, in separate meetings with the newspaper’s bureau chief Christopher Kidanka, and the Group Editorial Director, Mr Tom Mshindi, had complained about what he described as negative and biased reporting by the newspaper of Tanzania’s stand on regional issues the pace of regional integration and on the Coalition of the Willing (a loose description that puts Rwanda, Kenya and Uganda together in their joint efforts to push ahead with some regional projects that Tanzania is unwilling to immediately embrace).

Mr Mwambene also singled out a cartoon published in the issue of 19<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> January as “offensive and tasteless” and said it had upset the Head of State.

Mr Kiboro said that the newspaper had consistently observed the highest level of professionalism and independence and had carved for itself an enviable position in the region.

“While it is possible to make mistakes, these mistakes are not demonstrative of any negative agenda. We intend to engage the Tanzania government to reach a speedy resolution on this matter and have the paper back on the streets as soon as possible,” Mr Kiboro said.

The NMG also publishes the daily *Mwananchi*, the *Citizen* and *Mwanaspoti* newspapers in Tanzania. The Government last year also banned the *Mwananchi* paper for two weeks. No official explanation was given for the closure.

January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015