

Manuscript of the speech given by Dr. Stefan Chrobot, Resident Director of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Tanzania Office, at the launch of the Vision East Africa Forum in Arusha on the 6<sup>th</sup> October 2011.

Honorable Minister Sitta,  
Dear Ambassador Sezibera!

On behalf of the FES I would like to welcome you to this regional consultative meeting to form the Vision East Africa Forum. A very warm welcome to Mr. Sitta, who is a long-standing friend of our Foundation and we have been cooperating with you, Sir, for many years in your different political positions. However, I am meeting with Ambassador Sezibera for the first time today and I would therefore like to take the opportunity to introduce the FES to you. We are a German based political foundation; a value orientated, international organization with a close network of offices worldwide. Our values are those of democracy, social justice and peaceful cooperation, which we are proud of and share with our partners in many countries. Today's conference has been prepared and organized in cooperation with the already existing national chapters of the EAC Vision Groups in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda and is now being launched in the capital of East Africa. The idea for the Vision Group was born about three years ago and is our humble approach to foster cooperation in a democratic integration process of the EAC. The EAC integration is people-centred and market-driven and the FES shares these ideas and believes that the market should serve the people. The integration process of the EU is quite advanced and we would like to share our experiences with our friends and partners, and we do this in Eastern Europe, South America, Asia and now also in East Africa.

When I arrived in the region a few years ago, I was pleased that there was a vision for an East African Think Tank. The FES Tanzania was then asked to operate as a Secretariat and helped to organize consultative meetings in Kenya and Uganda, where the FES also has offices. In Rwanda and Burundi, on the other hand, we rely on our friends and partners, because the FES does not have offices there. Now that the national chapters have been established, we can consult about what can be done on the regional level. We are not responsible for this process, but we do share the values of people-centeredness, social justice and therefore we are joining this process. When this consultative meeting started yesterday, the members of the Vision East Africa Forum agreed upon a Communiqué.

It is a great honour to have both Hon. Mr. Sitta and Ambassador Sezibera here for the launch, especially since the FES has limited resources and humble possibilities. Even though there are other established organizations working with this topic, our approach is different, because we are a think tank and not an NGO network, thus communication is very important to us. For instance, the GIZ does very important work and synergetic effects are visible and we shall support each other. However, this Vision East Africa Forum is a think tank and although coordination is good between our organizations, each one shall meet their own objectives.

Thank you very much for your valuable time and dedication and I am greatly looking forward to a successful East African integration process.