1. Two out of three pupils enrolled in Standard 3 in East Africa fall short on basic literacy and numeracy skills.

2. Among pupils enrolled in Standard 7, one out of four do not have Standard 2 level literacy and numeracy competencies.

3. There are large differences in test results among countries in East Africa.

4. There are large differences in pass rates between districts within individual countries.

5. Children from poorer households consistently show lower competency learning levels.
Receiving the report, Honourable Kidega remarked that “In our quest for duty in providing leadership for harmonization, giving oversight to our members, in all our work, knowledge is key. Our doors are thus open to everybody and our call is to involve everyone, including the civil society”.

Underlining the value of education to East African states, the Speaker moved on to cite the Chinese Proverb, that:

If you want to be happy for about 3 months and have something to eat – plant rice. If you want to have money in about 10 years – plant trees. If you want to develop a nation for posterity – educate your children.

The Speaker reiterated the central position occupied by education in the concerns of the assembly, noting that they are “…concerned about harmonization of both the systems and the curricula across the member countries, and this report comes in at the right time, just ahead of the budget reading date”.

In his part, Honourable Ngoge emphasized the role of quality education in building the East African economies, recalling that “we have universities, but we have few graduates who are meeting the expectations and needs of the job market. Before coming here, I worked as a prosecutor in Rwanda, and from thousands of law graduates, we would struggle to fine quality graduates. Indeed, there is a big mismatch between the infrastructure and outcomes in our education systems”.

In her remarks, Honourable Pareno regretted that “…rather than bridging the gaps, Uwezo results show that through our education, the poorer we are, the poorer we become. What then, if not education, will the poor hold onto? Does it mean that all the poor must move into the cities for their children to learn?” She noted that the debate needs to be sustained, to understand for instance, what the rest of the community can learn and borrow from Mbeya Urban, the best district in East Africa according to the Uwezo report.

The Speaker concluded the session by stating that “It is not worth it to harmonize bad standards. We need to first fix learning, before we talk of harmonizing the systems”.

He promised to take the report to the Council of Ministers and urge them to do something to improve learning in East African schools. He invited Twaweza to attend an assembly session on Thursday 21st May 2015, to present to all the members of the assembly during a session.