The Minister of Local Government, Dr. Patrice Mugenzi, has called on local government leaders from East African Community (EAC) member states to work together in addressing regional challenges, including youth unemployment.

He made the appeal while opening the East African Local Government Forum (EALGF) meeting in Kigali, which brought together local government representatives from across the EAC.

The gathering was held under the theme: *“Strengthening the Role of Local Governments in Regional Integration and Cross-Border Collaboration.”*

Dr. Mugenzi emphasized that local governments play a vital role in fostering regional cooperation and promoting cross-border collaboration among EAC countries. He highlighted their potential to improve the wellbeing of citizens by tackling pressing social issues such as poverty and unemployment.

“Local governments are key actors in governance, poverty eradication, and regional cooperation,” he said. “Through strong partnerships and collaboration, local authorities must be empowered to effectively address challenges like youth unemployment, citizen participation, and climate change.”

Although unemployment rates vary across EAC countries, Dr. Mugenzi noted that all members share a common goal: creating jobs and implementing strategies to combat youth unemployment.

He also stressed the importance of involving local governments in sustainable regional development, economic growth, and ensuring lasting peace and security adding that Rwanda is committed to contributing to those goals.

“Partnership with local government forums is crucial for achieving inclusive development, economic resilience, and regional security,” he said. “Rwanda is playing its part through initiatives such as establishing cross-border markets and developing infrastructure that improves livelihoods.”

As an example of local government-led initiatives, Dr. Mugenzi cited the *Mpazi Model Village* project in Kigali, designed to improve urban housing conditions. Known as *Ubwiza Modern Village*, the planned community will accommodate more than 680 residents and feature 18 three-story apartment blocks (G+3), serving as a

model for affordable, modern, and environmentally friendly housing in Rwanda.