



Inaugural State of IGAD Address 2020
Workneh Gebeyehu
IGAD Executive Secretary
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The IGAD we want; United in Diversity to Overcome Adversity

- Your Excellencies, distinguished Members of the IGAD Committee of Ambassadors,
- My Brothers and Sisters, Members of the IGAD Family
- Fellow Citizens of the IGAD Region,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

I will begin this maiden State of The Secretariat Address by **reflecting on the words of the Late Dr. John Garang' De Mabior**, the founding father of our youngest Member State, South Sudan.

He said, **"Africans must unite, not as a continent but as a nation and therein lies our collective survival as a people"**. In these fragile times that we are living in, Dr. Garang's sentiment can be applied not just to Africa, but the entire world.

You will agree with me when I say that 2020 has been a very challenging year. It has **tested our resolve**, it has **strained our systems**, it has **taxed our resources**;

But **it has not sapped our strength** and **it has not shaken our confidence**. In spite of the numerous challenges, we have faced as individuals, as nations and as a region, **I am pleased to say My brothers and sisters, that the state of IGAD is still strong.**

Together we started the year on a high note and with the self-assurance that 2020 would be a watershed year for IGAD. **We were poised to undertake major institutional reforms that would revitalise our organisation to better serve the citizens of our region.** We rolled up our sleeves and geared up to tackle the challenges of yesteryear.

But it was not be; one month into the new year, our world was struck by the shock of the coronavirus pandemic. We watched with mounting concern as it tore its way from China to Europe, the Americas and indeed the rest of the world, sweeping away the most vulnerable of us in its path.

Here in Africa, we watched with alarm as the virus made landfall and simultaneously spread to all regions of our beloved motherland. In IGAD we recorded our first cases in the final days of February this year. By closely observing what we saw happening in the rest of the world, we knew that things would never be the same again.

Over a **quarter of a million** of our people have fallen victim to this virus in our region; and it has claimed the lives of **almost five thousand** of our fellow citizens. I want us all to take a moment to honour the memory of all those who have been taken away from us by this pandemic and mourn together with the families and friends who have lost loved ones.

Above all, let us pay tribute to our courageous healthcare workers who have fought bravely on our behalf against this unseen enemy. Some of them have paid the ultimate price to keep us safe.

Their sacrifice is a testament to the strength of the human spirit. We showed this by our **defiance in the face of overwhelming odds**, our **resistance to giving up** in the face of tremendous challenges and our **refusal to give in to despair.**

Instead of surrendering, we here in IGAD joined hands to support our brothers and sisters on the frontlines.

Through the visionary and leadership of our Chair, H.E. Abdalla Hamdok, **IGAD rapidly responded within 14 days of the first reported case to quickly convene the virtual emergency summit of Heads of Heads of State and Government on 30th March 2020.** This meeting was the first of its kind anywhere in the world to address the crisis that was upon us.

The virtual summit was an IGAD innovation that capitalised on the power of technology to overcome not only the obstacles that the coronavirus had placed on our mobility; but the restrictions it placed on our power to make decisions; and limitations it put on our capacity to take responsive action.

IGAD led the way in **formulating the first Regional Emergency Response Strategy to COVID-19** in support of our Member States safeguard the lives and livelihoods of our people.

I have spoken at length about this virus because it is the biggest existential threat that we have faced collectively as humankind since the end of the Second World War. But there have been many other localised threats that have stalked our region at the same time as the coronavirus.

The successive invasions of desert locusts this year have been the biggest and most intense we have witnessed in the last 25 years.

A second invasion of locusts 20 times bigger than the first, loomed over our region in the second half of the year, **threatening the food security and nutrition status of 50 Million people or 1 out of every 5 of our brothers and sisters.**

They say that when it rains, it pours. To compound this set of challenges that we were already grappling with, our region was subjected widespread flooding from March to September this year. Over **2.4 Million of our people were affected**, including **700,000 who were displaced** and **over 1,000 who lost their lives.**

The floods destroyed crops in the field and damaged critical infrastructure that supports agricultural production, further worsening the already precarious food security status of our region.

These floods signal the wider ecological challenges facing our region and are **a clear indicator that climate change is real and it is here with us.**

Data from our climate monitoring centre conclusively shows that **over the last 30 years, the IGAD region is getting hotter.** Parts of it are also **getting drier and undergoing prolonged drought.** This is a paradox considering we are also experiencing increased rainfall and flooding.

Nevertheless, the numbers do not lie. Average temperatures in our region have gone up **by as much as 3 degrees Celsius.** This is significant, considering that **global temperatures are rising only by half of this amount.** In other words, **the IGAD region is getting hotter twice as fast when compared to the rest of the world.**

Rainfall patterns are also increasingly unpredictable, undergoing extreme variations. **On one hand, we have selected areas experiencing persistent flooding.** This directly impacts our food production capabilities and also affects the stock of habitable land available to our still-growing population.

These challenges have aggravated our pre-existing vulnerabilities. In addition to food insecurity and ecological fragility, the peace and security situation in IGAD has remained fluid. We have seen Peace dividends in **selected parts of the region become offset by emerging challenges to security and stability in other parts of our region.**

Taken together, this basket of threats constitutes the **fundamental drivers of involuntary and unregulated migration** as our people seek to move in search of safety, security and better economic opportunities.

And yet **these dark clouds have come with a silver lining**. They have tested our mettle, kindled greater clarity in our thoughts and brought our priorities sharply into focus. 2020 has triggered **a fresh perspective and a new way of thinking that I like to call the 3R's of IGAD**.

The first "R" is **Response**. As I have outlined exhaustively in the opening section of this address, **IGAD has demonstrated capacity to react to multiple crises**.

Regardless of the litany of challenges that have relentlessly assailed our region, **IGAD has continuously exhibited calm and restraint in a world gripped by panic**. We have stood steadfast in the belief that **multilateral action is the best response to these threats that know no borders**.

Our coronavirus response strategy is built on empathy, prioritising the most vulnerable members of our society in 7 cross-border areas, 14 Refugee camps & IDP settlements and 11 migrant reception centres.

It is also founded on sympathy as evidenced by the collective sacrifice we all made to raise 700,000 US Dollars from our own personal contributions. This support went directly to our Member States to purchase personal protective equipment for our brothers and sisters who do not have ready access to national health systems.

I want to take this time to thank each and every member of staff who made a contribution. **However big or small, it was a major sacrifice for all of us**. And it is not about how much we gave as individuals, but how big a difference we have made as a family for our people and humanity as a whole.

IGAD has not been alone in this struggle. The European Union, has remained our most steadfast friend and was the first to commit 60 Million Euros in support of our regional response strategy.

I also recognise the 9.5 Million Dollars from AfDB to support IGAD and the East African Community, as well as the **generosity of Sweden, Turkey and all other partners who cast a vote of confidence in our response strategy through financial and material support.**

This support has made it **possible for us to procure 3.5 million surgical masks, gloves, and test kits as well as 8 mobile labs and 24 ambulances.** So far, we have ramped up our testing capacity with **over 3.2 Million tests carried out and more continuing every day.** We remain thankful that our region has been spared the worst of the virus pandemic so far.

Now as the world prepares to commence the vaccination of humanity against this disease, IGAD should not be left behind. I am calling upon our technical leads in Health to ensure that we are positioned and prepared to **supplement the efforts of our Member States to protect the over 270 Million citizens** of our region against contracting this disease in future.

IGAD came together to put up a united front to battle against this global pandemic. **Our concerted rebellion against the coronavirus is evidence that the state of IGAD is strong.** And there is further evidence that our partners have been convincingly persuaded by our unified approach.

Support has also come pouring in for Desert Locust Response that IGAD is carrying out in conjunction with the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and the Desert Locust Control Organisation of East Africa (DLCO-EA) and the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Near East and Horn of Africa (CRC).

Among the friends of IGAD, the **World Bank committed 500 Million Dollars**, the **European Union on its part committed 57 Million Euros** and **USAID** provided more than 24 Million Dollars to underwrite the cost of locust control actions. This funding helped to intensify ground control operations. In a big way.

At the beginning, we only had 7 aircraft to available to spray and repel the 1st wave of locusts. With the support of our partners, **operational capacity doubled to 13 aircraft** including 2 helicopters designated to Somalia.

This intervention was instrumental in retarding the progress of the first wave of locusts and impeding the much feared second invasion. As a result, **over 1.5 Million Metric Tonnes of food crops** was protected from these pests effectively **improving the food security status of 9.9 million people** and **defending the rangelands for the livestock of 687,000 pastoralist households.**

IGAD's priority area of response remains peace and security. here, IGAD acted swiftly in response to all of the aforementioned challenges **precisely because of the threat that they pose to peace and security.** And we did this even with the additional handicap of travel restrictions.

We have witnessed significant progress in the peace and security landscape of our region. **The peace process in the Republic of South Sudan continues to make steady progress.** This is notwithstanding the travel restrictions that curtailed efforts at diplomacy and mediation, peace-keeping and monitoring of the agreement.

IGAD played an **instrumental role in the mediations preceding the formation of the Revitalised Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU)** on the 22nd of February this year. IGAD engaged in shuttle-diplomacy to get the parties to agree on responsibility-sharing at state and local government levels.

IGAD also **advocated for the engagement of non-signatory parties to the Peace Agreement with some degree of success.** As we speak, **the latest round of talks** with the South Sudan Opposition Movements Alliance (SSOMA) on observing to the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement **are continuing in Rome.**

IGAD remains engaged in the monitoring and verification of permanent ceasefire & transitional security arrangements in South Sudan through CTSAMVM and the Revitalised Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (R-JMEC).

Somalia has similarly been making significant strides towards a lasting peace especially with regard to the ongoing engagements between the Federal Government and Federal Member States. **Historic talks were also held between Somalia and Somaliland in June of this year.** In addition, the process of fully reconstituting and capacitating the National Security Forces of Somalia to neutralise the threat posed by Terrorist and extremist groups is on-track.

Al-Shabab and Da'esh are regrouping under the cover of the Coronavirus crisis. As a consequence, we must remain vigilant that they do not build the momentum to recruit young people and expand their ranks. These groups pose a grave threat to the **security of the international recommended transit corridor (IRTC).**

Although piracy in the red sea and Gulf of Aden has reduced dramatically from peak levels in 2008, the **economic impact of COVID-19** and rising youth unemployment may lead to a **rise in the flow of illicit arms, contraband goods and illegal migration.**

IGAD is working to counter the recruitment of young people into violent extremism at the grassroots level and at the policy levels, we are working tirelessly through the Red Sea Taskforce to **arrive at a mutually agreed upon IGAD-GCC position on the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.**

We also continue to lobby for debt relief that will unlock additional resources for our Member States to effectively respond to the challenges affecting us. Early successes have been recorded on this front with **the irrevocable reduction by 89% of the debt owed by Somalia** in March this year by the IMF.

Similarly, Sudan has benefited from an international effort led by the European Union, Germany and the United Nations to mobilise strong political and material support for the ongoing transition which **raised 1.8 Billion US Dollars** in June this year.

Another critical milestone was reached 2 months ago when Sudan was removed from the list of countries that are state sponsors of terrorism. This has removed one of the biggest obstacles to debt relief. **IGAD will continue relentlessly advocating for the cancellation of debt payments** that handicap effective crisis response by our Member States

The **second “R” is Reform**. And here I will be exhaustive. The 13th Ordinary Summit of the IGAD Heads of State and Government that was held on 29th November 2019 directed the Executive Secretary to spearhead **reforms in IGAD that would ensure it becomes a rule-based, effective and predictable organization**.

This is an enormous responsibility and I am delighted to report that with the support of the entire secretariat, we rose together to meet this challenge. Together we have made significant progress on this front. When I was privileged to take on the responsibility of Executive Secretary **376 days ago, we began with a meeting of minds from which we formulated the 100-day IGAD institutional reform plan**.

We agreed to institute changes that would achieve 3 objectives; One, **resolution of structural challenges** to the efficiency and effectiveness of IGAD. Two, **capitalize on immediate strategic opportunities** available to IGAD and Three, **realize the necessary conditions** for IGAD’s next strategic leap forward.

I am pleased to report that we have achieved 81% of the intentions that we agreed upon exactly 1 year ago when we met at the Senior Management Retreat in Nairobi.

Out of the 57 reform tasks that we set for ourselves, 46 have been completed. And of the 11 reform tasks that remain to be completed, **5 are subject to the decision of IGAD policy organs, 2 are in the hands of external agencies and 4 are ongoing within the IGAD secretariat.**

I have been privileged to present our 100-day reform plan and the preliminary achievements to the various partners and in particular policy organs of IGAD. Most notably, the distinguished Committee of Ambassadors with whom we held a meeting in June of this year.

We also committed to improve internal coordination, implementation monitoring and reporting on achievements. I have observed significant progress in this area. We have **institutionalised weekly consultations at the level of senior management.**

We have also **inculcated a culture of consistent reporting** that has taken root among our 571 staff members in the 47 Projects we are currently implementing.

I am delighted to introduce this annual address as an essential part of our regular reporting to the Secretariat and Policy Organs of IGAD.

This objective is driven by an **aggressive digitisation strategy that is already improving how we communicate, collaborate and coordinate** the work we carry out on behalf of our Member States.

Our intention is to become a paperless organization that operates with the same international standards that are used by our sister agencies in the global arena.

So far, 11 out of 12 of the tasks set for the digitization ream in the first phase of reforms have been completed.

Supporting this software component, is the necessary human capacity. I recently **appointed experienced Staff Members to head up the coordination of IGAD activities in each of our Member States.** I will be holding an induction, orientation and planning meeting with this team **48 hours from now to chart the course for 2021.**

Progress notwithstanding, there is much that needs to improve in this area. I however note with satisfaction that **we have made a very good start on the journey towards optimal synergy in IGAD.**

On equitable representation of Member States in the Human Resource structure of IGAD, I am happy to report that **83% of the institutional reform structure programme has been completed.**

A full HR Audit has been conducted to determine the progressive readjustments that will have to be made in order to establish fair representation of Member States in the Staff Structure.

Furthermore, the **structure of the organisation has been reviewed and updated** based on the feedback received from Member States and the needs and realities on the ground and is **ready to be subjected to the approval of the IGAD Council.**

The Secretariat has recorded exemplary results on **Resource Mobilisation.** We had set a modest target of mobilising 50% of the arrears with our Member States. **Within 100 days the secretariat was able to exceed this target and so far, we have assembled 13.1 Million US Dollars or over 82% of outstanding contributions.**

4 of our Member States fully met their financial obligations to IGAD. We sincerely thank our Member States for heeding the call and stepping up to support IGAD organisation in a very big way.

At the programmatic level, the Secretariat has been proactively developing new interventions that respond to the challenges besetting our region. Of note is the engagement with the multi-partner trust fund for planned interventions on migration and climate change, strengthening our capacity to predict, respond and prevent slow and sudden onset disasters.

I am confident that **going forward, IGAD will be able to put together many more compelling cases for additional support from the international community.**

The mobilisation of these resources comes with the **obligation for IGAD to be more financially vigilant and prudent in the use of funds.** Here I am elated to report that we have made significant strides in improving our financial management systems to meet the exacting standards set by our international partners.

IGAD is preparing to **undertake an assessment that will establish if we are capable of directly managing funding from the European Union.** The results of the first practice run we did this year are encouraging but it also showed some areas that are in need of further improvement.

Out of a possible 260 points in the practice assessment, IGAD scored 193 which is 74.2%. Considering that the threshold for institutional qualification in the pillar assessment is 75%, **IGAD only needs to improve by a minimum of 0.9% to qualify for direct EU funding.**

I have full confidence in the team leading these preparations that IGAD will be ready to pass the full assessment scheduled to take place in the first quarter of 2021.

Institutional visibility is a core component of the IGAD reform programme. You will agree with me that our activities in the past 1 year **have won IGAD a lot of international recognition.** IGAD has been very visible both here at home and further abroad for the right reasons.

At the same time, **we have embarked on an ambitious strategy to “take IGAD to the people” so that our presence and impact is felt directly by the communities we serve.**

Towards this objective, IGAD is instituting a **regional awards scheme at the community level.** This initiative aims to recognize and cast the spotlight on the best innovations and practices by individuals and communities that drive forward our vision of peace, prosperity and regional integration.

In addition, IGAD is set to **launch a regional scholarship scheme in 2021 targeting underprivileged youth across our Member States.** The scheme will identify and groom the best and brightest of our young people whose gifts and talents have been curtailed by the conflicts, poverty and disasters affecting our region.

Looking to the future brings me to the **third “R”. Revitalisation;** this is perhaps the most demanding. And it is why we are gathered here today at the opening of this IGAD Strategy Meeting.

We have been charged with the responsibility of delivering on an expanded role for IGAD that goes beyond our core area of disaster risk reduction and management. **IGAD is now increasingly focused on regional integration in the long term as the engine of development.**

This is why in anticipation of this expanded role, IGAD broke ground on a New Headquarters building in February 2020. The New IGAD Headquarters is **a 4-year project with an estimated budget of 50 Million US Dollars** and is **representative of the scale of our ambitions and our enthusiasm to revitalise IGAD.**

Already, the structural design of the building is in the final stages and the Tender Documents for its construction will be floated in 2021.

This project is very close to the hearts of the leaders of our Member States. The IGAD Chair, H.E. Abdalla Hamdok, **has taken it upon himself to personally lead the charge for raising the necessary resources for its construction.**

Overtures have been made to existing partners in Europe and America as well as non-traditional partners in the Middle East, Turkey, and China to support this project. And the **signals from all quarters have been very positive.**

Once completed **the new headquarters will take us a step closer to the vision of IGAD under one roof.** The new building will be a **tangible symbol** of our efforts towards our shared aspiration of regional integration. It is going to be an **emblem of our people, represent our rich heritage and become a focal point for global interactions** in the greater Horn of Africa.

Still within the revitalisation agenda and **in addition to fund-raising, the Secretariat has also been actively friend-raising.** Contact and engagement with our Member States is at an all-time high. This year IGAD has held 2 extraordinary Assemblies of our Heads of State, 2 ordinary sessions with the Council of Ministers supplemented by several thematic ministerial meetings and 1 Meeting with the Committee of Ambassadors.

The net effect of constant dialogue with our leadership has been to accelerate the pace of decision-making and sharpen policy directives for IGAD. 2021 promises an even deeper level of engagement with our Policy Organs.

The Secretariat is planning to hold a meeting with the Committee of Ambassadors as one of the first orders of business in the new year.

Successive meetings with the Council of Ministers that will run-up to Assembling the Heads of State in the **first quarter of 2021** are in the pipeline.

And should the COVID crisis diminish, **this series of consultations will bring closure to outstanding agenda items** and furthermore, **refine policy advisories for IGAD** in the new year.

Ties with the African Union, our mother organisation have never been stronger. I cannot count on my fingers the number of times the Chairperson of the African Union Commission H.E. Moussa Fadia and I have shared different platforms to deliberate on solutions for the problems affecting our continent this year.

Indeed, the AU has commended IGAD for our proactive response to COVID-19 and modelled the continental response on our 4C's of Communication, Coordination, Collaboration and Compassion.

My Office has also been consistently engaging with the **top leadership of the European Union at the breath-taking pace of at least 1 meeting a week.** We have also maintained regular contact with other multilateral partners namely, the World Bank, African Development Bank and UN Agencies including the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, UNECA, UNHCR, IOM, FAO, WFP and ILO.

Furthermore, bilateral exchanges with Italy as the co-chair of the IGAD Partners Forum, Germany, the United States, Japan and the UK have continued at a satisfactory pace.

The response of non-traditional partners such as the Russian Federation, Turkey, Middle East and Gulf Cooperation Countries has been especially heart-warming.

The extent to which IGAD has built relationships with civil society is too extensive to be articulated in this address. It is enough to say that our open-handed policy to the conscience of society has **changed the minds and attitudes of change-makers towards government.**

As a result, the **prominence of IGAD as an active participant in international affairs has grown enormously** as a result of our tireless efforts to share our experiences and at the same time learn from the international community.

Regrettably, the plans that were in the pipeline to reach out to more potential partners were cut short by the advent of the coronavirus pandemic. **We have every intention of cementing these prospective relationships** immediately the crisis is over and it is safe for us to once more meet across a round table for discussions.

Nevertheless, it was **gratifying to hear our intentions to revitalise IGAD echoed and affirmed by the President of Ethiopia H.E. Sahle-Work Zewde**, during her official visit to the IGAD Headquarters last week.

In sum ladies and gentlemen, it is my privilege to report that **the state of IGAD relations in the brotherhood of nations is now stronger than ever.**

Now, as I come to the end of this comprehensive annual address, I want to **underscore the importance of the context** in which it has been delivered.

The IGAD Secretariat has gathered here to conclude the strategic planning process and chart the future of IGAD for the next 5 years. **This strategy is the blueprint that ties together our “3 R’s” of Response, Reform and Revitalisation to deliver a fourth and final “R”; Results.**

Our legacy shall be measured against our achievements not just our efforts. For it is not enough that we try and improve our region; we have no choice but to succeed in making a tangible difference for our people. And we are fortunate to be making this attempt within larger continental and global initiatives that will complement our own efforts.

We have the sustainable development agenda where 21 of the 169 targets were scheduled for 2020 and are undergoing a review this year.

We also have the African Union's Agenda 2063 within which the Continental Free Trade Area is meant to be rolled out. **2030 will therefore be a watershed year for us all** as the period for realizing the SDGs matures and the AU agenda nears its mid-point.

It is within this frame of thought that **we are challenging ourselves to think further forward than ever before**. I have called upon all of us to **stretch our collective imagination to the year 2050 and beyond and visualise the IGAD region we want**.

We are planning beyond our own time in office and **setting the foundation for the future generations** that will take the helm in IGAD long after we have yielded our responsibilities.

As we finalize our strategy for the next 5 years from 2021 to 2025, we shall plan with this end in mind. However, the strategic plan is not an end in itself; it is one of the many steps that we shall take towards 2050 and beyond.

With such high expectations riding on it, **our next strategic plan must therefore be greater than the sum of its parts**, for IGAD to make the next great leap forward.

Our strategy is the vehicle that shall **pull IGAD together to capitalise on our strength that comes with diversity**. It will determine how we shall collectively endeavour to overcome the multiple adversities that pose a hazard to our future development.

What was true in 1986 when IGAD was founded, has once again been proven to be true in 2020. **When the situation is at its worst, IGAD rises to be at its best**. When we were surrounded by crisis, after crisis, after crisis, we at IGAD took that opportunity to revitalize our sense of purpose.

IGAD has remained a beacon of multilateralism and collective action in a world that was retreating into isolationism and unilateral action. We called upon the combined strength of our Member States, Loyal Partners and New Friends.

Slowly but surely, we can see that the tide is turning. We remain ready to do our part in **putting our world, our continent and our region on the path to recovery, sustainable growth and transformative development.**

The IGAD secretariat continues to count on the full political and material support of our Member States. It is **only with your backing that the Secretariat is able to maintain its independence and further assert your sovereignty** in the International Community.

To the staff of the secretariat, I close this inaugural address with a call for us to **better exercise the coordination for which the world has come to admire IGAD.**

Let us avoid the mistakes of other organisations and indeed our own that have **many talented people working alone to do ordinary things.** It is better for IGAD to have **many ordinary people, working together to do extraordinary things.**

Let us all bear in mind that **talent alone may win one or two games, but Teamwork inevitably wins the entire competition.** For us all at the secretariat, let us move forward in the knowledge that **coming together is only the beginning, staying together is a measure of progress,** and it is by **working together** that we can **truly realize success.**

IGAD is strong, and United in our Diversity, we can make it even stronger together.

Thank you for your kind attention.