



OPENING REMARKS
WORKNEH GEBEYEHU, IGAD EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
SECTORAL MINISTERS MEETING ON LAND GOVERNANCE
29TH JULY 2021, NAIROBI, KENYA

- Our host in the Republic of Kenya, Your Excellency **Farida Karoney**, Cabinet Secretary Ministry of Lands and Physical Planning;
- Your Excellency **Ahmed Adam Bakheid Dukhri**, Minister for Social Development, Republic of Sudan and Representing the IGAD Chair;
- **Hon. Ministers present** and **designated representatives of the Ministers** from IGAD Member States;
- **Directors** responsible for Lands, Gender and Women Affairs;
- **Development Partners** here present – Particularly the **Embassy of Sweden** in Addis Ababa and Nairobi and the **Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)**;
- My dear **colleagues from the IGAD Secretariat**;
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**,
- All protocols observed.

It is with great pleasure that **I welcome you all to Nairobi for this important dialogue on land governance in the context of gender equality** within the IGAD Region.



The discussion today aims to achieve four objectives:

1. **Catalyse collective action** towards gender equality and equity on land,
2. **Stimulate cross-generational engagements** at the regional and local level on gender equality and equity with regard to land.
3. **Drive increased public & private investment** on equitable land governance,
4. **Cement avenues in policy and practice avenues that will deliver concrete and transformative outcomes** for women's access, ownership and utilisation of land in the IGAD Region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am truly encouraged that despite the ongoing turmoil in our region as a result of the covid-19 pandemic, conflict and the endemic hazards to peace, security and development, **we are still focused on addressing some of the root causes of the challenges that dominate in our region.**

It is a sign that **we are intent on treating inequality as the oldest disease affecting our nations, states and societies,** even as we address the symptoms which manifest as conflict, poverty and injustice.

As slightly more than half of the population of our region and indeed the world, **let there be no doubt that women are equal stakeholders in the destiny of our region and have a significant role to play in its prosperity.**

It is for this reason that the UN Sustainable Development Goal Number 5 and Aspiration Number 6 in the AU's Agenda 2063, **echo our principles as articulated in Article 6(a) sub-section(f) of the revitalized 1996 agreement establishing IGAD** that provides for;



“The recognition, promotion and protection of human and people's rights in accordance with the provisions of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights”

In this regard, my interpretation of this provision with the context of this meeting is that **IGAD is obligated to address gender disparities in all spheres of life.**

In our role as a regional policy coordination authority, IGAD is desirous for all our **Member States to institute policies that seek to transform the existing distribution of resources and responsibilities in order to establish a more equitable relationship between women and men.**

These policies would aim not only at not only promoting and protecting women’s rights as enshrined in international law, **but also amplifying the voice and agency of women to influence and participate in decision making.**

It is a positive development that a number of legislative frameworks have been developed, but we still face gaps in the implementation meaning that **women still face systemic discrimination, in part due to social and cultural barriers and the inaccessibility of public institutions to support them.**

Moreover, **gender concerns are increasingly “shrinking” in development cooperation as evidenced by the limited funding allocated to gender issues** especially in ‘hard’ sectors such as peace and security, coupled with the **anemic implementation of gender mainstreaming in development policy.**



Moreover, the **inadequacy of gender-disaggregated data both in development cooperation and national statistics** has limited our capacity to fully appreciate the **latent potential of women's land rights as a driver of regional development and integration**. This is an evidence gap that should therefore be urgently corrected.

Gender is a basic determinant of social relations and rights in states and households. Combined with other social factors such as class, ethnicity, and caste, **gender determines to the greatest extent for women in particular, their ability to capitalize on opportunities, the limits of their aspirations**, the established standard of living, their access to resources, their status in society and their sense of self-perception **especially in rural communities**.

Taken altogether, **these factors limit the optimal capacity of women as productive members of society and their potential as an asset** for our member states and societies. For the IGAD Region, **these limitations represent a significant cost of foregone opportunities in terms of social and economic development**. Land rights—whether customary or formal, therefore represent one of the most important avenues to social and economic empowerment the world over.

What we do know is that inequitable governance of land-linked resources is one of the principal causes of conflict, human rights violations and poverty affecting our societies. For our region to attain the peace, prosperity and integration that we keenly aspire to, we must therefore **systematically address the deficiencies in our policies and practices in land governance** including; conflicting legislation as well as inefficient administrative procedures.



We must also address ourselves to the outcomes of the deficiencies in land administration that have resulted in increased insecurity of tenure, environmental degradation, unregulated urbanization, historical land injustices and most importantly, inequitable access to land especially for women, children and minority groups. **Unequal access to land is therefore one of the root causes of the "*Feminization of Poverty*" in our region.**

Honorable Ministers,

In order for us to reverse this state of affairs, **we are duty-bound to entrench land reform gender policy frameworks that promote the principles of gender equity in land reform.**

This includes **mechanisms for ensuring women's full and equal participation in decision-making in national and regional land reform agenda.** Over the past two years, the IGAD Secretariat has worked with the technical staff in our IGAD Member States to understand, analyze, synthesize, and strategize on how best the region can move a regional transformative agenda on equality on land.

Today we deliver the Regional Women's Land Rights Agenda to you Honorable Ministers for Action. **This agenda is a call to Action for the transformation of our region.** It is anchored in the National Women's Land Rights Agendas of your respective countries. **I therefore call upon you to support its implementation through National Budget and Resource Allocations.**



This agenda is premised on our collective understanding that for our region to develop, **we must harvest the benefits offered to us by women** in terms of enhanced agricultural productivity, improved family health and wellbeing, reduced conflict, better governance as well as deeper regional integration through harmonized Land Governance frameworks.

Honorable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen;

I will conclude my remarks by reiterating that IGAD remains committed to supporting gender equality throughout the region. On my part, **I will continue to deliver on my solemn duty to bring IGAD closer together and deliver IGAD to the People** – both men and women of this region.

I thank you.