



**STATEMENT**  
**WORKNEH GEBEYEHU, IGAD EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**  
**AMBULANCE HANDOVER TO THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF**  
**TURKANA**  
**29<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2021, NAIROBI, KENYA**

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- Your Excellency **Hon. Mutahi Kagwe**, Cabinet Secretary for Health of the Republic of Kenya;
- The Governor of Turkana County, **Hon. Joshat Nanok**;
- Staff Members of the Ministry of Health, County Government of Turkana and my colleagues at the IGAD Secretariat;
- Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;
- **Good afternoon,**

It is indeed a **singular privilege to preside over this special official handover ceremony of this advanced ambulance** aimed to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Turkana County as well as the Republic of Kenya and the IGAD region at large.

I wish to sincerely thank the Republic of Kenya for the **important role it has played alongside our other member states in actively supporting the IGAD secretariat to roll-out our joint regional response strategy to COVID-19.**

**Excellencies, Dear colleagues;**

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of March last year, **the extraordinary summit meeting of IGAD Heads of States and Government arrived at a most meaningful and judicious decision**, directing IGAD to focus on protecting the most vulnerable sections of our population against Covid-19 especially in cross-border areas.



Furthermore, the Heads of State **established the IGAD emergency fund for the control and prevention of pandemic diseases** to which the **Republic of Kenya generously committed the sum of 2 million US Dollars.**

**Honourable Cabinet Secretary, your Excellency the Governor, Ladies and Gentlemen;**

Following the declaration of this special summit meeting, **the IGAD region has recorded tremendous progress in delivering immediate emergency response to the coronavirus pandemic** across 21 Cross-Border sites, 7 Refugee Camps and IDP settlements as well as 4 Migrant Reception Centres alongside highly mobile populations such as truck drivers.

So far, and with the support of our partners in the EU, AfDB, Sweden, Germany and many others, IGAD has procured over **5 million medical face masks, 1 million PCR covid-test kits, 4 million surgical gloves and 21 high-volume PCR Machines, 21 Ambulances, 5 Field Utility vehicles and 8 Mobile Laboratories.**

Our efforts at containment and protection against the pandemic are commendable. However, **a monumental challenge lies ahead; our region continues to face serious limitations in testing and vaccination capacity.**



In order to bring this issue sharply to your attention, **I would like to underscore the fact that only 2.2% of the IGAD population has been tested for COVID-19 and less than 1% has been fully vaccinated.** These sobering statistics reveal the scale of the challenge that lies ahead of us as a region.

In order **to remedy the low levels of testing, IGAD has spearheaded the procurement of 21 High-Volume PCR machines** that will significantly improve the ability of our Member States to detect and effectively target outbreaks of the virus.

Furthermore, to redress the challenges we are currently facing in inoculating our people against this pandemic, **IGAD has formulated a COVID-19 regional vaccine strategy that supports the efforts of our Member States to procure, deploy and administer the vaccine in our region.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen;**

IGAD will continue to engage the international community and our development partners on behalf of our people to **advocate for equitable access and universal acceptance of all vaccines that are recognized by the World Health Organization.**

The existential threat posed by Covid-19 and other pandemics to lives and livelihoods in our region and the world over **necessitates the establishment of home-grown capacities for the local production of vaccines and essential health commodities.**

Towards this objective, the IGAD secretariat has embarked on efforts towards the **establishment of COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing facilities in our member states.**



In this regard, IGAD calls upon Member States, our development partners the private sector and the wider international community to **further support our multi-lateral, multi-pronged approach to countering the threat of Covid-19 and similar pandemics.**

Already in October of this year, **IGAD with the support of the United States Agency for Development (USAID) is preparing to convene a regional conference on collaborative pharmaceutical manufacturing** in the Horn of Africa in the context of COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, IGAD is also **advocating to capitalise on the economies of scale and enhanced equity among our Member States** through bulk pooled procurement and logistics of vaccines and health commodities used for prevention of COVID-19.

**In conclusion Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;**

I am **fully convinced that regional integration is the key to sustainably addressing cross-cutting challenges in the region.** COVID-19 has **highlighted the potential of health cooperation as a driver for regional integration and a catalyst of global diplomacy.**

I look forward to the **contribution that the health services provided by this ambulance in Turkana County will make towards bringing our people at the confluence of Kenya, South Sudan, Uganda and Ethiopia closer together.**

**Thank you very much.**