

OPENING REMARKS
IGAD EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
HIGH-LEVEL MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON
SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF DESERT LOCUST
AND OTHER TRANSBOUNDARY PESTS IN THE IGAD REGION
Thursday, 17th June 2021

- Your Excellency **Prof. Eltahir Harbi**, Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources Republic of Sudan and representing the IGAD Chair;
- Excellencies, **Ministers of Agriculture of IGAD Member States**;
- Distinguished **Experts and Participants**;
- My **Esteemed IGAD Colleagues**;
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this **Ministerial Conference on Sustainable Management of Desert Locusts and other Transboundary Pests in the IGAD Region**. On behalf of IGAD, I commend you all for the efforts you have made thus far in monitoring and responding to the successive outbreaks of desert locusts in the IGAD region.

This meeting for the Ministers of Agriculture, **marks the latest milestone in our efforts to mitigate negative impacts of the desert locust invasion** within our region.

As you are aware, the IGAD Region currently faces **an unprecedented triple threat to food and nutrition security and community resilience** that has been caused by the combined effects of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, upsurge of desert locusts and severe flooding.

Ironically, it was the favorable weather and vegetation conditions across the Eastern African region in late 2019 that contributed to **the worst desert**

locust upsurge in our region for the past 25 years and the worst in the world for 75 years. These locusts did severe damage to our food crops and forage for our livestock.

While several warnings were issued throughout 2019 and control actions were launched in frontline countries and communities, **the situation deteriorated rapidly in January 2020 because of the effects of Cyclone Pawan in the Greater Horn of Africa in December 2019.** Regrettably, the desert locust invasion aggravated the already grim food and nutrition security situation.

Our region remains one of the most vulnerable to food insecurity in the world. According to the latest Food and Nutrition Security statement in April this year, **there are over 32 million people whose food insecurity status is Phase 3 or higher** in the IGAD region. This means that **they are living in a situation of food crisis, emergency or catastrophe.**

An impact assessment conducted by the Food Security and Nutrition Working Group that is convened by IGAD and FAO, between October and December 2020 in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia reinforces this finding.

Recognizing that the desert locust invasion is a *regional issue* that requires *a regional response, regional plans and regional action*, IGAD Heads of States, through the Communique of the **34th Extra Ordinary Summit of IGAD Heads of States and Governments** held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 8th February 2020;

"Agreed to act collectively through IGAD and join forces with neighboring regions and relevant agencies including the Desert Locust Control Organization **towards the total eradication of this pest and address the broader aspects of climate change in the region."**

In compliance with this directive, **IGAD has since established a Special Taskforce to oversee and coordinate joint desert locust response efforts.** The IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC) provided regular updates, reports and forecasts on the Desert Locust conditions and trends in the region throughout the outbreak period.

IGAD has also convened a number of technical, ministerial, and partners meetings to facilitate the **exchange experiences and discuss recommendations for effective desert locust prevention and management strategies.** The last of set of consultations was conducted early this year in partnership with the FAO, the World Bank and the French Agency for Development, AFD.

Excellences and Distinguished Guests

Although we have recorded a number of positive accomplishments since 2020 to date in the management of desert locusts by communities, national, regional and international agencies, **the current upsurge has once again highlighted the perennial lack of adequate prevention, readiness and response capacity in our region.**

It has also raised a number of questions about the roles and responsibilities of regional bodies, including IGAD in coordinating preventative and response actions.

As a remedy to these shortcomings, I want to draw your attention to the following proposed 6 actionable recommendations;

1. **Establishment of dedicated desert locust units/teams** in the affected national jurisdictions, in order to maintain a high level of alertness on potential desert locust upsurges and invasions.
2. Formulation of **national and regional preparedness plans.**

3. Development of **national and regional risk assessment and crisis management plans.**
4. Origination of **coordinated national and regional communications plans** by IGAD Member States.
5. Strengthening of **public-private partnerships (PPP) agreements at national and regional level** to guarantee and maintain the availability of the supplies and services needed to respond to outbreaks of desert locusts and other transboundary pests.
6. **Review of national and regional policies and regulations** to support an effective response at national and regional (cross-border) levels.

In conclusion,

Let me **thank all your Excellencies, the Ministers in charge of Agriculture in our Member States for** your unwavering leadership and support in our efforts to control Desert Locusts in our region.

I also want to **thank our partners who have stood resolutely with IGAD and Member States** throughout these unusual times as we contend with the triple-threat of COVID-19, desert locusts and floods.

I call upon you to **continue extending your friendship and support in our endeavors to reduce food and nutrition insecurity and minimize the erosion of our resilience.**

I also thank all the experts and participants for accepting our invitation; **IGAD welcomes your invaluable inputs and insightful perspectives** in the upcoming discussions and I very much **look forward to reviewing the outcomes report of this meeting.**

Thank you Very Much.