



PEACE, PROSPERITY AND
REGIONAL INTEGRATION

OFFICIAL REMARKS
WORKNEH GEBEYEHU, IGAD EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

3rd Conference of IGAD Ministers in Charge of Education
Wednesday, 30th MARCH 2022

Addis Ababa
Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

- Your Excellency, our Distinguished Guest of Honour and not to forget our Esteemed Host, **Prof. Berhanu Nega**, Minister of Education, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia;
- Your Excellency, **Moustapha Mohamed Mahamoud**, Minister of Education Republic of Djibouti;
- Your Excellency, **Nouria Aden Issa**, Deputy Minister of Education Federal Republic of Somalia;
- Excellency **Hon. Gabriel Changson Chang**, Minister of Education, Republic of South Sudan
- Excellency **Amb. Gamal El-sheikh Ahmed**, Ambassador of Sudan to Ethiopia;
- Excellency **Amb. Rebecca Amuge Otengo**, Ambassador of Uganda to Ethiopia;
- **Mr. Charles Obiero**, Deputy Director of Education, representing the Republic of Kenya;
- Excellency **Stephan Auer**, Germany's Ambassador to Ethiopia
- Excellency **Roland Kobia**, Head of Delegation and Ambassador of the European Union to Ethiopia;
- **Fadela Novak-Irons**, Representative of Education Cannot Wait
- Distinguished Representatives of our partners in education **GIZ**, **UNHCR** and **UNESCO**;
- Members of the **Media**;



- Dear **IGAD Colleagues,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It gives me great pleasure to **welcome you all to this ministerial conference on accelerating access to inclusive and quality education for refugees, returnees, IDPs and host communities.**

I am very **happy to welcome you all to beautiful Addis Ababa, a city of origins** and the seat of our Continental Organization, the African Union.

By extension, **may I also welcome you to the land of our common ancestor Lucy "Dinkinesh"** who approximately 3.2 million years ago, through the use of the first stone tools, stood at the dawn of learning and education.

4 months ago, in December of last year, **we held another high-level gathering in Djibouti to explore ways and means to build and safeguard the intellectual resources** of the most vulnerable sections of our population amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our assembly here today, builds on the momentum that we started in December and it **underscores our determination not allow the challenges we face in this region** in the form of; political instability, natural disasters, the covid-19 pandemic and impact of the conflict in Ukraine, **to distract us from our duty to continue addressing the prevalent need for education for our most disadvantaged brothers and sisters.**

I am personally encouraged by our collective focus and commitment at national, regional and international level, **not to disinvest in the future of our displaced populations and the communities that host them.**

Indeed, our work here is **an embodiment of the words of Malcolm X who reached back into his African roots** and borrowed from the wisdom of our forefathers who said, **“knowledge is a passageway to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today.”**

Education therefore restores not only the social mobility of disadvantaged populations, but also lifts the barriers to their physical mobility and protects them from the hazards of irregular migration and human trafficking by allowing them the opportunity and means to move in a safe, orderly and regular manner.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Education is one of the most important pathways to the regional integration of the IGAD region. I have always maintained that regional integration is not an abstract concept; the soul of regional integration is to be found in everyday interactions.

As IGAD, **we have always sought to seek the silver lining in every dark cloud and find opportunities in very challenge.** Take for instance, the COVID-19 pandemic; there has been never a greater catalyst for regional health integration, medical diplomacy and indeed international cooperation than this health crisis.

For our region, **it inspired the first and fastest reaction of the leadership of any part of the world to come together and come up with a common response** when the IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government convened in the historic virtual summit of March 2020.

For our development partners and in particular the EU, **it inspired the single greatest act of solidarity and humanitarian generosity when they immediately committed 60 million euros**, to fight the spread of covid-19 in the IGAD region and mitigate its effects on our states and societies, **even as they were waging an even bigger war against the virus themselves.**

5 days ago, I was also privileged to address a convocation of IGAD Health Ministers that was very similar to this one; and there **I underscored the power that everyday health interactions have to bring our people together.**

Alongside the grand policy outcomes that we were achieving, I highlighted the ordinary day-to-day things we are in the process of doing to realize regional integration through health, such as building a bridge in Mandera that will allow borderland communities in Somalia and Ethiopia to access a nearby health facility in Kenya.

Excellencies, Dear Participants;

We must therefore draw inspiration from these examples, and **see how we can also use education to drive regional integration;** to bring our countries and communities together through intangible ways such as shared ideas as well as through tangible ways such as common infrastructure.

It is time our people stopped moving to escape armed engagements and started moving in search of intellectual enlightenment. Indeed, the late Koffi Anan, former UN secretary-general expressed it best when he said ***"Education is simply peace-building by another name; It is the most effective form of defense spending."***

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It therefore **with is ideal in mind that in 2017, our ministers in charge of education adopted the Djibouti Declaration,** which laid out the key priority actions that would facilitate equitable, inclusive and quality education for forcibly displaced people.

This landmark regional policy instrument was further strengthened in December 2018 by the Addis Ababa call for action which was endorsed by the 2nd Education Ministerial Conference.

For the last 4 years, **IGAD and our partners have been making concerted efforts to translate these policy intentions into tangible action** and I am delighted to note the remarkable progress we have made since then.

Over the past 2 days at the steering committee and experts' meetings respectively, IGAD, in collaboration with different partners and stakeholders in education have demonstrated how we have worked closely with member states towards the implementation of the Djibouti Declaration as well as other regional and international commitments.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Please indulge me as I highlight 5 of the main initiatives that we are working together with our Member States in promoting education at the regional level;

1. Development of **Costed National Education Response Plans** for Refugees, IDP's and Host Communities;
2. Formulation of a **Comprehensive Regional Education Policy Framework**
3. THE IGAD **Regional Strategy for Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET)**;
4. The IGAD **Regional Scholarship Program** aimed largely at benefiting students from refugees, returnees and disadvantaged host communities;

And,

5. The **IGAD Regional Teacher Training Program** which targets building skills and competencies among secondary school teachers in refugee hosting communities.

Just as every education program requires a regular assessment of the learning outcomes, we have developed performance tracking tools to monitor and evaluate the progress we are making in the implementation of the Djibouti Declaration.



Moreover, we have **developed the roadmap for a regional qualification's framework**, as provided in the Djibouti Declaration and Addis Ababa Call for Action.

Both of these tools will be considered and adopted in this Conference as part of the raft of 33 recommendations that were drawn up by the high-level education experts meeting in Djibouti.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

As I come to the conclusion of my remarks, I wish to express my **sincerest appreciation to our partners for their continued financial and technical support**, notably, the Government of Germany through GIZ, Education Cannot Wait, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNHCR, and the EU.

Education is the transmission of civilization; 3.5 million years after our ancestor Lucy Dinkinesh walked this part of the world, **we are writing a new chapter in civilization through our regional integration agenda.**

I call upon all our partners of goodwill to work with us in this regard, by harnessing the power of education to strengthen the connection and relations across Member States as well as communities affected by conflict and displacement with the societies that host them.

Finally, I leave you to consider the what I have learned in my own limited experience; ***“education transforms despair into hope; and when hope is transformed into belief, it becomes the inspiration of action into destiny.”***

I thank you all for your attention.