



PEACE, PROSPERITY AND
REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Opening Speech
WORKNEH GEBEYEHU, IGAD EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

**4th Meeting of the Technical Committee to develop a Regional
Strategy to Prevent, Counter, and Respond to the Threat of
Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in the IGAD Region**

11th – 12th May 2022
Republic of Djibouti



- Your Excellency, **Mohamed Hussein Ahmed**, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Sudan and the IGAD Chair;
- **Representative of the Republic of Djibouti;**
- Your Excellency, Dear Brother **Ambassador Engineer Mahboub Maalim**, the immediate former Executive Secretary of IGAD and strategy development lead;
- **Commander Abebe Muluneh** and IGAD Security Sector Program team;
- Our Distinguished subject matter experts **Dr. Whitney Grespin** and **Mr. Gregory Robin;**
- **Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen;**
- All Protocols Observed,



I will begin my remarks today by **expressing my sincerest gratitude and that of the entire IGAD fraternity to the Government of Djibouti** for graciously accepting to host this meeting.

I also **specially thank the government of Denmark for their generous political, diplomatic and financial support** towards the development of the Regional Strategy to Prevent, Counter and Respond to the Threat of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in the IGAD Region.

Furthermore, my **singular appreciation goes to a special member of the IGAD Security Sector program team and my predecessor, H.E Ambassador Engineer Mahboub** whose extensive expertise on our region we continue to count on.



My brother Mahboub's **energetic engagement in this project is an example to us all on how to make retirement rewarding** by giving back knowledge to the community.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Turning to the theme of this meeting, **in the course of reviewing the data on IEDs in our region and around the world, I realized a number of insights** which I will invite you to appreciate with me.

Overall Improvised Explosive Devices **(IEDs) have become an increasingly serious and significant threat** in our region, especially as they have become the **preferred weapon of choice for insurgent and terrorist organisations.**



Between January 2020 to date, **our region has suffered 295 IED incidents** which have claimed the lives of almost 1,000 of our civilian brothers and sisters and inflicted life-threatening injuries on over 1,600 others.

The data showed that unsurprisingly, our sister Member State the Federal Republic of **Somalia is the most affected by IED attacks, accounting for almost 80% of all incidents** and carrying the unbearable burden of over half of all those injured and killed.

What is surprising however, **is that between 2020 and 2021, Ethiopia recorded an increase in IED incidents of 815%** from 34 to 311 or almost 1 IED attack for every day of the year.



Besides the direct devastation on human life, **IEDs also directly affect the economy and livelihoods in the region** when they destroy critical infrastructure such as water, sanitation and energy networks, roads, markets, schools, hospitals and social places.

Furthermore, they **add to the humanitarian burden in our already overloaded region when they disrupt the relief and assistance operations conducted by our governments and international partners.**

In a nutshell, **IED attacks are a serious obstruction to the political, social, and economic development of our region.**



Ladies and Gentlemen:

Several factors contribute to the growth in IED attacks that we are experiencing in our region.

I am certain that the experts in this room are in a better position to elaborate, but allow me to note that **we have to look inwards to first address those weaknesses within ourselves that make it easy for terrorist groups to manufacture, transport and deploy IEDs.**

In particular, I **see a big role played by the criminal networks that facilitate the financing and transport of illicit materials** through our porous borders as well as **endemic corruption, including the insufficient management of ordnance and ammunition stockpiles.**



Groups such as *Al Shabaab*, *Da'esh*, and ADF **are also reported to have infiltrated some sections of security services** and recruited cadres who are being trained to manufacture and use IEDs.

Excellencies Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is **in response to these multiple threats that transcend national borders** that this project has undertaken to **formulate a comprehensive regional strategy** to counter the threat posed by IEDs in a collaborative and coordinated manner.

This strategy-in-development **acknowledges from the onset that IEDs are neither a national nor a regional problem but a global challenge** that must be tackled in unison.



This is why this team led by Amb. Engineer Mahboub, is **working in close collaboration and partnership with INTERPOL as well as coordinating with the African Union** in order to come up with and implementing a holistic strategy that will deliver enduring and sustainable solutions to this highly dynamic problem.

Until now, **the challenge of IEDs has been ineffectively addressed through short-term interventions** that seek to treat the symptoms instead of curing the disease.

Previous efforts to combat IEDs have **focused on training and equipping specialist counter-IED forces** but this approach has proven to be costly, never-ending, and only marginally effective.



Regrettably, **capacity building for strategic and operational effectiveness has been overlooked** meaning that addressing the root-causes and enablers of IED proliferation has been ignored so far.

This strategy seeks to remedy that oversight through the prioritization of strategy development into capacity building which will **stimulate more pro-active approaches that include forecasting and detection in addition to prevention.**

This strategy framework **also provides an opportunity to foster more predictability,** greater transparency and measure accountability and effectiveness of counter-IED efforts in the region.

I am convinced that it will **also act as a confidence-building measure that will appeal to our partners who are keen to extend technical and financial support to our interventions.**



As I come to the conclusion of my remarks, **I invite all participants to carefully review and work diligently towards finalizing this draft counter-IED strategy** which will help to mitigate the negative impact of IEDs on our already-vulnerable communities and societies.

With these few remarks, **I officially opened this 4th Meeting of the Technical Committee** to develop a Regional Strategy to Prevent, Counter, and Respond to the Threat of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in the IGAD Region.

I wish you all successful deliberations, God Bless all of us, God Bless Djibouti, God Bless IGAD.

Thank you very much.