



PEACE, PROSPERITY AND
REGIONAL INTEGRATION

**SPEECH BY IGAD EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
H.E Dr Workneh Gebeyehu (PhD)**

On the Occasion of the visit by

H.E. Ahmed Abdulaziz Kattan

**Advisor to the Royal Court
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

to

IGAD Secretariat, Djibouti, Republic of Djibouti

Tuesday 7th June 2022

Our Guest, Excellency Ahmed Bin Abdulaziz Kattan
Advisor to the Royal Court, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,
Excellency, Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Republic of Djibouti
Excellences, Member of the IGAD Committee of Ambassadors
Members Senior Management, IGAD Secretariat,
Members of the Press,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me much pleasure to welcome you and your distinguished delegation, Excellency Ahmed Abdul Aziz to the seat of the Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), here in the beautiful coastal city of Djibouti, Republic of Djibouti.

In the same vein, I am honoured to welcome my brother, Excellency Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Government of the Republic of Djibouti for accepting our invitation to join us this morning for this truly historical and highly significant occasion. Allow me to also acknowledge and pay gratitude to Members of the IGAD Committee of Ambassadors here-present for gracing this auspicious ceremony.

Excellences, Ladies and gentlemen, you will recall that since its birth in 1986, IGAD (originally known as the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development- IGADD), the organisation set out to promote regional cooperation among countries in the Horn of Africa, to deal with a common binding challenge of recurring droughts that afflicted the region, with devastating impacts on the lives and livelihoods of the population. Most recently, the region has suffered a multitude of disasters- COVID-19, desert locust invasion, flooding and the worst drought in 40 years is currently being experienced, with over 14 million people at the risk of starvation. These recent

disasters re-affirm the continued relevance and importance of IGAD as strategic mechanism for joint responsive actions at regional level, for, no country can sustainably deal with the attendant impacts individually.

2022 marks 36 years of the existence of IGAD, with an expanded mandate covering areas of agriculture and natural resources management, disaster risk management (including droughts), climate variability and change; regional economic cooperation and integration; peace and security; and health and social development. These broad areas continue to present not only challenges but also opportunities for enhanced cooperation, collaboration and partnerships among the regional countries and beyond. It is for this reason that we are deeply humbled and honoured to host H.E Ahmed Bin Abdulaziz Kattan at IGAD Secretariat today, for we see an opportunity to renew and strengthen our relations and cooperation as a regional body with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in reinforcing the efforts of our Member States in pursuit of regional peace, prosperity and integration in the Horn of Africa.

Against this backdrop, I would like through your Excellency, to register our utmost appreciation and compliments to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman and Crown Prince Mohamed Bin Salman; and to the government and people of Saudi Arabia. Our sincere thanks for the support and commitment to addressing key binding constraints and shared challenges in the Horn of Africa, many of which fall within the expanded mandate of IGAD. Please convey my personal and our collective wishes for further prosperity and progress.

In 2017, IGAD Signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Secretariat of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC), which provided an overarching framework for regular consultations between parties on general regional issues of mutual concern, economic and cultural connectivity among

others. It is our desire and conviction to deepen this framework bi-laterally with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, towards the direction of a coherent cooperation agenda in areas of mutual interest and importance. For example, over the past five years, there has been a growing number of labour migrants from the Horn of Africa Countries to Saudi Arabia, and the trade in agricultural and livestock products has consistently increased. The Horn of Africa region is rich in livestock, with exports to neighbouring countries especially in the Middle East estimated at approximately One billion United States Dollars annually.

Governments in the region have made enormous efforts to improve the investment climate to attract foreign direct investments in manufacturing, agriculture and service sectors. IGAD welcomes the opportunity for further dialogue with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on how to leverage these opportunities available in the region for the progress and prosperity of our people. Moreover, enhancing the institutional capacity of IGAD to provide the necessary stewardship of regional agendas is absolutely, necessary in achieving the desired results. We therefore appeal for support towards corporate development, especially construction of the IGAD Head Quarters in Djibouti. I take this opportunity to acknowledge, with thanks, the generous donation of land by the Government of the Republic of Djibouti, in Haramous, near King Salman Mosque.

As I conclude, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to reaffirm the importance of the forthcoming Saudi- Africa, and Saudi-Africa-Arab Summits, as strategic platforms to dialogue and develop effective strategies for strengthening the cooperation and partnership between our regions. As a Secretariat, we look forward to the two Summits and their outcomes.