



OPENING REMARKS

WORKNEH GEBEYEHU, IGAD EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

POLITICAL MEETING OF THE AFRICAN GOVERNANCE PLATFORM

Addis Ababa, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Tuesday, 14th February 2023

- Your Excellency **Dr. Monique Nsanzabaganwa**, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union;
- Your Excellency, **Rémy Ngoy Lumbu**, Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and Chairperson of the African Governance Platform;
- Your Excellency, **Bankole Adeoye**, AU Commissioner for Political affairs, Peace and Security and Rapporteur of the African Governance Platform;
- Mme. **Lindiwe Khumalo**, Chair of African Governance Architecture and Acting Executive Secretary of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights;
- **Fellow CEO's and Representatives** of the AU Regional Economic Communities and Mechanisms;
- Esteemed **Governance Experts**;
- Our governance, peace & security **platform support partners** from GIZ and the EU;
- **Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen**;

I am **delighted in my capacity as vice-chairperson at the political level of the African Governance Platform to welcome you all** to this meeting of our august body.

I thank you, honourable chair and the entire fraternity of the African Union for convening us here to reflect on the progress our continent has made in advancing the principles and practices in good governance over the past year, and to further cast our eyes forward on what we intend to achieve through the **flagship projects scheduled for 2023.**

Excellencies,

It is undeniable that **the past 2 years have been equally challenging and encouraging when it comes to good governance worldwide,** but also more specifically in our continent and respective regions.

Our planet has experienced significant social, economic and political upheaval as nations have struggled to cope with the impact of the global pandemic, the effects of climate change, extreme weather and natural disasters.

Moreover, **these root causes have contributed to the increasing level of conflict in various parts of the world, our continent and affected regions.** Conflict, in turn has piled additional pressure on our fragile economies and evolving institutions and as a result, further **deepened the political divide between our states and societies.**

As nations and communities have become more polarized, the structural challenges affecting good governance, deficits in the rule of law have become more evident.

The erosion of shared values has reduced the available capacity to resolve disputes peacefully through negotiation instead of the force of arms, created a more permissive environment for the violation of human rights and thereby perpetuated the vicious cycle of conflict.

Nevertheless, in the midst of these challenges, **we can still count on the undimnable desire in humanity for lasting peace and stability.** Speaking for IGAD region, I can share our testimony for the appetite we all share for good governance, rule of law and the upholding of human rights.

Over the past 2 years, we have **experienced the some of the biggest challenges but also recorded some of the biggest successes** with to peace, security and stability.

Although the situations in Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan constituted grave challenges to regional stability, **our umbrella organisation the African Union and IGAD has been able to rally Member states, the African Union and our partners in the international community in the spirit of multilateralism** to seek lasting solutions because *what affects one of us, affects all of us.*

Indeed, **IGAD has consistently advocated for continuous and constructive engagement between all parties involved in liberation, state formation and reformation processes** as the means to address disagreements, promote democratic stability and ultimately foster good governance.

As a result, the ongoing political processes and peaceful elections across different Member States can only serve to strengthen the democratic credentials of our region and the African continent at large.

Drawing from the 2023 State of the Region address I delivered earlier this month, **I want to reiterate that the IGAD region is committed to ride on the “wind of peace” that is gradually blowing through our region,** in order to harvest the accruing dividends in good governance, the rule of law and entrenchment of human rights.

Clearly there are lessons we can learn from each other across the different regions and we should seize every opportunity to collaborate in strengthening the governance architecture of our continent.

In this regard, **I am encouraged by the vision contained in the 8 key priorities that we have set for ourselves in 2023 and the accompanying 10 flagship initiatives** that we shall use to deliver on the objectives of the priorities.

As vice-chair of this platform, let me say to you that **I always draw inspiration from bold targets and I want to single out 2 of the specific objectives from this governance platform;**

The first is **our intention to resuscitate Member State reporting on the 2007 African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.** This is a very important mechanism that we shall use to meticulously track and evaluate the progress we are making towards improving the governance environment in our continent and complying with the norms we have set for ourselves.

I take this opportunity to **highlight the contribution that IGAD will be making to the realization of this shared continental commitments;** we shall continue with our ongoing efforts to promote and popularize the 2003 African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, **which has already been ratified by 4 of our 8 Member States.**

The second is **delivering on our mandate to ensure the meaningful participation of marginalised groups in democratic governance processes and transformative agenda of our continent** especially women, youth and civil society.

Women and the youth constitute over 75% of our body politic and without their deliberate inclusion and active participation, we cannot claim to have credible and sustainable democratic institutions or make a real investment in long-term stability.

In this area, **IGAD will support the AU governance objectives specifically through the IGAD National Human Right Institutions Network** that was established in November of last year. This is **in addition to hosting the annual IGAD Governance Forum (IGF)** which provides a platform for exchange and experience sharing on the best practices in good governance, rule of law and human rights.

Additionally, **IGAD has established the IGAD Youth Forum and a Leadership Academy which are mechanisms that encourage young people of our region and continent** to gain an avenue as the leaders of tomorrow, to prepare and play an active role in nurturing good governance practices and transmitting our shared values to the next generation.

Chair, following the deliberations of the technical meeting that was held yesterday, may I add my support to its outcome statement, which **calls for deepened collaboration among platform members and a more defined role for RECs within the platform,** in the spirit of the 2021 Protocol on Relations between the RECs and the AU and Article 6 of the Abuja Treaty.

It is in our common interest to drive strong and effective governance mechanisms within our continent as part of our solemn duty to foster and entrench shared values among ourselves and thereby, **suffocate the atmosphere for disagreement and conflict.**

I will now conclude my remarks with **a quick word on the impact of sanctions and related measures meant to deter bad governance practices.** I am pleased to note that as a continent, we have a shared concern that sanctions as currently designed may not be as effective and are in some instances counter-productive.

I fully support the position of the 11th high-level dialogue in Cotonou that a wider conversation is necessary at the continental level on the measured application of sanctions as a deterrent of poor governance, to ensure that they are **precision-guided to affect offenders while shielding the public from undue impact.**

Finally, we eagerly **look forward to hearing the findings of the technical meeting of the African Governance Platform** and welcome the opportunity to take up the implementation and appropriate recommendations that require action at the political level.

Thank You Very Much.