



PEACE, PROSPERITY AND
REGIONAL INTEGRATION

OFFICIAL STATEMENT
H.E. Workneh Gebeyehu
Executive Secretary, IGAD

14th Ordinary Assembly of the IGAD Heads of State and Government

Monday, 12th June 2023

Republic of Djibouti

- Your Excellency **Ismail Omar Guelleh**, President of the Republic of Djibouti and our gracious host of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development;
- Your Excellency **Malik Akar**, Deputy President of the Transitional Sovereignty Council of the Republic of Sudan and Representative of the IGAD Chair;
- Your Excellency **Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali**, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia;
- Your Excellency **Dr. William Samoei Ruto**, President of the Republic of Kenya;
- Your Excellency **Dr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud**, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia;
- Your Excellency **Salva Kiir Mayardit**, President of the Republic of South Sudan;
- Honourable **Osman Saleh Mohammed**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea
- Honourable **Gen. Al-Hajj Odongo Jeje Abubakhar**, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Uganda;
- Your Excellency **Moussa Faki Mahamat**, Chairperson of the African Union Commission;
- Distinguished Members of the **IGAD Council of Ministers** and the **IGAD Committee of Ambassadors**;
- Your Excellencies **representatives of IGAD Partners** and **Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps**;
- My esteemed colleagues in the **IGAD Secretariat**;
- **Ladies and Gentlemen, All protocols observed**;



Good Afternoon,

It is my **singular privilege to stand before you today with deep gratitude and utmost appreciation to Your Excellency Ismaïl Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic Djibouti** for hosting this momentous 14th Ordinary Assembly of the IGAD Heads of State and Government.

Your commitment to regional cooperation and unity has been instrumental in fostering peace, stability, and development in our region.

2 weeks from now, our host country shall be celebrating the 46th anniversary of independence and it is my honour to invite us all to congratulate in advance, His Excellency **Ismaïl Omar Guelleh, the Government and the people of Djibouti on this very momentous occasion.**

I also extend my **heartfelt thanks to our chair the Republic of Sudan as well as all the Heads of State and Government present here today**, with special recognition to H.E. Dr. William Samoei Ruto, President of the Republic of Kenya and H.E. Dr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia, who will be delivering their maiden address to the ordinary assembly of IGAD Heads of State and Government.

Your presence here **underscores the importance you attach to our regional organisation** and our collective efforts towards regional integration, peace, and security.

Please join me in **wishing His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda a speedy recovery from COVID-19** which continues to be a threat to all of us. Your Presence at this summit is greatly missed and we look forward to and continued engagement and support very soon.



Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Summit comes at a time of great opportunity and positive developments in our region. Let me **take this opportunity to welcome back the State of Eritrea to the IGAD family.** Conversely, the Summit is also meeting at a time when parts of our region are mired in serious crises.

This is therefore a good time to **look back, reflect and take stock of the progress made and identify the obstacles that we are obligated to overcome.** Accordingly, this session will allow us to take a retrospective look and agree on the way forward.

We must **recognise the momentous and positive developments in Peace and Security for the IGAD region** beginning with the IGAD-driven dialogue on the sidelines of the 39th Extraordinary Assembly of IGAD Heads of State and Government held in July 2022, that de-escalated the tensions in shared border area between the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Republic of Sudan.

However, Your Excellencies, **the gains we banked from this agreement are now being eroded by the ongoing conflict in the Republic of Sudan,** which has resulted in immense suffering, with hundreds of our brothers and sisters losing their lives, thousands injured and over 1.4 million displaced since the fighting broke out almost 2 months ago on 15th April 2023.



I commend the swift response of your wise and concerned excellencies the IGAD Heads of state and Government, who convened an emergency summit meeting on 16th April 2023, within less than 24 hours of the onset of hostilities to respond to and make an effort to contain this situation.

From your consultations, you took the **bold step of establishing the High-Level Delegation, led by H.E. Salva Kiir Mayardit, President of the Republic of South Sudan and included H.E. Ismaïl Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti and H.E. Dr. William Samoei Ruto, President of the Republic of Kenya,** demonstrates our collective determination to bring about a peaceful resolution. **We are looking forward to the report of the High-Level Delegation and the draft roadmap on peace in Sudan that has been formulated.**

IGAD has been **welcoming the efforts to suspend hostilities through the temporary ceasefire** reached on 20th May and the **24-hour truce that came into effect from 06:00am on Saturday 10th June.**

However, the resumption of fighting in Khartoum, parts of Western Darfur and El-Geneina in Northern Darfur as well as other parts of the country is most discouraging. IGAD call upon all parties to cease all hostilities and give dialogue a chance. It is an **opportunity to prevent the further loss of life and allow the safe evacuation of civilians who wish to escape the fighting.** We urge the warring parties in Sudan *not to allow war to bring out the worst versions of the best of us.*

Let me take this opportunity to thank **our partners, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United States of America for their continued efforts** to broker peace in Sudan. We also **recognise and appreciate the African Union, United Nations and all other friends of Sudan** who are working tirelessly to end the conflict and support negotiations towards peace.

Let there be no room for doubt, **IGAD is extremely concerned by the violence in Sudan and wishes to stress that in war, there are no real winners.** For a credible cessation of hostilities, the violence and bloodshed must first stop. The **ramifications for our region and the world at large of a protracted conflict in the Republic of Sudan are unthinkable.**

Allow me to highlight just how serious this situation is; before this conflict broke out, **the Republic of Sudan was already one of the biggest refugee-hosting countries in Africa and the World.** As a result of the ongoing conflict, **we are now facing twin prospects of “double-displacement” of refugees and asylum seekers as well as the increased challenge of food insecurity** in Sudan and our region which has barely recovered from the devastating drought.

With this clear picture of what the future will look like if we do not act boldly and swiftly, **I reiterate that we must act above all, to save the lives of our brothers and sisters** who caught up in this conflict, save the hopes and dreams they share with us for peace and prosperity.

I therefore emphasise that as IGAD, good friends and neighbours of Sudan, **we have a moral and historical obligation to halt and reverse the course of this conflict; for *war is simply an escape from the challenges of peace.***

No one is better placed than IGAD to deliver on this outcome, we as the neighbours of Sudan, **have the mandate, the means and the mechanisms necessary to bring the parties to the negotiation table to work out a lasting peace** that is in line with the concrete decisions that Your Excellencies made at the emergency summit meeting that you convened on the 16th of April 2023.

I therefore reiterate my message to the 1156th meeting of the AU Peace & Security Council where I called for the **coordination of all our efforts and peace initiatives to pull together in the same direction and synchronize our collective actions in Sudan.**

The IGAD Secretariat in close coordination with our leaders commits to remain engaged on how best to track the dynamics in Sudan and provide the necessary support towards a peaceful resolution of this conflict through dialogue.

Your Excellencies,

The thematic summary reports that I will be tabling to this distinguished assembly in the closed session hereafter similarly **address the other peace, security and natural disaster situations prevailing in in our region.** Already, it is indisputable that **IGAD as your organization has built a formidable reputation from our successful interventions to broker peace in our region.**

Of great importance are the **positive steps achieved so far in supporting the implementation of the revitalized agreement to the resolution of the conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) Republic of South Sudan.**



IGAD appreciates the commitment of the leadership of the Republic of South Sudan towards the holding of national elections before the stipulated deadline of the transition period, 18 months from now in December 2024.

Allow me to however **highlight that IGAD is facing serious limitations in discharging our oversight, monitoring and evaluation responsibilities through CTSAMVM and R-JMEC, for the peace agreement in South Sudan.** In this regard, I call for the **political, diplomatic and material support of Member States and Partners to finalise the peace process in South Sudan.**

Excellencies,

I am pleased to report that **IGAD has remained the anchor organisation supporting and advocating for the recovery and reconstruction of our constituent Member State, the Federal Republic of Somalia.**

At this juncture, **we want to appreciate the historic steps that Somalia has taken so far on the path to its restoration of peace and stability under the leadership of H.E. President Dr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud** including; elections at National and Federal Member State level as well as Security Sector Reforms that have empowered the Federal Security Forces and the people of Somalia to take the fight to the *Al-Shabaab* terrorist group.

However, **IGAD notes with concern the resurgence and counter-offensive of *Al-Shabaab*** and especially the most recent instance 2 weeks ago on the 26th of May which claimed the lives of Ugandan soldiers. I **take this opportunity on behalf of IGAD to express our condolences to our brothers and sisters in the Republic of Uganda** for the loss of our brave and patriotic peacekeepers serving under ATMIS.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Shifting our attention to Ethiopia, I would like to take this opportunity to commend **H.E Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali** Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for his **leadership in achieving the cessation of hostilities agreement and silencing of the guns in Northern Ethiopia.**

This historic milestone marks a significant step towards peace, stability, and reconciliation in the region. The Prime Minister's **dedication to dialogue and peaceful resolution has proven instrumental in bringing an end to the bloody conflict, fostering an environment of trust and understanding** among the parties involved.

IGAD is also deeply **grateful that the Republics of Djibouti, Kenya and Uganda that have remained Oases of peace and tranquillity** having successfully held peaceful elections that have raised the democratic credentials of our region.

Excellencies,

Turning now to the natural disaster and humanitarian situation in the region, I am **obliged to mention that a majority of these are as a result of environmental degradation, climate change, and extreme weather patterns, particularly the drought-flooding cycle.**

Before the outbreak of conflict in Ukraine and in the Republic of Sudan, **it had been noted that, the world was recording a higher number of climate refugees than conflict refugees.**



In spite of being one of the regions that produces the lowest carbon emissions in the world, the IGAD region is nevertheless one of the most affected by climate change, which is adding to the already significant burdens of population displacement and widespread food insecurity that our region already carries.

In this context, I **draw your attention to the IGAD Disaster Response Strategy** and call upon all Member States to embrace and incorporate its critical elements in their national disaster response plans particularly for borderland areas.

Excellencies ladies and gentlemen,

Nevertheless, it is under these very difficult and challenging circumstances that the secretariat has continued to discharge its duties to you our Member States.

As reflected in the 2022 IGAD annual report, **the performance of the Authority has been commendable in the implementation of projects, programs revitalization and reform efforts**, regardless of the obstacles that have stood in our way.

As part of these efforts, **I am pleased to table to you later today, in line with resolution No. 8 of the 13th Ordinary Summit of IGAD Heads of State and Government held in November 2019, the draft IGAD treaty** which is destined to replace the 1996 Agreement Establishing IGAD. Furthermore, I will be **presenting the revised IGAD Service Regulations for your adoption.**



Already, we have a number of supplementary initiatives that are steering IGAD in new directions most conspicuously, **the flagship new IGAD headquarters project which at USD 50 Million is designed to cement the idea of “One IGAD” which is already underway** and once complete, will stand the test of time as your enduring legacy.

Moreover, **we have initiated a number of initiatives to take IGAD to the People**, including; the E-Visa project, the IGAD Council of Eminent Personalities, the IGAD Leadership Academy and the IGAD Scholarships and Awards program.

I must mention that our **scholarships program which we started with the University of Khartoum has regrettably been affected by the ongoing conflict** and we hope that with the restoration of peace, learning shall resume.

I further **call upon our Member States to emulate the generous example set by the Republic of Sudan and similarly extend scholarship opportunities** to the talented but vulnerable young people in our region.

Your Excellencies, allow me on your behalf to **recognize the invaluable support provided by our bilateral and multilateral allies in peace, security, disaster response, and development.**

We extend our sincere appreciation to the African Union who is our mother organisation, the United Nations, the World Bank, the European Union and the African Development Bank for your unwavering commitment and support.

In addition, we **appreciate the support of our bilateral partners**, including but not limited to the Members of the IGAD Partners Forum, which is Co-Chaired by the Republic of Italy.



We are grateful for the **support of the Troika Countries** (United States, United Kingdom and Norway), the Middle Eastern and Gulf Cooperation Countries, Canada, China, Japan, Türkiye, and numerous other nations that have shown friendship and support for the IGAD region.

Moving forward, I **invite this distinguished assembly to carefully consider the regional issues that I will highlight today**, as well as the forward-looking proposals that the secretariat will present for your consideration.

We **rely on the wisdom and guidance of your excellencies to promote, monitor, coordinate, and harmonize the initiatives that we have originated**. It is through collective efforts that we will continue to deliver on the mandate entrusted to us by our Member States.

Finally, I **extend my profound appreciation to all of Your Excellencies for the critical political, diplomatic and material support you have extended to the Secretariat; and fully appreciate the open-door policy you maintain** when I need to consult you, often at short notice.

I also **thank all other participants here with us who support the work of the Secretariat of the Authority** and your commitment to our shared objectives and aspirations for peace, prosperity and regional integration.

Thank You Very Much.