



**KEYNOTE STATEMENT**  
**WORKNEH GEBEYEHU, IGAD EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

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**AFRICA CLIMATE SUMMIT HIGH-LEVEL MINISTERIAL  
DIALOGUE**

**Climate Security: *Resilience, Fragility & Displacement in the  
Borderlands of the Horn of Africa***  
**4<sup>th</sup> September 2023, Nairobi, Kenya**

- Honourable Ministers;
- Esteemed delegates;
- Distinguished guests;
- Fellow advocates for a resilient future;
- Ladies and gentlemen,

**Welcome honourable ministers, experts and fellow colleagues** to this High-Level Regional Inter-Ministerial Conference on Climate Security. Our purpose today resounds with urgency: to confront the complex relationship between climate, security, and the lives of our people.

I am therefore profoundly honoured to stand before you as the Executive Secretary of IGAD, **united by our common cause to address the climate emergencies that transcends all borders and calls for extraordinary cooperation.**

**For over a century, our brothers and sisters in the borderlands have navigated the stormy seas of conflict and displacement, demonstrating unwavering resilience. Today, as we face a new adversary – the climate emergency – we must embrace our shared history,** learning from the lessons of the past to forge a united path forward.

Let us, for a moment, look closer to home – to the very heart of the Greater Horn of Africa. **History has cooked up a cocktail of challenges for us; but we, the people of IGAD, united by our shared adversity, came together 37 years ago** to establish an organisation that has transformed us from victims to agents.

We embarked on this journey not just to weather the storms of devastating drought and conflict, but to thrive in the face of adversity and proactively capitalise on opportunities we create for transformative change. **And yet, our story is now facing a new and formidable adversary: the climate emergency.**

**Imagine with me, the IGAD region, where 61 million of us – mothers, fathers and children – stand at the crossroads of climate impacts and conflict-induced turmoil.** Yet, even within this narrative of adversity, lies the seeds of opportunity. We find ourselves at the crossroads of potential transformation, at a juncture where resilience can emerge from fragility, where unity can rise from discord.

**Our region contributes the least to the emissions causing global climate change, and yet is ironically the most affected by the worst of the consequences** across all aspects of our lives.

**Environmentally, our projections show that over the next 15 years, the IGAD Region is set to heat up twice as fast as the global average.** Economically, reports by the world bank and IMF showed that the **recent drought reduced productivity in our member states by up to 2.5%** and other projections show that Africa's GDP may reduce by 30% in 2050 due to climate change.

From a humanitarian standpoint, **we are still feeling the effects of the protracted drought that threatened the lives of over 5.4 million of our brothers and sisters and killed over 9.5 million of our livestock destroying household incomes.** Oddly enough, only 2 years ago parts of our region were affected by intense flooding which displaced over 700,000 people in South Sudan, and affected over 6 million others.

**Climate change is therefore is a crisis that knows no borders,** a challenge that transcends our geo-political boundaries. **The sands of the Sahel, the plains of the Rift Valley, the rugged terrain of the Horn – all bear witness to the relentless march of climate change.** Should we fail in our duty to mitigate, adapt, and collaborate, we risk unleashing a cycle of conflict, displacement, and insecurity that will be felt far beyond our shores.

But let it be known – **IGAD and our member states, in the absence of a comprehensive international accord on climate security, have risen with determination to craft solutions that light the way in this atmosphere of uncertainty.**

The **IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC) stands as a testament to our commitment to international cooperation in addressing climate change.** By working closely with the national institutions of 11 Eastern African countries to harness the power of science and collaboration, we are advancing climate forecasting, empowering us to build resilience in the face of adversity, remains a beacon of hope for the region.

Similarly, the IGAD Regional Climate Security Coordination Mechanism, **is an innovation of great significance for our region and is now our bridge to the future. It is a multilateral platform that connects our member states, the African Union, and the United Nations** through the Office of the Special Envoy to the Horn of Africa. This partnership, is another IGAD model of how we can come together in international solidarity, underscores our unwavering resolve to confront climate security head-on.

**We are therefore not merely administrators of policy; we are architects of change.** Our responsibility transcends speeches; it demands action; and we have been very active; The Kampala Ministerial Declaration on Migration, Environment, and Climate Change is one of the cornerstones of our efforts in this direction.

**As we stand here, the Kampala declaration is being adopted region-wide** and is a testament of its significance in reshaping our responses to climate change and forging a path towards a climate-safe and sustainable future.

**Yet, our journey doesn't end here; it continues, for the current of climate change is relentless, and so must be our efforts.** The anticipated return El Niño, accompanied by the worrying threat of desert locusts, is a clear reminder of the inter-connected nature of our challenges.

**Conflict, as well is the greatest threat to the effective solutions we are implementing to climate change.** To address this convergence of climate-change and conflict, we must embrace an integrated approach – one that brings together conflict resolution, peacebuilding, sustainable development, and climate adaptation strategies.

**Let us also draw from the well of knowledge that flows not only within our own experiences but from the research and findings of the wider world.**

The 2022 Health Effects Institute report on the state of air quality and health impacts in Africa paints a worrying picture. **This report found that air pollution is taking a dangerous toll on our continent, accounting for 14% of child deaths under the age of 5.**

Therefore, the need to address this challenge is not only an environmental one, but also a humanitarian duty we owe to our future generations. It is **a clear reminder that climate security is connected to public health** and well-being, demanding our immediate attention.

In the same vein, **the recently released 2023 IMF report on Climate Challenges in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States** further reinforces our own findings from the **IGAD Conflict Early Warning Mechanism CEWARN** on the relationship between conflict and climate change. The IGAD region is home to one of the largest displaced populations in the world, consisting of over 4.5 million refugees and 12 million IDP's who have been forced to abandon their homes because of conflict and climate insecurity.

In 2020, the internal displacement monitoring centre reported that for the **first time in this millennium, more people were displaced by extreme weather events than by conflict.** We therefore stand well warned that failure to act on climate change could lead to an increase in deaths from conflict and hunger in fragile states.

**Excellencies,** So, what lies ahead? What path should we tread in this uncharted territory of climate security? **The answer lies in a raft of coordinated responses and our harmony of hearts and minds.** As we navigate this uncharted territory, let us pledge not only words but actions.

**We must forge partnerships that stretch beyond borders,** reaching out to our neighbours with outstretched hands of cooperation, collaboration and coordination in the spirit of multilateralism. We must **channel resources not only to the well-prepared, but to the fragile, the conflict-affected and most vulnerable communities particularly in the borderlands.** We must ensure that the pathways to progress are paved with resilience, sustainability, and a commitment to shared prosperity.

**I therefore call upon each one of you – policymakers, diplomats, visionaries, and advocates** to rise up to our sworn and solemn duty of reimagining our policies, our institutions, exploring available alternatives for our vulnerable rain-dependent agrarian economies for instance by capitalising on the untapped potential of the blue economy and groundwater sources.

**We must strengthen the resilience of our communities through disaster risk reduction, climate adaptation, and development initiatives** that empower our people to weather the storms and stay rooted in their homes.

Our mandate is clear – **to forge policy coherence, to address the vulnerabilities arising from climate-change induced migration and displacement into the very fabric of regional and national frameworks.** It is a journey that demands investment in prevention, in the building of resilient communities that can withstand the winds of change.

In conclusion your excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen, **let us not forget that this journey is not solitary.** The IGAD Secretariat stands unwavering, ready to provide the necessary support to propel the climate security agenda forward. **We shall not walk alone.**

Our goal is clear – to protect our people, to safeguard our environment, and to leave behind a legacy that future generations will cherish.

**Thank you very much, and may our discussions on enhancing climate security be as fruitful as they are transformative.**