



OFFICIAL STATEMENT
WORKNEH GEBEYEHU, IGAD EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

1st Edition of the Annual IGAD Media Awards
Sunday, 26th November 2023

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed journalists, distinguished guests,

Today marks another historic moment for IGAD as we gather for the first-ever Annual IGAD Media Awards Ceremony. This event not only celebrates the outstanding achievements of our award-winning journalists across the region but also inaugurates the IGAD Media Awards initiative, a testament to our commitment to recognizing and encouraging excellence in truth-telling across our region.

I extend a warm welcome to all practicing and freelance journalists from the mainstream and multi-media outlets in the 8 IGAD countries as well as the active foreign media practitioners operating within our region. Your dedication and commitment to journalism have played a pivotal role in shaping our understanding of critical issues.

This year, we proudly recognize 14 winners, including producers, journalists, reporters, bloggers, and photojournalists, who have excelled in their craft, shedding light on this year's theme on the benefits of ***'Cooperation for resilience against effects of drought.'*** You have not only demonstrated journalistic excellence but have also played a crucial role in advancing our collective understanding of the challenges posed by drought in the region.



Building strategic partnerships with the media is crucial for realizing the IGAD Vision of a resilient, peaceful, prosperous, and integrated region. The media, in our member states, serves as a powerful ally in raising awareness of the opportunities and benefits of multilateralism and regional cooperation in addressing shared challenges.

Through the IGAD Media Awards, the Secretariat and our partners aim to recognize and reward excellence in reporting on topical issues related to the IGAD mantra of peace, prosperity and regional integration. We seek to inspire and promote investigative journalism, accuracy, creativity, and innovation in presenting credible information to policy makers, policy practitioners, policy influencers and policy consumers.

Additionally, in world that has increasingly fallen victim to the lack of information, misinformation, disinformation; we encourage journalists to collaborate with learning and research institutions as well as centres of excellence and innovation in all relevant disciplines to shed light on the issues we face challenges affecting us and opportunities open to us as a region.

As we celebrate the winners, let us also acknowledge the distinguished guests present, especially the senior media personalities from IGAD member countries who grace us with their presence. We received an overwhelming 105 entries from competitors from IGAD member states and beyond, reflecting the enthusiasm and commitment of the journalistic community to addressing critical issues.

Journalists are the guardians of truth, the champions of transparency, and advocates of accountability. You play a crucial role in exposing realities, shaping narratives, and recording history for posterity. You are the pillars of a thriving democracy and the voice of the voiceless.



As we conclude this inaugural event, let this initiative be a beacon inspiring continued dedication to journalistic excellence and a catalyst for positive change in our region.

I take this opportunity to make a special mention and offer my commendations to our very own IGAD in-house journalist and head of communications, Mr. Mahamed Abdillahi who has been the driving force behind this initiative and the silently running engine behind the renewed and reinvigorated visibility of IGAD across all media platforms. Your dedication to your craft serves as an inspiration to all people of the pen.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to the pursuit of truth and the advancement of our shared goals and congratulations to all the winners!