



OFFICIAL REMARKS

WORKNEH GEBEYEHU, IGAD EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

HIGH-LEVEL EVENT OF THE IGAD SUPPORT PLATFORM AND ITS SOLUTIONS INITIATIVE FOR THE REFUGEE SITUATION IN SUDAN AND SOUTH SUDAN.

Friday, 15th December 2023

Thank you, moderator, Ambassador Mohamed Affey.

- Your Excellency, **Demekie Mekonen Hassen**, Deputy Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia;
- Your Excellency **Hon. Said Nouh Hassan**, Minister for Interior of the Republic of Djibouti;
- Your Excellency **Hon. Hilary Obalker Onok**, Minister for Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees, Republic of Uganda;
- Your Excellency **Ms. Gillian Triggs**, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, UNHCR;
- Your Excellency **Ms. Erica Gerretsen**, Director of Human Development, Migration, Governance and Peace of the European Union;
- Your Excellency **Ms. Adhieu Achuil Dhieu**- Refugee delegate - Board Member - UNHCR Advisory Board on Refugee & Stateless Persons
- Excellencies, **Heads of delegation of IGAD Member States**, honourable ministers, ambassadors, core group members of the IGAD Support Platform;
- **Representatives of our bilateral and multi-lateral partners**, CSO, the Private sector, foundations, Refugee Led Organizations;
- **Members of the diplomatic corps**, distinguished delegates, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, all protocols observed.

I am **deeply honoured to be with you here in Geneva today to discuss this crucial matter of the IGAD Support Platform and our Regional Approach to addressing the challenges faced by Displaced Populations and their Host Communities** in our Region. I extend my sincere appreciation to each one of you for your presence at this significant gathering.



Before I address the reason why we are together here this morning, I take your permission to **express my heartfelt gratitude to Ambassador Mohamed Abdi Affey, UNHCR Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, whose remarkable service is coming to an end.** We met fortuitously yesterday morning and IGAD and I will certainly look back with fondness on his impeccable service. **His pioneering role in the Nairobi process has left an indelible mark, and we wish him the very best in his future endeavours.**

Also allow me to share my special acknowledgment to the UNHCR team, led by my very good friend Mr. Filippo Grandi who although is not here with us today, **I recently shared a high-level panel on climate change and displacement in Dubai during COP28** for his unwavering support in facilitating this session, marking four years since the inception of the IGAD Support Platform.

Over the past two days that this Global Refugee Forum has been in progress so far, **IGAD has actively participated in 8 platforms and events** where in addition to our regional situation, we have **deliberately highlighted the plight and agony of the displaced population in the Republic of Sudan.**

The challenges that refugees the world over face, **as portrayed in the award-winning film “Everything Everywhere all at Once”** is a lived reality, it is not fiction or imagination. **I was pleased to see and hear from the co-star of the film,** Oscar Award Winning Actor and Former Refugee Ke Huy Quan, during the opening plenary session.

Currently, our IGAD region harbours one of the highest concentrations of displaced populations, totalling over **19 million of our brothers and sisters, namely 5 million refugees and 14 million IDPs.**



This number has risen by over 5 million in the past 4 years, with conflict, natural disasters and climate change exacerbating the situation. The IGAD Member States, despite facing financial constraints, continue to maintain an open-door policy to refugees and have made commendable commitments to finding durable solutions.

Since 2017, **IGAD Member States have embraced a regional approach, stemming from the Special Summit on durable solutions for Somali refugees.** This commitment has expanded to cover all refugee situations in the IGAD region, showcasing our collective dedication to implementing the Global Compact for Refugees.

Over the past 4 years, substantial progress has been achieved in various thematic areas. Notable highlights include the **joint declaration signed during the IGAD-Eastern Africa Community (EAC) high-level ministerial conference of June 2023**, the endorsement of the **regional refugee protection policy framework of September 2023**, and most notably, the **Kampala Declaration that opened the door for private sector involvement to facilitate socio-economic inclusion of refugees.**

This IGAD Support Platform has played a pivotal role in training Member States on including **displacement statistics** in national systems, developing a **Results Framework**, and **launching the Solutions Initiative for the displacement situation in South Sudan and Sudan.**

With the ongoing war in the Republic of Sudan, **this refugee platform has taken on an added significance** because currently and because of the war, more than **6.3 million people** are now living outside of their home.

Remember that **Sudan was one of our biggest refugee-hosting countries and now, they too have to seek protection elsewhere.** At least 1.2 million of our brothers and sisters have been forced to seek protection outside in neighbouring countries with their families and another 5.1million are internally displaced.

It is with a heavy heart that **I have to report that Sudan now has the largest child displacement crisis in the world,** with **3 million children** being forced out of school to escape widespread **violence.** We risk having **a new “lost generation”** because of this conflict.

This commendable effort has been bolstered by the support of international stakeholders and partners, including the core group members - EU, World Bank, Germany, Sweden, USA, Switzerland, UNHCR, and others. **Additional partners,** such as Australia, Canada, Japan, among others **have also expressed their interest,** reflecting a growing global commitment to addressing displacement challenges.

As we look forward, **I want to emphasize two regional pledges agreed upon by our Member States.** The **first pledge** focuses on delivering comprehensive solutions in the IGAD region, aiming to integrate forcibly displaced populations and their host communities into national development strategies. The **second pledge** zeroes in on climate action, with a focus on protecting and promoting the resilience of climate-vulnerable communities.

These pledges are undoubtedly ambitious, but is also because the problem they are addressing is of similar magnitude. We have a critical need for technical, financial, and political resources.



The economies of our member states remain fragile and this vulnerability is worsened by the 2 C's climate change and conflict. **I therefore, stress the importance of pledge matching, emphasizing the spirit of burden and responsibility sharing.** This matching should not be a one-time effort but sustained beyond the Global Refugee Forum.

In closing, **I urge all of us to keep the displaced population on the political and development agenda.** Let us collectively strive to ensure that displaced populations can lead normal lives like the rest of our society and become productive members of our national, regional, continental and ultimately global community.

Thank you very much.