



Statement by H.E Dr Workneh Gebeyehu, IGAD Executive Secretary at the Opening of the Preparatory Meeting for the Sudan All-Inclusive Political Dialogue, Wednesday 10th July 2024, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Excellency, Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson, AU Commission,
Excellency, Mohammed Ibn Chambas, Chairperson, AU High Level Panel,
Excellency, Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department,

My brothers and sisters, the citizens of the brotherly nation of Sudan,
Ladies and gentlemen,

1. It is with a profound sense of responsibility that I address you today. Permit me to begin by thanking Excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat and your team at the African Union for hosting this critical five days meeting to deliberate on the structure and process for an all-inclusive Sudan political dialogue.
2. Sudan has long been a refuge for millions of people fleeing conflicts in neighboring countries, including my own country, Ethiopia. This has been the case from the 1970s until last year when the war broke out. I want to share a personal story to illustrate the profound impact Sudan has had on the lives of refugees.
3. In the 1980s, my uncle and two of his sons sought refuge in Khartoum, Sudan, where they lived for 11 years. Remarkably, they did not live as outsiders but as integral members of the Sudanese community. One of my cousins grew up in Sudan, married a Sudanese woman, and together they have four children. My uncle passed away and was buried in Sudan, a testament to how deeply they integrated into Sudanese society.
4. Today, my uncle's children have moved to Canada, but they still consider themselves more Sudanese than Ethiopian. They constantly speak of the kindness and love they received from the people of Sudan. Whenever they call me, they passionately urge me to assist the Sudanese people who are now suffering. Their voices, filled with tears and emotion, haunt my thoughts and drive me to action.

5. This personal connection and the experiences shared by my family compel me to support the Sudanese people in their time of need. The bond formed through years of hospitality and compassion is unbreakable, and I feel a deep responsibility to give back to the community that once gave so much to my family.
6. The war that erupted in Sudan in April 2023 should never have started if peace had been prioritized over political ambition. This conflict has brought immense suffering to the people of Sudan, with many, including many of you, having lost loved ones, livelihoods or experienced various forms of harm.
7. The entire region, including IGAD Member States and neighboring countries, shares in the sorrow of this senseless war and remains committed to restoring constitutional order in Sudan through mechanisms that are led and owned by the Sudanese people
8. From the onset of the conflict, IGAD sought to bring the belligerents to the negotiation table with a view to immediately ending the conflict and continuing on the path of the political transition that was interrupted in April 2023. Unfortunately, these efforts have been hindered by those who mistakenly believe in a military solution to conflict.
9. IGAD strongly supports this initiative to convene a comprehensive political dialogue involving all segments of Sudanese society. This dialogue is essential for restoring constitutional order and creating a new Sudan that meets the aspirations of all its people. It is crucial that this process is inclusive of all political perspectives to ensure a durable peace. This belief has shaped the composition of representatives at this preparatory meeting.
10. As you engage in this dialogue over the next five days, I urge you to consider three key points:
 - a) **Sudanese-owned and Sudanese-led Process:** The conflict has seen excessive external involvement, which must be curtailed. The political process must ensure that all Sudanese feel represented. This is your process, and it must be led by you alone, without external interference.
 - b) **External Interference:** The political process should send a clear message to those whose involvement is hindering peace. Their interference must cease to allow Sudan to return to constitutional order.

c) Accountability: The outcome of this process must hold accountable the leaders of the Transitional Sovereignty Council and the Rapid Support Forces if they fail to meet under AU and IGAD auspices. Perpetrators of atrocities must also be held accountable, utilizing AU legal instruments and international humanitarian and human rights laws.

11. As I conclude, allow me to reaffirm the joint commitment that IGAD shares with the AU, to respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity, national unity and independence of the Republic of Sudan. We support the legitimate aspiration for the restoration of constitutional order through a democratic, inclusive and civilian-led government.
12. IGAD stands ready to continue supporting the Sudanese people on the challenging path ahead, in conjunction with the AU and all friends of Sudan.

I thank you.