



## OFFICIAL STATEMENT

### WORKNEH GEBEYEHU, IGAD EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

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#### Regional Consultative Seminar on Harnessing Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity for Security, Cooperation, and Resilience

Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2025

*"Technology best serves humanity when we as humanity guide its  
development."*

- The most respected Hon. **William Kabogo**, Cabinet Secretary of the Ministry of Information, Communications, and the Digital Economy of the Republic of Kenya and our gracious Host;
- Your Excellency, **Gunnar Andreas Holm**, Ambassador of Norway to the Republic of Kenya and our most valued development partner;
- Respected **IGAD colleagues, ladies and gentlemen**,
- All protocols observed;

1. It is a **real honour to speak with all of you today** about artificial intelligence and the way this **transformative force holds immense potential for our region and its critical role in enhancing security** within our law enforcement agencies.
2. We gather just **60 kilometres and only 60 minutes** from Konza Technopolis, our region's Silicon Savannah and a testament to our continent's digital ambitions and our determination to shape our technological destiny.

## Cybersecurity concerns for the IGAD region.

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4. Across our IGAD region, we face complex security challenges, and **these range from transnational crime and terrorism to cybercrime and border management gaps.** Nevertheless, even within these challenges lies the opportunity for innovation through AI and cybersecurity solutions.
5. **I have said it before, and please allow me to say it once again:** the future of regional security belongs to those who harness artificial intelligence. In this regard, **I challenge us all to become active architects of our region's digital security future.**
6. **In this future I can say without fear of contradiction,** that humanity will be divided not in terms of race and cultural diversity; not only black or white or brown but it will be between those of us who know how to use AI and those that do not. **AI is the new divide between the literate and the illiterate.**
7. Join me as we together **imagine AI systems that help our law enforcement predict crime patterns, optimise resource deployment, and detect threats before time.** Picture with me as AI-powered platforms improve border management and create safer, more connected communities.

### Excellencies,

8. Technology is already transforming security across our region. **In Ethiopia, law enforcement agencies are implementing predictive policing algorithms to combat urban crime.** Here in Kenya, AI-driven surveillance systems have reduced police response times by 40% and improved crime detection by 30%.

9. In Uganda, **National Digital ID systems are enabling enhanced identity verification for security agencies**, while beyond our region, Rwanda's police force has become a regional model for AI-integrated community policing. In our own headquarters in the Republic of Djibouti, AI-powered port security systems are enhancing maritime safety across the Red Sea corridor.
10. **In spite of these positive developments, we continue to face serious challenges.** Cyberattacks account for 68% of successful breaches across our African continent.
11. Our host country today, **Kenya, alone lost over 83 million dollars to cybercrime in 2023**, while attacks on government security systems increased by 45% year-on-year.
12. It is very **evident that criminal networks are increasingly targeting law enforcement databases**, while terrorist organisations are are exploiting our weak digital defences.
13. In **response, I say that if we act decisively, the IGAD region and the Greater Horn of Africa can lead in responsible AI deployment for security.** By 2035, AI could contribute 180 billion dollars to our regional GDP while creating 2.5 million jobs, including critical cybersecurity roles.

## Our Strategic Vision

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### Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

11. AI allows us to break down silos. **By sharing data responsibly across borders, we as IGAD member states can collaborate effectively on cross-border crime surveillance, regional intelligence sharing, and protecting critical infrastructure.**

12. However, **the projections show that we need 500,000 AI and cybersecurity professionals by 2030, and yet we are training fewer than 15,000 annually.** This skills gap is a serious threat to our digital sovereignty and national security.

### **The 3 principles of our commitment**

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14. **Therefore in order to harness AI's promise while guarding against its perils, I propose the following 3 principles for your consideration:**
15. **First, Harmonised Security Governance.** We must establish regional AI ethics protocols for law enforcement, shared cybersecurity standards, and cross-border incident response mechanisms. **A regional AI strategy based on our Member States' data protection legislation provides models for balancing innovation with security.**
16. **Second, Massive Investment in Security Professionals.** Let us launch the IGAD Digital Security Skills Initiative, training cybersecurity experts and establishing AI centres of excellence in each member state, with special focus on law enforcement applications.
17. **Third, Indigenous Security Innovation.** I call upon us to **create the IGAD AI Security Innovation Fund** that shall support startups to address our unique regional challenges, ranging from border monitoring to anti-terrorism intelligence.

### **Our Nairobi Commitment**

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18. From this meeting, I **further propose we adopt the "Nairobi Commitment,"** which states that by 2030, every IGAD citizen benefits from AI-enhanced security while being protected from digital threats.

19. **This means governments allocating at least 2% of budgets to AI security infrastructure,** private sector committing to local talent development, and development partners providing technology transfer for our law enforcement agencies.

**Excellencies,**

20. We stand at a digital crossroads. One path leads to **AI amplifying our security capabilities,** where every police officer accesses real-time intelligence, every border is monitored by smart systems, and our citizens are protected by predictive security measures.
21. The other path leads to **digital colonialism,** where our security data enriches distant corporations while cyber threats cripple our progress.
22. **Our young digital entrepreneurs are watching us. They ask not for promises, but partnership. Not for charity, but opportunity. Not for dependency, but digital sovereignty.**
23. From **Djibouti's** strategic infrastructure to **Uganda's** innovation hubs, from **Ethiopia's** AI innovation to **Kenya** and **Somalia's** mobile money success, we have proof of what's possible when African ingenuity meets technological opportunity.
24. **Let this seminar be remembered not for problems discussed, but for security solutions committed to implementation.** The future of Greater Horn security will be written by decisions we make in this room.
25. **Together, we can transform AI challenges into opportunities and harness technology as a force for our collective security,** human dignity, and regional prosperity.

**Thank you all very much.**