



In Service of Peace: A Call to Our Highest Destiny

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IGAD Regional Forum for Eminent Personalities and Leaders for Peace

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Nairobi, Republic of Kenya

- Your Excellency, Prof. **Kithure Kindiki**, EGH, Deputy President of the Republic of Kenya;
 - Hon. **Hannah Cheptumo**, Cabinet Secretary for Gender, Culture, the Arts and Heritage, Republic of Kenya
 - **Dr. Korir Sing'oei**, CBS, Principal Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Kenya
 - Hon. **Rehema Dida Jaldesa**, chair of the National Gender and Equality Commission, Republic of Kenya,
 - Distinguished members of the IGAD Council of Eminent Personalities,
 - Honourable Delegates and IGAD Colleagues,
 - Ladies and gentlemen, all protocols observed.
1. It is my singular honour to stand before you as Executive Secretary of IGAD, welcoming you to this momentous assembly. As we convened, a truth emerged to me with dazzling clarity: we are the living embodiment of a sacred trust; bridging divides and building futures. The IGAD Council of Eminent Persons exists in service of peace, security, and unity in the Horn of Africa.

2. Let history bear witness to our profound gratitude to the visionary leaders of our IGAD region who, two years past in June 2023, established this Council during the 14th IGAD Ordinary Summit. They understood that elder statesmanship is not merely tradition, but a mighty instrument in our collective pursuit of peace and perhaps the most potent weapon in our arsenal against discord.
4. To our gracious hosts, the Republic of Kenya, we extend deepest admiration for their exceptional hospitality and unwavering commitment to meaningful dialogue across our region. To our development partners, especially Japan, whose sustained commitment continues to bear fruit—your presence proclaims our shared resolve to close the chasms that divide us and build lasting peace.

The Foundation of Wisdom

5. Since 1986, IGAD has embodied our shared continental vision, anchored in our founding Agreement, driven by our Strategic Plan 2021–25, guided by Vision 2050, and aligned with AU Agenda 2063. This represents our deepening commitment to regional integration and peaceful development, forged in the crucible of experience.
6. Before IGAD was born and throughout history, our elders have been the custodians of peace, the mediators of disputes, and the voices of reason when tempests raged across our lands.

7. From resolving family conflicts to guiding nations through darkness, they have stood as unshakeable pillars upon which trust and reconciliation have been built, generation after generation.
8. Through their accumulated wisdom, countless disputes have found peaceful resolution, grievances have been heard with justice, and the sacred bonds of community have been restored. Their impartiality has been their greatest strength, allowing them to serve as honest brokers, trusted by all sides, and respected by all generations.
9. Yet we must ask ourselves the difficult questions: Are we still walking that hallowed path of wisdom and impartiality? Are we upholding the sacred trust placed in us when conflicts tear at the social fabric of our member states? Have we remained as neutral as those giants who came before us, or have the winds of change eroded the foundations of our moral authority?
10. These answers may wound our pride but will heal our purpose. For when violence threatens to overshadow dialogue, when division threatens unity, we must recommit ourselves to the principles that have guided us: impartiality, integrity, and the unwavering pursuit of peace.
11. Our legitimacy comes not from power, but from trust; not from authority imposed, but from respect earned through fairness and wisdom. We must be above the fray, listening to every voice, ensuring our actions serve all our people, not merely a privileged few.

A Region in Double Danger

12. Honoured Council Members, your Assembly convenes when our region is in the grip of “double danger.” On one hand, we acknowledge that there are important areas where leadership development can be improved to meet our evolving regional challenges, and at the same time we are besieged by multiple crises when leadership is needed most: from the terrorist insurgency in Somalia to political situation in South Sudan, and the hot war in Sudan. If we include climate shocks such as drought, flooding and famine and add pandemic threats, we inevitably face a perfect storm of destruction.
13. It is in this whirlwind, that we look to you as IGAD's moral compass. Your impartiality and independence are valued beyond measure. Your traditional wisdom fills the gap when formal frameworks fail. Your towering stature gives voice to the voiceless.
14. Your experience as elders, former Heads of State, scholars, and civic leaders equips you to open doors no uniform can access. The informal pathways within your control are often more effective at fostering diplomatic consensus, enabling IGAD to act early and effectively, with political will and moral authority as our protective shield.

The Call to Greatness

15. At our Addis Ababa meeting in November 2023, we refined our Terms of Reference, identifying where each of you serves best. This was a concrete commitment to complement IGAD's efforts at restoring peace in our troubled region.

16. We desperately need you to preserve and sustain IGAD's positive outcomes in silencing the guns. We need you to diminish the thunder of conflict into the whisper of reconciliation, ensuring that where once hatred divided our peoples, hope shall unite them; where drums of war echoed across our lands, the songs of children shall ring forth in chorus.
17. Drawing upon your wisdom, your firm hand, and your gravitas, where once violence's shadow darkened our horizon, the dawn of lasting peace shall illuminate the path forward, not only for this generation, but for all generations yet to come who shall feast upon the fruits of our courage and our unwavering determination to choose dialogue over discord, unity over division, and the enduring triumph of our shared humanity over the fleeting temptations of conflict.

A Milestone of Destiny

18. Excellencies, distinguished guardians of wisdom and architects of tomorrow's peace. This moment carries particular significance. IGAD turns forty in 2026. This is a milestone that invites reflection and calls upon us to redouble our efforts toward Vision 2050: creating a region that is peaceful, integrated, and prosperous.

19. This forum offers us the opportunity to prepare two precious endowments for our institution and the people of our region at large. First, conferring full diplomatic status to our preventive diplomacy missions with complete Member State support. This represents transformation from reactive to proactive peacebuilding, thereby saving countless lives and resources and preventing wars before they begin.
20. Second, elevating and cementing the status of this council of eminent personalities through full endorsement and formal institutional recognition within IGAD's policy organs. The enhanced visibility and operational coherence will harmonize peace missions, avoiding costly duplication while ensuring we are able to better exercise the principle of subsidiarity in our conflict resolution efforts.

Unity is Power

21. Excellencies, IGAD's fundamental strength lies in solidarity. Like the intertwining roots of the mighty baobab tree that has weathered a thousand storms, our unity gives us strength. When we join our individual capacities, we create something far more powerful than the sum of our parts, a real force for good that can transform our continent.
22. With your leadership and wisdom, this Council can embody this principle, effectively bridging divides and building a future that serves all our peoples. Your collective moral authority possesses transformative power to convert yesterday's conflicts into tomorrow's cooperation, ensuring that children of those who are fighting now shall unite for a better future tomorrow.

Our Sacred Trust

23. As we commence this vital session, let us reflect upon our sacred duty: to heal the wounded, unite the divided, inspire the despairing. Let us draw from the deep well of our shared heritage to foster dialogue where once there was shouting, to heal the wounds of division, to build bridges of understanding and hope where once stood walls of suspicion and fear.
24. Let this gathering testify to what wisdom can achieve when hope is given voice, when humanity's better angels triumph over discord's demons lurking in the human heart. Together, for divided we shall surely fall, let us chart a path toward a future defined not by division, but by solidarity; not by despair, but by boundless possibility. Together, we shall build the peace we seek. Together, we shall achieve the destiny that awaits us.
25. The hour might be late, but it is not too late. The challenges are mighty, but we are mightier still. The path is treacherous, but we are firm of footing. We shall not falter, we shall not fail, for we are the keepers of peace, the guardians of hope, and the architects of tomorrow's dawn.
26. Thank you for your steadfast commitment; your eminent presence honours us all. Thank you for the insights you bring to these deliberations that shall echo through the ages. And thank you once more for answering history's call when lesser souls would have turned away.
27. The future is watching. Let us not be indifferent to it. Let us inspire it, let us guide it, and let us deliver unto it the peace for which all our people in the IGAD region and indeed all of humanity yearns. **Asanteni sana!**