

Statement by Representative of IGAD at the Annual Briefing by African Regional Economic Communities to Member States and United Nations Entities on “Silencing the Guns in Africa: the Nexus between Peace, Security, Governance and Development”

Monday, 12 October 2015

Mr. Chairman,

Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to begin by conveying to you the greetings and best wishes of H.E Ambassador Mahboub Maalim, Executive Secretary of IGAD who is unable to be here with you this afternoon due to prior engagements. He has asked me to assure your Excellences of IGAD’s firm commitment to work towards silencing the Guns in one of the most conflict prone regions of the world that is the IGAD Region.

As your excellences are aware the IGAD region has been and continues to be adversely affected by inter and intra-state conflicts for several decades. This sad reality can be attributed to a number of factors including the colonial legacy of the countries of the region, lack of good governance and the geo-political position of the region attracting actors with conflicting interests, to mention just a few. Our region currently hosts the largest numbers of UN peace keeping operation in the world. This is in addition to the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) which currently has more than 21,000 troop strength. This is a direct consequence of the conflicts that have been going on between and within the member states of IGAD with all its negative consequences to the affected populations and to the region at large. Silencing the guns in Africa by 2020 is therefore, a vision that IGAD embraces fully and devotes all its resource for the realization of the same.

IGAD as one of the REC’s under the AU, has since its revitalization in 1996, prioritized conflict prevention, management and resolution as its main agenda. In the mid 1990’s, IGAD member states embarked upon two parallel peace processes to seek solution to the conflict between North and South Sudan and the conflict in Somalia when these conflicts defied all solutions and continued to cause incalculable loose of lives and displacement of huge population. Partner countries and organizations including the African Union and the United Nations rendered critical support to the IGAD lead peace processes and the collective effort resulted in the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and establishment of Transitional Federal Government in Somalia.

Despite the numerous challenges and outstanding issues still being encountered, in the full implementation the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and despite the numerous hurdles still outstanding in the peace building endeavors in Somalia the IGAD led and internationally supported effort in both peace processes was a success.

The lesson that IGAD has drawn from this is that, with adequate and timely support and assistance from the international community, REC's are best placed and most effective in finding solutions to conflicts arising within their respective region. I should of course add that members of the REC's should act in unison and pull in the same direction for their collective effort to bear the desired result.

Excellences,

IGAD member states once again had to face the scourge of a bloody war that erupted in December 2013 in the newly independent State of South Sudan. The IGAD Assembly of Heads of States and Governments immediately intervened to arrest an escalation of the civil war and succeeded in securing a cease-fire agreement within few weeks. After a long and arduous effort, and thanks to the IGAD-Plus endeavor, a peace agreement has recently been signed between the Government and opposition of South Sudan. The implementation of this peace agreement may continue to face several hurdles; however the first and most important step in terms ushering in an era of peace and stability in South Sudan has been laid down.

Through a collective and timely action and after garnering the support of the international community led by the UN and AU, IGAD as REC has demonstrated its resolve and capacity to do its part in terms of silencing the gun in the region. Following each intervention in peace making IGAD has demonstrated that for a regional effort to succeed the unreserved political support as well as financial and technical assistance of partner countries and organizations is absolutely critical.

I wish to underline that due to lack of the requisite resources and institutional capacity, IGAD's peacemaking endeavors have been conducted on ad-hoc basis. The ad-hoc approach as would be expected had its flaws and weaknesses. Taking lessons from its own experience and with a view to effectively address future challenges, IGAD has established and is in the process of strengthening a Conflict Early Warning Mechanism (CEWARN) and A Mediation Support Unit which will in the future provide the institutional support for IGAD's peace making and peace building missions.

In 2012 IGAD transformed its Capacity Building Program against Terrorism into an IGAD Security Sector Program. In doing so it has positioned itself to assist its member states' build their capacity to combat trans-boundary related crimes including terrorism

and violent extremism in a region that is immensely affected by these emerging global threats.

Through its political program and working in close collaboration with African Union IGAD has developed a Protocol on Democracy, Governance and Election. The Protocol is awaiting the signature and ratification by member states and once that is secured the member states would have at their disposal a yard stick to compare their own respective performance against the regionally accepted principles, procedures and norms. IGAD believes that all these measures will contribute towards the Continental Agenda of Silencing the Guns by 2020.

Since January this year IGAD Secretariat has embarked upon the development of a comprehensive 5 year strategy (2016-2020). The peace and security sector forms an integral part of this strategy and it is being developed with full participation of our member states. National and regional baseline studies have been conducted with a view to identifying the sources, dynamics and manifestations of armed conflicts in the region. The IGAD Peace and Security strategy (2016-2020) will be adopted before the end of this year and it is envisaged that the strategy will lay down a clear guideline and implementation modality for the region collectively to achieve the continental and global targets related to peace and security.

As one of the REC's, IGAD works in close consultation and coordination with the AU in all peace and security related matters. IGAD is also a beneficiary of the African Peace Support Program under the African Peace Support Architecture (APSA). In order to create synergy and collaboration, IGAD together with the UN Department of Political Affairs (UN-DPA) and the UN Office to the AU (UNOAU) have jointly developed a Framework Agreement. The Framework Agreement is expected to be signed at the conclusion of a High Level Dialogue scheduled to be held in Djibouti next month. The objective of the IGAD-UN High Level Dialogue is to strengthen cooperation between the two organizations on peace and security and to consolidate partnership modalities in conflict prevention and peace making.

We in IGAD believe that the target set to "Silencing the Guns by 2020" and the Continental Agenda 2063 as well as the Global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are achievable, and we pledge to work in earnest towards their realization.

I thank you for your attention,