

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY ON DEVELOPMENT



STATEMENT OF THE IGAD EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, ENG. MAHBOUB M. MAALIM, AT THE IGAD EXPERTS MEETING ON IGAD MEDIATION SUPPORT UNIT April 18-19, 2011, Djibouti

**Distinguished participants of our Member States,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It would have given me great pleasure had I been able to physically present and officiate the opening of this important session that is going to lay a ground for an important additional sector in our peace and security efforts. But, Ladies and Gentlemen, please kindly understand my absence as I am currently dealing with other urgent issues abroad. Since I have been following the process of our initiative on Mediation, I am real happy to acknowledge the high level of importance our Member States attaches to this initiative beginning from the consultative meeting back in May 2010 in Addis Ababa which continued to the Nairobi meeting in November 2011 and also to date.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite our efforts, hopes and some results, we are still struggling with potential sources of threats and also trying to resolve some of the protracted conflicts in the region. It is with this context that we had initiated a process by which capacities in this field can be enhanced and people of the region would be able to take part in peace processes in a systematic and institutional manner.

I think you would all agree with me that our region has wide diversity of culture in peacemaking practices especially at grass root levels. Not only do our traditional leaders and elders mediate conflicts, but also our professionals and the youth are coming up with innovative ideas to use our indigenous knowledge so that our problems can be dealt with using the wisdom of our people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we currently intend to establish a Mediation Support Unit aimed at institutionalizing mediation efforts in the region, we commissioned an expert who came up with a report that was discussed in Nairobi in November 2010.

The discussions you are about to have are very crucial in terms of finalizing the draft proposal to be submitted to our Council so that the establishment of the Mediation Support Unit could be realized. Our ultimate objective is to promote peace and security in the region through mediation by way of empowering people of the region both at national and regional levels. We shall continue with our capacity building efforts in due course and in this regard, our Member States will identify potential mediators to build a roster as they guide the establishment of Mediation Support Unit within the IGAD structure and work together with similar structures within the region including the African Union.

Today, the struggle and the path towards sustainable peace and security in Africa require well equipped and committed people. That is why mediation should be regarded as a specialized undertaking, encompassing knowledge and a set of strategies and skills. Please understand that mediation is a demanding activity and we cannot establish an effective mediation structure and create best mediators overnight, it is a process, whose key tenet includes learning from others beyond the region and also our citizens who are already given their hearts and minds.

It is my hope and belief that by putting your thoughts and views together you will achieve the result we expect from your meeting.

Finally, I would like to thank the EU through the African Peace Facility of the AU for the support they have given IGAD in this programme and hope the second APF II will have more funds for this initiative. I would also like to congratulate our Members States commitment to peace; all who have had hands in this activity and wish all of you a very productive session and pleasant time in Djibouti. Furthermore, we thank the government of Djibouti for hosting this important meeting.

I Thank You,

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