66TH EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF IGAD

16th November 2018
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR SMAÏL CHERGUI
COMMISSIONER FOR PEACE AND SECURITY
Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia and Chairperson of the Council of Ministers of IGAD,
Excellencies Ministers of Foreign Affairs of IGAD member states,
Excellency the Executive Secretary of IGAD,
Excellency the Special Envoy of IGAD for South Sudan,
Excellencies Ambassadors and Special Envoys,
Excellency the Acting Chairperson of JMEC,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am indeed happy to join the 66th Extraordinary Meeting of the Council of Ministers of IGAD. I should inform you that the AU Commission Chairperson who was also invited, could not be here because of the AU Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government.

It has been over two months since the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan was signed, after 16 months of negotiations. Once again, I wish to congratulate the IGAD countries for the unity of purpose displayed during the search for peace in South Sudan. Africa is proud of IGAD.

I also wish to commend both H.E. President Salva Kiir Mayardit and Dr. Riek Machar for ensuring that their delegations reached this Agreement. I would also like to congratulate the South Sudanese political and civic leaders for their determination despite all the differences since 2016. I also thank the IGAD mediation and the international community which, despite challenges, never surrendered in their search for a compromise.

Excellencies, the people of South Sudan have experienced too much suffering. They now have a right to live in peace and harmony. The Revitalized Agreement offers them a unique window of opportunity to return to the peaceful life they deserve and we are confident that the political leaders share this view.

In this connection, we commend the leaders for coming together to celebrate PEACE on 31 October 2018. The conciliatory messages they declared on that day give hope that this process may lead to peace. Since the signing, we are pleased
that the National Pre-Transition Committee has been formed and the South Sudan National Assembly has endorsed the Agreement. We believe that the release of political prisoners are necessary towards building confidence amongst the Parties. These decisions inspire confidence that the parties are committed to the peace agreement, this time around. While there may be delays in implementing some aspects, in general, we believe the Parties are showing signs of commitment to the Agreement.

Given the fact that we are united in our aspiration for peace in South Sudan, we therefore call on the international community to support this Agreement. We understand the hesitation of our international partners over this Agreement. However, we all agree that we could not have a perfect Agreement.

In this light, we believe that faithful implementation of this new Agreement by the Parties is what is required to build and sustain confidence. We should therefore call on the Parties to ensure that they implement the Agreement in letter and spirit. They should live up to their commitments and declarations. We are also of the view that such commitment will benefit our collective efforts to bring on board the party that has not yet signed the accord. This party needs to be engaged in order to safeguard the implementation process and avoid violations. Let me be very clear that we will not tolerate any violation of the permanent ceasefire.

In this regard, we look forward to a more robust engagement between the AU, UN and IGAD in order to support the work of JMEC and CTSAMVM. Some of the violations of the 2015 Agreement reported by JMEC were never addressed and they led to its collapse. That should not be allowed to happen again.

Excellencies, the African Union, through the AU Commission, the AU ad hoc Committee for South Sudan and the AU High Representative, remains available to assist where required. In fact, on 7 to 9 October 2018, I visited South Sudan together with the UN Undersecretary General for Peacekeeping and we met people calling for peace. I pledged AU support. I subsequently dispatched an AU Commission interdepartmental team to South Sudan from 7 to 9 November which has reported the need to support this implementation process. On
Sunday, 19 November 2018, the AU Commission, the Ad Hoc Committee will meet with the IGAD Special Envoy to discuss the AU support.

On Somalia, we very much appreciate the Minister’s statement outlining the Federal Government’s objectives, and we stand ready to assist Somalia in fulfilling them.

Let me emphasize three areas that deserve our attention quickly. First, we need to bring to an end the ongoing fractious political landscape with competition between the Federal Government Somalia (FGS) and Federal Member States. We strongly urge the political leadership of Somalia and all stakeholders, in the best interest of Somalia, to continue to show selfless leadership, resolve and unity of purpose, for without such dispositions, no amount of external assistance will make it possible to consolidate the gains that have been made in the country.

Second, we have to continue improving security while at the same time implementing the Somali Transition Plan. This will only be possible if there is tangible progress in the implementation of the National Security Architecture. The AU has strongly supported the Somali National Forces and we will work closely with the Federal Government as it increasingly takes a leading role.

Third, we are all optimistic about the recent positive developments in the Horn of Africa, marked by an improvement of bilateral relations between the countries of the region, as well as by a renewed determination to promote good neighborliness and foster regional consensus on supporting Somali led state building and peacebuilding efforts. In this regard, we will enhance our political engagement with Somalia to determine how best we can be of assistance.

Somalia has come a long way and every year we inch closer to our shared goal of a peaceful and prosperous Somalia. However, there remain chronic structural vulnerabilities which if not addressed would reverse all of the positive gains.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate our agreement to coordinate our efforts in Somalia. But on the ground there is still no coordination. We still need clear divisions of labor and to recognize and mutually reinforce each one’s role if we
are to deliver effective support to the Federal Government. The African Union remains committed in its support to the Federal Government and the people of Somalia in their transition from conflict to sustainable peace.

It is on this note that I wish every success to the 66th Extraordinary Meeting of the Council of Ministers of IGAD.

I thank you.