



EASF POLICY ORGANS MEETINGS

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF DEFENCE AND SECURITY OF THE EASTERN AFRICA REGION

28TH OCTOBER 2016

BUJUMBURA, BURUNDI

OPENING REMARKS BY THE GUEST OF HONOUR

The Chairperson of the Council of Ministers of Defence and Security, Your Excellency,

Honorable Ministers of Defence and Security of the Eastern Africa Region,

Distinguished Chiefs of Defense Staff,

Distinguished Delegates,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Director EASF Secretariat,

Members of the Press,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the People and the Government of the Republic of Burundi, I wish to take this opportunity to welcome all of you to this Ordinary meeting of the Council of Ministers of Defense and Security of the Eastern Africa Region. Knowing your busy schedule and competing obligations, I am very delighted to see you all here. We are honored to host such an important meeting on our soil and we do hope you will get the opportunity to visit and see what the rest of our beautiful country has to offer.

Honorable Ministers, Distinguished guests

It is my sincere hope that, our sub-region and the entire continent will make further progress in its quest for lasting peace, security and stability. It our home where we desire to create a more conducive environment for the economic growth and the development of our people and the fulfillment of their long cherished dream of well-being. Today, as we sit here to deliberate and discuss, we are aware and concerned that fate and wellbeing of 250 million people cannot be decided by a few gun totting,

deranged and diabolical individuals or groups who uses every excuses and pretexts to carry out their heinous acts. Our deliberations should be focused and decisive on this matter. Peace for the region means progress for all of us. Peace for the region means development for all of us. There can be no loser in a peaceful, secure and stable Eastern African Region.

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished guests,

I reiterate my deep concerns about the on-going crisis in South Sudan. I deplore the senseless killing of innocent civilians and the humanitarian tragedy unfolding on the ground. Thousands of civilians continue to lose their lives and others their livelihoods while attempting to flee for safety. I am aware that South Sudan has previously attended the EASF Policy Organs Meeting on an observer status and we have been looking forward to them joining our region. This brings the conflict closer to our turf as EASF and being ambassadors of peace, this is the correct time to review the political and cultural dynamics which lead to various forms of conflict and war in the region, and also to re-align our strategies to emerging conflict situations and related scenarios. This includes enhancing the early warning systems which may help prevent conflict and identify mechanisms and appropriate interventions at various stages of the broad range of the conflict spectrum.

Honorable Ministers, Distinguished guests

EASF must be commended for its achievements so far, this has shown the commitment of Member States, the EASF staff, the AU and our partners in

reaching this goal that we have strived for over ten years. It is our sincere hope that, thanks to our collective efforts and commitment, the continent will make further progress in its quest for lasting peace, security and stability, so as to create a more conducive environment for the advancement of our people and the fulfillment of their long cherished dream of well-being.

Honorable Ministers, Distinguished guests

This meeting provides an opportunity to exchange views on all these situations, and to discuss how best to consolidate the progress achieved. Indeed, we cannot relent, as the path towards lasting peace and stability requires a long-term investment to address the root causes of violence. We should continue to urge the concerned stakeholders to persevere in their efforts and continue to demonstrate the necessary resolve and political commitment. We should ensure that peace dividends swiftly materialize to provide further incentive for peace. We should be firm with spoilers to prevent the reversal of hard-won gains and the relapse into violence.

Honorable Ministers, Distinguished guests

Let me take this opportunity to appreciate Friends and Partners of EASF for the contributions and support that they have provided over the years. I also thank EASF Secretariat for its role as the Secretariat and for the coordination of EASF activities.

Finally Honorable Ministers,

I wish you all fruitful deliberations during this meeting.

With those few remarks it is now my pleasure to declare this meeting officially open.

Thank you.