

CHAIRMAN OF THE FRIENDS OF EASF

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE FRIENDS OF EASF's ON THE OCCASION ON THE DISTINGUISHED VISITOR DAY AT THE

EASF FTX IN GEBEIT, PORT SUDAN, SUDAN

ON 3RD DECEMBER 2017

- Guest of Honour xx
- Ambassadors and members of the Diplomatic Corps;
- Generals and Senior Officers here present;
- Director EASF;
- EASF staff, EASF components, technical advisers
- Invited Guests;
- Members of the Press;
- Ladies and Gentlemen;
- All protocols observed;

Let me first of all extend my sincere gratitude to EASF and its member states for its kind invitation to the “Friends of EASF” (FoEASF) to attend the Distinguished Visitor Day (DVD), which also constitutes the closure of the EASF FTX. It is highly appreciated and yet another clear gesture of our close and fruitful cooperation. I am aware that a significant number of “Friends” have travelled to Gebeit region in the Republic of Sudan to learn about the experience and lessons learned from the FTX Mashariki Salaam II.

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I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to the Director of EASF, Dr. Abdillahi Omar Bouh, his able staff, the hard working technical advisers and all participants from EASFs 10 member states. This is the first FTX that EASF has conducted since the last field training exercise in Jinja, Uganda in 2013. I believe that the value of this exercise cannot be overestimated. The significance of this activity, as an indicator of EASFs strengths and identifications of areas where EASF still needs to focus its continued training efforts onwards in order to increase its performance and capacity, is of utmost importance. Furthermore, the message that EASF and its member states convey to the rest of the world about regional coherence, cooperation and mutual responsibility is very important.

To me, this event is also a great opportunity to meet with old good friends and colleagues among the EASF fraternity. I am particular pleased to recognise the previous Director of EASF, Ambassador Chanfi Issimail who have taken upon himself the challenging role of “Head of Mission” during this exercise.

So, what are the lessons learned from the exercise? I have been highly encouraged about the feedback that I have received from various parts about EASFs performance during the exercise. Was there no mistakes? Of course there were mistakes and things that can be further developed. However, I was very pleased to learn that in particular EASFs ability to the run the EASF FHQ and the EASF Mission HQ. These competences are absolutely crucial for a multinational standby force. I was also told that besides the ability to act as a multilateral force, EASF did also perform as an integrated and coherent unit. I believe these identifications are very important.

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Let me once again underline the overall purpose of the FTX. The purpose was exactly the same as for all similar exercises. It is to train and demonstrate to which extent a force – in this case EASF - is capable to fulfil its foreseen mandate. Furthermore, to identify strengths and in particular to identify and register weaknesses, which subsequently will constitute important targets for our training efforts onwards. It is through our failures that we improve our skills and competences. I have no doubt that the exercise will have significant importance for the continued development of the EASF.

So, you may ask yourselves, what is next? Of course the training continues. Maintaining and enhancing the skills across the three components (military, police and civilian) is a continuous and incessant endeavour and among other things, EASF should also improve its capacity to prepare, plan and undertake deployment and redeployment missions. However, is EASF as a force offering the right answers to tomorrow's challenges?

Many of the threats towards nations today are different from previously, where most conflicts was characterised as interstate conflicts. However, it seems that the tendency of asymmetric threats that we have experienced during the last decades will continue and even further evolve. Non-state actors such as terrorists are difficult opponents, which many countries – also in the Western world have experienced. They do not fit the traditional combatant role in the understanding of the International Humanitarian Law (IHL). They are difficult to distinguish and may look like the rest of us.

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Consequently, it might make sense to undertake a discussion on whether EASF is working on providing all the relevant capacities for the changing challenges. Let me be very clear, I am definitely not indicating that EASFs capacities to counter challenges as identified in the anticipated scenario I – VI are irrelevant. But maybe EASF needs to further develop its span of capacities to counter additional scenarios.

Consequently, the FoEASF, in close collaboration with EASF, are suggesting to initiate a strategic discussion on these topics and how we can ensure that EASF continues remaining a relevant and attractive partner to counter a variety of contemporary challenges towards peace and security. We suggest inviting to a high-level discussion among EASF senior leadership and ambassadors that are members of the FoEASF. The output of such an event would be to develop a short paper reflecting major findings and recommendations, which can serve as an input and inspiration for the further development of EASF.

Allow me to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to our host nation – the Republic of Sudan. From my own experience, I can talk about a highly professional and warm reception when I arrived here in Sudan and I have only received the best support throughout my visit. Furthermore, I have been told by different international participants, that they have been very impressed by the excellent hospitality and pro-

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professionism organised by our Sudanese hosts. I must say that not only has the generosity and hospitality of Sudan made this exercise possible, but it has also constituted a fantastic opportunity to explore the beauty of this country. Thank you so much.

I would also like to thank the Director of EASF for his firm leadership in making this exercise a reality. But my thanks obviously also goes to all participants including the training audience, supporting staff, advisers, etc. Without you – no exercise!

I thank you.

Joern Rasmussen, Chairperson of the Friends of EASF

Gebeit, Port Sudan, Sudan, 3rd December 2017