

**OPENING REMARKS BY CHAIRPERSON OF THE
COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AMB. RAYCHELLE OMAMO,
SC, CABINET SECRETARY FOR DEFENCE, REPUBLIC
OF KENYA, DURING THE 16TH ORDINARY MEETING OF
THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE EASTERN
AFRICA REGION HELD AT THE INTERNATIONAL
PEACE SUPPORT TRAINING CENTRE (IPSTC), KAREN,
NAIROBI ON 15TH FEBRUARY, 2014**

Hon. Ministers of Defence and Security;

Distinguished Chiefs of Defence Staff;

Director EASFCOM;

Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Invited Guests;

Members of the Press;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I take this opportunity to welcome you to the official opening of this session of the Council of Ministers of Defence and Security of the Eastern Africa Region. I also extend a warm welcome on behalf of the people and the Government of Kenya and wish to communicate Kenya's great honour at being accorded the opportunity to host

successive East African Standby Force (EASF) Policy Organs Meetings.

Honourable Ministers,

Peace and Security are the foundations upon which States have developed, improved their citizens' standards of living and indeed nurtured harmonious coexistence as civilized societies. Any threat to human peace and security is a major impediment to economic and social development.

Sub Saharan Africa in general and our Eastern Africa region in particular have over the year experienced political and social upheavals that come with great loss of human life, destruction of property and disruption of peaceful coexistence. Recent challenges to peace in South Sudan and the threat to security posed by terrorist groups such as Al Shabaab attest to this.

The EASF provides a viable instrument through which crises and threats of this nature can be surmounted collectively not only within our region but anywhere on the continent. This is the promise embedded in the

operationalization of ASF and its RDC of which EASF is a part.

Honourable Ministers,

Though a great deal of work remains to be done, we and indeed the rest of the international community have taken note of the significant steps taken by EASF towards the road to full operationalization. Initial Operational Capability (IOC) was attained towards the end of 2009 and through subsequent Command Post Exercise (CPXs) and Field Training Exercises (FTXs) we have demonstrated that attainment of EASF Full Operational Capability (FOC) by 2015 is our topmost priority. I wish to assure you of the full commitment of the government of Kenya to this objective and the unwavering personal support of His Excellency President Uhuru Kenyatta to EASF and the ASF as demonstrated by the donation of US\$1 million to the Africa Peace Fund for the strengthening of the ASF and in particular to facilitate the success of Exercise AMANI II in December of this year. May I seize this opportunity to commend Member States that have taken steps to meet your financial obligations to EASF. This will accelerate EASF's progress towards Full Operational Capability (FOC).

Honourable Ministers,

It is my hope that as we deliberate on the report and recommendations made by our Chiefs of Defence Staff on the structural, administrative issues confronting EASF and the Strategic Review carried out by the Secretariat, we shall bear in mind the Declaration made by the AU Ministers of Defence in Addis in January, 2014 in response to the comprehensive assessment of the ASF by the Independent Panel of Experts. We must ensure that EASF is configured in a manner that is congruent with continental aspirations.

Honourable Ministers,

In addition, we need to give guidance on the strategic direction that EASF should take towards FOC and beyond as well as consider for approval of nominees for key appointments whom we shall entrust with the management of EASF. I believe I do not have to overemphasize the centrality of these decisions to the future of EASF.

Honourable Ministers,

As I conclude, I wish to state that Kenya is conscious of significant contributions made by EASF's Partners to the development of our organization. On behalf of the Government of Kenya, I wish to graciously acknowledge and sincerely thank all of them for their continued support.

Additionally, I thank you once again, Honourable Ministers and all distinguished and eminent persons present, for being here to take part in this meeting. I cannot fail to recognize and appreciate the respective roles played by Member States and EASFCOM in nurturing and routinely managing the EASF.

Finally, it is now my pleasure to declare that the 16th Ordinary Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Eastern Africa Region officially open.

I thank you.