

An extraordinary session of IGAD's Executive Council

(MoFA July 1, 2011)- The 39th extraordinary session of IGAD's Executive Council, the Council of Ministers, was held in Malabo on Wednesday, on the sidelines of the AU Summit. As Ethiopia currently holds the chair of IGAD, the meeting was chaired by Ato Hailemariam Desalegn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. It was briefed on current activities by Engineer Mahboub Maalim, the Executive Secretary of IGAD, and considered regional developments including implementation of the CPA in Sudan, Somalia and the activities of the Eritrean Regime.

Ato Hailemariam welcomed IGAD Council members to the extraordinary session. He told the Council that IGAD Heads of State would not be able to meet in Malabo as the Summit schedule was too tight, but IGAD leaders were invited to meet in Addis Ababa in early July. He briefly touched upon developments in the region, noting that as Independence Day for South Sudan (July 9th) was so close, it was "vital for IGAD to be fully appraised of current developments in the negotiations and the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement." It was imperative for IGAD to discuss with the Parties to ensure full and timely implementation of the CPA and to identify those critical issues which needed to be addressed before July 9th and those that could be handled through the Post Referendum Arrangements.

This, without any exaggeration, was "crucial for the maintenance of peace and security of the Sudan as a whole, the region and beyond". He mentioned the negotiations under the auspices of the AU High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) concerning Abyei, noting "the agreement reached between the Parties to demilitarize the areas around Abyei and allow the deployment of a Security Force for Abyei", and extending his congratulations to the Parties and also to the leadership of AUHIP for a job well-done. For the sake of the people of the Sudan and the region, he encouraged the Parties to expedite their

negotiations to conclude a comprehensive agreement before the impending independence. Turning to the situation in Somalia, Ato Hailemariam recalled the decision of IGAD Heads of State on January 30th on how best to handle the transition there. He noted that the TFG leadership had now sorted out its problems through the signing and implementation of the Kampala Accord. He called on Somalis and on the international community to work together in unison to move the peace process forward, adding that it was necessary for IGAD to be vigilant. He called on all Somali parties “to redouble their efforts to realize the Kampala Accord and protect it from the usual spoilers”. In this context, he also noted the need to exchange views on how to address the challenges the region faced from Eritrea’s continuous policy of destabilizing the sub-region.

On Sudan and the implementation of the CPA, the Council was given extensive briefings on the status of the peace process, the challenges and the way forward for addressing the post-referendum issues by Mr. Deng Alor, Minister for Regional Cooperation of the Government of South Sudan, and by IGAD’s Special Envoy to the Assessment and Evaluation Commission, Lissane Yohannis. Members of the Council expressed their full support to the Parties and the AUHIP, and to the recent agreement to resolve the challenges in Abyei in which Prime Minister Meles played a major role.

On Somalia, the Council was briefed by TFG’s Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Mohamed Abdilahi Omar, who detailed the progress achieved on the ground and on the implementation of the Kampala Accord. IGAD’s Facilitator for Somalia Peace and National Reconciliation briefed the Council on current developments and suggested that the Council should call on the TFG to intensify its efforts to provide logistical support to its forces and those of Ahlu Sunna wal Jama’a to expand control and cut off Al-Shabaab supply routes and access to the port of Kismayo, and deny the organization links to its networks inside Somalia. In Mogadishu, with AMISOM and TFG forces in effective control of the Pasta Factory, the National Stadium, the Arafat area and the entire Industrial Road, the government forces would be in a firm position to control entry into the Bakhara Market. The Council was also briefed by Mr. Boubacar Diarra, Special Representative of the African Union Commission on Somalia, and UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative on Somalia, Ambassador Mahiga on the Kampala Accord between the President and the Speaker and the implementation of the agreement.

The Council also exchanged views on the activities of the Eritrean regime. Djibouti’s Foreign Minister, Mr. Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, briefed the Council on the status of the Qatari-led peace process aimed to resolve the issues that Djibouti had with Eritrea. During discussions on the best way to deal with the problems posed by the Eritrean regime mention was made of the recent attempts by an Eritrean based-terrorist group to disrupt the African Union summit in Addis Ababa last January, and the bombing in Kampala which had resulted in the death of innocent civilians last year. The Council was told that the bombing in Kampala had been planned in Asmara under the code name of the “Asmara Retreat”.

In a subsequent communiqué, the IGAD Council of Ministers welcomed the Kampala Accord and congratulated the President and Speaker of the TFG for their efforts in breaking the political impasse. It welcomed the nomination and confirmation by Parliament of a new Prime Minister and requested the expeditious establishment of the Cabinet as stipulated in the Kampala Accord, asking the TFIs to intensify their cooperation and implement the Kampala Accord within a stipulated timeframe. It directed the parties to the Accord to include a strategy for effective implementation of the various agreements entered onto between the TFG and other groups supportive of genuine peace and national reconciliation. It expressed its appreciation to Uganda and Burundi for the sacrifices their troops continue to make for AMISOM, and urged those countries which have pledged troops to make them available immediately. It encouraged the Governments of IGAD member states to identify specific areas of support to the TFG and intensify efforts to provide logistic support and advice to TFG and ASWJ forces, and mobilize more resources to improve the operational capacity of AMISOM and the TFG and enhance the efforts of IGAD military experts with the TFG and AMISOM. It reiterated a call to the international community to upscale its humanitarian assistance to women and children.

On the Sudan, the Council congratulated the Parties to the Sudan Peace Process for their level of courage and commitment and encouraged them to maintain this to finalize outstanding issues and cooperate after July 9th. It welcomed the Abyei Interim Administration and the Temporary Security Arrangements and UN resolution 1990 that supports the deployment of security forces to demilitarize the border areas. It underlined that the recent signing of the agreement on political and security principles would pave the way for a final settlement in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States. It congratulated the Parties on reaching an agreement on General Principles for the cessation of hostilities, and urged them to uphold the agreement. It acknowledged the determination of the AUHIP under the leadership of former President Thabo Mbeki and of the members of the Panel, Pierre Buoyoya, and Abubaker Abusalam, and commended the efforts of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. It called on AUHIP to continue its engagement with the two Parties. To this end, IGAD, on the recommendation of the AEC and with the support of the Government of the Sudan and the Government of the South Sudan, accepted a new arrangement to allow for the channelling of funds and necessary support post-July 9th.

The Council strongly condemned the activities of the State of Eritrea and the active part it has taken in destabilizing the region through support of extremist and other subversive elements. It called on the UN Security Council to take all appropriate measures to ensure that the regime in Asmara stops these activities in the Horn of Africa. It also called on the African Union and the United Nations Security Council to fully implement existing sanctions and to impose additional sanctions selectively on the Eritrean regime, to target in particular the economic and mining sectors on which the regime draws, as well as the Eritrean Diaspora, to ensure that Eritrea complies with the previous decisions of the United Nations. The decisions of the IGAD Council of Ministers are now expected to be endorsed by the AU Summit of Heads of State and Government