

OPENING REMARKS

Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, IGAD Executive Secretary
12th IDDRSI Platform Steering Committee Meeting
Thursday, 18th March 2021, Mombasa

- **Hon. Eugene Wamalwa**, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Devolution, Arid and Semi-Arid Lands, Republic of Kenya
- Distinguished **Representatives of Member State Delegations;**
- **Jennifer Maurer**, representing our Dependable Development Partners in the Global Alliance for Action on Drought Resilience and Growth led by USAID;
- My hard-working and inspiring **colleagues in the IGAD Secretariat;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

On behalf of IGAD, I am **delighted to welcome all the participants** and it is my humble **privilege to chair the meeting of the IDDRSI Platform Steering Committee for the 2nd time.**

We begin today on a sombre note, **joining our brothers and sisters in Tanzania to mourn the passing away of His Late Excellency John Pombe Magufuli**, President of the United Republic of Tanzania.

President Magufuli was **a passionate pan-africanist** who deeply believed in African development and the uplifting of our people

Allow me to thanking our gracious hosts, the Republic of Kenya for allowing us to converge here in the enchanting sea-side city of Mombasa to **get some serious work done amidst these beautiful surroundings.**

I am told that in Swahili there is a saying that "***When guests are welcome on the first day but on the second day, they must start working.***"

Because some of us have been here for more than one day, **it is now time for us to work very hard in this meeting to ensure that the IDDRSI program remains successful.**

Our **last IDDRSI steering committee meeting was almost 8 months ago** on 23rd July 2020 which because of the restrictions of the Coronavirus, we were forced to host completely virtually.

Our meeting today is a hybrid event; While some participants are present physically here in Mombasa, others are joining the meeting online. **This is a testament to the resilience of our people to the paralyzing effects of this pandemic** that continues to sweep our home planet.

As we all know, IDDRSI is our overall resilience-building platform. **It is a partnership initiative that brings together all stakeholders involved in the drought resilience**, including IGAD Member States, Development Partners, UN agencies, Civil Society and specialized research and training institutions and the IGAD Secretariat.

We are united by our collective endeavour to end drought emergencies; and this platform provides us with **a unique opportunity to discuss our plans, chart our progress, examine our challenges and leverage on opportunities** to build resilience to drought and related environmental shocks for the communities of our region.

The platform also provides an effective framework for promoting, coordinating and monitoring our interventions.

The **principal instrument that has guided and coordinated the interventions** of our Member States in this initiative is the **IDDRSI Strategy**.

The **second 5-year phase of this strategy was endorsed nearly 2 years ago** over which period the **IDDRSI strategy has been translated into country and regional programming papers.**

It is **now almost 10 years since the decision to adopt the IDDRSI approach** was made at the historic summit that brought our leaders and development partners together in Nairobi in September 2011.

Since that time, **we have recorded remarkable progress towards achieving the objectives of the summit** and implementing the decision to end drought emergencies;

Let me draw your attention to 4 major paradigm-shifts in IGAD that can be attributed to IDDRSI over the period it has been in existence;

- 1. Climate-Change Responsiveness:** IGAD Member States have initiated numerous resilience-enhancing interventions, including policies, programs and projects; and the **countries are convinced beyond doubt of both the necessity and viability of addressing the challenges of climate change and related environmental challenges.**
- 2. Focus on Cross-Border Areas:** The implementation of IDDRSI has **highlighted the need for a special focus on cross-border areas**, which in addition to being arid and semi-arid, also present socio-economic and other challenges related to the nature of borderlands. IDDRSI is **increasingly appreciated as an effective framework for development in cross-border areas.**
- 3. Coordinated Regional Approaches to Programming:** The highlight of this initiative is how **it has taught us how to think and work as a region.** I am very encouraged to observe that many of our countries have gone a step further and **incorporated elements of this strategy into national development plans and even embarked on implementation.**

4. Pro-active Disaster Risk Management: IDDRSI has also highlighted the importance of being pro-active by **focussing on managing risk, rather than being reactive and forced to manage emergencies.** This approach is especially instructive, when considering the triple-disaster scenario, such as we currently have in our region – with the COVID-19 pandemic, desert locust invasion and floods, among others. The implementation of IDDRSI shows us that **it is not only about surviving a particular disaster, but more about being prepared for the next one.**

As the theme of the meeting today suggests, **we are now consolidating the path to resilience and sustainability** and we are here today to put our heads together, share our insights, review our progress, reflect on our circumstances and design the next way forward. **I therefore look forward to very substantive deliberations on the future of IDDRSI in this meeting.**

I will conclude my remarks by first of all, **sincerely thanking my fellow members of the Steering Committee for their dedication to the cause of resilience and zeal to find solutions** to the problems of our region.

I am also **deeply grateful to our development partners who have believed in the wisdom of our decision to invest in resilience building** and have walked with us on this journey.

I also **thank all of our IGAD Member States for the sacrifices they have made to forego short-term gains and opt for long-term benefits** that will accrue from building resilience; the results so far achieved are promising, suggesting that we are on the right track.

Finally, allow me **through your good offices Honourable Cabinet Secretary, to thank the people and Government of Kenya** for once more hosting this meeting and for the wonderful hospitality, especially in these difficult times of this pandemic.

Thank you very much everyone.

Asanteni Sana