

**OPENING REMARKS BY GUEST OF HONOUR, AMB.
RAYCHELLE OMAMO, SC, CABINET SECRETARY FOR
DEFENCE, REPUBLIC OF KENYA, DURING THE 15TH
ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF EASTERN
AFRICA CHIEFS OF DEFENCE STAFF HELD AT THE
INTERNATIONAL PEACE SUPPORT TRAINING CENTRE
(IPSTC), KAREN, NAIROBI ON 13TH FEBRUARY, 2014**

Chairperson of the Committee of Eastern Africa Chiefs of
Defence Staff, Gen (Dr) Julius W. Karangi;

Distinguished Chiefs of Defence Staff;

Director EASFCOM;

Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Invited Guests;

Members of the Press;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I thank you for inviting me to preside over the opening of this key meeting of the Committee of the Eastern Africa Chiefs of Defence and Security. I take this early opportunity to warmly welcome you to Kenya and reaffirm the Republic of Kenya's great honour at being accorded another opportunity to host this meeting. I hope that you will have a pleasant stay during your stay in Kenya.

Distinguished Delegates,

The Eastern Africa Chiefs of Defence Staff (EACDS) have over the years collectively contributed significantly to the realization of the Eastern Africa Standby Force (EASF). When fully actualized, our organization, operating under the auspices of the African Standby Force (ASF), can be a potent instrument for addressing challenges to peace, security and stability not only in our region but on the whole African continent. We therefore, have an onerous duty and responsibility of ensuring that EASF quickly evolves into a credible tool for regional peace, security and prosperity. I consequently, cannot over-emphasize the fact that EASF must urgently reinvigorate the pursuit of its Strategic Objectives so that benchmarks for a cohesive political decision making structure as well as functional operations and administration systems are put in place.

Whereas we are never shy to proclaim the significant progress that we have made over the years in developing various aspects of human and structural capabilities, we should be equally bold in acknowledging that considerable work is yet to be done. Unfolding events in our region, from Somalia to the region's borders with the Democratic Republic of Congo, from Darfur to South Sudan, the challenges are many, varied and mutant. Indeed, challenges permeate our seemingly peaceful societies

and if not identified and dealt with effectively can have the potential to throw our serene environments into paroxysms of instability, insecurity and death. We must therefore marshal our collective efforts to actualize credible deployable forces to arrest and resolve crises. I am optimistic that where there is a will, there is a way!

Distinguished Delegates,

Against the backdrop of the aforesaid, EASF must draw encouragement from the commitment shown by its political leaders to supporting the implementation of peace and security initiatives. Our leaders are at the forefront of the establishment of an African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC). Several of our Member States have already established Rapid Deployment Capabilities that are key components of both EASF and ASF. The recent donation by Kenya of US\$1m to the African Union towards implementation of EASF programmes was not a mere symbolic gesture but a concrete restatement and a crystal clear indicator of Kenya's commitment to the cause of prevention and eradication of conflicts in order to foster enduring peace in our region and the African continent at large.

With the foregoing in mind, and as I have previously stated before to this forum, an honest self-evaluation will open our eyes to the reality of EASF's pressing need for a *paradigm shift* in order to remain seized of objectives that will realize our mission and vision. I reiterate that EASF structures, management, staffing procedures and general *modus operandi* are areas that are in need of urgent overhaul.

This forum must therefore, through its in-depth deliberations, make proposals and recommendations that will be catalysts for our desired progress. And you must neither shy away nor hesitate from recommending to the Council of Ministers practicable solutions to structural and contemporary issues that face EASF.

Distinguished Delegates,

The significant and valuable contribution that our Friends and International Partners continue to make towards our development cannot be underestimated. I therefore acknowledge their support and sincerely thank them.

I want also to acknowledge EASFCOM's role as the Secretariat to our organization and appreciate their continued coordination of EASF activities.

I finally take this opportunity to thank you, distinguished delegates, for making time to participate in this important meeting and wish you fruitful deliberations.

It is now my pleasure to declare this meeting officially open.

I thank you.