

SPEECH FOR THE CABINET SECRETARY FOR DEFENCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA, AMBASSADOR RAYCHELLE OMAMO, SC

Protocol

Today marks an important milestone in the history of the Eastern Africa Standby Force (EASF). The day also commemorates an important event in the history of mankind, the International Peace Day. It is therefore, only befitting to double up this event to celebrate the strides made by EASF which is our organization set up as part of the Africa peace mechanism with the responsibility of bringing together the 10 Eastern African countries to collectively contribute towards peace and stability on our continent.

The time is indeed ripe and very important, as this open day heralds EASF's commitment and effort to relentlessly undertake this responsibility. EASF, for those who may not be aware, will be a rapid response team that will be called upon quickly to respond to regional problems including terror attacks. Other such forces are being prepared in South, North and West Africa under the AU in the African Solutions to African Problems initiative.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

EASF, marks this occasion with a readiness and commitment never seen before as a regional organization. Taking stock of the milestones, last year, in December 2014, in the presence of the African Union, the forces declared Full Operational Capability, clearly showing our readiness, in terms of capacity and political commitment, and that we are ready and willing to play our part in this region towards peace and security in Africa.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Ten years ago, the Government of the Republic of Kenya made a commitment to be an active player in this agenda. We signed the relevant document to bring to life the Eastern Africa Standby Force, then known as the Eastern Africa Standby Brigade. As I stand before you today, I am proud to announce that Kenya, together with many other EASF Member States have cleared for ratification the Agreement on establishment of the EASF, thereby, binding the collective commitments of the ten member Nations into one unified, solid block ready to take on the plague that is eating our region, and Africa as a whole.

During this Open Day, we will share with you the fruits and progress of the many years' of our collective efforts, that hence brought the organization to the recorded level of readiness. EASF will reveal to you what the organization is all about and its reason for existence. We will provide answers to many of your questions so that by the time you leave here, you will be better placed and convinced that EASF's existence is noble. You will understand that in the current economic and geopolitical environment and with the emerging threats, collective responsibility is key and the way to go. EASF is all of us and all of us are EASF.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Kenya has been a key player in the arena of Peace Support Operation (PSO). Our effort to bring peace to our region is demonstrated not only by

being in EASF, but through our involvement in Somalia, and many other peace keeping missions such as Darfur and South Sudan. We believe that as long as we can, we will not stand idly by and let our neighbors burn because we know that sooner or later, that same fire may spread to our homes. Today, we will proudly show you the culmination of our effort and the solutions for future deployments.

The EASF is a tool at the disposal of the African Union to use as seen best. More so, EASF is an instrument of Peace to be engaged by those committed to see peace and stability on our continent. As a country, we are confident that we have responded to the call of our continental leaders when they made the call to create the African Standby Force, which EASF is part of. As it may be noted, Kenya is the first country in the East African region to evaluate and validate more than its 1000 pledged forces expected to be deployed to trouble spots within 14 days of receiving the orders.

It is a fact that conflict is widespread in various parts of Africa ranging from the conventional threats to asymmetric threats such as terrorism, piracy and extremism among others. Today, it is more and more evident that no nation can stand aloof in the face of such threats. The problems of Somalia have had far reaching effects to Kenya and even as far as Seychelles and other countries with devastating repercussions.

African nations have proven to be very responsive and act rapidly to conflict situations affecting their fellow nations. Africa has the potential, to respond more effectively through a collective mechanism such as the EASF. All member countries have provided the necessary financial and human resources for the growth of the organization.

Ladies and Gentlemen

As EASF continues to develop, let us appreciate the political will and leadership that has made it possible for it to reach its current status in a bid to secure the region and its peoples. In this respect, I wish to hail the commitment of the President of the Republic of Kenya, H.E. Uhuru Kenyatta, who has constantly supported this regional peace initiative even through other forums.

Let me conclude my remarks by expressing the Kenya Government's appreciation to all our Member States, Partners and the media for standing with EASF so far. I am sure EASF as an organization remains grateful to the troops and police contributions made by member states and the pivotal role these have played in various missions within the region. The EASF region will continue to stand with its' people to continuously and expeditiously shape a more secure, stable and peaceful region.

I urge you to make the most of this Event and learn as much as possible because together, with your support, we can create a better place for all of us.

I thank you.