

**THE COMMITTEE OF
EASTERN AFRICA CHIEFS OF DEFENCE STAFF
KIGALI, RWANDA**

20TH AUGUST 2014

OPENING REMARKS BY THE GUEST OF HONOUR

Distinguished Chiefs of Defence Staff

Distinguished Delegates,

The Director EASFCOM;

Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Welcome to Kigali for the Meeting of the 17th Ordinary Meeting of Chiefs of Defense Staff of the Eastern Africa Region and thank you for giving me the opportunity to grace this occasion. Once again, Rwanda is honored to host this very important Meeting. I would like to thank all of you for sparing time off your very busy schedules to participate in this meeting. I also take this opportunity to sincerely appreciate the Director Eastern Africa Standby Force and his team for organizing the meeting.

Distinguished Chiefs of Defence,

As the chiefs of Defence Staff , our participation in this important meeting has never been more critical than today. This comes at a time when the Eastern Africa region continues to face serious security challenges which require collective and maximum attention. It comes at a time when EASF is undergoing some major restructuring and downsizing in order to position itself to respond to the current and emerging realities in our sub-region. The emerging security challenges are diverse in nature and they keep

evolving over time. Emergence of new conflicts or rather a relapse of old ones, put into question our efforts to find lasting peace and stability in our region. These must be addressed and responded to with effective measures.. EASF and its Member States will continue to rely on your leadership to provide direction for our leaders. It is therefore your responsibility as Chiefs to constantly review and update policies, guidelines and identify appropriate approaches that will help the sub-region to achieve its mission and move forward. Peace, Security and Stability, distinguish Chiefs, is the key to our economic prosperity and the development of our nations and well being of peoples.

Distinguished Guests, participants

Commendable strides have been made in the operationalization of the Eastern Africa Standby Force. We have at our disposal an instrument upon which we can build to further structural conflict prevention and sustain peace where it has been achieved. On the ground, the region through our individual Member States are showing greater pro-activeness in dealing with current conflict and crisis situations, with encouraging results. . I call on all our member States , , to lend a helping hand to collectively push the

scourge of conflict inflicting misery and suffering on our people into oblivious once and for all.

Conflict remains a painful reality in some parts of the Eastern Africa region. We continue to face the threat of unconstitutional challenges of Government, the recourse to armed rebellion to further political claims, and other threats, including terrorism, transnational organized crime, piracy, and radicalization activities. We have a collective responsibility to address these issues and to continuously identify and implement workable solutions. As such, we cannot over-emphasize the need to have a robust peace and security mechanism to prevent and resolve conflicts in this region. You have a very important agenda and program of work before you. The key of which is the pledging of the multidimensional Forces . There is no doubt that all Member States will contribute within means and capabilities towards building the EASf. I urge you to deliberate freely and frankly on the matters at hand and make concrete and actionable recommendations.

Distinguish Chiefs, Ladies and Gentleman

Distinguished Chiefs of Defence,

EASF has made commendable progress since its establishment ten years ago. EASF has undertaken several trainings, Field Exercises, capacity-building , workshops and other activities to help build the multidimensional Force. In this process, EASF has made significant achievements as set out in the African Union (AU) Road Map III. As we approach the proposed timeline for attainment of Full Operational Capability (FOC) in Dec 2014, EASF needs to critically examine the gaps that would affect progress and urgently institute measures to address these gaps. Your guidance at the policy, professional and technical levels will be critical to the success of EASF, particularly in the next few months.

Distinguished Chiefs of Defence,

Let me now recognize the role of the Friends of EASF and partners for supporting EASF over the years. Your active participation in strengthening EASF is very highly appreciated. We welcome the declaration by the United States during the US-African Summit to support a robust African force from Ethiopia, Rwanda and Uganda to intervene in serious circumstances to protect our people and our region.

Distinguished Chiefs of Defence,

With these few remarks, it is now my pleasure and honor to declare the 17th \Ordinary Meeting of the Committee of Eastern Africa Chiefs of Defense Staff officially open.

I wish you fruitful deliberations

I Thank you.