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**6th Meeting of the HISS of the Member States of IGAD and EAC,
29-30 May 2019,
Nairobi, Kenya**

**Opening Remarks by the Commissioner for Peace and Security
H.E. Ambassador Smail Chergui
29 May 2019
Nairobi, Kenya**

Dr Fred Matiangi, Cabinet Secretary for Interior and Coordination of National Government
The Executive Secretary of IGAD,
Representative of Secretary General of the EAC,
Representative of the Head of the Nouakchott Process,
Heads of Delegations,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the 6th meeting of the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services of the Member States (MS) of IGAD and EAC. Allow me to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of Kenya for hosting this event and for the warm welcome extended to our delegation.

We are delighted that EAC and IGAD Member States have responded to our invitation, which emphasizes yet again, our commitment to promoting peace in the region through our shared goal of strengthening regional security cooperation.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This 6th meeting provides us with another opportunity to review the security situation in East Africa region, refine our strategies to address the numerous challenges, and take stock of the progress made in the implementation of the decisions made in the 5th meeting that was held in Kampala, Uganda in May 2018.

Since our last meeting, the challenges facing this region and our continent in general has not decreased. In spite of the progress that has been made, the region still continues to face a myriad of complex challenges that have exacerbated the already challenging security environment. Allow me to outline a few:

First, a number of elections will be held in the East Africa region in the next two years. It is expected that the majority of these elections will remain peaceful, but with the possibility that some may face violence. From past experience, disputes over the composition and membership of election management bodies, the lack of adequate consultations on impending election timelines, debates around issues of succession and term limits, as well as prevailing security situations have been some of the issues that have contributed to heightened tensions and violence in some Member States.

I would also like to highlight that although social media has facilitated democratic participation on the continent, it continues to be used to spread negative propaganda, leading to social unrest. In the coming months and considering the number of elections that will take place on the continent, the challenge for our Member states

will be striking a balance between meeting the requirements of freedom of speech and the requirements for law and order.

Secondly, there is concern that some of the protracted crises in some of our Member States might escalate as we near key milestones such as elections, implementation of key provisions of peace agreements or political negotiations.

Thirdly, some of our member states in the region are going through political transitions. Transitions are an opportunity for change but they are also a moment of vulnerability and are always fraught with challenges. We must work to ensure that the gains are not reversed.

We are also grappling with the rise in popular uprising phenomenon which seems to be spreading on the continent. These popular uprisings often represent genuine voice of the people and we should strive to ensure the right platform is set for the grievances to be addressed while shielding them from toxic external manipulation.

Let me take this opportunity to call on our Member States to pay closer attention to the increasing interferences of external actors. More specifically, **special attention** should be paid to the complex competition between super powers, the Gulf crisis and their adverse impact on our continent.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The threat of terrorism in Africa remains. Just earlier this year, we saw the heinous attack on Nairobi's Dusit 2 Hotel. In this regard, I would like to express once again our condolences, to the people and the Government of Kenya. Extremist's organisations continue to expand their reach, acquiring sophisticated bomb making skills, operating efficient administrations in their areas of control and mounting communities against each other. We should not underestimate the terrorist's creativity as they seek to sow deaths and destruction. A particular attention should be devoted to the security of our airlines, airports, hotels and other key installations. At our airports for example, Security is only as good as the weakest link and that weakest link may well be airport staffs that have access to the aircraft. The same applies to our porous borders. Vetting mechanism need to be enhanced at all ports of entry to avoid terrorist attacks.

Furthermore, bioterrorism and cyber security are looming threats that are of particular concern to Africa. There are two-dozen conventional biological agents including anthrax that terrorists or other criminals could acquire and unleash on an unsuspecting public. Cyber Security is also one of the new trends that are disrupting institutions and that requires our attention as we move forward.

The sophistication of the terrorists organizations is a clear indication that our security centered approach is not sufficient. Combatting, countering and preventing

extremism demands a robust, all-encompassing political engagement that takes into account the evolving global and regional dynamics in support of our security effort.

**Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen**

Negative forces such as the Alliance for the Democratic Forces (ADF)-Nalu and the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) to name a few, continue to cause instability in the Great Lakes region. This month alone, we saw a rise in the number of incidents involving negative forces in the eastern DR Congo. There is a need to refocus our attention on the negative forces as the current dynamics in the Great Lakes can give them a lifeline that some long for.

Furthermore, the region is also likely to remain vulnerable to transnational crimes including drug and arms trafficking, human trafficking as demonstrated by the number of migrants crossing the Mediterranean or the Red Sea. The worrying trend is that transnational organized crimes have become intimately intertwined with terrorist groups' activities and are providing them with new sources of funding.

**Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We cannot shy away from the fact that there is a resurgence of inter- state tensions which risk derailing our regional integration agenda and expose us collectively to external pressures. I am reminded of a Nigerian saying that *a Lizard cannot climb a wall unless there are cracks on the wall.*

This region is in the midst of consequences related to climate change such as, environmental degradation, desertification, floods, drought and famine. This is leading to the displacement of populations which increases inter communal violence.

As for the economic outlook, we are seeing a regression. Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa was estimated at 2.3 percent for 2018, down from 2.5 percent in 2017. Although regional growth is expected to rebound to 2.8 percent in 2019, it will have remained below three percent (3%) since 2015. Linked to this we continue to observe the erosion of the capacity of the state to deliver basic services and social safety nets such as employment, tackling corruption, stemming the collapse of infrastructure, investment in health and education.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

This meeting comes at a time when multilateralism is under assault and the global political landscape is ever-changing. This stresses the importance of this platform; an avenue to share information and best-practices in order to better respond to

emerging challenges. Our challenges must be met through cooperation and Joint action. The Fusion and Liaison Unit, once fully operational with your support, could assist us in institutionalizing our engagement and to enhance our capacity to effectively respond to these threats. As such, partnership is our best conflict prevention tool!

These challenging times must also be an opportunity for the region to step-up its efforts and move forward. It is critical that we invest in longer-term strategic planning initiatives which will enable us to foresee these challenges and address them at an early stage. At the AU, we have also developed various tools to enhance the capacity of our member states for early warning and conflict prevention. I would like to mention one such tool – the Country Structural Vulnerability and Resilience Assessment and its resultant, the Country structural Vulnerability Mitigation Strategy. With these tools, member states will have the capacity to identify at a very early stage their vulnerabilities which if not addressed could lead to violent conflicts and are able to craft relevant mitigation strategies (CSVMS) in line with their national priorities and agendas.

I would like to use this opportunity to encourage all the participating countries to volunteer for this process and make use of our tools for conflict prevention.

Excellencies,

Indeed, the progress made by this esteemed platform as highlighted in the progress report is a clear indication that there exists political will among our Member States to collectively address the challenges facing this region. Our gathering today is a reiteration of this existing will. The complexity of the challenges is a testament that we cannot do it alone - the need for a stronger cooperation is greater than ever. In this regard, I would like to thank our Chair, Uganda for spearheading this effort and we look forward to working with Member States of the Djibouti Process to make further progress.

I therefore, call for an open and frank discussion for the next two-days, to discuss and strategize on how we can achieve this common vision.

I Thank You

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6th Meeting of the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services (HISS) of the Member States of IGAD and EAC, 29-30 May 2019, Nairobi, Kenya

Chergui, Smail Amb.

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