

**SPEECH BY H.E. AMBASSADOR (ENG.) MAHBOUB MAALIM, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY,
INTER-GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY ON DEVELOPMENT (IGAD) AT THE FIRST
MONITORING FOR ENVIRONMENT AND SECURITY IN AFRICA FORUM, 31ST AUGUST
2015, CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL**

**The guest of honor, Hon. Prof. Judi Wakhungu, Cabinet Secretary for
Environment and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kenya and my co- host,**

**H.E. Mrs. Rhoda Peace Tumusiime, Commissioner for Rural Economy and
agriculture - African Union Commission (AUC)**

Mrs. Anna BURYLO, Counsellor

Head of Cooperation - European Union Delegation to the African Union

H. E. Jean-Claude de l Estrac

**Secretary General of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), Current Chairperson
of the MESA Programme Steering Committee**

**Distinguished Participants, Members of the Press,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It gives me great pleasure to join you this morning for the official opening of the First Monitoring for Environment and Security in Africa (MESA) Forum. On behalf of the Inter Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and on my own behalf, I would like to welcome all the participants to the IGAD region. I would also like to thank the Government of Kenya for hosting this forum and for warm hospitality given to the delegates since their arrival.

**Distinguished Participants;
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As you are aware the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) was founded in 1986 to combat the recurring severe droughts and other natural disasters that resulted in widespread famine, ecological degradation and economic hardship in the Eastern Africa region. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a revitalized IGADD, with expanded areas of regional cooperation was launched by the IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government on 25 November 1996 in Djibouti, the Republic of Djibouti and was mandated to promote regional cooperation and integration to add value to member states' efforts in achieving peace, security and prosperity.

The Monitoring for Environment and Security in Africa (MESA) programme is being implemented simultaneously with the IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative (IDDRSI). IDDRSI provides a roadmap for ending drought emergencies in the IGAD region by the year 2027 and the MESA programme will contribute to one of the pillars of the initiative.

ICPAC is the Regional Implementation Center for the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) in the MESA programme focusing on; **Land Degradation Assessment, Natural Habit Conservation and Forest Monitoring Services**. The MESA programme intends to consolidate services developed during the African Monitoring of Environment for Sustainable Development (AMESD) project that ended last year, to provide information as a means for addressing some of the aforementioned factors.

**Distinguished Participants;
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Africa as a continent is very rich in natural resources, biodiversity and untainted landscapes that require environmental protection and management. Some of the regional natural resources are shared by several communities and cut across national boundaries. These include grazing lands, rivers, lakes, wildlife among others.

As you are aware much of the IGAD region is arid or semi-arid with highly variable rainfall. Droughts are very frequent in the region and are often followed or preceded by floods. Most of the natural resources that drive the livelihoods and socio-economic activities are therefore regularly exposed to extreme climate events. Such climate extremes impact negatively not only on the environment that drive the basic livelihoods, but also on regional food security, pasture, water, energy, health, wildlife, tourism, infrastructure, conflicts and security among many others. Proper environmental monitoring and management is therefore critical for achievement of security in the region.

As a region, we envision the MESA programme will increase the information management, decision-making and planning capacity of the African continental, regional and national institutions with mandate on environment, climate, food security and related sectors; by enhancing access to, and exploitation of relevant Earth Observation applications in Africa.

This includes a range of information to respond to the common man's needs such as monitoring the water level and flow rate of key rivers used for commercial transport; water cycle information to help agriculture (best planting time, improved crop yields, etc.) and warn of flood and drought risks; monitoring of the changing condition of rangelands for livestock management; tracking the depletion and/or degradation of forest resources and biodiversity; monitoring of marine pollution, fisheries resources and coastal erosion among others.

We look forward to the MESA project generating quality products and services based on Earth Observation (EO) data, strengthen policy frameworks and to build the capacity of our region.

Distinguished Participants;
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I would like to assure you that IGAD will continue to be supportive of not only the MESA project, but all other initiatives fostered by the AUC and our development partners, aimed at improving our region's welfare, environmental governance and security. Thank you.