

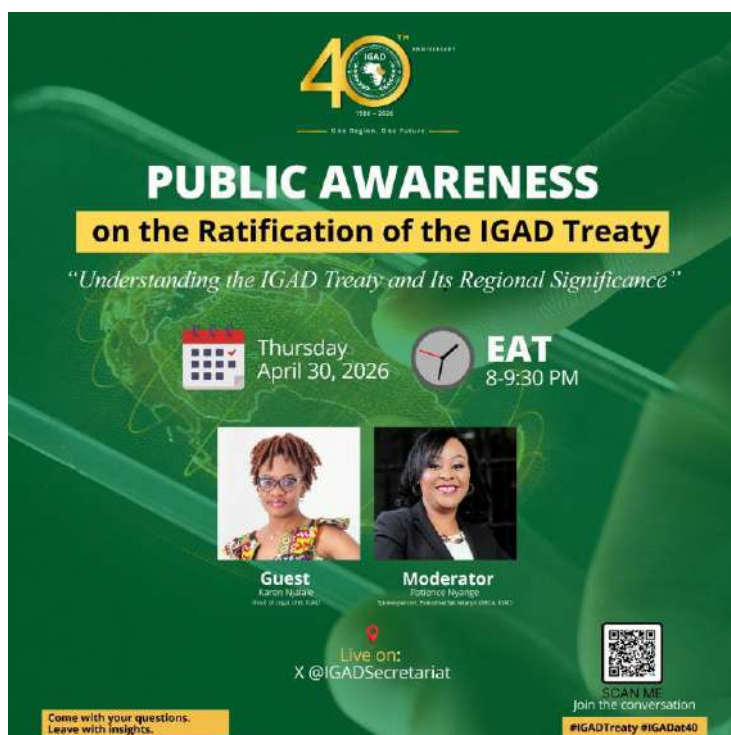
# PUBLIC AWARENESS ON THE RATIFICATION OF THE IGAD TREATY

The Public Awareness Session on the Ratification of the  
IGAD Treaty was convened by the Intergovernmental  
Authority on Development (IGAD) Secretariat.

Moderator: Patience Nyang'e

Guest Speakers: Karen Njalale and Mubarak Mabuya

Unofficial  
Proceedings  
Report By:  
BRIDGE  
Research and  
Innovation for  
Democratic  
Governance  
and Enhanced  
Peace



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Unofficial Proceedings Report By: BRIDGE Research and Innovation for Democratic Governance and Enhanced Peace

### ABSTRACT

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This publication is an independent compilation by BRIDGE, a nonprofit think tank, based on public transcripts Public Awareness on the Ratification of the IGAD Treaty Event. It is not an official document of IGAD or its affiliates. Neither the organizers nor the speakers assume responsibility for the accuracy, additions, or omissions within this text. It is intended solely to contribute to scholarly debate and regional knowledge on IGAD Treaty.



## Public Awareness on the Ratification of the IGAD Treaty

### “Understanding the IGAD Treaty and Its Regional Significance”

Date: Thursday, April 30, 2026

Time: 8:00 PM – 9:30 PM EAT

Platform: X Spaces (@IGADSecretariat)

Moderator:

Patience Nyang'e, Spokesperson, Office of the Executive Secretary, IGAD

Guest Speakers:

Karen Njalale, Head of Legal Affairs, IGAD (Djibouti Office)

Mubarak Mabuya, Coordinator, IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience Sustainability Initiative (IDDRSI)

Compiled by: BRIDGE (Research and Innovation for Democratic Governance and Enhanced Peace)

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## Executive Summary

The proceedings report compiled by BRIDGE documents a high-level public awareness session hosted by the IGAD Secretariat in April 2026 to discuss the historic ratification of the IGAD Treaty. This independent publication by the non-profit think tank aims to bridge the gap between complex regional policies and the general public, specifically unpacking the legal, institutional, and socio-economic implications of the new treaty for the Horn of Africa.

A central milestone highlighted in the session is that five IGAD Member States have officially ratified the document, successfully meeting the two-thirds legislative threshold necessary for the treaty to move toward its official entry into force. This transition from the previous 1996 Agreement to a formal Treaty marks a strategic shift intended to elevate IGAD's legal standing among other African Regional Economic Communities and provide a binding framework for modern governance.

The modernization effort directly addresses critical gaps in the legacy 1996 framework, which lacked robust dispute resolution mechanisms, predictable legal directives for inter-state friction, and strong enforcement tools to ensure compliance with regional policies. By formalizing these mandates, the new treaty seeks to foster investor confidence and institutional maturity while providing the legal architecture necessary to manage the evolving geopolitical and economic landscape of the region.

Key structural reforms introduced in the 2023 Treaty include the explicit inclusion of gender equality, disability rights, and the rule of law as binding principles for member states. Additionally, the treaty expands IGAD's institutional accessibility by adding Arabic as an official language, introduces a formal sanctions system for non-compliance, and establishes an independent Audit Committee to enhance financial accountability.

For the ordinary citizens and youth of the region, the treaty promises tangible "peace dividends" by transforming borders from barriers into bridges through the associated Protocol on Free Movement of Persons. Practical benefits include the creation of a regional qualifications framework to allow cross-border recognition of education and the implementation of advanced climate early-



warning systems to protect the livelihoods of pastoralists and farmers from shared environmental threats like droughts and floods.

Looking ahead, the IGAD Secretariat is focused on the immediate implementation phase, which involves national domestication according to each member state's constitutional procedures and the development of specific operational rules for sanctions. Once the final instrument of ratification is deposited, a 60-day countdown will begin, officially ushering in a new era of regional integration designed to secure permanent peace and socioeconomic transformation across the bloc.



## Disclaimer & Editorial Note

This publication represents an unofficial editorial proceeding compiled by BRIDGE Research and Innovation for Democratic Governance and Enhanced Peace. The foundational material is derived from the Public Awareness Session on the Ratification of the IGAD Treaty, a high-level dialogue convened by the IGAD Secretariat on April 30, 2026, via X Spaces (@IGADSecretariat).

Leveraging AI-supported technologies to ensure accurate capture of complex regional dialogue, BRIDGE Research and Innovation for Democratic Governance and Enhanced Peace has transcribed, structured, and polished these oral presentations to conform to a readable, professionally rigorous proceedings format.

This document is an independent compilation and does not constitute an official record of IGAD or its affiliates. While every effort has been made to maintain the integrity of the discussion, the organizers, guest speakers, and BRIDGE shall not be held responsible for any errors, additions, or omissions thereof.

It is BRIDGE's firm conviction that this accessible and synthesized iteration about the IGAD Treaty will serve as a vital resource to contribute to scholarly debate and enhance regional knowledge. By bridging the gap between complex sub-regional policies and the general public, this document aims to foster a deeper understanding of the institutional frameworks shaping the Horn of Africa.

Dr. Kaleab Tadesse Sigatu

Director, BRIDGE Research and Innovation for Democratic Governance and Enhanced Peace, May,  
2026, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



## Welcome Address & Session Orientation

### Patience Nyang'e (Moderator)

My name is Patience Nyang'e, and I serve as the Spokesperson for the Office of the Executive Secretary, His Excellency Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, at the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). On behalf of the Secretariat, I am absolutely delighted to welcome you to this vital, timely conversation regarding public awareness of the IGAD Treaty.

Recently, five IGAD member states ratified the new IGAD Treaty. By doing so, we have officially met the necessary two-thirds threshold. This is a truly historic milestone for our institution and the broader Horn of Africa region. Tonight, our goal is to thoroughly unpack this legal document and discuss what it means for regional cooperation, our shared future, and the everyday citizens living across the IGAD space.

The treaty provides the bedrock foundation for our ongoing work in peace and security, economic integration, climate resilience, and sustainable development. As our region continues to rapidly evolve, we must ensure that the institutional and legal frameworks guiding our cooperation evolve along with it. That is why we are here tonight: to raise awareness and deepen public understanding of the treaty.

To help us do that, I am joined by Karen Njalale, IGAD's Head of Legal Affairs, broadcasting from our Djibouti office. Karen has brilliantly spearheaded the legal process for the new IGAD Treaty, which was formally adopted by our Heads of State and Government in 2023. She has a deep passion for the courtroom and international law, making her the perfect expert to clarify these complex institutional processes tonight.



## Foundational Legal Frameworks & The Evolution of IGAD

Patience Nyang'e (Moderator)

What is IGAD, and why does it matter for the region to have a ratified treaty right now? Specifically, what legal and institutional framework currently underpins IGAD's role in regional cooperation and integration?

**Karen Njalale:**

Under international law, a treaty is a formally binding written agreement between sovereign states or international organizations. It explicitly creates concrete legal rights and obligations for the parties involved. In our context, this new treaty will serve as the absolute highest-level legal instrument establishing IGAD's modern governance, its mandate, its institutional structures, and its operational functions. Once it fully enters into force, its commitments become legally binding on our member states.



To define what IGAD is for the benefit of those who may be new to our work: the Intergovernmental Authority on Development is a premier regional intergovernmental organization. We serve eight member states across the Horn of Africa and the broader Eastern Africa region.

### **Our Multi-Sectoral Mandate:**

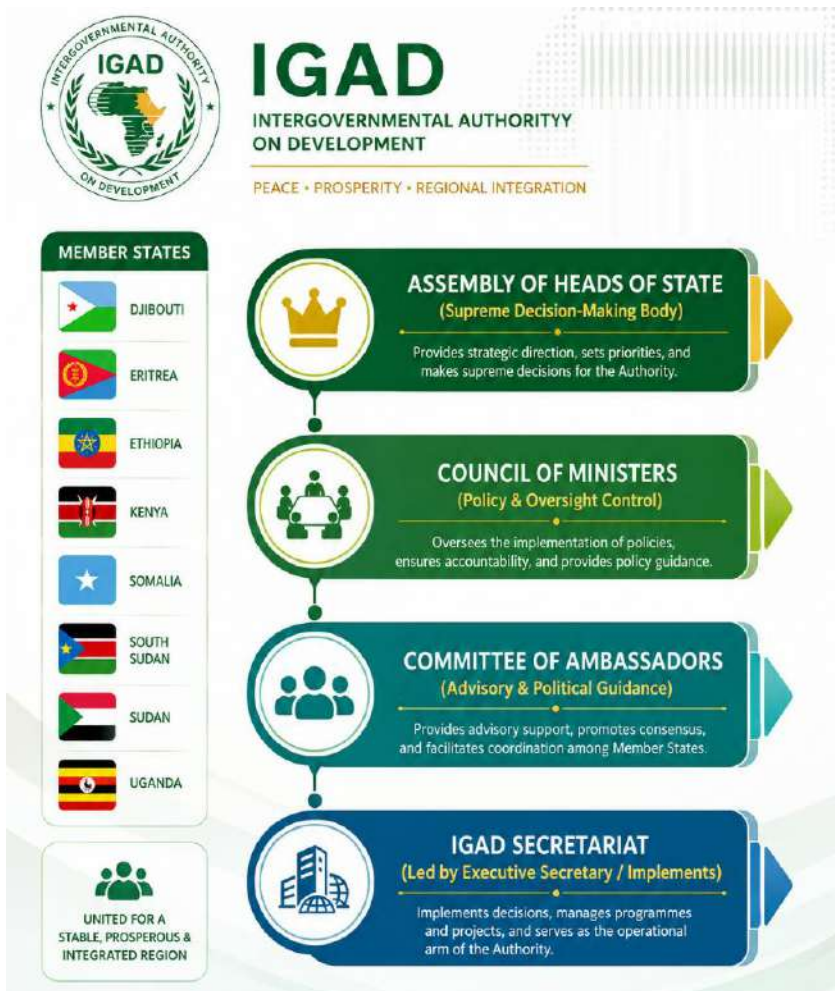
IGAD provides a unified platform for our member states to coordinate responses to shared challenges and advance collective development. Our operations span across several core pillars:

- Peace, security, and conflict resolution
- Economic cooperation and regional integration
- Agriculture, food security, and environmental protection
- Climate resilience and humanitarian affairs
- Migration management

Our organization has evolved significantly over the decades. We were originally established forty years ago, back in 1986, as IGADD, with a double "D", which stood for the *Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Desertification*. At that time, the body was created out of sheer necessity to combat the rampant, devastating droughts, famines, and desertification plaguing the region, while trying to patch together basic economic development.

However, our leaders eventually realized that the challenges facing the region were expanding far beyond environmental shocks. We were increasingly dealing with complex political issues, border security, economic blockages, and deep social development hurdles. Consequently, in April 1995 in Addis Ababa, the Heads of State and Government made a landmark decision to revitalize the old IGADD, broaden its scope entirely, and transform it into the modernized IGAD we know today, which was formalized via an updated agreement in 1996.





*Currently, IGAD operates through four primary institutional organs (Illustrated by BRIDGE)*

Our legal cooperation is grounded in shared foundational principles: brotherhood, collective self-reliance, economic integration, and regional stability. This cooperation is vital because countries in the Horn of Africa share tightly linked, collective challenges. Individual progress is limited; true transformation depends entirely on pooling our resources and working as a unified bloc. Through collective action, we build economic resilience, boost our global competitiveness, and secure regional stability.

In terms of its legal identity, IGAD is a formal intergovernmental organization possessing full legal personality under international law.



## Gaps in the 1996 Framework & The Strategic Shift to a Treaty

Patience Nyang'e (Moderator)

Why was there an urgent need to revise or modernize the existing 1996 agreement? What specific legal and institutional gaps does this new treaty seek to aggressively address?

Karen Njalale

It is important to clarify a vital piece of legal status for our listeners: the instrument we have right now is the 1996 Agreement Establishing IGAD. It remains our active, binding legal framework until it is formally replaced by the new treaty upon its final entry into force.

Now, look at the big picture, IGAD is now 40 years old. We have achieved immense, undeniable success under our overall mandate, often pushing well over and beyond what the original text envisioned. The 1996 agreement successfully guided our transition from a narrow, drought-focused body into a broad, highly respected regional development organization. It has anchored critical peace initiatives, cross-border health collaborations, unified migration frameworks, and regional climate preparedness strategies. It provided a dependable, consistent diplomatic forum for our Heads of State to align on collective solutions.

IGAD through the years became the central mediator in regional conflict, such as facilitating peace processors in our member states, engaging state building efforts in our member states. And legally, there's been significant development of the legal and policy instruments, such as the migration frameworks, the health oppression, trade and development strategies.

However, as the geopolitical and economic landscapes of the Horn of Africa morphed over the last three decades, significant legal and institutional gaps became glaringly apparent. Our leaders issued a direct mandate that we must modernize our founding framework.

Here are the key structural gaps and challenges that forced our shift from an "Agreement" to a formal "Treaty":



- **Absence of Dispute Resolution Mechanisms:** The 1996 agreement lacked clear, robust, and predictable directives on how to legally resolve disputes within the organization or between member states, leaving a massive vacuum during diplomatic friction.
- **Weak Compliance and Enforcement Tools:** The current framework does not provide our governing organs with sufficiently strong enforcement mechanisms to ensure strict institutional compliance with passed regional policies.
- **Aligning with Continental RECs:** The African Union recognizes IGAD as a core Regional Economic Community (REC), a vital foundational building block for continental integration. To sit confidently in the same legal and diplomatic space as other African RECs (like ECOWAS or EAC), IGAD needed to elevate its foundational document to a comprehensive Treaty.
- **Institutional Power & Oversight:** Moving to a treaty format creates a vastly stronger legal foundation under international law. It explicitly enhances institutional power by handing clear, expanded mandates and stronger oversight capabilities to our core organs, directly accelerating the speed of policy implementation.
- **Investor Confidence and Predictability:** In today's global economy, attracting massive international investment and infrastructure partnerships requires an unshakeable, highly predictable legal regime. A formalized treaty signals institutional maturity, stability, and credibility to global markets.

These are the core institutional gaps we faced. Shifting from the old 1996 agreement into a robust, modern treaty is the definitive solution to these challenges.





## The Institutional Journey: From 1998 Commitment to 2023 Adoption

### Patience Nyang'e (Moderator):

I hear you talk about key reforms and the new provisions that have been introduced within the revised IGAD Treaty. In simple terms, when comparing the old framework with this new treaty, why does this shift matter so profoundly to us today?

### Karen Njalale:

It matters in every sense because these changes directly address the institutional and legal gaps I mentioned earlier. Resolving these bottlenecks will make our services smoother, more legally sound, and far more effective for the citizens we serve.

Before diving into the specific text of the reforms, it is crucial to appreciate the extensive, highly deliberate journey this document has travelled. This was not an overnight project; it represents



decades of systematic work responding directly to the mandates of our apex organ, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government.

In 1998, IGAD committed itself to the African Economic Cooperation requirements as part of its role as a continental building block for regional integration. A decade later, in 2008, the Summit instructed IGAD to conduct an audit of achievements made toward fulfilling the 1998 integration commitments. This process led to a three-year study, which concluded in 2011 that IGAD required a comprehensive and formal Treaty framework to effectively advance regional integration. In 2012, the 45th Council of Ministers validated the study's findings, officially launching formal negotiations for the new Treaty. By 2014, the Committee of Ambassadors had validated a draft Treaty text containing "brackets" on key integration issues such as the Free Trade Area (FTA), Customs Union, and Common Market. In 2016, Member States reached consensus and directed the official removal of these brackets, paving the way for a unified text.

The following year, in 2017, the Committee of Ambassadors formally validated the consolidated unbracketed Treaty text. In 2019, the 13th Ordinary Assembly issued ten strict legal and strategic directives that needed to be fulfilled before adoption of the Treaty. To address these requirements, legal experts from all Member States convened in 2022 for rigorous article-by-article legal reviews of the document. This process culminated on 12 June 2023, when the 14th Ordinary Summit unanimously adopted and signed the completed IGAD Treaty. As of 2026, IGAD is in the current phase of meeting the ratification threshold and advancing the Treaty toward its Entry into Force.





(Illustrated by BRIDGE)

In 2022 and 2023, legal experts from all member states sat in the same room, burning the midnight oil to review the document word-for-word, guided strictly by the 2019 Assembly directives. On June 12, 2023, during the 14th Ordinary Session of the Summit, the final treaty was presented to the Heads of State, Government, and the Council of Ministers, where it was unanimously adopted and signed.



## Side-by-Side Analysis: 1996 Agreement vs. 2023 Treaty

To understand exactly how this document modernizes our regional architecture, consider this comparative structural breakdown:

Structural Area	1996 Agreement Establishing IGAD	2023 Revised IGAD Treaty
<b>Core Values &amp; Principles</b>	Mentions state sovereignty, non-interference, and human rights in broad, general terms.	Explicitly binds membership to the rule of law, constitutionalism, democracy, accountability, transparency, and gender equality.
<b>Scope of Cooperation</b>	Focused primarily on agriculture, trade, transport, environment, peace/security, and humanitarian response.	Retains legacy pillars but explicitly expands to cover the free movement of persons, labor, services, transhumance, disability inclusion, and civil society participation.
<b>Market Integration</b>	Describes a "gradual harmonization" of trade policies as a long-term objective.	Outlines an explicit, binding commitment to the free movement of goods, services, labor, and capital.
<b>Financial Governance</b>	Structured around basic member state contributions, variable donations, and the Drought Fund.	Establishes a rigorous financial architecture: independent external audits, unified financial rules aligned with international standards, and non-traditional funding partnerships.
<b>Legal Status &amp; Transition</b>	Served as the foundational intergovernmental agreement.	Operates as an entire legal replacement. Upon entry into force, the 1996 agreement ceases and loses all legal effect under international law.
<b>New Organs &amp; Operations</b>	Contained standard operational language; programmatic execution focus.	Establishes a completely independent Audit Committee reporting directly to the Council of Ministers. Elevates language to a broader strategic scale.



<b>Institutional Accessibility</b>	Working languages restricted exclusively to English and French.	Introduces Arabic as an official institutional language to accommodate linguistic realities across Member States.
<b>Executive Leadership</b>	Led structurally by a single Executive Secretary.	Formally introduces the offices of Deputy Executive Secretaries to allow scale and administrative continuity.

*(Illustrated by BRIDGE)*

### **Patience Nyang'e (Moderator)**

Let us look at how the Treaty was reviewed and where we are today. Notably, the inclusion of gender equality and disability aspects are now key frameworks in how we manage our operations, talk to our member states, and engage with them.

I also note the stronger governance structures that have now been put in place. This includes a governance and sanctions system that did not exist before, guidelines on how the suspension of member states can be achieved, and clear legal transitions. Furthermore, you spoke about the complete replacement of some pre-existing frameworks and the adoption of broader, simplified language that is now much easier for everyone to understand.

### **Refining Economic Cooperation and Security Mandates**

**Mubarak Mabuya:**

"You asked me to address two main issues. The first is the lifting of brackets around matters of economic cooperation and trade during negotiations, which subsequently opened those areas up.

To understand the context, we must look at the history of IGAD. When it was established in 1986, the authority focused exclusively on drought and desertification in the region. However, in 1996, it expanded its mandate to include peace and security, as well as economic cooperation and trade.



At the time, a provision within the agreement stated that IGAD would support the objectives of COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa), which had just been established in 1994. Moving forward, member states had to negotiate. When states 'bracket' certain provisions of a treaty during negotiations, it implies a lack of immediate consensus and a need for further discussion. It took time to deliberate on these economic elements, but once a relative consensus was reached, the brackets were removed, allowing us to proceed.

On peace and security, there was a realization in 1996 that the binding challenges in our region were not restricted to drought. Member states recognized the nexus between drought and various inter-community, intra-state, and inter-state conflicts, and IGAD was invited to play a leading role. Some of our greatest achievements under the previous agreement involved the successful mediation of peace processes, such as in South Sudan and elsewhere.

Through this peace and security mandate, we have carved out our role in preventive diplomacy and mediation. We have institutionalized our work in preventing and countering violent extremism, as well as building capacity for security sector reforms and conflict early warning and response systems. This addresses various typologies of conflict, from climate-induced and resource-based disputes to intra- and inter-state conflicts. For instance, we have the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN), one of our specialized centers of excellence, which exclusively tracks specific indicators and provides early warning information to our member states. This has become a major brand for IGAD, though our work extends far beyond peace and security to include social development."



## Advancing Regional Integration and Economic Infrastructure

### Mubarak Mabuya:

"In the area of economic cooperation and regional integration, IGAD signed a protocol on February 25, 1998, that governs relations between regional bodies and the African Union. This officially entitled us to become one of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). That protocol has since been revised, and IGAD is a signatory to the update.

There are eight recognized RECs tasked with contributing to the establishment of the African Economic Community. This is a sequential process that transitions from a common market and customs unions to monetary unions and, ultimately, a political federation. Consequently, IGAD must undertake progressive endeavors in that direction.

Within IGAD, we recognize that this integration must start at the borderlands. From the very outset, we dove deep into borderland dynamics and started promoting cross-border cooperation. We have also focused heavily on infrastructure, establishing a Regional Infrastructure Master Plan that covers road and transport corridors, railways, air transport, energy, and water infrastructure.

Additionally, we have a Regional Tourism Master Plan and are holding consultations to make the IGAD region a single tourist destination utilizing a unified tourist visa. A number of activities are underway to promote our economic integration agenda. We previously moved a bit slower in this area due to the provision requiring us to defer to the objectives of COMESA. However, member states recognize that intra-regional trade across Africa remains very low, and during the treaty negotiations, they expressed a strong desire to deepen trade within our specific region.

As a result, the revised treaty explicitly articulates requirements for IGAD to drive economic cooperation and integration, specifically emphasizing the establishment of a common market and the development of regional infrastructure."



## Entry into Force, Implementation, Transitional Arrangements and National Domestication

**Patience Nyang'e (Moderator):**

When can we expect this treaty to formally come into force, and what happens practically during the immediate implementation and transition phases?

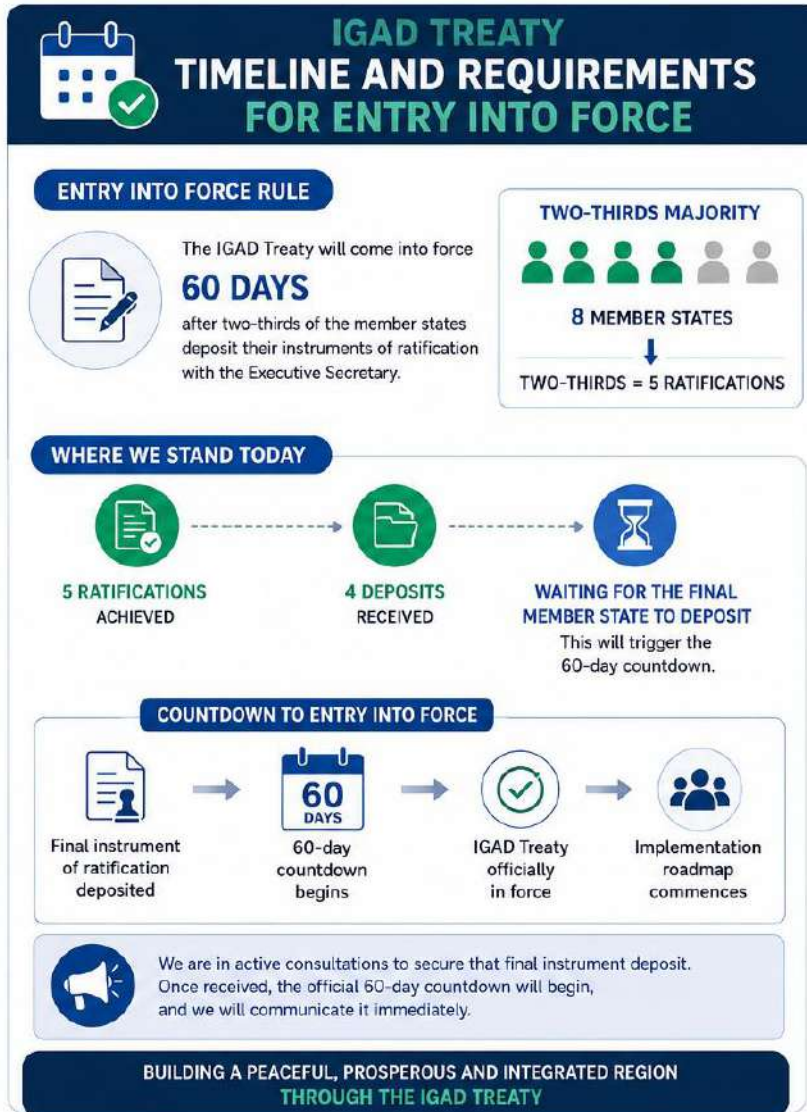
**Karen Njalale**

The treaty is designed to reflect current regional realities as they are. It aims to enhance coordinated mechanisms, improve legal clarity and accountability, expand areas of cooperation, and promote institutional ownership, especially among our esteemed member states.

Mechanically, the treaty will come into force 60 days after two-thirds of the member states deposit their instruments of ratification with the Executive Secretary. Out of our eight member states, a two-thirds majority requires five ratifications. So far, we have achieved five ratifications, but only four formal deposits. We are currently waiting for that final member state to deposit its instrument, which will trigger the 60-day countdown. That is exactly where we stand: four out of the required five deposits are secured, and we look forward with deep appreciation to beginning that long-awaited countdown very soon.

As for what happens next regarding implementation, there will naturally be a transition period requiring structured transitional arrangements. First, we must ensure the 'saving' of existing decisions and instruments through the specific saving clauses built into the treaty. We also have to maintain continuity across existing institutions, organs, programs, and ongoing projects, work must continue uninterrupted. Similarly, we must ensure administrative and staff continuity, followed by a phased alignment of legal and policy frameworks.





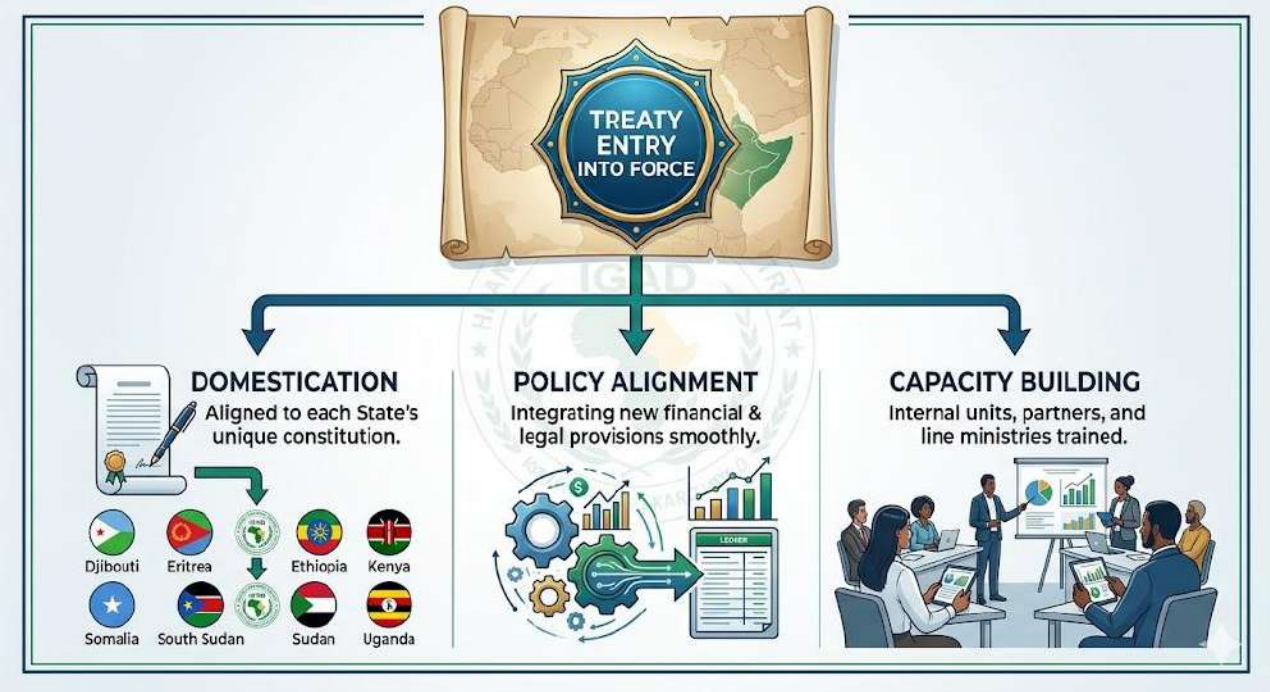
*(Illustrated by BRIDGE)*

The implementation of any new structures will be gradual, anchored safely by these saving provisions across all fronts, both for the member states and for the Secretariat. Another critical component of implementation is national domestication. This process must follow each member state's respective constitutional procedures. Consequently, we have a significant amount of work ahead to understand the specific legal procedures of each country and support them in ensuring that domestication happens seamlessly.



Additionally, we will need to align regional policies because they form an integral part of the treaty framework. Once the organization is operating under this new regime, we will gladly continue guiding it through the process. Above all, we will provide periodic and necessary capacity building, not just for our internal colleagues, but also for our partners, member states, and their respective national institutions.

This is what the implementation roadmap looks like and how soon we expect the treaty to take effect. While I cannot provide an exact calendar date right now, we are in active consultations to secure that final instrument deposit, at which point the official countdown will begin, and we will communicate it immediately."



(Illustrated by BRIDGE)



## Internal Readiness and Institutional Alignment

### Patience Nyang'e (Moderator):

"What exactly does this capacity building look like in practice? Does it mean the legal team will leave the IGAD Secretariat to visit different member states, guiding them through the text and ensuring that the various institutions within IGAD fully grasp its implications? What truly happens on the ground during this phase of implementation?"

### Karen Njalale:

Capacity building requires a highly structured approach. We must start internally; we all need to deeply understand the nuances of the new text before we can effectively communicate it to the people and member states we serve.

Therefore, capacity building begins right here at home at our headquarters in Djibouti, starting within our own unit. We are already having continuous internal conversations whenever we collaborate with colleagues on their respective projects. This transition from the original Agreement Establishing IGAD into the comprehensive Treaty marks a very significant and interesting time for the organization. It is already changing how we review documents, draft statements, and approach our daily legal operations, especially since the Treaty could officially come into force at any moment.

Because this is a legal document and we require a thorough, accurate understanding across the board, we will address specific operational needs as they arise during this transition. From there, we will expand our outreach to the member states. Fortunately, we have a dedicated network of national legal experts who were involved in the complete revamp of this Treaty. Whenever we meet during protocol negotiations or other regional forums, we continue to discuss and break down the text. In that sense, the process of explaining and unpacking the framework has already begun.

There is still a lot of ground to cover. The Treaty contains numerous chapters and articles that will require careful interpretation, but the Legal Unit stands ready alongside our member states' legal experts, guided by their respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs and other relevant authorities.



We have already made tangible progress. For example, in collaboration with the Director and Head of Finance, we have already begun implementing key structures. We have established the Audit Committee and successfully held its inaugural meeting. While this committee aligns perfectly with the new Treaty framework, it was actually authorized under previous mandates but had not yet been operationalized. We have brought it online now to solidify its standing under the new Treaty.

Ultimately, capacity building is an ongoing, continuous process. It is not something we will ever truly 'finish' because our region keeps morphing and our institutional mandate keeps evolving. We will continuously adapt our capacity-building efforts to keep pace with that growth."

**Patience Nyang'e (Moderator):**

**What does this Treaty mean in practical terms for ordinary citizens? We often talk about high-level engagement with member states, but what is the tangible impact on the ground?**

## **Shared Regional Challenges and the Peace Dividend**

**Mubarak Mabuya:**

"The answer is that this Treaty means quite a lot for the citizens of our region. The core premise is that, as a region, we are already integrated by our shared challenges. Whether we are talking about droughts, climate-induced disasters, severe floods, or transboundary pests, these threats do not stop at political or geographical boundaries.

We are equally bound together by peace and security dynamics; a conflict in one community or country can spread rapidly throughout the entire region. Similarly, we share interconnected social challenges. In this context, the Treaty seeks to strengthen and enhance cooperation among member states. At the national level, it provides the latitude for enhanced policy alignment, cross-border coordination, a robust legal foundation, and improved institutional efficiency and agency.

Consequently, an ordinary citizen will benefit immensely from stronger regional peace and security frameworks, as well as the stability dividends they generate. Under this framework, more conflicts



will be prevented. It is an interesting reality that the public generally only hears about conflicts when they break out, rarely learning about those that have been successfully averted. As His Excellency Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, our Executive Secretary, often notes, our success should be assessed by the conflicts we actually prevent. Unfortunately, prevention rarely makes the news, but our continuous interventions keep many disputes from escalating.



Peace and security serve as the fundamental enabler for everything else, whether it is education, trade, or local business. Therefore, this framework is critically important.

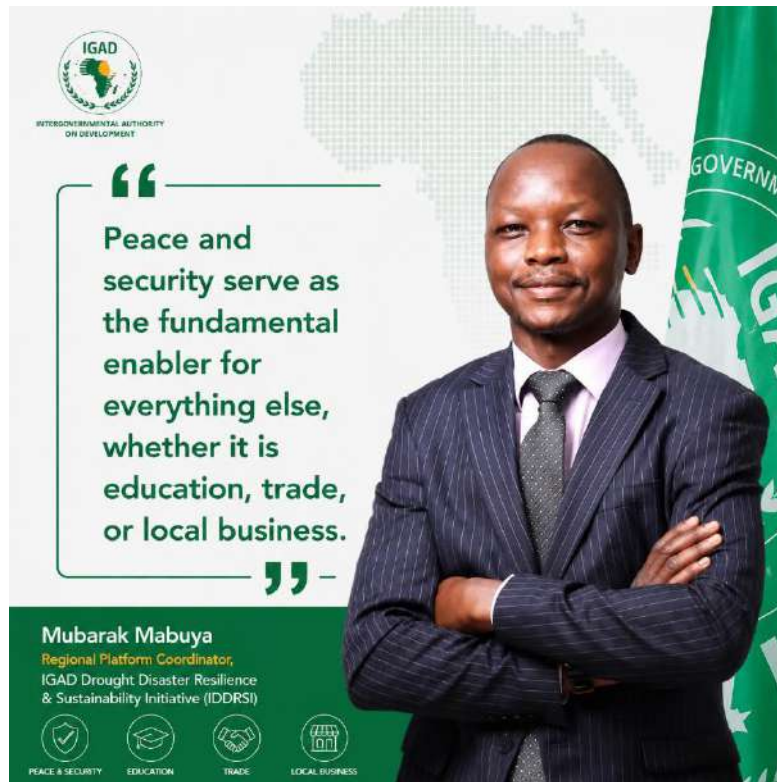
## Climate Resilience, Mobility, and Economic Transformation

Mubarak Mabuya:

Beyond security, we do substantial preventive work regarding climate early warning systems. This directly helps farmers and pastoralists adopt appropriate adaptation strategies to boost their



production and productivity. Given that 70% of our region is arid or semi-arid and highly prone to frequent droughts, safeguarding livestock, a primary means of livelihood, is a major focus. This Treaty provides a robust legal basis to support and protect our pastoralist communities.



Furthermore, the Treaty establishes a legal foundation for the harmonization and standardization of regional qualification frameworks. This means an individual who studies a particular field in Djibouti can have their qualifications officially recognized in Nairobi, Khartoum, Juba, or Kampala. This mobility will be further facilitated by companion instruments, such as the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons. Citizens will see direct benefits in terms of trade, personal mobility, and deeper regional integration.

By building the capacity of member states to anticipate and respond to floods, droughts, and insecurity, we ensure far more prepared and effective responses to these shared crises.

Finally, the underlying architecture of this Treaty promotes inclusiveness and people-centered development. Our goal is to ensure that borders cease to operate as barriers and instead become



bridges that spur socioeconomic transformation. Enhanced collaboration, backed by a cohesive and solid legal framework, will contribute directly to the GDP of our respective countries. The cascading benefits translated to the individual citizen will be enormous.

Our positive experiences under the 1996 Agreement give us every confidence that a stronger legal framework will yield even greater benefits for our people. In fact, some of these impacts will extend beyond our borders. Currently, our climate prediction and application services, as well as our initiatives to counter violent extremism, benefit our wider geography, because a secure IGAD region naturally creates a more secure neighborhood. Ultimately, by working together, we can secure enough food to feed our region and contribute to the food security of the entire continent. These are the true long-term benefits for our citizens.

The graphic features the IGAD logo at the top left, with the text "INTERGOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY ON DEVELOPMENT" below it. A quote in a white box reads: "IGAD's goal is to ensure that borders cease to operate as barriers and instead become bridges that spur socioeconomic transformation." To the right is a portrait of Mubarak Mabuya, a man in a dark pinstriped suit with his arms crossed, standing in front of a green flag with "GOVERNMENT" and "IGAD" visible. At the bottom, a green bar contains the name "Mubarak Mabuya" and his title "Regional Platform Coordinator, IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience & Sustainability Initiative (IDRSI)". Below this are four icons: a bridge for "BRIDGING BORDERS", a recycling symbol for "SOCIOECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION", two hands shaking for "REGIONAL COOPERATION", and a bar chart for "SHARED PROSPERITY".





# IGAD TREATY THE PRACTICAL IMPACT ON ORDINARY CITIZENS



## WHAT DOES THIS TREATY MEAN FOR ORDINARY CITIZENS?

We often talk about high-level engagement with member states, but what is the tangible impact on the ground?

The IGAD Treaty brings real, everyday benefits to people across our region—by turning regional cooperation into better lives and shared prosperity.



## 1 SHARED REGIONAL CHALLENGES AND THE PEACE DIVIDEND

We are integrated by our shared challenges—they do not stop at borders.



Droughts & climate-induced disasters.



Severe floods



Transboundary pests & diseases



Peace & security threats

The Treaty strengthens cooperation to deliver:



Policy alignment



Cross-border coordination



Robust legal foundation



Improved institutional efficiency

### HOW CITIZENS BENEFIT



Stronger peace & security frameworks and the stability dividends they generate.



More conflicts prevented. Prevention rarely makes the news, but our interventions stop many disputes from escalating.



Peace & security enable everything else—education, trade, business, and development.



A secure IGAD region means a better, safer, and more prosperous life for every citizen.

## 2 CLIMATE RESILIENCE, MOBILITY, AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION



### CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Early warning systems and preventive action help farmers and pastoralists adapt, protecting livelihoods and boosting productivity. A strong legal basis to support and protect our pastoralist communities.



### MOBILITY & RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS

Harmonizes and standardizes regional qualification frameworks. Qualifications earned in Djibouti can be recognized in Nairobi, Khartoum, Juba or Kampala.



### FREE MOVEMENT & INTEGRATION

Companion instruments, such as the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, facilitate mobility, trade, and deeper regional integration.



### PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE

Stronger capacity to anticipate and respond to floods, droughts, and insecurity—ensuring faster, more effective responses to shared crises.



### ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION & INCLUSIVENESS

Borders become bridges—promoting people-centered development, trade, investment, and economic growth that boosts GDP and creates jobs.



These benefits cascade to individuals and communities—improving incomes, opportunities, services, and quality of life.

## 3 BEYOND OUR BORDERS: A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE WIDER REGION AND CONTINENT



### Climate prediction & application services

Support not only our region but our wider geography.



### Countering violent extremism

A secure IGAD region creates a more secure neighborhood.



### Food security for the region

Working together to secure enough food to feed our region...



### Contributing to the food security of Africa

...and supporting the food security of the entire continent.



### Proven track record, greater future impact

Our success under the 1996 Agreement gives us confidence that a stronger legal framework will yield even greater benefits for our people.



**THE IGAD TREATY IS ABOUT PEOPLE, PROSPERITY, AND A SHARED FUTURE.**  
By working together, we turn shared challenges into shared opportunities—  
for today and for generations to come.



*(Illustrated by BRIDGE)*



## Synthesizing the Dividends of Regional Cooperation

**Patience Nyang'e (Moderator):**

In ideal terms, then, this Treaty should help us reduce violence and insecurity, creating safer spaces across our region. We are looking at expanded economic opportunities, easier cross-border movement, and improved cooperation that will lead to smoother travel, trade, and interaction between neighboring countries, directly benefiting traders, workers, and families alike.

Furthermore, when we look at our response to climate challenges, the Treaty facilitates coordinated joint action across all member states rather than isolated national efforts. Whether addressing droughts, floods, or other climate risks, this collective approach will safeguard communities that depend on agriculture and livestock for their daily livelihoods, ultimately improving food security. In short, this Treaty is designed to deliver direct, tangible benefits to ordinary citizens."



## Strengthened Frameworks for Institutional Accountability

**Karen Njalale:**

"To support these goals, the new Treaty articulates 18 distinct areas of cooperation. None of these areas are repetitive, yet they are designed to complement and speak to one another seamlessly. When the time comes, we will take all stakeholders through these sections in detail. This comprehensive structure is a massive benefit to our member states, paving the way for a level of regional cooperation that is far stronger and more cohesive than what we have today.

Crucially, the Treaty establishes clear obligations for member states, backed by a defined sanctions system and explicit operational modalities. This ensures better coordination on regional issues and vastly improved institutional accountability, as every process and expectation is now clearly defined in the text.

Ultimately, all of these structural improvements trickle down to the citizens we serve. By solidifying our legal and operational foundation, IGAD will become a far more effective regional institution, better equipped to manage conflicts, respond to climate challenges, unlock economic opportunities, and systematically improve the lives of our people across the region."

Here is the polished and structured version of the sixth section of your proceedings, maintaining the professional tone and exact institutional terminology (such as the policy organs and historical dates).

## The Evolving Mandate of the Legal Unit

**Patience Nyang'e:**

"What specific role is the Legal Unit playing in supporting, interpreting, and implementing this framework? You mentioned that you must actively engage with member states. From your end, now that you are reaching out to them, what actions do you expect them to take?"



## Strategic Tasks: Sanctions Rules and Policy Organ Protocols

**Karen Njalale:**

To begin with, I want to express my deep gratitude as Head of Legal to our member states. This process has been incredibly engaging. The cooperation we have experienced as a unit, representing the IGAD Secretariat, has been remarkable. We are immensely grateful for the unwavering commitment of our member states, but the work does not stop here.

We will continue to need a high level of commitment and support from them as we enter this new phase of regional cooperation. The Treaty is designed to strengthen the organization so that we can serve the region even better than we already do, and public understanding is absolutely essential for regional ownership and ultimate success. The fact that representatives from our member states are joining us tonight is a clear demonstration of the exact engagement we need.

Moving forward, our unit plays a key role in ensuring this momentum is sustained. We are tasked with interpreting the implications of the Treaty's clauses, driving continuous sensitization, and delivering capacity building while managing strict implementation timelines. We will maintain continuous engagement with member states through whichever ministries, divisions, or authorities they designate to guide us. We are more than happy to drive this process until the transition stabilizes.

Furthermore, we will provide legal briefs to policymakers. We are also eager to support academia, as this transition represents pure international law playing out in a highly dynamic region like ours; international law classes would benefit immensely from studying this process. It will require a step-by-step breakdown of all our upcoming tasks.

In fact, the member states gave us specific assignments as we concluded the review of the Treaty. For instance, while we have a dedicated article on sanctions within the Treaty, the member states explicitly instructed us to develop comprehensive operational rules on sanctions. Consequently, as soon as the Treaty comes into force, we will reach out to our member states for an expedited response. We will need national legal experts to help us craft these rules. The Secretariat does not



draft these in isolation, this is the member states' document. We are simply here to facilitate the process and guide it based on the instructions we were given.

Another major task involves our Rules of Procedure for the policy organs. Our existing rules date back to 1997. While they have served us well, time has passed and our three policy organs, the Summit, the Council of Ministers, and the Committee of Ambassadors, have developed distinct operational dynamics. It is only appropriate that their procedural rules are separated. We have already drafted these separate rules, but they have not yet been formally validated. Therefore, we still need the support of the legal experts from our member states to review them. Although we drafted them in consultation with experts, we will need one more session to finalize them before validation.

To date, the only body that has validated its specific rules is the Committee of Ambassadors. Because they play an advisory role and are based locally, it is much easier for us to engage them regularly. However, we are holding off on final implementation because we want all three sets of rules validated together.

These are just a few examples of the continuous support that the Legal Unit, and the Secretariat as a whole, will constantly require from our member states."

## Questions from the Audiences

### What the Treaty Means for Ordinary Citizens and Youth

#### Patience Nyang'e (Moderator):

We received a question submitted by an audience member, Sue Angelica, asking: *"For the young people who form over 70% of the IGAD population, what are the biggest practical benefits or opportunities created by this new treaty?"*



## Mubarak Mabuya:

This is a critical question. The youth in our region are a dynamic group, comprising students, pastoralists, entrepreneurs, and sadly, individuals caught in conflict cycles. This treaty changes their reality in three major ways:

- **Normative Protections in Peace Processes:** When IGAD facilitates peace and mediation processes under this treaty, we are legally bound by modern international conventions, such as the *African Charter on the Welfare and Rights of the Child*. This guarantees that child protection and youth rehabilitation are hardcoded into ceasefires and peace agreements.
- **Climate-Smart Agriculture and Technology:** Our strengthened cooperation frameworks streamline how data is shared. Young farmers and pastoralists will have direct, real-time access to advanced regional weather and climate prediction models directly on their smartphones, allowing them to safeguard their livestock and boost agricultural productivity.
- **The Regional Qualifications Framework:** This is an absolute game-changer for youth mobility. The treaty provides the legal foundation to harmonize and standardize education qualifications across borders. Once fully implemented, a degree or technical certification obtained in Djibouti or Kampala will be legally recognized in Nairobi, Juba, or Khartoum, completely unlocking cross-border employment.

## Patience Nyang'e (Moderator):

In essence, this treaty stops our borders from acting as barriers and turns them into bridges. It translates directly into safer spaces, enhanced cross-border trade for family businesses, coordinated climate action against droughts and floods, and boosted food security for the entire Horn of Africa.

## Karen Njalale:

Exactly. With 18 clear, non-repetitive areas of cooperation, explicit member obligations, and strict compliance tools, we are transitioning into a far more accountable, efficient regional body. Everything we have achieved under the old 1996 agreement gives us total confidence that this



stronger legal regime will yield massive, tangible dividends for every ordinary citizen across our region.

## **Border Mobility, Free Movement, and Climate Displacement**

### **Patience Nyang'e (Moderator):**

We have another question from our audience Mohammed Ali. Mohammed asks: "Will this new treaty make it easier for everyday people to travel, work, or conduct business across the borders of different member countries?"

### **Mubarak Mabuya:**

The short, direct answer to Mohammed's question is an absolute yes.

However, it is important to understand the legal mechanics of how this will happen. The founding IGAD Treaty establishes our overarching regional cooperation framework and explicitly secures the commitment to free movement. To bring these commitments to life on the ground, the treaty relies on specific, actionable sub-agreements known as protocols.

Alongside the text of the main treaty, we have successfully negotiated the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons in the IGAD Region. This comprehensive protocol provides for an array of critical legal rights, including:

- The right to cross regional borders seamlessly without institutional friction.
- The right of establishment, allowing citizens to legally set up businesses in any member state.
- The right to study, reside, and practice professions fluidly across national jurisdictions.

Where we stand right now: the protocol has already been signed by a number of our member states. We are currently navigating the process of coordinating its legislative ratification. Just like the primary treaty, this protocol is subject to a strict two-thirds majority threshold before it officially comes into force.



Once both the overarching treaty and this protocol achieve full entry into force, a visa-free regime will be officially introduced across the bloc. We have designed a concrete roadmap to achieve this, and the Secretariat is working tirelessly toward it. Once finalized, everyday citizens will not need visas to travel within the region for trade, work, education, or tourism.



INTERGOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY ON DEVELOPMENT


“

**The treaty provides the legal foundation to harmonize and standardize education qualifications across borders... completely unlocking cross-border employment.**

”

**Mubarak Mabuya**

*Regional Platform Coordinator,  
IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience & Sustainability Initiative (IDDRSI)*

-   
HARMONIZED EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS
-   
RECOGNIZED STANDARDS
-   
CROSS-BORDER EMPLOYMENT
-   
EXPANDED OPPORTUNITIES



## Patience Nyang'e (Moderator):

Thank you so much to our panel and our listeners. This provides incredible clarity on how IGAD is actively dismantling cross-border barriers. Thank you all for joining us tonight. Goodbye.

## Conclusion

The Public Awareness Session on the Ratification of the IGAD Treaty highlighted a defining structural evolution for the Horn of Africa. By shifting away from the legacy 1996 Agreement and transitioning into a comprehensive, binding international Treaty, IGAD is upgrading its legal status to match its extensive modern mandates.

With five member state ratifications secured, the region sits on the exact cusp of this historic transition. The introduction of an independent Audit Committee, the addition of Arabic as an official language, the inclusion of robust democratic principles, and the impending implementation of the Free Movement Protocol all serve a singular objective: transforming geopolitical borders into prosperous bridges for socioeconomic integration, permanent peace, and enduring climate resilience.



## About BRIDGE Research and Innovation for Democratic Governance and Enhanced Peace

We are a non-profit think tank specializing in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) sub-regional organization, with a focus on peace, governance, development, across the IGAD region and parliamentary affairs in Ethiopia. Established and registered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, we operate as a local organization in accordance with the FDRE Civil Society Organization Proclamation No. 1113/2019.

The primary goal of the IGAD Knowledge and Research Program is to bridge the gap between complex sub-regional policies and the general public, decision-makers, and researchers by generating clear, policy-focused, and evidence-driven analysis. To achieve this, the program provides rigorous diagnostics of political, institutional, security, and socio-economic changes shaping the IGAD region, structuring its efforts around five highly critical regional thematic pillars.

These pillars include Peace and Security, which tracks dialogue mechanisms, institutional mediation effectiveness, and ongoing security challenges like the crisis in Sudan or maritime disputes in the Horn; Regional Integration, which analyzes how member states collaborate, implement regional treaties, and push for infrastructural or regulatory alignment; and IGAD and the Gulf Relations, which deconstructs the complex geopolitical dynamics, foreign policies, and strategic investments connecting the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states to the Horn of Africa. Additionally, the program covers Climate Resilience by assessing environmental challenges, drought responses, cross-border resource management, and regional adaptation mechanisms, alongside Humanitarian and Social Affairs, which investigates issues surrounding regional displacement, migration management, health initiatives, and civil human security.

To ensure this gathered knowledge transforms into accessible and actionable insights, the program manages a regular publication consisting of three distinct literary and analytical outputs. This includes the IGAD Monthly Digest, a concise, monthly publication detailing institutional updates and evaluating recent accomplishments across the sub-regional bloc; Policy Briefs, which are target-specific research documents breaking down sudden political updates or security shocks into



empirical conclusions for diplomats and policymakers; and Handbooks, which serve as long-form systemic publications that clarify institutional frameworks, treaty compliance, and operational pathways.

Moreover, IGAD Knowledge and Research Program overlaps with the Regional Governance & IGAD Training Program, a structured training architecture designed for diplomats, scholars, and policy practitioners that provides deep theoretical and applied dawn-to-dusk instruction regarding IGAD's decision-making architecture, administrative organs, and the cultural-environmental history of the Horn.

