

EAC Headquarters, arusha, 8 August 2008: The Secretary General of the East African Community, Ambassador Juma Mwapachu has said the EAC Partner States – Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi and Rwanda – are set to take their defence co-operation to a higher level. The Secretary General said that among the steps being taken is upgrading the existing 1998 Memorandum of Understanding for Co-operation in Defence Matters into a Protocol that would be more elaborate and binding on the EAC Partner States.

The Secretary General said this on 4 August 2008, when he paid a courtesy call on the Kenya Minister of State for Defence, Mr Yusuf Haji at the Defence Headquarters in Nairobi at the beginning of his four-day (4-7 August) familiarization tour of defence institutions and establishments in Kenya that are involved in the EAC co-operation agreement on defence matters.

Deepening defence co-operation

During the familiarization tour, the Secretary General visited the Moi Air Force Base in Nairobi, the Kenya Armed Forces Technical College (KAFTEC) at Embakasi, Nairobi as well as military installations in Eldoret and Mombasa; and concluded with a keynote lecture to course participants at the National Defence College at Karen, Nairobi on 7 August 2008.

The Secretary General's visit to the defence institutions in Kenya follows similar visits he made in 2007 to the defence institutions in Tanzania and Uganda. The Kenyan tour that had been planned for September 2007 was postponed due to the elections campaigns that were taking place in the country at the time.

During the courtesy call on the Defence Headquarters, on 4 August, the Secretary General and the Kenyan Minister of State for Defence, who was accompanied by the Chief of General Staff, General Jeremiah Kianga, held discussions on a wide range of issues in the ongoing process of deepening and widening EAC defence co-operation.

The discussions centred on the deliberations of upgrading the MOU on defence co-operation into a Protocol; a project on co-operation in defence policy research and development; joint EAC military exercises planned to be undertaken during 2009/2010; and the establishment of the EAC Directorate of Peace and Security whose preparations are at an advanced stage.

The Secretary General who was accompanied by Members of the EAC Defence Liaison Unit from the five EAC Partner States on 4 August, toured the Moi Air Force Base where he was received by the Commander of the Kenya Air Force, Major General Harold Mwakio Tangoi; and also visited the Kenya Armed Forces Technical College (KAFTEC) at Embakasi where he was briefed on the operations of the college by the Commandant of KAFTEC, Col. H.O. Malweyi.

Development dimension of defence establishment

The Secretary General toured the munitions production plant at the Kenya Ordnance Factories Corporation (KOFCC) in Eldoret on 5 August 2008. The Secretary General was taken round the production lines of the Kenya Ordnance Factories Corporation by the Management of the

Corporation led by the Managing Director, Brigadier S.G. Mohammed. The Management of KOFC briefed the Secretary General on the agricultural projects, environment and water management as well as community development projects, in health and educational development, which the local and wider civil society and business community are participating in and benefiting from.

The Secretary General said that he was impressed by the application of modern advanced technology in the KOFC munitions plant, noting also that the KOFC was engaged in the production and provision of quality products for civilian uses as well as input to the commercial demand. He advanced a new ethos of the armed forces in the EAC region which, he said, should combine their core values of high military preparedness with corporate social responsibility; and increasingly put military resources to civilian advantage

The Secretary General said the EAC is making plans to bring similar defence institutions in the EAC Partner States together to harmonize their technological capabilities to exchange views and experiences towards rationalizing their utilization of resources and investments and benefiting from the economies of scale to avoid wasteful duplication as well as addressing, in concert, other implications and ramifications of the armaments industry.

East African maritime defence

During the visit to the Kenya Navy Headquarters in Mombasa on 6 August 2008 the Secretary General and his entourage were taken round the Kenya Navy dockyard and briefed on the operations of the Kenya Navy and held discussions with the Deputy Commander of the Kenya Navy, Brigadier Ngewa Mukala.

Brigadier Mukala briefed the Secretary General on the strategic significance of the East African Indian Ocean coastline and the important initiatives Kenya is undertaking within the EAC, AU and global frameworks to safeguard the regional security and maritime interests. Brigadier Mukala said that anti-piracy and counter-terrorism operations had assumed a high profile in the East African and Horn of Africa coastline. Maritime security services had come to the fore with the realization that disturbances and interference with the sea routes gravely impacted the world trade.

He said that with the current global food and fuel prices crisis, the resources of the sea had become critical. He said the resources of the East African maritime zones remained largely untapped by the East African countries in terms of the fisheries, oil and gas resources potential of the East African maritime area under the provisions of the UN Law of the Sea. Brigadier Mukala observed that the best tuna fish resources were found in the Indian Ocean with Kenya having a potential of 150,000 tonnes per year, translating into 30 billion Kenya Shillings per year.

Lake Victoria basin development

The Secretary General said that the EAC is considering the re-establishment of a strong East African marine and fisheries organization, such as which existed under the former EAC

(1967-1977) that would involve research and development to tap the maritime and fisheries resources of the East African water bodies - both offshore and inland - for the benefit of the East African people.

The Secretary General also addressed the Lake Victoria development prospects. He said the EAC has plans to launch a major Lake Victoria Basin development master plan that would transform the area into a special economic development and growth zone and impact the acceleration of the East African region into a middle income economy. Lake Victoria, the second largest fresh water body in the world has a gross economic potential in the order of USD 5 billion.

The Secretary General said a study on the proposed EAC Lake Victoria basin development master plan would be undertaken adding that the master plan would involve the implementation of regional projects and programmes under the Lake Victoria Basin Commission in, among others, the roads, lake transport, tourism, fisheries and agricultural sectors.

The Secretary General said the centre-piece of the Lake Victoria development master plan would be the implementation of the ongoing ring road around the Lake, which is part of the East African Road Network Project, with feeders leading to the shores of the Lake to link with tourist facilities, hotels, lodges, cruise ships as well as strategic industries that would involve investments with private public sector participation.

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