

CHAIRPERSON OF THE FRIENDS OF EASF

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE FRIENDS OF EASF ON THE OCCASION OF THE EASF OPEN DAY IN BURUNDI

20th APRIL 2018

Protocol . . .

On behalf of the countries constituting the “Friends of EASF”, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and gratitude for the kind invitation to attend the EASF Open Day in Bujumbura, Burundi.

I am so happy to see the concept of EASF Open Days being conveyed to all EASF member states. If my memory serves me right, the EASF Open Day in Burundi is the eight number of this initiative since the first one took place in Nairobi, Kenya in September 2015. I also understand that the ninth EASF Open Day is scheduled to take place in Rwanda next month. Then only Somalia is pending in order for this activity having taken place in all EASF member states. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Director EASF, Dr. Abdillahi Omar Bouh and the entire EASF fraternity for this great accomplishment.

I assume that you will not be surprised that I am a strong proponent of the EASF Open Days, as I had the privilege to be a part of the able EASF team led by Mrs. Lucie Sewe when it was first launched back in 2015. The initiative should be seen as a part of the EASF Strategic Communication Plan that was prepared in 2015 identifying three focus areas. These focus areas comprise 1) Internal communication. 2) External communication. 3) Communication during deployment. Obviously, the EASF Open Days constitute some of the activities under the umbrella of the “External Communication”.

CHAIRPERSON OF THE FRIENDS OF EASF

The whole rationale for this initiative was the fact that EASF was quite unknown to many people in its member states. We were asking ourselves: “Isn’t it a problem that most of the Eastern African populations counting more than 250 million people are unacquainted with EASF?” “That they do not know what its purpose is, and what’s in it for them?” So, that was the rationale behind the idea to launch the concept EASF Open Days in all EASF member states and to interact with people who are interested in peace and security. To put it simple, the purpose of the EASF Open Days is to raise awareness and knowledge about the EASF.

I had the privilege to participate in a few of these activities and I was quite surprised of the active and dynamic interaction with participants and I sincerely hope that we will experience some of the same enthusiasm and vitality today.

EASF conducted a very important event in November last year. That was the EASF Field Training Exercise “Mashariki Salaam”, which took place in Gebeit, close to Port Sudan in the Republic of Sudan. The lessons learned from that exercise should constitute the priorities for the training effort in 2018. I know that EASF just last month conducted the AAR (After Action Report) in the wake of the FTX in order to identify strength and gaps in its capacity. That report will constitute a very important document in our continued work to ensure that EASF continues its development as a relevant and efficient mechanism towards challenges to peace and security.

I would also like to emphasize the importance of the fact that EASF constitutes as a platform for dialogue and cooperation among its 10 member states. I believe that its significance for promoting peaceful collaboration within the Eastern African region cannot be underestimated.

CHAIRPERSON OF THE FRIENDS OF EASF

Excellences, ladies and gentlemen, allow me to take this opportunity to reaffirm the readiness of the Friends of EASF to assist and work together in maintaining this important objective.

This is my first visit to the beautiful country of Burundi. I would like to extend my warmest gratitude to the Republic of Burundi for hosting this important event so generously.

My sincere thanks also goes to the hard working EASF planning team and the sponsors for making this event possible. You have once again demonstrated your talent and diligence.

I would like to conclude by wishing all of you a very successful and fruitful EASF Open Day here in Burundi.

Thank you.

Joern Rasmussen, Chairperson of the Friends of EASF

Burundi, 20th April 2018