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**Keynote Address by Amb Mahboub Maalim Mohammed, during the
GLOCEPS Conference opening ceremony on 24 May 2022 at the
Serena Hotel, Nairobi**

The Executive Director, GLOCEPS, Brig(Rtd) Dr. Kabage and your staff; Lt Gen (Rtd) Lazaro Sumbeiywo; Excellencies ambassadors and heads of missions present; Distinguished guests, conference participants, ladies, and gentlemen; **Good morning.**

I am delighted to be here today, among a phenomenal diverse group of participants (economists, diplomats, academics, analysts, and policymakers) who share a common agenda for regional peace and security in Eastern Africa. I was ecstatic when I received the invitation from GLOCEPS because even after I left IGAD, I still share a lot of passion for proactive efforts to resolve conflict and developmental concerns in Africa and Eastern Africa in particular.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Eastern African region continues to witness the proliferation of terror groups and intra-state conflicts. These conflicts emanate from questions of identity and belonging, and a scramble for natural resources, while some are outrightly fueled by geopolitical entities. Most of these conflicts have been confined within states, creating state formation crises, governance

deficits, and structural violence. This fragility has made Eastern Africa vulnerable to the cross-border mobility of violent extremists and transnational criminal networks who partake in the trafficking of people, narcotics, and other resources.

Ladies and Gentlemen, if we do not proactively strategize on bringing stability into the region, all other efforts towards our respective national visions and the Continental Vision Agenda 2063 will be undermined. I say this because a fortnight ago, I was reading the 2021 Africa Governance Report (AGR), which presented three scenarios of what Africa will look like in 2063. It has been dubbed "the futures report".

The first scenario is the baseline scenario in which 'Africa is united' and achieves Agenda 2063, in which most states are resilient and well-governed. The second scenario is the "Utopia scenario", where Africa attains way above the Agenda 2063. This leads the continent to become a formidable competitor on the global stage with democratic, sustainable economies and thriving, crime- and conflict-free societies. The third scenario is the "Dystopia scenario", where "Africa is defeated" with failed socioeconomic and political systems.

If we continue to bury our heads in the sand, Africa is headed to Dystopia where conflict, poverty, hunger, violent extremism, and poor governance will reign over us. This is not the Africa we want for our grandchildren, and it is certainly not what we want for Eastern Africans. We must consciously

make deliberate efforts, and we cannot expect non-African actors and international institutions to lead us to the light.

I must acknowledge that Eastern Africa has made tangible peace and prosperity efforts. In the last few years, we have held relatively peaceful elections, which have ushered in a democratic transfer of power in Somalia, Tanzania, and Burundi. We continue to pursue peace in South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia through our regional-centric entities. These interventions reiterate the mantra of 'African Solutions for African Problems'. This mantra speaks to African urgency in finding solutions to our local problems as Africans. We Africans understand the local dynamics, and we are to come up with solutions.

Having had years of engaging with the peace and security environment in this region, I have often pondered how to stabilize our region. And I believe this is why we are here today. I am excited when I look at the programme. I see case studies touching on states from all over the region, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, DRC, the Indian Ocean littoral and Island states (such as Comoros and Seychelles). As we brainstorm on regional stability, I would like to provoke your thoughts on a number of positions that will require your interrogation:

One is the need to embrace Africa Centric and homegrown conflict management models within the Africa Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) mechanism of the African Union. Let's, for a moment, evaluate the

challenges that the Panel of the Wise, the Africa Standby Force, the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), and the Peace Fund continue to face and how can they be strengthened.

Two, we have to recognize that the region has indigenous/ homegrown peace-building mechanisms that are culturally sensitive in conflict management. These are the "African potentials for peace". Thus, what can we borrow from the Mato Oput in Northern Uganda, Gacaca courts in post-genocide Rwanda, Ubuntu in South Africa, Shimiglina councils in Ethiopia, and Guurti in Somalia?

Three, what is the value of regional cooperation? I am excited that DRC has joined the EAC but could we think about how the larger Eastern African region can effectively address cross-cutting security threats such as various transnational organized crimes, violent extremism, and transboundary resources governance? I strongly believe regional economic communities and ratification of the African Continental Free Trade Area are opportunities for greater stability.

Four, how can we revitalize regional-based peace support operations in conflict-ridden regions to complement the United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU) in peace support endeavors? How can IGAD support the AU Transitional Mission in Somalia (ATMIS)? How should EAC support the MONUSCO force in DRC? How can we enhance mission support funding,

equipment interoperability and coordination mechanisms for successful and effective peace support operations in our region?

Five, what power-sharing models in governance can we adopt to promote peace and stability in fragile contexts? I believe it is time to demystify the Western-centric conceptualization of democracy, as we lay the ground for a long-term institutional building to pre-empt power-based conflicts.

Of course, to know what works, why, where, and how, I would like to underscore the importance of action research in addressing conflict dynamics in the region through policy influence and strategy formulation. This is why I am particularly proud of GLOCEPS for convening this inaugural conference in line with the Centre's mission and vision, I believe it is timely and will provide fruitful deliberations and collaborations on new research frontiers that will contribute to peace and security in the region.

Thank you very much.