

The COMESA inter-parliamentary meeting for peace and security has been urged to ensure that there is the right environment for peace and development, and to also foster ties of friendship and understanding across borders.

“In these times of globalisation and global threats, we are aware that our neighbors’ security is also our security. Since the conflicts in our region are intertwined, a multiplicity of actors and approaches is needed to complement the strengths and competencies of state and non-state actors,” said Mr Danny Faure, the Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles.

“Parliamentarians have a key role to play in dissolving the walls of distrust which often build up in conflict areas so it is important that we share experiences and best practices,” Mr Faure added. While officially opening the COMESA Inter-Parliamentarian Meeting for Peace and Security held in Victoria, Seychelles, on 22-24 October 2012, the Vice-President said that insecurity and conflicts are some of the greatest factors contributing to economic stagnation and the debilitating crisis facing the continent.

He cited the insecurity in Somalia which he said has contributed greatly to the piracy problem facing the region and thanked the regional partners like COMESA, SADC, IGAD, EAC and the IOC who are implementing initiatives aimed at mitigating the burden of economic consequences resulting from the threat of piracy for the region.

Mr Faure also said that credible elections are also key components of stability in the region. “For us to have stability in the region, we should have credible elections and the rule of law. All of us are aware that the region

cannot afford any alternative to genuine elections if we are to achieve prosperity. We, therefore, look forward to free and fair election in 2013 in Kenya, Madagascar and Zimbabwe.”

“As MPs, you are policy makers and also voices of the people. Your unique positioning means you can effect change for good. By performing your oversight role, you can advocate for democracy and advance economic development goals in the region,” Mr Faure told the Members of Parliament.

The Deputy Speaker of the Seychelles National Assembly, Mr Andre Pool, welcomed the delegates to Seychelles. He noted that COMESA is playing a leading role in the fight against the war economy, taking into account the different conflicts on the continent.

“We realise that war economy has serious negative impacts on our economy, and I am sure that this workshop will give the participants a chance to analyse the different ways that our region can solve the conflicts in the region,” Mr Pool said. “It is clear that COMESA provides its members a wider, harmonised and competitive market. To promote trade in this market, a range of programmes have been put in place for trade facilitation, ICT, and infrastructure among others. However, the war economy negatively impacts these endeavors so we need to find solutions to conflicts in the region.”

Mr Pool highlighted the piracy problem faced especially by the Island nations and he added that piracy undermines legitimate trade, shipping and the fishing industry. “It is important to discuss and agree on what COMESA can do about the threat and effects of piracy in the Indian Ocean. War economy goes beyond national borders hence the need for a regional strategy and the enlisting of international support to fight it,” he concluded.

The Assistant Secretary-General of COMESA, Ambassador Nagla El-Hussainy welcomed the MPs to the meeting and appreciated the Vice-President of Seychelles, Hon. Danny Faure for taking time out of his busy schedule to open the meeting. She congratulated H.E President James A. Michel of the Republic of Seychelles for the tremendous role he continues to play in bringing peace to the region, especially participating in the different fora that assist the nations in the Indian Ocean to achieve lasting peace.

“We note with appreciation Seychelles’ efforts in fighting piracy and your efforts to modernise your piracy legislation in adherence to the UN legal framework,” she said. She also congratulated the Republic of Egypt and Libya for holding democratic elections following the crisis that faced these countries last year.

While concluding her remarks, Ambassador Nagla highlighted COMESA’s formal mechanism to involve the civil society and private sector organizations in peace building in the region, the development of an early warning and response mechanism; and the development of guidelines on good management of electoral processes. She commended COMESA’s cooperating partners who include: the European Union, USAID, KFW, the African Union, and other sub-regional and regional organizations like: EAC, IGAD, IOC, ICGLR AND SADC.

The meeting drew participants from Burundi, Comoros, Eritrea, Djibouti, DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, Seychelles, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Swaziland, and Rwanda.