

Malawi has taken over as Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers of Foreign Affairs with a call for collective and strong resolve in propelling the region towards peace and security in the region.

During the acceptance of the chairmanship from the Kingdom of Swaziland, Malawi Foreign Affairs Minister Ephraim Chiume said Malawi takes over as chairperson of the committee at a time when the region is faced with many challenges that relate to the peace and security of the people.

The minister was however quick to point out that the challenges that the COMESA region is facing are not insurmountable. He said the conflicts that are in the region affect not only the warring parties but also other neighboring states including those outside the regional grouping.

“These challenges include the crisis in the Great Lakes region, the continued insecurity in the Horn of Africa due to the persisting instability in Somalia and the need to finally restore constitutional order in Madagascar and welcome this country back from its suspension,” he said.

Mr Chiume reiterated the need to support the consolidation of democracy in Egypt and Libya and praised them for conducting peaceful elections, which ushered in new leaders. He expressed confidence that Kenya and Zimbabwe would remain peaceful during and after their forthcoming elections, which will be observed by COMESA and other international and local observers.

“It is my strong desire that we as the COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs shall make visible contributions to lasting peace, security and stability as we look forward to deepening regional integration”, the minister said.

Mr Chiume pledged Malawi’s continued dedication to the role of Chairperson of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs Committee and called on all Member States to render the much needed support and wisdom to facilitate this.

Speaking earlier, out-going chairperson of the committee, Minister of foreign Affairs from the Kingdom of Eswatini, Honourable Mtiti Fakudze, in a speech read for him by Minister of Commerce, Industry and Trade, Senator Jabulile Mashwama, thanked all COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs for the support rendered to him during his tenure.

Honourable Fakudze, said a number of achievements had been scored during his tenure including the elections in Libya and Egypt which saw the successful completion of the transition period.

“It is very gratifying that these two countries have now held democratic elections despite the challenges they faced. This was a huge achievement especially for Libya which had not held elections for almost half a century,” he said.

“We acknowledge the challenges ahead as they move towards consolidating and entrenching democracy and I am sure the experiences from the region will provide a useful resource to these countries. Honourable Fakudze, Malawi and Ethiopia should be commended and used as examples by countries in conflict to realise that it is possible to have peaceful transition of power,” he concluded.