

“While we can safely say that the incident of conflicts in the COMESA region has reduced greatly over the years, challenges still remain with potentially devastating effects. Our ultimate objective therefore should be to eliminate all forms of violent conflicts in our region,” said Hon. Sam Kuteesa at the opening of the 12th meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs on 21 November 2012 in Kampala, Uganda.

Mr Kuteesa who is the Uganda Minister of Foreign Affairs called upon the meeting to be ardent in its role of supporting the promotion and restoration of peace, security and stability in the region given the complex nature of conflicts, coupled with other sensitive and delicate dynamics that go with it.

This year, there have been three major conflicts in the COMESA region; the Somali situation, the conflict between the Sudan and Southern Sudan as well as the recent armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

“The occurrence and reoccurrence of these conflicts point to our failure individually as states and collectively as a region. We need lasting remedies and to find the root causes of these conflicts to be able to deal with them decisively,” said Mr Kuteesa. Countries like Burundi were urged to sustain the positive post-conflict phase of reconstruction and development and develop strategies for the total eradication of conflicts in the region.

Mr Kuteesa called for the African region to be given the chance to solve its own problems and gave examples of interventions in Burundi, Somalia and DRC. He added, “What Burundi and Somalia demonstrate is that we have a better appreciation of the problems in the region and are better positioned to find solutions if we work together.” The international community was also requested to support these peace efforts even as the African region mobilises resources to finance regional peace mechanisms that are put in place to address regional issues.

Mr Kuteesa reiterated the need for consolidation of democracy as central to abetting conflict and instituting sustainable peace and security during post conflict situations. “As we deepen our integration through the implementation of the COMESA Customs Union, the impact of conflicts in one country has the potential to severely affect others in the region. We have the responsibility to ensure free and fair elections in our region and to ensure that where conflict exists, we address them through legal means,” he added.

In conclusion, Mr Kuteesa commended COMESA on its new program on democracy and governance and urged Member States to fully cooperate in the implementation of this and all other programs.