

# The Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Security Symposium

Addressing Key Security Challenges

**SYMPOSIUM REPORT**

December 8, 2025



**The HORN Institute:** The HORN International Institute for Strategic Studies is a non-profit, applied research and policy think-do tank based in Nairobi, Kenya. The Institute works closely with local communities, governmental and non-governmental organisations and partners on various projects and activities focusing on six thematic areas: defence and security; terrorism and violent extremism; climate change, migration, and development, diplomacy and foreign relations; governance and statecraft; and transnational crimes and strategic threats with a primary focus on 13 countries that include; Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In 2021, the Institute was ranked 18<sup>th</sup> globally, as “a Think Tank to Watch” by the Global Think tank Index.

**Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS):** The Konrad Adenauer Foundation is a German Political Foundation with close ties to the Christian Democratic Union. Working through more than 110 offices and projects worldwide, the foundation is also present with over twenty offices across sub-Saharan Africa. In addition to the Country Offices, the Regional Programmes complement the Foundation’s country-specific activities and deal with a particular issue from a regional perspective. The Regional Programme Security Dialogue for East Africa deals with international affairs and security in Eastern Africa. The thematic area of security affairs is to be understood in a broader sense. In addition to interstate and intrastate conflicts and the development of terrorist organizations in the region, the RP SIPODI East Africa also deals with topics relating to food and energy security and the closely related challenges like flight and migration as well as climate change.

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“ ... a high-level platform for policymakers, experts, and practitioners to reflect on emerging and persistent security challenges in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region ”

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## Joint Role in Convening the Symposium

The HORN Institute and KAS jointly convened this symposium to provide a high-level platform for policymakers, experts, and practitioners to reflect on emerging and persistent security challenges in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region. Through this collaboration, the convenors aimed to:

- ❑ Promote informed dialogue grounded in credible research and regional expertise
- ❑ Strengthen cooperation among regional and international stakeholders
- ❑ Support the development of actionable policy recommendations to enhance regional stability
- ❑ Contribute to collective efforts to address state fragility, violent extremism, and geopolitical competition

Together, the convenors affirmed their commitment to fostering sustainable peace, strengthening regional institutions, and advancing security and development in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region.



## Acronyms and Abbreviations

|                |                                                                                        |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>ADF</b>     | Allied Democratic Forces                                                               |
| <b>ARCSS</b>   | Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan                             |
| <b>AU</b>      | African Union                                                                          |
| <b>CAR</b>     | Central African Republic                                                               |
| <b>CPA</b>     | Comprehensive Peace Agreement                                                          |
| <b>CTSAMVM</b> | Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism |
| <b>DRC</b>     | Democratic Republic of the Congo                                                       |
| <b>EAC</b>     | East African Community                                                                 |
| <b>EACRF</b>   | East African Community Regional Force                                                  |
| <b>ECOWAS</b>  | Economic Community of West African States                                              |
| <b>EV</b>      | Electric Vehicle                                                                       |
| <b>FARDC</b>   | Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo                                   |
| <b>FSI</b>     | Fragile States Index                                                                   |
| <b>IDP</b>     | Internally Displaced Person                                                            |
| <b>IED</b>     | Improvised Explosive Device                                                            |
| <b>IGAD</b>    | Intergovernmental Authority on Development                                             |
| <b>KAS</b>     | Konrad Adenauer Stiftung                                                               |
| <b>KLE</b>     | Key Local Engagements                                                                  |





“ Together, the convenors confirm their commitment to fostering sustainable peace, strengthening regional institutions, and advancing security and development in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region. ”

|                |                                                                                                   |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>LCBC</b>    | Lake Chad Basin Commission                                                                        |
| <b>MONUSCO</b> | United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo         |
| <b>NEPAD</b>   | New Partnership for Africa's Development                                                          |
| <b>OAU</b>     | Organization of African Unity                                                                     |
| <b>P/CVE</b>   | Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism                                                       |
| <b>P-DDRCS</b> | Program for Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Reintegration, and Community Stabilization |
| <b>R-ARCSS</b> | Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan                            |
| <b>REC</b>     | Regional Economic Community                                                                       |
| <b>RJMEC</b>   | Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission                                          |
| <b>RUSI</b>    | Royal United Services Institute                                                                   |
| <b>SADC</b>    | Southern African Development Community                                                            |
| <b>SME</b>     | Small and Medium-sized Enterprise                                                                 |
| <b>SOFA</b>    | Status of Forces Agreement                                                                        |
| <b>SPLA</b>    | Sudan People's Liberation Army                                                                    |
| <b>SPLM</b>    | Sudan People's Liberation Movement                                                                |
| <b>UAV</b>     | Unmanned Aerial Vehicle                                                                           |
| <b>UN</b>      | United Nations                                                                                    |
| <b>UNDP</b>    | United Nations Development Programme                                                              |
| <b>UNMISS</b>  | United Nations Mission in South Sudan                                                             |
| <b>UNOCT</b>   | United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism                                                        |
| <b>US</b>      | United States                                                                                     |
| <b>VEG</b>     | Violent Extremist Group                                                                           |



## Acknowledgement

The HORN Institute and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) wish to express their sincere gratitude to all individuals and organizations that contributed to the success of the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes Security Symposium.

Special thanks go to, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) Regional Programme Security Dialogue for East Africa for supporting the event, as well as to the Symposium Organizing Committee from the HORN Institute, including; Hassan Khannenje Ph.D., (Director), Elizabeth Radina (Strategic Communications Officer), Edmond Pamba, Jeremy Oronje and Bravin Onditi (Research), Evans Ombisa (Publisher) and Sharif Nasir (Accountant), whose dedication ensured the planning and delivery of a successful symposium. We also extend our appreciation to KAS–Regional Programme Security Dialogue for East Africa; Nils Wörmer (Regional Director), Edgar Mwine (Project Manager), and Bellon Twongyeirwe (Senior Finance and Administration), Abdulswamad Alawi (Symposium Coordinator), Faridah Muli (Symposium Rapporteur), and all service providers whose timely support contributed to the smooth running of the event.

We acknowledge with deep appreciation the moderators of the symposium sessions, Prof. Fred Jonyo, Winnie Rugutt. Ph.D., Christopher Hockey and Singo Mwachofi Ph.D., whose guidance ensured a productive dialogue across all panels and plenary sessions.

We are grateful to the distinguished panelists who enriched the symposium with their expertise, including Amb Major Gen (Rtd) Charles Tai Gituai, Fabrice Muchiga, Samira Gaid, Halkano Wario, Ph.D., Martine Zeuthen, Rosalind Nyawira, Ph.D., Walter Ochanda, Maj (Rtd) Beautah Mwanza Suba and Amb. (Eng) Mahboub Maalim. Their thoughtful analyses on state fragility, violent extremism, and the role of regional institutions significantly shaped the symposium's outcomes.

We particularly acknowledge our keynote speaker, Amb. Monica Juma, DPhil, the National Security Advisor, for gracing the occasion, as well as the diplomats among other stakeholders, for their attendance and active participation which have enhanced understanding of the security challenges facing the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region and will help guide more effective and sustainable solutions.



## Executive Summary

The Horn of Africa and Great Lakes Security Symposium, organized by The HORN Institute in partnership with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) – Regional Programme Security Dialogue for East Africa, was held on December 8, 2025 at the Serena Hotel in Nairobi, Kenya. The symposium brought together policymakers, regional experts, security practitioners, scholars, and representatives from regional bodies including IGAD, EAC, and AU, as well as diplomats, researchers, and civil society organizations. The meeting aimed to enhance understanding of the evolving security landscape in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region and to identify actionable strategies for strengthening regional stability.

Discussions were anchored on three core themes: state fragility, the evolving threat of terrorism and violent extremism, and the role and effectiveness of regional institutions in conflict prevention and resolution. Participants engaged through a series of moderated panels and plenary sessions that produced several key findings.

First, the region continues to face persistent state fragility, marked by weak governance structures, protracted conflicts, contested political transitions, and national cohesion challenges. The cases of Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Somalia exemplify how internal conflict, governance deficits, and socio-political fragmentation undermine state stability and fuel regional insecurity.

Second, the symposium emphasized that terrorism and violent extremism remain among the most significant threats to regional peace. Groups such as Al-Shabaab and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) have adapted their operational strategies, broadened their recruitment networks, and exploited governance vacuums, economic marginalization, and community grievances. Participants noted that current regional Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) frameworks require strengthening and better alignment with emerging threat trajectories.

Third, the forum highlighted both the promise and the limitations of regional institutions notably IGAD, EAC, and the AU. While these bodies have played critical roles in mediation, peace operations, and diplomatic engagement, their impact is constrained by internal divisions, inadequate resources, overlapping mandates, and complex geopolitical pressures. Recent initiatives including IGAD's engagements in Sudan and the EAC-led Nairobi Process on the DRC illustrate the importance of coordinated regional mechanisms but also expose gaps in implementation, coherence, and political will.





Fourth, participants emphasized that the region's security challenges are increasingly shaped by geopolitical competition and external interventions. The involvement of global and Gulf actors continues to influence political dynamics, economic alignments, and conflict trajectories, necessitating more coherent regional strategies to manage external interests.

The symposium generated several key recommendations. First, regional governments should prioritize strengthening state institutions, accelerating political transitions,





and fostering inclusive national dialogues to address drivers of internal instability. Second, security actors and policymakers should enhance regional cooperation on counterterrorism, including intelligence sharing, joint operations, community-centered prevention frameworks, and resilience-building at the local level. Third, IGAD, EAC, and the AU should be supported to improve their conflict-management capacities, harmonize mandates, and develop unified approaches to emerging crises. Fourth, regional actors should establish mechanisms to better coordinate engagement with external powers to reduce fragmentation and ensure alignment with regional priorities.





## Background

The Horn of Africa—home to over 250 million people—is at a critical juncture in its history, facing complex security challenges with far-reaching implications not only for the region itself but also for the broader African continent as well as for global peace. The region is not only characterized by state fragility, protracted conflicts, terrorism, and regional power struggles, but also by enormous potential in terms of economic growth, infrastructure development, and natural resources.

Indeed, the Horn of Africa is considered one of the most fragile and conflict-prone areas in the world. According to the 2022 Fragile States Index (FSI) published by The Fund for Peace, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan rank among the most fragile states globally, reflecting the ongoing instability in these nations (Fund for Peace, 2022). These countries face enormous challenges in governance, security, and economic recovery, which have regional spillover effects, such as refugee crises, cross-border militancy, and destabilized neighboring states.







Further compounding the region's vulnerabilities are terrorism and violent extremism. The continued operations of groups like Al-Shabaab in Somalia and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) pose serious security threats, despite ongoing regional and international counterterrorism efforts. These terrorist organizations exploit governance and security gaps, corruption, and poverty to recruit fighters and instill fear among populations. As reported by the Global Terrorism Index 2021, Somalia and the DRC remain two of the highest terrorism hotspots in Africa, with Al-Shabaab being the deadliest terrorist group in Africa (Global Terrorism Index, 2021).

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For years, the Horn of Africa have long attracted the attention of external powers, each advancing distinct strategic interests. Historically, global actors such as the United States, European Union (EU), China, and Russia have engaged the region through security partnerships, development aid, investment in natural resources, and military cooperation. Most recently, Gulf countries have equally demonstrated growing interest in the region, with powers such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, and Qatar actively pursuing strategic, economic, and political interests. However, the growing external influence in the region is exacerbating local tensions, fostering dependency and complicating peace efforts, making the conflicts in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region more intractable.



Regional institutions such as the African Union (AU), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and East African Community (EAC) continue to play a pivotal role in managing and resolving crises. However, their capacity to act effectively is hampered by internal divisions, limited resources and leverage, and external geopolitical competition.

This symposium sought to provide a platform for key regional stakeholders to engage in meaningful discussions on how to address these challenges. The main objective is contribute toward building a regional consensus among key stakeholders on possible interventions to strengthen regional security and stability in the Horn of Africa.

### Symposium Focus Areas

The symposium focused on four core areas of concern that intersect with security and stability in the region:

- State Fragility
- External Interventions and Strategic Interests
- Challenges Facing Regional Institutions (AU, IGAD, EAC)

### Objectives of the Symposium

The primary objectives of the symposium were:

- To facilitate dialogue between key stakeholders on addressing fragile states and unfinished transitions in the region.
- To analyze the impact of geopolitical competition in the region on regional stability and make appropriate policy recommendations.
- To develop actionable policy recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of regional institutions like IGAD in conflict management.

### Target Audience/Participants

- Policymakers from the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region.
- Security and foreign relations Experts and Academics: Specialists in diplomacy and conflict management.
- Civil society organizations focused on peace and security.

### Expected Outcomes/Outputs

- Enhanced regional cooperation on security threats particularly in managing state fragility, conflict, geopolitical competition and countering terrorism.
- A detailed report on the discussions and recommendations.
- A policy brief.



# Symposium **FORMAT**



# Session One

## Opening and Keynote Address

Moderator: **Prof. Fred Jonyo, Ph.D.**, Former Chairman, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of Nairobi

Opening Remarks by **Hassan Kanneje, Ph.D.**, Director HORN International Institute for Strategic Studies



The session opened with remarks by Dr. Hassan Kanneje, Director of the HORN International Institute for Strategic Studies, who warmly welcomed participants and expressed appreciation for their presence and engagement. He emphasized the significance of the gathering as a timely and important platform for dialogue on pressing regional security issues affecting the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region.

Dr. Kanneje emphasized that the security dynamics in these regions are deeply interconnected and have far-reaching implications that extend beyond national borders. He noted that challenges such as conflict, political instability, and governance deficits continue to shape the regional security landscape, with tangible consequences for peace, development, and human security. He further highlighted that these issues affect societies and livelihoods in direct and indirect ways, reinforcing the need for sustained, informed, and collaborative approaches to addressing them.

In concluding his remarks, Dr. Kanneje reiterated the value of the forum in fostering informed discussion among policymakers, practitioners, and scholars, and expressed

“  
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”



confidence that the deliberations would contribute meaningfully to policy-relevant insights and solutions for enhancing regional stability.

Opening Remarks by **Edgar Mwine**, Project Manager Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) – Regional Programme Security Dialogue for East Africa



“

... conflicts in the region are increasingly shaped by global power dynamics, with external actors exerting significant influence over regional resources, governance frameworks, and human security outcomes

”

This was followed by opening remarks by Mr. Edgar Mwine, Project Manager for the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) Regional Programme on Security Dialogue for East Africa. He emphasized that peace and security remain central to KAS's mandate and core programming across the region.

Mr. Mwine highlighted the long-standing partnership between KAS and the HORN Institute, noting that the two institutions have jointly convened a total of six regional deliberations on key security issues in East Africa. He described the HORN Institute as one of KAS's longest-standing and most valued partners in advancing policy-relevant dialogue on regional peace and security.

He further observed that conflicts in the region are increasingly shaped by global power dynamics, with external actors exerting significant influence over regional resources, governance frameworks, and human security outcomes. In this context, he acknowledged Kenya's role in promoting democratic norms within the region, as well as Uganda's contributions through troop diplomacy in regional peace operations.

Mr. Mwine concluded by welcoming participants to the symposium and expressing his expectation that the engagements and deliberations would be constructive and contribute meaningfully to informed dialogue on regional security challenges.

Keynote Address by **Amb. Monica Juma, DPhil.**, National Security Advisor to President



Dr. (Amb.) Monica Juma began by expressing her appreciation to Dr. Hassan Khannenje for the invitation. She emphasized the significance of the symposium for the Horn of Africa and the wider Great Lakes region, noting that its implications extend well beyond the immediate geographical space.

Dr. Juma reflected on earlier efforts to conceptualize regional peace and security, recalling a 2016 discussion in Khartoum, Sudan held alongside former President Thabo Mbeki on the evolving dynamics of the Red Sea arena. She noted that, despite the foresight demonstrated in those engagements, the region missed a critical opportunity to articulate a shared strategic vision for the Red Sea corridor. She further referenced the United States Institute of Peace report on the Red Sea and IGAD's subsequent efforts to establish a regional framework that links the Red Sea, the Greater Horn of Africa, and the Middle East, including constructive engagement with Middle Eastern states.

Turning to present challenges, Dr. Juma emphasized how the current crises in Sudan raise broader questions about the Horn of Africa's position within global and regional geopolitical theatres. She noted that the region hosts primary global supply chains, making it imperative to understand the broader strategic environment shaping political and security outcomes. She also observed that the emergence of new states such as South Sudan and Eritrea and ongoing struggles in Ethiopia and Somalia reflect deeper issues of state fragility, institutional reconstruction, political instability, and recurring humanitarian strain. Somalia, she noted, remains particularly vulnerable as it works to craft durable, informed policy solutions.

Dr. Juma highlighted the intensifying impact of global climate change, recalling that when IGAD was formed in 1986, drought, desertification, and ecological degradation were already recognized as existential threats. Today, these risks are magnified and continue to compound state fragility. She questioned whether the region has truly internalized past lessons, pointing to the persistence and accelerating pace of governance gaps,

“

... the emergence of new states such as South Sudan and Eritrea and ongoing struggles in Ethiopia and Somalia reflect deeper issues of state fragility, institutional reconstruction, political instability, and recurring humanitarian strain

”





state fragmentation, and legitimacy challenges. Using South Sudan as an example, she noted repeated difficulties in achieving coherence in peace agreements and translating political arrangements into sustainable federal relationships between the center and peripheries.

On Sudan, Dr. Juma described the 2023 conflict as one of the most tragic humanitarian crises of the twenty-first century, marked by deep contestation, long-standing local grievances, and severe human rights consequences, especially for women and children. She stressed that fragile states often act as “risk multipliers,” with the Sahel providing a clear example through the resurgence of coups and the spread of terrorism.

Dr. Juma then broadened the discussion to West Africa, noting the resurgence of coups and the spread of terrorism across the Sahel. She drew attention to emerging links between extremist groups in the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, and Central Africa, warning that these affiliations undermine economies and destabilize borderlands. This, she argued, requires a fundamental rethinking of counterterrorism approaches. She stressed that partners must move beyond purely kinetic approaches and invest in community resilience. She invited the audience to consider complex questions, such as the feasibility of

negotiating with groups like Al-Shabaab, referencing lessons from Afghanistan and noting the need for sober parameters in approaching difficult security dilemmas.

Dr. Juma also raised concerns about drug trafficking in the East African region, which she described as an emerging transport corridor for narcotics and other transnational criminal activities. She urged greater reflection on how these trends intersect with regional security.

Turning to geopolitics, she noted the intensifying competition among global powers particularly the United States, China, and European actors within the region. She questioned how asymmetrical power dynamics shape regional institutions and highlighted the contrast between IGAD’s engagement in Sudan and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) recent actions in West Africa. She emphasized the need for East African institutions to act more swiftly and with reduced dependency on external partners, which currently constrains their ability to fully implement their mandates.

Dr. Juma called for policies that better account for the multidimensional nature of threats, partnerships, and regional priorities. She encouraged deeper reflection on long-standing structural challenges, the rapid evolution

of technology, and demographic shifts. She warned against the weaponization of technology and stressed the strategic importance of investing in research and development to build an African innovation architecture capable of delivering sustainable solutions.

She concluded by emphasizing the importance of valuing institutions that support long-term scenario planning and medium-term frameworks, particularly in a context

marked by high uncertainty and an expanding cast of actors. She praised KAS for promoting inclusive dialogue and credible conversations on regional security. She also referenced President William Ruto's recent remarks that African countries must position themselves as "co-actors" in the global order reminding the audience that, historically, the region has often been "on the menu" rather than at the decision-making table.

## Comments and Q&A

Discussion on the New Washington Agreement (DRC-Rwanda)

### Question:

**What distinguishes the new Washington Agreement between the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda witnessed by Kenya from previous peace efforts Agreements.**

Ambassador Monica Juma explained that the Washington Agreement's core premise is the management and equitable utilization of the DRC's natural resources. She noted that the framework aims to establish a regional economic mechanism to curb illicit extraction, promote lawful resource management, and ensure that benefits accrue to both Eastern DRC and Kinshasa. She emphasized that the stakes are exceptionally high given that critical minerals from the DRC are central to global technological and industrial development. She also contextualized the geopolitical interest of the United States and China, particularly around control and access to these minerals. Drawing a parallel to earlier continental initiatives during the transition from the OAU to the AU especially the NEPAD-G8 framework, she insisted that no country could manage such issues alone.

### Question:

**What is Kenya's position and agency in relation to the DRC peace deal.**

Ambassador Monica Juma explained that Kenya's interest in eastern DRC extends beyond immediate security concerns. She emphasized that Kenya's democratic promise includes a regional responsibility to help stabilize neighboring states. A peaceful and stable DRC, she added, holds significant economic potential for the region. Supporting DRC's stability, therefore, aligns with Kenya's national interest, its sense of duty of care, and its broader regional responsibility to contribute to regional peace and development.





# Session Two

Moderator: **Winnie Rugutt, Ph.D.**, Lecturer University of Nairobi's Department of Diplomacy and International Studies

## Panel One: Assessing State Fragility in the Region

**Input 1:** Governance and Stability in Post-Independence South Sudan presented by **Amb. Major General (Rtd) Charles Tai Gituai** - Former Interim Chairperson of the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC) for South Sudan



“

Key institutional deficits such as the incomplete professionalization of the SPLA and lack of diversified SPLM leadership remained unaddressed

”

### Introduction

Amb. Major General (Rtd) Gituai began by situating South Sudan's current fragility within the legacy of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). While the CPA ended decades of North-South civil war and paved the way for independence in 2011, it failed to address internal governance challenges within Southern Sudan. Key institutional deficits such as the incomplete professionalization of the SPLA and lack of diversified SPLM leadership remained unaddressed, laying the groundwork for post-independence instability. He emphasized that these structural weaknesses created vulnerabilities that quickly manifested in political, economic, and security crises after independence.

### Post-Independence Governance and Institutional Weakness

Amb. Major General (Rtd) Gituai observed that South Sudan entered independence without robust legislative, judicial, or administrative institutions, which severely constrained the state's ability to govern effectively. Service delivery in critical sectors such as health, education, and infrastructure was minimal, and corruption became systemic. Near-total reliance on oil revenues further exacerbated fiscal vulnerability,



leaving the country highly susceptible to economic shocks and political contestation. These governance gaps, he noted, directly contributed to the rapid escalation of the 2013 political dispute into full-scale armed conflict, displacing millions and precipitating one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

### Conflict Dynamics and Peace Agreements

Amb. Major General (Rtd) Gituai reviewed the trajectory of peace processes in South Sudan, from the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) to the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS). He noted that while the R-ARCSS established the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity, initiated constitutional and justice reforms, and laid out comprehensive governance, security sector, economic, and transitional justice measures, implementation gaps remain persistent. Political mistrust, limited resources, and intermittent insecurity have slowed progress. He highlighted that delays in implementing preconditions for credible elections, alongside the spillover effects from the Sudan conflict, continue to pose risks of relapse into violence.

### Humanitarian and Economic Context

Amb. Major General (Rtd) Gituai highlighted the dire economic and humanitarian situation in South Sudan. Oil production has fallen sharply, hyperinflation has eroded household purchasing power, and declining government revenues have increased reliance on humanitarian

assistance for millions of citizens. He also noted the compounded effect of climate-related shocks, including flooding and other environmental crises, which have further strained the state's capacity to maintain services, implement reforms, and support peacebuilding efforts.

### Governance and Security Nexus

A central theme of the presentation was the mutually reinforcing cycle between weak governance and insecurity. Amb. Gituai illustrated how politicized and factionalized armed groups, stalled security sector reforms, and proliferation of local militias undermine national cohesion and perpetuate instability. Governance failures, he emphasized, are not merely administrative weaknesses; they actively drive conflict by fueling impunity, militarizing political competition, and sustaining cycles of violence.

### Role of Regional and International Actors

The presentation outlined the contributions of regional and international actors in supporting South Sudan's peace processes. IGAD has acted as a guarantor for peace agreements, the African Union has emphasized inclusive leadership and governance reforms, and the United Nations through UNMISS provides civilian protection and supports rule of law and electoral processes. Oversight mechanisms such as RJMEC and CTSAMVM monitor compliance. However, the presentation cautioned that external actors alone cannot stabilize South Sudan; sustained national political will and commitment are essential for meaningful reform.



## Conclusion and Strategic Priorities

Amb. Major General (Rtd) Gituai concluded by emphasizing that achieving stability in South Sudan requires a holistic, multi-dimensional reform agenda. Key strategic priorities include:

- Accelerated governance and security sector reforms to build institutional resilience and restore public trust.
- Completion of constitutional and electoral preparations to ensure credible and inclusive political processes.
- Economic diversification and strengthened public financial management to reduce oil dependency and mitigate fiscal shocks.
- Integrated humanitarian and resilience interventions to address acute vulnerabilities caused by displacement, food insecurity, and environmental shocks.

The presentation concluded that only through coordinated governance, security, economic, and humanitarian interventions can South Sudan break the destructive cycle linking weak institutions, insecurity, and economic fragility, paving the way for sustainable peace and national cohesion.

**Input 2:** Protracted Instability and National Cohesion in the DRC discussed by **Fabrice Muchiga**, Founder Africa Peace Initiative



“  
DRC’s chronic  
insecurity is  
a protracted  
phenomenon that  
has shaped the entire  
Great Lakes region for  
decades

”

## Introduction

Fabrice Muchiga began by situating the Democratic Republic of Congo’s (DRC) instability within a long historical arc of political fragility, governance failures, and regional dynamics. He emphasized that the DRC’s chronic insecurity is a protracted phenomenon that has shaped the entire Great Lakes region for decades, with ongoing ripple effects on regional peace, population movements, and inter-state relations. The country’s mineral wealth—particularly cobalt, lithium, and other strategic resources vital to the global energy transition—has further intensified competition, making the DRC a focal point for regional and international actors pursuing economic and geopolitical interests.

### Internal Drivers of Instability

While acknowledging the role of external actors, Muchiga stressed that internal dynamics are equally central to the DRC's insecurity. Weak governance, poor land administration, inequitable power distribution, and the systematic exclusion of local communities have created fertile ground for armed groups, particularly in the Kivu region, which now hosts over 120 active factions. The conversation highlighted how disputes over land, authority, and resources, combined with ethnic tensions, have perpetuated cycles of violence and fragmentation.

### Governance Failures and Localized Conflict

Fabrice emphasized the central role of governance deficits in undermining state legitimacy. Arbitrary appointment or removal of local chiefs, often conducted without consultation, has triggered violence, displacement, and community mistrust. He cited examples such as Nemwanda Musemi and the emergence of localized militias like Bundu dia Kongo and Kamina Saco. The recent escalation involving the M23 rebellion, including the killing of ten local chiefs, further illustrates how weakened authority and contested governance contribute to instability.

### External Influences and Regional Architecture

Fabrice noted that regional and international engagement often prioritizes economic and strategic interests over the stabilization of the DRC. He argued that the current regional architecture does not sufficiently address governance or peacebuilding, creating an environment where armed groups, neighboring states, and external actors advance their agendas at the expense of Congolese stability. He observed that this dynamic has fostered a system where regional engagement is driven more by opportunistic interests than by institutional mandates, contributing to ongoing instability.

### Limitations of Peace Processes

Peace agreements, Fabrice argued, have repeatedly failed because they overlook local governance issues and community-level grievances. Conflicts such as the Munebwe–Banyamulenge tensions exemplify how historical disputes, power struggles, and mistrust persist when agreements are top-down and exclusionary. Additionally, uncoordinated refugee returns without community dialogue have often exacerbated local tensions, setting dangerous precedents for further unrest.

### Regional Dynamics and Hypocrisy

Muchiga critically examined the role of neighboring countries, noting that regional hypocrisy undermines peace efforts. Despite frameworks like the 2013 Addis Ababa Agreement, which prohibited hosting or supporting rebel movements, some states have continued to support armed groups. He highlighted the involvement of figures such as Laurent Nkunda and the links between Ugandan, Burundian, and Congolese actors, illustrating how inconsistent regional engagement erodes credibility and hampers stabilization.

### Conclusion and Way Forward

In conclusion, Fabrice Muchiga emphasized that breaking the cycle of protracted instability in the DRC requires building inclusive social cohesion grounded in a common national narrative that transcends ethnic, political, and resource-based divisions. He advocated for long-term efforts to unite communities across mining, agriculture, and local governance sectors, establishing inclusive economic and social systems that support peace. He stressed that only through community-rooted engagement and genuine regional cooperation can the DRC move toward meaningful national cohesion and lasting stability.





**Input 3:** National Unity in Somalia amid Inter-State Disputes and the Security Transition  
presented by **Samira Gaid**, Head of Research and Policy Balqiis Insights



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... the resurgence of clan-based militias and Al-Shabaab's territorial expansion reflect the state's inability to provide security and justice

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### Somalia Fragility

Samira Gaid began by outlining Somalia's persistent fragility, noting that the country has remained a fragile state for over three decades following the collapse of institutions in 1991. She highlighted that the absence of a comprehensive reconciliation process has left deep social fractures, with grievances accumulated across generations. While some progress has been made in governance and security, these efforts have often been incremental and overshadowed by the singular focus on countering Al-Shabaab.

### Federal System and Political Dynamics

The discussions analyzed the creation and evolution of Somalia's federal system, emphasizing systemic weaknesses and uneven functionality across federal member states. It was noted that post-2024 political dynamics involving Puntland and Somaliland illustrate ongoing disputes over centralization and decentralization. Efforts to implement a one-person-one-vote electoral system have been perceived by some actors as politically motivated rather than democratic, and at least three federal states remain financially reliant on the capital, Mogadishu, reinforcing perceptions of unequal power distribution.

### Governance, Trust, and State Predation

A central theme of the presentation was the erosion of public trust in Somali institutions. Weak governance, nepotism, and corruption have contributed to a predatory rather than representative state. Gaid highlighted examples such as the digital e-visa and electronic cargo-tracking systems, which, although intended to modernize state operations, have often been viewed as rent-extraction mechanisms. She emphasized that these governance deficits undermine citizen confidence and exacerbate tensions.

### Security Dynamics and Armed Groups

The presentation noted that the resurgence of clan-based militias and Al-Shabaab's territorial expansion reflect the state's inability to provide security and justice. Clan-led



initiatives, such as the 2022 Ras Camboni mobilizations, were cited as evidence of communities increasingly relying on local actors to fill security vacuums. The drawdown of African Union Mission (AMISOM/ATMIS) troops to 12,000 personnel was noted to raise additional concerns about maintaining stability, particularly when Somali political elites remain embroiled in rivalries.

### Regional and International Influence

External actors have played a significant role in Somalia's security and governance landscape; the involvement of the United Arab Emirates and Turkey in economic and security sectors, and the interests of Kenya and Ethiopia regarding Somali federal states. She noted that these external dynamics intersect with local governance challenges and ongoing humanitarian crises, further complicating state-building and national cohesion.

### Humanitarian and Socio-Economic Context

Gaid highlighted the persistent humanitarian crises, including food insecurity, displacement, and limited

public service delivery. These conditions exacerbate tensions between federal and local authorities and undermine efforts to build trust and legitimacy in the state. She emphasized the need for integrated solutions that combine security, governance, and humanitarian interventions.

### Conclusion

Samira Gaid concluded that Somalia's path towards national unity remains fragile, with political, social, and security challenges deeply interconnected. She stressed that incremental reforms and counterterrorism efforts alone are insufficient to address the root causes of instability. Sustainable unity requires rebuilding trust across political and clan lines, strengthening coordination between federal member states, and aligning international interventions with Somali-led priorities. She warned that marginalizing peripheral regions will further fragment the country, and emphasized that the cohesion of Somalia's people, institutions, and security forces is essential for long-term stability.

## Comments and Questions and Answers (Q&A)

### Question 1:

**Is it time for the federal government of Somalia to initiate negotiations with Al-Shabaab?**

Samira Gaid noted that engagement and dialogue on this issue have been discussed previously; however, timing and contextual constraints have remained significant challenges. It was observed that the Federal Government exercises effective control over only a limited portion of national territory, estimated at approximately 30 percent, which complicates





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... any negotiation framework would require Al-Shabaab to fundamentally alter its ideological orientation, including renouncing its affiliation with Al-Qaeda ...

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the feasibility of meaningful negotiations. It was further argued that any negotiation framework would require Al-Shabaab to fundamentally alter its ideological orientation, including renouncing its affiliation with Al-Qaeda, a condition widely regarded as unrealistic under the current circumstances. Additionally, concerns were raised regarding the absence of cohesive Somali leadership capable of managing such negotiations, given the complexity of actors involved in the conflict.

### Question 2:

**Will the agreement between the United States and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) contribute to sustainable peace in the country?**

Fabrice Muchinga stressed the need to critically assess what is substantively new in the agreement and whether it introduces mechanisms capable of producing tangible peace dividends. Attention was drawn to the economic dimensions of the deal, particularly the strategic importance of the DRC's mineral resources, including those essential for electric vehicle (EV) production, and whether these resources will meaningfully benefit the Congolese people. It was noted that of the 19 largest mining operations in the DRC, 16 are currently operated by Chinese entities under infrastructure-for-minerals agreements concluded during the former President Kabila administration. Reference was also made to the Lobito Corridor initiative, which was intended to enhance regional connectivity but has thus far failed to deliver expected outcomes.

It was further argued that for the agreement to succeed, lessons must be drawn from previous peace accords signed in Uganda and Addis Ababa, many of which failed due to weak enforcement mechanisms and the exclusion of key stakeholders. The proliferation of peace agreements, including recent calls for additional negotiations in Togo, was cited as evidence of a recurring pattern that overlooks the structural drivers of violence in the DRC. These include governance deficits, persistent armed group activity, and the dilemma posed by militarized buffer zones. It was stressed that sustainable peace requires prioritizing governance reforms, placing national interests first, and engaging armed groups through dialogue to create space for difficult but necessary conversations.

### Question 3:

**Is the Government of South Sudan likely to release VP Riek Machar to create space for renewed negotiations**

Amb. Major General (Rtd) Gituai noted that President Salva Kiir and VP-Riek Machar remain the central actors in South Sudan's political and security crisis.

It was noted that religious leaders, including Christian bishops and Muslim leaders, have started to actively engage both parties and advocating for dialogue as a pathway forward. Regarding VP-Machar, it was emphasized that there is no conclusive evidence linking him to the alleged circumstances surrounding the loss of a senior military general. It was argued that political probability indicators point toward his eventual reinstatement to office as part of efforts to stabilize the political process and revive negotiations.



# Session Three

Moderated by **Christopher Hockey**, Senior Research Fellow at RUSI-Nairobi, Kenya

## Panel Two: Evolving Threat of Terrorism and Violent Extremism

**Input 1:** Mapping Key Violent Extremist Groups: Agendas and Strategies presented by **Halkano Wario Ph.D.**, Regional Organized Crime Observatory Coordinator - East Africa, Institute for Security Studies.



### Introduction

Dr. Wario began by contextualizing the current terrorist threat landscape in Africa, noting that according to the Global Terrorism Index 2025, the countries most affected by terrorism include Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, and Kenya. He highlighted that the spread and resilience of violent extremist groups (VEGs) are not uniform, emphasizing the need to understand the distinct operational modalities and territorial control exercised by each group to develop effective counterterrorism strategies.

### Violent Extremist Groups in Somalia

The presentation identified four major categories of violent extremist groups operating in Somalia, each with distinct organizational structures, agendas, and operational strategies:

1. **Al-Shabaab** – Operating as a shadow government for over 20 years, Al-Shabaab has established significant territorial control, particularly in rural areas and along border regions. The group implements a Sharia-based governance system in areas under its control, providing services that sometimes rival federal government provision, which enables them to generate substantial local revenue. Al-Shabaab

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... terrorist groups are highly adept at generating and transferring funds, often exceeding the revenue collection capacity of federal governments in affected areas

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recruits hundreds of operatives and maintains strict hierarchical structures to execute operations, including IED attacks and border incursions.

2. **Islamic State Affiliates** – These groups operate not only in Somalia but also across the Central African Republic (CAR) and Mozambique. They maintain decentralized cells, adapting quickly to counterterrorism operations, and increasingly rely on cross-border coordination and technological tools, such as UAVs, for reconnaissance and attacks.
3. **Clan-Based Cells and Peripheral Networks** – Particularly in western Puntland, smaller extremist cells have been observed to grow in coordination with transnational actors such as the Houthis, highlighting the interplay between local grievances and broader regional conflicts.
4. **Financial and Operational Networks** – Dr. Wario emphasized that terrorist groups are highly adept at generating and transferring funds, often exceeding the revenue collection capacity of federal governments in affected areas. These funds are used to support operations, recruit personnel, and maintain influence over local populations. The decentralized structure of these groups allows them to operate with resilience despite sustained counterterrorism operations.

### Operational Strategies and Capabilities

Dr. Wario analyzed the operational sophistication of violent extremist groups in the region, noting:

- ▣ **Decentralization** – The groups operate through autonomous cells, making them harder to neutralize through conventional counterterrorism efforts.
- ▣ **Technological Adoption** – Use of UAVs and advanced communication systems, often transferred from international affiliates, has enhanced surveillance, targeting, and coordination capabilities.
- ▣ **Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)** – Widely deployed in rural and border areas to disrupt security forces and civilian life, reflecting a strategic use of low-cost but high-impact tactics.
- ▣ **Recruitment and Training** – Recruitment is systematic, drawing in hundreds of recruits annually to sustain operational capacity. Training often includes ideological indoctrination, tactical skills, and cross-border operations.

### Challenges to Counterterrorism Efforts

Dr. Wario emphasized several factors limiting the effectiveness of current counterterrorism measures:

- **Fragmented Political Attention** – National and regional political divisions reduce focus and coherence in counterterrorism strategies.
- **Persistent Decentralization of Groups** – Even with sustained counterterrorism operations over the past two years, groups have remained resilient and largely decentralized.
- **Regional Spillovers** – Cross-border linkages between extremist groups, including financing and



“**Improve state service delivery and legitimacy in vulnerable regions to reduce the appeal and influence of extremist governance models**”

operational collaboration, complicate national-level responses.

- **Technological Diffusion** – Transfer of UAVs, encrypted communications, and other advanced tools from international affiliates is increasing operational sophistication, reducing the efficacy of conventional counterterrorism measures.

## Conclusion

Dr. Wario concluded that violent extremist group in Somalia and the wider region remain resilient, adaptive, and increasingly sophisticated, posing significant threats to national and regional security. Their decentralization, access to financial resources, and technological adoption enable them to persist despite ongoing counterterrorism operations. Addressing this challenge requires a holistic approach that considers local grievances, political dynamics, and regional cooperation, rather than relying solely on kinetic military strategies.

## Recommendations

1. **Enhanced Regional Coordination** – Strengthen cross-border intelligence sharing and joint operations among affected states in the Horn of Africa and West Africa to disrupt financing, recruitment, and operational networks.
2. **Community-Centered Approaches** – Integrate local communities into prevention and early-warning mechanisms, focusing on reducing recruitment appeal through education, livelihoods, and social cohesion initiatives.
3. **Technological Countermeasures** – Invest in counter-UAV systems, advanced surveillance, and cyber capabilities to monitor extremist communications and operational planning.
4. **Capacity Building for Governance** – Improve state service delivery and legitimacy in vulnerable regions to reduce the appeal and influence of extremist governance models.
5. **Sustained Policy Focus** – Ensure political continuity and multi-year strategies to counter extremist groups, reducing the impact of fragmented political attention on counterterrorism effectiveness.

**Input 2:** Drivers and Impacts of Terrorism and Violent Extremism presented on **Martine Zeuthen**, Associate Fellow in the Terrorism and Conflict Programme at RUSI

## Territorial Control and Operational Footprint

The presentation began by outlining the geographical and operational presence of Al-Shabaab and other violent extremist groups (VEGs) in Somalia and neighboring regions.

Key points included:

- **Proximity to key cities:** The groups maintain control in strategic regions such as Middle Juba and South West State, while also operating close to Mogadishu.
- **Cross-border operations:** They conduct attacks across the Kenya-Somalia border, leveraging porous boundaries and weak border governance.
- **Maintaining strongholds:** Their territorial control enables enforcement of Sharia law in controlled areas, effectively creating alternative governance structures and generating revenue streams to fund their operations.

## Human and Social Impacts of Terrorism

Zeuthen highlighted the profound effects of terrorism on local populations and state functions:

- **Casualties:** High levels of civilian and security force casualties disrupt societal stability.





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Forced taxation, or zakat collection, often coincides with reductions in humanitarian aid, exacerbating vulnerability among affected communities

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- **Service disruption:** Healthcare, education, and security services are severely affected in conflict-affected regions.
- **Humanitarian strain:** Forced taxation, or zakat collection, often coincides with reductions in humanitarian aid, exacerbating vulnerability among affected communities.

She noted that these impacts not only feed Al-Shabaab’s narrative of legitimacy but also undermine trust in government institutions.

### Communications and Propaganda Strategies

A central theme of the presentation was how VEGs manipulate narratives to consolidate power and legitimacy:

- **Multilingual outreach:** Al-Shabaab communicates in Somali, Arabic, English, Kiswahili, and Afaan Oromo, tailoring messages to diverse audiences.
- **Exploiting failures:** Propaganda strategically highlights government weaknesses while showcasing their provision of “normal life” under Al-Shabaab governance.
- **Political narratives:** Borders are portrayed as artificial; Kenyan and Ethiopian authorities are labeled as illegitimate occupiers of Muslim land, emphasizing a pan-Somali ideological agenda.
- **Digital sophistication:** Online platforms are increasingly used to project success, recruit fighters, and respond to international developments, such as US political statements or military actions.

### Command and Control Evolution

Zeuthen explained the organizational transformation of Al-Shabaab over the last decade:

- **Shift from centralization to decentralization:** Post-2014, central command remains, but regional units, especially those conducting operations in Kenya, have gained autonomy and adapt tactics to local conditions.
- **Decline of proxy networks:** Centralized proxies like Al-Hijra in Kenya have diminished, reflecting a strategic decentralization.

- **Emerging nationalist tendencies:** The group appears to be gradually pursuing more nationally-focused agendas, reducing direct alignment with Al-Qaeda, while still leveraging ideological legitimacy.

collaboration, and local grievances makes these groups resilient to conventional counterterrorism measures. Understanding their operational strategies, narratives, and social embedding is essential for designing effective responses.

## Emerging Trends and Strategic Observations

Zeuthen identified several critical trends shaping the threat landscape:

- **Criminal and transnational intersections:** Violent extremist groups increasingly intersect with criminal networks, other armed groups (e.g., Houthis), and illicit trade actors.
- **Climate change adaptation:** Extremists are reportedly integrating climate narratives into propaganda and operational planning.
- **Technological adoption:** The potential acquisition of weaponized drones and UAVs increases operational risk.
- **Strategic resilience:** Despite counterterrorism efforts, Al-Shabaab remains adaptive, exploiting political divisions and humanitarian funding gaps to sustain influence.

## Conclusion.

Zeuthen concluded that terrorism and violent extremism in Somalia and the wider region are highly adaptive, decentralized, and integrated with broader social, economic, and political dynamics. The combination of territorial control, sophisticated communications, criminal

## Recommendations

1. **Enhanced Intelligence and Regional Coordination** – Strengthen cross-border intelligence sharing and operational collaboration between Kenya, Somalia, and neighboring states.
2. **Targeted Counter-Narratives** – Develop strategic communication campaigns to counter extremist propaganda, leveraging local languages and addressing community grievances.
3. **Community Engagement and Resilience** – Implement programs that reduce recruitment appeal, including social services, livelihoods, and integration initiatives in vulnerable areas.
4. **Technological Preparedness** – Invest in monitoring, counter-drone capabilities, and cybersecurity measures to mitigate threats posed by technological adoption by extremist groups.
5. **Integration with Humanitarian Response** – Coordinate counterterrorism efforts with humanitarian interventions to prevent further marginalization of affected populations and reduce the exploitation of aid gaps by extremist actors.

**Input 3:** Regional P/CVE Frameworks answering whether they are Fit for Purpose presented on **Rosalind Nyawira Ph.D.**, Former Director, National Counter Terrorism Center, Kenya

## Regional P/CVE Frameworks

Dr. Nyawira began by outlining the rationale and intended objectives of regional Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) frameworks:

- **Cross-border coordination:** These frameworks are designed to facilitate cooperation between neighboring states, particularly in addressing transnational threats such as terrorism, radicalization, and the exploitation of digital technologies.
- **Shared learning and capacity building:** They promote mutual learning among member states, enhancing collective capabilities in law enforcement, intelligence, and community engagement.





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Regional frameworks integrate multiple actors, including government security institutions, civil society, religious leaders, youth groups, media, and local communities

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- **Whole-of-society approach:** Regional frameworks integrate multiple actors, including government security institutions, civil society, religious leaders, youth groups, media, and local communities. This inclusive approach aims to address root causes of violent extremism while ensuring community buy-in.
- **Harmonization of strategies:** Regional frameworks serve as templates for national P/CVE strategies, standardizing approaches to intelligence sharing, strategic communication, and financial regulation to minimize gaps across borders.

### Key Regional Frameworks and Their Features

Dr. Nyawira highlighted several major regional P/CVE initiatives and their defining characteristics:

- **IGAD (ICEPCVE, 2018):** Emphasizes an integrated approach addressing root causes, promoting inclusivity, good governance, and human rights; currently under review.
- **SADC Counter-Terrorism Strategy:** Focuses on rule of law, information sharing, institutional coordination, and addressing structural drivers of violent extremism. Implemented via the SADC Regional Counter-Terrorism Centre.
- **ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Strategy:** Highlights community engagement, regional cooperation, institutional capacity, and rule-of-law approaches, implemented with support from UNDP.
- **Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC):** Adopts an integrated, rights-based approach addressing inclusivity, governance, and root causes of extremism.
- **UNDP Regional PVE Project for Africa and Arab States:** Works across multiple sub-regions to strengthen the capacities of regional organizations.
- **Marrakech Platform (Pan-African, 2022):** Provides a forum under UNOCT for African states to share information, best practices, and coordinate P/CVE strategies across the continent.

## Achievements and Strengths

Dr. Nyawira observed that regional frameworks have several advantages:

- They recognize the transnational nature of terrorism and facilitate collaboration on financial flows, digital communications, and cross-border extremist movements.
- They create mechanisms for institutionalized cooperation and mutual accountability.
- They provide platforms for knowledge exchange, fostering harmonized strategies and shared expertise.
- They incorporate both hard security measures (law enforcement and military interventions) and soft approaches (community engagement, youth programs, and governance reforms).

## Challenges and Limitations

Despite their strengths, Dr. Nyawira identified several critical constraints affecting the effectiveness of regional P/CVE frameworks:

- Contextual diversity: African states vary widely in political, social, and economic contexts, making uniform implementation challenging.
- Resource and trust deficits: Many frameworks require sustained financial resources, political commitment, and mutual trust, which are often lacking.
- Balancing hard and soft measures: Harmonizing robust security responses with community-focused interventions without alienating populations is delicate and often inconsistently applied.
- Geopolitical and political pressures: External influences, regional rivalries, and competing strategic interests can undermine local legitimacy and effective implementation.

- Need for national adaptation: While regional strategies provide frameworks, successful P/CVE interventions must be localized, embedded in national contexts, and supported by domestic legal and institutional structures.

## Conclusion

Dr. Nyawira concluded that regional P/CVE frameworks are essential but not sufficient for preventing and countering violent extremism in Africa. They provide necessary coordination, standardization, and platforms for collaboration, but their effectiveness is limited by resource constraints, political diversity, and gaps between regional guidance and national implementation.

She emphasized that frameworks can only succeed if they are contextually adapted, inclusive, and underpinned by strong national strategies that prioritize governance, rule of law, and community trust.

## Recommendations

1. **Strengthen National Integration:** Regional frameworks should be translated into robust, actionable national P/CVE strategies, ensuring local relevance.
2. **Enhance Resources and Capacity:** Governments and regional bodies should invest in institutional capacity, training, and sustainable funding.
3. **Balance Security and Societal Engagement:** Integrate hard and soft measures carefully to address root causes while maintaining security.
4. **Foster Political Commitment and Trust:** Build long-term political will among member states, ensuring compliance and collaborative engagement.
5. **Leverage Technology and Data:** Utilize digital tools for monitoring, intelligence-sharing, and countering online extremist narratives effectively.

## Comments and Questions and Answers (Q&A)

### Question 1:

From a state perspective, what approaches would you recommend for addressing violent extremism and related security threats?

In response, it was emphasized that states must adopt a balanced approach that integrates both soft and hard security measures, with each country developing strategies



suited to its specific context. The importance of inclusive engagement was highlighted, particularly the need to bring together all relevant stakeholders, including law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, and community-based actors. Reference was made to the value of sustained capacity-building efforts, including long-term training programs and the strengthening of legal and jurisprudential frameworks. It was further stressed that engaging local communities is essential to understanding the multifaceted nature of security threats and the underlying grievances that fuel them. In the Kenyan context, attention was drawn to the cross-border dimension of the threat, where individuals may move across borders and return to carry out attacks, emphasizing the need for coordinated and community-informed responses.

### Question 2:

**Given precedents such as the Taliban's refusal to engage Qatari intermediaries while maintaining direct communication with the United States, how feasible are negotiations with Al-Shabaab, particularly in relation to its links with Al-Qaeda?**

In addressing this question, it was noted that negotiation dynamics are often driven by mutual strategic calculations, as both sides seek to determine what they stand to gain from engagement. It was argued that any negotiation framework would need to focus on localizing the group and creating internal pressures that could weaken cohesion and legitimacy. The importance of addressing the status of fighters within such groups was highlighted, particularly in terms of reintegration and accountability. Questions were also raised regarding the meaning and implications of resettlement, including whether it would reinforce centralized authority or exacerbate existing tensions in regions such as Jubaland or Somaliland. These considerations were identified as critical to shaping any credible negotiation process.

### Question 3:

**Despite sustained interventions against violent extremism in the Horn of Africa, Central Africa, and the Sahel, limited progress has been achieved. What should be done differently to address this challenge?**

In response, it was acknowledged that there have been notable military successes in degrading violent extremist groups. However, it was stressed that such gains require unity of purpose and coordinated action to prevent extremist actors from exploiting political and territorial fragmentation, particularly in Somalia. Addressing structural challenges, including political fragmentation and governance deficits, was identified as essential to reducing the operational space available to groups such as Al-Shabaab. Continued military advancement was described as a necessary component, but insufficient on its own. Attention was also drawn to the role of propaganda and information warfare, noting that extremist narratives thrive in contested spaces where alternative viewpoints are suppressed. Strengthening political and legislative frameworks, pursuing locally grounded solutions, and empowering legitimate local command and governance structures were highlighted as critical steps toward achieving sustainable progress.





# Session Four

Moderator: **Prof. Fred Jonyo, Ph.D.**, Chairman, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of Nairobi

## Panel Three: Role of Regional Institutions in Conflict Prevention and Resolution

**Input 1:** IGAD Peace Initiatives in Sudan: Successes, Failures, and Lessons presented by **Walter Ochanda**, IGAD Senior Director of Programs and Partnerships



### IGAD's Peace Efforts in Sudan

Mr. Ochanda began by contextualizing IGAD's role in Sudan's peace processes, highlighting the organization's historical engagement and evolving strategies:

- ❑ **Historical precedent:** IGAD has long served as a regional mediator, drawing on experiences from previous peace efforts including the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended the North–South civil war.
- ❑ **Member-state led mediation:** Peace processes have traditionally been spearheaded by member states, supplemented by IGAD's Special Envoy and technical support mechanisms.
- ❑ **Multi-track diplomacy:** IGAD has employed various approaches such as the trilateral mechanism, the Jeddah Declaration, and the IGADPLUS framework in South Sudan, complemented by AU–IGAD political tracks to address Sudan's conflicts comprehensively.

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... Peace processes have traditionally been spearheaded by member states, supplemented by IGAD's Special Envoy and technical support mechanisms

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- ▣ **Role of Special Envoy:** The Special Envoy facilitates dialogue through backchannel shuttle diplomacy, consults a broad spectrum of political and civilian stakeholders, and seeks to unify divergent voices while promoting inclusive negotiations.

## Successes

Mr Ochanda identified several notable achievements in IGAD's peace initiatives:

- **Dialogue facilitation:** Successful convening of multiple stakeholders, including political leaders, civil society actors, and regional partners, to foster constructive communication.
- **Inclusive frameworks:** Establishment of mechanisms that consider both political and civilian perspectives, ensuring broader representation in peace negotiations.
- **Humanitarian considerations:** Integration of immediate humanitarian priorities, including civilian protection and aid delivery, within the peace processes.
- **Ceasefire agreements:** IGAD's interventions contributed to temporary ceasefire arrangements and created a foundation for broader negotiations.

## Failures and Challenges

Despite these successes, Mr. Ochanda noted the limitations and challenges that have hindered IGAD's effectiveness:

- ▣ **Complex governance dynamics:** Parallel government formations in Nyala and Port Sudan undermined central mediation efforts, complicating political cohesion.
- ▣ **Trilateral and Quad mechanisms:** Agreements such as the Jeddah Declaration and Quad ceasefire arrangements faced implementation gaps and lacked enforceable mechanisms.
- ▣ **Global polarization:** Divergent interests of external actors, including the UN, AU, and major powers, created additional pressure and reduced IGAD's leverage.
- ▣ **Primacy versus subsidiarity:** Conflicts arose between IGAD's central coordinating role and member states' independent actions, resulting in fragmented efforts.
- ▣ **Limited enforcement capacity:** IGAD's lack of direct mechanisms to hold actors accountable often undermined compliance with agreements.

## Lessons Learned

The presentation emphasized that the experience in Sudan provides critical insights for regional peacebuilding:

- **Facilitation vs mediation:** Distinguishing between facilitating dialogue and directly mediating conflicts allows IGAD to leverage its comparative advantage effectively.
- **Division of labour:** Coordinated allocation of responsibilities between IGAD, AU, UN, and member states enhances efficiency and reduces duplication.



- **Holistic multilateral approach:** Combining inclusive political processes, humanitarian aid delivery, and civilian protection within a comprehensive strategy is essential for sustainable peace.
- **Flexibility and responsiveness:** Peace efforts must be adaptable to evolving conflict dynamics, stakeholder concerns, and geopolitical pressures.

## Conclusion

Mr. Ochanda concluded that IGAD's peace initiatives in Sudan have demonstrated both the potential and limitations of regional organizations in conflict resolution.

While IGAD has successfully fostered dialogue, coordination, and temporary ceasefires, challenges such as fragmented governance, external interference, and enforcement gaps have constrained long-term stability. Sustainable peace requires integrated, multilateral strategies that balance political, humanitarian, and security objectives while empowering local stakeholders.

## Recommendations

1. **Strengthen Coordination:** Enhance collaboration among IGAD, AU, UN, and member states to ensure unified mediation strategies.
2. **Institutionalize Accountability Mechanisms:** Develop mechanisms to enforce compliance with peace agreements and ceasefire commitments.
3. **Inclusive Political Processes:** Ensure that peace negotiations integrate diverse societal actors, including civil society, women, and youth.
4. **Integrated Humanitarian and Security Planning:** Align peace initiatives with humanitarian aid delivery and civilian protection to reinforce trust in the process.
5. **Capacity Building:** Invest in IGAD's institutional and operational capacity to respond rapidly to emerging conflict dynamics and regional crises.

**Input 2:** The EAC-led Nairobi Process on the DRC: Achievements and Challenges presented by **Maj (Rtd)**

**Beautah Mwanza Suba**, Strategic Communications Defence Diplomacy and Soft Power Specialist in Asymmetric Environment



“ ... Regional instability, resource exploitation (notably minerals), ethnic tensions, and weak governance structures have shaped the conflict dynamics

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Maj (Rtd) Mwanza Suba opened by providing a contextual overview of the protracted conflict in Eastern DRC:

- ❑ **Long-standing instability:** Violence has persisted since the 1990s, with over 100 active armed groups operating in the region.



- **Drivers of conflict:** Regional instability, resource exploitation (notably minerals), ethnic tensions, and weak governance structures have shaped the conflict dynamics.
- **Regional interventions:** The presence of the East African Community Regional Force (EACRF), MONUSCO, and SADC aimed to stabilize the area and protect civilians.
- **Recent developments:** By 2025, escalating M23 insurgency and renewed cross-border tensions noted the urgency of coordinated regional peace efforts.

The Nairobi Process, initiated in April 2022 and led by former President Uhuru Kenyatta as EAC Facilitator, was designed to address both military and political dimensions of the conflict through two complementary tracks:

1. **Track I:** Deployment of EACRF troops to stabilize conflict-affected areas.
2. **Track II:** Dialogue with armed groups and political actors to foster sustainable peace.

### Key Achievements of the Nairobi Process

Maj. Mwanza Suba highlighted significant successes achieved through the Nairobi Process:

- **Military deployment and stabilization:** Full deployment of EACRF troops in the Multinational Sector facilitated the withdrawal of M23 from key areas, maintaining ceasefire conditions for over six months.
- **Protection of strategic areas:** The process prevented threats to Goma and Sake and ensured the free movement of people and goods along critical supply routes (RN2 and RP1030).
- **Humanitarian interventions:** EACRF supported Casevac operations, facilitated aid delivery, and coordinated humanitarian assistance in conflict-affected areas.
- **Community engagement and return of civilians:** Gradual reintegration of civilians into liberated areas was supported, accompanied by Key Local Engagements (KLE) promoting peaceful coexistence.
- **Support to DDR initiatives:** Reconnaissance missions, such as the RUMANGABO pre-

cantonment site, contributed to preparations for the Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Reintegration, and Community Stabilization (P-DDRCS) process.

### Strategic Gaps and Challenges

Despite achievements, several challenges constrained the Nairobi Process:

- **Mandate limitations:** The EACRF mandate, linked to the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), was time-bound and restricted operational flexibility.
- **Implementation gaps:** Dialogue outcomes lacked a clear enforcement or monitoring framework, weakening accountability.
- **Overlapping processes:** Confusion and duplication arose from parallel initiatives, such as the Angola-led Luanda process.
- **Limited buy-in:** Some DRC government actors and armed groups perceived EAC as biased or passive, particularly regarding M23.
- **Funding constraints:** Operations heavily relied on individual member-state contributions, affecting sustainability.
- **Operational challenges:** Delays in P-DDRCS preparation, absence of local administration in liberated areas, negative propaganda, and ongoing clashes between armed groups impeded progress.

### Drivers of Optimism

Maj. Suba noted several reasons for cautious optimism:

- **Political alignment:** Renewed regional political coordination, exemplified by the Washington Accord, demonstrated commitment to peace.
- **Community resilience:** Local communities, particularly youth and women, continue to engage in peacebuilding despite adverse conditions.
- **Diplomatic achievements:** EACRF successfully facilitated the peaceful withdrawal of M23 without armed confrontation, demonstrating the effectiveness of diplomacy over force.
- **Socio-economic engagement:** Promotion of SMEs and cultural exchange initiatives strengthened local cohesion and economic stability.



## Recommendations

To consolidate gains and address ongoing challenges, Maj (Rtd) Mwanza proposed:

1. **Integrate political and military strategies:** Align dialogue outcomes with troop deployments to ensure coordinated implementation of the P-DDRCS process.
2. **Engage local armed groups:** Incorporate all relevant actors to prevent marginalization and reduce the risk of renewed insurgency.
3. **Separate mandates and streamline operations:** Clarify the scope of EACRF operations independently of SOFA limitations.
4. **Enhance humanitarian support:** Prioritize assistance to IDPs and conflict-affected communities.
5. **Strengthen local administration:** Establish functioning local governance structures in liberated areas to reinforce legitimacy.

6. **Professionalize FARDC and security sector actors:** Build institutional capacity to maintain law and order and support DDR initiatives.

7. **Coordinate infrastructure and supply routes:** Ensure safe access for civilians and economic activities in liberated zones.

## Conclusion

Maj (Rtd) Mwanza concluded that lasting peace in Eastern DRC cannot be achieved solely through military means. Success requires a holistic approach combining strategic diplomacy, regional cooperation, and community resilience. He emphasized that the current generation has both the responsibility and the opportunity to shift the trajectory of the DRC toward sustained stability, inclusive governance, and reconciliation, asserting that diplomacy and community engagement must complement military interventions to achieve durable peace.

**Input 3: Efficacy and Constraints of African Regional Bodies in Conflict Resolution** discussed by **Amb. (Eng.) Mahboub Maalim**, Former Executive Secretary, IGAD (2008–2019)

Amb. Mahboub Maalim provided a comprehensive overview of the role of African regional economic communities (RECs) and regional bodies in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Drawing on decades of experience in IGAD and broader continental engagement, he highlighted that while regional organizations have made notable strides, their efficacy is constrained by structural, political, and resource-related challenges.



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He emphasized that the African continent, home to approximately 25 percent of the Global South’s population, faces unique peace and security dynamics shaped by historical legacies, cultural contexts, and political realities. Understanding these contexts is critical to designing mechanisms that are not only functional but sustainable in resolving conflicts.

### Achievements of Regional Bodies

Amb. Maalim highlighted several key successes of African regional bodies:

- **Norm-Setting and Political Engagement:** RECs such as IGAD, ECOWAS, and the African Union have established frameworks for dialogue, mediation, and conflict management, often raising regional and continental attention to crises.
- **Conflict Prevention:** Early warning systems have allowed for proactive monitoring, particularly in contexts such as South Sudan, Somalia, and the Sahel, helping to anticipate escalation before full-scale conflict occurs.
- **Peace Processes and Mediation:** Regional bodies have facilitated successful mediations, such as IGAD’s role in the Sudan Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and ECOWAS interventions in West Africa, demonstrating capacity for negotiation and diplomatic engagement.
- **Cultural and Contextual Sensitivity:** The localized understanding of conflicts, social structures, and historical grievances has allowed African organizations to craft responses more tailored than external interventions.

### Constraints and Limitations

Despite achievements, Amb. Maalim highlighted persistent structural and operational challenges limiting the effectiveness of regional bodies:

- **Multiplicity of Organizations:** Overlapping mandates and numerous organizations addressing similar conflicts create confusion and duplication of effort.



- **Sovereignty Sensitivities:** Member states are often reluctant to fully cede authority or allow robust intervention in domestic affairs, slowing conflict resolution processes.
- **Political Divergence:** Conflicting interests among member states can impede consensus, delaying decisions and undermining collective action.
- **Resource Limitations:** Financial constraints, inadequate human capacity, and dependence on external funding reduce the ability of RECs to implement and sustain initiatives.
- **Early Warning System Gaps:** Methodologies are often generic and not fully contextualized, reducing predictive effectiveness in rapidly evolving conflict scenarios.
- **Operational Inertia:** Amb. Maalim cautioned against regional bodies acting “for the sake of doing something,” emphasizing that coordination and harmonization without strategic depth can reduce impact.

### Lessons Learned from Regional Engagement

Amb. Maalim drew on historical experiences to highlight lessons for strengthening regional conflict resolution mechanisms:

- **Intentionality and Strategic Planning:** Member states must deliberately commit to the objectives of RECs, balancing sovereignty concerns with collective security needs.
- **Partnerships:** Collaboration between regional bodies, AU, UN, and civil society is essential for coherent and sustainable peacebuilding.
- **Tailored Approaches:** Solutions must be adapted to specific conflict contexts, considering cultural, historical, and political dynamics rather than applying generic frameworks.
- **Strengthening Governance:** Internal governance of regional bodies must be robust to avoid

inefficiency and ensure accountability in peace operations.

### Conclusion

Amb. Maalim concluded that African regional bodies have demonstrated the potential to mediate, prevent, and resolve conflicts, yet persistent challenges undermine their full efficacy. Structural weaknesses, limited resources, political divergence, and overlapping mandates remain significant hurdles. For regional organizations to achieve their intended impact, deliberate reforms, stronger partnerships, and contextually informed strategies are required.

### Recommendations

Based on his analysis, Amb. Maalim recommended the following measures:

1. **Enhance Institutional Capacity:** Strengthen the administrative, operational, and financial capabilities of regional organizations.
2. **Streamline Mandates:** Clarify roles and responsibilities to reduce overlap among regional and continental mechanisms.
3. **Prioritize Political Alignment:** Encourage member states to align on security priorities, balancing sovereignty concerns with collective peace obligations.
4. **Invest in Early Warning Systems:** Tailor predictive tools to local contexts to improve conflict prevention and rapid response.
5. **Promote Partnerships:** Expand collaboration with civil society, research institutions, and international actors while maintaining African leadership in conflict resolution.
6. **Strategic Implementation:** Ensure that actions by regional bodies are purposeful, measurable, and designed to create long-term stability rather than temporary interventions.

## Comments and Questions and Answers (Q&A)

### Comment:

A reflection was offered on the Nairobi Process, questioning its overall effectiveness and tangible outcomes. It was observed that, despite extensive dialogue and deliberations, the process has largely failed to deliver meaningful results. Concerns were raised regarding



**Member states must deliberately commit to the objectives of RECs, balancing sovereignty concerns with collective security needs**



the lack of implementation of agreed outcomes, the absence of clear innovation or new approaches, and the optics surrounding the process. The comment further suggested that persistent gaps between commitments and action point to a degree of insincerity in the broader peace architecture.

### Question 1:

Given that peace remains achievable yet elusive after decades of conflict, with women and children disproportionately displaced and humanitarian funding significantly reduced, what role can regional bodies play in accelerating government efforts? How can returns be made sustainable, and how can the risk of creating breeding grounds for violent extremism be mitigated? Is the region at risk of further destabilization?

In response, it was emphasized that sustainable peace is a prerequisite for meaningful social and economic recovery, as there can be no viable future without peace. It was argued that peacebuilding efforts must involve revisiting and strengthening earlier interventions to address unresolved gaps and ensure continuity, rather than allowing initiatives to stall or collapse. Attention was drawn to the fact that peace interventions have increasingly been overtaken by external actors who leverage influence through powerful state and non-state stakeholders, often sidelining regional ownership. Strengthening the role and credibility of regional mechanisms was identified as essential to supporting government efforts, ensuring sustainable returns, and reducing the conditions that enable violent extremism to take root.

### Question 2:

Rwanda is often cited as a key actor in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), yet it has not featured prominently in this discussion. If given the opportunity to engage President Paul Kagame directly, what message would you convey?

In response, it was noted that while Rwanda is an important actor in the DRC conflict, it is not the only one. Burundi was also identified as a significant player whose role is frequently overlooked. It was argued that an overemphasis on a single actor risks introducing bias into conflict analysis and obscures the broader regional dynamics at play. The need to adopt a more balanced and comprehensive approach was emphasized, one that acknowledges the roles and responsibilities of all relevant actors rather than disproportionately focusing on one state.



# Plenary Session

## The Way Forward

Actionable Policy Recommendations presented by **Singo Mwachofi, Ph.D.**

### 1. Summary of Key Findings from the Three Panels



#### Panel 1: State Fragility, Governance and Regional Conflict

- ❑ State fragility is largely driven by weak institutions, corruption, and historical governance failures, as evidenced in countries like Sudan and the DRC.
- ❑ Civil wars and internal conflicts have long-term impacts on state cohesion, regional stability, and population displacement.
- ❑ External interference by global powers, including China, UAE, and the US, complicates conflict resolution and resource governance.
- ❑ Climate change exacerbates fragility through desertification, drought, and food insecurity, putting additional pressure on governance systems.
- ❑ Peace agreements often lack enforcement mechanisms, local ownership, and inclusive dialogue, limiting their effectiveness.

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#### Panel 2: Terrorism, Violent Extremism and Counter-Terrorism

- Al-Shabaab remains resilient and adaptive, employing IEDs, drones, and sophisticated digital propaganda.
- Terrorist networks increasingly intersect with criminal activities and exploit local grievances.





- Existing counter-terrorism frameworks are reactive, largely militarized, and insufficiently integrated with community-based approaches.
- Radicalization is fueled by marginalization, poor governance, and economic deprivation.
- Regional coordination is weak, with legal, operational, and trust deficits hampering joint efforts.

### Panel 3: Regional Institutions, Mediation and Peace Processes

- AU, IGAD, and EAC are overstretched, under-resourced, and lack enforcement capacity.
- Mediation efforts, including the Nairobi Process and Jeddah Declaration, have limited sustainability without political will and commitment.
- Parallel governments and fragmented leadership undermine peace implementation.
- Humanitarian funding is insufficient and poorly coordinated, leaving two-thirds of needs unmet.
- Local actors, including civil society, women, and youth, are often excluded from formal peace processes.

## 2. Identified Priorities for Enhancing Regional Security

| PRIORITY AREA                           | KEY OBJECTIVES                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Governance and Accountability           | Build transparent, inclusive institutions; combat corruption; enhance judicial independence.                                       |
| Regional Conflict Resolution            | Develop enforceable peace agreements with local ownership; strengthen AU/IGAD/EAC mediation and monitoring.                        |
| Integrated Counter-Terrorism Strategies | Combine security, development, and community resilience approaches; improve cross-border intelligence and joint operations.        |
| Sustainable Resource Governance         | Establish fair and transparent mineral/oil revenue-sharing mechanisms; regulate external investment to align with local stability. |
| Humanitarian and Climate Resilience     | Improve funding and coordination for crisis response; mainstream climate adaptation into security planning.                        |
| Regional Institutional Empowerment      | Enhance early warning, rapid response, and enforcement capacities; harmonize legal frameworks across member states.                |

## 3. Actionable Policy Recommendations: “What Is to Be Done?”

### Governance and Institution-Building

- Establish regional anti-corruption commissions with audit and investigative powers.
- Support civil society oversight mechanisms and independent media.
- Implement security sector reforms emphasizing accountability and community policing.

### Peace Process Enhancement

- Develop AU-led ceasefire monitoring and enforcement units.
- Mandate inclusion of women, youth, and marginalized groups in all peace negotiations.
- Create local peace committees to ensure community ownership and effective implementation.

### Counter-Terrorism and Community Resilience

- Adopt “whole-of-society” counter-terrorism frameworks integrating economic opportunity and social cohesion.
- Launch regional deradicalization and reintegration programs.
- Enhance digital surveillance and counter-narrative capabilities to combat online extremism.

### Resource Governance and Geopolitical Engagement

- Draft a regional mineral certification and revenue management pact.
- Engage China, UAE, and other external actors in transparency agreements.
- Develop local content policies to ensure communities benefit from resource extraction.

### Humanitarian and Climate Action

- Establish a regional humanitarian emergency fund with fast-track disbursement.
- Integrate climate risk assessments into national security strategies.
- Promote cross-border climate adaptation initiatives, such as drought-resistant agriculture.

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**Mechanisms or platforms should be established for dialogue among actors in conflict zones to ensure inclusive peace processes**



### Regional Institutional Reform

- Strengthen AU's Panel of the Wise and early warning systems.
- Harmonize counter-terrorism laws, extradition treaties, and border management protocols.
- Increase funding and operational autonomy for regional mediation bodies.

### Open Floor Highlights

- Global dynamics are likely to remain volatile; frontline states must prepare for evolving geopolitical shifts.
- Armed group proliferation, small arms, and light weapons pose a continuing threat.
- Mechanisms or platforms should be established for dialogue among actors in conflict zones to ensure inclusive peace processes.
- Enforcement of peace agreements requires both political will and robust institutional frameworks.

### 4. Conclusion

Dr. Mwachofi concluded that regional security depends on coordinated, multilevel approaches integrating governance reform, community resilience, and strategic diplomacy. While challenges persist from weak institutions to external interference there is an opportunity for the region to strengthen frameworks that combine preventive, responsive, and inclusive measures. Emphasis must be placed on forward-looking strategies, learning from past mistakes while preparing for shifting power dynamics and emerging security threats.





## Closing Remarks

Hassan Kannenje, Ph.D., Director, HORN Institute, in his closing remarks, emphasized that the peaceful transfer of power is not just a political ideal but also a cornerstone of lasting peace in the region. He noted that peace is built incrementally through small yet meaningful steps, beginning with individuals in their communities, institutions, and daily actions.

He highlighted the complex and interconnected challenges facing the Horn of Africa and the wider Great Lakes region, stressing that peace cannot be achieved through isolated efforts but requires deliberate, coordinated, and collective action. Dr. Kannenje emphasized the critical role of initiatives like the HORN Institute, in partnership with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, for providing platforms for dialogue, reflection, and collaboration, which bring diverse voices together to shape sustainable solutions.

He further noted that over the years, the HORN Institute has intentionally built a network of partners and structured engagements across multiple thematic areas, creating a funnel that channels ideas, expertise, and innovative approaches into tangible outcomes. Looking ahead, Dr. Kannenje remarked that many more topics, discussions, and initiatives will be explored, all aimed at fostering stability, resilience, and development in the region.

In the context of wars, conflicts, and the legacies of genocide, he emphasized the importance of active engagement by all stakeholders in peace processes, noting that each contribution, voice, and action counts. Dr. Kannenje concluded by thanking attendees for their engagement, commitment, and contributions during the symposium, and expressed his hope that their efforts will be guided by wisdom, courage, and the enduring aspiration for a peaceful and prosperous region. He ended his remarks with, "Asante sana. God bless."



















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