

# HORN *of* AFRICA BULLETIN

A publication of the Life & Peace Institute

September 2024

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## African Perspectives on the Multilateral System

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**Harnessing Environmental Programming and Climate Financing for Sustainable Peacebuilding:** Insights from the Lake Turkana Region in the Horn of Africa for the UN Summit of the Future

**Anchoring Networked Multilateralism:**  
the ICGLR and Conflict in the DRC

**A Pillar of Multilateralism:**  
the Evolution of African Union Peace Support Operations

Photoarticle:  
**Empowering Youth in the United Nations System  
& Intergenerational Collaboration**

A Conversation with Stephen Jackson:  
**Discussing Kenya as the Hub of Multilateralism in the Global South**

A Conversation with Nashiba Nakabira:  
**Empowering African Youth in Multilateral Systems**

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#### **Sweden Office:**

Kungsängsgatan 17  
753 22 Uppsala, Sweden  
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[www.life-peace.org](http://www.life-peace.org)

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# Letter from the Guest Editor

**Tim Murithi**

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**Horn of Africa Bulletin**

African Perspectives on the Multilateral System

September 2024

## GUEST EDITOR

Welcome to the September 2024 edition of the Horn of Africa Bulletin. The articles in this issue present African perspectives on the upcoming United Nations Summit of the Future, which will be convened in New York from 22–23 September 2024. The summit will bring together leaders from around the world to map out a vision for the transformation of global relations to revitalise the multilateral system. This issue is intended to provide a platform for African researchers and analysts to articulate their perspectives and offer insights on the main thematic topics relating to the summit.

Several recent UN publications are pivotal to the articles in this issue. In September 2021, UN Secretary-General António Guterres issued a report entitled “Our Common Agenda” in which he calls for the strengthening of global governance on key issues, with specific reference to geo-political insecurity, the climate emergency, the humanitarian crisis, and managing the unpredictable power of artificial intelligence.<sup>1</sup> In this report, he also proposed convening the Summit of the Future and established the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism, which subsequently issued “A Break Through for People and Planet: Effective and Inclusive Global Governance for Today and the Future”.<sup>2</sup> This report offers initial insights to inform the outcome document of the summit, the “Pact for the Future”.<sup>3</sup> In July 2023, the UN secretary-general issued a further report, “A New Agenda for Peace”, which analyses how to strengthen multilateralism as it relates to a primary function of the UN—maintaining international peace and security.<sup>4</sup> In particular, the discussions in this issue of the Horn of Africa Bulletin engage extensively with this policy brief in interrogating networked multilateralism in the promotion of peace and security on the African continent.

The first article entitled, “Harnessing Environmental Programming and Climate Financing for Sustainable Peacebuilding: Insights from the Lake Turkana Region in the Horn of Africa for the UN Summit of the Future”, is written by Abraham Ename Minko from Cameroon. His discussion responds to the urgent need for more comprehensive and integrated approaches to address the interconnected challenges of environmental degradation, climate change, and conflict—a key theme highlighted in the policy processes leading up to the UN Summit of the Future. In particular, this article examines the integration of environmental programming, climate financing, and sustainable peacebuilding in the Lake Turkana region in the Horn of Africa. By exploring the synergistic potential of these interventions, this article aims to contribute an African perspective to the global discourse on sustainable development and peace. Specifically, it looks at how environmental interventions and climate finance mechanisms can effectively contribute to sustainable peace in conflict-affected areas.



Entitled “Anchoring Networked Multilateralism: The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and Conflict in the DRC”, the second article is by Nathan Mwesigye Byamukama from Uganda, a former regional director at the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). Bringing an insider perspective to his analysis, he looks at the role of regional economic communities in contributing to networked multilateralism through their peace and security interventions, with a specific focus on ICGLR interventions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Importantly, the article also highlights the challenges impeding ICGLR effectiveness as a cornerstone for networked multilateralism to provide insights into both the potentials and limitations of this approach in addressing regional challenges. He closes his discussion with a focus on how multilateralism can be revitalised through more engaged partnerships with regional organisations.

The third article, “A Pillar of Multilateralism: The Evolution of the African Union Peace Support Operations”, is from the guest editor, Tim Murithi from Kenya. He interrogates the emergence of the African Union (AU) as a pillar of multilateralism and the transformation of global governance, with a discussion of how the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2719 can contribute to the evolution of African-led peace support operations. In particular, this article assesses the role that will be assigned to the AU through the UNSCR 2719 in managing African-led peace support operations and argue that this constitutes a devolution of significant international authority to a continental organisation in pursuit of the promotion of peace and security.

This issue includes a photo essay by Martin Mwaluma Kasina, which explores the importance of youth perspectives, as highlighted during the UN Civil Society Conference in Nairobi in convened on 9–10 May 2024. At this gathering, young participants advocated for greater inclusion in the decision-making processes within multilateral institutions to address key issues affecting the world including geopolitical conflict, climate emergency, food insecurity, refugee flows and humanitarian crises. The UN

Conference appealed for a more pronounced role for civil society actors and social movements in ensuring that local, national and regional perspectives are included in the deliberations and decision-making processes within international organisations to ensure that the wisdom and insights from the full spectrum of humanity are articulated and incorporated into policy processes.

This issue also features two interviews. The first is with Stephen Jackson, the UN resident coordinator in Kenya, who discusses the unique role Kenya plays in multilateralism, UN work in Kenya and the Horn of Africa, and the invaluable contribution of civil society to peace and security. The second interview is with Nashiba Nakabira, AU youth ambassador for peace (AYAP) for Eastern Africa, who shares insights on African youth participation in the multilateral system, including key issues these youth face. She also talks about AU efforts to support and amplify youth voices, especially in relation to peace and security initiatives.

**“The timeliness and relevance of this issue of the Horn of Africa Bulletin cannot be overstated, nor can the importance of the African perspectives it presents be underestimated.”**

The timeliness and relevance of this issue of the Horn of Africa Bulletin cannot be overstated, nor can the importance of the African perspectives it presents be underestimated. Created to address the problems of the world in 1945, the UN is self-evidently no longer fit for purpose

## “... the Summit of the Future is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape multilateralism.”

in its current form in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In particular, the UN charter has not undergone any meaningful review in the 80-year existence of the organisation. Thus, the Summit of the Future is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape multilateralism. When the current multilateral system was established, the majority of the African continent was still under the tutelage of enforced European colonialism. Consequently, African countries were largely absent as this new multilateral system first became operationalised. This has had profound and far-reaching implications in terms of African exclusion from key decision-making platforms – notably, the UN Security Council. The continent also remains marginalised in terms of the decision-making processes of global financial institutions.

Since then, Africa has been trying to challenge and dispense with paternalistic attitudes from, and within, the UN system. Africa has consistently argued for its increased inclusion in the decision-making systems and processes of the multilateral system, based on the principles of equity, fairness, and justice. African policymakers, analysts, and researchers have repeatedly emphasised the equality and dignity of *all* people and have emphasised that *all* countries and societies should commit to the renewal of the principles that initially animated the UN charter and all of the provisions of international law. This issue of the Horn of Africa Bulletin is part of the contribution from the African continent in shaping the ongoing debate on the much-needed transformation of the multilateral system. It also complements a number of interventions that have taken place across the African continent.

For nearly 20 years, Africa has voiced concern about the need for change in the existing UN system. In March

2005, for example, the AU issued a declaration known as “The Common African Position on the Proposed Reform of the United Nations: The Ezulwini Consensus”.<sup>5</sup> Since 2005, the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government has consistently maintained the issue of UN Security Council reform as an agenda item of their annual summits and have designated a group of ten heads of state and government—the AU Committee of Ten—to continue advocating for this issue. A High-Level Panel of African Experts on the Reform of the Multilateral System was also convened in Addis Ababa between 2023 and 2024. Aligned with this issue of the Horn of Africa Bulletin, their report asserts that a new reformed multilateralism must recognise and institutionalise regional organisations, especially the AU, as a pillar of the collective security and development system anchored in the UN charter.<sup>6</sup> Most recently, the AU convened an African regional dialogue on the Summit of the Future from 4–6 March 2024 in Abuja, Nigeria. Focused on the theme of “The Africa We Want and The United Nations We Need”, the dialogue calls for the democratisation of the UN Security Council by establishing two new permanent seats for the African continent and reiterates the importance of invoking Article 109 to convene a UN Charter Review Conference as a key outcome of the upcoming summit.<sup>7</sup>

Given this rich and long-lived context of action and ideas, we invite you to engage with this issue, which is a timely and necessary contribution of African perspectives to ongoing debate and discussion about how multilateralism can be transformed in the twenty-first century to enhance efforts to promote peace and security.

Warm regards,  
Tim Murithi



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## Endnotes

*The Letter from the Guest Editor*

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# Harnessing Environmental Programming and Climate Financing for Sustainable Peacebuilding: *Insights from the Lake Turkana Region in the Horn of Africa for the UN Summit of the Future*

**Abraham Ename Minko**

*Senior researcher and policy analyst in  
peace, security, and conflict resolution*

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## INTRODUCTION

The policy processes leading up to the United Nations (UN) *Summit of the Future: Multilateral Solutions for a Better Tomorrow* (22–23 September 2024 in New York) highlight the urgent need for more comprehensive and integrated approaches to address the interconnected challenges of environmental degradation, climate change, and conflict. In alignment with the goals outlined in the draft text, “Pact for the Future”, this article investigates the integration of environmental programming, climate financing, and sustainable peacebuilding in the Lake Turkana region in the Horn of Africa. In particular, it seeks to generate insights that can inform the policy deliberations in the lead-up to the UN Summit of the Future. By exploring the synergistic potential of these interventions, this article aims to contribute an African perspective to the global discourse on sustainable development and peace. Specifically, it examines how environmental interventions and climate finance mechanisms can effectively contribute to sustainable peace in conflict-affected areas.

The Lake Turkana region is characterised by environmental degradation, resource scarcity, and ongoing conflicts over land and water resources. As a case study, it showcases the policy connections between environmental programming, climate financing, and peacebuilding efforts. The effectiveness of these interventions on local communities is premised on their pursuit of inclusive and participatory capacity-building efforts and the forging of multi-stakeholder partnerships. This article underscores the importance of an inclusive approach that involves a range of actors—local communities, governments, and



international actors—in collaborative efforts to ensure that interventions contribute toward building resilience through contextually relevant initiatives.

The Lake Turkana case study offers valuable insights into the potential of harnessing environmental programming and climate financing for sustainable peacebuilding across Africa. It provides a framework that can be adapted and applied to other parts of the world facing similar challenges. It therefore provides important insights that can inform the policy deliberations relating to the UN Summit of the Future. In particular, this analysis interrogates how international and continental African institutions frame these environmental interventions, advocating for policies that are supportive of integrated approaches and aligned with broader sustainable development goals. Overall, the Lake Turkana case study contributes to the development of a greater understanding of how targeted environmental and climate finance interventions can address some of the critical issues identified in the draft UN report, “Pact for the Future”, paving the way for sustainable peace and development in regions marred by conflict and environmental challenges.<sup>1</sup>

## ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AS A DRIVER OF CONFLICT

Environmental degradation is a potent catalyst for conflict in the Lake Turkana region, amplifying existing tensions and triggering violent confrontations over dwindling resources.<sup>2</sup> The arid and semi-arid landscapes of the Horn of Africa are particularly vulnerable to environmental stressors such as water scarcity, land degradation, and erratic rainfall patterns. The “Outcome Report of the African Regional Dialogue on The Summit of the Future, The Africa We Want and The United Nations We Need” (hereafter “The Africa We Want and The United Nations We Need”) report asserts that these environmental challenges necessitate urgent and coordinated responses to prevent conflicts and promote sustainable development.<sup>3</sup> This aligns with the emphasis of “Pact for the Future” on addressing environmental issues as integral to achieving peace and security. For instance, the diminishing water

levels of Lake Turkana, which first began to be observed in the early 2000s, have been a growing concern over the years.<sup>4</sup> This is exacerbated by climate change and unsustainable water extraction for agriculture and hydroelectric projects, practices that have sparked conflicts between pastoralist communities and fisherfolk who depend on the lake for their livelihoods.<sup>5</sup> The depletion of grazing lands due to desertification and deforestation further intensifies competition for dwindling resources, leading to clashes among and between pastoralist and agricultural communities over access to pasture and water points.<sup>6</sup> These environmental pressures intersect with ethnic, political, and socio-economic dynamics, fuelling cycles of violence and displacement in the region.<sup>7</sup>

In recent years, conflicts over natural resources have escalated into deadly skirmishes between rival pastoralist groups, such as the Turkana, Samburu, and Pokot communities, who vie for control over grazing areas and water sources. For example, clashes between Turkana herders and neighbouring communities in the borderlands of Kenya and Ethiopia have resulted in the loss of lives, displacement of populations, and widespread insecurity.<sup>9</sup> “The Africa We Want and The United Nations We Need” report notes that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons exacerbates the impact of resource-based conflicts, escalating disputes into protracted violence and hindering efforts toward a peaceful resolution. As the same report notes, in addition to intercommunal conflicts, environmental degradation also contributes to tensions between local communities and external actors, including government agencies, private investors, and multinational corporations involved in large-scale development projects in the region.<sup>10</sup> The construction of dams and irrigation schemes, along with the presence of extractive industries, often leads to land grabs, environmental pollution, and the displacement of indigenous peoples, sparking resistance movements and conflicts over land rights and natural resource governance.<sup>11</sup>

As emphasised in “Our Common Agenda”, a report by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, addressing the root causes of environmental degradation requires



holistic approaches that integrate environmental sustainability with conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts.<sup>12</sup> Initiatives that promote sustainable natural resource management, community-based conservation, and equitable access to water and land can help mitigate conflict risks and build resilience in the Lake Turkana region. For instance, projects focusing on reforestation, soil conservation, and water harvesting techniques empower local communities to adapt to climate change and reduce their vulnerability to environmental shocks. As stated in the report of the UN secretary-general, entitled “A New Agenda for Peace”, peacebuilding initiatives that foster dialogue, reconciliation, and conflict mediation among diverse stakeholders are essential for building trust, fostering social cohesion, and preventing the escalation of conflicts over natural resources.<sup>13</sup> The High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism, which was convened by Guterres in 2023, observes that by addressing the interconnected challenges of environmental degradation and conflict, stakeholders can work towards building a more peaceful and sustainable future for the inhabitants of the Lake Turkana region, along with the lake itself and the surrounding geography.<sup>14</sup>

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACEBUILDING

In the Lake Turkana region of the Horn of Africa, amidst the challenges posed by environmental degradation and conflict, significant opportunities exist for sustainable peacebuilding through innovative approaches that prioritise environmental sustainability. One such opportunity lies in the promotion of eco-friendly livelihoods that simultaneously address environmental concerns and foster peaceful coexistence among communities, as outlined in “Our Common Agenda”.<sup>15</sup> Initiatives that promote sustainable agriculture practices, such as agroforestry and conservation agriculture, not only enhance food security and resilience to climate change but also mitigate land degradation and reduce competition over scarce resources.<sup>16</sup> By providing alternative income sources and reducing dependency on unsustainable practices such as charcoal production and illegal logging, these

initiatives simultaneously contribute to poverty alleviation and conflict prevention in the region.

As noted in “A New Agenda for Peace”, initiatives that can contribute towards sustainable peacebuilding are anchored in the development of community-based natural resource management systems that empower local stakeholders to collectively govern and sustainably manage their environment.<sup>17</sup> For example, community-based conservancies in northern Kenya, such as the Borana Conservancy, unite pastoralist communities, conservation organisations, and government agencies in collaborative efforts to manage wildlife and natural resources. The Borana Conservancy, as with other similar initiatives in the region, seeks to balance the needs of local communities with conservation goals by promoting sustainable land use practices, enhancing security, and generating income through eco-tourism. This model of shared responsibility aims to protect endangered species while supporting the livelihoods of pastoralist communities that have long relied on these lands. By fostering collaborative decision-making, equitable benefit sharing, and effective conflict resolution mechanisms, these conservancies both contribute to biodiversity conservation and promote peace and stability by addressing underlying grievances and building social cohesion among diverse ethnic groups.<sup>18</sup>

As “The Africa We Want and the United Nations We Need” report suggests, there is growing recognition of the potential for renewable energy projects to act as catalysts for sustainable peacebuilding in the Lake Turkana region. For instance, the Lake Turkana Wind Power project, one of the largest wind farms in Africa, provides clean and affordable electricity to communities in the region at the same time as it generates employment opportunities and supports local development initiatives. By reducing reliance on fossil fuels and mitigating the adverse impacts of climate change, renewable energy projects contribute to environmental sustainability while also fostering economic development and social inclusion, thereby laying the foundations for peace and stability in the region.<sup>19</sup>



To promote and consolidate sustainable peacebuilding in the Lake Turkana region, “A New Agenda for Peace” recommends enhancing partnerships between local communities, civil society organisations, and international donors.<sup>20</sup> For example, the United Nations Development Programme has partnered with local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and government agencies to implement a peace, security, and development programme in the Horn of Africa, which seeks to address the root causes of conflict by promoting inclusive governance, livelihoods diversification, and environmental resilience. By leveraging resources and expertise from diverse stakeholders, such initiatives can scale up impact, build local capacity, and foster sustainable peacebuilding processes that are rooted in the aspirations and priorities of the communities they serve, as recommended by the UN secretary-general in his report, “Our Common Agenda”.<sup>21</sup>

There are opportunities to lay the foundations for sustainable peacebuilding in the Lake Turkana region, so long as the key stakeholders adopt a holistic and integrated approach that recognises the interlinkages between environmental sustainability, conflict resolution, and development. By harnessing the potential of eco-friendly livelihoods, community-based natural resource management, renewable energy projects, and multi-stakeholder partnerships, the region can overcome the challenges

posed by environmental degradation and conflict to pave the way for a more peaceful and sustainable future. This point is reinforced in “The Africa We Want and The United Nations We Need” report, which notes that integrated and participatory approaches are essential for addressing the multifaceted challenges in conflict-affected regions.<sup>22</sup>

### ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT AND FINANCING

In July 2022, Prime Minister Mia Mottley of Barbados convened a high-level retreat to discuss the state of the international financial architecture (IFA). This meeting resulted in the Bridgetown Initiative, which is an evolving set of proposals aimed at reforming the IFA to better address the needs of developing countries, particularly in response to climate change and economic crises.<sup>23</sup> External assistance, including funding from international organisations, donor agencies, and climate financing mechanisms, plays a crucial role in supporting efforts to address the complex nexus between environmental degradation and conflict. As the UN secretary-general also states in “A New Agenda for Peace”, the role of international support and financing is pivotal in driving sustainable peacebuilding efforts in the Lake Turkana region of the Horn of Africa.<sup>24</sup> One notable example of international support is the Green Climate Fund (GCF), which provides financial resources to developing countries to

“A New Agenda for Peace”, the role of international support and financing is pivotal in driving sustainable peacebuilding efforts in the Lake Turkana region of the Horn of Africa.”

**António Guterres**  
*UN secretary-general*

## “The *Africa We Want* and *The United Nations We Need*”, international actors can also play a crucial role in advocating for policy reforms and institutional changes that promote environmental sustainability and peacebuilding in the Lake Turkana region.”

mitigate and adapt to climate change. In the Lake Turkana region, GCF funding has been allocated to projects that promote renewable energy, water management, and sustainable agriculture, thereby contributing to environmental resilience and peacebuilding efforts in the region.<sup>25</sup> As further indicated in “A New Agenda for Peace”, international organisations such as the UN, the African Union (AU), and the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), play a key role in facilitating multilateral cooperation and coordination among countries in the Horn of Africa to address common challenges related to environmental degradation and conflict.<sup>26</sup> For instance, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) works closely with national governments and local stakeholders in Africa to develop regional strategies and action plans for sustainable natural resource management and conflict prevention.<sup>27</sup> This reflects a key recommendation in “A New Agenda for Peace: International organisations should utilise and leverage capacity-building initiatives, technical assistance, and knowledge exchange platforms to strengthen the capacity of local actors to design and implement effective peacebuilding interventions that are contextually relevant and sustainable.”<sup>28</sup>

Bilateral and multilateral donor agencies provide financial and technical assistance to support peacebuilding initiatives in the Lake Turkana region. For example, the European Union (EU) has funded projects aimed at promoting sustainable development, conflict resolution, and environmental conservation in the Horn of Africa.<sup>29</sup> These projects encompass a wide range of activities, including community-based natural resource management, livelihoods diversification, and peacebuilding dialogues, which contribute to building resilience and fostering inclusive and peaceful societies in the region.

In addition to financial support, as indicated in “The Africa We Want and The United Nations We Need”, international actors can also play a crucial role in advocating for policy reforms and institutional changes that promote environmental sustainability and peacebuilding in the Lake Turkana region.<sup>30</sup> For instance, International Alert, a peacebuilding organisation, engages in policy advocacy and dialogue facilitation to promote inclusive governance, resource sharing, and conflict-sensitive natural resource management practices.<sup>31</sup> By raising awareness, building consensus, and mobilising political will at the national and regional levels, international actors contribute to creating an enabling environment for sustainable peacebuilding efforts to thrive.<sup>32</sup>

The “The Africa We Want and The United Nations We Need” report emphasises that the role of international support and financing is indispensable in advancing sustainable peacebuilding efforts in the Lake Turkana region.<sup>33</sup> Through financial assistance, technical expertise, and policy advocacy, international actors contribute to strengthening the resilience of local communities, fostering inclusive governance, and addressing the root causes of environmental degradation and conflict. By working in partnership with local stakeholders and leveraging resources from diverse sources, international support can help unlock the full potential of the Lake Turkana region to build a peaceful and sustainable future for generations to come.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND LOCAL OWNERSHIP

Community engagement and local ownership are essential pillars in the pursuit of sustainable peacebuilding in



the Lake Turkana region. In particular, “A New Agenda for Peace” argues that empowering local communities to actively participate in decision-making processes and take ownership of peacebuilding initiatives is critical for ensuring their relevance, effectiveness, and long-term sustainability.<sup>34</sup> One example of successful community engagement is the Turkana Basin Institute (TBI), an organisation that collaborates closely with local communities to conduct scientific research, environmental conservation, and cultural heritage preservation. Through community-led initiatives such as wildlife monitoring, reforestation projects, and educational programmes, the TBI fosters a sense of ownership and stewardship among residents, thereby promoting environmental sustainability and peacebuilding at the grassroots level.

As proposed in “Our Common Agenda”, participatory approaches that prioritise the voices and perspectives of marginalised groups, especially women, youth, and Indigenous peoples, are essential for building inclusive and resilient communities in the Lake Turkana region.<sup>35</sup> For instance, the Samburu Women Trust, a local NGO, empowers women from pastoralist communities to participate in peace-building activities, natural resource management, and income-generating projects.<sup>36</sup> By providing training, advocacy support, and networking opportunities, the organisation enables women to play active roles in conflict resolution, decision-making, and community development, thereby strengthening social cohesion and promoting gender equality in the region.

The “The Africa We Want and The United Nations We Need” report argues that fostering partnerships and collaboration among diverse stakeholders is key to enhancing community engagement and local ownership in peacebuilding efforts.<sup>37</sup> For example, the Lake Turkana Fisheries Project, implemented by the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute in partnership with local fishing communities, aims to promote sustainable fisheries management, income diversification, and conflict resolution along the shores of Lake Turkana.<sup>38</sup> By establishing co-management structures, community-based organisations, and resource-sharing agreements, the project enables local stakeholders to collectively govern

and sustainably manage their fishery resources, thereby reducing conflicts over access and promoting peaceful coexistence among competing user groups.

In addition to building the capacity of local communities to lead peacebuilding initiatives, “The Africa We Want and The United Nations We Need” report suggests that it is essential to mainstream conflict sensitivity and community resilience into development interventions and public policies in the Lake Turkana region.<sup>39</sup> For instance, the Kenya Integrated Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (KIWASH) project, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), integrates conflict-sensitive approaches into water resource management and sanitation programmes in arid and semi-arid areas, including the Lake Turkana region.<sup>40</sup> By engaging with local communities, traditional leaders, and government authorities, KIWASH promotes dialogue, cooperation, and sustainable solutions to water-related challenges, thus contributing to peacebuilding and stability in the region.

Community engagement and local ownership are fundamental principles that underpin sustainable peacebuilding efforts in the Lake Turkana region.<sup>41</sup> “The Africa We Want and The United Nations We Need” report recommends that by empowering communities to take ownership of their development processes, fostering inclusive partnerships, and mainstreaming conflict sensitivity into interventions, stakeholders can build resilient and peaceful societies that are grounded in the aspirations and priorities of the people they serve.<sup>42</sup> Through collaborative efforts and participatory approaches, the Lake Turkana region can harness its rich cultural heritage, natural resources, and human capital to build a future of peace, prosperity, and sustainability.

## PROSPECTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMMING AND CLIMATE FINANCING IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

The UN Summit of the Future and the framing of the draft “Pact for the Future” report can play a crucial policy role in shaping the effectiveness and sustainability of local



peacebuilding efforts, such as the initiatives in the Lake Turkana region, as well as across the African continent and other parts of the world. The “Pact for the Future” report presents an important opportunity to develop a forward-looking policy framework to provide the legal and regulatory foundation. This is necessary for addressing the complex interplay between environmental degradation, conflict dynamics, and sustainable development in regions such as the Horn of Africa. International policy frameworks can be reinforced by national-level initiatives, such as the Kenyan government National Climate Change Action Plan (2013–2017; 2018–2022).<sup>43</sup> These documents outline strategies for mainstreaming climate change considerations into national development policies and programmes, including efforts to enhance resilience, mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, and promote sustainable livelihoods in arid and semi-arid areas such as the Lake Turkana region. By providing a roadmap for coordinated action across different sectors and levels of governance, policy frameworks help align priorities, mobilise resources, and ensure coherence in peacebuilding interventions aimed at addressing environmental challenges and fostering sustainable development.<sup>44</sup>

Moreover, institutional support is essential for translating policy objectives into concrete actions and outcomes on the ground. National and local government agencies, as well as civil society organisations and international partners, play key roles in implementing peacebuilding initiatives, providing technical assistance, and mobilising resources to support local communities. For example, the Kenya Wildlife Service works collaboratively with local communities and conservation organisations to manage protected areas and wildlife habitats in the Lake Turkana region, which promotes biodiversity conservation and ecotourism as alternative livelihoods. By strengthening institutional capacities, enhancing coordination mechanisms, and promoting inclusive governance structures, stakeholders can ensure that peacebuilding efforts are effectively implemented, monitored, and evaluated to achieve tangible results and lasting impacts in the region.

Fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaboration is also essential for addressing the complex and interconnected challenges facing the Lake Turkana region. For instance, the Lake Turkana Basin Commission (LTBC), established by Kenya and Ethiopia, provides a platform for riparian countries to jointly manage transboundary water resources, promote sustainable development, and prevent conflicts over shared natural resources. By facilitating dialogue, knowledge exchange, and joint planning among governments, local communities, and other stakeholders, the LTBC promotes peaceful coexistence, equitable resource sharing, and regional integration in the Lake Turkana Basin. Similarly, initiatives such as the Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework for the Great Lakes Region bring together governments, regional organisations, and international partners to address the root causes of conflict and promote stability, development, and environmental sustainability in the Horn of Africa.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to strengthening policy frameworks and institutional capacities, it is essential to ensure that peacebuilding efforts are responsive to the needs and priorities of local communities in the Lake Turkana region. “A New Agenda for Peace” calls for meaningful engagement with affected populations, including women, youth, and marginalised groups, which is critical for promoting ownership, participation, and inclusivity in decision-making processes.<sup>46</sup> For example, the Turkana County Peace and Reconciliation Committee, composed of traditional elders, religious leaders, and civil society representatives, facilitates dialogue, conflict mediation, and reconciliation efforts at the grassroots level to address intercommunal tensions and promote social cohesion. By empowering local communities to take ownership of their peacebuilding processes, stakeholders can build trust, foster resilience, and promote sustainable peace in the Lake Turkana region and beyond.

## CONCLUSION

Policy frameworks such as the draft “Pact for the Future” can guide key stakeholders and generate the levels of





institutional support necessary for contributing to effective and sustainable local peacebuilding. By establishing the legal and regulatory frameworks, strengthening institutional capacities, and fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships, the stakeholders involved in policy deliberations for the UN Summit of the Future can play a critical role in addressing the root causes of conflict, promoting environmental sustainability, and building resilient, peaceful societies in the region. The inclusive and collaborative initiatives being undertaken by a range of actors at the community, national, and regional levels are laying the foundations to address the challenges posed by environmental degradation and conflict in the Lake Turkana region. The experiences generated from this region provide important insights that can inform the policy deliberations, which are part of the UN Summit of the Future and are aligned with “A New Agenda for Peace”, with its aspirations to forge a more prosperous, equitable, and peaceful future for humanity.

#### Author information & contact

### Abraham Ename Minko

Abraham Ename Minko is completing a PhD in political science and international relations at Istanbul University in Türkiye. A Cameroonian, he also serves as a senior researcher and policy analyst in peace, security, and conflict resolution. His areas of interest include peace and conflict resolution, mediation and negotiation, the AU African peace and security architecture, UN peacekeeping operations, peacebuilding and peacekeeping, international humanitarian law and armed conflict, and terrorism and countering violent extremism.

He can be reached by email at:

[abrahamminko@gmail.com](mailto:abrahamminko@gmail.com)

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# Anchoring Networked Multilateralism: *the ICGLR and Conflict in the DRC*

**Nathan Mwesigye Byamukama**

*Founder of the Regional Centre for Human  
Security in the Great Lakes Region*

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## INTRODUCTION

As global challenges become increasingly interconnected and complex, the concept of networked multilateralism has gained prominence, offering a more collaborative, inclusive, and flexible alternative to traditional approaches. Regional organisations such as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) play a pivotal role in this framework, contributing to peace, security, and development.

A 2021 report by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, “Our Common Agenda”, highlights the necessity of coordinated regional and networked multilateral approaches to better ensure inclusive and effective efforts to security, governance, and development, underscoring the importance of the creation and involvement of regional organisations.<sup>1</sup> Along similar lines, a 2023 policy brief by Guterres, “A New Agenda for Peace”, states, “Regional frameworks and organisations are critical building blocks for networked multilateralism. They are urgent in regions where long-standing security architectures are collapsing or where they have never been built.”<sup>2</sup> In particular, the report emphasises the importance of the wider UN system in providing support to regional organisations in the area of peace making and peacekeeping.<sup>3</sup>

Networked multilateralism has been discussed in various United Nations (UN) forums. The UN High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism, for example, highlights the role of regional organisations and emphasises that networked multilateralism should lay the foundations for a more integrated and cooperative global governance system.<sup>4</sup> In preparation for the Summit of the Future (22–23 September 2024 in New York), the board has assessed how a system of networked multilateralism can harness the strengths and capabilities of regional entities, promote shared responsibilities, and ensure a more responsive and resilient approach to global challenges such as peace, security, and sustainable development. The draft report “Pact for the Future” also asserts that regional organisations can contribute to networked multilateralism through enhanced coordination, information sharing, and joint initiatives by leveraging the unique strengths of each organisation and overcoming fragmentation to create more cohesive and effective responses to emerging global challenges and threats.<sup>5</sup>



This article explores the role of ICGLR as an anchor for networked multilateralism in the Great Lakes Region of Africa, with a specific focus on promoting peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). It assesses ICGLR efforts to address instability in the DRC—characterised by military confrontations, proxy forces, and ethnic violence—which hinders regional stability and development. The article also highlights challenges that have impeded ICGLR effectiveness as a cornerstone for networked multilateralism, providing insights into both the potentials and limitations of this approach in addressing regional challenges.

In particular, the article specifically assesses ICGLR efforts to operationalise its founding instrument, the Pact on Security, Stability, and Development in the Great Lakes Region. It examines the extent to which the ICGLR has partnered and networked with other multilateral actors to achieve its stated objectives. The article concludes with key insights designed to contribute to the deliberations for the UN Summit of the Future, focusing on how multilateralism can be revitalised through more engaged partnerships with regional organisations.

### SITUATING INSTABILITY IN THE DRC

Despite its instability, the DRC continues to be exploited by external forces. This undermines efforts by the Congolese to secure, stabilise, and promote peace in their country, the potential of which remains largely untapped due to unresolved conflicts and systemic challenges. The DRC is endowed with some of the world's most strategic minerals and the second-largest tropical rainforest. The country therefore plays a crucial role in global industry, biodiversity, and climate regulation.

For several decades, conflict in the DRC has become endemic, driven by a combination of internal and external factors, and defined by cyclical and recurring violent confrontation. To date there are an estimated 150 armed militia groups active in eastern DRC. These groups, including the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), the Lord's

Resistance Army (LRA), and the Popular Forces of Burundi (FPB) often originate from neighbouring countries. They destabilise and exploit Congolese territory while using it as a base to destabilise their countries of origin; notably, Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi. There are also numerous DRC militia; notably, the Mai-Mai Nyatura Militia, March 23 Movement (M23), Cooperative for the Development of the Congo (CODECO), Red Tabara, National Liberation Forces (FNL), and the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP). All these groups add to the cacophony of rebel fighting in the DRC, with cross-border ramifications necessitating regional responses for more effective conflict resolution.

### AFRICAN REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS AS ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS FOR NETWORKED MULTILATERALISM

As African countries gained political independence in the late 1950s and 1960s, debates arose regarding the continent's future. The Casablanca group advocated for immediate political unity, while the Monrovia group preferred a gradual approach to African unity and independence<sup>7</sup>. In 1963, the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which later evolved into the African Union (AU), represented a compromise between these positions. The OAU focused on unity, sovereignty, independence, cooperation, and the eradication of colonialism. Although initially less effective in conflict resolution due to its policy of non-interference, the OAU's transformation into the AU in 2001 marked a shift from non-interference to "non-indifference" by committing to active involvement in preventing war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity wherever they (or threaten to) occur in any of the AU member state(s)<sup>8</sup>. Throughout the 1970s, as more nations gained independence, the Lagos Plan of Action and the Treaty of Lagos emphasised economic integration, leading to the establishment of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) across Africa to enhance regional cooperation and economic development.<sup>9</sup>

## Regional Economic Communities

As countries pursued regional integration, a multitude of RECs emerged in Africa. By 2007, the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) noted the existence of "14 regional integration groupings, with two or more in almost all sub-regions", with one country, the DRC, belonging to 4 of them.<sup>10</sup> REC examples include the re-established East African Community (EAC), founded in 1967 and revived in 1999, and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), which succeeded the Preferential Trade Area in 1993. The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), established in 1992, succeeded the Southern Africa Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) formed in 1980, with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) established in 1983.

Other notable RECs include the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), established in 1996, transformed from the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) in 1986. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (1975), Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) (1993), and the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) (1998) were all supported by the Lagos Plan of Action. These regional economic groupings incrementally began to overlap in terms of their member states.<sup>11</sup> In addition, these regional organisations were gradually compelled to contribute to anchoring multilateralism in their own regions, specifically on peace and security. There are now recommendations that African RECs should also have capacities for effective conflict management, including in the area of peacekeeping.<sup>12</sup>

## Pan-African multilateralism and the Lagos Plan of Action

While the primary focus of these RECs under the Lagos Plan of Action was on economic development and integration, political considerations, including peace, security, and conflict resolution, were not entirely sidelined. Over time, the RECs expanded their mandates to include these areas based on recognising the necessity of addressing the political realities and challenges faced by their member states.

In 1996, for instance, SADC established its "Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security", which was given a legal framework in the form of its "Protocol on Politics, Defence, and Security Co-operation", adopted in 2001.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the 1999 EAC treaty emphasises "widening and deepening cooperation among partner states in political, economic, social, and cultural fields, as well as in research and technology, defense, security, and legal and judicial affairs for their mutual benefit".<sup>14</sup>

When the DRC joined SADC in September 1997, it did so amidst insecurity, particularly from its East African neighbours, Uganda and Rwanda, during the Second Congo War (1998–2003). In April 2022, the DRC finally joined the EAC by acceding to its founding East African Community Treaty. When handing over instruments of ratification to the EAC secretariat, the DRC vice prime minister and minister of foreign affairs, Christopher Lutundura Pen Apala, acknowledged the importance of networked multilateralism. He states, "The region has challenges of insecurity that can best be addressed collectively by partner states for the well-being of their peoples."<sup>15</sup>

## ICGLR contributions to multilateral efforts promoting peace and security in the DRC

The ICGLR is a regional political and diplomatic grouping formed in the early 2000s to address regional challenges with regional solutions.<sup>16</sup> Emerging in response to the conflicts in the DRC and the Rwanda genocide in the 1990s, the ICGLR became operational in 2007. The lessons from the inability of the international community to halt the Rwanda genocide, along with the subsequent involvement of neighbouring countries in the DRC conflict, prompted the UN to recommend regional action, supported by the AU and Great Lakes Region leaders.

In particular, under UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) 1291 and 1304 of 2000, African heads of state were urged to convene a regional conference to address the conflicts in the Great Lakes Region.<sup>17</sup> In 2004, this led to the "Dar es Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy, and Development in the Great Lakes



## “..the UNSCR resolutions thus paved the way for the emergence of the ICGLR as an anchor regional organisation to undertake the task of promoting security, stability, and development.”

Region”.<sup>18</sup> Following this, the founding instrument of the ICGLR, the “Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region”, was developed in 2006.<sup>19</sup> It recognises that peace, security, and development are not mutually exclusive, and that conflicts fuel poverty, under-development, human rights violations, and other crises. The UNSCR resolutions thus paved the way for the emergence of the ICGLR as an anchor regional organisation to undertake the task of promoting security, stability, and development.

As stated in the preamble of the ICGLR Pact and the ICGLR Dar es Salaam Declaration, member state leaders commit to regular political consultations in order to:

transform the Great lakes Region into a space of cooperation based on the strategies and policies within the framework of a common destiny ... in conformity also with the AU vision and mission, with full participation of all our peoples and in partnership with the United Nations, the African Union and the international community as a whole.<sup>20</sup>

In effect, this created a unique platform that shows how international and regional organisations can collaborate through networked multilateralism. As such, the ICGLR is a concrete example for interaction among members of SADC, COMESA, EAC, ECCAS, IGAD, AU and the UN system.

The ICGLR initially instituted regional and national forums for women, youth, the private sector, media, and civil society, as well as regional and national committees on the prevention of genocide. The ICGLR Forum of Parliaments was also established, with head-

quarters in Kinshasa. These forums and committees serve as central nodes in networked multilateralism, feeding into decision-making bodies.<sup>21</sup> The ICGLR structure revolves around four core clusters (which later evolved into directorates) outlined in the ICGLR Pact: 1) Peace and Security, 2) Democracy and Good Governance, 3) Economic Development and Regional Integration, and 4) Humanitarian, Social, and Environmental Issues. Before the ICGLR Secretariat became operational in 2007, a fifth cluster for "cross-cutting issues" was added to mainstream gender, environment, human rights, HIV/AIDS, and human settlement into the four primary clusters. By 2015, gender issues were deemed too significant to remain under the cross-cutting directorate and were later established as a separate, sixth directorate.

Amended in 2012, Ten Protocols are integral to the Pact.<sup>22</sup> These include those related to non-aggression,<sup>23</sup> democracy,<sup>24</sup> judicial cooperation,<sup>25</sup> genocide prevention,<sup>26</sup> illegal exploitation of natural resources,<sup>27</sup> refugees,<sup>28</sup> internal displaced persons,<sup>29</sup> sexual violence,<sup>30</sup> information and communication. and on reconstruction and development<sup>31</sup>. The implementation of these protocols is overseen by the ICGLR secretariat, reporting to the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee (RIMC) and Summit. At the national level, each member state has a National Coordination Mechanism and Collaborative Mechanisms.<sup>32</sup>

Whereas the National Coordination Mechanism facilitates the implementation of the ICGLR Pact at the national level, the Collaborative Mechanisms coordinate the implementation of the ICGLR Pact in cooperation with member states, regional economic communities, and relevant regional institutions.<sup>33</sup> In addition, the ICGLR has a regional security mechanism consisting of the



Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism (EJVM) and the Joint Intelligence Fusion Centre (JIFC).<sup>34</sup> Although the ICGLR normative framework and relevant mechanisms for networked multilateralism are in place, implementation poses ongoing challenges. Nonetheless, the ICGLR remains a vital instrument for addressing regional crises.<sup>35</sup>

## ICGLR INTERVENTIONS IN THE DRC CONFLICT

Over the past 17 years, the ICGLR interventions can be grouped into three phases: 2007–2011, 2012–2018, and 2019–2023. Article 17(b) of the ICGLR Pact emphasises promoting cooperation in peace, conflict prevention, and peaceful dispute resolution. Article 28 also commits member states to settling disputes peacefully through negotiation, mediation, or other political means within the framework of the ICGLR mechanism.<sup>36</sup>

### Phase 1: 2007–2011

During its initial five-year period from 2007 to 2011, the ICGLR and its secretariat had significant aspirations, as the DRC was transitioning into a new democratic phase. At the same time, however, a rebel militia group led by General Laurent Nkunda, the leader of the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP), operated in eastern DRC; namely, in the volatile North Kivu province. The CNDP presence was rooted in a claim to protect the Tutsi population from attacks by Hutu militias, in particular the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), which included perpetrators of the 1994 Rwandan genocide against the Tutsis. Politically, the CNDP sought greater representation and community autonomy, echoing the Katanga secessionist movements of the 1960s. Criticisms were directed at the DRC government for its failure to provide security and governance in the eastern region, leading to numerous military operations against the Congolese army (FARDC, *Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo*; Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo) and other rebel groups, especially the FDLR by the CNDP.

Under the leadership of Ambassador Liberata Mulamula from Tanzania and working with the UN and the Great Lakes Region representatives (former presidents Olusegun Obasanjo and Benjamin Mkapa), the ICGLR secretariat played a significant role in facilitating the 2008 Goma Agreement between the DRC government and armed groups in eastern DRC. Subsequent efforts, including the peace agreement signed in March 2009, which sought sustainable peace in eastern DRC, did bring peace, albeit temporarily, despite accusations of human rights violations and external support to the CNDP.<sup>37</sup> ICGLR involvement in coordinating regional efforts against negative forces further underscored its commitment to resolving the conflict. It also demonstrated the importance and utility of networked multilateralism.

### Phase 2: 2012–2017

During this period, the military campaigns led by the CNDP waned, although the end of conflict in eastern DRC was not in sight. In 2012, a new rebel group emerged—the March 23 Movement (M23), primarily composed of former CNDP members. Claiming that the 2009 peace agreement with the DRC government was not fully implemented, M23 swiftly gained strength, nearly capturing the entire eastern Congo.

Under the leadership of President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda from 2012 to 2014, the focus of the ICGLR shifted toward addressing the M23 rebellion, implementing security measures, and fostering political dialogue for peace and stability in the Great Lakes Region. Concerned about the M23 threat, six consecutive extraordinary summits were convened from July to December 2012. The solutions proposed at these summits included deploying a neutral force and military operations against armed groups.

By 2013, M23 had ceased active military action and countries urged the DRC government to address legitimate concerns of the group.<sup>38</sup> By 2014, the Congolese military, MONUSCO, and the UN Force Intervention Brigade neutralised the threat of the M23 militia. Despite





these developments, other armed groups such as ADF and FDLR remained active, necessitating continued engagement by the ICGLR, as evidenced by meetings in Angola in 2015 and 2016. Despite efforts to integrate M23 as refugees in Uganda, some returned to the DRC.

During this period, the UN also introduced a new mechanism, the UN Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the Region, which was signed on 24 February 2013 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.<sup>39</sup> Anchored on the principle of networked multilateralism, the framework sought “to address the underlying causes of recurrent violent conflicts in eastern DRC and provided commitments of the DRC government, governments of the region and the international community.”<sup>40</sup> The 12 ICGLR members, plus South Africa, were signatories to the framework. This initiative was seen as an opportunity for regional organisations to network more effectively with a view to enhancing collaboration for peace and security in eastern DRC following the 2013 cessation of hostilities agreement between the DRC government and M23. Some viewed it as a hindrance to peace, however, criticising it as excessive multilateralism with the potential for too many cooks to spoil the broth.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, 13 years later, eastern DRC remains volatile, with a range of illegal armed groups active and the full-blown re-emergence of the M23.

### Phase 3: 2020–2024

In late 2021, General Sultani Makenga, the military leader of M23, resuscitated and reactivated the group, marking a resurgence of activity since their defeat in 2014. This renewal was sparked by an attack on Bunagana in November 2021, followed by offensives leading to the capture of M23 members in 2022. Unfulfilled promises, lingering issues, and regional tensions fuelled the insurgency, particularly among the Congolese Tutsi community. Further complicating regional dynamics, after the capture of Bunagana by rebels the DRC publicly accused Rwanda of supporting M23<sup>42</sup>, which undermined the effectiveness of the ICGLR framework.

In contrast to past engagements in the country, during this period, the ICGLR had gone silent and was experiencing a decline in visibility and activity, ceding ground to the EAC and SADC to increase their influence in addressing the crisis in the DRC. Consequently, the ICGLR has become increasingly marginalised despite its continued mandate to address crises in the region. Although for the chairperson of the ICGLR chaired the mini-summit on peace and security in the eastern DRC on 23 November 2022 in Luanda, Angola, the mini summit report show that the meeting was not convened in his capacity as ICGLR chair. Instead, Angolan President João Gonçalves Lourenço, acting as the African Union Champion for Peace and Reconciliation in Africa and the AU-designated mediator for maintaining dialogue between the DRC and Rwanda, led the meeting, further minimising the ICGLR role.

The diminishing of the ICGLR's role in this context appears to be more a result of shifting dynamics and power play rather than a deliberate effort to undermine the organisation. As the crisis in the DRC escalated, regional bodies seized the opportunity to increase their influence, leveraging their resources and strategic positions. Meanwhile, the African Union's involvement, particularly through President João Gonçalves Lourenço, further shifted the focus away from the ICGLR that he also chaired. This power play likely stemmed from a combination of the ICGLR's reduced visibility and activity, and other organisations' eagerness to assert their leadership in resolving the crisis, rather than an intentional effort to diminish the ICGLR.

### WHY IS ICGLR MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY DIMINISHING?

Since 2023, the dynamics affecting conflict in the DRC reveal a noticeable decline in the quality of diplomatic relations between Kinshasa and Kigali.<sup>43</sup> Despite efforts by the EAC and Angola to broker ceasefires, the crisis persists due to agreements that have been violated and delays with military interventions. The ongoing conflict is exacerbated by blame games, ineffective multilateral diplomacy, and structural grievances that



perpetuate geopolitical tensions and proxy warfare. As “A New Agenda for Peace” emphasises the importance of persistent peace making processes as a necessary pathway to remedy these challenges, it will therefore be necessary to renew a political process beyond militarism.<sup>44</sup>

Revived in late 2021, the M23 insurgency underscores unresolved political demands and ethnic tensions in the DRC. It also highlights the challenges that can be faced in peace making, despite an established framework for networked multilateralism. While the EAC spearheads peace efforts, the refusal of Kinshasa to negotiate with the M23 complicates diplomatic solutions. The limits of pursuing engagement through the EAC led Kinshasa to turn to SADC for support, highlighting the pitfalls and limitations of regional diplomacy and geopolitical dynamics. As proposed by some observers, coordinated regional efforts could revive multilateral diplomacy, with emphasis on the roles of the EAC and SADC.<sup>45</sup> The ICGLR does not feature in this scenario, which points to the diminishing role of the organisation amidst ongoing conflict and diplomatic challenges.

### ICGLR challenges in conflict resolution

The ICGLR can still play a pivotal role in addressing conflict in the DRC, but it faces a number of daunting challenges that could hinder its efficacy. Six of these bear mention.

1. Overlapping regional organisations: DRC membership in multiple regional bodies dilutes ICGLR impact. DRC alternation between EAC<sup>46</sup> and SADC forces exemplifies this, irrespective of the ICGLR mandate as a key anchor multilateral institution to address the crisis in the region.
2. Evolving regional dynamics: Emerging mediators from the UN Framework and the RECs can undermine the ICGLR role if there is insufficient coordination and collaboration through networked multilateralism. It is imperative to discourage inter-organisational competition and instead promote cooperation, cohesion, and coherence in policy and action among the various regional organisations engaged in the peace and security agenda in the DRC.
3. DRC EAC membership: The strategic position of the DRC makes it essential to all regional organisations. While EAC members previously viewed the ICGLR as the primary avenue for engagement with SADC and ECCAS (where the DRC is a member), DRC membership in the EAC could shift diplomatic focus away from the ICGLR. In turn, this could reduce ICGLR prominence and further diminish its influence in DRC-related matters.
4. Resource constraints: Limited ICGLR resources impede effective conflict resolution, which is exacerbated by financial, logistical, and diplomatic shortcomings. In 2016, for example, the financial contributions of ICGLR member states were inadequate to fund all projects and planned activities, combined with dwindling donor support.<sup>47</sup> By 2020, the financial situation had further deteriorated, even affecting staff salaries.<sup>48</sup> During its ordinary meeting, the RIMC received complaints from the ICGLR executive secretary of “non-payment of statutory contributions by some member states, which does not facilitate payment of salary arrears and day-to-day functions of the secretariat and affiliated bodies”.<sup>49</sup> The RIMC acknowledged that the ICGLR was at a crossroads in the wake of the economic crisis, coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>50</sup> There is no evidence that the financial situation improved after the COVID-19 pandemic ended.
5. Perceived ineffectiveness: Since 2015, ICGLR visibility and leadership have regressed and been beset by inertia, with these financial constraints exacerbating matters. ICGLR efforts to maintain impartiality amid regional political tensions and divisions has also weakened its effectiveness. Combined, this has undermined organisational effectiveness in conflict resolution. In addition,



ICGLR does not have a monitoring and evaluation system to better monitor the implementation of its decisions (especially on peace and security). By establishing a dedicated monitoring and evaluation unit with a centralised tracking system, a clear reporting framework, and regular reviews would enhance member states' ability to implement their own decisions effectively. Additionally, creating a feedback mechanism with member states would allow for timely adjustments, constant consultations to ensure that decisions are followed through and achieve their intended impact.

6. Internal and external dynamics: Internal bureaucratic divisions and the interference of external actors, along with the competing interests of other regional organisations, has undermined ICGLR abilities to lead and coordinate interventions.

To surmount these challenges, the ICGLR must enhance its visibility, assertiveness, effectiveness and resource mobilisation in order to revitalise its role as a key actor and anchor for networked multilateralism in contributing towards peacemaking and peacebuilding processes in the DRC and the Great Lakes Region.

### KEY INSIGHTS FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MULTILATERALISM

The ICGLR has challenges to be addressed but it is not diminished yet as an institution. Its potential can be harnessed and effectiveness improved. The ICGLR experience highlights several key insights for improving the effectiveness of networked multilateralism in addressing the peace and security challenges in the DRC. First, the consultative and inclusive approach of the ICGLR in developing the Dar es Salaam Declaration and the ICGLR Pact, protocols and programmes of action demonstrates the importance of broad stakeholder engagement, including civil society, women, youth, and the private sector, in fostering sustainable peace initiatives. Second, the multi-faceted structure of the ICGLR—organised around clusters such as peace and security, democracy and

good governance, and economic development—underscores the need for integrated and holistic approaches to conflict resolution. Third, the role of the ICGLR as a regional anchor institution highlights the significance of regional ownership and leadership in driving peace processes and leveraging local knowledge and expertise.

### Strategies for enhancing networked multilateralism

Drawing from ICGLR experience, several strategies can enhance the effectiveness of networked multilateralism in addressing peace and security in Africa:

1. Closer collaboration and coordination: Fostering collaboration between regional organisations such as the ICGLR, AU, EAC, and SADC, with support from the UN, is essential. This can be achieved through regular joint summits, information-sharing mechanisms, and joint peacekeeping initiatives to enhance regional solidarity and coherence in addressing cross-border security threats.
2. Strengthening operational capacity and financial sustainability: Enhancing the operational capacity and financial sustainability of regional organisations such as the ICGLR is crucial. This includes increasing resources for ICGLR secretariat efforts in conflict prevention, mediation, and peacebuilding, as well as boosting member state contributions to funding and logistical support for regional peace operations.
3. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms: Strengthening mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of protocols and peace agreements is necessary. Clear benchmarks and reporting mechanisms should be established to ensure compliance and effectiveness. Early warning and early action mechanisms must be in place and effective.
4. Leveraging partnerships: Partnering with international organisations, donor agencies, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can

provide additional resources and expertise. This includes technical assistance, capacity building programmes, and joint initiatives focused on conflict prevention, disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR), and post-conflict reconstruction.

## CONCLUSION

The ICGLR stands as a pivotal regional organisation established to address complex challenges through collaborative regional solutions. Emerging in response to the devastating conflicts in the DRC and the Rwandan genocide, the ICGLR functions as a model for networked multilateralism. The organisation is mandated by regional leaders and supported by the international community to foster peace, security, and development. Despite initial successes and the adoption of comprehensive protocols aimed at addressing regional crises, including the reintegration of illegal armed groups such as M23, the ICGLR faces significant challenges.

The 2021 resurgence of M23 underscores ongoing regional instability and highlights the diminishing role of the ICGLR in conflict resolution, as other regional bodies such as the EAC and SADC have taken precedence. Challenges such as overlapping regional memberships, evolving geopolitical dynamics, resource constraints, and perceived ineffectiveness have hampered ICGLR ability to maintain its leadership, coordinate effective interventions, and anchor networked multilateralism in the region. Moving forward, enhancing ICGLR visibility, assertiveness, and resource mobilisation is crucial in revitalising its role as a key actor in networked multilateralism for peacebuilding and conflict resolution in the Great Lakes Region. By leveraging its founding mandate and strengthening cooperation with other regional and international partners, the ICGLR can reaffirm its commitment to promoting stability, security, and sustainable development in one of the most volatile regions in Africa.

### Author information & contact

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## Nathan Mwesigye Byamukama

Nathan Mwesigye Byamukama is an independent Ugandan consultant with more than 25 years of regional and international experience. He is the founder of the Regional Centre for Human Security in the Great Lakes Region (RC4HS-GLR). Nathan is former ICGLR regional director, where he worked for 13 years, and former director at the Uganda Human Rights Commission, where he worked for 10 years. His areas of expertise include a specialisation in peace and security issues, with a focus on good governance, human rights, genocide, and atrocity crime prevention.

He can be reached by email at: [byam\\_nat@yahoo.com](mailto:byam_nat@yahoo.com)  
and Linked in: [Nathan Mwesigye Byamukama](#)



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# A Pillar of Multilateralism: *the Evolution of African Union Peace Support Operations*

**Professor Tim Murithi**

*Head of the Peacebuilding Interventions  
Programme, Institute for Justice and  
Reconciliation, Cape Town*

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## INTRODUCTION

The African Union (AU) is emerging as a pillar of the evolving multilateral system. It is now poised to contribute towards global governance processes, specifically in the area of peace and security. This will shape the devolution of international authority in the 21st century. The United Nations (UN) has a self-ascribed mandate to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” and to contribute to maintaining international peace and security.<sup>1</sup>

The intensification of geostrategic tensions between the major powers has structurally paralysed the UN Security Council (UNSC), however, rendering it ineffective in undertaking necessary life-saving peace and security interventions. In terms of impact, UNSC-mandated peacekeeping operations have also failed to contribute significantly to sustaining peace in war-affected countries across Africa. For example, the long-standing UN mission presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) was requested by the host government to withdraw, for its failure to protect civilians. The adoption of UNSC resolution (UNSCR) 2719 on 21 December 2023 redefines the approach to peace support operations on the African continent. The devolution of a degree of authority and the provision of financial support to the AU will situate it as a key pillar of networked multilateralism. The AU should take the initiative to contribute towards defining the modalities of how the evolving partnership with the UN on peace support operations will be reconfigured and managed. This article assesses the insights that have been generated by this initiative for the UN Summit of the Future, with particular reference to the transformation of global governance.

## THE FAILURE AND LOSS OF CREDIBILITY OF UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

The institutions established to promote peace and security, specifically the UNSC, are now dysfunctional to the point of being a clear and present danger to the well-being of humanity.<sup>2</sup> In particular, UN peacekeeping operations have lost their credibility on the African continent for their failure to contribute to promoting sustainable peace.<sup>3</sup> For example, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) failed to prevent the 1994 genocide in the country despite





early warning information transmitted to the UNSC. Deployed in some form since 1999, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC; MONUSCO) also struggled to neutralise armed groups and protect civilians, which led to President Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi requesting the mission to accelerate its withdrawal from the DRC. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) turned out to be one of the deadliest missions, for the local population and UN personnel, failing both to curb violence and lay the foundations for effective peacebuilding. Similarly, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) failed to protect civilians under threat of physical violence in line with its core mandate. The Central African Republic and the DRC also had to deal with UN peacekeepers being accused of rape and sexual misconduct against women and girls, with allegations of insufficient action to pursue accountability and justice for the victims of these violations.<sup>4</sup>

It is necessary to note that the failures of UN peacekeeping operations are also attributed to a range of factors, including: the lack of clarity in terms of the UNSC mandates and the nature of the realities confronted on the ground; complex political and cultural contexts; and failure to maintain impartiality, leading to perceptions of bias.<sup>5</sup> As far as the cultural dimension is concerned, the composition of a significant number of peacekeeping military and civilian troops from different parts of the world often meant that “the United Nations intervening forces” and local communities “belonged to two completely different conceptual fields” and “value systems”.<sup>6</sup> This meant that UN peacekeeping operations were utilising a cultural prism, including language, habits and behaviour, that digressed and may even have clashed with that of local communities. In part, this also contributed to the failure of some of these missions.

As a consequence of these failures and violations, UN peacekeeping operations on the African continent have lost their credibility from the perspective of

African policymakers. It is notable that the last UN peacekeeping operation in Africa began in 2014 —a decade ago. In the aftermath, a series of African-led and other bilateral and multilateral interventions missions have been used to address peace and security issues. In the face of this new reality, the UNSC recognises that African inter-governmental institutions should be the primary bearers of responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security on the continent, which is a key function of multilateralism. Subsequently, initiatives to transform the nature of the relationship between the UN and the AU have been adopted as part of the series of reforms leading up to the UN Summit of the Future.

### The UN Summit of the Future

The transformation of the multilateral system is necessary to more effectively manage, negotiate, and address global challenges and protect the planet from, for example, further environmental damage due to climate change and the effects of increasing wars, which are undermining societies across the world. On 5 August 2021, UN Secretary-General António Guterres issued a report titled “Our Common Agenda”, in which he calls for a re-imagining of the vision for the future of multilateralism.<sup>7</sup> The report calls for the convening of the UN Summit of the Future, set for September 2024 in New York, with the theme: “Summit of the Future: Multilateral Solutions for a Better Tomorrow”. The summit will bring together leaders from around the world to map out a vision for the transformation of global relations to revitalise the multilateral system. At this summit, member states will negotiate the final version of the draft report, “Pact for the Future”, which identifies practical pathways for the implementation of existing and new global commitments.<sup>8</sup>

### AN EMERGING PILLAR OF MULTILATERALISM: AFRICAN UNION CO-LEADERSHIP ON PEACE AND SECURITY

Article 24 of the UN charter assigns to the UNSC the primary responsibility for the maintenance of global peace and security. Article 53 of the UN charter stipulates provisions for the engagement and utilisation

“...there is an opportunity for the AU to play a much more significant role going forward. For this to happen [...] it is evident that AU-led peace support operations require dedicated and predictable funding.”

of regional organisations to undertake enforcement action to pursue and promote peace and security. Consequently, AU–UN cooperation has consistently focused on the issue of support for African-led peace support operations. In 2019, a UNSC resolution on the financing of AU peace support operations was debated, but had no definitive outcomes. In February 2023, the 36<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the AU Heads of State and Government adopted the “African Consensus Paper on Predictable, Adequate and Sustainable Financing for AU Peace and Security Activities”.<sup>9</sup> In April 2023, the UN secretary-general subsequently issued a report on the implementation of UNSCR 2320 (2016) and UNSCR 2378 (2017), which focused on the financing of AU peace support operations mandated by the UNSC.<sup>10</sup> In effect, this brought the issue of financing AU-led peace support operations to the forefront of the AU–UN cooperative relationship on peace and security. The UNSC then relaunched the negotiation on the 2019 draft framework.

The AU has led on the establishment of peace support operations in situations where a comprehensive peace agreement has not yet been achieved; for example, in Burundi and the Darfur region of Sudan in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This approach is a departure from the traditional orthodoxy established by UN peacekeeping missions, which predominantly operate on the basis of an agreement between the host country and the UNSC. This means that they tend to require more time to be operationalised. In contrast, AU peace support operations have a broader mandate, including the ability to resort to the use of force. They can also be more rapidly deployed. The July 2023 policy brief

by Guterres, “A New Agenda for Peace”, acknowledges that we are now in a new era of peacekeeping. This era is defined by the need for more nimble peace operations and political missions from the UN due to increasingly reluctant host government support and budget constraints, which means standard large-scale peacekeeping operations are no longer feasible.

As a consequence, there is an opportunity for the AU to play a much more significant role going forward. For this to happen, however, it is evident that AU-led peace support operations require dedicated and predictable funding. AU-led peace support operations tend to work in precarious and hostile environments; for example, the former African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) role in Somalia, which has since been replaced by that of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). The acceptance of the necessity and inevitability of AU co-leadership in peace support operations is increasingly becoming widely acknowledged as a model that will define interventions in the future. AU-led missions have also had to take on board a degree of criticism, echoing the challenges that have faced UN peacekeeping operations; notably, criticism about the propensity to use force, allegations of sexual misconduct, and technical constraints in terms of adequate equipment and training of personnel. Yet, there is an emerging worldview that African organisations should be empowered to undertake peace interventions as part of the process of re-thinking multilateralism, especially in the context of the intensification of the geostrategic tensions between major powers, with consequences for the effective functioning of the UNSC.<sup>11</sup>



The AU consensus paper on financing for peace support operations focuses on establishing and ensuring a common African position on the UN review of PSOs. Specifically, it assesses a number of key issues, including burden sharing and the division of labour between the UN and the AU on the financing of AU-led peace support operations. The AU consensus paper stipulates that 25% of the AU budget will be dedicated to supporting peace and security priorities across the continent to achieve African ownership of peace support operations through a revitalised AU Peace Fund.<sup>12</sup>

A number of financing models have been considered, including through UN–AU hybrid missions, based on the experiences of the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) in the Darfur region of Sudan. The second model includes establishing an enhanced UN logistics support package based on the experiences with the former AMISOM and the ongoing ATMIS. The third model involves financing to sub-regional peace support operations, such as the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM), based on the condition that they are formally established through the AU decision-making processes.<sup>13</sup>

In terms of decision-making, oversight, command, and control of AU-led peace support operations, there is a divergence of opinion between the UN and AU as to which body should maintain strategic and political control of these operations. There is similar contestation relating to control over financial transparency, accountability mechanisms, and human rights compliance. In this regard, the three African non-permanent members of the UNSC, also known as the A3—currently Algeria, Mozambique and Sierra Leone—also prepared a roadmap on financing AU-led peace support operations. A key concern emerging from the AU perspective is that the use of UN-assessed contributions to operationalise AU peace support operations should not be viewed as an act of sub-contracting by the global body, but rather as a recognition of the comparative advantage that the AU provides, as a pillar of multilateralism, to addressing complex conflict and humanitarian crises across the continent.<sup>14</sup>

### Policy brief: “A New Agenda for Peace”

“A New Agenda for Peace” is one of the 11 policy briefs providing analysis ahead of the UN Summit of the Future. In this policy brief, Guterres admits that, “In a number of current conflict environments, *the gap between UN peacekeeping mandates and what such missions can actually deliver in practice has become apparent* [emphasis added].”<sup>15</sup> The secretary-general also notes: “Peace operations help operationalise diplomacy for peace by allowing the Organisation [the UN] to mount tailored operational responses, including by mobilising and funding Member State capacities and capabilities that no single actor possesses.”<sup>16</sup> The policy brief recommends that, as far as the UNSC is concerned, in cases “where peace enforcement is required”, it should “authorise a multinational force, or enforcement action by regional and sub-regional organisations”.<sup>17</sup>

In this regard, there are variations in terms of doctrine in the sense that traditional peacekeeping interventions are deployed to monitor ceasefires and observe peace processes in post-conflict situations, acting as an impartial presence between warring parties.<sup>18</sup> In contrast, stabilisation missions are deployed in situations where there could be ongoing conflict and are often supporting state authority and working to a mandate to protect civilians.<sup>19</sup> AU peace support operations tend to have authorisation to use force to restore peace and security, as well as engage with the conflict parties to promote peace. In addition, AU peace support dos

**“AU peace support operations tend to have authorisation to use force to restore peace and security, as well as engage with the conflict parties to promote peace.”**



operations tend to have a regional character and are typically established and include troops from the countries that are in close proximity to the war-affected country. “A New Agenda for Peace” proposes the establishment of “a new generation of peace enforcement missions and counter-terrorism operations, led by African partners with a Security Council mandate under Chapter VII and VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, with guaranteed funding through assessed contributions.”<sup>20</sup> The policy brief further acknowledges “the importance of these operations as part of a toolkit for responding to crisis in Africa, alongside the full range of available United Nations mechanisms” and the necessity “for ensuring that they have the resources required to succeed”.<sup>21</sup>

This constitutes a break with the past and is an important departure from the established and traditional positions that the UN has adopted in terms of dogmatically adhering to a peacekeeping doctrine that has no resonance with the reality of a conflict or crisis situations on the ground.<sup>22</sup> This issue relates to the need for more nimble peacekeeping operations. It is also identified in the 2015 report by the High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (HIPPO), “Uniting Our Strengths for Peace—Politics, Partnership and People”.<sup>23</sup>

### Adoption of UNSCR 2719 (2023)

The adoption of UNSCR 2719 recognises the need for African-led interventions on the continent.<sup>24</sup> In particular, the resolution acknowledges the mandate of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) to promote peace, security, and stability in Africa, in line with the AU protocol that established the PSC. UNSCR 2719 outlines a framework for cooperation and collaboration between two organisations in responding to conflict and crises in Africa by providing direct support to AU-led peace support operations. The resolution is a significant departure in the traditional relationship between the AU and the UN in the devolution of responsibility to a continental authority structure. In effect, this contributes to the transformation of multilateralism, specifically as it relates to the maintenance of international peace and security. Consequently, the AU is now emerging as a pillar of multilateralism and

is positioned to contribute to the manner in which shared multi-level governance processes shape the devolution of global authority in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The limitations of past UN peacekeeping operations is illustrated, for example, by the interventions of different iterations of various missions to the DRC which have been operational for several decades, without fixed end-dates or effective exit strategies. It is also noteworthy that despite the presence of a UN peacekeeping mission, the warring parties continued to sustain their ability to wage war in the DRC. There was also limited or no progress in pursuing an effective peacemaking process, which was at times also held hostage by the sub-regional political interests of neighbouring countries. In addition, the imbalance of resources allocated to peacekeeping, when contrasted with peacebuilding and transitional justice interventions, has meant that the necessary and arduous work of enabling communities in the war-affected part of the country to take ownership in sustaining peace has been significantly under-resourced. As a result, this has meant that there is a gap in terms of building the necessary infrastructures for peace to enable the peacekeeping missions to depart without a return to violent confrontation.

### Enhancing AU capacities

UNSCR 2719 provides a platform to further strengthen and enhance the capacities of the AU to gradually take ownership and responsibility for governing peace and security on the African continent. In particular, there are a number of key elements listed in UNSCR 2719 that need to be highlighted in terms of the role they can play in enabling this.

*Primacy of politics:* UNSCR 2719 emphasises the primacy of politics, which provides an opening for UN support to AU-led PSOs to also focus on conflict prevention and peacemaking. This ensures that crises are addressed prior to their escalation, when victims die as a result of violent conflict. The 2015 HIPPO report confirms that “resources for prevention and mediation work have been scarce and the United Nations is often too



slow to engage with emerging crises”.<sup>25</sup> The report further reveals that, “Too often, mandates and missions are produced on the basis of templates instead of *tailored to support situation-specific political strategies, and technical and military approaches come at the expense of strengthened political efforts* [emphasis added].”<sup>26</sup> The HIPPO report recommends four essential shifts in UN peace operations, including the acceptance that: 1) politics must drive the design and implementation of peace operations; 2) the full spectrum of UN peace operations must be used more flexibly to respond to changing needs on the ground; 3) a stronger, more inclusive peace and security partnership is needed for future interventions; and 4) the UN secretariat must become more field-focused and therefore, UN peace operations must be more *people centred*.<sup>27</sup>

Concretely, the HIPPO report indicates, “The prevention of armed conflict is perhaps the greatest responsibility of the international community and yet it has not been sufficiently invested in.”<sup>28</sup> It further recommends, “The UN must *invest* in its own capacities to undertake prevention and mediation and in its capacity to assist others, particularly at the national and regional level.”<sup>29</sup> Ultimately, the HIPPO report asserts that, “The international community must sustain high-level political engagement in support

of national efforts to deepen and broaden processes of inclusion and reconciliation, as well as address the underlying causes of conflict.”<sup>30</sup>

*AU coordination with Regional Economic Communities (RECs):* UNSCR 2719 makes reference to AU-led peace support operations without prescribing how these missions are mandated or how responsibility should be shared with the RECs. The Protocol Establishing the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (PSC Protocol) emphasises the central role that RECs play in supporting peacemaking, peace support operations, and post-conflict peacebuilding. Consequently, RECs are an integral component of the African peace and security architecture and can also be mandated to lead on peace support operations. As such, the AU PSC should take the lead in establishing its overarching endorsement and ensuring that there is close collaboration with the RECs in the establishment of peace support operations on the African continent. Although the AU and the RECs have not always been aligned in terms of the deployment of peace support operations, the advent of UNSCR 2719 requires a much more concerted and convergent approach. More specifically, the AU PSC and the RECs can endorse and co-lead the establishment of peace support operations to ensure that they fall within the ambit of UNSCR 2719

“The failures and loss of credibility of UN peacekeeping operations on the African continent has led to the emergence of the AU as the lead agency in the implementation of peace support operations.”

and thus become subject to its provisions. In terms of joint planning and monitoring, UNSCR 2719 stipulates that the UN secretary-general and the chairperson of the AU Commission should jointly support a report to the Security Council every six months. In this regard, the AU Commission should ensure that it works closely with the UN Office to the AU and the UN peacekeeping departments to compile and finalise these reports to present to the UNSC.

## CONCLUSION

The AU is now emerging as a pillar of multilateralism, with specific reference to the maintenance of peace and security, and in particular through its deployment of peace support operations. In this regard, the AU co-leadership role in deploying peace support operations will contribute to the manner in which shared multi-level governance

processes shape the devolution of global authority in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In particular, the AU preempted the appeals for transformation of the multilateral system, which subsequently animated the UN Summit of the Future initiative. The failures and loss of credibility of UN peacekeeping operations on the African continent has led to the emergence of the AU as the lead agency in the implementation of peace support operations. More specifically, UNSCR 2719 points to the evolving nature of the multilateral system as it relates to the specific issue of the maintenance of peace and security. The AU, working in partnership with civil society actors, think-tanks, and other key stakeholders across the continent should take advantage of the evolving multilateral system to make the case for African interests and concerns in terms of the implementation of UNSCR 2719. This would enhance the emerging role of the AU as an influential international actor and pillar of multilateralism.

### Author information & contact

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## Professor Tim Murithi

Professor Tim Murithi is head of the Peacebuilding Interventions Programme, Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, Cape Town. He is also extraordinary professor, Security Institute for Governance and Leadership in Africa, University of Stellenbosch, extraordinary professor of African studies at the Centre for African and Gender Studies, University of the Free State (South Africa), and a research associate, Institute for Democracy, Citizenship and Public Policy in Africa, University of Cape Town.

He can be reached by email at: [tkmurithi@hotmail.com](mailto:tkmurithi@hotmail.com)



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# EMPOWERING YOUTH IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM & INTERGENERATIONAL COLLABORATION

**Martin Mwaluma Kasina**

*Global Policy Programme Assistant  
at the Life & Peace Institute*

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**Horn of Africa Bulletin**

African Perspectives on the Multilateral System

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The United Nations (UN) has consistently emphasised its commitment to youth empowerment and inclusivity with evidence from the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 that recognised the role of young people in conflict prevention, bringing positive change and sustainable peace.

However, the reality remains that young men and women are still underrepresented in global policymaking and decision-making processes due to various reasons such as structural and institutional barriers. Examples of such issues were brought to the forefront during the recent United Nations Civil Society Conference held in Nairobi between 9 to 10 May 2024, that focused on perspectives and insights from civil society actors contributing to the Pact for the Future and the Declaration for Future Generations leading up to the Summit of the Future to be held in September 2024. This platform featured open workshops with various themes which saw young participants voicing their concerns and calling for greater inclusion in decision-making spaces or positions of power.

The conference had participants of different ages and occupations, such as Lemeria Leperes, a determined International Relations student at Daystar University, who captured the frustration of countless young people excluded in global policy discussions in the UN's multilateral system. With an intense and passionate stance, he underscored the critical need for greater youth participation in organisational decision-making, expressing that youth are consistently overlooked and undervalued, despite being the primary stakeholders in peace and security.



Lemeria Leperes, an International Relations student at Daystar University, at the United Nations Civil Society Conference



**LEMERIA NOTED:**

“See, I am just a student, and in these times as much as it is 2024, young people are not taken seriously by the older generation due to our lack of experience, which is what we are looking to them to offer. But I believe young people have so much to offer.”

To bridge the gap between youth and the older generation, Lemeria advocated for a more inclusive dialogue. He challenged the status quo where young voices are relegated to the sidelines and their potential remains untapped. Suffering from the decisions made by the older generation, young people prove that having more diverse voices in decision-making processes represents the communities better at all levels, thus motivating youth participation. Lemeria asserted that young people should

be considered key partners in decision-making processes. Platforms such as conferences, should be utilised to their full potential and create an enabling environment where youth can freely express their views and engage in meaningful dialogue with older generations.

On a global scale, these examples of the concerns and frustrations of the youth resulted to a recent [letter to global leaders](#) ahead of the September Summit of the Future, that emphasised the critical need for youth perspectives to be taken seriously and for youth to be included in positions of power and decision-making processes.

#### THE LETTER TO THE GLOBAL LEADERS' NOTES:

“We need more young people represented in all spheres of decision-making within government, at the United Nations, in civil society, private sector and academia. And they must be taken seriously.”



Anne Maua, a youth and Executive Director of Uzalendo Afrika, highlighted the systemic barriers that prevent young people from fully participating in the workforce and broader society. While acknowledging the critical role of young people in shaping peaceful societies, Maua pointed out that they are often at a disadvantage due to the inequality of opportunities. Despite their potential and the clear mandate outlined in UN Security Council Resolution 2250, youth continue to be excluded in decision-making processes creating a range of challenges. Additionally, the [UN Secretary-General's 2023](#)

[Youth Peace and Security report](#) highlights a growing mistrust between youth and governments, exacerbated by discriminatory laws and practices based on age, which remain prevalent in many countries and significantly hinder the meaningful participation of young people in general. She believes that expanding opportunities, particularly for historically marginalised youth like those with disabilities, can significantly boost trust in institutions. Employment opportunities can also empower young people and make them feel heard, thereby enhancing the rate of their participation.

Anne Maua, Executive Director of Uzalendo Afrika, at the United Nations Civil Society Conference





Elijah Mwega, advocate and founder of the Kenyan Aged People Require Information, Knowledge & Advancement (KARIKA), at the United Nations Civil Society Conference



#### ELIJAH MWEGA

“Mwega [...] advocated for a cross-generational approach that incorporates the wisdom of elders with the energy and innovation of young people.”

Another participant, Elijah Mwega, a passionate advocate and founder of the Kenyan Aged People Require Information, Knowledge & Advancement (KARIKA), underscored the often-overlooked role of older generations in youth-focused initiatives. Mwega emphasised that the global shift towards youth empowerment should also not eclipse the valuable insights and contributions of older generations. His presence at the conference served as a reminder of the importance of intergenerational dialogue. Intergenerational dialogue gives a platform to people of all ages to discuss challenges affecting them, hence creating understanding between them and working together to find solutions to these issues.

Mwega cautioned that excluding older generations from discussions in general, and about youth issues in particular, could create new challenges. Instead, he advocated for a cross-generational approach that incorporates the wisdom of elders with the energy and innovation of young people. He called on the UN multilateral system to prioritise intergenerational collaboration as



a cornerstone of its efforts to address global challenges. The testimonies of these passionate individuals across generations serve as a stark reminder of the urgent need to amplify youth voices in global governance. It paints a vivid picture of the potential that exists when youth are empowered and supported. To truly harness this potential, the UN must take concrete steps in youth empowerment through active support.

While challenges persist, the determination of youth and the growing momentum behind youth activism offer hope for a future where young peacebuilders are not merely “beneficiaries” of development but drivers of positive change. Looking into the future, the youth look to the Security Council to uphold the commitments they made in their "New Agenda for Peace" that provides a framework for integrating young people into broader peacebuilding efforts. This framework entails commitments to financing youth-led initiatives, expanding opportunities for youth participation in decision-making in various levels in global policymaking and leadership positions, and ensuring that young people have access to the education and resources they need to succeed.

Following the words from the [UN’s Meaningful Youth Engagement](#) policy brief, it is clear that, when engaged as partners for peace, they [youth] help to shift a widespread perception of mistrust of young people, to more accurately presenting youth as positive and constructive social agents who play an essential role in building sustainable peace.

When the insights of these young leaders are combined with the wisdom of older generations, they create a powerful foundation for addressing global challenges in a holistic and sustainable manner.

If the UN fails to act, the consequences will be dire. Without the involvement of young people, our global efforts to address challenges like climate change, poverty, and conflict will be incomplete. The UN multilateral system risks losing a generation of talented and passionate individuals who would be vital to shaping a better future.

**Author information & contact**

**Martin Mwaluma Kasina**

Global Policy Programme Assistant  
 at the Life & Peace Institute

*...when engaged as partners for peace, they [youth] help to shift a widespread perception of mistrust of young people, to more accurately presenting youth as positive and constructive social agents who play an essential role in building sustainable peace.*



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# A Conversation with Stephen Jackson: Discussing Kenya as the Hub of Multilateralism in the Global South

**Lesley Connolly, Eden Matiyas and Paola Abril**  
*Life & Peace Institute (LPI)*

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**Horn of Africa Bulletin**  
African Perspectives on the Multilateral System  
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**Dr. Stephen Jackson, the United Nations (UN) resident coordinator in Kenya, recently sat down with Lesley Connolly, Eden Matiyas, and Paola Abril from the Life & Peace Institute (LPI), to share more about the uniqueness of Kenya in the multilateral space, the role of the UN in Kenya and across the Horn of Africa, and the role of civil society in supporting peace and security efforts.**

Dr. Jackson has more than 30 years of experience in international development, peacebuilding, and humanitarian affairs, including more than 15 years in sub-Saharan Africa. Prior to his current role, he most recently served as the resident coordinator in Gabon, after holding leadership positions at the Department of Political Affairs and with UN Peacekeeping. He holds both a doctorate in cultural anthropology and a master's degree in public affairs from Princeton University, as well as a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Trinity College Dublin.

*This interview has been edited for clarity and length*

**Can you tell us about how the UN operates in Kenya, some of the actors that you engage with, and how you engage with these actors to support peace and security?**

— I will start from Kenya's relationship with multilateralism. And with the state of multilateralism in the world, which is not great. The paradox of the present moment is that if you look at all the big challenges facing the planet, they all can only be fixed through multilateralism. And by coincidence, they all happen to begin with the letter "C". The resurgence of global conflict, COVID, which stands in for pandemics in general, the climate crisis, the cost of capital and development. We could add a fifth, which is both a challenge and an opportunity, but does not begin with a C: Migration. All five of those problems only have multilateral solutions to them. And yet you see more countries worldwide retreating from multilateralism, so that is the challenge now. Multilateralism does not have to mean the United Nations, and it does not exclusively mean it. But I'd argue the UN has to be a big part of finding and delivering solutions to any and all of these challenges.

Focusing on Kenya – Kenya could be called the "centre of multilateralism within the Global South". It is the only UN global headquarters in the Global South, and, as a result, it has cultivated a unique and historic 50-year relationship with the UN. This has shaped Kenya into a steadfast advocate for multilateralism and a strong supporter of the UN.





Within this, the aspect I focus on is the work that the UN does in Kenya for Kenya. However, within the United Nations Office in Nairobi, we have big parts of the UN that are in Kenya, but not just for Kenya – they are for large parts of the subregion and/or the world. We house several UN global headquarters, as well as significant continental capacity for the different UN agencies, funds, and programmes [AFPs]. There is a wealth of diversity within this compound, which has created a form of mutuality – each side believing in supporting the other, which allows all entities of the UN here, therefore, to be much more effective and impactful than might be the case separately.

Kenya is deeply committed to the importance of, and investment in, the multilateral system. Recently, Kenya completed a distinguished tenure on the Security Council. Kenya’s council interventions on issues such as the war in Ukraine, were marked by judiciousness and came from a place of deep conviction and principle. This was important for the world to hear: a powerful, confident, independent, non-aligned voice.

This Kenyan form of 21st century multilateral cooperation is an example to us all. It is this strong belief and investment in multilateralism that not only strengthens the work that I am able to do on the ground, but also strengthens the UN globally. So, it is very much a mutual relationship.

**“Kenya is deeply committed to the importance of, and investment in, the multilateral system. [...] This was important for the world to hear: a powerful, confident, independent, non-aligned voice.”**

**Working with civil society in an inclusive manner is a core principle of peacebuilding and sustaining peace as well as a key component of the Pact for the Future and the way the UN operates.**

**Can you tell us about how you are working to create space for civil society?**

– Let us start with the most notable point. Kenya recently hosted the Global Civil Society Conference in preparation for the Pact for the Future. That was the first time that the conference took place in the Global South – a regrettable fact that still leaves me a little bewildered. I am thrilled and honoured that Kenya got to be the first one, but let it not be the last.

Everybody who took part remarked on the extraordinary levels of energy in the civil society conversation here. The UN secretary-general came for the closing and was profoundly moved by that energy. Past civil society conferences have not had the level of engagement, uptake, and active participation that this one had.

A caveat, though. It was a push to ensure that the voices of southern civil society were not drowned out by northern civil society. One shouldn’t be surprised that global civil society still reflects global governance, which is tilted North–South. But one shouldn’t be accepting of this. It needs to change. And this was the beginning of a moment when it does change.

I hope so. For me, this is key. It's not just about holding the conference in the Global South but making sure that there is a level playing field – in civil society as in international relations.

### How do we keep this momentum alive? What would be the best next steps?

– We have both specific and general concerns. On the one hand, we need to consider: How do we keep this momentum for the Summit of the Future and the Pact? Then, on the other, we should address the broader question: How do we keep this alive as a more inclusive conversation with civil society from the Global South in multilateralism? And those two things are connected because, again, one of the major strands of the Summit of the Future is discussion about reform to global governance, which is about making the global governance system constituted by civil society more inclusive and equitable. The two things do connect.

And then more generally: How do we make sure that we do not go back to the old way of going around civil society? We need to ensure that the global governance structure established after the Second World War by 193 member states recognises and incorporates the significant emergence of civil society as a crucial third force. Civil society is uniquely organised, with a distinct DNA, responding to different stimuli, speaking a different language, and originating from different places. We must find a way to make this integration effective. That's also part of what the Summit means when it indexes the need to reinvent the social contract.

So, I am optimistic that the Summit of the Future is going to be a real moment for that. Though it goes without saying that the geopolitical headwinds are not propitious, which is always the case in human history. I mean, you are always trying to fix things when they are at their most broken. That is human nature.

**“We need to ensure that the global governance structure established after the Second World War by 193 member states recognises and incorporates the significant emergence of civil society as a crucial third force. Civil society is uniquely organised, with a distinct DNA, responding to different stimuli, speaking a different language, and originating from different places. We must find a way to make this integration effective...”**

**Financing peacebuilding and development is a central focus in the Pact for the Future.**

**What does this adequate, predictable, and sustainable financing mean in the Kenyan context?**

– In the newly revamped UN development system, the focus has shifted from funding to financing. This is saying that traditional development assistance in the form of official development assistance



[ODA] was never going to be to the scale needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. This is not a critique of ODA, but rather a call to view it differently – as the important initial spark for a development engine that relies on additional sources of fuel. The large-scale financing required, reaching into the trillions, primarily needs to come from governments themselves through national and domestic revenues.

For example, Kenya's government has a 30 billion dollar a year public purse. The Kenyan private sector alone is a 90 billion dollar a year enterprise. The transition from funding to financing is about triggering those much larger pots of development capital to go toward goals that achieve this much valued triple bottom line: economic profit, social impact, and environmental sustainability. ODA does not disappear, but it needs to be used to unlock those more significant flows.

What this does mean is that we need to recognise that ODA shrinks over time because of domestic pressures at home, global conflict, and humanitarian spending. It also shrinks proportionate to a country like Kenya, which is growing. So even if ODA remains constant, proportionately it grows less and less. ODA, however, remains highly relevant, and you need it to be predictable and recurrent. Moreover, the quantity of ODA is crucial for unlocking and influencing the direction of these larger sums of development investment.

There, too, is the narrower piece of financing for development, which is about international peace and security, and then national peace and security. And there your debates range from the humanitarian spend to funding costs of peace operations, whether those costs should be covered by the UN or by regional entities like the AU [African Union], to the costs of preventive diplomacy, where that predictable financing is needed. The bottom line is, however, that prevention is, comparatively, cheap! You want expensive? That is called war. Expensive in human lives, but also in capital. By contrast, preventive diplomacy and broader prevention programming are both laughably good value in comparison.

### **The argument around the cost-effectiveness of prevention is age old, but often hard to operationalise. How has your office worked to support prevention in the country?**

— In 2022, around the Kenyan elections, our office worked with Kenyan institutions, with support from the UN Peacebuilding Fund and the German government, to develop a consortium using artificial intelligence to do real-time tracking and countering of hate and incitement speech. Through the investment of 2 million euros, we were able to support Kenyan institutions to get nearly 11 million counter messages online on countering hate and incitement speech with verified information and with peace messaging. And then there were approximately 900 reported cases of violation of Kenya's very strong legal framework against hate and incitement speech that could be reported upwards to the proper institutions that could deal with them.

This work highlights the strength to be found in Kenya's national peace infrastructure. Following the tragic violence during the 2007 elections in Kenya, which resulted in tens of thousands of deaths, there was a collective effort by the government and the international community to address the crisis. This led to the adoption of the new constitution in 2010, which established several key institutions



for peacebuilding and sustaining peace. These include the [National Cohesion and Integration Commission](#), the [Uwiano Platform](#), and the [National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management](#), along with the courts and the media freedom institutions and all elements of society, which helped to keep Kenya on track through, what I described, as the most peaceful and orderly election, but also the narrowest election in Kenyan history. And recently, with funding from Norway and Sweden, we supported Kenya to do an independent review of how that architecture had performed during the elections, where the stress fractures were, and how they could be repaired. That report, by the Independent Panel of Advisers that we supported, received the blessing of the government, at the level of the president, and recently took its full report to the Peacebuilding Commission in New York for comparative discussion with countries from Europe and Latin America. Impressive stuff!

This national peace infrastructure costs money, but it does not cost very much money. Here, I like to think of the public health model of sustaining peace. Invest a little bit now in maintaining your health so that you do not have to get emergency surgery and spend hundreds of thousands of dollars in the emergency room. And the initiative by Kenya to review and adapt its infrastructure is an excellent example of this.

**Considering the spill over of conflicts in the Horn of Africa, do you envision a national peacebuilding architecture like Kenya's for other countries in the region? What lessons from Kenya's initiative can be applied to other Horn of Africa countries to ensure sustainable regional peacebuilding efforts, and how can the AU and IGAD [Intergovernmental Authority on Development] support these efforts while maintaining a country-specific focus?**

— Kenya's sustaining peace comprises three geographic levels. There is the subnational level at the county and the communal levels, the national level, and the regional level. We have supported Kenya to do this national peacebuilding architecture review, and I lean on the word "national". But it did very much need to look at the regional context. Your question, however, goes further, which is to say, first, is it a model that other countries in the region could adopt, and secondly, should one be thinking about trying to do it at the regional level?

The first question is easier than the second because of the notion of it being a model that should be adopted. Well, yes, but not just in Africa, not just in the Horn. The notion of having a national peacebuilding architecture is something that I think Ireland – my home country – should also adopt. I think anybody who comes from my island is a little bit modest about us, not necessarily always holding ourselves up as a model of sustaining peace! In recent years, we have done a little better, but we have a long history of conflict. So, there are many countries that could adopt a model of constructing a national sustaining peace architecture and then periodically reviewing it. I certainly think that parts of the Horn could do that.

A regional conversation is an intriguing idea, but tricky. While my mandate focuses on Kenya and my responsibilities with UN Kenya, I cannot ignore the broader context of my three-decade career in the region. The Horn of Africa has not seen such intense violence and instability since I started my career in the 90s. This current climate is indeed dire, making it both crucial and challenging to engage



in regional dialogue now. Just as with the Summit of the Future, the need for such discussions is more pressing than ever, though they are at their most difficult to navigate.

**We have spoken a lot about the uniqueness of Kenya, the role of the UN, and the role of civil society, so as we look at peacebuilding in Kenya, what are your hopes for the future? What excites you?**

— I think you can tell that I am just very excited about Kenya in general. In terms of development and sustainable peace, Kenya bucks the trend. Kenya is countercyclical. Kenya is making strides in both areas, though not without challenges. Kenya's progress is notable, especially given the broader global context.

Let us start with peace and security. While Kenya certainly faces challenges, it stands out when compared to its neighbouring countries, other parts of Africa, and in the Middle East. Kenya is an outlier. Kenya is consolidating its peace, rather than experiencing regression or reversal. The same is true in development terms. Kenya, in broad aggregate terms, is posting rates of macro-level economic development in the range of 5 to 8 percent per annum, which is extraordinary given the current context.

So, what am I excited for? Well, how both of those come together. A very wise man by the name of Keith Hansen, who is my brother, the World Bank Country Director in Kenya, talks about inequality and inclusion in Kenya in the following ways. He says Kenya's development trajectory has been astonishing for the last 20–25 years, but no country in history has ever – as far as we know – graduated from middle-income to upper-income status with these levels of internal inequality. You cannot do it without radical inclusion, social protection schemes, job creation, and solving the impact of the climate crisis on the parts of the country most ravaged by that. All those different forms of inclusion are needed for Kenya to advance to the next stage in its development.

A couple of years ago, we conducted a [Leave No One Behind](#) report for Kenya, focusing on the different constituencies most at risk of being left behind in the country's otherwise extraordinary and aggregate development journey. When we presented the report to President Kenyatta, I emphasised three reasons why I felt he, as president, should take the task of addressing inequality seriously. Firstly, I said, "Because you are a president who is committed to justice, as enshrined in the constitution of Kenya." Secondly, I quoted Keith Hansen, and I said, "My brother tells me that, 'From an economic deficiency point of view, you can't achieve what you want to if you're a country without this inclusion.'" And then I said, "If those two aren't enough to convince you, there's a third. And it's peace and security." Because long-term inequality, exclusion, and marginalisation lead to big security challenges for any country in the world.

So, why am I excited and why am I optimistic? Because the Kenyan government gets that. It is our job as friendly partners to help them translate that into getting it into things that will improve inclusiveness. It is not easy in any society, but at least if you have that commitment, and I hear that commitment, at least at the rhetorical level in Kenya. So that is what I am excited about.



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# A Conversation with Nashiba Nakabira: Empowering African Youth in Multilateral Systems

**Eden Matiyas and Saron Hirpa**  
*Life & Peace Institute (LPI)*

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**Horn of Africa Bulletin**  
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**Ms. Nashiba Nakabira**, the African Youth Ambassador for Peace (AYAP) representing Eastern Africa, recently engaged in a conversation with Eden Matiyas and Saron Hirpa from the Life & Peace Institute. During the discussion, she shared her insights on the involvement of African youth in the multilateral system and highlights the role of the African Union (AU) in supporting and amplifying youth voices in peace and security initiatives.

A Ugandan national, Ms. Nakabira holds a master's in peace and conflict studies from Makerere University and a bachelor's degree in Social Sciences from Kyambogo University in Uganda. She is a co-founder of the Sisters for Peace Initiative, a women-led non-profit peacebuilding organisation. Ms. Nakabira is a senior programme specialist at the African Youth Development Link. She has eight years of experience working with youth from marginalised communities in advocacy, governance, leadership, gender mainstreaming, peacebuilding, project planning, and management. She has led the implementation of several projects geared toward community development, youth, and women's empowerment.

*This interview has been edited for clarity and length.*

### **Can you tell us about your role as AU Youth Ambassador and what that entails?**

— As a youth ambassador, I work in the AU Youth for Peace programme under the Political Affairs, Peace, and Security department. My primary mandate is to promote the continental framework on youth, peace, and security, ensuring that the five pillars are implemented. In this role, I collaborate with various civil society organisations, including youth networks, groups, activists, academia, and the media, to advocate for the development and implementation of national action plans on youth, peace, and security. I also work with member states and the regional economic communities to promote the Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda. I work to bridge relationships between young people across the board—in local, national, regional, and global bodies—by being their voice and representing them on different platforms. Additionally, I am responsible for building youth capacity on existing frameworks and policies and creating awareness about the different programmes that empower youth to benefit from developments at various levels.

### **How does the AU engage youth in advancing their peace and security efforts across the continent? Could you share some examples of related activities?**

— The AU facilitates various platforms for young people at the regional and continental levels to share their views and contribute to peace and security efforts. For example,



I represented the youth at the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary event of the AU Peace and Security Council in Tanzania. I joined a panel with distinguished African leaders, such as the former Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo. The high-level meeting was also graced by different dignitaries, including the Tanzanian president, Samia Suluhu Hassan. It was empowering to share how the AU engages with the youth and the challenges they face and propose collaborative solutions that more so leverage technology and innovation to respond to the current peace and security threats.

The AU focuses on building young people's capacity to help them understand the continental frameworks and other relevant frameworks, covering peace, security, governance, climate change, and more. For example, some youth received initial election observation mission training in Nairobi, Kenya. During the joint AU–COMESA [Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa] election observation mission to Rwanda in July 2024, I was deployed as one of the short-term election observers. For me, this was empowering, as I observed from a youth perspective assessing how national policies and frameworks in Rwanda support meaningful youth participation in governance and electoral processes.

Another important issue is empowering youth to contribute to the conversations that shape policies and programmes. Recently, the AU, in partnership with the Embassy of Switzerland, held a regional consultation on the peace agenda. We gathered views from young people across Eastern Africa on how they can contribute to peace and security efforts in the region, ensuring their efforts are coordinated and provide actionable solutions to regional peace and security challenges. The Eastern Africa regional youth consultation report for the "A New Agenda for Peace" policy briefing was shared during the three-day structured dialogue with African youth on peace and security. The outcome was a comprehensive continental report that encapsulates the voices of African youth peacebuilders and will be presented to the UN Security Council in October this year. Additionally, we [the AYAPs] reviewed the continental guidelines for the development and implementation of the continental framework on youth peace and security. During this process, we focused on identifying key strategies to advocate for and engage stakeholders and ensure youth involvement in developing and implementing national action plans on youth, peace, and security, picking examples from the countries that have already developed their national action plans and those that are in the process, considering the contextual realities in the respective regions and member states.

### **In the regional consultation, what challenges did you highlight about African youth efforts in peace and security, and how can their contributions be better supported?**

— We've discussed and shared that young people are actively working on peace and security. However, their efforts are often uncoordinated, despite contributing directly or indirectly to lasting peace on the continent. We need innovative ways to ensure youth efforts at various levels are recognised.

We are conducting a project called "Youth Speak". It uses talent to ignite civic consciousness in a slum area of Kampala, Uganda. We've been leveraging the untapped talent to amplify youth voices. The youth have the basics but lack the means to enhance their initiatives. Youth-led initiatives have limited funding and limited access to funding opportunities, which hinders their meaningful engagement.



Another issue we shared is that most of the frameworks are in English, which some youth do not understand. Making these documents more accessible could help them connect better with the content. For example, I recently met upcoming artists, poets, and football players who use creative methods to engage the community, bring the youth together, and package the message in a manner that is quite understandable by all.

We also identified a lack of harmonisation in youth programming among member states in the region. For example, youth councils have the potential to advocate for the development and implementation of national action plans on YPS [youth, peace, and security] but some countries such as Somalia don't have national youth councils. In other countries, such as Uganda, national youth councils exist, but they face challenges. In Tanzania, the law provides for their establishment, but until today they are not operational.

Another challenge that was identified is the divisions among youth, based on ethnicity, religion, and politics. This hinders their collective voice, which slows their meaningful engagement and contribution to peace and security efforts.

### **Can you also describe the genuine engagement of youth in peace and security issues at the AU and how the AU measures the meaningful engagement of youth in its initiatives?**

— When it comes to the national action plans on peace and security, we try to assess how many countries have involved youth in the process, and how many are planning or have initiated this process. Additionally, we also track the number of programmes and policies targeting youth, and the extent to which youth are involved in those programmes.

The AU also evaluates the involvement and contributions of youth, emphasising that their AU representation must be meaningful. This means their participation is not a mere symbolic gesture, but that their proposals and suggestions are actively considered. I believe the AU measures its representation by evaluating how youth involvement at the regional level creates a ripple effect across all levels. As the African Youth Ambassador for Peace, I measure how often I engage people in my region and country as well as how my interactions influence actions at these levels.

### **If you could pick three words to describe the genuine engagement of youth within the AU, what are the three words you would use?**

— Representation, capacity, and inclusion!

### **Based on the different engagements you have had, how are youth engaged in decision-making processes within the AU?**

— Youth are engaged through ongoing programmes. For example, the African Youth Ambassador for Peace programme selects five young people as representatives for the five regions of Africa to serve as ambassadors for peace. They represent the AU in different forums and help other youth understand regional frameworks and programmes.



**“... the AU has a Wise Youth Network, which is a platform that helps young people participate in negotiations, mediation, and peace efforts. This network empowers youth with specific skills in conflict resolution and management.”**

The AU also has another programme called the “Roster of Youth Experts”. This programme selects one youth from each region with expertise in any field. We have collaborated with this expertise to conduct activities for the AU in our respective regions. We have contacted several partners to explore the best way to work together with the youth experts. For instance, I am Ugandan, and my fellow youth expert is from South Sudan. He supports me in this work.

Additionally, the AU has a Wise Youth Network, which is a platform that helps young people participate in negotiations, mediation, and peace efforts. This network empowers youth with specific skills in conflict resolution and conflict management. Moreover, the revised AU continental post-conflict reconstruction and development policy has a pillar about youth. This aims to empower youth to drive sustainable peace and development, ensuring long-term stability and resilience in post-conflict communities. Therefore, we should think critically about how to achieve meaningful outcomes by leveraging existing programmes and frameworks, while empowering youth initiatives at the grassroots level.

I think the AU’s work has inspired engagements at the regional and national levels. Various regional and economic communities have also appointed youth ambassadors, such as those for migration. This practice is partly inspired by what the AU is already doing, which had a trickle-down effect to regional and local levels.

**How can the Summit of the Future accelerate the implementation of youth, peace, and security commitments at national and regional levels?**

— I think the Summit of the Future must creatively address the gaps in the existing regional and national frameworks and programmes by asking if these frameworks meet the needs of the youth. This is where creative thinking needs to be employed to strengthen regional and national mechanisms that promote and implement meaningful youth participation in peace, security, and governance.

Many countries have weak constitutions that can easily be manipulated, leading to human rights violations, infringement of freedoms, and other issues. The Summit of the Future must consider strengthening constitutionalism and the rule of law. Ultimately, for individuals to feel empowered, whether globally, continentally, or regionally, these frameworks must be domesticated at the national level. They should also be integrated into a robust system trusted by the people, especially the youth. If institutions at the national level are weak and the constitution is ineffective, they cannot protect the rights of youth, resulting in them feeling abandoned.



The youth may lack interest in current events due to the feeling that their rights have been violated. They believe they are merely surviving day by day in their countries. Therefore, it is essential to strengthen national systems, as it is through these systems that UN Security Council resolutions can be integrated into the corresponding departments of government at the national level.

The Summit of the Future must focus on empowering youth researchers to generate ideas, stay updated on developments, share their initiatives, and learn about advancements at various levels. It must also address early warnings and responses. Most of the time, indicators of violence are evident. However, responses are often slow, leading to an escalation of violent conflict. I believe the Summit of the Future must focus more on early responses to prevent violent conflict and meaningfully engage youth in early warning and response systems. Furthermore, there should be a focus on capacity building and protecting the youth in activism and politics, as they have not been adequately safeguarded.

**What are other pressing challenges, besides the constitutional issue you mention, that you believe the Summit should address in Africa and for its youth?**

— Firstly, the issue of unemployment and limited skills has been a challenge. Many youth lack the necessary skills required in the job market. Therefore, we need to think critically about how to address unemployment, as it is also a contributing factor in luring youths into violence. Youth may be drawn into radicalisation and criminal activities in instances where they are promised jobs and privileges. If youth unemployment is addressed through skills development and improving the education system, it will partly contribute to addressing the challenges faced by the youth in Eastern Africa and the entire continent.

Secondly, youth underrepresentation in decision-making is a challenge. It's not about having good policies, but about implementing them. For example, in my country, the national youth policy ensures representation from the national level to the grassroots levels. The meaningful participation of youth is curtailed, however, by political manipulation and exploitation. Moreover, through the Youth Speak project, I have found that youth groups often lack funds. Orientation as leaders when they are elected to office is also seldom done. Furthermore, there are limited capacity building training opportunities to prepare youth to fulfil their mandates. This has led to ineffective structures. We should ensure that good policies do not remain on paper but are put into action.

Thirdly, African youth possess untapped talent, but there are limited national programmes to identify and develop these skills and talents. These talents could empower youth, enhance civic engagement, and create livelihoods. However, the absence of national support hinders their potential. Nevertheless, when these individuals achieve global recognition, everyone wants to acknowledge and support them. This disparity needs to be addressed to better uplift youth talents overall.

Finally, another issue is the utilisation of social media and technology. Since most young people are active on social media, we need to ensure opportunities are accessible and relevant, addressing their needs in governance, peace, and security. Additionally, we should create ways for youth to use technology effectively, while managing potential risks and challenges.



### How can we ensure young Africans are able to participate in and understand the Summit of the Future?

— It is crucial to see whether youth can access and participate in the Summit of the Future. For example, is the Summit accessible to those unable to attend in person, but want to stay informed through social media? Can the youth understand what is happening through the different social media platforms? How are local media promoting the Summit effectively? By now, we should have advertisements running on social media, local TV, and radio stations. Additionally, we should engage ambassadors to speak about the Summit of the Future and creatively collect young people's views so that they can contribute.

I think these platforms are critical because sometimes these conversations are limited to elites—those who can only attend in person by invitation or those who can afford mobile data to attend online. But what about a secondary school student who wants to understand global issues? What about a young person in a rural area? They are active and willing to learn about what is happening elsewhere. We should think critically about how to make this conversation more inclusive so that even an ordinary young person can understand why the Summit of the Future is so important. Ultimately, they should feel ownership and pride in contributing. If there is a lack of inclusivity, then the documents or the outcomes of the Summit will not be embraced by all

### What recommendations would you offer to enhance African youth participation beyond the Summit event?

— The youth must be supported to actualise the outcomes of the Summit of the Future. They should be empowered to implement programmes to contribute to peacebuilding and conflict prevention at various levels. Stakeholders should regularly meet to assess the progress of these action points and propose practical ways to improve their implementation.

Regarding the outcomes, I expect this process to involve multi-stakeholder engagement in the Summit of the Future. For example, we can engage member states, particularly targeting key ministries and departments at the national level. We can collaborate with regional economic communities, civil society, and youth at the grassroots level to ensure that the key action points and reports are not just documents, but rather become actionable documents that have an impact on actions and programming from a youth lens.

### What impact do you expect the Summit of the Future will have on your role as a youth ambassador for peace?

— I'm quite interested and looking forward to the Summit of the Future. I'm looking at the action points that address the contextual issues, and peace and security threats. I will utilise my platform to amplify the outcomes, raise awareness, and ensure that young people at the grassroots level understand Summit outcomes.

I'll try to make sure that I share opportunities, initiatives, and key learnings from young people contributing to peace and security efforts in Eastern Africa. Additionally, I will highlight areas for improvement to enhance their meaningful involvement in peacebuilding and governance.

**What impact will the Summit of the Future have on the AU? Will it lead to greater youth participation in decision-making and commitment to implement its outcomes in continental, regional, and national frameworks?**

— The Summit will facilitate or enhance the implementation of the continental framework on peace and security, particularly by supporting the youth ambassadors and youth peacebuilders in implementing and supporting the national action plans on peace and security and ensuring that these issues are mainstreamed. I also hope this information will be used to engage the regional economic communities, member states, and other stakeholders

**In terms of multilateral institutions, what do you hope for the future? What are you excited about?**

— What I'm excited about is the idea of youth owning up to the processes. I hope to see them in meaningful representation, where their voices are heard, and the summit speaks to their needs. I'm looking forward to seeing the youth taking a central role, facilitating conversations, and contributing to discussions as panellists. I'm looking forward to seeing youth-focused action points as key outcomes of the Summit of the Future and ensuring these are well followed up, so they are actualised at different levels.

**“... I'm looking forward to seeing the youth taking a central role, facilitating conversations, and contributing to discussions as panellists.”**

**NASHIBA NAKABIRA**



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