SOUTHERN VOICES NETWORK FOR PEACEBUILDING REGIONAL POLICY CONFERENCE

Peacebuilding in the Great Lakes Region

Kampala **16-17** **June 2022**

REPORT

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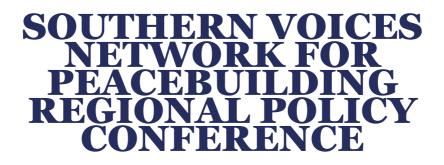
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REPORT

Acronyms

APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
AU	African Union
CAR	Central African Republic
CCM	Centre for Conflict Management
CEPAS	Centre d'Etudes pour l'Action Sociale
CEWARN	Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism
CRSV	Conflict-Related Sexual Violence
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DDRSI	Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
FPRC	Front for the Rebirth of Central Africa
GLR	Great Lakes Region
GPSP	Gender Peace and Security Program
ICGLR	International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IPAR	Institute of Policy Analysis and Research
MINUSCA	United Nations Mission in CAR
MLCJ	Movement of Central African Liberators for Justice
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PoW	Panel of the Wise
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
RMs	Regional Mechanisms
SDGEA	Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa
SRSG	Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General
SVNP	Southern Voices Network for Peacebuilding
UN	United Nations
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UPDF	Uganda People's Defence Forces

Contents

Background to the Conference

Defining the Great Lakes Region

For the purpose of this conference, we go beyond geographically correct boundaries to define the Great Lakes Region to include DRC, Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, Central African Republic and South Sudan. The selection is based on the definition of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), an intergovernmental organization of the countries in the African Great Lakes Region. Its establishment was based on the recognition that political instability and conflicts in these countries have a considerable regional dimension and thus require a concerted effort in order to promote sustainable peace and development. The ICGLR is composed of twelve member states, namely: Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Republic of South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia.

Regional Conflict Context

The countries in the Great Lakes Region (GLR) have been prone to conflict for several decades, and have witnessed some of the worst conflicts on the African continent. Among these are the genocide in Rwanda, civil war in Burundi and South Sudan, conflict in Sudan (Darfur), cross-border conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and, more recently, sectarian conflict in Central African Republic (CAR).

Tensions in the GLR, especially since the end of the Cold War, have been fuelled by attempts to accumulate wealth, often through the exploitation of natural resources and control over informal cross-border trading activities, exacerbated by internal and external illegal armed groups. In other words, conflicts in the region are a set of wars over control of resources, with numerous actors involved. Nearly all illicit traffic in Congolese minerals that funds armed groups' transits through neighboring Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, and strongly influences the economic and political dynamics in those countries. The conflict also has regional security implications, as illegal arms are smuggled through to other neighboring countries.

The dynamics of the conflict in the GLR are complex, and rooted in the legacies of colonialism, nationality and identity, ethnic tensions and discrimination, lack of rule of law, violation of human rights, political exclusion, and a wide range of development challenges. These include poor governance, corruption, poverty and youth disenfranchisement, the collapse of democratic process, and coming to power of military leadership. All of these issues are heightened by foreign interference and the inability of ruling governments to respect peace agreements or the Constitution.

These conflicts force millions of people, mostly women and children to seek refuge in neighboring countries which has both a direct and an indirect effect on their already strained economies. One of the most devastating forms of extreme hostility waged against civilians in the region is conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). Although women and girls are often the primary targets, CRSV is also strategically perpetrated against men and boys. The circumstances that render women and children vulnerable to these situations include low economic empowerment and displacement due to conflict, leading to a lack of food, security and shelter. For some women and children, this may lead to transactional sex in exchange for these basic needs, while others are coerced or sexually violated by armed groups or security forces. Sexual violence, exploitation and abuse impacts on the social fabric and hinders effective post-conflict reconstruction.

Peace building in the Great Lakes Region

Amid continued violence, there have been a number of formal and informal attempts — locally, regionally and internationally — to establish peace in the region. In early 2000, there were several attempts to negotiate peace between the DRC, Rwanda, Uganda and the rebels. Although peace deals were signed, the conflicts continue, as promises were not fulfilled. Little has been done to move away from day-to-day conflict management and towards proactively building the capacity of societies to develop their own culture of conflict prevention to resolve disputes and address the root causes of conflict, particularly tensions over the control of resources. Yet this has not been the focus of peace deals in the region. Rather, international engagement continues to be fragmented, with an emphasis on symptoms, and no comprehensive framework to end the conflict.

Most peace initiatives in the region have failed to take into account the complexity of the conflict and its implications at national, regional and international levels. Moreover, most initiatives have relied solely on the willpower of the states involved, thereby neglecting local communities' participation in the process of peace negotiations. Institutionalized mechanisms for peacebuilding, such as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), have become ineffective due to a lack of support from international partners.

Why the peacebuilding conference

This regional conference was organized as a collaboration between the Great Lakes Region of African members of the Southern Voices Network for Peacebuilding (SVNP), under the auspices of the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars Africa Program. The conference planning, organization and implementation was led by the Women's International Peace Centre (The Peace Centre), the Centre d'Etudes pour

l'Action Sociale (CEPAS), Institute of Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR-Rwanda) and the Centre for Conflict Management (CCM) of the University of Rwanda.

The main goals and desired learning points from the conference were as follows:

→ To gain a deeper understanding of the root causes of conflict in the GLR and efforts to resolve them, drawing from lessons.

→ To interrogate the role of different stakeholders in building peace in the region and reflect on their various approaches to peace building.

→ Assess the implementation of the various national and regional peace frameworks and lessons learnt and develop strategies for more effective approaches to peace building in the region

→ To reflect on the current dynamic in the context of COVID-19 and its impact on peace building in the region.

→ Provide a platform to create collaboration and networking among SVNP members in the region and policy makers.
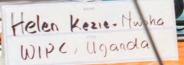
The conference lasted two (2) days, from June 16th to June 17th, 2022 and was hosted at Protea Hotel Kampala in Uganda. The conference had 27 physical participants and 51 online participants comprising high-level representatives of SVNP members in the region, policy makers, practitioners and academics.

Discussion Sessions

The conference was organized into five core sessions. Each session began with a key address on a subtopic, followed by any supporting contributions and then a Q&A session leading into group discussions on the sub topic.

The five core sessions discussed the following:

→ The Role of Regional Institutions in Peace Building in the Region: Challenges and Prospects

→ The Role of the International Community and Non-state Actors in Peace Building in the Region

→ A Review of the Implementation of Peace Agreements in the Great Lakes Region

→ The Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the Great Lakes Region

→ Re-imagining Peace Building in East Africa: Strategies and approaches- Policy- Recommendations for effective peacebuilding in the region

About Southern Voices Network for Peacebuilding (SVNP)

Centering African knowledge and agency is key to building and sustaining peace in Africa. The Southern Voices Network for Peacebuilding (SVNP) works with the Wilson Center's Africa Program to attain the most appropriate, cohesive, and inclusive policy frameworks and approaches for achieving sustainable peace in Africa. Generously funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York since its establishment in 2011, the SVNP works to generate African knowledge to inform U.S. and international peacebuilding policies on Africa; help build the next generation of African peacebuilders through its scholarship program; and create a pan-African network of African peacebuilding organizations, practitioners, and experts to collaborate and share knowledge, best practices, and lessons learned on peacebuilding in Africa.

For more information on the Southern Voices Network for Peacebuilding, visit: https://www.wilsoncenter.org/the-southern-voices-network-for-peacebuilding

Opening Session

Speakers	

Helen Kezie-Nwoha
Executive Director Women's International Peace Centre

Elizabeth Lwanga
Chairperson of the Board, Women's International Peace Centre

Alyson Grunder
Senior U.S. State Department Fellow and Associate Director of the Africa Program at Wilson Centre

The root causes, not just the causes, of conflict are often ignored and there is a need to assess what should be done differently. This is the question the conference is expected to answer, so that more proactive practices for peace are identified.

The Women's International Peace Centre (The Peace Centre), one of the organisers and host of the event on behalf of the SVNP, is a feminist organization with a mission to ignite women's leadership, amplify their voices and deepen their activism in recreating peace. They do this by enhancing women's technical expertise to participate in peace processes, provide information for women to influence decision-making in peace processes, claim spaces for women to participate in peace processes at all levels and take on a holistic wellbeing of women in peace processes.

The Peace Centre developed a review document on the performance of the Great Lakes Region in addressing sexual and gender-based violence for the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region. It has further contributed to the development of different laws and policies, forming alliances with various offices of the African Union (AU) to facilitate women's access to high level dialogues and regional policy makers to address the AU Peace and Security Council. The Peace Centre works in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and Uganda, in partnership with local, regional and international organizations and institutions.

The experience of the Peace Centre in addressing conflict and peace building in the Great Lakes Region leaves many unanswered questions about how to have effective and impactful conflict resolution processes in the region. Despite many efforts to resolve the conflicts with numerous peace agreements since 2000, conflict still continues in the region; with the current crisis in the DRC as a continuing example of conflict.

The conference aimed at helping participants look deeply into the past and ongoing efforts geared towards bringing peace to the region and search for other approaches that would more comprehensively address the many drivers of conflict. Some of the drivers of conflict include: poor governance, violation of human rights and the rule of law, marginalization, ethnic tensions, poverty and failure to invest in youth who constitute the majority of the population in the countries in the region.

The desired outcome of the conference is a deeper understanding of the root causes of conflict in the Great Lakes Region, an interrogation of the role of different actors and provision of alternatives to the current practices of peacebuilding in the region.

food, fuel and other supplies in Africa and globally. In Africa, we continue to face war in Mozambique, DRC, Nigeria and more countries. In DRC, we note the impact of the war on the population. Many are long standing wars, and despite efforts in place, the wars continue. Today, we are gathered here to discuss alternatives to sustainable peace in the Great Lakes Region.

—— **Helen Kezie-Nwoha**
Executive Director, the Peace Centre

The Woodrow Wilson International Centre is a non-partisan forum that supports independent research and open dialogue which leads to policies for a more secure, equitable and prosperous world. They address the most critical issues facing Africa and promote mutual Africa-U.S. relations including enhancing knowledge and understanding about Africa in the United States.

The Africa Program in particular achieves its mission through in-depth research and analyses, including the Africa Up Close blog, public discussions, working groups and briefings that bring together policy makers, practitioners, and subject matter experts who analyze and offer practical options for tackling key challenges in Africa and Africa-U.S. relations.

Session 1

The Role of Regional Institutions in Peace Building in the Region: Challenges and Prospects

| Speakers | **Dr. Eugenie Kayitesi**
Chair |
|---|---|

Stella Sabiiti
Peace and Development Expert

Nathan Byamukama
Executive Director, Regional Centre for Human Security in the Great Lakes Region

Presentation Summary

The Role of the African Union

As guided by the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063, the mandate of the African Union is to promote peace and stability in Africa. While the United Nations (UN) has the mandate to promote peace, security and stability globally. Chapter 8 of the UN Charter allows for national organizations to take on the security mandate.

The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) is the umbrella term for the key AU mechanisms for promoting peace, security and stability on the African continent. APSA includes three central instruments of conflict prevention, conflict management and peace building of the African Union (AU), the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) as well as the Regional Mechanisms (RMs). APSA has five (5) pillars:

1. The Panel of the Wise (PoW) is a consultative body of the African Union, composed of five appointed members, who each serve three-year terms. The mandate of the PoW is to advise the Peace and Security Council on issues relevant to conflict prevention, management, and resolution.

2. The African Standby Force is composed of multidimensional capabilities, including military, police and civilians on standby in their countries of origin and ready for rapid deployment.

3. The Peace/Special Fund, which was established in 1993 as the principal financing instrument for the peace and security activities of the Organization for African Unity/ African Union.

4. Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), are not uniform entities, but without whose involvement the AU and the UN cannot undertake successful peacemaking ventures in a particular sub-region.

5. The Continental Early Warning System is a conflict early warning operation within the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) of the African Union. Its development was supported by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1809.

The AU recognizes the contribution of women through the AU Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa adopted in 2003, in Article 9; which provides for the Right of Women's participation in the political and decision-making process of the African Union. The AU Gender Architecture, enshrined in the AU Gender Policy (2009), including policies and legal instruments that address the issue of Women, Peace and Security has paved the way for an increase in the number of women in senior positions within the Commission; the nomination of Women Special Representatives in countries in conflict or emerging from conflict; women mediators and Special Envoys.

Women's participation is also recognized by sections 5 and 2 of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA), which was adopted by the AU Heads of State and Government in 2004. Here, they committed themselves to report annually on progress made on gender mainstreaming in their respective countries. The SDGEA recognizes and extends the participation of women in peace processes including in post-conflict reconstruction in Africa as stipulated in UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

Women's issues receive the least budgetary amounts. We too need resources. When one hears what all these situations are doing, one dreams of a world where women are in security and have everything. What is happening on the ground shows that the institutions are asleep. They only wake up to make resolutions.

— **Stella Sabiiti**
Peace and Development Expert

The Positive Masculinity Program, which began in November 2021, promotes positive forms of masculinity as a key element of the joint efforts of two United Nations agencies to achieve gender equality and end the shadow pandemic of violence against women and girls. Lastly, the Gender Peace and Security Program (GPSP) promotes inclusive peace and human security for women and men.

The AU has one of the best peace building architectures but the challenge is the effectiveness of that architecture on the ground. Countries that do not adhere to agreements made by the AU are not punished. Instead, more resolutions are made. The AU has become a "sleeping grandfather". When strong willed people join the AU, we expect change, only for them to tell us later that "one must not punish the grandfather". Countries need to do away with institutions that have no impact on the ground. What will it take for these institutions to work?

—— Participant

Contrary to popular belief, the AU has registered some progress in addressing peace in the region. While the OAU's focus was on Africa's liberation from colonialism, the AU is working towards promoting peace, security, and stability on the continent. The AU works closely with civil society to hold governments accountable in advancing Agenda 2063 which has aspirations and flagship programs, such as Silencing the Guns by 2020.

I am originally from DR Congo, but I have been based in Uganda for the last 10 years as a refugee. At what level are the continental framework(s) working? How can we promote accountability towards their implementation? What opportunities do they hold for refugees? We are not allowed to participate in politics, but we are refugees because of politics. What next for us?

Resolving Conflict in East Africa's Zone 3 through an Integrated Approach

Recently, the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) ordered the Turkana, the Karimojong, and their leaders to immediately hand over the criminals involved in the killing of geologists and soldiers in Moroto District, on the Uganda-Kenya border. Peace and disarmament operations are ongoing in ICGLR's Zone 3 (Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan and Ethiopia), and regional integrated effort is the magic bullet for sustainable peace, security and development.

Member countries in Zone 3 have adopted the traditional state-centric approach to security that prioritizes state security (securing the state's territory and sovereignty) as opposed to the human security/integrated approach (securing citizen security). One of the security approaches in Zone 3 is state-led disarmament of armed pastoralists, which has been implemented for about two decades. Uganda and Kenya have implemented a mix of voluntary and forced disarmament strategies. There has been little effort to integrate policy interventions, actors and outcomes, resulting in limited

Community Insecurity	Proliferation of SALW, Cross border and inter-ethnic (cattle) raids, *est-20,000-40,000 guns (Karimajong), 50,000 guns (Turkana), UHRC Report and UNDP Report*
Personal Insecurity	Physical violence in form of killings, rape (sexual violence)
Environmental Insecurity	Environment degradation, Resource depletion/extraction, natural
Food Insecurity	Hunger, famine draught, cattle raids, high food prices
Health Insecurity	Poor sanitation, poor nutrition, epidemics and lack of access to health care
Economic Insecurity	Poverty, unemployment, lack of education facilities and alternative livelihood, illegal exploitation of the Natural Resources
Political Insecurity	Violations of human rights during forceful disarmament

There have been regional ICGLR commitments and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) initiatives to resolve and prevent future conflict. These include:

→ IGAD Development Facilitation Unit to coordinate cross border interventions.

→ IGAD Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN).

→ IGAD Rapid Response Fund

→ IGAD's Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative (IDDRSI)

IGAD also ratified the "Informal Cross-Border Security Governance Policy Framework in 2018 to allow small-scale cross-border trade of legitimate goods. The ICGLR has also utilized bi-lateral agreements, reconciliation meetings, Memorandums of Understanding and a regionally constituted disarmament committee.

Unfortunately, despite these initiatives, the ICGLR seemed to have lost momentum and has been ineffectual. Human insecurities such as those in Zone 3 cannot be tackled in isolation through fragmented stand-alone responses such as focusing on only disarmament. Instead, integrated and comprehensive approaches are needed to ensure regional, cooperative, and multi-sectoral responses. This approach will unify the agendas of those dealing with security, development, environment, and human rights in the border areas.

Session 2

The Role of the International Community and Non-state Actors in Peace Building in the Region

Speakers

Alain Nzadi-a-Nzadi
Chair

Robinah Rubimbwa
CSO Representative

Ashad Sentongo
Private Sector Representative

Presentation Summary

Internalized Roots of Conflict in the Great Lakes Region Vs External Solutions

The Great Lakes Region has not lived without war for the last 50 years. This means that 75% of almost 250 million people have never lived a day without war; they have internalized thinking that when conditions are unhappy, we fight and there is evidence to prove that when they fight, their conditions improve.

People may also internalize past trauma and use it as a lens to interpret reality – especially in times of conflict. So, 75% of people in the Great Lakes Region live with a chosen trauma and they constantly fall back on that history of civil war, violent regime change, and genocide.

The processes of state formation in the Great Lakes Region in Africa focused on the creation of systems and structures of governance, and they undermined or suppressed relationships, culture and traditions. Any interpretation of grievance or peace is stuck between state solutions and cultures, histories and traditions - a contradiction that is enduring across Africa.

Reclaiming peace calls for a three-legged hybrid solution involving the international community, local political actors and the local communities affected by the conflict. A Hutu-Tutsi problem in Rwanda cannot be solved without solving the same problem in Burundi, DRC, and Uganda. The transnational dimension is critical and peace interventions

" *People may also internalise past trauma and use it as a lens to interpret reality – especially in times of conflict. So, 75% of people in the Great Lakes Region live with a chosen trauma and they constantly fall back on to that history of civil war, of violent regime change and genocide.* "

and strategies such as local, international and regional instruments must be interpreted and localized to filter out what it means in the individual communities. Furthermore, all the conditions provided for in international instruments should be informed by the local context.

The AU peace architecture must be interpreted and localized. The local people must know that there is a framework of reference when we talk about peace. That this is what the African Union says - what does it mean to them? The domestication of international instruments should be informed by the local context and not vice versa. It should not be because this is what the UN says.

— **Dr. Ashad Ssentongo**

The translation of system level structures into everyday practices at the local level strengthens peacebuilding efforts. After localizing peace building, the next step is to problematize it. Peace building should be a condition for a government to receive a loan from the World Bank. Ultimately, peace building should be a condition for development aid and cooperation. Our leaders need a paradigm shift in terms of thinking about access, control and maintaining power.

Further, security should be reconceptualized as a piece within the peacebuilding puzzle. Over 90 peace agreements and power sharing systems in Africa were analyzed by Andreas Mellow who revealed that both mechanisms overestimate the influence of local leaders and underestimate the power of the local community, which results in the exclusion of the people.

When political leaders who are designing these regional instruments come to power through civil war, how can you tell them to build peace? You are indirectly telling them what they did was wrong!

— **Dr. Ashad Ssentongo**

The Role of Civil Society in Peace Building in the Great Lakes Region

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are a set of voluntary organizations and associations that are not driven by private or economic interests. They typically show civic virtue, and are free to participate in the public space. Civil society is supposed to play a supportive role in peace processes, supporting both the state and communities.

The role of civil society in that context can be summed up into five functions: raising awareness and advocacy, monitoring, protection, service delivery, facilitation and mediation, and promoting social cohesion.

The role of CSOs becomes more pronounced in times of state fragility, conflict and disasters. During COVID-19, for example, CSOs had to step in to provide food, water and other essentials, as well as psychosocial support to women in distress. Conflict usually puts women, who are already vulnerable, in unbearable states of danger and distress. The situation in Uganda over the 20 years of the Lord's Resistance Army insurgency resulted in the formation of many women's organizations.

So, civil society evolves from the actions of individuals and small groups, because they are meeting a particular need. In every country in the Great Lakes Region, there are known civil society organizations working to prevent or to strengthen response to violence against women and to gender based violence, to enhance sexual reproductive health services, and to increase public knowledge of the existence of services.

Following the violent post-election period in Kenya in 2007, it is women's organizations that called for the protection of civilians and distressed communities. In eastern DRC, women established organizations in response to the rampant sexual violence and the unchecked intimidation of rebel groups and militias. These organizations have now grown into active organizations that are championing the implementation of the peace and security agenda in the Great Lakes Region.

Monitoring and advocacy include using information, research and sound analysis to monitor human rights violations, monitor implementation of peace agreements, and apply pressure to the state to be more responsive and accountable.

In 2006, the women of Uganda participated in monitoring the violence in Juba, South Sudan (Sudan at that time) and in the talks by the Uganda government and the Lord's Resistance Army. The women were not part of the government delegation but were determined to influence the outcome document. Their participation ensured that the agreement was localized and informed by the issues affecting women and girls.

Civil society can facilitate community dialogues between conflicting parties, which feeds into promoting social cohesion. The objective of social cohesion is to help groups and communities to live together in peaceful coexistence in a region with very strong socialization institutions such as families, religion and culture, and political parties which are very polarized. Getting the different groups together not just to reconcile, but to focus on their common goals is paramount. In Uganda, women's rights organizations have trained mediators at the local level. Nationally, the Eminent Women of the Women's Situation Room held mediation meetings in the aftermath of the 2016 General Elections. Challenges and gaps that CSOs face include: low capabilities for quality analysis, ineffective use of the media, short unsustainable funding, and increasing authoritarianism in the region.

It is important to localize the identification of issues and their solutions. After that, CSOs should align their activities with National Action Plans on UNSCR1325. They should also make sure they deliberately create spaces for women to participate in tracking negotiations of peace processes. Finally, they must work with religious and cultural institutions to form development allies.

Is the localization agenda the way to go? There is a need for a comprehensive way to deepen its understanding at the local level. Who does the localization agenda benefit? We need to recognize the efforts that are being made by organizations at the grassroot level. Can we start by mapping all the organizations, assess their capacity, and create unique agendas, such that each and every problem affecting these people is being captured for response?

— **Participant**

Session 3

A Review of the Implementation of Peace Agreements in the Great Lakes Region

Speakers

Dr. Peter Mugume
Chair

Dr Rigobert Minani S.J. (CEPAS/DRC)
Democratic Republic of Congo

Paterne Mombe
Scholar, Wilson Centre African Program,
Central African Republic

Presentation Summary

Improving Peace Agreements in the Great Lakes Region

Although there are numerous peace agreements signed so far in the region, none is being adhered to completely. To address this, it is critical to recall them, analyze them and ascertain what is or is not working. This will involve removing duplicates, to merge some and do away with others, leaving comprehensive agreements. No new agreements should be signed, before reviewing the existing ones.

Some conflicts have been fueled by the failure of parties to implement peace agreements. For example, the M23, an armed rebel group that emerged in 2012 accused the government of marginalizing the ethnic Tutsi minority and failing to honor previous peace accords. The rebel group occupied North Kivu in DRC, forced tens of thousands of people to flee their homes and is responsible for countless past and present atrocities.

International humanitarian law, including Common Article 3 to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, prohibits summary execution, rape, torture, forced recruitment, and other abuses. All parties involved in the conflict, including rebel forces, security forces of Congo and its neighbors, and United Nations peacekeepers, are obligated under international law to spare civilians. However, abuse continues.

The region has good mechanisms for peace building, such as the Dar-Es-Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region (2004) which was signed by all Heads of State and Government of Member countries of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, under the auspices of the United Nations and the African Union.

The parties concerned agreed to stop conflicts in the region. Under this declaration, many protocols were set up, including non-aggression which forbade troops from one country to go and fight in another, and mutual defense which called for combining of forces from different countries when need be. Sadly, it was never implemented as each country pursues its own concerns.

Furthermore, the agreements did not have clauses calling for the punishment of countries that do not comply. Worse, they did not seek to address the root causes of the crisis, therefore peace lasted a short time and the conflicts resumed. To reinforce peace agreements, certain key areas must be addressed fully, especially the root causes and penalties for defaulters. The abundance of resources attracts conflict in the region, and it is exacerbated by hidden agendas which see different countries support rebel groups in neighboring countries.

Broken Accords
A Case Study of the Central African Republic

The Political Accord for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic was signed in Bangui on February 6, 2019. It was the eighth such accord in seven years aimed at ending the country's multi-sided conflict that has displaced more than 1.2 million people.

At the beginning, the Accord seemed more effective than its predecessors at creating change. It called for less attacks on the civilian population and easier movement within the countryside, as well as all combatants ceasing fire. Arrangements were made to demobilize and disarm all the armed groups. Ex-combatants were given different responsibilities. Moreover, a Justice and Reconciliation committee was set up to aid the transition.

In Bangui the capital city of CAR, government representatives and the United Nations Mission in CAR's (MINUSCA) Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) reaffirmed their commitment to the Accord, and other regional guarantors, including the African Union (AU) and Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). This was echoed in joint statements and video messages.

The country experienced a sudden change; with fewer atrocities and attacks against civilian populations. However, one year down the road, towards elections, the Peace Accord was broken by some factions. After the elections, the implementation of the Peace Agreement changed, with a growing deterioration of relations between the state and the parties to the agreement. During this time, there were continued violations of the Peace Accord.

After several months, two of the three special military advisers—Mahamat al-Khatim of the Central African Patriotic Movement (MPC) rebel group and Abbas Sidiki of Return, Reclamation, and Rehabilitation (3R) – resigned as they discovered the positions were empty shells and lacked any authority or funding. The third, Union for Peace in CAR (UPC) leader Ali Darassa, did not resign from his position, but used his status to continue the operations of his armed group, expand his territorial control, and continue trafficking in weapons.

Throughout this period, the Peace Agreement was further undermined by ongoing attacks against civilians and fighting between signatory groups; most notably between the Front for the Rebirth of Central Africa (FPRC) and Movement of Central African Liberators for Justice (MLCJ) in Vakaga prefecture.

It was not until October 2021, that the northwest unit of the Special Mixed Security Units (USMS) was finally inaugurated in Bouar, without the participation of 3R, the largest planned contingent in the force. A month later, Sidiki reversed course and tried to contribute troops to the unit, but many were deemed ineligible. So far, the performance of the force has come under local scrutiny and much suspicion over 3R's connection to recent acts of urban violence.

The timeline for the operationalization of the other two forces (northeast and southeast) remains unclear to date,

as many of the chosen armed group participants are frequently in conflict with one another.

Peace agreements with a gender perspective are still an exception, not the rule. Two decades ago, the UN called on all peace process actors to adopt a gender perspective. Unfortunately, some have not adhered to this but there are some that have done so.

—— **Paterne Mombe**

The proportion of peace agreements providing for women's and girls' concerns in 2020 continued to increase, following a drop in 2017, although it remains low. In 2020, 29% of global peace agreements contained references to women, girls, and gender (6 out of 21 peace agreements). This brings the proportion of peace agreements with gender references back in line to a level last reached in 2016 (29%), after this dropped to just 8% of peace agreements in 2017, and continues a positive trend across the 1990-2020 period. However, the Peace Agreement signed by CAR had a slight gender aspect in it. Guetel Moiba Esther Adrienne, an ex-combatant and President of the Central African Women's Organization was the only woman who was a signatory to the Central African Republic (CAR) Peace Agreement.

Session 4

The Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the Great Lakes Region

Speakers

Jolly Kamuntu
(Chair) - DRC

Marie Concessa Barubike
AFRABU – Burundi

Manasseh Emmanuella
South Sudan

Ms. Laura Nyirinkindi
Regional Perspective

Presentation Summary

The Role of Women and Youth in Burundi in Peace Initiatives

Without sustainable peace, there is no growth. The contribution of women and youth in peace building is critical, and where communities put women at the forefront of peace building, they rarely fail in their endeavors. The Bujumbura Declaration, formulated with and for youth, was a key milestone in the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa.

More than 350 young women and men across Africa participated in the Continental Dialogue on Youth, Peace and Security, hosted by the Government of Burundi on April 23rd 2022. The 150 virtual and 200 in-person participants shared practices and innovative ideas for the implementation of the youth, peace and security agenda, both in Burundi and in Africa. With the use of digital tools, young people were able to network and engage beyond cultural or linguistic differences and contribute meaningfully to fruitful discussions on their crucial role as agents of peace in peacebuilding, social cohesion, stability and governance.

During the Burundi crisis of 2015, widespread demonstrations lasted over three weeks, as people protested the intentions of the incumbent President of Burundi, Pierre Nkurunziza, to run for a third term in the 2015 presidential election. As a result of the protests the government shut down the country's internet and telephone networks,

closed the country's universities and government officials publicly referred to the protesters as 'terrorists'. Tens of thousands of people fled the country, hundreds of people were arrested and several protesters and police officers were killed while dozens more were injured.

Conditions for those who became refugees were also hard, particularly for women and children. They are victims of sexual violence, have limited education options, and faced with hunger and disease. There are many children born in refugee camps who have never known the stability of their homeland. It is essential to work towards getting refugees safely home.

In Burundi, although women are not active in politics, they play a key role in calming the people, thereby reducing the scope of the crisis. Where women have been called in as peace builders, positive results are visible. They go the extra mile to address concerns or conflict. Although Burundi has policies that enable women to be at the frontline of peace building, the enforcement still leaves a lot to be desired.

Since 2015, there have been attempts to improve diplomatic relationships despite the unrest in the country. The Great Lakes Region needs to adopt a unified vision and common agenda in relation to peace and security which involves women and youth in the dialogue process.

The Conflict in South Sudan and its Impact on Women

Women are the most affected by conflict and violence. Rape and sexual harassment are the order of the day in South Sudan - including for girls as young as 3 years who cannot identify the criminals and whose mothers lack adequate access to help or services. A number of organizations have established legal aid mechanisms, however, these are rare and are not located across the country. The initiatives are also not well publicized. The government set up a court for the trial of juvenile cases, which is only one, but meant to serve the 10 states and 3 administrative areas.

In terms of developmental aid, the World Food Program recently decreased the food ratios for people living in camps, resulting in food insecurity and increased crime rates. Early marriages are also being promoted in response to these challenges. It is of utmost importance that peace builders work closely with local communities, especially the women and children to effectively address their peace and security concerns.

Gender Roles in Peacebuilding

The root causes of conflict are: inequality, social injustice, socio-economic hardships, decline of the economy, religious division, poverty and changes in the climate. If these are not addressed appropriately and sustainably, they will result in an influx of refugees, there will be a social breakdown in the system, mortality rates will go up, , increased violence and the need for more IDP camps.

Men and women have different roles that they play in peace building. Women are better at organizing and have used various approaches in Africa including:

→ Peace Huts

→ Peace Circles

→ Local Peace Communities

→ Peace Caravans

→ DDR – NFs

→ Situation Rooms

Other methods that have been used for peace building include:

→ Negotiations

→ Meditations

→ Peace Agreements

→ Post Conflict Reconstruction

→ Transitional Justice

There is a need for governments to engage CSOs and the AU in security sector reforms. They should actively participate in the formulation of security sector policies/laws; promoting peace, security and stability; promoting and defending a culture of good governance, democratic principles, participation, human rights and freedoms as well as social justice and gender-sensitive practices in the security sector. The process should be backed by research, including budget analysis, monitoring and evaluation of security policy and practices.

It is the duty of the AU to not only urge Member states to integrate Women, Peace and Security considerations in the reform processes and National Security Sector Strategies, but also to call for a comprehensive process inclusive of women-specific activities, gender awareness and responsive programming, in order to actualize transformative possibilities for gender equity within the security sector.

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Session 5

Re-imagining Peace Building in East Africa: Strategies and Approaches

| Speakers | **Helen Kezie-Nwoha**
Chair |
| | |
| | **Martha Tukahirwa**
Uganda |
| | |
| | **Prof. Frederick Ogenga**
Kenya |

Presentation Summary

Aligning Peace with Justice and Security

Peace is not synonymous with security. Conflict and war are too complex and call for the need to unpack that complexity for the most affected people in a community. Peace agreements need to incorporate the elements of peace and restructuring the society, and answer the question of how to pursue redress for survivors of conflict. Peacebuilding should tackle not just the effects of conflict, but also the root causes.

The peace architecture at global level has failed Africa because of different interests; some conflicts are not home bred but proxy wars being fought. There is also a trust deficit between government and civil society, who do not view each other as equal partners. There is no political will to view civil society as a partner, rather than a watchdog.

Can we go back to the basics? Can we all contribute to the agenda? Are we doing the work at the grassroots? We need to create an inclusive movement which is sustainable.

— **Martha Tukahirwa**

Women help calm the population, yet they are rarely called upon to get involved in peace building. We should work to bring all players on board to create social justice, peace building and an inclusive movement which is sustainable. There is a lot of knowledge being churned out on peace, and there is a need to reconcile knowledge building with policy making.

All these considerations need money at continental, national, and grassroot levels. Money moves agendas, and there is a need for advocacy to realistically set these agendas.

The Changing Dynamics of Conflict in the Great Lakes Region

Conflict dynamics in the Great Lakes Region are inspired by a few things, namely: democracy in Africa, which includes governance, rule of law, human rights and security; ethnicity; and land disputes. A conflict that has a local dimension is transformed into a regional dimension, inviting more actors, as was the case in eastern DRC, where conflict stemmed from ethnic issues related to the Hutus and Tutsis that transect the boundaries of Rwanda, Burundi and DRC. Such kinds of conflict require multi-level strategies involving the different countries and engaging with the locals to address the root issues.

The East African Standby Force is an example of a local intervention meant to help disarm the conflicting parties around the DRC so that they have peace and stability. To what extent can we learn from this?

— **Prof. Fredrick Ogenga**

Conflict has a spillover effect from a humanitarian, security and trade perspective; therefore, peace and security cannot be solved without collaboration, genuine listening and critical thinking that respects local knowledge and context. There is a need to move from lip service to joint interventions which involve putting local actors at the forefront of peacebuilding efforts.

The DRC should be allowed to demonstrate that it is capable of solving its security challenges. There is the Rapid Intervention Force, the East African Standby Force, and other international forces. How will they work together to end the conflicts? Who invited these forces to intervene? For what reason exactly? Who are they disarming? There are over 120 fighting groups in that space!

— **Participant**

Women help calm the populations, yet they are rarely called upon to get involved in the peace building. We should work to bring all players on board to create social justice peace building and an inclusive movement which is sustainable.

Emerging Issues and Recommendations

1. A top-down approach to the implementation of peace agreements and decisions that do not sufficiently consult nor include citizens in design and implementation is not conducive to peacebuilding on the continent.

   a. The AU and RECs should ensure that decisions made at the regional level on peace and security involve and are informed by local communities, women and youth.

   b. National governments and civil society should collaborate to ensure citizens' voices are amplified and advance the implementation of peace and security decisions at the national level.

2. The guidelines and decisions made at the regional level to harness peace building are not evenly applied across the continent. In many cases, peace agreements are not fully implemented.

   a. RECs should monitor and support national governments to deliver on their commitments to creating a peaceful and safe Africa as well as localize an inclusive approach to deliver Agenda 2063.

3. The work of the African Union is constrained by funding limitations which impact full implementation of decisions and accountability efforts.

   a. Member states should make periodic contributions to the AU to support implementation of programmes.

   b. Private sector actors should be engaged to make more significant financial contributions to the AUC.

4. Accountability of parties to peace agreements and government institutions for incomplete implementation of peace agreements is lacking. This significantly impacts delivery on progress towards peace and security, and non-recurrence of conflict at national and local levels.

   a. The AU and RECs in their oversight role should operationalise efficient mechanisms to follow-up and monitor peace agreement implementation progress and ensure action by the different peace agreements signed by the different member states.

   b. The AU and independent think tanks should collaborate to evaluate how States can be held accountable to their peace and security commitments, including the establishment of initiatives to strengthen citizen's ability to monitor State progress on these agreements.