



EMERGING SECURITY SECTOR LEADERS' SEMINAR

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WASHINGTON D.C., UNITED STATES | JUNE 4-6, 17-28, 2024

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS) convened the *Emerging Security Sector Leaders* seminar from June 4-28. The first portion (June 4-6) was held virtually while the in-person part took place in Washington, D.C from June 17-28, 2024. The seminar brought together 55 uniformed and civilian mid-to-senior security sector officials from 38 countries as well as representatives from the African Union (AU), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The event focused on strategic leadership, critical thinking, ethics, and democratic governance in the context of security challenges facing the African continent.

The below read-out provides a summary of key insights from the seminar and recommendations offered by participants from African States. The recommendations presented below are directed towards African States. They do not reflect the official views of any organizations or individuals present.

KEY INSIGHTS

1. *Security leaders must pursue professionalism and respect the rule of law.* Participants highlighted the importance of security leaders, both uniformed and civilian, working within the context of institutional frameworks that nurture professionalism and a consistent apolitical posture. Moreover, participants underlined the importance of critical thinking and professionalism for effective strategic leadership. However, they acknowledged several structural barriers to professionalizing the security sector, including situations of conflict, political instability and violence, politicization and ethnicization of the security sector, nepotism and corruption, poor recruitment, limited selection and training opportunities, and insufficient remuneration for security sector roles.
2. *National security strategies are key for guiding resource mobilization and management.* Participants highlighted the importance of national security

strategies in helping African countries undertake threat analysis and determine which security issues to prioritize when it comes to resource allocation. The development of a national security strategy not only helps African countries in assess key security challenges but also helps them with evidence-based analysis and policymaking which, in turn, influence budget allocation. National security strategies help governments identify and prioritize key security risks, threats, and vulnerabilities, in addition to assisting in the development of effective responses.

3. ***National security strategies should include a focus on professionalization of the security sector.*** Participants agreed that the development and implementation of national security strategies can be used as a framework to identify activities and processes that strengthen professionalism in Africa's security sector. For example, national security strategies can include a focus on promoting capacity building and strengthening security sector governance. This requires budgetary allocation towards enhancing training and capacity building of security sector actors.
4. ***Healthy civil-military relations (CMR) are fundamental to peace, security, and stability.*** Participants highlighted that fostering healthy relationships between civilians *and* security forces is critical towards fostering peace, security, and political stability. They noted that healthy CMR provide a way for security actors to engage with civilians and build long-lasting relationships based on mutual trust. This is especially important in contexts where the relationship between civilians and the uniformed security forces are characterized by fear and mistrust.
5. ***A systems perspective and comprehensive approach to security should be adopted to improve the management of security resources.*** Participants highlighted the importance of adopting a more comprehensive and holistic approach to the pursuit of sustainable peace and security. Participants generally agreed with the proposals that national security strategies should be broad-based and developed with inputs from a wide array of stakeholders, including security actors as well as civilians from various government departments as well as parliament, independent commissions, civil society, and the private sector. Such wide-ranging consultations ensure that sufficient resources are equitably allocated to both security and development actors. Adopting a holistic approach to security is critical to addressing both traditional security challenges such as violent extremism, terrorism, insurgencies, banditry, gangs, maritime threats, transnational organized crime (ToC), as well as human security issues such as climate change, environmental degradation, food insecurity, energy challenges, unemployment, and economic insecurity.
6. ***Regional efforts to address conflict can be duplicative and poorly coordinated.*** Participants noted that the existence of multiple Regional Economic Communities

(RECs) with overlapping jurisdictions and numerous cross-border security threats has led to overlapping initiatives. While regional initiatives have a crucial role to play in addressing Africa's security challenges, participants generally agreed that existing regional architectures often lead to duplicative, poorly coordinated, and at times conflicting approaches to manage conflict. In the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, for instance, the lack of coordinated approaches has led to two separate negotiation processes and the subsequent involvement of two separate RECs - the EAC and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

7. ***Amidst changing conflict landscapes, political solutions are needed to resolve conflict and should complement peace support operations (PSOs).*** PSOs cannot succeed if they are deployed as alternatives to political solutions. Participants highlighted that PSOs are increasingly mandated to face non-traditional conflict threats, including insurgency, violent extremism, terrorism, and transnational organized crime. PSOs thus have to confront situations of asymmetrical warfare, which is often characterized by the proliferation of armed groups and belligerents. This requires a significant understanding of the political dynamics in the country and region where they are deployed as well as coordinated effort to negotiate political solutions to conflicts.
8. ***PSO mandates should be more realistic and contextually relevant.*** Participants noted the gap between the mandates of peace support operations and the capabilities of troop contributing countries (TCCs), police contributing countries (PCCS), and individual peacekeepers. They noted that increasingly PSOs are being deployed in contexts of ongoing fighting, which compels the use Chapter 7 mandates (peace enforcement) rather than Chapter 6 (traditional peacekeeping). Participants further cited unrealistic and shifting mandates as a major challenge to the success of PSOs. They noted that peacekeepers are often left to deal with the gaps between an overly ambitious mandate and limited military capabilities - which leave both peacekeepers and communities unsafe. In some cases, PSOs are given large mandates without the matching capabilities. This, in turn, contributes to the discontent of local populations who are often left feeling short-changed when the deployment of a peacekeeping mission does not result in improved security. Furthermore, unrealistic mandates often expose peacekeepers on the ground to risks because they are expected to deliver security in the context of restrictive mandates and Rules of Engagements (ROEs).
9. ***Non-military tools are critical to addressing threats posed by violent extremist organizations (VEOs).*** Countries that have successfully contained violent extremism, advocate a multi-pronged approach. In addition to deploying military forces, these approaches include reinforcing gendarmeries, creating community-oriented police, undertaking justice sector reforms, targeting sources of financing for extremist groups, providing alternative livelihoods for those vulnerable to

extremism, and regulating the religious spheres in their countries. There was a consensus among participants that a key challenge to addressing violent extremism in their countries was the relative weakness of non-military institutions.

10. *Dialogue with violent extremists remains a challenge.* Participants acknowledged that military solutions alone were insufficient to decisively alter the strategic direction of ongoing campaigns against violent extremists on the continent. Dialogue with VEOs, though unlikely to, on their own, be the answer to addressing the threat posed by these groups, was discussed as a viable option to pursue alongside other initiatives aimed at preventing the prolongation of violent conflict with militants. However, prospects for dialogue and political engagement with extremist groups are mired with challenges, including: a reluctance to engage on the part of violent extremist groups; risk of the militant leaders exploiting talks to reorganize and prepare attacks; and risk that politically engaging the group legitimizes an organization that uses violence to attain power, among other concerns.

11. *African states strive to implement existing regional initiatives and instruments aimed at improving cross-border cooperation needed to counter transnational organized crime (ToC), but face challenges.* Participants noted that there exist various frameworks, policies, and instruments to facilitate regional cooperation to counter ToC. For example: ECOWAS has developed the Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA) and the West African Research Network on Organized Crime (WARNOC); SADC has an Integrated Strategy to Prevent and Combat Transnational Organized Crime and Action Plan; IGAD's Security Sector Program prioritizes cooperation between its member states, capacity building among security institutions, and the ratification and implementation of treaties on countering ToC; the EAC also has policies and programs on security that promote integration through its Peace and Security Strategic Plan, which includes the EAC Joint Response to Regional and Cross Border Security Threats project; the Lusaka Agreement on Cooperative Enforcement Operations Directed at Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora in Africa has a Lusaka Agreement Task Force that facilitates cooperative activities by law enforcement across member states; and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) also facilitates cross-border law enforcement coordination. Meanwhile, various states and regional bodies coordinate with international bodies such as Interpol's regional bureaus and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), while many African states have ratified the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime. Despite these initiatives, participants noted that several challenges hinder successful implementation, including limited capacity within states, lack of legislative harmonization across states, differences

in how crimes related to illicit activities are defined, limited political will to encourage cooperation as well as involvement of state-embedded actors in organized crime, technical and financial challenges to coordination, and distrust and concerns over classified versus open-source information sharing.

12. ***Maritime security threats should be addressed on land and sea.*** Participants called for a holistic approach to maritime security, adding that some of the maritime security threats such as piracy, smuggling, illegal immigration, and trafficking of drugs and humans are generally driven by land-based challenges. Participants cited the youth bulge as well as unemployment and climate change – especially in terms of its effect on agricultural production – as some of the major drivers of maritime security challenges. To this end, participants called for enhanced efforts to address land-based security threats before they transfer to the maritime space. Participants called for initiatives focusing on the underlying drivers of maritime threats.

13. ***Many African countries have adopted cyber laws and policies while others have established institutional structures.*** Participants noted that most African countries have put in place legal and policy frameworks to deal with the emerging threats in the cyber domain. These legal and policy frameworks are aimed at anticipating, detecting, responding, combating, and addressing cyber threats. When fully implemented, cyber laws and policies assist African countries to not only navigate the fluid and complex digital frontier but also develop digital resilience. Countries with existing institutions and/or policy frameworks to address cyber security include Algeria, Benin, Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sierra Leone. However, participants observed that despite these policies as well as legal and institutional frameworks, challenges remain. Key challenges include limited capacity and expertise to deal with cyber threats as well as insufficient budgets for cyber-security threat prevention and response. This is further compounded by the limited coordination between the key security actors. Further, participants also noted how limited cyber capabilities impact cyber threat awareness and response. Participants also observed that the public has low levels of cyber security awareness. They also observed that there is a lack of sufficient platforms for engagement between state and non-state actors on cybersecurity matters. Participants further revealed challenges they experienced while attempting to coordinate and share information with private sector actors due to a reluctance on the part of the private sector.

14. ***Several African countries have adopted codes of conduct for their security personnel to ensure professionalism.*** Participants highlighted that professionalism is central to ensuring that security actors effectively provide security to citizens. Various security agencies have developed Codes of Conduct.

For example, Kenya adopted its Armed Forces Code of Conduct and Ethics. Additionally, there is also a movement towards development of overarching guidelines for the security sector at regional levels. For instance, in 2011, ECOWAS developed the “Code of Conduct for Armed and Security Forces” which reflects the move towards harmonizing regional standards for security sector professionalism. Similarly, the AU adopted a Solemn Declaration on a Common African Defence and Security Policy (2004) and the AU Policy Framework on the Security Sector Reform (2013). These policies, guiding documents, and codes of conduct are envisaged to contribute towards improving the values of accountability, transparency, and professionalism within the security sector in the region and in the continent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Strengthen independent institutions that oversee the security sector.** The key challenge is not so much the over-capacity of the security sector, but a lack of capacity within civilian institutions tasked to coordinate with or oversee the security sector. Ways of addressing this problem include building capacity to oversee the security sector within parliaments, the justice and independent oversight bodies and including civilian government officials in both domestic and international professional military education (PME) and training. Strong oversight bodies and mechanisms are critical towards the strengthening and promotion of healthier CMR as well as promoting justice and ensuring that impunity is addressed.
- 2. Review and reform the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) to enable better cooperation between the RECs and the AU.** The APSA should include a mechanism that allows for cross-REC collaboration to address conflicts that concern members of multiple RECs. REC-led peace operations, including those implemented by the African Standby Forces (ASF), should allow for non-REC members to contribute troops. The AU, through UN Security Council Resolution 2719, should seek to undertake joint peace support operations with relevant RECs.
- 3. Ensure that resource mobilization is accompanied by sound and transparent resources management.** There is need for enhanced efforts by African states to monitor the way security resources are utilized and managed. Additionally, more efforts are required to enhance oversight over the security sector to ensure accountability and transparency within the sector. This requires addressing corruption and secrecy in security sector (especially defence) spending. Furthermore, strengthened efforts are required to curb and control the opaque

procurement processes that can be undertaken within the security sector if the necessary safeguards are not put in place. Parliament and other oversight bodies such as anti-corruption commissions as well as ethics committees have a role to play in preventing the mismanagement of security budgets. Furthermore, there should also be reciprocal accountability by the senior government officials who are tasked with overseeing the security sector.

- 4. Promote harmonized and synergized training for African security sector actors.** It is important to ensure that security sector training academies make space for civilians to be trained there. Security sector actors, especially uniformed personnel, must also be afforded the opportunity to go to civilian institutions for training. This will facilitate cross-pollination of ideas as well as strengthen the professional collaboration between civilians and security actors.
- 5. Promote continued adoption and review of codes of conduct that play a role in enhancing security sector professionalism.** Professionalism of the security sector is key to ensuring that security actors effectively provide security. Professionalism of the security actors should be codified by legal and policy frameworks as well as guiding frameworks and standard operating procedures. Given the evolving conflict contexts and security threats, African states should ensure that Codes of Conduct in the security sector are subjected to periodic reviews, to ensure that they help address the deficits identified. Such reviews can also be used to inform internal policy changes and revision.
- 6. Integrate political processes into peace and security efforts.** RECs, the AU, and the UN, together with bilateral and multilateral partners, should ensure that the design of mandates for PSOs considers exit strategies. PSOs should be utilized together with other political processes such as diplomacy, good offices, mediation, negotiation, and dialogue. Examples include modalities such as the AU Panel of the Wise, the ECOWAS Council of Elders, the ECOWAS Ambassadors to Member States as well as forums such as the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa). These mechanisms and entities could be used to support peace processes, while PSOs deal with the security challenges on the ground. The use of other strategies for conflict intervention allows PSOs to create conditions for longer-term and lasting peace and to identify drivers of conflict, as well as have dialogue conflict about these issues. Over time, PSOs should pave the way for other conflict interventions which focus on creating conditions that address the root causes of.

7. **Promote training and capacity building on cyber domain awareness.** There is a huge need for increased awareness and understanding of cybersecurity best practices among African security sector actors. This is designed to increase monitoring, vigilance, protection, and responses against cybersecurity risks. Capacity building and continued training should focus on thematic areas such as cyber domain awareness, the importance of cyber security, digital security, information security, and data protection.