



AFRICA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

Lessons Learned in Adapting Peace Operations to Violent Extremist Threats

SENIOR LEADERS' ROUNDTABLE

January 22-24, 2025

BIOGRAPHIES

Leadership

Colonel (ret.) Daniel Hampton brings more than 25 years of experience developing and implementing U.S. defense policy and strategy in Africa. As professor of practice in security studies, he oversees curriculum development and program management in the areas of institutional capacity building and civil-military cooperation.

During the course of a 30-year military career, Colonel (retired) Hampton held several postings on the African continent to include the United States Senior Defense Official to the Republic of South Africa and U.S. Defense Attaché to the countries of Eswatini, Malawi, Lesotho, and Zimbabwe. He also served as a policy adviser to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the Horn of Africa region. As part of the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan, Colonel Hampton commanded the Regional Support Command-South responsible for the institutional training, equipping, and resourcing of all Afghan Army and Afghan Police forces in southern Afghanistan.

Colonel (retired) Hampton is a graduate of the United States Army Command and Staff College, the Zimbabwe Staff College, and the Defense Language Institute (French). He holds a Masters in African Studies from the University of Illinois, a Masters in Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College, and a B.A. in History from Wake Forest University.

Dr. Nate Allen is Associate Professor at the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, where oversees academic programming and conducts research on cyber issues, peace operations, emerging technology, and civil-military across Africa. Previously, Dr. Allen was a policy advisor at the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) Task Force on Extremism in Fragile States. He has also worked at the U.S. State Department, House of Representatives, and as a research analyst at NORC at the University of Chicago. Dr. Allen's work has appeared in a wide range of leading policy and peer-reviewed publications, including *Armed Forces and Society*, *The Washington Quarterly*, *Democratization*, *Orbis*, *War on the Rocks*, *The Washington Post*, and *Foreign Affairs*. He has received fellowships from American University, the Robertson Family Foundation, and USIP, where he was a 2016-2017

Peace Scholar. He currently serves as a Research Fellow at South Africa's Stellenbosch University and is a Council on Foreign Relations Term Member.

Dr. Allen holds a Ph.D. in international relations and African studies from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, an M.A. from Princeton University's School of Public and International Affairs, and a B.A. from Swarthmore College.

Moderators

Colonel Sean McClure is a U.S. Army Special Forces officer and Sub-Saharan Africa Foreign Area Officer. Prior to becoming a Foreign Area Officer, he served in a variety of command and staff positions in special operations units, with multiple deployments in Kosovo and Iraq. As a Foreign Area Officer, he has served as the Africa Team Chief for the Defense Threat Reduction Agency's International Counterproliferation Program, the Chief of the Offices of Security Cooperation in both South Sudan (2011-12) and Nigeria (2016-19) for the U.S. Africa Command, and as Deputy Middle East Division Chief of the Missile Defense Agency. His most recent assignment was as the Director, Military Assistance Group - Somalia (2022-23). He holds an M.S. in International Relations from Troy University, an M.S. in Defense Analysis from the Naval Postgraduate School, and a Masters of Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College. He is currently assigned as the Senior Military Advisor at the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, where he is the faculty lead for the military professionalism portfolio and supports the counterterrorism portfolio.

Ms. Sophie Rutenbar is a Visiting Scholar at New York University's Center on International Cooperation (CIC) and a Foreign Policy Visiting Fellow at the Brookings Institution. She brings conflict prevention and peacebuilding expertise to both roles, supported by a Council on Foreign Relations International Affairs Fellowship. Her current focus lies on understanding Haiti's intricate socio-political landscape, exploring the interplay between economic and political elites shaping the nation's trajectory. Working with the United Nations (UN) Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), she served as the strategic planner for the office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General.

Her tenure at the UN includes contributing to the Policy Planning Team of the UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO), 2017-19, where she worked extensively on UN peacekeeping and peace and security reform processes. She also distinguished herself as the inaugural US-sponsored associate expert/junior professional officer within the UN Secretariat from 2013 to 2015, working with the policy planning team for the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support.

Before the UN, Sophie's career took her to Sudan and South Sudan, including observing the 2011 referendum process on independence for South Sudan with the Carter Center and working for USAID's Sudan and South Sudan Transition and Conflict Mitigation Program. She also has experience in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zambia, and Thailand, where she honed her ability to drive positive change amidst challenging environments.

A recipient of the Marshall Scholarship, Sophie received Masters degrees in Conflict, Security, and Development from King's College London and Human Rights from the London School of Economics (LSE). She graduated magna cum laude from the University of Texas at Dallas, where

she studied global politics as a Eugene McDermott Scholar and was selected as the university's first-ever Truman Scholar. Her commitment to leadership and security issues is demonstrated by her current service as a Security Fellow with the Truman National Security Project, where she continues to leverage her expertise to advocate for effective US foreign policy and promote peace.

Dr. Anouar Boukhars is a professor of counterterrorism and countering violent extremism at the Africa Center for Strategic Studies. He works closely with African government and nongovernmental security sector leaders on developing and implementing activities and programs relating to counterterrorism and countering violent extremism. His research focuses on the dynamics of radicalization and violent extremism in Africa.

Prior to joining the Africa Center, Dr. Boukhars was a nonresident fellow in the Middle East Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and an associate professor of international relations at McDaniel College. He has served on several advisory boards and committees on the Sahel and North Africa, including at the African Peacebuilding Network at the Social Science Research Council. From August 2015 to July 2017, Dr. Boukhars served at the Institute for Peace and Security Studies in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, as lead facilitator of its flagship program, the Executive Masters in Managing Peace and Security in Africa. His research has been published in numerous leading policy publications and academic journals. He routinely conducts fieldwork in Africa and consults frequently for the African Union, World Bank, United Nations, U.S. State Department, and European governments.

Dr. Boukhars holds a Ph.D. in international studies from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia; an M.A. in applied humanities from Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco; and a B.A. in English literature from Ibn Tofail University in Kenitra, Morocco.

Ambassador Dr. Martin Kimani is the Executive Director of New York University's Center on International Cooperation (CIC).

From 2021 to 2024, he served as the Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations (UN), where he held the positions of President of the Security Council in October 2021 and President of the UN Development Program (UNDP), the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) Executive Board in 2023. Prior to this role, he was Kenya's Special Envoy for Countering Violent Extremism and the Director of the National Counter Terrorism Centre. Earlier in his career, he served as Kenya's Permanent Representative to the UN Environment Program (UNEP) and UN-Habitat. Additionally, he directed the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) and has experience in political risk analysis, bond and currency sales, and trading.

Ambassador Kimani holds a Masters of Arts degree and Ph.D. in War Studies from King's College London and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy from the University of New Hampshire. His distinguished service to Kenya has been recognized with two senior presidential honors: Chief of the Order of the Burning Spear (CBS) and Elder of the Order of the Burning Spear (EBS). He was awarded the German Africa Foundation's Honorary Award in 2022. He is a member of the Aspen Global Leadership Network.

Mr. Herbert Loret is Team Leader of the Light Coordination Mechanism Integrated Training Services, Evaluation Policy and Training Division, Department of Peace Operations at the United Nations. He has served with the United Nations for over twenty years based in New York City and various locations in Africa, including the DRC, Senegal, and Cote d'Ivoire.

Dr. Daisy Muibu is an Assistant Professor of Security Studies at the Africa Center for Strategic Studies. Her work is focused on counterterrorism, countering violent extremism, and security sector governance in conflict-affected states. She is responsible for leading the counterterrorism and countering violent extremism portfolio as well as the countering transnational organized crime portfolio at the Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

Prior to joining the Africa Center, Dr. Muibu was a Research Fellow at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and an Assistant Professor at the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Alabama. Her work on foreign fighter influence on armed groups and security sector reform in conflict-affected locales involved fieldwork in Somalia and Kenya where she conducted community surveys and interviews. Her work has been published in academic journals including *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, *South African Journal of International Affairs*, *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, *Conflict, Security and Development*, *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, and the *Combating Terrorism Center*. Dr. Muibu has also been the recipient of various research grants including: the National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education (NCITE); the United Nations' Initiative on Peace and Reconciliation in Somalia; the Association for the Study of The Middle East and Africa; and the University of Alabama.

Dr. Muibu holds a Ph.D. in Justice, Law and Criminology from the American University in Washington D.C. (2020), an MA in Intelligence and International Security from King's College, London (2015), and a BA in International Relations from the United States International University - Africa (2014).

Panelists

Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix is the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations. Mr. Lacroix brings to the position over 25 years of political and diplomatic experience, with a focus on multilateral organizations, and on United Nations activities and programs.

Mr. Lacroix served from 2014 to 2017 as Director for United Nations, International Organizations, Human Rights and Francophonie at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His previous appointments include Ambassador of France to Sweden, Chief of Protocol of France, Deputy Permanent Representative at the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations in New York, Deputy Chief of Mission at the French Embassy in Prague and First Secretary then Second Counsellor at the French Embassy in Washington. He also served as Advisor at the Cabinet of the French Prime Minister.

Mr. Lacroix holds BAs from the Institute of Economic and Commercial Sciences (ESSEC), the Institute for Political Studies - Sciences Po Paris and the National School of Administration (ENA), as a graduate of the Class "Michel de Montaigne."

Her Excellency Fatima K. Mohammed is the Head of Mission of the AU to the UN. Her mandate is to represent the AU at the UN as well as develop and maintain constructive and productive relationship between the AU and Member States in New York. Prior to her appointment, she was Senior Special Advisor to the ECOWAS Commission. Her career spans over 2 decades with a focus on peace, security, socio-economic development, regional integration, organizational development, and project management, both in the public and private sectors. Her academic background is in Peace, Security, Development and Conflict Transformation (University of Innsbruck), Responsible Management and Sustainable Economic Development (UN University for Peace, Costa Rica), and Business Communication (European University, Switzerland). She also has a BA in Environmental Design (ABU, Zaria, Nigeria). She is also the Founder of the LikeMinds Project, a non-profit, Organization working with vulnerable communities in Nigeria. She is an Eisenhower Fellow and was further honored with the ExxonMobil. Distinguished Fellow Award in 2017.

Maj. Gen. Kenneth P. Ekman is the Department of Defense West Africa Coordination Element Lead, U.S. Africa Command, Stuttgart Mörhingen, Germany. In this capacity, he coordinates with African militaries, the U.S. interagency, and allies to build unity of effort, maximize the effectiveness of operations, activities and investments, and ensure alignment with U.S. whole of government efforts to advance posture initiatives and campaign objectives in West Africa.

Maj. Gen. Ekman received his commission in 1991 after graduating from the U.S. Air Force Academy. He has primarily flown sailplanes, the F-16 Fighting Falcon and the F-22 Raptor, and has commanded at the squadron, wing and Air Expeditionary Task Force levels. His staff assignments include service at U.S. Air Forces Central Command, Office of the Secretary of Defense, North American Aerospace Defense and U.S. Northern Commands and Office of the Defense Representative Pakistan. Prior to his current position, the general served as Director, Strategy, Engagement, and Programs, U.S. Africa Command.

Maj. Gen. Ekman holds a Bachelors of Science in aeronautical engineering from the U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs and a Masters of Science in mechanical engineering from California State University, Fresno.

Major General Cheryl Pearce of Australia was appointed to the position of Deputy Military Adviser for Peacekeeping Operations with the United Nations in January 2024. However, she assumed the position of Acting Military Adviser in April 2024. Previously serving as the Deputy Chief of the Army of the Australian Defense Force, Major General Pearce brings to this position more than 35 years of military experience. She was Force Commander of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus from 2019 to 2021.

She previously served as the Commandant of the Australian Defense Force Academy (2017-2019) and as Commander of the Australian Joint Task Force Group in Afghanistan (2016). She was the Australian Army Headquarters Chief of Staff (2013-2016) and Director of Special Operations Support (2010-2012). Major General Pearce also held the positions of Commandant of the Defense Police Training Centre and Commanding Officer of the 1st Military Police Battalion. She was the Australian Army's Provost-Marshal as well as a military observer with the United Nations

Mission of Support in East Timor in 2002.

Major General Pearce holds a Bachelor of Arts in Asian Studies from the University of New England in Armidale, a Masters in Policing, Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism from the Macquarie University in Sydney and a Masters of Arts in Defense Studies from the Deakin University in Melbourne, all in Australia.

Mr. Idriss Mounir Lallali is the Acting Director and concurrently Deputy-Director of the African Union Counter-Terrorism Centre (AUCTC)/ formerly known as the Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), Among his primary responsibilities are to Advise the African Union Commission leadership and Policy Organs on how best Africa can contribute in a more meaningful way to the African and international campaign against terrorism, lead the design and development of the ACSRT Continental Counter-Terrorism Early Warning System. He contributed to the development of the African Anti-Terrorist Model Law, and the Principles and Guidelines on Human and Peoples' Rights while Countering Terrorism in Africa adopted by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights; led the Monitoring Process of ratification of the African and Universal Counterterrorism Instruments, in addition to taking part in various AU-UN Joint Missions and Programs, including with the UNOCT, CTED, UNODC, UNICRI and UNPD.

Mr. Lallali is the editor-in-chief of the African Journal for the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, the AU Africa Terrorism Situation Analysis Report and the Joint ACSRT-NATO Sahel Terrorism Analysis Report. He is a guest Lecturer on Counterterrorism at the National Defense College of Nigeria (NDC) and on Conflict Management at the National Higher Institute of Political Science of Algiers (ENSSP). He is also Member of the Academic Advisory Board of the Faculty of Political Science at the University of the Free State, South Africa and Associate Fellow, Preventing / Countering Violent Extremism at International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT). He prefaced the book *Directions in International Terrorism: Theories, Trends and Trajectories*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2021. In June 2021 was the first African official to be interviewed by the prestigious West Point Counter-Terrorism Centre (CTC) Sentinel. He was also Member of the Project Strategic Steering Committee of the Guidelines for the Criminal Justice Response to Terrorism "Promoting the Role of Women in Security and Counterterrorism" published by the Women in International Security (WIIS) and the member of Informal Advisory Group of the UN Prosecution, Rehabilitation And Reintegration (PRR) Compendium, and Member of the UNOCT Expert Group Meetings (EGM) supporting the development of the compendium of Good Practices and related guidelines for the Establishment of CT Fusion Cells.

Mr. Lallali has a Postgraduate Diploma in Corporate Security Management from Cranfield University (the Royal Military College of Science: RMCS) in the United Kingdom; An MBA in International Business from Regent's College in London; A MA in Security Management from Webster University in the United States of America; And a BSc. of Finance from the University of Algiers. He periodically briefs the AU Peace and Security Council, the UN Security Council CT Committees, the Global CT Forum, the Global Security Forum (GSF), NATO, the European Union, and African Heads of Security and Intelligence Services. Mr. Lallali has presented papers and participated as keynote speaker, moderator and facilitator in an important number of High-Level Meetings, Conferences and seminars, including in preparation for the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, and published regularly in the Public and Private Sector Partnerships Journal.

Ms. Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee of Ghana is Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, United Nations.

A career diplomat, Ms. Pobee brings more than 30 years of experience in international affairs and diplomacy with her Foreign Ministry. She served as Chief Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration and was previously Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ghana to the United Nations from 2015 until 2020. In that position, she performed various special assignments, including as the Chair of the African Group of Ambassadors in New York, Vice-President of the seventy-first session of the United Nations General Assembly, Chair of the New York Group of Friends of the African Women Leaders Network, Co-Facilitator of the High-Level Meeting on Financing for Development 2019, and Co-Chair of the Group of Friends on Gender Parity at the United Nations, among others.

Ms. Pobee previously served as Deputy Head of Mission and Chargé d'affaires at the Ghana High Commission in Pretoria (2012-2015), Director of the Information and Public Affairs Bureau at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2010-2012) and Head of Chancery at the Ghanaian Embassy in Washington, D.C. (2006-2010). She was Acting Director of the Bureaux for Human Resources and Administration (2006) and for Information, Culture and Linguistics (2004-2006). Posted to the Ghanaian Embassy in Tel Aviv in 2000, she served as Minister-Counsellor and Deputy Head of Mission (2002-2004), and as Chargé d'affaires (2000-2002). Ms. Pobee also served as Acting Director of the Personnel and Training Bureau (1998-2000), having been posted to Ghana's Permanent Mission to the Office of the United Nations in Geneva (1995-1998) and to the Embassy in Moscow, where she was First Secretary (1994-1995).

A graduate of the University of Ghana, Ms. Pobee also holds a Masters degree in development studies with a specialization in women and development from the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague. She also has diplomas in public administration and multilateral diplomacy from the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration and the Geneva Institute of International Studies.

Dr. Andre Le Sage is the CEO of Sage Research, and a recognized expert in African affairs. Since 2010, Dr. Le Sage has worked with U.S. Special Operations Forces' counterterrorism and stabilization efforts in Africa, including analysis of friendly and enemy networks, strategy development, training of SOF operators, and field support during deployments. He supports a wide range of U. S. Government offices and agencies, and regularly briefs senior leaders at the US Embassy in Somalia, State Department, Defense Department, US Africa Command, the National Security Council, and the intelligence community.

From 2005-2018, Dr. Le Sage served as a Professor and Senior Fellow at the US National Defense University's Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS) and Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS). His research and field work focused on humanitarian, development, security and stabilization efforts in East Africa, particularly Somalia and Kenya, as well as the challenges posed by the Lord's Resistance Army in Central Africa, and strategic approaches to militia and terrorist threats in the Trans-Sahara area of North West Africa. Previously, Dr. Le Sage worked across the Horn of Africa, East Africa and Central Africa with the United Nations, Medecins Sans

Frontieres/ Doctors Without Borders and other organizations.

He has also served as an Adjunct Professor at Georgetown University, where he taught “Security Challenges in Africa” for the School of Foreign Service, and has appeared on the PBS News Hour, National Public Radio, BBC World Service, and ABC News. Dr. Le Sage holds a B.A. in Political Science from Creighton University, an M.A. in International Relations from Yale University, and a Ph.D. from Cambridge University’s Faculty of Social and Political Science.

Major General Diomède Ndegeya is an experienced senior diplomat and high-level military commander with a number of positions in the Burundi government and multi-lateral organizations. He served in both AMISOM and ATMIS as a Force Commander: in AMISOM from September 1, 2020 to May 2022 and in ATMIS from June 1, 2022 to November 2022.

In March 2023, he was reappointed as Senior Advisor to the Minister of Defense in Burundi, a position he previously occupied from May 2018 to July 2020. In that capacity, he acts as the Minister’s main focal point for the reintegration of former combatants into the Armed Forces; the coordination of DDR and security sector reform programs; and the delivery of defense policy and strategy to all Burundi Defense Attachés globally. He previously served as the, Burundi Defense Attaché to Burundi Embassy to Cairo, and Deputy of Burundian National Defense Force Chief, following his ascension within the National Burundian Army. Ndegeya has a full military education, starting with the artillery Institute in Russia, to the highest military studies of command and defense strategy at the Chinese Defense University and at the National High Institute of Defense Studies in Paris, IHEDN, France. He holds a Masters degree in Technical Sciences, as well as two Bachelor’s degrees in Economics and Management Sciences and International Relations and Political Sciences. He has navigated many multicultural contexts, taking advantage of his language skills (Swahili, Kirundi, French, English, and Russian).

Dr. Seth Appiah-Mensah currently serves with the Chief, Joint Operations Center/Integrated Information Hub, United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM). He previously held positions a Research Fellow at the University of Western Australia and as a Team Leader on the CAR Team, Office of Operations to support to the newly established United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

Dr. Appiah-Mensah is a veteran international peacekeeper, military and maritime expert, and an academic. He has extensive experience in inter-organizational security partnerships focusing on ECOWAS, AU, UN and EU engagements. As a strategic planner and political analyst, he successfully deployed and managed complex peacekeeping operations from start-up to liquidation, including transitions from AU-led to UN-led missions. He is a prolific writer and contributor to discourses on Pan- African security, African political leadership and values-based indigenous governance systems in Africa. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Western Australia and Masters from the University of Wollongong.

Lieutenant General (Ret.) Dr. Dennis Gyllensporre is an Associate Professor in Security Policy and Strategy at the Swedish Defense University, currently at Oxford University as a Visiting Fellow. His research is focused on security strategy, military diplomacy, and peacekeeping. He also holds office as the Vice President of the Royal Swedish Academy of War Sciences. LTG (Ret.)

Gyllensporre has 38 years of service in the Swedish Armed Forces.

In October 2021, he completed three years of service as the Force Commander for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). He came from a four-year appointment as the Chief of Defense Staff and Director of Special Forces of the Swedish Armed Forces. He was promoted to Lieutenant General in 2014. Gyllensporre has served as a staff officer in various positions, including tours abroad in Bosnia- Herzegovina and Sudan, and served as a military advisor in international crisis management at the MoD. He has also served as chief of staff at the Swedish Joint Operations Command and later as head of the Doctrine and Concepts Branch at the European Union Military Staff. In 2008, he was deployed to Afghanistan as the Chief of Staff at Regional Command North of the NATO-led operation (ISAF).

He has studied at multifold military institutions and holds several academic degrees, including a Masters of Science in Computer Science (Royal National Institute of Technology, Sweden), Masters of Business Administration (Warwick University, United Kingdom), Masters of Military Arts and Science (US Army Command and General Staff College), as well as a Ph.D. in Policy Analysis and Governance (Maastricht University, the Netherlands). He is the author of several books and academic articles on military strategy and security studies.

His leadership has been officially recognized nationally and internationally. He is a recipient of the Swedish Armed Forces Medal of Merit in gold for distinguished leadership during combat and war-like situations, the French Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur, the Chevalier de l'Ordre national du Mali, and the Dwight D. Eisenhower Award (2001) for academic achievements at U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. He was awarded the 'Leader of Change 2022' in Sweden for successful work as an adaptation manager. Gyllensporre was inaugurated into the Hall of Fame at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (2017) and the U.S. National Defense University (2022).

Ambassador Maman Sidikou of Niger has held distinguished high-ranking representational positions in the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU). He currently serves as Senior Advisor for the Sahel at the U.S. Institute of Peace, offering the Institute and other entities multidisciplinary advisories on Africa-related political, developmental, defense and security issues, with a focus on West Africa and the Sahel.

Until 2023, Ambassador Sidikou was the AU High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, where he led the AU's efforts including coordination with ECOWAS and the UN to address crises and the multifaceted challenges confronting the Sahel region. His responsibilities also included monitoring the transitions in Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso following the disruptions of democratic governance.

Previously, he held key positions with the World Bank, UNICEF (in Nigeria, Afghanistan and Iraq) and Save The Children (in Rwanda and the DRC). Ambassador Sidikou also served as the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission (SRCC) for Somalia and Head of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) from 2014 to 2015; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO)

from 2015 to 2018; and the Executive Secretary of the G5 Sahel Executive Secretariat in Nouakchott, Mauritania from 2018 to 2021.

In addition to his international service, Ambassador Sidikou has held senior positions in Niger, including serving as Special Adviser to the President in 1996, Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1997 to 1999, and Ambassador to the United States from 2011 to 2014.

He holds a Ph.D. from Florida State University and is fluent in English, French, and Spanish, while also speaking several African languages, including Hausa and Dzarma-Songhai. Recognized for his contributions, he has been awarded honors such as Commander of the National Order of Merit of Mauritania and Officer in the Order of Merit of Spain.

General Lucky Eluonye Onyenuchea Irabor CFR (Rtd) served in the Armed Forces of Nigeria for nearly four decades since commissioned as an officer in 1986. He served as Force Commander of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) from May 2017 to August 2018.

Successful leadership roles marked General Irabor's military career. He played a significant part in national and international peacekeeping and peace-building roles. His early years saw him in the war in Liberia and later in Sierra Leone, fighting against rebels. He served as part of ECOMOG troops in both countries before taking part in UNAMSIL and UNMIL operations. His appointment as the Theater Commander of Operation Lafia Dole in Nigeria brought him to the limelight for his professionalism, doggedness, and resilience. His tenure as the Theater Commander in the North Eastern Nigeria, saw the defeat of Boko Haram, a feat that took him to the international stage as the Force Commander of the Multinational Joint Force at N'Djamena, Chad. He later became the Chief of Defense Training and Operations at Defense Headquarters and Commander of Training and Doctrine Command, Nigerian Army. He was later appointed the 17th Chief of Defense Staff on 26 January 2021.

As a military leader and strategist, General Irabor has made remarkable contributions in the counterterrorism and counterinsurgency efforts in Nigeria and neighboring countries. Aside his tours of duty in Liberia and Sierra Leone differently for ECOMOG operations, UNMIL and UNAMSIL, he planned and executed the conduct of Operations which led to the destruction and clearance of Boko Haram Terrorist (BHT) camps and enclaves in Alagarno and Sambisa Forests of North East Nigeria, leading to the capture of several weapons and equipment belonging to the terrorists, as well as rescue of over 20,000 civilians abducted by the terrorist group. The senior officer also conducted intense kinetic operations that forced the BHTs to release 103 abducted Chibok Girls. During his tour of duty as Force Commander MNJTF, General Irabor facilitated the orchestration of an overarching Regional Stabilization Strategy tailored towards securing early post conflict recovery by identifying drivers of violent extremism as well as formulating concerted plans to tackle them in the Lake Chad region.

The General has several decorations and awards including national honour as Commander of the Order of the Federal Republic (CFR). He is equally a Fellow of Nigerian Society of Engineers and a Fellow of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs. He holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Electrical/Electronics Engineering from Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, a Master of Arts Degree in International Affairs from the University of Ghana, Accra, and a Master of Strategic

Studies from Bangladesh, University of Professionals, Dhaka. He also attended several seminars and conferences including Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction and Terrorism at the European Centre for Security Studies in Garmish, Germany; Harvard Kennedy School of Government, USA in 2012 for a National and International Security as well as Leadership Decision-Making Course in same institution in 2017.

Ms. Rania Mohamed Osman Mohamed Hadra serves as the Regional Advisor on Sahel for the Regional Bureau for Africa at the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). She is an international practitioner with over 20 years of experience in humanitarian, development, civil and political affairs and has worked in, Sudan, Libya, and Syria.

Her previous positions include Assistant Representative for UNICEF in Sudan (2021), Senior Planning Officer in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (2019-2021), Head of the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Syria (2016-2019), and Team Leader on the Horn of Africa within the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2014-2016).

Dr. Amandine Gnanguênon is Associate Research Fellow at UNU-CRIS and Visiting Fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) Africa program, working on a research project to map-out bilateral support from five European countries (France, Germany, UK, Italy and Sweden) to African Regional Organizations (AROs) in West and Central Africa.

Previously, she was the Director of the War and Political reconstruction project (2012-2016), which focused on political reconstruction in war zones, based on cross-area comparative and trans-regional studies (Africa, Asia and the Middle East). This project was hosted by the Institut des mondes africains (IMAF) at the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (EHESS), winning project of the "Emergences Program" of Paris City. She was also a senior researcher at the Institute of Security Studies (ISS) in Dakar (2014) and head of the sub-Saharan Africa program at the Institute of Strategic Research, Ecole Militaire (IRSEM), French MoD think tank, in Paris (2010-2013).

She holds a Ph.D. in political science from the University Clermont Auvergne where she is Associate Fellow. She was awarded a scholarship from the French Ministry of defense to conduct her Ph.D. thesis on the evolution of regional multilateralism (European Union, United Nations, African Union and Regional Economic Communities) to deal with system of conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa.

Her research interests are regionalism and regionalization in West Africa, African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), comparative regionalism in Africa (African Regional Organizations and African coalitions), and African conflict prevention mechanisms (esp. regional early warning system).

Major-General Michael Ayisi Amoah is the Force Commander of the Multinational Joint Taskforce for the Accra Initiative (MNJTf-AI). Before his current appointment, he was the General Officer Commanding the Southern Command of the Ghana Armed Force. Having served for about 37 years in the Ghana Armed Forces he has done all the relevant courses commensurate to his rank. He has held several key appointments such as Commanding Officer of the 3 Infantry

Battalion, Deputy Director of Projects at the General Headquarters, Chief Staff Officer at the Army Headquarters, Deputy Director General Joint Operations at the General Headquarters and Joint Task Force Commander of Operation VANGUARD among others. He has a rich experience in the area of peacekeeping, having served in various Missions in key capacities.

Mr. Oliver Ulich oversees the Protection and Performance pillar in the Policy and Best Practices Service of the Policy, Evaluation and Training Division in the United Nations Department of Peace Operations (DPO). He has been responsible for the Peacekeeping Summits and Ministerials since 2015 and has been coordinating a number of reform initiatives during his time in DPO. He was recently part of the core teams responsible for the New Agenda for Peace (2022/23) and was the lead in DPO for the Independent Study on the future of peacekeeping that was prepared for the Berlin Ministerial. Before joining DPO, Mr. Ulich worked in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General from 2005 to 2010, the UN Mission in Sudan, and for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). He was also an adjunct professor at the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University (SIPA) from 2006 to 2010. Before joining the UN, Mr. Ulich worked as an attorney for major international law firms in New York, Hong Kong and London.

Mr. Zinurine AlGhali serves as the Senior Political Coordinator at the African Union Permanent Observer Mission to the UN in New York.

In this role, Mr. AlGhali coordinates peace and security issues, focusing on the work of African members of the UN Security Council (A3) and enhancing AU-UN cooperation. Prior to this, Mr. AlGhali held several key positions at the African Union, including Acting Head of the Peace Support Operations Division, where strategic guidance was provided on all AU peace support operations (PSOs) and the African Standby Force (ASF) initiatives. As Chief of the Policy Development Unit, Mr. AlGhali led efforts in policy development, best practices, and compliance processes for AU PSOs across the continent.

Earlier in Mr. AlGhali's career, he contributed to peacebuilding efforts in Sierra Leone as Program Coordinator at Post-Conflict Reintegration Initiatives for Development and Empowerment (PRIDE), focusing on Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR), Security Sector Reform (SSR), and Transitional Justice. Mr. AlGhali has also worked at the African Center for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) in South Africa, where leadership was provided to the Peacekeeping Unit and the Training for Peace (TfP) Program. Mr. AlGhali's academic background includes a Masters in Gender Studies from the University of Sierra Leone, alongside a Bachelors in Philosophy and Politics and a Diploma in Mass Communication Public Relations/Image Management.

Ms. Bitania Tadesse serves as a peace and security researcher and policy analyst at International Peace Institute who focuses on conflict management and peacebuilding in Africa and African multilateral institutions.

Before joining the International Peace Institute, she was program director at Amani Africa in Addis Ababa. She has worked with various international and pan-African organizations, including at the Norwegian Refugee Council AU Liaison Office, with the AU Special Envoy on

Women, Peace and Security and Save the Children International pan-African Office.

She has worked extensively in research and advocacy in women, peace and security, and humanitarian and development policies primarily focusing on African Union-led initiatives and programs. Over the years, she has worked closely with various stakeholders including multilateral partners and international organizations.

Ms. Tadesse received her Masters in African Studies from Oxford University, holds a Bachelors in Political Science and International Relations, and a Masters in Peace and Security from Addis Ababa University.

Major General Patrick Dube is the Former Force Commander of United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO)'s Force Intervention Brigade and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM).

Major General Dr. Augustin Mubiayi Mamba is currently the Director General of the College of Advanced Studies of Strategy and Defense, CHESD-DRC.

Major General Mubiayi Mamba is a distinguished military officer and academic with extensive experience in both the defense and psychological fields, with a career marked by leadership roles in intelligence and security operations. The Major General has held several key positions, including Deputy Head of the Military House in charge of Operations and Intelligence and Head of the External Department at the Intelligence Staff. His military training includes specialized courses in tactical intelligence, nuclear and biological warfare, and international security, with advanced studies in strategy and defense at renowned institutions across the globe.

In addition to his military achievements, Major General Mamba is a respected scholar in clinical psychology. He earned his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Kinshasa, following a long academic journey that included studies in mathematics, physics, and clinical psychology. Mamba has held faculty positions at the University of Kinshasa, served as a psychotherapist, and contributed to numerous publications on psychological support and trauma management. His publications include books and articles on psychoaffective health, particularly focusing on marginalized groups. Fluent in several languages, including French, English, and multiple Congolese languages, he remains a key figure in both the military and academic spheres of the DRC.

Ms. Leila Zerroughi is a highly experienced legal and human rights expert with over 40 years of service in international peacekeeping, rule of law, and the protection of civilians. She served as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) from 2018 to 2021, and previously as the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict from 2012 to 2017. Her latest position was as a member of the High Level Panel on the Security and development in the Sahel from 2022 to 2023.

A former Supreme Court Judge in Algeria, Ms. Zerrougui has held leadership roles in numerous

human rights committees and advisory groups, both within the UN and other international organizations. She has served as an expert on the UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, and worked as Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. In addition to her international work, she has contributed to legal reforms and human rights initiatives in Algeria, including her role as Special Envoy in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Throughout her career, she has been deeply involved in peace and mediation processes across Africa, South America, Asia, and the Middle East, working closely with UN Special Envoys, regional organizations like the African Union, and various conflict parties. She has also been a key contributor to the development of human rights mechanisms, including the African and Arab Charters of Human Rights.

Ms. Zerrougui is also an academic, having taught law and human rights at various institutions and participated in global discussions on issues such as women's empowerment, peacekeeping, and the prevention of torture.

Ms. Liesl Louw-Vaudran is the International Crisis Group's Senior Advisor, African Union. Liesl has worked on issues relating to peace, security and governance in Africa for over twenty years. She has written extensively about the African Union (AU) and Africa's broader peace and security challenges and regularly participates in public events featuring the AU.

Before joining the International Crisis Group in February 2023, she was a project leader for Southern Africa at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in Pretoria. She was also the editor of the PSC Report, the ISS' flagship monthly publication focusing on the AU Peace and Security Council.

Liesl has written two books, including 'Superpower or Neocolonialist', published in 2016, about South African foreign policy. She has a Masters Degree in Political Science from the University of Pretoria and is a board member of In Transformation Initiative, a not-for-profit organization dealing with peacemaking in Africa and globally. Liesl was awarded the title of Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Mérite by French President Emmanuel Macron in 2019.

His Excellency Ambassador Professor Mpho Molomo is the former Head of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) and the Special Representative to the Chair of the Organ (SACO) on Politics Defense and Security Cooperation. As Head of Mission, he provides overall political authority and strategic direction to SAMIM, works closely with the Force Commander, and serves as a link between SAMIM, SADC Secretariat, and the Chairperson of the Organ. Following his appointment as SRCO, Molomo was also appointed Ambassador by His Excellency Dr. Mokgweetsi Eric Masisi, President of the Republic of Botswana.

Before he was seconded to the SADC Mission in Mozambique, Prof. Molomo was Secretary of Political Affairs at the Office of the President in Botswana and previously served as Professor of Political Science in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies at the University of Botswana.

Molomo founded the Center for Strategic Studies in 2001 and established the Regional Center for Culture and Peace Studies at the University of Botswana in 2004. Molomo holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Boston University, Masters in Political Science and Africa Studies from Ohio University, and Bachelors from the University of Botswana and Swaziland. Molomo is an alumnus of the Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

Brigadier General Patrick Karuretwa is the Director General of International Military Cooperation (IMC) in the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Rwanda.

With a military career spanning thirty years, General Karuretwa previously served as Principal Secretary to His Excellency the President of the Republic of Rwanda (2014 - 2019) as well as Defense and Security Advisor to the President (2011 - 2014).

He is a graduate of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University in the United States of America, where he obtained two Masters degrees in Law and Diplomacy (MALD), and in International Law (LLM). He also holds a Bachelor degree in Law from the National University of Rwanda.

With a Special Forces background, General Karuretwa's military experience includes serving as Head of Operations and Training in RDF's 2nd Infantry Division, and as a Senior Officer in the Republican Guard Unit. He is an alumnus of the Rwanda Defense Force Command and Staff College.