



AFRICA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

EAST AFRICA SECURITY GOVERNANCE FORUM: PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT OF THE SECURITY SECTOR ON CT/CVE

MULTINATIONAL ACADEMIC PROGRAM INFORMATION NOTE

WHAT: The Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS) will hold a forum for East African defense and security officials as well as parliamentarians and staff on enhancing parliamentary oversight of the security sector. Participants will share practical insights and generate concrete recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of legislative oversight of East African states' strategies, budgets, and approaches for countering terrorism and countering violent extremism (CT/CVE).

WHERE: Nairobi, Kenya

WHEN: April 8-11, 2025

WHO: The program will target approximately 60 participants from across the security and defense policy sectors in East Africa, particularly from Burundi, Djibouti, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda. Each delegation of nominees per country will include parliamentarians or clerks with defense and security expertise (ideally on defense and security committees in their country's legislature), uniformed and civilian security sector officials who design or implement CT/CVE strategies and policies for the Armed Forces, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of the Interior, National Security Advisor's Office, and/or National Counterterrorism Centers; and security sector officials who support the Minister of Defense or Joint Chiefs of Staff in their engagements with parliament. Direct invitations will be issued to the African Security Sector Network, East African Community, the East African Legislative Assembly, the East African Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization's Counterterrorism Center of Excellence, Women in International Security - Kenya, and the House Democracy Partnership. To ensure comprehensive peer learning, nominees must include women and men, and are encouraged to include incumbent and opposition parties.

WHY: In East Africa, empirical research shows that boosting popular trust in the defense and security sector to counter terrorism and violent extremism within a robust framework of the rule of law and civilian harm mitigation is essential to state legitimacy and effectiveness. This finding underscores the importance of enabling informed legislative oversight of a country's CT/CVE strategy, budget, and implementation by elected representatives of the people. Yet frequently, incoming legislators have little specialized expertise on security issues, to include CT/CVE;

legislators with prior defense and security experience do not always employ a human security framework for oversight of CT/CVE; and there is a tendency for civilian oversight of CT/CVE issues to be overly cautious. Defense and security officials, for their part, sometimes still consider their sector to be “off limits” from external oversight done by civilian institutions and are not always incentivized to behave in ways that bolster professionalism (such as providing public education and accountability about the results of CT/CVE strategies, programs, and campaigns).

The Forum will bolster defense institution building in the region by fostering peer learning and experience sharing about tools, techniques, and useful practices that both CT/CVE policymakers in the defense/security sector as well as defense/security focused parliamentarians are using to make legislative oversight of CT/CVE more effective, legitimate, and accountable. The Forum will help both defense/security officials and parliamentarians to become more closely networked and mutually informed about each other’s roles and responsibilities in oversight of the security sector. It will also allow officials from East African countries to share knowledge and experiences from this process in their region’s specific context, particularly as it relates to CT/CVE. While there are often constitutional and legal frameworks providing defense/security oversight officials the authority to do their work, their capacity to do so in practice is limited because of organizational cultures and training gaps across the civil-military divide.

HOW:

The Forum will be in-person for four days, conducted in English and French, under a strict policy of non-attribution. It will take a structured approach to fostering peer learning on a practical problem set, in order to enable participants to propose solution frameworks for their countries and region. The Forum will therefore include a combination of plenary sessions, small group discussions, and country-specific guided exercises. Regionally renowned experts will be featured as panelists to stimulate practical and contextualized learning. Participants in the Forum will analyze approaches, tools, and lessons learned on how they can exercise the 3As (ability, authority, and attitude) in oversight work, both in concert and in tension with their counterparts.