



# 2024 IRSK Annual Conference

# CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

## **THEME:**

Fostering Integration and Cooperation  
in the COMESA Region through  
International Relations and Diplomacy

## **DATE AND LOCATION:**

23rd - 25th October 2024

Nairobi, Kenya

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## INTRODUCTION

The International Relations Society of Kenya (IRSK), the professional body for international relations and diplomacy in Kenya, is pleased to announce the upcoming second IRSK Annual Conference. This 3-day event will feature high-level, insightful evidence-based deliberations regarding current challenges, priorities and prospects in international relations and diplomacy. The conference is being organized in partnership with the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD). The second IRSK Annual Conference builds on the inaugural conference and represents a significant milestone in advancing the discourse and practice of international relations and diplomacy not just in Kenya, but also in the COMESA region and the wider African continent.

The theme of the 2024 IRSK Conference is **“Fostering Integration and Cooperation in the COMESA Region through International Relations and Diplomacy.”** Participants at the conference will delve into the critical role of international relations and diplomacy in strengthening ties among stakeholders as well as for overcoming deep-seated political, economic, peace and security and developmental challenges in the COMESA region. It seeks to examine how diplomatic efforts and international relations frameworks facilitate collaboration and partnership between governments, regional organizations, civil society groups, and private sector entities and how the highlighted challenges impact on regional integration and cooperation. It will be a platform where participants reflect on the past progress at regional integration and cooperation in the COMESA region and examine how international relations and diplomacy can be enhanced to inform future efforts.

The conference is expected to draw around 200 attendees, including government officials, parliamentarians, diplomats, scholars, policymakers, business leaders, media personnel, think tanks, and civil society representatives, among others. Special attention will be given to ensuring broad geographic representation and the involvement of women and youth from as many COMESA countries as possible. The 3-day conference will be held in Nairobi, Kenya from October 23 to October 25, 2024.

## CONFERENCE METHODOLOGY

The conference approach will encompass a dynamic blend of elements, ensuring a rich and transformative experience for all attendees. Participants can expect captivating keynote addresses, engaging roundtable discussions, debates, dialogue, and workshops aimed at propelling these vital discussions, paving the way for well-informed action as well as impactful solutions. Beyond the intellectual discourse, the agenda also encompasses vibrant social events, networking sessions and cultural activities. The fusion of these components creates an inclusive platform that aims to nurture knowledge, dialogue and collaboration amongst participants, making the conference an exceptional and memorable event.

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## CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

- Policy dialogue and intellectual discourse.
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- Practical policy incubation
- Knowledge exchange and research dissemination
- Professional development and skill enhancement
- Networking and collaborative engagement
- Promoting Inclusivity
- Mentorship

## CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITY

The 2024 IRSK Annual Conference is poised to facilitate rich dialogue, debates and deliberations that promise to shed light on the progress of the COMESA Integration Agenda. This year's conference aims to examine the efficacy of international relations and diplomacy in fostering of integration and cooperation in the COMESA region. By delving into the tools being utilized and their effectiveness, as well as exploring innovative approaches, the conference seeks to propel the continent towards heightened levels of integration and cooperation. It therefore serves as a pivotal platform for exchanging ideas, sharing perspectives, and forging partnerships. Additionally, the conference offers an opportunity to explore novel strategies in diplomacy and international relations, particularly in addressing regional integration challenges. Through these discussions, the conference endeavors to identify pragmatic solutions capable of reshaping the trajectory of international relations and diplomacy within the COMESA region and beyond.

## THEMATIC OVERVIEW

Regional integration and cooperation have been key priorities for African leaders since the Pan-African movement of the 1960s. Within the COMESA region, regional integration and cooperation remain crucial pathways to sustainable development, as outlined in the Abuja Treaty of 1991. The Treaty advocates for the establishment of the African Economic Community (AEC) through integration starting at regional levels, with COMESA being one of the pillars. Specifically, the first principle of establishing and strengthening existing Regional Economic Communities (RECs) places significant responsibility on organizations like COMESA to lay a strong foundation for the success. Furthermore, the Constitutive Act of the African Union (CAU) recognizes RECs as the building blocks of the continent's peace and security architecture.

From the onset of its foundation, COMESA has built its reputation as a prominent front-runner in the promotion of Africa's Regional Integration Agenda. Established in 1994, COMESA stands as one of the largest RECs in Africa, comprising 21 member states and representing around 640 million people. COMESA's primary objective was to facilitate the economic growth and development of the integrating states. During this time, significant progress has been made in areas such as trade facilitation, infrastructure development, policy harmonization and promotion of good governance, peace and security. These achievements made thus far provide an impetus for COMESA to expand and deepen its regional integration agenda, which is crucial for unlocking the region's full potential.

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Despite the progress being made in advancing the “negative agenda” i.e. removing barriers to trade and advancing socioeconomic transformation, there equally is an important need for moving toward the “positive agenda” or providing goods that markets do not supply. Good governance, peace and security are fundamental regional public goods that are necessary for realizing the benefits of integration. In this regard, COMESA is emerging as a regional leader in the promotion of political stability and international cooperation amongst its member states. Through various programs, initiatives, and partnerships across its member states, COMESA has earned its reputable name and emerged as a leader through its collaboration with various stakeholders at both continental and global levels. Furthermore, its engagement with external partners and regional organizations has expanded its influence and contributed to broader efforts aimed at enhancing economic prosperity, peace and security in the region.

As it stands, many RECs in Africa face deep seated challenges, hindering the full realization of its integration and cooperation objectives as envisaged in the Abuja Treaty. Some of the barriers to the integration and co-operation agenda in the region include fragile economic structures, civil strife, political instabilities and wars. If not urgently addressed, these threaten to derail the progress and achievements as envisaged in the Abuja Treaty of 1991 remain largely elusive. This underscores the need for concerted efforts to promote good governance, peace and security within the COMESA region and the continent at large. For this to be a success, it cannot be overemphasized that these efforts should be grounded in sound IR and diplomacy analysis and should be evidence-based.

It is in this context that the theme of the second IRSK Annual Conference for the year 2024 is **Fostering Integration and Cooperation in the COMESA Region through International Relations and Diplomacy**. This theme underscores the crucial role of diplomacy and international relations in shaping the COMESA integration agenda, the success of the region and the entire African continent. The conference aims to provide a forum for the participants to take a retrospective pause and re-examine the strides the region has made in its integration journey, but also to critically analyse why it hasn't fully achieved the objectives, with a view to identifying pragmatic and innovative ways of pursuing the agenda. The conference also provides a platform for delving into the positive contemporary issues and particularly the importance of peace, security, and political stability for the region's resilience and sustainable development.

The conference theme is guided by the theoretical assumption that by combining various IR and diplomacy theories, frameworks, and methodological instruments, we can better understand, analyze, and explain the current level of integration and cooperation in the COMESA region. The utilization of eclectic and multidisciplinary approaches is crucial for analyzing these factors and their implications for sustainable economic and social progress of member states. The conference will also propose sound and actionable policy recommendations to enhance integration, sustainable peace, security, and inclusive growth in the region.

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## CONFERENCE TRACKS AND THEMES

IRSK, COMESA & ACCORD invite well-researched scholarly and policy papers based on the conference theme from scholars, policymakers, and practitioners. The papers should be original, well researched and analytical, with realistic and relevant policy recommendations and should neither be published nor under consideration elsewhere.

The conference will be organized around three distinct tracks with several thematic areas:

### Track 1: International Relations

- Peace and Security
- Democracy and Elections
- Good Governance
- Geopolitics
- Foreign Policy
- Cyber Security
- Migration

### Track 2: Diplomacy

- Public Diplomacy
- Economic/Commercial Diplomacy
- Development Diplomacy
- Education Diplomacy
- Humanitarian Diplomacy
- Digital Diplomacy
- Cultural Diplomacy
- Gender and Diplomacy
- Environment/Climate Diplomacy

### Tracks 3: Regional Integration

- International Trade and Economics
- Investment and Finance
- Harmonization of Policies and Standards
- Infrastructure Integration
- Regional Cooperation
- Movement of People and Labor Mobility
- Cultural Integration and Social Cohesion
- Development Cooperation

In line with the forementioned thematic strands, the conference will critically interrogate theoretical, conceptual and methodological approaches as well as the instruments adopted to deal with these issues within the context of regional integration and cooperation in the region. These are to be embedded in elaborate, innovative and empirical examination in order to spur both academic and policy discourse. The conference will emphasize broad-based interdisciplinary approaches that support access to resources, participatory decision-making and equity. Various IR and diplomacy theories, frameworks, and methodological instruments, we can better understand, analyze, and explain the current level of integration and cooperation in the COMESA region. The utilization of eclectic and multidisciplinary approaches is crucial for analyzing these factors and their implications for sustainable economic and social progress of member states. The conference will also propose sound and actionable policy recommendations to enhance integration, sustainable peace, security, and inclusive growth in the region.

## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- i.** Manuscript Submission Format: All text must be typed in 12-point Times New Roman font with 1.5 line spacing. Margins should be at least 1 inch on all four sides.
- ii.** Abstract: Articles will be preceded by an abstract of between 200-300 words describing the purpose, significance, methodology, general findings and recommendations of the study and should contain a minimum of five (5) keywords listed in alphabetical order.
- iii.** Cover Page: The complete manuscript title, name(s) and addresses of the author(s), institutional affiliations, and status should be clearly stated on this page.
- iv.** Numbering: Pages should be numbered consecutively.
- v.** Biography Page: Please provide a short biography (fewer than 100 words) for yourself and each author, if the paper is the work of more than one author.
- vi.** Referencing: The APA Style Version 7 (2020) referencing style is to be used
- vii.** Word Count: Between 6,000 – 8,000 words.
- viii.** Important Timelines:
  - Deadline for Submission of Abstracts by 15th of May 2024.
  - Feedback on reviewed Abstracts by 30th of June 2024.
  - Submission of full Papers by 1st of September 2024.
  - Submission for Peer review by 30th of November 2024.
  - Publication of peer-reviewed papers in the second quarter of 2025.
- ix.** Submission of Abstracts and Papers: In soft copy (MS Word) and should be done through the following email address [conference@irskkenya.or.ke](mailto:conference@irskkenya.or.ke).

## REGISTRATION FEES

<b>International Participants</b>	USD 100
<b>Non-Members</b>	KES 10,000
<b>IRSK Members</b>	KES 8,000
<b>Students</b>	KES 4,000

## Payments should be made through one of the following methods:

### Bank Transfer

**Bank:** National Bank of Kenya Ltd.

**Branch:** Kenyatta National Hospital Branch

**Account Name:** International Relations Society of Kenya Account

**Account Number:** 01020248155100

**Swift Code:** NBKEKENXXXX

**Bank Code:** 12

**Branch Code:** 025

### M-Pesa Pay Bill

**Business Number:** National Bank of Kenya Ltd.

**Account Number:** 01020248155100

Payment should be made on or before 15th September 2024

## PARTNERING ORGANIZATIONS



### **International Relations Society of Kenya (IRSK)**

IRSK is the professional body for the international affairs and diplomacy fields in Kenya. The Society serves as a forum for the exchange of ideas, networking, and programmatic initiatives among those involved in the study, teaching, and practice of international relations and diplomacy. IRSK works to promote policy dialogues on international affairs and diplomacy between various parties, carry out pertinent and substantial research, and engage in conversation and collaboration with various actors at national, regional, and international levels.

[www.irskkenya.or.ke](http://www.irskkenya.or.ke)



### **The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)**

COMESA was established in 1994 to replace the former Preferential Trade Area (PTA). It is the largest Regional Economic Community with a total of 21 Member States. COMESA's main focus is to promote economic prosperity through regional integration. Its objective also includes the promotion of peace and security in the region as espoused in Article 3(d) of the COMESA Treaty. The program on peace and security specifically focuses on governance, conflict prevention, conflict management and post-conflict reconstruction.

[www.comesa.int](http://www.comesa.int)



### **African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD)**

ACCORD is a civil society organisation working throughout Africa since 1992, to bring creative African solutions to the challenges posed by conflict on the continent. We impact political developments by bringing conflict resolution, dialogue, and development to the forefront as an alternative to protracted conflict. As part of its strategic objectives, ACCORD aims to generate, document, and share knowledge that positively impacts conflict prevention, management, resolution and transformation.

[www.accord.org.za](http://www.accord.org.za)

