



Governance, Peace & Security

Newsletter

Sixth edition, April - June 2025

Introduction

In line with Article 3(d) of the COMESA Treaty, the COMESA Governance, Peace and Security (GPS) Unit made positive treads towards the promotion of regional peace, security, and stability. For the second quarter (Q2) of 2025, the newsletter chronicles various activities implemented whilst underscoring the key achievements and the outcomes realised, encompassing a wide range of efforts, from promoting good democratic processes to institutional capacity development and partnerships. The following thematic areas are covered:

This edition covers the following thematic areas:

1. **Democracy and Governance**
2. **Early Warning**
3. **Joint Programming**
4. **Mediation**
5. **Transnational Organised Crime**
6. **Women, Peace and Security**
7. **Youth Engagement**

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Joint COMESA-AU Pre-Election Assessment Mission to Malawi

In line with its mandate to promote democratic elections within its member states, COMESA-GPS and the AUC PAPS, with support from the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) and International IDEA, conducted a Joint Pre-election and Needs Assessment Mission (PAM/NAM) to Malawi from 31 March – 5 April 2025. The PAM/NAM aimed to evaluate Malawi's level of preparedness for the 2025 General Elections. The mission further sought to identify areas requiring support for the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) and other key electoral stakeholders.

Consultations were held with a wide range of stakeholders, including MEC, Malawi Police Service, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, political parties, the National Institute for Civic Education (NICE), EU Exploratory Mission, UN Malawi, UNDP, and civil society organisations. Issues and best practices raised during the consultations were shared with Malawi Electoral Commission and other key stakeholders in form of feedback. The recommendations further informed COMESA/AU/IDEA joint technical support to Malawi Electoral Commission.

Training on Election Risk Identification and Protecting Elections Against Gender-Based Discrimination

A training on Election Risk Identification and Protecting Elections against gender-based discrimination was conducted by International IDEA in collaboration with the AU and COMESA from 16 - 18 June 2025 in Lilongwe, Malawi. This training is in response to one of the recommendations that was proposed during the PAM/NAM. The training marks the first phase of technical support being provided to the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) and other local electoral stakeholders. The Training attracted 50 participants from various institutions including MEC, Malawi Peace Commission, Police, Defense Forces, National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE), Law Society of Malawi, Judiciary, Communication Regulatory Authority, Registrar of Political Parties, Anti-Corruption Bureau, Malawi Human Rights Commission, Political Science Association, and Malawi Law Commission.

Follow-up planned activities include:

Election Risk Identification training and Protecting Elections against gender-based discrimination	Development and adoption of a risk management framework and policy	Training of Trainers for Logistics Management
BRIDGE Modular Training for MEC Civic and Voter Educators (CVE) and District Elections Officers on Gender Inclusion in elections	Technical training and support on the adoption of the Electoral Risk Management Tool and data collection hub	Capacity Building to equip MEC with best practices on Quality Control & Compliance during elections
Development of Election Monitoring Strategy		

It is expected that by the end of the technical support and all the lined-up activities, the capacity of MEC and other electoral stakeholders will be enhanced to deliver free, fair, and transparent elections in September 2025.



AU-COMESA-SADC Technical Tripartite Committee Meeting on Strengthening Early Warning, Peace and Security in the Southern African Region

In the spirit of collaboration and enhancing peer-to-peer support and learning, COMESA_GPS participated in the technical meeting organised by the African Union on 26 – 29 April 2025 in Johannesburg, South Africa. The meeting brought together the AU-CEWS Southern Africa Regional Desk, COMESA, and SADC. The overall objective of the technical meeting was to develop a holistic approach and framework towards identifying and addressing conflict, peace, and security challenges at their nascent stages and supporting existing initiatives and interventions in the Southern Africa region.

The key outcome of the technical meeting was the development of a collaboration and coordination framework outlining the necessary interventions to be undertaken towards addressing the identified threats. The key interventions that require strengthening included enhancing early warning and reaching out to key policy response entities for timely intervention, strengthening institutional capacities at regional, national, and local levels, and joint resource mobilisation towards leveraging on institutional capacities, among others.



Workshop on New Emerging Threats to Peace and Security in the Southern Africa Region

COMESA_GPS participated in a workshop organised by the African Union CEWS on emerging peace and security threats in the Southern Africa region from 5 – 8 May 2025 in Harare, Zimbabwe. Being 1st of its kind, the workshop's sole objective was to review the status of emerging peace and security threats in the Southern Africa region and deliberate on workable strategies towards preventing, managing, and mitigating them. The workshop featured a dynamic mix of stakeholders from the AUC PAPS, COMESA, and SADC and Southern Africa Member States, including Angola, Botswana, the Kingdom of Eswatini, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Also in attendance was SAPPC, a civil society organisation working on peace and security in Southern Africa.

Key issues highlighted as emerging threats during the workshop included terrorism – within the lens of radicalisation and violent extremism; climate change impact; underperforming economies and increasing foreign debt; armed opposition groups; transnational organised crimes, notably human trafficking, cyber-crime, drug trafficking, production of counterfeit currencies by criminal groups, foreign interference, among others.

The workshop concluded with commitments from stakeholders to enhance efforts towards the following:



Reviewing the existing normative frameworks to align them with the existing and emerging threats in terms of strengthening the necessary effective responses



Enhancing cooperation between AU and key actors at the regional and national levels (RECs/RMs and civil society) towards achieving collaboration and leveraging of resources



Incorporation of the identified threats in the future programming of activities in order to ensure that coverage and responses are holistic in the prevention, management and post-conflict cycle stages



29th Technical Meeting on Early Warning and 3rd AU-RECs/RMs Technical Coordination Meeting on Preventive Diplomacy and Mediation

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“We either swim together or drown separately” – Dr Oita Etyang

For effective harmonisation of efforts in conflict prevention, COMESA_GPS actively took part in the 29th Technical Meeting on Early Warning between the Continental Early Warning System of the African Union (AU CEWS) and the early warning systems of Regional Economic Communities (RECs)/ Regional Mechanisms (RMs). The technical meeting was held on 26 - 28 May 2025 in Nairobi, Kenya. The Technical Meeting featured technical experts from the AU Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) Department, alongside representatives from regional bodies including CEN-SAD, EAC, IGAD, SADC, EASF, and NARC, as well as the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP).

Discussions highlighted progress and challenges in implementing continent-wide early warning systems, with each REC/RM detailing specific peace and security threats. Concerns were raised over foreign interference escalating conflicts across Africa, gaps in feedback mechanisms on early warnings, and the need

to strengthen preventive diplomacy frameworks. The Technical experts committed to enhance coordination in reporting and interventions, leveraging the AU Peace and Security Council's recent Communiqué on Early Warning and Early Response, and capitalising on the existing high-level diplomatic platforms for timely conflict prevention. The meeting further underscored the critical role of harmonising tools and technologies, including embracing emerging innovations such as artificial intelligence to improve early warning systems. Also underpinned was the need for regular briefings to the AU PSC and the African Union Inter-Regional Knowledge Exchange (I-RECKE) on Early Warning and Conflict Prevention. The meeting reaffirmed the importance of synchronised AU/RECs/RMs collaboration through designated focal points to streamline intervention efforts.

As an outcome of the meeting, the AU/RECs/RMs were tasked with preparing situational analysis reports for countries approaching elections. COMESA, in collaboration with the AU and other RECs, will focus on Seychelles, Malawi, Somalia, Egypt, and Tunisia for elections in 2025, with plans underway for Uganda and Zambia in 2026.

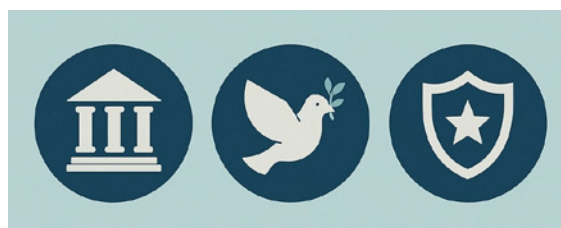
Joint Planning and Review Meeting on the Governance, Peace and Security Programme



From 15 – 16 May 2025, in Nairobi, Kenya, COMESA_GPS actively participated in the Joint Planning and Review Meeting on the EU-Supported Governance, Peace and Security Programme jointly hosted by the AUC and EASF. The meeting attracted technical experts from CEN-SAD, COMESA, EAC, IGAD, SADC, APRM, AU ECOSOC, WANEP, and the European Union (EU). The objectives of the meeting were centered around operationalising a new Governance, Peace and Security (GPS) Programme, which is set to be launched in 2026 as the successor to the EU-APSA IV Support Programme. The technical experts reviewed implementation modalities, monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and reporting mechanisms. The new programme will consolidate support for

the African Governance Architecture (AGA), the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), and the Human Rights Compliance Framework, while maintaining robust support for the Peace Fund and civil society organisations.

From the sessions, some key aspects that were noted included the need to ensure that child protection is mainstreamed in all programming and ensure strengthened coordination given additional partners on board. The Meeting also tabled critical recommendations to enhance programme delivery deliberations related to Communication and Visibility, Coordination and Information Sharing, the Implementation Handbook, and Quarterly Coordination Meetings.





Training of Targeted Local Communities in the Region on Natural Resource-Based Conflicts

In Baringo County, Kenya, COMESA_GPS, in collaboration with the Horn of Africa Youth Network, convened a three-day workshop from 23 - 25 April 2025 to train local mediators on natural resource-based conflicts. The workshop brought together 37 participants from conflict-prone pastoralist regions of Kenya including Turkana, West Pokot, Samburu, and Elgeyo Marakwet. The selected Counties were targeted based on frequent disputes they experience over pasture and water, which are further exacerbated by the impacts of climate change phenomena such as El Nino and La Nina and associated cycles of drought and flooding.

The training, anchored on the COMESA Handbook on the Mediation of Natural Resource-Based Conflicts, developed under the third phase of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA III), builds on previous regional efforts to address natural resource conflicts in the Karamoja Cluster covering border communities of Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda. Previous trainings held in Kitale, Kenya (2022), Soroti, Uganda (2024), and Lodwar, Kenya (2024) which focused on establishing a pool of trained local mediators to de-escalate disputes across local, and cross-border levels.

Key modules covered during the workshop included: the impact of climate change on peace and security, sector-specific conflict drivers, conceptual frameworks for mediation, the mediation cycle, guiding principles, and

practical considerations. Participants also engaged in localized case studies to apply their learning in practical scenarios.

The workshop concluded with several recommendations including the following:

Documenting local coping mechanisms for climate change and integrating traditional knowledge into adaptation plans	Increasing community awareness of the COMESA Handbook (including translating key sections and developing visual toolkits),	Incorporating gender sensitivity and inter-generational mentorship into training modules
Institutionalising mediation structures at the ward level	Scaling up training efforts, documenting and sharing successful mediation case studies, hosting reflection sessions for mediators	Participants were also encouraged to apply their training within their communities and relay feedback to COMESA for continued support.

COMESA Supports the Review of Relevant Policies in line with Global FATF Standards, and Country-Specific Jurisdictions



COMESA_GPS has continued its deliberate efforts to support the review and implementation of the Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Countering the Financing of Terrorism regime across the region, aligning them with global FATF standards and country-specific jurisdictions.

From 28 March to 4 April 2025, COMESA participated in the 49th Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group (ESAAMLG) Task Force of Senior Officials Meeting in Kampala, Uganda. The Task Force meeting was held in preparation for the 25th ESAAMLG Council of Ministers' meeting scheduled for August 2025 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The meeting provided a critical platform to review progress by the ESAAMLG member countries in implementing the FATF standards and to strengthen regional coordination in combating Money Laundering (ML), Terrorist Financing (TF), and Proliferation Financing (PF). 14 COMESA Member States (with 13 being ESAAMLG members) participated in the meeting. A major highlight was the successful conclusion of the second round of mutual evaluations, which commenced in 2015 under the 2013 FATF Methodology. While the next evaluation cycle, slated for 2026, will focus on effectiveness and technical compliance, both Burundi and South Sudan were exempted from the evaluation due to their recent entry and their institutional frameworks that are still evolving.

A number of notable outcomes emerged from the meeting as follows:

Changes to FATF Assessment Methodology which will affect the third round of ESAAMLG Mutual Evaluations beginning 2026.	ESAAMLG managed to successfully conclude the second round of FATF mutual evaluations. The last country to be evaluated was Eritrea which was supported by COMESA and ESAAMLG in 2024 to enhance its preparedness for the evaluation.
Following COMESA and ESAAMLG support in May 2024, Eritrea's Mutual Evaluation was successfully conducted and the Mutual Evaluation Report (MER) for Eritrea was adopted.	COMESA managed to identify countries that required urgent support including those grey-listed, those in the FATF's International Co-operation Review Group (ICRG) monitoring pool (high-risk group), those scheduled for assessment beginning 2026 and those with newly established Asset Recovery units which may require urgent technical support.
Kenya was selected to be guest at FATF Secretariat, which is a welcome new collaborative initiative introduced by FATF.	

Support to Eswatini to join the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs)



COMESA_GPS further extended technical support to the Eswatini Financial Intelligence Centre (EFIC). The assessment that was done from 12 - 16 May 2025 and conducted by Eswatini's Egmont sponsors namely Malawi and South Africa

was geared towards finalising modalities for the EFIC's Phase Four final onsite visit. The assessment was critical in evaluating the country's readiness for membership to the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs). The assessment included consultations with Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) and key reporting institutions. COMESA's support to this process was in response to a formal request made by the EFIC in April 2025 and was also a continuation of its support since 2023 across multiple phases of the Eswatini's Egmont application process.

Eswatini is currently awaiting final confirmation of Egmont Group admission, which, once granted, will provide Eswatini access to information exchange platform and capacity-building opportunities offered by the Egmont Group of FIUs. Enhanced operational standards at EFIC are expected to culminate in improved analysis and execution of financial intelligence functions thus strengthening COMESA's regional AML/CFT/PF effectiveness.

IMPACT ASSESSEMENT TOWARDS THE EXTENSION AND EXPANSION OF ONE-STOP YOUTH CENTRES IN THE COMESA REGION

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“The more we give importance to skills development, the more competent will be our youth” – Narendra Modi

COMESA_GPS recently initiated a field-based impact assessment from 26 – 30 May 2025 in Apala Town, Uganda, to evaluate the progress made by the One-Stop Youth Centre and the impact experienced by youth in Alebtong. The One-Stop Youth Centre was established and officially launched in December 2023 by COMESA_GPS in partnership with the National Youth Council of Uganda, Save the Children, and the Horn of Africa Youth Network. Designed as a safe and inclusive space, the Centre offers youth training in Information Technology and conflict resolution. Its success has drawn interest from other COMESA Member States, including Madagascar and Kenya, requesting a similar initiative, hence necessitating the conducted impact assessment.

The assessment engaged a total of 47 (29 male and 18 female) key stakeholders through Focus Group Discussions (36 participants) and Key Informant Interviews (11 participants), which were primarily aimed at assessing the extent to which the Centre has contributed to skill development of the young people in Alebtong district and Northern Uganda at large, as well as leverage the lessons learned and benchmarked best practices for a replica models in Madagascar and Kenya.

Key findings from the assessment reveal that the Centre's skills training has enhanced employability, fuelled entrepreneurship, and improved school performance. It has also fostered positive social outcomes, including increased civic participation and conflict prevention. Despite the impact created, the assessment revealed challenges encountered by the Centre including financial constraints, inadequate security measures, limited oversight from the oversight committee and Apala town council leadership, and limited resources.

Moving forward, it was recommended that future interventions from COMESA and partners should prioritise program diversification (including vocational skills), infrastructure improvements (solar power and accessible facilities), strengthened governance and management through the development of clear policy guidelines, robust community engagement, and formalised learning outcomes with timely certification. Key interventions may also include implementing a targeted gender equity strategy. To ensure true sustainability, it was suggested that the Centre should transition from being operated with a project-based mindset, to a social enterprise model with diversified revenue streams and local ownership. By addressing these critical areas, the Apala One-Stop Youth Centre can maximise its long-term impact as a catalyst for positive youth development and ensure long-term community peace and prosperity.

Training of Targeted Communities in the Region on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism



“Let’s work together to build more peaceful, inclusive, and stable societies in which terror and violent extremism have no home!” António Guterres

As part of its efforts to continue building peaceful, inclusive, and stable societies, COMESA_GPS in partnership with the National Counter Terrorism Center of Kenya, and the Horn of Africa Youth Network convened a training workshop on preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) and terrorism, which took place on 15 - 18 April 2025 in Moyale, Kenya. The training targeting local communities along the Kenya-Ethiopia border was necessitated by recent security challenges in the region, particularly the influx of militias and terrorist groups reported in February 2025. It was also held in response to the Decision of the 18th Meeting of the COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs, which “Emphasised the need for an integrated approach across the peace and development nexus that addresses the underlying causes of conflict in the COMESA region, including violent extremism.”

A total of 78 participants (59 males and 19 females) attended, aiming to strengthen local capacity in governance, peacebuilding, and security to combat violent extremism. The agenda covered six thematic pillars, including foundational P/CVE knowledge, regional threat assessments (with contributions from the Uganda National Counter-Terrorism Center), youth and gender inclusion, early warning systems, good governance, and cross-border collaboration. Participants developed country-specific community strategies and identified opportunities for cross-border collaboration, such as intelligence sharing and reinforcing border peace committees. The training concluded with recommendations urging COMESA and partners to increase financial and technical support for grassroots initiatives and to expedite the signing of the Simplified Trade Regime (STR) to boost regional cooperation in countering violent extremism.

The following recommendations were specifically made for implementation by the Kenya and Ethiopia Governments and included:

Kenya Government

- ✓ *Creation of a one-stop border digital platform where intelligence reports are shared among the interested parties especially from the security sectors.*
- ✓ *Modernising surveillance at the strategic border entry points.*
- ✓ *Gazettement of the other three border corridors (that is Sololo-Mio, Dukana-Dilo, and Forole-Dirre, in order to scale down challenges occasioned by porous border points).*
- ✓ *Coming up with structured ways of mining by artisanal miners to work freely.*

Ethiopia Government

- ✓ *Establishment of community-based early warning and Anticipatory Action systems.*
- ✓ *Launch of P/CVE education in schools and community centers.*
- ✓ *Empowering youth through job creation and civic engagement.*
- ✓ *Involving traditional and religious leaders in peacebuilding efforts.*
- ✓ *Organisation of culture and sport festivals regularly in the border area.*
- ✓ *Initiation of media campaigns using multi-language to enhance efforts in P/CVE.*

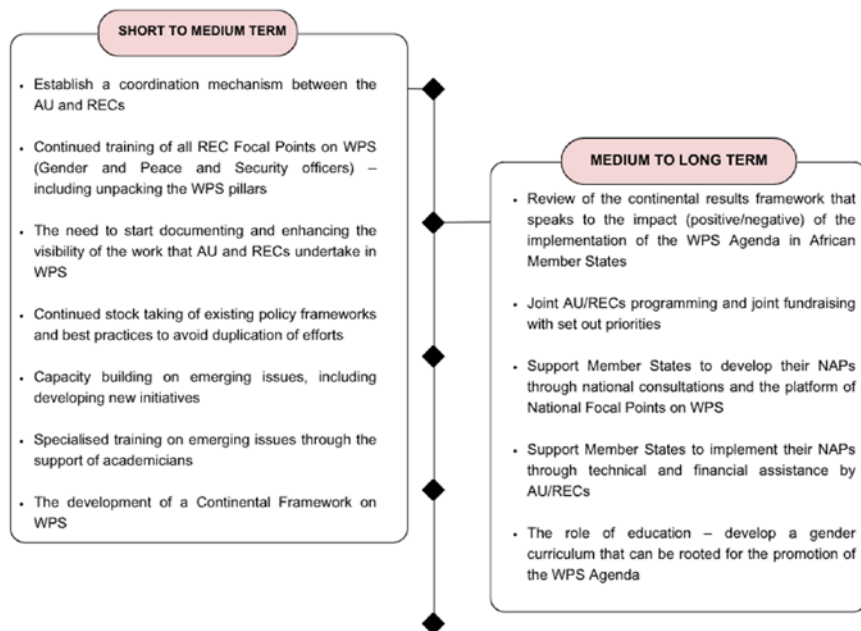


Regional Consultation on Advancing Women, Peace And Security Beyond the 25th Anniversary of UNSCR 1325

From 17 – 18 June 2025, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, COMESA_GPS participated in the Regional Consultation with RECs on Women, Peace and Security. The consultative workshop was convened by the AU Gender, Peace and Security Unit in line with the upcoming celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the UNSCR 1325 to take stock of the progress made by the RECs in the advancement of the WPS Agenda, including the challenges encountered, best practices, and lessons learnt. Discussions focused on analysing the evolving security context of WPS in Africa, particularly the rise in intra-state conflicts, and reviewed the 25 years of WPS

implementation through an evaluation of the existing normative frameworks, including their successes and failures. Discussions included presentations from the RECs and the AUC on their WPS initiatives and the identification of locally-led initiatives on WPS that could be benchmarked.

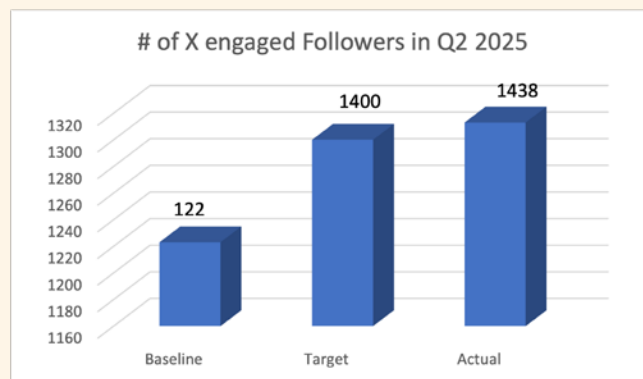
These discussions culminated in an agreed-upon way forward to foster greater coherence, collaboration, AU-REC, and inter-REC experience sharing and benchmarking on best practices. The following emerged:



VISIBILITY AND ONLINE PRESENCE

Recognising the importance of a dynamic digital presence in today's interconnected world, it is crucial to embrace social media through compelling digital storytelling to enhance the visibility of existing initiatives and foster a stronger connection with Member States, and enhance collaboration and partnership with other stakeholders and the regional community at large. COMESA_GPS shares updates, milestones, initiatives, and its expertise through its X platform. COMESA_GPS saw its X audience surge by 9.5% in the second quarter of 2025, scaling from 1,313 to over 1,438 engaged followers. This digital momentum reflects the success of targeted advocacy that highlights the governance, peace, and security programmes, with followers actively sharing content and participating in policy discussions. COMESA_GPS intends to maintain this momentum and continue leveraging

credible and popular social media platforms to enhance more awareness towards its GPS activities.



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