



# Governance, Peace & Security

*Newsletter*

## Introduction

In accordance with Article 3(d) of the COMESA Treaty, the GPS Unit continued to undertake efforts towards promoting peace, security and stability in the COMESA region. In this newsletter, a documentation of the activities implemented in the fourth (Q4) quarter of 2024 is provided - highlighting progress, achievements and key outcomes. The following thematic areas are covered:

### Thematic Areas:

1. Children Affected by Armed Conflict
2. Climate Change, Peace and Security
3. COMESA Policy Organs, CPS and MOFA
4. Early Warning
5. Democracy and Governance
6. Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development
7. Research and Publications
8. Transnational Organised Crimes
9. Youth Engagement

## IN THIS ISSUE

Nineteenth Meeting of the COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs	2
Permanent Secretaries Validate Zambia's CSVRA/CSVMS Report	4
Consultation Process for the Malawi CSVRA Process	6
The Second Annual IRSK-COMESA Conference	8
The 3rd Intergenerational Dialogue Forum on Youth, Peace and Security	10
The 4th High-Level Ministerial Conference on Youth, Peace and Security	11



## Annual Meetings of the Africa Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

In the fourth quarter of 2024, COMESA Secretariat through the Governance, Peace and Security (GPS) Unit trained and sensitized key stakeholders on issues of Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CAAC). Through collaborating with Save the Children and the Horn of Africa Youth Network, this activity contributed to the popularizing of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The meetings were held in Maseru, Lesotho from 30th September – 9th October 2024. The objectives of COMESA's participation were to :-

- i. Utilise the platform offered by the forum to showcase COMESA's undertaking in the area of CAAC.
- ii. Identify potential partners for collaboration.
- iii. Expand networks.

Several sessions took place and included:



25th Session of the Civil Society Organisations (CSO) Forum on the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child



44th Ordinary Session of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child



Child Rights Forum on the African Children's Charter



Regional Economic Communities (RECs) Workshop on Violence Against Children

The conclusions and key outcomes from these sessions included:-

COMESA and ACERWC agreed to coordinate and collaborate on promoting issues of the RWC and CAAC

A call for protection of children from online exploitation and abuse - including cyberbullying and radicalisation

A call to reduce barriers to skills development, technical and vocational training, increasing and diversifying learning opportunities and promoting lifelong learning

The need for COMESA and other RECs to collaborate with CSOs to promote gender-responsive educational reforms to reduce gender disparities and support conflict prevention

# Climate Response Programming and utilisation of the COMESA Handbook on the Mediation of National Resource-Based Conflicts for the Horn of African



The five cluster studies on the nexus between climate change, peace and security conducted by COMESA in 2023 were crucial in gaining a refined understanding of the manner in which climate change impacts on the peace and human security of various vulnerable communities in the region. As part of its efforts towards aiding Member States in addressing issues with a potential to generate conflict – such as climate change, a workshop aimed at sensitizing stakeholders on climate responsive programming and the utilisation of the COMESA Handbook on Mediation of natural resource-based conflicts for the Horn of Africa region was organised in Lodwar, Kenya, from 14 -16 November 2024.

The workshop was attended by Government officials from the region, CSOs, community peace builders and religious leaders, COMESA and other partner organisations, and aimed at achieving the following objectives:-

- a. To enhance the level of awareness on climate responsive programming for local communities affected by climate change hazards based on the cluster study findings.
- b. To discuss opportunities for engagement among the local communities in mainstreaming the cluster study findings on nexus studies in the region in a bid to further climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.
- c. To discuss the ways in which climate responsive programming can be implemented by stakeholders through engagement and collaboration.

Numerous recommendations emerged from the workshop and included:-



Development of a guiding framework on adaptation mechanism and resilience for member states to cope with climate change-induced vulnerabilities.



Establishing platforms for AU-RECs/RM collaboration on climate change, peace and security.



Implementing clear accountability frameworks that hold all stakeholders responsible for their commitments and actions.



Mainstreaming Climate Security into National Policies and Plans and integrating Climate-Peace Nexus into Early Warning Systems.





## Nineteenth Meeting of the COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs

On 29th October 2024, Bujumbura, Burundi hosted the 19th Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of COMESA. During the Meeting, the Status Report on Peace and Security in the COMESA Region and the Report on the Implementation of COMESA's Governance, Peace and Security Programme activities for the period June 2023 to September 2024 were reviewed and considered. The key areas covered in the Status Report included:-

- a. Situation in Ethiopia and implementation of Cessation of Hostilities Agreement;
- b. Transition process in Libya;
- c. Transition process in Somalia;
- d. Situation in The Sudan;
- e. Peace and security situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo;
- f. Emerging peace and security challenges in the region including floods and cyclones in East

Africa, and the drought situation in Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe;

- g. Elections held in the region covering six countries namely Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Egypt, Democratic Republic of Congo, Union of the Comoros, and Rwanda.

Several directives were made by the Ministers to the Secretariat, most notably being:-

- a. A call for the Secretariat to work with AUC in supporting Zambia towards concluding the CSVRA process.
- b. the Secretariat was urged to continue mobilizing extra-budgetary resources to consolidate the CSVRA process and support other Member States that had volunteered to undergo the process in 2025.



## Regional Training of Trainers on COMWARN SVA and AU CSVRA/CSVMS

As stated by author Roy H. Williams, "Training is not an expense, but an investment in human capital." This sentiment rings true with regards to the sixth Training of Trainers' (ToT) workshop on the Structural Vulnerability Assessment (SVA) methodology and Country Structural Vulnerability and Resilience Assessments (CSVRA)) process organized by the COMESA GPS Unit from 8 – 11 October 2024 in Lilongwe, Malawi. The ToT training was crucial as it served as an investment in human capital which is paramount in reinforcing and interconnecting the existing Continental and Regional Early Warning Systems.

Presentations on the methodologies were given to delegates drawn from Kenya, Seychelles and Burundi. The participants from Zambia and Malawi delegates served as guiding examples in terms of sharing their experiences as they have made progress in the implementation of the CSVRA process.

The workshop concluded with several commitments made by the participating countries and COMESA, namely:-

Burundi committed to finalise the national consultation on the adoption of the SVA methodology and to send an official request to COMESA and the AUC for support to commence the CSVRA process.	Kenya committed to fast-track the implementation of the roadmap and to complete the implementation by 2026 before the next General election in 2027.
Zambia committed to having the CSVRA/ CSVMS report validated by the policy makers and seeking its approval from Cabinet. This would then be followed by the launch of the report and the commencement of the implementation of the mitigation strategy, as well as encouraging other COMESA Member States to volunteer to the process.	Seychelles committed to briefing policy makers on the outcomes of the training and convening a meeting for the Bureau to revive the process. Additionally, a commitment was made to finalise the draft roadmap that was developed during the training and to communicate to COMESA and the AU on its plans to commence the CSVRA process.
Malawi committed to commence the national and regional consultations, which would be done in line with roadmap that was developed earlier in the year during SVA national multi-stakeholder consultations.	COMESA assured the respective countries that it would continue to sensitise Member States on the SVA/CSVRA processes, convene ToT workshops to facilitate for increased understanding of the process particularly for new bureau members; and together with the AU, expedite their support to the Malawi process.



## Permanent Secretaries Validate Zambia's CSVRA/CSVMS Report



Recognising the need to prioritise supporting Member States in understanding and mitigating their structural vulnerabilities, as well as leveraging on their existing resilience factors remained a paramount priority in Quarter four. In pursuance of this objective, the COMESA Secretariat through GPS in collaboration with the Government of Zambia convened a meeting of Permanent Secretaries from 7 – 8 November 2024 to validate Zambia's CSVRA/CSVMS report. This activity was in direct response to the Decision of the 18th Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs held on 6th June 2023 in Lusaka, which called on the Secretariat to support the Government of the Republic of Zambia to finalise the CSVRA process that had commenced in 2021.

The validation meeting was attended by 37 participants comprising of Permanent Secretaries, Zambia SVA-CSVRA Bureau members, Consultants and an AU Commission representative. The Zambia SVA-CSVRA Bureau took lead in presenting the developed CSVRA Report which involved highlighting the identified vulnerabilities and resilience factors, as well as the Mitigation Strategy matrix. Thereafter the Permanent Secretaries provided feedback towards improving the report and adopted it.

At its conclusion, the Meeting endorsed the following towards concluding the CSVRA process for the country:-

Ensuring the support and facilitation of the launch of the adopted CSVRA report before the end of the year 2024 - entailing the SVA-CSVRA Bureau writing to Government

Transitioning the current SVA-CSVRA Bureau into the Zambia CSVRA Implementation Reference Group - with focal points in various Ministries.

Popularising and disseminating the Report across the country in all provinces.

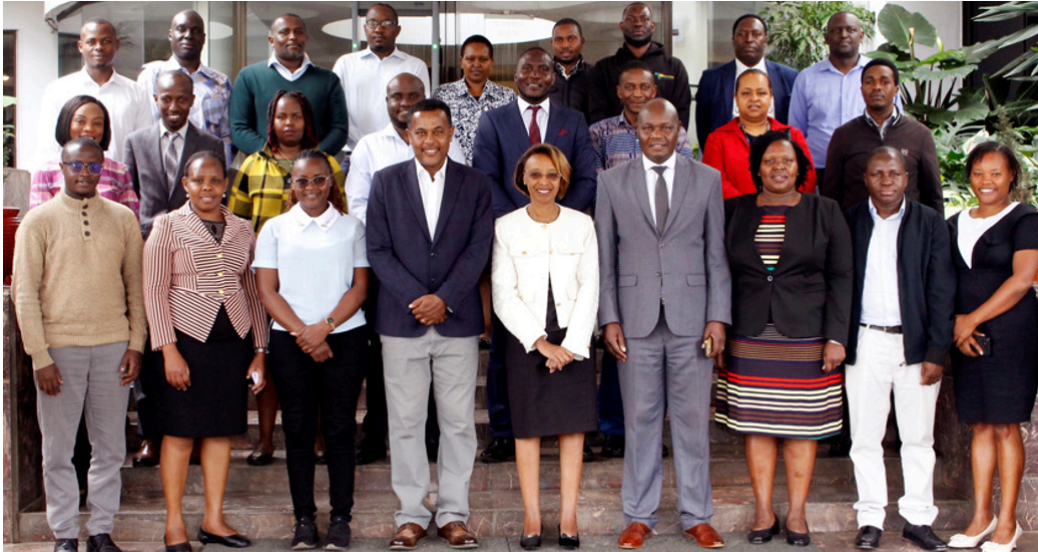
Establishing the cost of the implementation of the Mitigation Strategy and Action Plan with key milestones, resource needs and time-frames.

Develop and launch the online tracking tool/dashboard to track the progress of implementation.

Mobilize technical and financial resources to fill gaps and complement state resources.

Prepare a progress report for presentation by the Government of Zambia to the AU and COMESA.

Consolidate lessons learned on the CSVRA and share with other COMESA Member States..



## Planning Meeting for the Country Structural Vulnerability and Resilience Assessment (CSVRA) – Republic of Kenya

Progress requires taking the first step. Thus, in Q4, the COMESA Governance Peace and Security Unit, in collaboration with the AU, organised a planning meeting for the CSVRA process for the Republic of Kenya from 6 – 8 November 2024 in Nairobi. The holding of the meeting was in response to the request made by the Government of Kenya to commence preparations for the country to undergo the AU-COMESA CSRA process which the country volunteered for in 2023. The Kenya SVA/CSVRA Bureau – comprising of representatives from government institutions and CSOs - attended the planning meeting and were briefed on the stages of the CSVRA process in order to aid them in drawing up a clear and

comprehensive roadmap with indicative timelines for implementation. In addition, the meeting set out to provide a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders to be involved in the conduct of the CSVRA process.

Following presentations on the COMWARN SVA methodology and the AU-CSVRA and Country Structural Vulnerability Mitigation Strategy (CSVMS), as well as discussions that followed regarding the recruitment of consultants and modalities of the conducting the national consultations, two main outcomes emerged, namely;

Official launch scheduled for April 2025 and launch of the final report scheduled for October 2025

A CSVRA implementation roadmap for Kenya was developed

Including National Government, Country Government, CSOs, Local Administrators, AU, COMESA and APRM

The roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders were established



## Consultation Process for the Malawi CSVRA Process



*Following the official launch of the process on 17th December 2024, a national consultation was held in Lilongwe City on 17th to 18th December 2024*

Towards the conclusion of the fourth quarter, and following the earlier development of a roadmap to implement the Malawi CSVRA process, COMESA in collaboration with the AU Commission and the Malawi Government commenced the national consultation process. The activity also included representatives from APRM, SADC and ACCORD. The collective parties were divided into three teams and were spread nationwide to undertake consultations in various locations that covered the Northern, Southern, and Central regions of the country on 11th to 15th December 2024. Following the official launch of the process on 17th December 2024, a national consultation was held in Lilongwe City on 17th to 18th December 2024.

## Training and Information Exchange Workshop for the COMESA Committee of Elders

In efforts towards promoting good governance, democracy, peace and security in its Member States, COMESA organised a training and information exchange workshop for the COMESA Committee of Elders in succession of the Swearing-in Ceremony for the Elders at the 23rd Summit of the COMESA Authority held in Bujumbura on 31st October 2024. Seven members of the Committee of Elders were engaged in the training delivered by the Executive Director of ACCORD, Dr. Vasu Gounden and addressed by Assistant Secretary General of Programmes, Ambassador Dr. Mohamed Kadah. The training covered the following topics:-



**General overview of the socio-economic state of the African continent, challenges faced and the main drivers of conflict.**



**A session on conflict analysis and management techniques, as well as mediation and negotiation.**



**Discussion on the role COMESA can play in Sudan's conflict resolution process - during which it was established that a conflict analysis session would be a good starting point.**





## Consultations on the Extension of the Impact Assessment Study of the Trading for Peace Project

COMESA GPS organised two consultative workshops, on 14 – 16 October and 17 – 19 October 2024 respectively towards extending the impact assessment study of the COMESA Trading for Peace Project at the Kasumbalesa and Mokambo border areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zambia. This was done in collaboration with the Governments of DRC and Zambia and in response to the Policy Directive of the 18th Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs held on 6th June 2023 in Lusaka and which called on the Secretariat to mobilize additional extrabudgetary resources and extend the impact assessment study to other borders where the Trading for Peace project had been implemented, in order to ensure that the findings are more comprehensive and accurate. The initial focus area that had been covered by the impact assessment study was the Ishasha border area of DRC-Uganda.

The two workshops brought together 114 cross-border trade stakeholders who included small-scale cross-border traders, leadership of the Cross-Border Traders Associations, civil society

and border officials. Presentations and focus group discussions were conducted and covered were key topical areas including the COMESA's Peace and Security Programmes, the benefits of the Simplified Trade Regime (STR) to small-scale cross-border traders, the Trading for Peace Project's five key strategies and its impact on cross-border trade five key strategies of the Trading for Peace Project which include the importance of strengthening Cross-Border Traders Associations (CBTAs), promotion of the use and application of the STR and the Charter, advocating for better trading cross-border infrastructure, and facilitation of the implementation of these strategies through the putting in place of the Trade Information Desk Offices and continued support to CBTAs. The identification of several challenges facing small scale cross-border traders emanated from the focus group discussions and included high taxes, complex documentation processes, and governance and human rights issues including harassment of female traders and corruption among other others. Recommendations on improving the trading atmosphere at the border areas were proffered as well, and including the following:

The urgent need for the signing of the STR agreement – to pave way for its implementation and the consequent formalization of small-scale cross-border trade.

Continuous capacity building through training and awareness creation for the small-scale cross-border traders, CBTA officials and border officials.

The increasing of additional Trade Information Desk Offices (TIDOs) from 1 to 3 on both sides of the DRC-Zambia border due to increased trade volumes.

Publication of information materials into local languages spoken at the border areas for easier understanding by cross-border communities.

The need for official recognition and support from government institutions to CBTAs and TIDOs.



## The Second Annual IRSK-COMESA Conference

In a bid to enhance engagement with academia and think-tanks on contemporary peace and security challenges in the COMESA region, COMESA Secretariat and its partners ACCORD and International Relations Society of Kenya (IRSK) convened a conference under the theme “Fostering Integration and Cooperation in the COMESA Region through International Relations and Diplomacy” in Nairobi, Kenya from 20 – 22 November 2024. The objective of the conference was to bridge theory and practice in the conduct of international relations and diplomacy. The conference brought together 140 participants who included various state and non-state actors to deliberate on challenges facing the region as well as the prevailing regional integration dynamics. It also afforded a platform for a wide array of perspectives to be shared and reflected upon. The discussions undertaken, along with over fifty presentations, ranged from peace and security to trade, environmental diplomacy, and infrastructure integration.

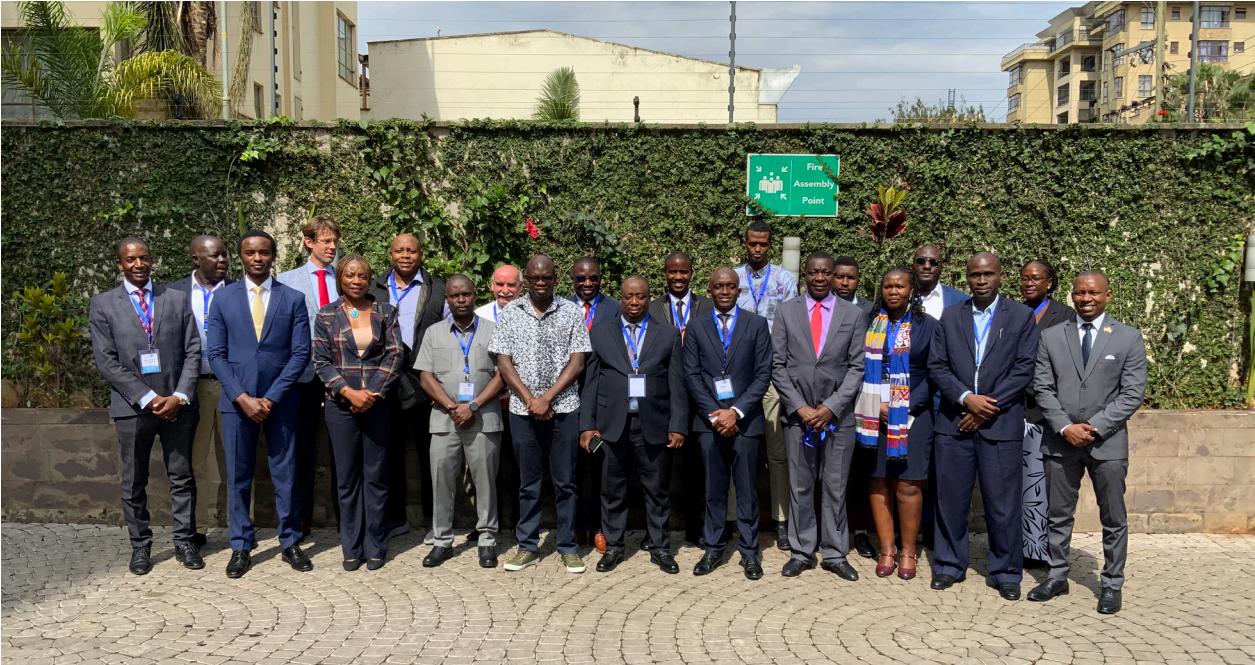
The conference further provided an opportunity for an awards ceremony to be held whereby key personalities who have left their mark in selected fields on the continent were honoured. The personalities included H.E Chileshe Kapwepwe, the Secretary General of COMESA who was presented with the Women in Diplomacy Award, and former Secretary General of COMESA and Deputy Chairperson of the AU, H.E Ambassador Erastus Mwencha, who was conferred with the Economic Diplomacy Award.

The conference also included the launching of several academic and policy publications that were presented during the previous conference held in 2023. Papers presented during the 2024 conference are set to be published in 2025 and thereafter disseminated to enhance knowledge sharing and influence the COMESA region's policy development initiatives.

## Support to Zambia's Second National ML/TF/PF Risk Assessment

Q4 saw the Governance, Peace and Security (GPS) Unit support two of the three components on the calendar of Zambia's second national Money Laundering/ Terrorist Financing/ Proliferation Financing (ML/TF/PF) Risk Assessment. In pursuance of this initiative, COMESA-GPS provided financial support to the undertaking of field consultations from 9th September to 25th October 2024 in various select regions of the country. In addition, the Secretariat further sponsored a workshop for 90 participants from 12 working groups on data analysis held from 25 – 29 November 2024 in Lusaka, Zambia. The workshop aimed at enhancing the capacities of participants in analyzing the data collected from the provinces in towards developing an interpretation model that would contribute to the overall rating of the country on ML/TF/PF.





## National Counter-Terrorism Centres Trained on Preventing and Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism

As part of its efforts towards building the capacities of national counter-terrorism centres, COMESA GPS organised a Regional Training for National Counter-Terrorism Centres on Tools, Methodologies and Analysis for Preventing and Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism from 1 – 3 October 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya. This initiative was in collaboration with the United Nations International Centre for Research and Innovation and MASC Foundation from Mozambique. The Workshop brought together 17 NCTC officials from Kenya, Malawi, Somalia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The key takeaways from the training included:

Enhancing inter-agency coordination and cooperation and information sharing between and among affected and at risk

Leveraging on technology for more effective work

Strengthening gaps in legislation

Incorporating structural prevention through addressing other social and economic development challenges that pose a risk to citizens being recruited into terrorist networks



## The 3rd Inter-Generational Dialogue Forum on Youth, Peace and Security

In the course of Q4, COMESA GPS in collaboration with various partners including the National Youth Council of Uganda and International IDEA convened the 3rd Inter-Generational Dialogue Forum on Youth, Peace and Security in Kampala, Uganda from 12th –

14th November 2024. The Forum's theme was From Learning to Leading: Education as a Catalyst for the Advancement of the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Agenda and provided a platform for the 124 participants – encompassing both youth and the older generation in the region – to engage in dialogue geared towards enhancing youth participation in peacebuilding and governance. Major challenges discussed through panel sessions and presentations included the existing gap between the current educational system and job market needs, climate change crises, as well as cultural barriers hindering inclusive participation. Key outcomes of the Forum included:



**Development of actionable strategies to enhance youth advocacy within regional frameworks.**



**A call to action - emphasising commitment to inclusive education and the recognition of youth as agents of peace and change.**

Several recommendations directed at various stakeholders also emerged, and included:

Developing gender-responsive education policies

Integrating peace education into national curricula

Empowering youth-led initiatives

Investing in educational infrastructure



## The 4th High-Level Ministerial Conference on Youth, Peace and Security



An endeavour crucial for popularising the regional and continental framework on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Agenda was also undertaken in Q4 – the 4th High-Level Ministerial Conference - organised by COMESA for the Island States region in conjunction with the Government of Madagascar and other partners. The conference aimed at enhancing youth involvement in the peace and security agenda and accentuating the role of Governments, the AU, RECs and Regional Mechanisms in the promotion of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda. Context is crucial and thus, the conference's focus on the Island States region provided an opportunity for geographic-specific vulnerabilities and opportunities – such as maritime insecurity and the blue economy - to be explored.

The Conference aided in bringing to light the need to accord significant attention and resources to the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda to the Island States due to the region's large youth demographic and the serious repercussions that the lack of YPS implementation and youth capacity building initiatives can spell for the region's political, economic, social and maritime security. As stated by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Madagascar;

***"The voice of young people must be heard, valued and translated into concrete actions."***

To that effect, numerous outcomes emerged, the specific ones being:

Commitments from Youth Representatives at the Ministerial Session

A Call to Action (Communiqué) for Governments

Developing a centralised data collection centre and joint registry on maritime offenses for the Island States - to enhance maritime security cooperation

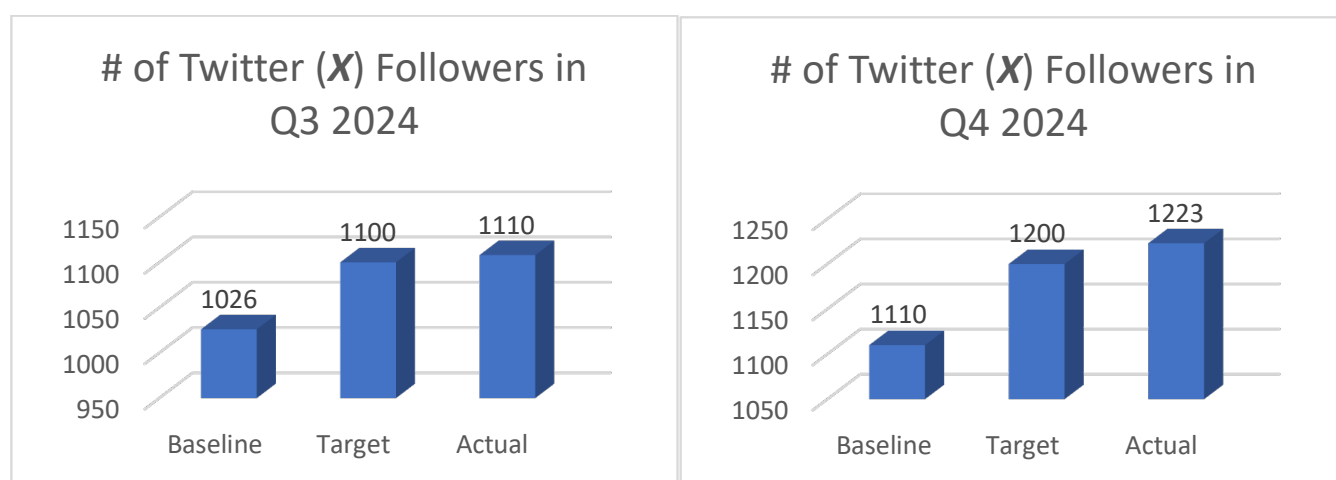
Prioritising the development and implementation of National Action Plans on YPS in line with the Continental Framework on Youth, Peace and Security and its 10-Year Implementation Plan

Support initiatives that empower youth leaders as peacebuilders in their communities and the Island regions

Institute flexible funding opportunities for localised, youth-driven initiatives

## VISIBILITY AND ONLINE PRESENCE

The Governance, Peace, and Security Unit considers the publicising and spotlighting of its activities through its social media platforms a cornerstone of its efforts towards keeping the COMESA Members States and other stakeholders informed and abreast of its current programme implementation initiatives. During the fourth quarter of 2024, the number of Twitter (X) followers grew from 1,110 to over 1,200. This steady growth is a direct reflection of the consistency and fruitfulness of the outreach and engagement strategies, as evidenced by the online community's interest in and support for GPS programme activities. The GPS Unit intends to maintain this momentum and continue leveraging on social media platforms such as (X) to direct more awareness towards GPS activities in the various thematic areas and to enhance information sharing with stakeholders.



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