



Governance, Peace & Security

Newsletter

Eighth Edition, Oct - Dec 2025

Introduction

Anchored on Article 3 (d) of the COMESA Treaty, the Governance, Peace and Security Unit continued advancing peace, security and stability across the region with tenacity and vast impact in 2025. Wrapping up the year 2025, this newsletter (Vol. 8) reflects the Unit's programmatic milestones, achievements and outcomes over the fourth quarter (Q4), offering a window into the wide-ranging initiatives that were implemented to strengthen regional resilience in various domains. From protecting children affected by armed conflict, to reinforcing democratic governance, enhancing early warning, and mobilising youth as drivers of peace, the activities herein highlight COMESA_GPS' steadfast commitment to building a peaceful region. The Quarter 4 initiatives are captured across the following thematic areas:

This edition covers the following thematic areas:

1. Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CAAC)
2. COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs Meeting (MOFA)
3. Democracy, Governance and Mediation
4. Early Warning
5. Partnership and Collaboration
6. Research and Publications
7. Transnational Organised Crime
8. Youth Engagement
9. Visibility and Online Presence

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The 5th Conference on Safe Schools Declaration A Decade of Commitment

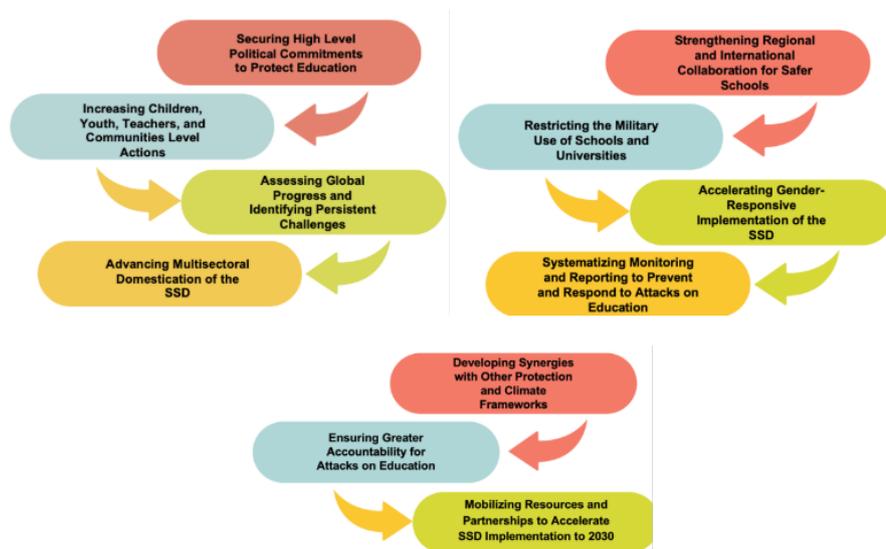
“The closure of schools in conflict zones and the ongoing security challenges are events that are more than statistics; they are stories of interrupted futures.” - Hon. Musalia Mudavadi

The 5th International Conference on the Safe Schools Declaration (SSD) took place in Nairobi, Kenya, from 25 - 26 November 2025, bringing global attention to the protection of education in conflict-affected areas. Hosted by the Government of Kenya and co-organised by COMESA, UNICEF, UNESCO, Plan International, Save the Children, the Government of Norway, and other partners, the Conference marked ten years of commitment to the Safe Schools Declaration under the theme, **“Safe Education for All: A Decade of Commitment, A Call to Action.”** It brought together high-level and technical representatives from UN Member States,



regional organizations, UN agencies, civil society, academia, and children and youth advocates, and provided a platform for cross-regional dialogue, mutual learning, and new partnerships to advance the protection of education in conflict zones.

The Conference concluded with the adoption of a Declaration, comprising of an Action Plan (2025–2030) that set out ten global commitments aimed at strengthening national laws, improving data and reporting, increasing financing, ensuring gender-responsive implementation, empowering affected communities, and enhancing regional and international cooperation. Furthermore, indicators for measuring SSD Implementation Progress were documented in the Declaration, as shown below:



This Declaration's Action Plan signals a renewed global and regional resolve to ensure that schools remain safe spaces for learning, even in times of conflict.



The Twentieth Meeting of the COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs

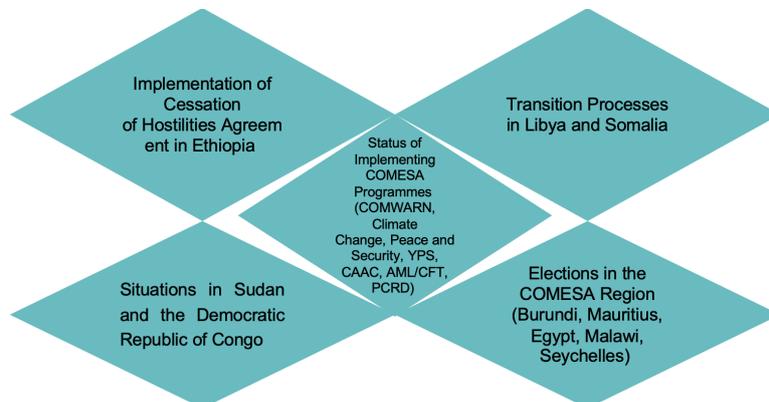
Nairobi, Kenya - where peace and security took centre stage.

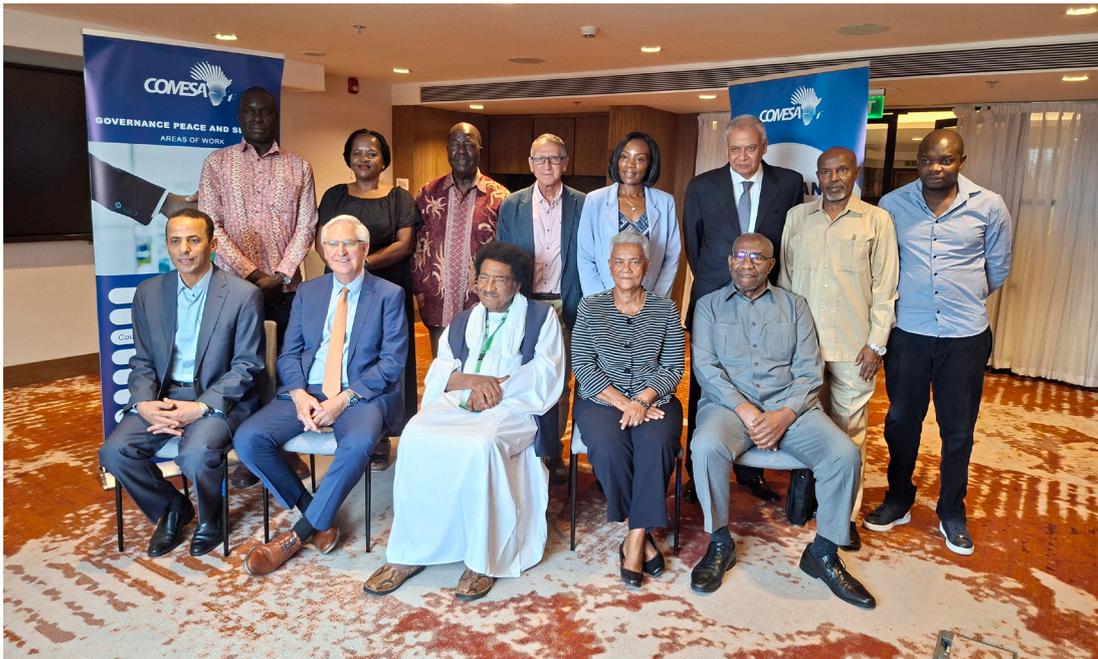
Where peace leads, prosperity follows. This regionally shared conviction was given practical expression in Nairobi, Kenya, during Twentieth Meeting of the COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs, held on 8 October 2025. The Meeting, chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Burundi, H.E. Edouard Bizimana, and attended by Ministers from across the COMESA region, was officially opened by the Prime Cabinet Secretary and Cabinet Secretary responsible for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs of the Republic of Kenya - H.E. Dr. Musalia Mudavadi.

H.E. Dr. Mudavadi underscored peace and security as indispensable foundations for economic development, regional integration, and shared prosperity within the COMESA region.

Echoing this message, COMESA Secretary General H.E. Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe highlighted that peace, security and stability remain the core pillars anchoring socio-economic development and integration. She noted that the Meeting sought to review the regional peace and security landscape and assess progress made in implementing key governance, peace and security programmes aligned with Article 3 (d) of the COMESA Treaty.

The Status Report on Peace and Security in the COMESA region and a report on the implementation of COMESA's GPS Programme activities were considered. The reports covered the following key areas:





Strengthening the Art of Mediation: COMESA Committee of Elders Sharpen Mediation Skills and Deepen Regional Collaboration

Mediators hold the power to quieten the loudest of storms.

In an effort to reinforce preventive diplomacy and mediation for regional peacebuilding, COMESA_GPS took on a dual agenda - enhance the capacities of its Committee of Elders whilst fostering closer regional cooperation to address conflicts.

Thus, a training of members of the COMESA Committee of Elders on mediation was conducted from 11 - 12 October 2025 in Nairobi, Kenya. The training, held back-to-back with the Meeting of the COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Summit, and conducted by the Director of Clingendael Institute, Mr. Ron Ton, was designed to strengthen the negotiation and mediation skills of the COMESA Committee of Elders in line with their mandate under the COMESA Peace and Security Architecture to support preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution.

The training introduced strategic concepts in international negotiations and combined practical negotiation frameworks with interactive exercises that mirrored the work of the Committee in the region. The training further employed case studies, simulations, and structured

dialogue approaches to deepen the understanding of the members of the Committee. This activity underscored the Secretariat's commitment to continuously enhance the knowledge and capacity of the COMESA Committee of Elders to ensure it remains responsive to evolving complex disputes, including those linked to governance, borders, trade, and the management of shared natural resources - particularly water.

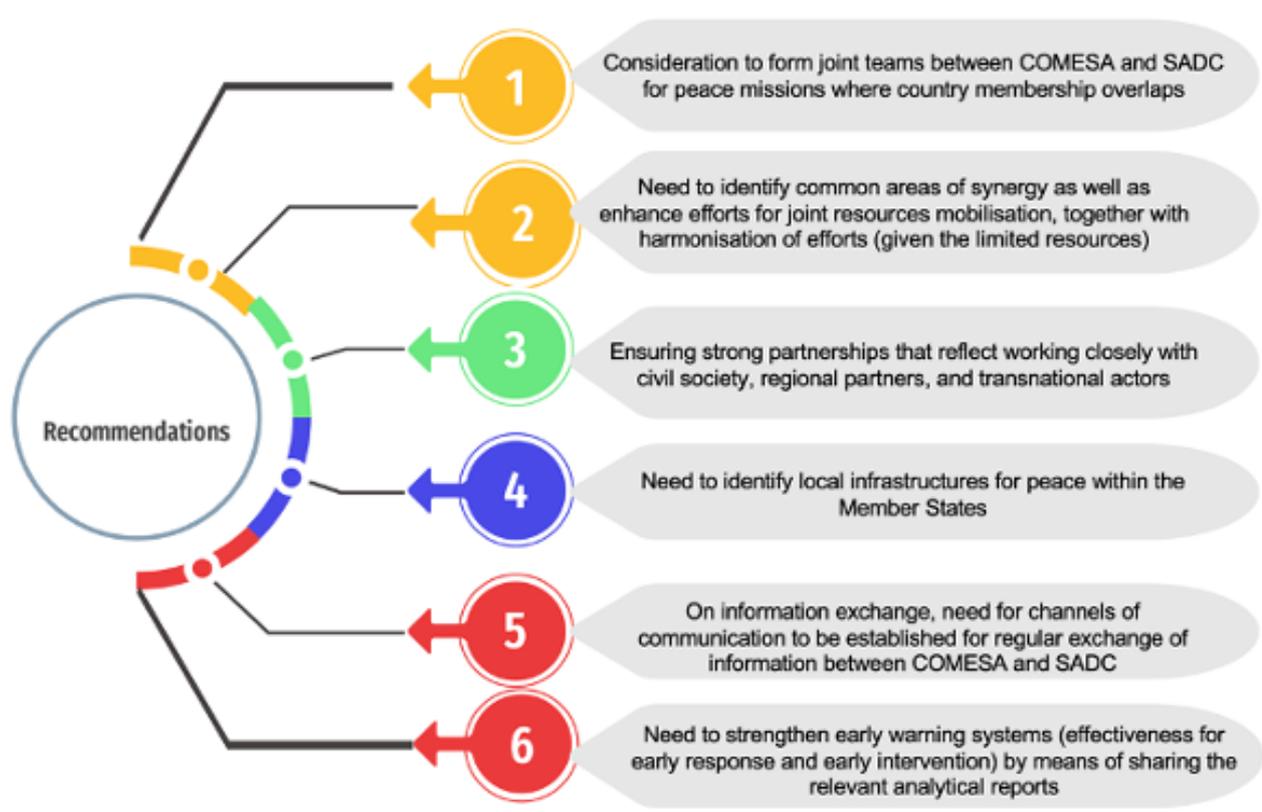
Ahead of the training, the members of the Committee convened for their annual retreat in accordance with the Committee's Rules of Procedure. The retreat provided space for reflection on their work, exchange of best practices and candid discussions on operational challenges. The Elders put forth key recommendations aimed at strengthening the effectiveness, structure and coordination of the Committee.

Complementing these capacity-building efforts, a reflection session between the COMESA Committee of Elders and the SADC Panel of Eminent Persons was convened in Nairobi, Kenya from 13 - 14 October 2025.

Attended by Members of the COMESA Committee of Elders, staff from COMESA Secretariat led by the Assistant Secretary General (Programmes), Amb. Dr. Mohamed Kadah, SADC Panel of Eminent Persons, and staff from the SADC Secretariat and ACCORD, the session created a unique platform for regional exchange.

This enabled the two institutions' Eminent persons to share experiences, lessons learned and challenges encountered in mediation efforts, particularly in contexts where COMESA and SADC memberships overlap. Through expert-led discussions and peer-to-peer exchanges - including case studies and personal testimonies from past deployments - practical approaches to mediation and conflict prevention were explored. Dialogue also focused on navigating relationships with governments, civil society actors and disputing parties, and on strengthening information sharing between the two regional mechanisms. The session concluded with key recommendations, as shown below:

The training, retreat and reflection session together marked a significant accomplishment for COMESA - strengthening



the professional readiness of its Committee of Elders while deepening regional partnerships that are essential for lasting peace in the COMESA-SADC region.

Joint AU-COMESA Election Observation Mission to the Arab Republic of Egypt

Election observation serves as the quiet guardian of democracy. It does not interfere but transforms an election from an event into an accountable process.

Elections shape both national and regional stability. As Egypt undertook its House of Representative elections, the African Union and COMESA jointly deployed an Election Observation Mission to observe the first phase of the elections, from 10 - 11 November 2025.



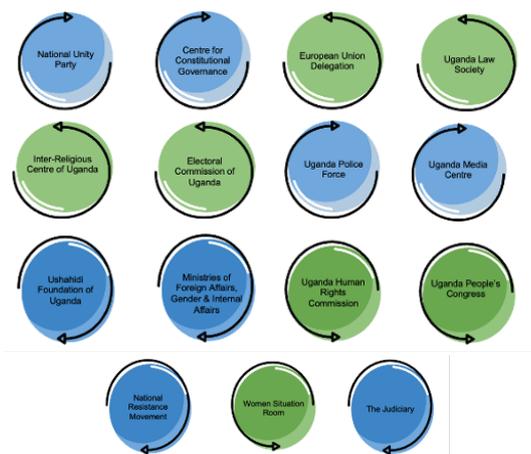
The Mission participated in pre-election briefings conducted by the National Elections Authority for observers and media, which emphasised the importance of objective observation and reporting. On the election days, observer teams visited 72 polling stations to cover the opening and voting processes. The final mission report was submitted to the NEA.

Joint AU-COMESA Pre-election Assessment Mission to the Republic of Uganda

Assessing Preparedness for a Free, Fair and Credible Electoral Process

The success of an election cycle is not defined by a single day, but by the processes that shape it – processes that were reviewed during the Joint AU-COMESA Pre-election Assessment Mission to the Republic of Uganda from 17 - 21 November 2025.

In preparation for Uganda's elections on 15 January 2026, to elect a President and 529 Members to the National Assembly, COMESA, in collaboration with the African Union, and technical support from the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA), led by Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Nigeria, H.E Geoffrey Onyeama, undertook a Pre-Election Assessment Mission, aimed at assessing the level of preparedness by electoral stakeholders in Uganda for the 2026 General Elections. To achieve its objectives, the Mission interacted with key stakeholders in Uganda including:



Based on the findings, key recommendations were submitted to electoral stakeholders.

Driving Vulnerability Mitigation and Building Resilience across Africa: Zambia, Malawi and Kenya Lead the Way



In Quarter 4, COMESA, in collaboration with the African Union and other regional partners, spearheaded a series of initiatives across Zambia, Malawi and Kenya in order to advance the Structural Vulnerability Assessment (SVA)/ Country Structural Vulnerability and Resilience Assessment (CSVRA) processes - which are designed to identify and mitigate vulnerabilities, and build on existing resilience factors. From technical workshops to a high-level Launch, the momentum has continued to build in these Member States as they pave the way for a more secure and resilient region.

On 8 December 2025, Zambia launched its CSVRA report in its buzzing capital city of Lusaka. The event, attended by 122 high-level stakeholders, including the Vice President of Zambia, Dr. W.K. Mutale Nalumango, COMESA Secretary General, Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe, development partners, representatives from Embassies, civil society, academia, and the media, highlighted Zambia's SVA/CSVRA process journey, which commenced in October 2020 but was delayed by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The report highlights key vulnerabilities and resilience factors

in Zambia. It covers a wider spectrum of sectors including economy, education, climate change, security, health, governance among others. In her speech, Her Honour the Vice President of the Republic of Zambia emphasised the value and importance of the CSVRA report to the process moving forward, stating:

"As we conclude the CSVRA Process, the Government reaffirms its commitment to investing in structural conflict prevention. The CSVRA report now provides a solid platform on which we will build peacebuilding initiatives, governance reforms, and sustainable development interventions." - Her Honour Dr. W.K Mutale Nalumango, Vice President of the Republic of Zambia

Following the launch, the focus now shifts to the implementation of the mitigation strategy. To accomplish this, the AU and COMESA will continue providing technical backstopping to the Zambian government and ensure that the mitigation strategy is implemented.

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Driving Vulnerability Mitigation...

Efforts then continued southwards with Malawi, as the country hosted a technical workshop on 17 - 21 November 2025 in Lilongwe, to validate the Malawi CSVRA report. Organised by COMESA in collaboration with the AU, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), participants reviewed and validated stakeholder inputs, identified gaps and areas of improvement, and verified the overall accuracy, consistency and credibility of the report. Following in-depth discussions on the content of the report, feedback was provided by the Malawi SVA/CSVRA Bureau in the form of suggested improvements.

The validation workshop culminated in the development of a roadmap with several key actions, including the convening of a validation workshop of the report with senior policymakers in late February 2026, and the launch of the adopted CSVRA report to be held before June 2026.

On the eastern end of the continent, Kenya also worked to advance its CSVRA process. On 18 December 2025, COMESA_GPS convened a one-day planning meeting in Nairobi, Kenya with the country's SVA/CSVRA Bureau, and AU CEWS representatives. The meeting was aimed at



reviewing the progress of the Kenya SVA/CSVRA roadmap and enhancing Kenya's preparedness in anticipation of the commencement of its national and regional consultations in early 2026. Agreed next steps included briefing the Minister of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs on plans for the implementation of the CSVRA process, concluding with the recruitment of a consultant, and holding a final planning meeting prior to the CSVRA process launch.

These three Member States exemplify a growing commitment across the region to identify vulnerabilities and build long-term peace, security and consequent development. Moreover, through these initiatives, COMESA and its partners effectively spotlighted the importance of the SVA/CSVRA processes and facilitated a structured pathway to actionable interventions.





Steps Towards Smarter Early Warning: Strategic Assessment and Review of the CEWS Methodology

As conflict dynamics across Africa grow more complex, the need for modern, agile and data-driven early warning systems has never been greater. Therefore, from 23 - 29 November 2025, the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) of the African Union (AU) conducted a series of sessions to review the CEWS indicators, methodology, tools and its implementation strategy.

Drawing numerous stakeholders from RECs/RMs, intergovernmental organisations and international organisations, CSOs, think tanks, academia, and development partners, the review ensured a holistic and inclusive examination of CEWS - grounded in both operational experience and emerging research.

A key outcome of the review was the adoption of a joint roadmap to integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) into early warning processes, signaling a strategic shift towards more predictive conflict analysis, alongside an updated Indicators Repository Matrix. Beyond technical upgrades, the review

emphasised the need to revitalise CEWS through increased collaboration with African stakeholders to ensure more effective conflict prevention, management, resolution and post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD). Moreover, commitments were made by AfDB to support processes related to resilience-building on the continent, including Country Structural Vulnerability and Resilience Assessments (CSVRA).

Overall, the strategic assessment and review represented a positive advancement in repositioning AU CEWS as a modern, forward-looking early warning system, and worked to strengthen its ability to deliver timely, credible and actionable insights, thereby enhancing Africa's collective capacity to prevent conflicts and sustain peace.



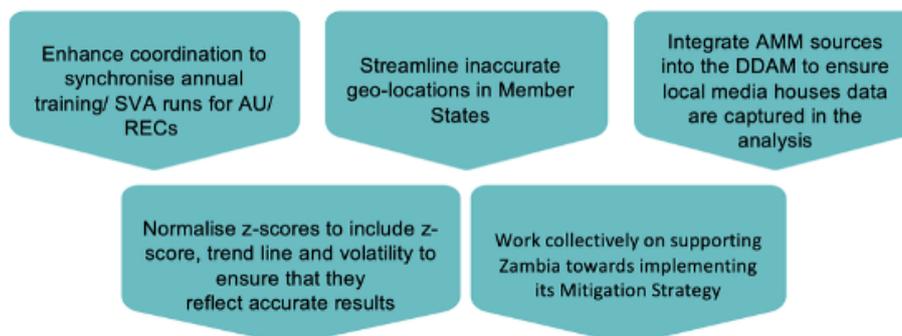
Joint AU/COMESA Review of the COMWARN Structural Vulnerability Assessment Methodology

Early warning is only as powerful as the intelligence behind its analysis.

Behind every early warning system is a method, and every method comes alive through the expertise of those who apply it effectively. As the COMWARN Structural Vulnerability Assessment (SVA) methodology continues to inform regional early warning and decision-making, its strength lies not only in its technical design but in the capacity of analysts to analyse, interpret, and communicate its results with clarity and confidence.

Thus, from 15 - 17 December 2025 in Nairobi, Kenya, the Joint AU/COMESA Review of the COMWARN SVA methodology provided analysts from the Continental Early Warning System of the African Union (AU CEWS), the East African Community Early Warning System (EACWARN), as well as the COMWARN staff, with the opportunity to strengthen their capacity in order to sustainably produce high-quality, policy-relevant assessments that support timely action across the region. Furthermore, the review of COMWARN SVAs was occasioned by the need to ensure new indicators are incorporated into COMWARN, and new country-specific and regional forecasts for 2025 - 2028 are generated which better reflect the emerging realities in the region. It was envisaged that the production of a new run would inform the planned SVA Multi-Stakeholder Consultations planned for 2026 onwards.

Following presentations by experts from Virtual Research Associates (VRA) of the COMWARN Dynamic Data Analysis System and new upgrades to the system - including the new Graphic User Interface - the following action points depicted below were agreed upon to guide the way forward:





Regional Workshop on the Integration of Southern African Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) into the Pan-African Civil Society Network on Political Affairs, Peace and Security

Civil society has, over time, proven its ability to play a vital role in shaping inclusive, people-centred peace and security processes across the continent. Recognising this, a regional workshop on the integration of Southern African Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) into the Pan-African Civil Society Network on Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PANPAPS) was convened from 5 - 7 November 2025 in Cape Town, South Africa.

Bringing together representatives of Southern African CSOs, RECs (COMESA and SADC) and their Southern African Member States, the CSOs Network from Western (WANEP), Central (COPAC) and Eastern (ECONET) Africa, and the African Union Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department (PAPS), the workshop aimed to facilitate the integration of Southern African CSO networks into the PANPAPS framework

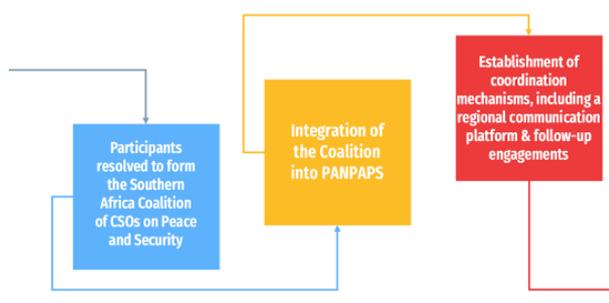
in a bid to enhance collaboration on peace, security and development. Moreover, it sought to enhance CSO capacities and develop actionable strategies and follow-up mechanisms for accountability purposes. Rich discussions took place, underscoring the importance of inclusive participation, multi-track diplomacy, and the role of CSOs as partners in conflict prevention, governance, and human security.

The key outcomes of the workshop included the following resolutions and agreements:

Several key recommendations emerged, namely;

- i. Development of a Southern Africa CSO Integration Roadmap with clear roles, timelines and performance indicators;
- ii. Establishment of regional coordination mechanisms using a co-chair model and regular peer-learning sessions;
- iii. Promotion of CSO self-organisation and coalition-building aligned with AU and REC objectives.

Regarded as a significant step towards enhancing collaboration between regional bodies and CSOs on peace and security in Southern Africa, the workshop effectively reinforced dialogue, inclusivity and joint accountability, in order to advance the aspirations of 'Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.'





The 3rd Annual IRSK Conference

“Research is to see what everybody else has seen, and to think what nobody else has thought.” - Albert Szent-Györgyi

In a world where policy decisions and programmatic activities increasingly hinge on evidence, the 3rd Annual International Relations Society of Kenya (IRSK) Conference placed research at the heart of diplomacy and regional integration. The Conference was convened from 1 - 3 October 2025 in Nairobi, Kenya, by COMESA in partnership with the IRSK, the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), the Acacia Dialogue Center, and the Australian High Commission to Kenya, under the theme - “Enhancing COMESA’s Strategic Positioning and Resilience in the Evolving Global Order.” The Conference served as a landmark precursor event to the COMESA Heads of State Summit and aimed to provide a critical space for dialogue and reflection around policy innovation on regional governance challenges.

Amb. Dr. Mohamed Kadah, COMESA Assistant Secretary General for Programmes, emphasised the need to accelerate regional growth and integration through a keynote speech, during which he stated;

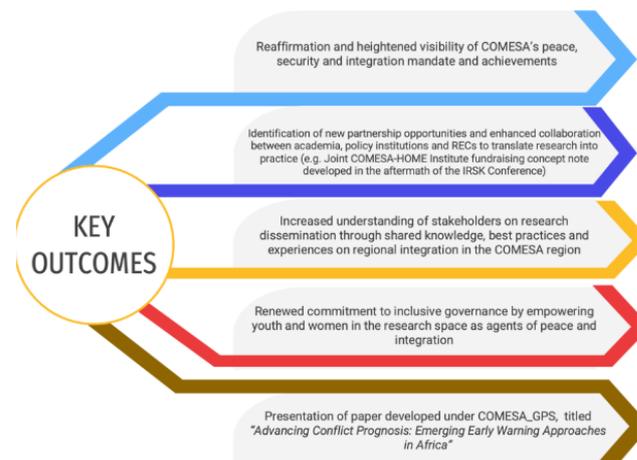
“COMESA is a transformative platform to boost trade in this evolving global order -which represents immense opportunities. The question to ponder on is - how can COMESA lead with a clearer vision, unity of purpose and vision?”

The Conference provided a dynamic platform for 72 experts

from diverse fields to interrogate critical issues - from peace and security, governance and trade, to digital transformation, energy transition and regional integration. With thematic tracks spanning international relations, diplomacy and COMESA’s 30-year journey, issues such as good governance and the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite were explored through vibrant panel discussions. A particular highlight was a roundtable on “COMESA at 30”, celebrating the REC’s decades-long legacy and achievements in the economic and socio-political spheres. The Conference further hosted the launch of the African Women in Diplomacy and International Affairs (AWDIA) Initiative, which effectively works to position women at the heart of the region’s diplomatic and peacebuilding agenda.

Beyond intellectual exchange, the Conference embodied partnership and collaboration, and effectively reflected Africa’s ability to unite, learn, adapt and lead with confidence.

The following key outcomes were achieved, all of which aid in strengthening COMESA’s regional agenda and role in driving peace, security and sustainable development:





Enhancing Regional Financial Security: COMESA Supports Rwanda's Final Egmont Group of FIUs Ascension Process

COMESA_GPS worked to support the regional fight against money laundering in November 2025, as Rwanda advanced towards full membership in the Egmont Group. A final onsite visit to the Rwanda Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC) at its HQ in Kigali, Rwanda, was conducted by Egmont from 10 - 14 November 2025. The visit was organised to facilitate the finalisation of modalities for the FIC's final phase of the Egmont Group of FIUs ascension process, and support was provided by COMESA in line with an official request made by the Rwanda FIC in October 2025. The final phase assesses several components including premises, security, adequacy of staff, technologies in use, inter-agency cooperation, adequate legal and policy framework, and FIU budget. The engagement brought together officers from the Rwanda FIC and the Egmont Sponsors for Rwanda, as well as officers from the Mauritius FIU and Zambia FIC.

At the conclusion of the five-day assessment, the sponsors agreed on the following:



Final run through the completed Egmont Membership Criteria would be conducted by Rwanda FIC virtually by 21 November 2025 to Egmont Canada



Sponsors will participate in Egmont plenary in first quarter of 2026 and present Rwanda and Eswatini reports for consideration

This reflects growing momentum across the COMESA region in strengthening financial intelligence capabilities and compliance with international anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing standards. To date, 11 out of 21 COMESA Member States have attained Egmont Group membership - representing 52.38% of the region. Eswatini's and Rwanda's expected admissions will position them as the 12th and 13th Member States in the Egmont Group respectively, further reinforcing collective regional capacity to combat financial crime.

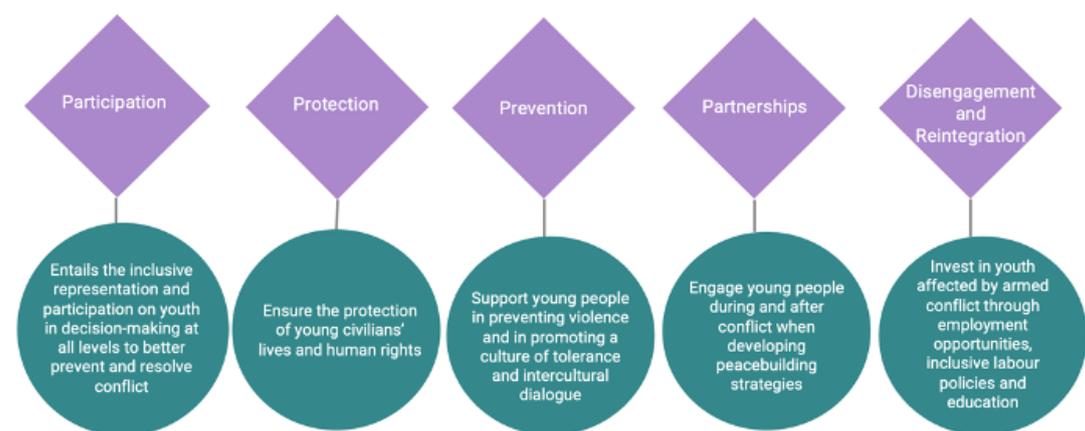
Continental Stocktaking Conference on Youth, Peace and Security



Youth are the canvas upon which the masterpiece of tomorrow is painted. The Stocktaking Conference on Youth, Peace and Security defined the colours and contours of tomorrow. From 8 - 10 December 2025, in Nairobi, Kenya, COMESA and its partners – the African Union, Government of Kenya, Search for Common Ground, ICGLR Youth Forum, Office of the UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, GIZ, ISS, ACCORD, Horn of Africa Youth Network, Youth for SDGs, and Africa-Europe Foundation convened the Conference under the theme, “Ten Years of UNSCR 2250: Reflections and Renewed Commitments for Africa.” A diverse mix of 179 participants (90 Males and 89 Females) - consisting of young peacebuilders, African Union Youth Ambassadors for Peace and COMESA Youth Advisory Panel members, AU policymakers and REC representatives, technical experts, civil society organisations, and international

development partners - gathered to review and reflect on a decade of implementing UNSCR 2250 and the AU Continental Framework on YPS, taking stock of successes, challenges, lessons learned and best practices, in a bid to enhance meaningful youth engagement in peace and security across Africa by facilitating intergenerational collaboration and strengthening the implementation of youth-centred peace and security policies by building on duty bearers’ existing political commitments.

The Conference focused on key continental and regional trends shaping the YPS Agenda, the development and implementation of National Action Plans on YPS, and shared policy and programme wins across the five pillars of the UNSCR 2250, as shown below:



It also featured thematic deep dive sessions on cross-cutting issues such as climate change, emerging technologies, and governance, alongside discussions on research and knowledge management. Moreover, a side-event, the Youth in Peacebuilding Awards, recognised outstanding African youth peacebuilders for their impactful and innovative contributions to peace and security.

At the Conference's conclusion, high-level representatives from RECs and other partners jointly endorsed an Outcome Document and offered verbal commitments to set the YPS

Agenda and guide the next decade of its implementation in Africa. The Document was presented to the AU Champion for YPS, H.E. Évariste Ndayishimiye, President of the Republic of Burundi, during the 4th Continental Dialogue on Youth, Peace and Security in Africa on 11 December 2025 to ensure its integration into continental, regional and national platforms on YPS through a clear AU Peace and Security Council Resolution that would anchor accountability, unlock resources and guide AU Member States to deliver on the promise of both UNSCR 2250 and the AU CFYPS. It outlined four priority areas, as shown below:



Additionally, the Common Impact Framework, developed to monitor and report on the progress and effectiveness of the YPS Agenda implementation continentally, was built around five key pillars, as depicted below:

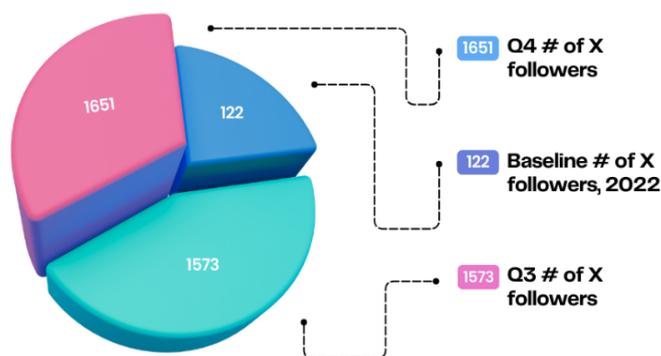


VISIBILITY AND ONLINE PRESENCE

Harnessing the influence of digital engagement has become an indispensable practice in today's interconnected world. Throughout the Quarter, COMESA_GPS continued to embrace strategic online engagement to expand its reach, amplify its impact and cultivate meaningful partnerships.

Through the publishing of consistent and compelling content on the social media platform X, the Unit showcased its programmatic achievements and shared real-time updates across all thematic areas. This effort drove a 5% growth in X followers, achieving a rise from 1,573 to 1,651. This expanding digital community reflects growing public interest in COMESA_GPS' work and stands as a testament to the Unit's commitment to investing in innovative digital strategies, energising online dialogue, and increasing regional impact.

OF X ENGAGED FOLLOWERS IN Q4 2025



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