

8<sup>th</sup> Edition

**APSACO**

African Peace and Security  
Annual Conference

8<sup>TH</sup> EDITION - 2024

# MEDIATION IN AFRICAN INTERNAL CONFLICTS

**REPORT**

June, 10-11, 2024, Rabat

**General coordination**

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African Peace and Security Annual Conference - APSACO

# **MEDIATION IN AFRICAN INTERNAL CONFLICTS**

8<sup>TH</sup> EDITION - 2024

**RAPPORT**

June, 10-11, 2024, Rabat

# OPENING REMARKS



**ABDELHAK BASSOU**  
Senior Fellow, Policy Center for  
the New South



**RACHID EL HOUDAIGUI**  
Senior Fellow, Policy Center for  
the New South

- **Key Elements:**

**ABDELHAK BASSOU** welcomed participants to the Eighth Annual Conference on Peace and Security in Africa (APSACO), highlighting that APSACO has become a key forum for examining the African security landscape and dynamics. Along with the Africa Economic Symposium (AES) and the Atlantic Dialogue (AD), APSACO is one of the international conferences organized annually by the PCNS. While APSACO scrutinizes African security dynamics, AES focuses on African economic transformation, and AD aims to place Africa and its Atlantic rim at the center of discussions on establishing a new world order. APSACO also reflects the PCNS's African and Southern focus. The theme of the 8th edition is mediation, a classic and turbulent topic in African affairs, receiving meticulous attention within the PCNS, as demonstrated by the Think Tank's numerous publications on the subject.

**RACHID EL HOUDAIGUI** expressed his satisfaction with the maturity APCACO has achieved as it approaches its 8th edition. The community within the APSACO ecosystem enriches the African academic debate on conflict prevention and management. PCNS sees itself as a player in Africa, having participated in the select group tasked with revising the African Union (AU) Policy Framework on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD), which was adopted by the AU Assembly of Heads of State in February 2024. The Conference also derives strength from its unique narrative: analyzing Africa from the continent's own perspective while acknowledging its interdependence with the rest of the world. There is no single, universal model for conflict resolution. While the UN is the global actor and the multilateral approach is legitimate, solutions must also be local or regional. Peace is a social construct and cannot be imposed externally; a settlement designed by others does not necessarily guarantee lasting peace.

The theme of the 8th edition is mediation in internal African conflicts. Mediation has long attracted the interest of international organizations, particularly within the framework of the AU. While guided by UN standards, African mediation incorporates African norms, notably the principle of subsidiarity, strongly advocated by African Regional Economic Communities (RECs). However, this process faces four key obstacles: 1. institutional challenges stemming from fragmentation; 2. the diversity of national interests, which vary significantly between countries and even within regions; 3. the challenge of making AU and the REC engagement more innovative and less competitive, grounded in the principle of subsidiarity; 4. the strategic partnership between the UN and the AU, which is based on complementarity, yet disrupted by the international power game, which continues to be a destabilizing factor in Africa.

APSACO serves as a forum for dialogue and debate, focusing on five key areas: 1. African mediation mechanisms and approaches; 2. the coordination between local, regional and continental processes; 3. strategies for fostering synergies between the AU and civil society; 4. the Sahelian crisis, which highlights the complexities of conflict; and 5. the role of civil society, particularly in ceasefire and inclusive peace processes. Moreover, the evolving security dynamics across Africa underscore the need to develop African mediation expertise. Recommendations may include the establishment of a mediation training panel to address this need.





## Panel 1

# Mechanisms and Approaches to Mediation in Internal Conflicts

### • Panel composition:

- **Mohammed Loulichki**, Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the New South
- **Kabiné Komara**, Former Prime Minister, Republic of Guinea
- **Lassina Zerbo**, Former Prime Minister of Burkina Faso
- **Jean-Hervé Jezequel**, Project Director, International Crisis Group
- **Ajay Sethi**, Senior Advisor, Ceasefire and security arrangements, Mediation Support Unit, United Nations

### • Session Description:

This panel has explored innovative strategies and specific mediation mechanisms for internal conflicts in Africa, aiming to understand and address complex challenges. Emphasis was placed on solutions tailored to the African context and on fostering sustainable peace, drawing from both the achievements and limitations of institutional mechanisms and ongoing or completed mediation processes. It was notably highlighted that mediation can play a crucial role in advancing national reconciliation, particularly in the Sahel-Saharan region.

- **Key Elements:**



**Kabiné Komara**  
Former Prime Minister, Republic  
of Guinea

**KABINÉ KOMARA** emphasized the benefits of mediation in Guinea, which played a pivotal role in resolving the political crisis that emerged after a military coup, deepening the divide between the Guinean military and its citizens while isolating Guinea from the rest of Africa. Mediation was instrumental in crafting a political framework to end the crisis and convincing African countries to support Guinea's national reconciliation efforts, notably through the establishment of the National Commission of Inquiry. Similarly, mediation helped resolve the political crisis in Togo between the president and the political class, leading to the organization of free and transparent elections. The Liberian experience, where feminist mediation was crucial in advancing Liberia's national reconciliation process, stands as a particularly revealing example of mediation's power.

**LASSINA ZERBO** emphasized that effective mediation in African countries is impossible without inclusivity. Women, as mothers, sisters, and community leaders, are integral to African societies and must play a pivotal role in mediation efforts. Additionally, respecting cultural frameworks is essential. For example, in Burkina Faso, tribal affiliations deeply influence political dynamics, making it crucial for modern mediation strategies to incorporate cultural nuances in order to resonate effectively with local populations. Currently, peace and security discussions often overlook the majority of the population, focusing instead on minority political ecosystems. This imbalance highlights the challenges in initiating meaningful change.



**Lassina Zerbo**  
Former Prime Minister of Burkina  
Faso



**Jean-Hervé Jezequel**  
Project Director, International Crisis Group

**JEAN-HERVÉ JEZEQUEL** pointed out that the Sahel is in a crisis of unprecedented scale, marked by the geographical spread of violence and the increasing number of atrocities. The failure of both the international community and Africa to contain the Sahel crisis stems largely from the dominance of externally imposed security solutions, such as the Algiers Agreements in the Malian context, at the expense of mediation efforts. This focus on security measures has overshadowed dialogue efforts to the extent that national dialogue, which could lead to reconciliation, is often seen as political surrender. However, the Sahel is rich in dialogue and mediation potential, not only at the institutional level but also through civil society actors such as women, religious leaders and traditional figures.

**AJAY SETHI** highlighted that Africa is the only continent where regional organizations, with 80% of its sub-regional bodies, hold a formal mandate for mediation. He stressed that both the international community and Africa must avoid simplistic assumptions, such as the belief that “local mediation is universally effective,” and instead embrace a more nuanced approach. The guiding principle for Africa should be to exercise due diligence, ensuring that conflicts are not exacerbated by empowering unsuitable local actors. Potential mediators must be carefully vetted to ensure they possess genuine capability and local legitimacy, rather than relying on inflated credentials. This process requires detailed mapping and assessment, which is often lacking. Capacity is key, as navigating security dynamics in geopolitically complex environments is challenging. While the AU often spearheads mediation efforts, success depends on collaboration, not competition, among stakeholders. Given Africa’s diverse geopolitical landscape, mediation efforts must be tailored to local contexts, as a uniform approach is neither feasible nor advisable.



**Ajay Sethi**  
Senior Advisor, Ceasefire and security arrangements, Mediation Support Unit, United Nations



- **Policy Recommendations:**

- **Mediation in Africa Must be Inter-African:** The mediation process in Africa should be inherently inter-African rather than extra-African, driven by the reluctance of African countries toward external interventions.
- **The International Community Can Contribute through an African Lens:** While the international community can play a role in crisis resolution and national reconciliation, mediation must be intra-African, respecting African traditions and particularities.
- **Mediator Selection Must Consider All Stakeholders:** The choice of mediators should not be limited to government representatives. Effective mediation requires training that addresses local issues and cultural sensitivities, along with an understanding of the root causes of conflicts.
- **Master the Tools of African Mediation:** Listening is crucial in mediation. Understanding the origins of problems enables collective progress. Consistency is critical; without it, credibility wains. African institutions must demonstrate reliability for mediation frameworks to gain traction. While financial resources are vital, reliance on external funding can complicate matters. Exploring internal resources and collaboration is crucial for sustainable solutions.
- **Prioritize Development over Security:** The Sahel faces a multidimensional crisis that demands complex responses based on three main pillars: security, governance and development. However, addressing all three pillars is challenging if security predominates. It is urgent to rebalance the focus by promoting dialogue.
- **Fostering Dialogue to Resolve the Inter-Sahelian Crisis:** Dialogue must occur at the regional level, particularly through ECOWAS, while also reviving integration, which is essential for lasting solutions. In Senegal, the emergence of a renewed, democratically-elected government could serve as a mobilizing force. The military must avoid escalations and instead support Sahelian social forces that contribute positively.
- **Align Financial Support with Peacebuilding Efforts:** Financial support is essential but insufficient on its own; it must be paired with a genuine commitment to long-term engagement. Previous ceasefire agreements have faltered due to sudden lapses in funding, highlighting the need for sustainability. Financial commitments should align with long-term peacebuilding objectives.
- **Ensure a Strategy of Sustainable Peace:** Achieving sustainable peace requires strategic patience and comprehensive expertise. Africa's tendency to rush into peace operations as quick fixes must shift to building local capacity and empowering credible mediators. This approach necessitates consistency and adaptability. The outcomes of African efforts should feed into a broader agenda for peace negotiations, ensuring that insights from across the continent inform global peacebuilding strategies.



## Panel 2

# Innovation for Better Coordination of Local, National, Regional, and International Processes

### • Panel composition:

- **SÂ Benjamin Traoré**, Associate Professor, Mohammed VI Polytechnic University
- **Paul-Simon Handy**, Senior Advisor, Institute for Security Studies
- **Ahmedou Ould Abdallah**, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Islamic Republic of Mauritania
- **Loredana Teodorescu**, Head of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network
- **Norman Sempijja**, Associate Professor, Mohammed VI Polytechnic University

### • Session Description:

The session examined the complexities and challenges of mediation in Africa, emphasizing the need for effective coordination among various actors operating at local, national, regional, and international levels. Key issues discussed include the impact of inequalities, climate change, and domestic conflicts on mediation efforts, as well as the role of non-state actors. The panel highlighted the necessity of leveraging the comparative advantages of different mediators. It also addressed the historical reliance on charismatic leaders in mediation, noting a shift towards developing technical expertise and professionalizing mediation efforts within the AU.

• **Key Elements:**



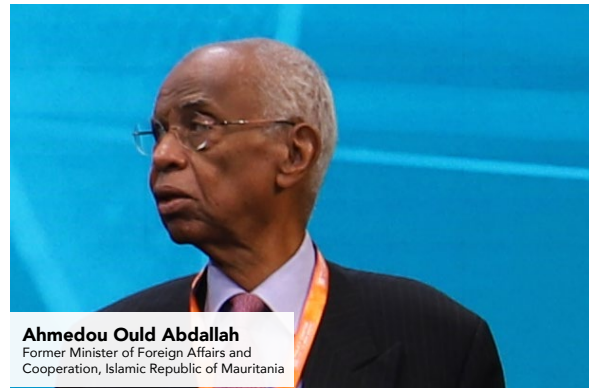
**Paul-Simon Handy**  
Senior Advisor, Institute for Security Studies

**Professionalizing Mediation:**

**PAUL-SIMON HANDY** emphasized the importance of professionalizing mediation within the AU. Historically, the AU relied on the charisma of elder statesmen, but there is a now a pressing need for technical expertise to address complex mediation tasks. Despite the innovative nature of the African peace and security arrangement, a significant gap persists between the AU's mandate and the reality of its mediation efforts. Handy recommended burden-sharing, integrating civil society, and involving the private sector in mediation processes.

**Governance and Corruption:**

**AHMEDOU OULD ABDALLAH** highlighted the considerable obstacles posed by corruption and poor governance. He emphasized that a free press is crucial for exposing malpractice and holding officials accountable, thereby combating corruption. Moreover, enhancing governance and mediation capabilities is essential for effectively addressing conflicts.



**Ahmedou Ould Abdallah**  
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Islamic Republic of Mauritania





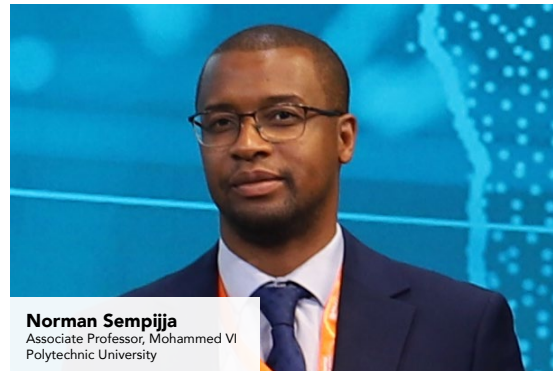
**Loredana Teodorescu**  
 Head of the Mediterranean Women  
 Mediators Network

**Gender Participation:**

**LOREDANA TEODORESCU** from the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network stressed the importance of integrating women into the mediation process. She discussed the necessity of inclusivity and global partnerships that emphasize complementarity and collective leadership. Despite notable achievements, the entire mediation system requires significant reforms to align with today's realities.

**Continuous Mediation:**

**NORMAN SEMPIJJA** pointed out the underdeveloped nature of peacekeeping as a political process. He noted that peacemaking is often viewed as a singular event; however, conflicts can resurface, necessitating ongoing mediation. Sempijja emphasized the importance of legitimate mediators and the need for continuous mediation efforts to achieve lasting peace and stability.



**Norman Sempijja**  
 Associate Professor, Mohammed VI  
 Polytechnic University



**• Policy Recommendations:**

- **Enhance Conceptual Clarity and Ownership:** Develop a comprehensive roster of mediation capacities to ensure the AU has access to a diverse range of skilled mediators for various conflict scenarios. It is crucial to address conceptual issues related to ownership by fostering inclusivity and involving all stakeholders in the mediation process.
- **Increase Investment in Conflict Prevention and Mediation Capabilities:** Tackle the current underfunding by focusing on the development of technical expertise and the professionalization of mediation tools. Additionally, enhance burden-sharing among mediation actors by integrating civil society and involving the private sector in mediation efforts.
- **Strengthen Governance and Combat Corruption:** Prioritize the enhancement of governance structures to create stable environments conducive to conflict resolution. This includes empowering a free press to expose corruption and hold officials accountable.
- **Develop Context-Specific Approaches to Different Conflict Types:** Given the diversity of conflicts in Africa, formulate tailored strategies for each type of conflict. Address root problems early to facilitate prevention and conflict resolution at the regional level.
- **Promote Inclusivity and Gender Participation in Mediation Processes:** Ensure the integration of women into the mediation process to enhance its effectiveness and inclusivity. Create dedicated platforms to ensure that diverse voices, particularly those of women, are heard in the mediation process.
- **Strengthen African Cohesion and Ownership:** Foster inclusivity by ensuring African voices are heard in negotiations and taking the initiative in resolving conflicts on the continent. Enhance the role of regional organizations in mediation and peacekeeping, ensuring they play a more active role.
- **Enhance Partnerships and Financing:** Secure more financial support to bolster mediation networks and coordination. Develop initiatives aimed at improving governance and mitigating the impact of poor governance on conflicts. Encourage global partnerships that support mediation efforts through collaboration and shared leadership.
- **Recognize Peacekeeping as a Continuous and Adaptive Process:** Treat peacekeeping as an ongoing effort rather than a one-time event to prevent the resurgence of conflict. Ensure that mediators are perceived as legitimate and unbiased to enhance the success of peacekeeping efforts. Implement adaptive strategies to address the dynamic nature of conflicts, maintaining continuous mediation efforts to achieve lasting stability.
- **Focus on Managing Subsidiarity and Competition for Funds:** Develop strategies to manage competition for funding and ensure effective coordination among different levels of mediation. This includes implementing mechanisms to streamline funding processes and reduce conflict over financial resources.





## Panel 3

# Regional Perspectives on Internal Crises in the Sahelo-Saharan Region

- **Panel composition:**

- **Mounia Boucetta**, Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the New South
- **Abdelhak Bassou**, Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the New South
- **Issaka Ouedraogo**, Director, Sahel Politica
- **Rida Lyammouri**, Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the New South
- **Shawn E. Holtz**, Deputy Director, AFRICOM/J5

- **Session Description:**

This panel, moderated by Mounia Boucetta, Senior Fellow at the Policy Center for the New South, focused on the multifaceted internal crises facing the Sahelo-Saharan region. The Sahel region has emerged as a hotspot for conflicts and instability, driven by a combination of political, social, and environmental factors. The complexity of these conflicts, involving numerous local and international actors, presents significant challenges for mediation efforts.

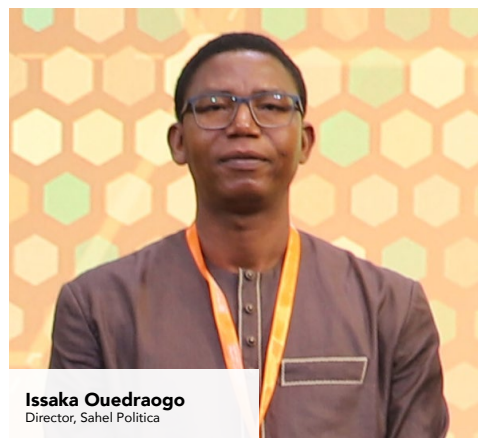
- **Key Elements:**



**Abdelhak Bassou**  
Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the  
New South

**ABDELHAK BASSOU** highlights the complexity of the military situation, characterized by multiple levels of conflict, diverse actors, and intricate entanglements. He analyzes the role of ECOWAS, noting its failure to act as an effective mediator due to punitive responses to coups d'état, which have resulted in resistance from three member states. He highlights the emergence of the Sahel States Alliance as a parallel framework that further complicates regional dynamics by fragmenting collaborative platforms. This development undermines ECOWAS's capacity to function as a neutral mediator in regional conflicts, reflecting broader challenges in managing multi-state cooperation and security issues. On the topic of terrorism, drawing on the example of Mali, Bassou questions whether mediation between state authorities and violent groups is feasible, given the prevailing stance that "one does not negotiate with terrorists". He explores alternative mediation possibilities that might exist.

**ISSAKA OUEDRAOGO** advocates for the AES to collaborate with ECOWAS amid regional tensions, political governance issues, and security concerns. He calls for easing internal tensions within AES countries as well as between regional blocs. Ouedraogo notes an increasing radicalization among opponents of the Burkinabe regime, contrasting the ideal of "returning to a normal constitutional order" with the reality in Ouagadougou, where the situation has moved beyond a mere transitional phase. Regarding security issues, he cites a strategic shift: previous attempts at peaceful resolutions have failed, leading to a new more offensive approach, with negotiations occurring only after establishing a position of strength.



**Issaka Ouedraogo**  
Director, Sahel Politica



**Rida Lyammouri**  
Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the  
New South

**RIDA LYAMMOURI** discusses how states have manipulated communities against each other as a strategy to weaken enemies, employing a divide-and-rule approach. He critiques the international community's stabilization efforts in the region, including military interventions and missions like MINUSMA, labeling them as failures due to a fundamental misunderstanding of the local dynamics. He highlights the significant disconnect between the situation on the ground and international policymakers, who often focus on issues such as migration, terrorism, and rivalry with Russia, without taking the local context into account.

**SHAWN HOLTZ** emphasizes the collaborative nature of AFRICOM's operations, stating that they work closely with allies and partners on the ground through a strategy encompassing diplomacy, development, and defense, often referred to as the 3D approach. A key focus is on building the capacity of African partner nations to enhance their ability to manage their own security needs. Holtz discusses various security cooperation offices and programs that involve European partners, highlighting the importance of training, advisory roles, military justice, and civilian law capabilities, all while respecting sovereignty, equality, and locally and regionally led solutions to security challenges. He also noted the impact of climate change on security, pointing out that climate-driven instability, mass migration, and competition for resources create opportunities for violent groups to escalate conflicts and fuel further violence.



**Shawn E. Holtz**  
Deputy Director, AFRICOM/J5



• **Policy Recommendations:**

- **Drawing Lessons from Other Experiences:** Examining successful mediation practices from Togo as potential models for conflict resolution.
- **Developing Military Diplomacy:** Suggesting that military diplomacy might be effective, with military personnel serving as intermediaries to engage in discussions with other militaries.
- **Adapting to the Target Audience:** Defining the target of advocacy efforts and developing strategies to effectively persuade the concerned actors while addressing their objections.
- **Identifying Root Causes:** Identifying the root causes of crises to better orient policies. While quick wins can be achieved through training and equipping for urban terrorism, the core issues lie in rural areas, necessitating a focused approach to these regions.
- **Unity and Dialogue:** Fostering internal unity and initiating dialogue within affected communities before involving external mediators. This includes addressing problems at the micro-level by ensuring the provision of security, justice, economic opportunities, and access to resources. Thorough analyses are needed to understand the boundaries of dialogue, as well as the interests and risks facing local populations.
- **Strengthening State Partnership Programs:** Focusing on enhancing security and development in Africa by bolstering state partnership programs.





## Panel 4

# African Civil Society and Strengthening Ceasefires

### • Panel composition:

- **Kidane Kiros**, Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the New South
- **Saïd Abass Ahamed**, Director, Thinking Africa
- **Oumar Ba**, Associate Expert, Les Afriques dans le Monde
- **Judith van den Boogert**, Mediator and Dialogue Facilitator in Social and Conflict Transformation, Independent
- **Mohamed Jeghlaly**, Mediation Advisor, HD Centre

### • Session Description:

During this session, the panelists discussed the vital role of civil society in conflict mediation in Africa. They highlighted practical examples from various regions, emphasizing both the challenges and successes of civil society involvement. The discussions underscored the necessity of including diverse civil actors, such as women and youth, in peace processes. Additionally, they addressed the need to clarify the roles of civil society organizations and provide them with adequate resources and training to enhance their effectiveness in fostering lasting peace and reconciliation.



- **Key Elements:**



**Kidane Kiros**  
Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the  
New South

**KIDANE KIROS** emphasized the critical role of African civil society organizations in the ceasefire negotiation process, noting that their involvement is essential for the effectiveness and sustainability of peace agreements. Despite international consensus on the importance of civil society in post-conflict scenarios, these organizations are often excluded from actual negotiation, which tend to be dominated by elite actors. "This exclusion can negatively impact the sustainability of peace agreements or ceasefires, as well as the post-conflict peacebuilding process." To address these challenges, Kidan raised several questions: How can civil society involvement enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of ceasefire agreements? What supportive environments exist for their inclusion in negotiations? How can formal institutions like the AU or ECOWAS be engaged? What challenges must be overcome to ensure their involvement in ceasefire negotiations?

**SAID ABASS AHAMED** highlighted the historical challenge of civil society participation in African mediation, noting that powerful entities often resist their involvement until global resolutions like Resolution 1325 promote inclusion. "We needed to wait for Resolution 1325, which promotes and fosters women's participation, to really open the debate and create space for civil society in negotiations." He emphasized the crucial timing of civil society involvement, citing Liberia's peace process, where women leaders like Leymah Gbowee played a pivotal role in pressuring for ceasefire agreements. "Her initiative managed to mobilize civil society in Liberia, raise funds, and exert pressure on the ceasefire agreement, leading to a long peace process." Reflecting on his experience in Comoros, he underscored the need for well-organized and resourced civil society engagement to counterbalance external pressures and influence political dialogues. "The strategy was to rally civil society to create an alternative to political dialogue and exert pressure on the parties, but this initiative ultimately failed due to strong external influences." Ahamed advocated for strategic and inclusive civil society participation in ceasefire processes, particularly involving women and youth to ensure broad legitimacy and effective peacebuilding.



**Saïd Abass Ahamed**  
Director, Thinking Africa



**OUMAR BA** emphasized the need to redefine civil society distinct from political entities, highlighting their governance under public law but differing in purpose—political power preservation versus societal objectives. He discussed civil society’s role in peace processes, using examples such as Mali’s failed agreements, Sudan’s brief 2023 ceasefire, and funding gaps in humanitarian aid. He noted that in the Central African Republic, women-led initiatives like the Peace Academy and Women’s Leadership Network facilitated crucial dialogues and political agreements. He cited the role of religious leaders in the Central African Republic and initiatives in Sudan that united armed groups despite international failures, earning praise from the UN and AU.

**JUDITH VAN DEN BOOGERT** highlighted the importance of understanding civil society’s role in peacebuilding and the necessity of including all stakeholders. She acknowledged the complexity of negotiation processes and emphasized the pivotal role of trusted local figures in brokering peace. She also advocated for their integration into formal peace processes alongside civil society actors like religious leaders, women’s groups, youth organizations, and business leaders. She stressed the strategic utilization of local knowledge in formal peace processes, as it can generate innovative and sustainable solutions. She noted that listening to and acknowledging all voices involved in negotiations is crucial for achieving sustainable solutions, particularly during the implementation phase.



**MOHAMED JEGHLLALY** emphasized the need for diverse mediators in addressing Africa’s multi-level conflicts, suggesting that civil society can serve as complementary or alternative channels when official processes face constraints. He highlighted examples such as Tunisia’s 2013-2014 crisis and international conflicts like Russia-Ukraine, where civil society facilitated agreements that official mediators could not achieve. In Sudan’s political crisis, civil society initially played a crucial role but was later courted by various factions as the political landscape shifted. “Even in international conflicts like Russia-Ukraine, involving civil society as co-mediators can lead to agreements that official

mediators might struggle to secure.” Civil society can brainstorm and test solutions that official bodies can then adopt.” Jeghlly noted civil society’s pivotal role in ceasefire negotiations, political settlements, and peace consolidation, stressing their ability to innovate and develop solutions critical for sustainable peace. He recommended that African organizations clarify their roles and specialize to enhance their mediation effectiveness.



**Mohamed Jeghlly**  
Mediation Advisor, HD Centre

• **Policy Recommendations:**

- **Clarify Role and Differentiation:** Clearly define civil society as distinct from political entities to maximize their effectiveness in mediation, ensuring their objectives align with appropriate tools. “Specialization is crucial; organizations cannot mediate effectively while also engaging in activities like human rights advocacy.”
- **Enhance Inclusion in Peace Processes:** Integrate diverse societal actors, such as women’s groups and religious leaders, into formal peace negotiations to ensure broad legitimacy and sustainable outcomes.
- **Support Traditional Mediators:** Acknowledge the value of traditional leaders in conflict resolution, as seen in successful initiatives involving Islamic scholars and community leaders.
- **Utilize Ground-Level Knowledge:** Incorporate local insights and solutions into formal negotiation frameworks to maintain relevance and durability of peace agreements.
- **Expand Alternative Dialogue Platforms:** Create dialogue advisory groups and peace polls to amplify the voices of civil society, offering varied perspectives to negotiation processes.
- **Train Insider Mediators:** Invest in training key societal figures to mediate effectively, bridging community needs with formal negotiation processes.
- **Invest in Mediator Networks:** Provide financial support for mediator networks that enable training and collaboration among civil society actors, enhancing their collective impact.
- **Educate Stakeholders on Agreements:** Promote awareness and understanding of peace agreements among community and religious leaders to encourage their active participation in the implementation process.



## Panel 5

# Valuing African Skills and Expertise for a Common Mediation Approach

- **Panel composition:**

- **Nouzha Chekrouni**, Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the New South
- **Ibrahim Abusheriah**, Professor, Sebha University
- **David Anetey Akrong**, Deputy Commandant, The Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center – KAIPTC
- **Ahmed Mahmoud Dahan**, Director, IMES

- **Session Description:**

The session, moderated by Nouzha Chekrouni, Senior Fellow at the Policy Center for the New South, focused on fostering a unified and collaborative approach to African mediation. It highlighted the importance of innovative African approaches that are tailored to the continent's diverse cultural contexts. The speakers underscored the need to invest in capacity building, leverage various mediation networks—including African, Arab, and Moroccan women mediators—and pursue indigenous solutions by involving local communities in conflict resolution efforts.



- **Key Elements:**



**Nouzha Chekrouni**  
Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the  
New South

**NOUZHA CHEKROUNI** emphasized the importance of a unified and collaborative approach to mediation in Africa, advocating for strategies that respect the continent's cultural diversity. She emphasized investing in capacity-building initiatives to enhance the effectiveness of mediation networks, particularly those involving African, Arab, and Moroccan women mediators.

**IBRAHIM ABUSERIAH** warned of the risks associated with using financial incentives in mediation during the civil war in Southern Libya. He drew comparisons to the 2017 reconciliation efforts in Gambia and South Africa, noting the significant role played by academia. Abuseriah also addressed the complexities of the Libyan context, characterized by foreign interventions and the involvement of new regional actors, stressing that peace cannot be bought. He cited examples from Libya where individuals mediated tribal conflicts successfully without financial incentives.



**Ibrahim Abuseriah**  
Professor, Sebha University





**David Anetey Akrong**  
Deputy Commandant, The Kofi  
Annan International Peacekeeping  
Training Center – KAIPTC

**DAVID ANETAY AKRONG** highlighted that 70% of the audience supported African solutions for African problems. He emphasized the historical and cultural relevance of African states resolving their issues with active community participation. Akrong pointed to the success of traditional community mechanisms, such as those seen in Liberia, and underscored the importance of women’s involvement in mediation, recognizing their valuable contributions.

**AHMED MAHMOUD DAHAN** addressed the internal nature of most African conflicts and the resource dilemma they create, forcing states to choose between security and development. He advocated for the adaptation of traditional customs to modern state values and suggested that traditional leaders could reduce security costs and promote social cohesion. Dahan stressed the need for Africans to rely on their expertise in conflict resolution, noting that many issues arise from community tensions and are exacerbated by favoritism. He called for the empowerment of religious and traditional leaders in mediation processes.



**Ahmed Mahmoud Dahan**  
Director, IMES



• **Policy Recommendations:**

- **Support and Empower Women and Youth:** Ensure inclusivity by empowering women and young people to lead mediation efforts.
- **Invest in Capacity Building:** Strengthen conflict mediation structures and personnel through targeted capacity-building initiatives.
- **Examine Funding Sources:** Scrutinize who finances African-led conflict resolution efforts to maintain autonomy and effectiveness.
- **Adapt Traditional Practices:** Leverage traditional leaders and customs in conflict mediation, integrating these methods into modern governance frameworks.
- **Create Mediation Entities within Justice Systems:** Establish formal mediation entities within justice systems to institutionalize and support mediation processes.



## Report Presentation

# Annual Report on the African Geopolitics

### • Panel composition:

- **Mohamed Brick**, Program Officer, Policy Center for the New South
- **Imen Chaanbi**, Founder, 5WE Consulting Services & Business Solutions Co
- **Khalid Chegraoui**, Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the New South
- **Abdou Cissé**, Journalist, APA News
- **Enrico Castello**, Analyst, NATO Strategic Direction South-Hub

### • Session Description:

This session, moderated by Mohamed Brick, features authors who contributed to the Annual Report on African Geopolitics. The discussion covers issues such as Libya's ongoing conflict, the rivalry of global powers in Africa, the fragility of states in the Sahel and the resilience of Senegalese democracy.

- **Key Elements:**



**Imen Chaanbi**  
 Founder, 5WE Consulting Services &  
 Business Solutions Co

**IMEN CHAANBI** explored the complexities of Libya's conflict, emphasizing foreign involvement and its role in deepening the divide among local stakeholders. She traced the conflict from the second civil war in 2014 to the 2017-2020 period, where foreign powers exploited Libya's energy resources, supporting various factions including Marshal Haftar, with backing from Russia, Egypt, and the UAE, against militias and Islamists supported by Qatar and Turkey. She highlighted four potential scenarios: 1- Establish a dialogue among all stakeholders, relaunch the Batili plan, hold presidential and parliamentary elections, disarm militias, and withdraw foreign troops. 2- Maintain the status quo, with the risk of a third government and potential for war. 3- War 4- Draw up a multi-party agreement involving Libyan and foreign parties focused on economic and strategic interests to achieve peace.

**KHALID CHEGRAOUI** emphasized that the fall of the Gaddafi regime unleashed a flood of arms into the region, destabilizing the Sahel. He argued that Western interventions are largely ineffective due to a lack of cultural expertise. Chegraoui referred to a "folkloric" return to Sankarism, suggesting a superficial or symbolic revival of Thomas Sankara's policies and ideals rather than substantive political change. He also noted endemic issues, such as the lack of effective state governance, which has left many citizens feeling stateless.



**Khalid Chegraoui**  
 Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the  
 New South





**Abdou Cissé**  
Journalist, APA News

**ABDOU CISSÉ** highlighted Senegal’s long electoral history, dating back to pre-independence. He elaborated on President Macky Sall’s political journey, highlighting his break from his mentor Abdoulaye Wade, who had attempted to install his son in power. This move sparked civil society mobilization, ultimately leading to Sall’s electoral victory in 2012. Sall served two terms, during which he faced criticism for unfulfilled promises and mounting pressure to renounce a potential third term. Cissé also addressed the resilience of political actors who resist manipulation, the determination of citizens to safeguard democracy, and the pivotal role of civil society, including movements like Y’en a Marre in 2011, NGO mobilizations in 2024, and the growing influence of social media.

**ENRICO CASTELLO** synthesized the speakers’ ideas, particularly regarding Libya, emphasizing the tension between realpolitik (politics based on practical and material factors) and idealpolitik (politics based on ideological principles). He proposed that Libyans must either find common unifying values or consider dividing into three states reflecting regional loyalties. With regard to Senegalese democracy, he emphasized the significant role that citizen participation plays in a country’s stability, noting that democratic values must be embedded within the social fabric. He noted that local leaders have shown a capacity to assert themselves and resist external pressures, demonstrating the power and potential of local governance when aligned with citizen interests.



**Enrico Castello**  
Analyst, NATO Strategic Direction  
South-Hub

• **Policy Recommendations:**

- **Reconstructing Libyan Identity:** Rebuilding a sense of Libyan national identity is crucial to restoring sovereignty. Rejecting foreign domination is essential to pave the way for national reconciliation and meaningful dialogue.
- **Installing Dialogue and Addressing Structural Challenges:** Dialogue must be accompanied by structural solutions to address economic and social challenges, including trafficking and terrorism.
- **Adopting an Inclusive Approach:** A more inclusive, holistic approach to understanding community contradictions is needed, with a focus on listening to and documenting the stories of those involved.







## CLOSING REMARKS

“The role of women mediators in conflict resolution is increasingly recognized as pivotal. Mediation is both an art and a method, requiring a deep understanding of the incentives driving various actors, thorough knowledge of local dynamics, and the ability to navigate complex issues. This practice demands curiosity, the capacity to empathize with others, and a commitment to long-term engagement and interaction. Essential values—curiosity, respect, trust, determination, and modesty—are foundational to successful mediation.

In this context, Africa’s performance is mixed; while significant strides have been made, there remains room for improvement. Achieving balance between macroeconomic policies, shaped by past shocks and the intricate dynamics of geopolitical rivalries, is crucial. Africa is increasingly viewed as a region where ‘something is happening,’ and there is a strong desire to be part of its transformative journey. To further this progress, it is essential to develop a robust local narrative about Africa, alongside a broader narrative that includes the Wider Atlantic region.”

**Karim El Aynaoui,**  
Executive President, Policy Center for the New South







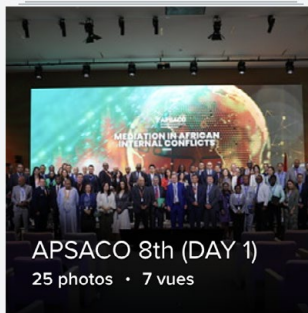




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