

WPS BULLETIN

Message from the Editor



Dear Readers,

April 2026 has once again demonstrated that peace and security across Africa cannot be separated from questions of governance, economic justice, civic participation, and gender equality. From Sudan and the Sahel to Somalia, Botswana, and the broader global economic landscape, this month's developments reveal a continent navigating increasingly complex and interconnected crises while simultaneously advancing important efforts toward inclusive peacebuilding.

A recurring theme throughout this edition is the growing recognition that women are not peripheral actors in peace and security processes, but central leaders, mediators, organisers and responders shaping resilience within communities affected by conflict and instability. Whether through Sudanese women sustaining humanitarian response efforts amid war, Somali women strengthening local governance and peacebuilding structures, or women mediators in Chad building preventive diplomacy capacities through FemWise, African women continue to lead despite structural exclusion and insecurity.

At the same time, this month's developments also expose the persistent barriers undermining the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda across the continent. Shrinking civic space, authoritarian governance trends, economic shocks, militarised security responses, and underfunded peace infrastructures continue to limit women's participation and heighten vulnerabilities for women and girls. Reports emerging from Zimbabwe, the Sahel, Haiti, and Tunisia remind us that commitments to peace, democracy, and inclusion must extend beyond rhetoric into meaningful accountability and institutional reform.

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Importantly, this edition also highlights the increasingly global dimensions of African human security. The economic ripple effects of the Middle East conflict demonstrate how international crises directly affect food security, livelihoods, inflation, and social stability across African communities. Similarly, the African Union's engagement within the G20 framework underscores the urgent need for Africa to shape global governance systems that have long influenced the continent's economic and political realities.

Across these stories, one message remains clear: sustainable peace cannot be achieved through militarisation, elite negotiations, or symbolic commitments alone. Peacebuilding requires inclusive governance, protection of civic space, economic resilience, and sustained investment in locally led women's leadership and community peace infrastructures.

As we continue to amplify feminist and gender-responsive perspectives on peace and security in Africa, we remain committed to centering the voices, experiences, and leadership of women navigating conflict, governance challenges, and social transformation across the continent.

In Solidarity

Helen Kezie-Nwoha

Acronyms

ACCORD	African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes
AfDB	African Development Bank
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EU	European Union
FemWise	Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
G20	Group of Twenty
NAP	National Action Plan
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNTMIS	United Nations Transitional Mission in Somalia
UNSCR 1325	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325
WPP-II	Women, Peace and Protection Joint Programme Phase II
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

Botswana Advances Women, Peace and Security Agenda Through National Action Plan Development

Botswana has taken a significant step toward advancing the WPS agenda through ongoing efforts to develop its first National Action Plan (NAP) on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR1325). Recent capacity-building workshops held in Mahalapye, convened by Botswana's Ministry of Youth and Gender Affairs in partnership with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the European Union (EU), brought together government institutions, security actors, civil society organisations, youth representatives, and faith-based groups to strengthen national coordination on WPS implementation. The initiative seeks to localise regional and international commitments on women's participation in peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and security governance into Botswana's national policy framework.

The development of a NAP is an important milestone not only for Botswana's gender governance architecture, but also for the broader Southern African region, where countries are increasingly being called upon to domesticate the UNSCR1325 into actionable national strategies. While Botswana is often viewed as one of Africa's most stable democracies, the absence of a formal WPS framework has historically limited the institutionalisation of gender-responsive peace and security measures. The ongoing consultations signal recognition that peace and security cannot be reduced to the absence of armed conflict alone, but must also address structural inequalities, gender-based violence, exclusion from decision-making, and social vulnerabilities that disproportionately affect women and girls.

Importantly, Botswana's approach reflects a growing regional shift toward inclusive security governance. By involving actors from the justice sector, civil society, and community structures, the process acknowledges that sustainable peace requires multi-sectoral participation and local ownership. However, the effectiveness of the future National Action Plan will depend on whether it moves beyond symbolic commitment into adequately funded implementation,

monitoring, and accountability mechanisms. Across Africa, many WPS National Action Plans face challenges linked to limited financing, weak institutional coordination, and insufficient grassroots inclusion. Botswana therefore faces the task of ensuring that women are not merely consulted during policy formulation, but are meaningfully represented in security institutions, mediation processes, early warning systems, and peacebuilding leadership.

Botswana's efforts come at a time when the African continent continues to confront intersecting crises including political instability, economic insecurity, climate-related displacement, and rising gender-based violence. These challenges disproportionately affect women and girls, yet women remain underrepresented in formal peace and security structures. Botswana's planned National Action Plan therefore presents an opportunity to strengthen preventive peacebuilding through gender-responsive policy, while positioning women not as passive victims of insecurity, but as critical actors in peace, governance, and national resilience



<https://www.botswanayouth.com/botswana-advances-women-peace-and-security-agenda-through-national-action-plan-development/>



Shrinking Civic Space and Rising Insecurity Threaten WPS Across Africa

Escalating insecurity and governance challenges across several African states during the month of April 2026 once again highlighted the deeply interconnected nature of peace, human rights, and democratic participation on the continent. Reports compiled by AllAfrica documented rising concerns ranging from political repression and constitutional intimidation in Zimbabwe, allegations of sexual abuse linked to security operations in Haiti involving Kenyan personnel, growing violent extremism in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and shrinking civic space under military regimes in parts of the Sahel.

These developments reflect a broader continental

pattern in which instability is increasingly accompanied by restrictions on civic participation, weakened accountability, and heightened vulnerability for women and marginalised communities.



One of the most concerning trends emerging from the report is the continued erosion of democratic and civic spaces during periods of insecurity. In Zimbabwe, reports of intimidation and restricted participation during constitutional hearings point to the ways governance processes can exclude citizens from meaningful engagement, particularly women and young people whose political participation already faces structural barriers. Similarly, in Burkina Faso, the dissolution of over one hundred civil society organisations under the guise of regulatory enforcement demonstrates how governments and military authorities increasingly frame dissent and independent civic action as security threats. These measures not only undermine democratic governance, but also weaken local peacebuilding ecosystems that are often sustained by women-led and community-based organisations.

These developments underscore how conflict and authoritarian responses disproportionately affect women and girls. Allegations of sexual violence linked to peace and security operations, including those involving personnel deployed to Haiti, reinforce longstanding concerns around accountability within security institutions. At the same time, women continue to face exclusion from formal decision-making spaces even as they bear the social and economic consequences of conflict, displacement, and political instability. Across conflict-affected regions such as eastern DRC and South Sudan, women and girls remain exposed to heightened risks of gender-based violence, forced displacement, exploitation, and food insecurity.

The developments also reveal that security responses focused primarily on militarisation without parallel investment in governance, accountability and inclusion are unlikely to produce sustainable peace. Counterterrorism operations and emergency security measures may address immediate threats, but they cannot substitute for democratic participation, institutional trust, and social protection systems. Sustainable peacebuilding requires recognising women not merely as victims of insecurity, but as political actors, mediators, community organisers, and defenders of civic space. As African states confront evolving security threats, integrating gender-responsive governance and protecting civic participation will remain essential to advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda across the continent.

<https://allafrica.com/stories/202604100075.html>

Tunisia Reaffirms Its Commitment to the Role of Women in Peace and Security in Africa

Tunisia has reaffirmed its commitment to advancing the role of women in peace and security across Africa during the 10th Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security held in Senegal in April 2026. Speaking during a workshop on “The Role of Women in Peace and Security in Africa,” Tunisia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohamed Ali Nafti, highlighted the country’s continued support for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR 1325) and recalled Tunisia’s hosting of the sixth African High-Level Forum on Women, Peace and Security in December 2025. The minister stressed that African states must strengthen women’s participation in peacebuilding processes while ensuring greater protection for women and girls affected by conflict and instability across the continent.

Tunisia’s renewed commitment comes at a critical moment for the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda globally and regionally. Africa continues to face interconnected crises including armed conflict, violent extremism, political instability, climate insecurity, and displacement, all of which disproportionately affect women and girls. In this context, Tunisia’s emphasis on multilateral cooperation and preventive diplomacy reflects growing recognition that sustainable peace cannot be achieved without women’s meaningful participation at all levels of decision-making. The country’s diplomatic positioning also reinforces Africa’s historical contribution to the WPS agenda, particularly as African states played a key role in advocating for the adoption of UNSCR 1325 in 2000.

However, Tunisia’s statements also raise broader questions about the gap between international commitments and domestic realities. While Tunisia continues to project itself as a regional advocate for women’s rights and inclusive peacebuilding, concerns over shrinking civic space and increasing restrictions on civil society within the country have intensified in recent months. Human rights organisations have warned that growing limitations on independent voices and civil society participation could undermine democratic governance and weaken the very inclusive structures necessary for advancing peace and security agendas. These tensions illustrate a recurring challenge across many states: the ability to champion Women, Peace and Security internationally while facing criticism over governance and civic freedoms domestically.

Tunisia’s engagement remains significant because it demonstrates the continued importance of African leadership in shaping peace and security discourse. Yet meaningful progress will ultimately depend on translating diplomatic commitments into measurable action through adequately funded national action plans, protection mechanisms for women and girls, and genuine inclusion of women-led civil society in peace and governance processes. As conflicts across Africa grow increasingly complex, advancing the WPS agenda requires not only symbolic affirmation, but sustained political will, accountability, and structural investment in gender-responsive peacebuilding systems.

<https://news-tunisia.tunisienumerique.com/tunisia-reaffirms-its-commitment-to-the-role-of-women-in-peace-and-security-in-africa/>





High-Level Solidarity and Advocacy Mission to Sudan

As Sudan's conflict entered a third devastating year this April, two major developments reinforced a critical message: sustainable peace in Sudan must be Sudanese-led, inclusive, and centered on the realities of those most affected by the war.

From 6 to 9 April 2026, the African Union Commission's Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security conducted a High-Level Solidarity and Advocacy Mission to Sudan under the theme "Standing with Sudanese Women: Lived Realities, Priorities, and Women-Led Pathways to Peace amid Conflict."

The Mission engaged government representatives, Sudanese women leaders, civil society actors, displaced women and girls, religious leaders, humanitarian actors, and international partners. Its communiqué highlighted the worsening humanitarian crisis facing women and girls, including displacement, sexual and gender-based violence, economic hardship, and shrinking civic space.

But beyond documenting suffering, the Mission recognized Sudanese women as frontline peacebuilders. Across conflict-affected communities, women continue to sustain families, lead humanitarian response efforts, document violations, and foster local peace initiatives despite immense insecurity and limited support.

Days later, during the Third International Sudan Conference in Berlin on 15 April 2026, the African Union Commission Chairperson reaffirmed the importance of "a Sudanese-led and Sudanese-owned political process." Together, these developments reflect growing recognition that externally driven solutions cannot deliver sustainable peace without the meaningful participation of Sudanese civilians – particularly women.

The AU Mission called for women's full inclusion in peace negotiations and political transitions, stronger protection measures, improved humanitarian access, and greater investment in women-led organisations as central actors in peacebuilding and recovery. These demands are not symbolic, they are necessary.

Too often, peace processes continue to sideline women while relying on elite political and military actors to negotiate the future of countries devastated by conflict. Sudan demonstrates the limits of that approach. Excluding women from decision-making weakens both peace efforts and recovery processes.

The communiqué also raised concern over emerging forms of online and digital violence targeting women activists and peacebuilders, further restricting civic participation and women's leadership in public spaces.

For the WPS agenda, the message is clear: Sudanese women are not waiting to be included. They are already leading. The responsibility now lies with regional and international actors to ensure that peace efforts move beyond rhetoric toward meaningful inclusion, accountability, and support for locally led initiatives.

Sudan's future cannot be negotiated without Sudanese voices at the centre and there can be no inclusive peace without women.

<https://youtu.be/aUPEWyvhdjU?si=eA4P9IOgV4bbXtBW>



Middle East Conflict Exposes Africa's Economic Vulnerabilities and Human Security Risks

The African Union Commission (AUC), African Development Bank (AfDB), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) have warned that the escalating conflict in the Middle East poses serious economic and social risks for African countries already grappling with fragile recovery processes. In a joint policy brief released in April 2026, the institutions projected that Africa could lose up to 0.2 percentage points in GDP growth should the conflict continue beyond six months. The report highlights sharp increases in oil, food, and fertilizer prices, disruptions to trade routes, weakening African currencies, and rising debt servicing costs as immediate consequences of the crisis. With the Strait of Hormuz handling a significant share of global oil exports, prolonged instability threatens supply chains critical to African economies, particularly import-dependent states.

The policy brief underscores how global geopolitical conflicts continue to expose Africa's structural economic vulnerabilities. Many African economies remain heavily reliant on imported fuel, fertilizer, and food commodities, leaving them particularly susceptible to external shocks beyond their control. The policy brief notes that disruptions

in Gulf energy supplies are already affecting access to ammonia and urea during the crucial agricultural planting season, potentially worsening food insecurity across the continent. At the same time, rising shipping and insurance costs, currency depreciation, and inflation are placing additional strain on households already facing high living costs and economic uncertainty.

From a WPS perspective, the crisis demonstrates how international conflicts can deepen insecurity for women and girls far beyond active war zones. Economic shocks linked to food inflation, fuel shortages, and declining household incomes disproportionately affect women, who often carry primary responsibility for food provision, unpaid care work, and household survival in many African contexts. In fragile and conflict-affected states, these pressures can heighten risks of gender-based violence, displacement, child marriage, exploitation, and social instability. The policy brief warnings therefore reinforce the need to treat economic resilience and social protection as central components of peace and security policy rather than purely economic concerns.

Importantly, the joint paper also frames the current

crisis as a potential turning point for Africa's long-term resilience strategies. The institutions call for accelerated investment in energy security, regional trade integration, food sovereignty, and financial self-reliance to reduce dependence on volatile external markets. While some countries such as Nigeria, Mozambique, Kenya, Namibia, and South Africa may experience limited short-term gains through energy exports or rerouted logistics, the report cautions that these benefits are unlikely to offset the broader inflationary and humanitarian pressures facing the continent.

The crisis ultimately highlights the interconnected nature of global security and African human security. For the WPS agenda, it reinforces that peace and security cannot be narrowly defined through military or diplomatic lenses alone. Economic instability, food insecurity, and weakened social systems directly affect women's safety, participation, and wellbeing. As Africa navigates the ripple effects of the Middle East conflict, gender-responsive economic governance and inclusive resilience planning will be critical to protecting vulnerable communities and sustaining peace across the continent.

<https://www.accord.org.za/news/high-level-intra-african-dialogue/>



Somalia Launches New Initiative to Strengthen Women's Role in Peacebuilding and Governance

Somalia has launched a new phase of the Women, Peace and Protection Joint Programme (WPP-II), a two-year initiative aimed at strengthening women's participation in peacebuilding, governance, and leadership processes across the country. The programme, launched in Mogadishu in April 2026, is led by Somalia's Ministry of Family and Human Rights Development and implemented in partnership with UN Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with technical support from the United Nations Transitional Mission in Somalia (UNTMIS). According to officials, the initiative is expected to directly benefit approximately 6,000 people and indirectly reach more than 42,000 others, particularly women, girls, internally displaced communities, minority groups, and persons with disabilities.

The launch reflects Somalia's continued efforts to institutionalise the WPS agenda within a context marked by prolonged conflict, political fragility, displacement and insecurity. For decades, Somali women have played critical but often unrecognised roles in mediation, humanitarian response, reconciliation, and community survival amid state collapse and violent extremism. Despite these contributions, women remain significantly underrepresented in formal political institutions, peace negotiations and security governance structures. The WPP-II initiative therefore represents an

attempt to address systemic barriers limiting women's participation while strengthening gender-responsive governance and protection mechanisms.

Importantly, the programme moves beyond symbolic representation by linking women's participation to broader peacebuilding and institutional reform processes. According to programme documents, WPP-II aims to strengthen coordination between federal and state-level institutions, improve protection frameworks, support women leaders and changemakers, and address harmful social norms that continue to restrict women's political and public engagement. The initiative's emphasis on localisation and inclusion of marginalised groups including internally displaced women and women with disabilities reflects a growing recognition that peacebuilding efforts cannot succeed if they exclude those most affected by insecurity and conflict.

This initiative is particularly significant given the country's ongoing transition from conflict toward stabilisation and state-building. Women's meaningful participation in governance and peace infrastructures has repeatedly been linked to more inclusive and sustainable peace outcomes globally. Yet Somalia continues to face challenges including clan-based political systems, insecurity from Al-Shabaab attacks, limited civic protections, and deeply entrenched patriarchal norms that constrain women's leadership. While progress has been made in increasing women's parliamentary representation and advancing national WPS commitments, implementation gaps and resource constraints remain significant barriers.

The launch of WPP-II therefore signals both progress and ongoing urgency to address existing challenges. As Somalia navigates complex security and political transitions, strengthening women's leadership in peacebuilding is a matter of gender inclusion, and broader requirement for sustainable governance, social cohesion, and long-term national recovery. The initiative also reinforces the importance of sustained international support for locally led women's organisations and community peace networks that continue to operate at the frontline of conflict prevention and resilience-building efforts across Somalia.

<https://www.dawan.africa/news/somalia-launches-project-to-boost-womens-participation-in-peacebuilding>

AU Launch FemWise-Chad to Strengthen Women's Mediation in Conflict Prevention

The African Union, through its Mediation and Dialogue Division, in partnership with ACCORD, has launched FemWise-Chad, a targeted initiative aimed at strengthening the capacities of women mediators in conflict prevention and response to violent extremism. The initiative was operationalised through a capacity-building training held from 14 to 16 April 2026, bringing together Chadian women mediators to enhance their technical skills, coordination, and engagement in peace processes. The programme forms part of the broader FemWise-Africa network strategy, which seeks to institutionalise the role of African women in mediation and preventive diplomacy across the continent.

The launch of FemWise-Chad Chapter comes against a backdrop of increasing insecurity in the Sahel region, where countries like Chad face overlapping challenges including violent extremism, cross-border instability, political transitions, and humanitarian pressures. These dynamics have heightened the need for locally grounded conflict prevention mechanisms that can respond to early warning signs and address community-level grievances before they escalate. Women, who are often embedded within communities and social networks, are uniquely positioned to play this role, yet they remain underrepresented in formal mediation and security structures. The initiative therefore seeks to bridge this gap by equipping women with the tools, networks, and institutional backing needed to participate effectively in peace processes.

The FemWise Chad Chapter reflects a strategic shift toward professionalising and institutionalising women's participation in mediation rather than treating it as ad hoc or symbolic. By strengthening technical mediation skills and linking national actors to continental frameworks such as FemWise-Africa and the Panel of the Wise, the initiative contributes to building a pipeline of women peacebuilders capable of engaging in high-level negotiations as well as community-based conflict resolution. This is particularly critical in contexts affected by violent extremism, where military responses alone have proven insufficient to address the root causes of

conflict, including marginalisation, governance deficits, and social fragmentation.

Importantly, the initiative also highlights the growing emphasis on preventive diplomacy within African peace and security frameworks. Training women mediators at national level supports early intervention strategies that prioritise dialogue, community engagement, and social cohesion over reactive crisis management. However, the long-term impact of FemWise-Chad Chapter will depend on whether these capacity-building efforts are matched with political will to include women in formal peace processes, sustained funding, and institutional recognition of women mediators within national and regional security architectures.

Ultimately, the launch of FemWise-Chad Chapter reinforces the central premise of the WPS agenda: that sustainable peace requires the meaningful inclusion of women not only as participants, but as leaders and decision-makers in conflict prevention and resolution. As insecurity in the Sahel continues to evolve, investing in women's mediation capacities offers a critical pathway toward more inclusive, locally grounded, and durable peacebuilding efforts across the region.

<https://www.accord.org.za/news/accord-and-the-african-union-launch-femwise-chad-to-strengthen-capacities-of-women-mediators-in-conflict-prevention-and-response-to-violent-extremism/>

African Union Pushes for Coordinated G20 Strategy to Advance Agenda 2063 Priorities

The African Union (AU) convened Member States in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in April 2026 for a strategic retreat aimed at strengthening Africa's collective engagement ahead of the 2026 United States G20 Presidency. The retreat, organised following the African Union's recent admission as a permanent member of the G20 and South Africa's historic presidency in 2025, brought together Member States, AU institutions, financial bodies, and strategic partners to align continental priorities under Agenda 2063. Discussions focused on economic growth, industrialisation, debt reform, trade, innovation, infrastructure financing, and Africa's role within global governance structures. AU officials emphasised that Africa must move beyond symbolic representation within the G20 toward influencing global decision-making processes in ways that reflect the continent's developmental and political priorities.

The retreat signals an important moment in Africa's evolving relationship with global governance institutions. For decades, African states have often criticised international financial and political systems for marginalising African priorities while disproportionately shaping economic conditions on the continent through debt structures, trade imbalances, and unequal decision-making power. The AU's permanent G20 membership therefore represents both symbolic recognition and a strategic opportunity to advocate for reforms in global financial architecture, development financing, climate justice, and industrialisation. AU officials at the retreat stressed the need for coordinated continental engagement to ensure that Africa speaks with a unified voice rather than fragmented national positions that weaken collective bargaining power.

The discussions around Agenda 2063 and G20 engagement are significant, even though they are primarily framed as economic and governance issues. Economic insecurity, debt burdens, food inflation, unemployment, and weak public services have direct implications for human security and social stability across Africa. Women and girls are often disproportionately affected by austerity measures, economic shocks, and underfunded social systems, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. The AU's emphasis on inclusive growth, industrialisation, and sustainable development therefore intersects directly with the WPS agenda, which recognises that peace and security cannot be separated from economic justice, social protection, and equitable participation in governance structures.

Importantly, the retreat also highlighted concerns around Africa's position within global power dynamics. AU Commissioner Francisca Tatchouop Belobe reportedly raised concerns regarding developments linked to the United States G20 Presidency and the risks such dynamics pose to inclusivity and consensus-based multilateralism. These tensions underscore broader debates about whether Africa's increased representation within institutions like the G20 will translate into substantive influence or remain largely symbolic.

For many African states, global economic decisions continue to shape domestic realities ranging from debt distress and food insecurity to climate vulnerability and conflict financing.

Ultimately, the Malabo retreat reflects a growing continental effort to reposition Africa as an active actor within global governance rather than a passive recipient of international policy decisions. This shift is important because sustainable peace requires inclusive economic systems, responsive governance, and development models that address structural inequalities. As the AU advances Agenda 2063 priorities within the G20 framework, ensuring that women's economic participation, social protection, and leadership remain central to these discussions will be critical to building a more inclusive and resilient future for the continent.

<https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20260428/au-member-states-convene-advance-africas-2026-g20-priorities-aligned-agenda-0>

UN Warns Sahel Instability Threatens Peace, Development, and Women's Security Across Africa

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has renewed calls for stronger international cooperation to address the growing spread of violent extremism and insecurity across the Sahel region, warning that instability in countries such as Mali continues to undermine peacebuilding, humanitarian response, and development efforts. Addressing ongoing insecurity in the region, Guterres stressed that military approaches alone are insufficient to resolve the complex drivers of conflict, including poverty, governance failures, political instability, climate pressures, and the expansion of extremist networks. The warning comes amid continuing clashes, displacement, and humanitarian strain affecting millions across the Sahel and neighbouring regions.

The Sahel has increasingly become one of the world's most fragile security regions, with conflict dynamics spilling across borders and affecting states including Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad. The weakening of regional security cooperation, military coups, shrinking civic space, and strained relations between some governments and international partners have further complicated peace and stabilisation efforts. While security responses remain heavily militarised, humanitarian organisations and civil society actors continue to caution that long-term peace cannot be achieved without addressing the structural inequalities and governance crises fuelling recruitment into armed groups.

The deteriorating situation in the Sahel carries particularly severe implications for women and girls. Conflict and displacement continue to expose women to heightened risks of sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking, food insecurity, and loss of livelihoods. At the same time, women peacebuilders and community leaders often operate on the frontline of mediation, humanitarian response, and social cohesion efforts despite receiving limited political recognition and financial support. The crisis also continues to disrupt girls' education, healthcare access, and civic participation, deepening long-term inequalities across affected communities.

Importantly, Guterres' emphasis on international and political solutions reflects growing recognition that counterterrorism operations alone cannot deliver sustainable peace. Across the Sahel, communities increasingly face intersecting crises involving economic decline, climate-related displacement, weak governance systems, and reduced public trust in state institutions. These conditions not only intensify insecurity but also undermine the resilience of local communities, particularly women-led households already carrying disproportionate social and economic burdens.

The Sahel crisis ultimately reinforces a core principle of the WPS agenda: sustainable peace requires inclusive governance, protection of civilians, and meaningful participation of women in prevention and recovery processes. As regional and international actors reassess security strategies in the Sahel, integrating gender-responsive peacebuilding and supporting locally led women's initiatives will remain critical to addressing both immediate humanitarian needs and the deeper structural causes of instability across the region.

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/04/1167382>

IGAD mediation conference warns risk of ‘nations’ or ‘parts of nations’ becoming objects of acquisition as ‘peace’ gets commercialized

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Mediation Reflection Conference held in Nairobi raised urgent concerns over what regional leaders described as the growing “commercialisation” and “privatisation” of peace processes across Africa. Kenyan Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi warned that mediation efforts are increasingly becoming transactional, driven by geopolitical and economic interests rather than genuine commitments to conflict resolution and civilian protection.

The conference, convened under the theme “Reimagining Mediation in a Fragmented World,” brought together regional leaders, diplomats, mediators, and peace actors to assess the effectiveness of African peace processes amid escalating conflicts in Sudan and the wider Horn of Africa. Participants warned that fragmented diplomatic tracks, competing international interests, and weakened multilateral cooperation are undermining sustainable peace efforts across the continent.

One of the most significant concerns raised during the conference was the risk that African conflicts are increasingly shaped by external geopolitical competition and war economies. Speakers cautioned that peace negotiations risk becoming instruments of political bargaining and resource interests rather than inclusive processes centered on affected populations. Mudavadi warned that this trend could result in nations, or parts of nations, effectively becoming “objects of acquisition,” reflecting fears around the erosion of sovereignty and growing external influence in conflict zones.

The discussions also highlighted the limitations of fragmented mediation approaches, particularly in Sudan, where multiple parallel initiatives have struggled to produce coordinated outcomes. IGAD Executive Secretary Workneh Gebeyehu noted that modern conflicts are increasingly interconnected, prolonged, and influenced by both internal and external dynamics, making traditional mediation frameworks less effective.

The conference reinforced the importance of African-led, inclusive, and locally grounded peacebuilding processes. Delegates stressed that sustainable peace requires the meaningful participation of women, youth, and community actors rather than elite-driven negotiations dominated by political and military interests. The discussions further underscored concerns that militarised and externally driven responses often marginalise women-led peace initiatives and weaken civic participation.

Ultimately, the conference reflected growing recognition that Africa’s peace architecture faces a legitimacy challenge. As conflicts become increasingly complex and internationalised, regional actors are calling for stronger coordination, political accountability, and mediation processes rooted in local ownership rather than geopolitical competition. For the WPS agenda, the message remains clear: peace cannot be sustainable where communities, particularly women, are excluded from shaping the future of their societies.



Conclusion

This month's developments reaffirm that the WPS agenda remains both urgent and very relevant across Africa's evolving political, economic, and security landscape. From national action plan development in Botswana to women-led peacebuilding efforts in Sudan, Somalia, and Chad, there are clear signs of progress toward recognising women as essential actors in conflict prevention, governance, and recovery.

Yet these advances continue to unfold alongside shrinking civic space, rising insecurity, humanitarian crises, economic instability, and persistent exclusion from formal decision-making structures. The stories featured in this edition illustrate that peace cannot be sustained where women's participation is limited, civic freedoms are undermined, or structural inequalities remain unaddressed.

They also remind us that peace and security are not narrowly military concerns. Economic shocks, governance failures, food insecurity, displacement, and global geopolitical tensions all shape the everyday realities of women and communities across the continent. Building sustainable peace therefore requires holistic, gender-responsive approaches grounded in accountability, inclusion, social protection, and locally led leadership.

As Africa continues to navigate complex regional and global challenges, the responsibility now lies with governments, regional institutions, international partners, and civil society to move beyond symbolic commitments toward concrete action. Supporting women-led organisations, protecting civic participation, investing in preventive peacebuilding, and ensuring meaningful representation of women in governance and security processes will remain essential to building a more peaceful, resilient, and inclusive continent.

At REWiB, we continue to believe that feminist peacebuilding is not optional to Africa's future – it is fundamental to it.

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