

Challenges Annual Forum 2025



‘Adapt and Advance: Renewing the impact of Peace Operations’

14-16 October 2025, Accra, Ghana

PROGRAMME

14 October

08:30 *Coffee and Registration*

09:00 *Opening Remarks: Welcome to CAF25*
Air Commodore David Anetey Akrong | Acting Commandant, Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KA IPTC)
Hon. Ernest Brogya Genfi | Deputy Minister of Defence, Ghana
Dag Hartelius | State Secretary for Political Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sweden (video)
Colonel Richard Gray | Commandant, SWEDINT, Swedish Armed Forces
Per Olsson Fridh | Director-General Folke Bernadotte Academy, Chair of the Challenges Forum Partner Meeting (video)
Benoît Pyllyser | Director, Challenges Forum International Secretariat (CFIS)

09:20 *A look back: Key Outcomes from the 2025 Peacekeeping Ministerial in Berlin*
Inger-Luise Heilmann | Senior Policy Advisor, UN and Peacekeeping Affairs, Federal Ministry of Defence

09:30 *Setting the Stage: Burning Questions for Peace Operations Reform and Development*
This interactive session will include a brief keynote to frame the core themes of the Forum, drawing on insights from the ongoing Review of the Future of all Forms of UN Peace Operations, the UN80 process, and the Peacebuilding Architecture Review. Participants will be invited to reflect on and share critical questions and perspectives that should shape the Forum’s conversations. These “burning questions” will identify priorities, challenge assumptions, and enrich the dialogue over the coming two days – and beyond.

Hanna Tetteh | Special Representative of the Secretary General for Libya & Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL)

10:00 **Coffee (Group Photo)**

10:30 **Amplifying Strengths: Synergies Across the Full Range of Peace Operations**

Responding to the questions raised by the participants, this high-level panel will explore the full spectrum of peace operations, highlighting their core functions, strengths, and the conditions needed for them to be able to address tomorrow's challenges in a relevant, flexible, and effective way.

Jean-Pierre Lacroix | Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, United Nations (video)

Spencer G.N Leeco | Deputy Minister of Defence, Liberia

Abdel-Fatau Musah | Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, ECOWAS Commission

Fatemeh Ziai | Director, Office of the Director for Coordination and Shared Services, United Nations

Awa Dabo | Director and Deputy Head Peacebuilding Support Office, Department for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, United Nations

Moderator: Shamala Kandiah Thompson | Executive Director at Security Council Report

12:00 **Lunch**

13:15 **Evolving Needs, Evolving Missions: Regional Perspectives on Peace Operations**

West Africa and the Sahel offer vital insights on peace operations, encompassing several host countries directly affected by conflict, as well as important troop- and police-contributing countries. This session will explore their insights, lessons learned and best practices, informing the Review on the realities of regional peace operations.

Jonathan Titus-Williams | Deputy Minister, Ministry of Planning and Economic Development

Anita Asmah | Head of Mission and Force Commander of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF)

Parfait Onanga-Anyanga | Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the African Union and Head of the UN Office to the African Union, United Nations

Leonardo Santos Simão | Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), United Nations

Moderator: Liesl Louw-Vaudran | Senior Adviser for the African Union, International Crisis Group

14:30

(incl. coffee break)

Innovation Labs

Through three thematic Innovation Labs, CAF25 will explore how peace operations could best evolve to meet today's and future challenges.

Grounded in regional insights, the conversations aim to inspire new thinking that can strengthen the UN's ability to maintain peace and security.

Strengthening the role of regional organizations in addressing armed conflicts and regional instability

Chair: **Dawit Yohannes** | Project Manager and Senior Researcher
Training for Peace, Institute for Security Studies, Addis Ababa

Ignite Speaker:

Bitania Tadesse | Policy Specialist for Africa, International Peace Institute (IPI)

Ngozi Margareta Amu | Acting Director Political Affairs, UNOWAS

The lab will explore the role of regional organizations in preventing and addressing armed conflicts and instability, with a focus on West Africa and the Sahel. It will examine opportunities for collaboration under UN Security Council Resolution 2719 (2023) and discuss how regional actors can enhance conflict prevention, peace support operations, and post-conflict reconstruction efforts.

Integrating climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies in peace operations and peacebuilding efforts

Chair: **Dominique Grass** | Head of the United Nations and Cross-Cutting Affairs Department, Directorate-General for International Relations and Strategy, Ministry of Defence, France

Ignite Speaker:

Anna Mensah | Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Academic Affairs, KAIPTC

Ratia Tekenet | Climate Security Expert, UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

The lab will explore how peace operations can better address the links between climate change and armed conflict. It will examine how the integration of climate considerations in peacebuilding and effective partnerships can promote resilience, protect civilians, and support long-term stability.

Leveraging new technologies to enhance effectiveness and efficiency of peace operations

Chair: **Maj Gen BK Sharma** | Director General, United Service Institute of India (USI)

Ignite Speakers:

Dirk Druet | Non-Resident Fellow at the Brian Urquhart Center for Peace Operations, International Peace Institute (IPI) and Affiliate Researcher, McGill University's Centre for International Peace and Security Studies

Samiuel Atuahene | Research Scientist at CSIR, Institute of Industrial Research; Senior Consultant, KAIPTC

Fatemeh Ziai | Director, Office of the Director for Coordination and Shared Services, United Nations

The lab will examine how new and emerging technologies are shaping peace operations. It will explore how AI, drones, and digital platforms

can enhance effectiveness and engagement, and examine the risks and threats related to such tools, including disinformation.

17:30 ***Joint Departure from KAIPTC***

18:00 ***Reception at the Lancaster***

Unfiltered Experiences: The Compelling Narrative of Peace Operations

During the reception, participants are given the opportunity to share critical personal experiences and stories, and/or innovative ideas related to the themes of the Forum. The aspiration is to foster a candid exchange between peers and allow for diverse voices to be heard and thus spark new insights in a respectful and impactful way.

15 October

09:00 ***Opening: When we Speak of Peace***

Yasmin Omar | Associate Officer, Challenges Forum International Secretariat; Youth Ambassador, United Nations Associations Sweden and; Poet

09:05 ***Future Priorities: Core Tasks for Tomorrow's Peace Operations***

As financial pressure mount, the full spectrum of peace operations is forced to adapt and deliver on their mandates with even greater focus, despite diminishing resources. This foresight session invites strategic thinking on key core tasks to ensure that peace operations remain relevant and effective. Through flexible thinking and direct participant input, the session will generate forward-looking insights to inform the UN reviews and help shape peace operations to counter the demands of an increasingly complex and constrained global environment.

Bintou Keita | Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of Congo and Head of MONUSCO (video link)

Harold Agyeman | Former Permanent Representative of Ghana

El-Ghassim Wane | Former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Head of MINUSMA

Babu Rahman | Senior Principal Research Analyst, UK Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office

Mohamed Ibn Chambas | High Representative for Silencing the Guns, African Union, Former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Head of UNOWAS

Cynthia Chigwenya | Former Youth Ambassador for Peace for Southern Africa, African Union

Moderator: Jenna Russo | Director of Research and Head of the Brian Urquhart Center for Peace Operations, International Peace Institute (IPI)

10:30 ***Coffee***

- 11:00** ***Collaborative Workshop: Key Priorities for the Review of the Future of All Forms of UN Peace Operations***
Building on insights from the foresight session and previous sessions, participants will continue to identify and discuss the core priorities and key tasks for future UN peace operations. The outcome will directly inform the Review as part of the Forum's key takeaways and actionable recommendations.
- Brenda Ammeraal** | Policy, Evaluation and Training Division, Department for Peace Operations, United Nations
Nebil Said Idris | Policy and Mediation Division, Department for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, United Nations
Lucía Soriano Irigaray | Strategic Foresight Analyst, UN Futures Lab
- 13:00** ***Lunch***
- 14:30** ***Adapt and Advance: Concrete Ways Forward***
Building on the Forum's discussions, the closing conversation will focus on turning insights into action. Participants and speakers will explore practical, concrete steps to enhance the effectiveness and agility of peace operations. Together, we will identify opportunities for stronger collaboration, adaptive strategies, and meaningful contributions from all stakeholders to the renewed impact of UN and regional peace operations.
- John Mikal Kvistad** | Ambassador of Norway to Ghana
Leonardo Santos Simão | Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), United Nations
Zia Choudhury | Resident Coordinator Ghana, United Nations
Emma Birikorang | Director of Research, Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC)
Benoît Pylyser | Director, Challenges Forum International Secretariat (CFIS)
- Moderator: Hanna Bertelman* | Head of the United Nations Department, Folke Bernadotte Academy
- 15:25** ***Official Closing Remarks***
Air Commodore David Anetey Akrong | Acting Commandant, Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC)
- 15:30** ***Coffee***
- 16:00** ***In Ghana's Footsteps: Towards a Reimagined Multilateralism***
Ghana has long stood at the forefront of global peace and multilateralism, pushing boundaries and shaping international norms. This session, including a gallery walk, draws on this legacy to inspire future action in an increasingly challenging context: Which are the key lessons from Ghana's forward-leaning leadership, and how can they guide the next generation of global peace efforts?
- 16:30** ***Mingle & Bazaar***

16 October

09:00

Partners' Meeting

14:00

Exploring Accra
Open to all participants