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Keynote Address

Reimagining Peace and Security in West Africa: Local Solutions, Regional Solidarity and Global Partnerships

Presented by

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Institute for Peace and Strategic Studies and
TETFUND Centre of Excellence in Security Management,
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WAPSED 2025 Partners



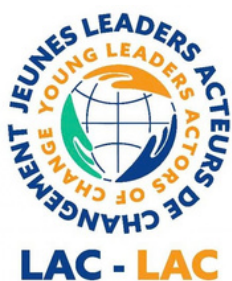
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**Reimagining Peace and Security in West Africa:
Local Solutions, Regional Solidarity and Global Partnerships**

Presented by

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Nigeria

at the

West Africa Peace and Security Dialogue (WAPSED) 2025
which was held on the 5th-6th November 2025
Bon Hotel Elvis, Wuse II, Abuja, Nigeria

Introduction

I want to begin this lecture by acknowledging the organisers for addressing key issues central to repositioning the West African sub-region for sustainable peace. I hope this gathering will help us identify steps to fill the existing gaps in our security architecture at the local, national, and regional levels. As you all know, the security challenges in the region are severe and multifaceted, characterised by a high number of conflict-related fatalities and incidents concentrated mainly in Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. The region is experiencing a sustained asymmetric warfare model with jihadist insurgencies, banditry, separatist violence, mass abductions, and frequent attacks on civilians and strategic infrastructure. Key armed groups like ISIS-West Africa (formerly Boko Haram), Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM), and Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP) operate extensively, using tactics including ambushes, roadside bombs, kidnappings, drone and air strikes, and attacks on military and civilian targets.

The crisis is fueled by fragile state institutions, socio-political volatility, governance failures, weak regional coordination, limited intelligence sharing, and the expansion of criminal-terrorist networks. Without credible accountability mechanisms and holistic civilian-protection strategies, the security situation risks further escalation and regional spillover, deepening instability and humanitarian crises across West Africa. Addressing security challenges requires a multi-layered approach that involves local solutions, regional solidarity, and global partnerships. This integrated strategy reflects the region's complex security landscape, which is characterised by transnational threats, weak governance structures, deep socio-economic divides, and the spillover of conflicts across borders.

While national governments have traditionally held primary responsibility for peacebuilding and security provision, it's essential to recognise the significant influence of local communities. These communities, affected by various socio-cultural and economic factors, actively influence conflict dynamics and resolutions. This underscores the importance of incorporating local actors into peacebuilding processes. Similarly, regional bodies such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) provide complementary platforms for collective security and conflict management that extend beyond national frameworks. Together, local, national, and regional actors form a tripartite system that can better address the nuanced security challenges in West Africa, though tensions and gaps remain in coordinating these levels.

Historically, national interventions in West Africa have evolved from ad hoc responses to more structured peacebuilding efforts, notably during major conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Ivory Coast. However, these national efforts have often faced significant obstacles. Many West African states contend with limited technical capacity, inadequate logistical support, and political interference that undermine sustained conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Moreover, internal political instability, including coups and authoritarian governance, diverts attention and resources from effective peacebuilding to regime survival. These limitations are compounded by the multidimensional nature of contemporary conflicts, which demand approaches that transcend conventional military and security solutions. Consequently, national governments have increasingly found it difficult to manage intricate conflicts that straddle political, economic, social, and regional dimensions unilaterally, eliciting calls for more inclusive intervention strategies.

Rationale for Complementary Local and Regional Approaches

Given the constraints faced by national authorities, there is growing recognition among scholars and policymakers of the insufficiency of national-level interventions as the sole mechanism for managing peace and security. Local violence, often manifesting in ethnic clashes, resource-based disputes, or community mobilisation through armed groups, frequently escapes the reach or adequate understanding of national governments. Similarly, conflicts with transnational features, such as cross-border insurgencies, trafficking, and refugee flows, necessitate regional coordination to prevent spillovers and to mount coherent responses. Regional organisations, due to their geographical and political proximity, provide frameworks for collective action and normative enforcement that transcend state boundaries. Local actors, simultaneously, embody contextual knowledge, legitimacy, and direct stakes in peace building, which are crucial to achieving sustainable outcomes. Thus, multi-tiered engagement encompassing local ownership complemented by national and regional partnership has emerged as a preferred paradigm for addressing the layered peace and security challenges in West Africa.

Capacity Constraints in National Security Architectures

One of the foremost challenges in national peace and security interventions in West Africa is the pervasive inadequacy of technical and operational capabilities within security forces. Many national armies, police, and paramilitary units operate with suboptimal equipment, insufficient training, and limited logistical infrastructures, rendering them ill-prepared to undertake multidimensional peacekeeping and counter-insurgency operations demanded by evolving conflict environments.

The sophistication of threats, from violent extremism to community-based armed groups, requires specialised skills, intelligence capabilities, and rapid deployment mechanisms that are often lacking. These deficiencies result in inconsistent law enforcement, a reduced deterrence effect on armed actors, and compromised protection of civilian populations. The fragmentation and slow adaptation of security forces further attenuate their effectiveness in complex peace support operations, highlighting critical gaps in national defense and internal security systems.

Compounding technical incapacity are significant financial and material constraints that beset national security institutions across West Africa. Many states operate under tight budgetary conditions, with competing developmental priorities, which restrict sustained investment in security sector professionalisation, modernisation, and operational readiness. This shortfall leads to a significant reliance on international donors, bilateral partners, and multilateral agencies for funding, equipment, and technical assistance. Although international support bolsters national efforts, the dependence raises concerns regarding sovereignty, continuity, and conditionality, as external agendas may not always align with local priorities. Moreover, the volatility of aid flows undermines long-term planning and operational consistency. The financial fragility also extends to infrastructure maintenance, peacekeeping mission contributions, and civilian protection programs, limiting the scope and sustainability of national interventions.

The internal organisational structure of national security institutions in West Africa frequently reflects weaknesses marked by poor cohesion, unclear command chains, and accountability deficits. Fragmentation between military, police, intelligence, and civil protection agencies impedes coordinated responses to security threats. Governance challenges, including politicisation of security appointments, lack of meritocracy, and corruption, erode institutional effectiveness and public trust. These factors lead to operational inefficiencies, internal friction, and a weakened capacity to implement coherent peace and security strategies. Furthermore, the absence of institutionalised mechanisms for interagency collaboration constrains the ability to mount integrated responses to hybrid threats combining conventional insurgency with criminality or cyber elements. Such institutional fragility hampers the consistent application of peacekeeping mandates and compromises strategic planning, which is necessary for national security.

Political instability within West African states significantly undermines the efficacy of national peace and security interventions. Frequent unconstitutional seizures of power, political intolerance, and weak democratic institutions foment environments of uncertainty and mistrust. The entrenchment of patronage systems and elite competition over political and economic resources often fuels conflict and obstructs genuine reconciliation efforts. Such elite-driven governance models prioritise regime survival over inclusive governance and equitable resource distribution, exacerbating grievances among marginalised groups.

The perpetuation of exclusionary policies and a lack of political will to address the root causes of conflict weakens peace initiatives. These political dynamics are intricately linked to broader concerns of governance quality, institutional legitimacy, and the durability of peacebuilding processes at the national level.

A salient challenge in national interventions relates to entrenched notions of sovereignty, sovereignty-based non-interference, and territorial integrity that pervade political culture and legal frameworks. National governments often exhibit reluctance to cede authority to external or even sub-national actors in managing peace and security affairs, fearing loss of control or political destabilisation. The legacy of the Organisation of African Unity's (OAU) principle of non-interference continues to complicate proactive intervention by regional bodies or civil society actors. This emphasis on sovereignty constrains the scope of collaborative security measures, delaying or diluting responses to internal conflicts or crises. It also creates dilemmas of legitimacy and effectiveness, as national sovereignty considerations conflict with imperatives for timely and coordinated regional peace interventions.

The entanglement of economic interests, particularly control over natural resources, further complicates national efforts to maintain peace and security. The dominance of mineral wealth and resource extraction in conflict dynamics fosters economic agendas that influence state capacities and priorities. Competing factions frequently use control over lucrative assets, such as mines, oil fields, or timber resources, to sustain armed conflicts or negotiate for political power. This "resource curse" dynamic hampers conflict resolution by incentivising violence as a means of economic gain. National interventions are often constrained by the political economy of resource control, where vested interests may undermine peacebuilding efforts or perpetuate insecurity. These economic undercurrents require integrated strategies that address both the political and material dimensions of conflict.

At the grassroots level, the proliferation of community-based armed groups poses a significant challenge to national peace and security efforts. In regions such as central Mali and parts of West Africa, local communities have resorted to armed mobilisation as a form of self-defence or to assert control amid state absence, inter-communal rivalry, and resource competition. These groups often hold local legitimacy but operate outside formal state control, thus exacerbating the fragmentation of authority and security provision. The involvement of non-state armed actors in violent episodes transforms the conflict landscape, entrenching cycles of retributive violence and impeding national disarmament and reconciliation initiatives. Understanding local mobilisation dynamics is essential for contextualised interventions that can address legitimacy and governance deficits at the community level.

Underlying much of the localised violence in West Africa are deep-seated patterns of socioeconomic exclusion, marginalisation, and inequitable resource management. The disenfranchisement of certain groups, along ethnic, regional, or economic lines, fuels grievances that often transcend formal peace agreements. Inequalities in access to land, employment, social services, and political representation contribute to perceptions of injustice and insecurity. These social fractures often worsen in the face of environmental stressors, such as climate change, which intensifies competition over dwindling natural resources. The persistence of marginalisation at the local level thus undermines national efforts by fostering parallel systems of authority and support for violent contestation.

Local governance structures in many West African settings remain weak, under-resourced, and poorly integrated into national frameworks. This fragility limits the capacity to deliver essential services such as healthcare, education, and security, exacerbating vulnerability among populations exposed to violence and instability. Local authorities often lack both legitimacy and functional capability, resulting in governance vacuums that non-state actors or armed groups fill. The migration of displaced persons into fragile urban centres further strains already insufficient infrastructure and social services, escalating tensions and potential conflict triggers. These deficiencies underscore the need to enhance local governance as a foundational element of durable peace and security.

Coordination between national governments and regional bodies such as ECOWAS and the African Union often suffers from fragmented mandates, poor communication, and jurisdictional ambiguities. While regional organisations provide normative frameworks and peacekeeping capacities, their integration with national efforts is hindered by overlapping responsibilities and strategic misalignments. This fragmentation complicates comprehensive responses to conflicts that transcend borders or have regional implications. The disconnect between national and regional actors can result in duplicated efforts, delayed interventions, or gaps in monitoring and enforcement, reducing the overall effectiveness of peace and security architecture in West Africa.

Enforcing peace and security at the national level is challenged by incomplete or weak legal and institutional frameworks. National mechanisms for imposing sanctions, managing conflict mediation processes, and adjudicating breaches are often underdeveloped or inconsistently applied. Furthermore, the political will to uphold regional protocols, such as those against unconstitutional changes of government, is at times lacking, allowing some member states to act with impunity. The neutrality of mediators within national and regional processes is frequently questioned, undermining legitimacy and trust. These gaps robust responses to conflict and reduce the potential of in legal infrastructure and operationalisation obstruct regional instruments to support national peacebuilding effectively.

Peacekeeping missions deployed in West Africa often involve multiple actors, including the United Nations, African Union, ECOWAS, and bilateral partners. However, operational coordination among these entities faces challenges in harmonising logistics, mandates, and command structures. Differing institutional cultures, bureaucratic constraints, and resource allocation issues complicate the implementation of a unified mission. Lessons from past interventions, such as those in Liberia and Sierra Leone, underscore the challenges in achieving coherent and efficient cooperation, which is crucial for successful peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. Addressing these challenges requires clear delineation of roles and enhanced inter-organisational communication to maximise comparative advantages.

Emerging Security Threats Requiring Local and Regional Responses

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed critical vulnerabilities in national security architectures by amplifying health crises while simultaneously exacerbating poverty, inequality, and social unrest. Such non-traditional threats necessitate non-military security responses and challenge conventional frameworks that are predominantly focused on kinetic military threats. Simultaneously, climate change acts as a significant stressor driving rural-to-urban migration, straining fragile cities with weak governance.

These dynamics increase competition over scarce resources, heightening risks of conflict and instability at both local and regional scales. National authorities, constrained by limited capacities, often cannot address these complex and multi-dimensional challenges alone, calling for integrated local and regional strategies that incorporate diverse stakeholders.

Several security threats in West Africa transcend national borders, necessitating enhanced regional cooperation. Islamist insurgencies, arms trafficking, human smuggling, and the spread of extremist ideologies permeate porous Islamist insurgencies in the Sahel and parts of Northern Nigeria exemplify the transboundary nature of security risks, straining coordination and intelligence sharing. The inadequacy of single states to effectively counter these challenges underlines the importance of robust regional mechanisms and cross-border cooperation, facilitated by ECOWAS and the African Union, to stabilise contiguous conflict zones and contain spillover effects.

West African urban centres are proliferating due to rural-to-urban migration, often driven by environmental degradation and conflict-related displacement. These "fragile cities" face challenges including poor infrastructure, insufficient social services, and limited governance capacity to manage demographic pressures. New migrants can experience exclusion from formal systems, which can foster intergroup tensions, crime, and political instability, thereby exacerbating existing vulnerabilities. Without effective local governance and inclusive policy frameworks, urban areas risk becoming flashpoints for insecurity that extend beyond the control of national governments, necessitating targeted local and regional interventions.

Local actors possess intimate knowledge of community dynamics, conflict drivers, and culturally appropriate mechanisms for conflict resolution, making local-level governance critical for effective peacebuilding. Empowering local authorities and communities fosters legitimacy and resilience, enhancing the responsiveness of security contexts. Local involvement is crucial measures to specific conte for addressing grievances, mediating disputes, and promoting trust between populations and authorities. It also reduces the disconnect often observed between national policies and on-the-ground realities, allowing for sustainable peace rooted in community participation rather than externally imposed solutions.

Challenges in Integrating Local Actors into National Frameworks

Despite the benefits of local engagement, integrating local actors- particularly armed community groups-into formal national security frameworks poses challenges. Political resistance from centralised authorities may arise due to fears of diluting the state's monopoly on violence or losing control over security decisions. Furthermore, the presence of armed community groups creates security dilemmas, as their inclusion could legitimise the non-state use of force, thereby complicating disarmament and demobilisation efforts. Institutional barriers and mistrust between local and national levels hamper collaborative frameworks, underscoring the need for carefully designed policies that balance local autonomy with national coherence.

Role of Civil Society and Traditional Authorities

Civil society organisations and traditional governance institutions play a crucial role in promoting peace and security at the local level. Civil society mobilises community engagement, advocacy, and reconciliation initiatives that complement formal state efforts. Traditional authorities often wield significant social and moral influence, which can facilitate conflict resolution and social cohesion, especially in areas where state presence is limited or contested. Leveraging these actors within peacebuilding strategies enhances inclusivity and cultural legitimacy, potentially bridging gaps between local realities and national or regional policies.

Regional Organisations' Role in Supporting and Complementing National Efforts

ECOWAS, as a key regional Peace and Security Actor, must be underscored in this respect. ECOWAS has a rich history as a regional peace and security actor, known for its active interventions, peacekeeping missions, and normative frameworks aimed at preventing unconstitutional changes of government and sustaining democratic order. Its established protocols, including the zero-tolerance stance on coups, underscore a commitment to regional stability. However, ECOWAS faces constraints in maintaining post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction initiatives due to resource limitations and political complexities within member states. Nonetheless, ECOWAS remains a pivotal institution for orchestrating collective security responses and fostering regional solidarity in the face of internal crises across West Africa.

Challenges Faced by Regional Bodies

Regional organisations encounter significant institutional capacity shortfalls, including insufficient financial, logistical, and human resources, which impair their effectiveness. Dependence on donor funding raises concerns about sustainability and complicates strategic autonomy. Additionally, enforcement of regional sanctions or intervention mandates is often impeded by political sensitivities, lack of unanimity, and concerns over sovereignty. These challenges weaken the credibility and decisiveness of regional bodies in managing peace and security issues, highlighting the need for institutional reforms and reinforced political commitment among member states.

Potential for Strengthened Regional-Local Collaboration.

Enhancing collaboration between regional organisations and local peace initiatives promises to strengthen the overall security architecture. By supporting community-level partnerships, regional bodies can bridge gaps between national policies and local realities. Building legal frameworks and operational capacities grounded in the principle of subsidiarity allows more effective burden sharing and tailored interventions. Addressing capacity deficits while fostering participatory approaches that integrate local voices can bolster the durability and legitimacy of peace efforts across West Africa.

Lessons from Past Interventions and Future Prospects

Experiences from Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Mali offer instructive lessons on the potentials and limits of national peace initiatives. For instance, in Liberia and Sierra Leone, collaboration between the United Nations, ECOWAS, and other stakeholders facilitated relatively successful conflict resolution despite logistical and coordination challenges. Conversely, Mali illustrates how delayed external interventions and limited national capacities can exacerbate conflict dynamics. These cases emphasise the importance of coordinated multi-stakeholder approaches that combine national efforts with external support while maintaining local legitimacy and context sensitivity.

Innovations in Peacekeeping and Governance Models

Africa's peacekeeping landscape is evolving with the introduction of structures such as the African Standby Force (ASF), designed to enable rapid and multidimensional responses to complex conflicts. These hybrid models recognise the need to go beyond traditional military-centric operations and incorporate civilian, police, and humanitarian components. However, operationalisation has been hindered by bureaucratic hurdles, resource constraints, and issues related to civil-military coordination. Adapting governance models to the realities of contemporary security threats in West Africa requires innovation, flexibility, and enhanced institutional support.

Building Sustainable Peace Through Multi-Level Engagement

Sustainable peace in West Africa necessitates comprehensive strategies that integrate national, local, and regional actors in a coherent framework. Capacity-building efforts must target all levels, fostering political will, inclusive governance models, and effective service delivery. Emphasising multi-sectoral collaboration aligns with the complex nature of conflicts, which span social, economic, and political domains. Synergising the strengths of local communities, national governments, and regional bodies under unified peace and security architectures enhances prospects for long-term stability and development.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The key point made by this address is that national interventions in West Africa face significant challenges, including inadequate technical and operational capacities, resource constraints coupled with dependence on external donors, institutional weaknesses, and political instability. These difficulties are exacerbated by social complexities at the community level, fragile governance systems, and coordination gaps with regional organisations. Emerging non-traditional threats such as pandemics, climate-driven migration, and transnational security risks further strain national capabilities and require multifaceted responses.

Empowering local governance structures and communities enhances legitimacy, fosters context-specific responses, and promotes the sustainability of peace efforts. Concurrently, strengthening regional frameworks such as ECOWAS and improving collaboration between national and regional actors provide the necessary platforms for collective security and enforcement. Support for legal and institutional reforms to clarify roles, build capacities, and foster joint ownership will enhance the effectiveness of peace and security interventions across West Africa.

Moving forward, strategic investments in institutional reforms, capacity building, and resource mobilisation at regional levels must underscore efforts to promote subsidiarity and collaborative models of intervention. Integrated peace and security frameworks that balance national sovereignty with local inclusion and regional cooperation can better address the evolving complexities of conflict in West Africa, ultimately fostering durable peace and stability.

About WAPSED 2025

The West Africa Peace and Security Dialogue (WAPSED) 2025 is a collaborative initiative of the Building Blocks for Peace (BBFORPEACE) Foundation, Society for Peace Studies and Practice (SPSP), Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), LAC-LAC Network-Niger Republic, and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC).

About Building Blocks for Peace Foundation

Building Blocks for Peace Foundation (BBFORPEACE) is a registered, youth-led, non-profit organisation working to prevent violent conflict, strengthen inclusive governance, and promote sustainable peace across Nigeria and West Africa. Founded in 2016 and formally incorporated in 2017, BBFORPEACE was established to address the exclusion of young people from decisionmaking processes while promoting their meaningful participation in peacebuilding, governance, and sustainable development. (bbforpeace.org) Today, BBFORPEACE occupies a unique niche by bridging grassroots action, policy advocacy, research, and regional networking.

The organisation works across the humanitarian-development peace nexus, empowering communities to prevent conflict, strengthen resilience, and build inclusive societies through evidence-based programming, strategic partnerships, and policy engagement. Vision A peaceful, just, and inclusive Africa where youth, women, and men lead resilient communities. Mission To equip youth, women, and men as peacebuilders to prevent violent conflict and promote sustainable peace.

Our Strategic Focus

BBFORPEACE delivers integrated programmes across five strategic thematic areas:

Youth, Peace and Security (YPS), Women, Peace and Security (WPS), Conflict Prevention, Mediation and Peacebuilding, Climate and Environmental Security, Governance, Civic Participation and Accountability, Livelihoods and Humanitarian Response, Organisational Sustainability and Partnerships.

The organisation's work is guided by five mutually reinforcing pillars: Research and Knowledge Generation Programme Implementation and Capacity Development Advocacy and Policy Engagement Partnerships and Network Building Communications and Strategic Outreach.

About the Society for Peace Studies and Practice (SPSP)

Initiated alongside the Peace and Conflict studies programme at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, the Society for Peace Studies and Practice (SPSP) emerged alongside the university's Peace and Conflict Studies programme. Initially conceived as a modest forum to connect students with seasoned peace practitioners, SPSP has since evolved into a distinguished professional platform committed to fostering sustainable peace and development across Africa.

From its inception, SPSP has championed the integration of academic insight with practical expertise. By facilitating meaningful interactions between scholars and practitioners, the Society enriches classroom learning and cultivates a dynamic ecosystem of peacebuilding knowledge.

Today, SPSP stands as a beacon of collaborative engagement-promoting technical excellence, strategic partnerships, and a shared commitment to nurturing a culture of peace wherever its influence reaches.

Capacity Building and Strategic Engagement

SPSP plays a pivotal role in training and educating high-level personnel in the fields of peace, security, and development. Through tailored programmes, it strengthens the capacities of scholars, practitioners, and members of the military and paramilitary forces, fostering synergy among stakeholders, donors, and specialised institutions.

In recognition of its expertise, SPSP has trained and inducted over a hundred Executive Students of Nigeria's National Institute of Security Studies (NISS) annually since 2022. In 2024, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) designated SPSP to train officers across all ranks- junior, intermediate, and senior. Notably, in September 2025, SPSP facilitated an executive capacity-building workshop for approximately 200 senior officers including Deputy Inspectors General, Assistant Inspectors General, and Commissioners of Police- with the Inspector General of Police in attendance. Themed "Managing Fast-Paced Security Challenges in a Protracted Conflict Environment," the workshop was held at the Police Resource Centre, Abuja. Earlier, in November 2024, SPSP conducted a Similar workshop for Chief Superintendents of Police at the Nigeria Police Staff College, Jos, under the theme "Peacebuilding and Policing."

Academic Advancement and Thought Leadership

SPSP actively promotes peace scholarship and multi-stakeholder engagement by supporting the development of peace and conflict studies programmes across academic institutions. Through annual conferences, seminars, and the SPSP Roundtable Series, the Society fosters intellectual exchange and policy innovation.

In recent years, SPSP contributed to the development of postgraduate curricula in Peace and Security Studies at Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Kwara State, and Fountain University, Osogbo, Osun State. At the University of Cape Coast in Ghana and the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, SPSP Founder Prof. I.O. Albert, fspsp, was directly responsible for formulating their Peace and Development Studies curricula-the former under a contract engagement with UNDP.

SPSP has consistently hosted annual conferences. In 2024, it held its 18th Annual Conference at the Nigerian Defence Academy, themed "Community Engagement: Networking Kinetic and Non-Kinetic Capabilities for Tackling Insecurity in Africa." The 19th Annual International Conference and General Assembly, scheduled for 2025 at the University of Ibadan, will explore "Economic Challenges and the Tasks of Building Sustainable Peace in a Globalised World."

Membership and Global Reach

SPSP is a membership-based organisation comprising individuals and institutions. Its diverse membership includes former and serving political leaders from across Africa, senior diplomats, members of the Armed Forces (Army, Navy, Air Force), State Security Service (SSS), Police, and Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC). It also includes universities, civil society organisations, industry leaders, media professionals, academics, students, and peace practitioners from varied backgrounds.

With branches established across Nigeria and internationally in Sierra Leone and Cameroon, SPSP continues to expand its global footprint. Ongoing partnership discussions with the University of Portsmouth (UK), Adventist University (Rwanda), and the University of The Gambia further underscore its commitment to international collaboration.

Institutional Recognition and Strategic Vision

SPSP is a proud member of the International Peace Bureau (IPB), with its President, Mr. Nathaniel Msen Awuapila, fspsp, recently elected to the IPB Council for a renewable three-year term. In June 2025, SPSP was granted Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC).

Guided by its strategic plan, SPSP actively contributes to the realization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 16 and 17. This vision was reinforced during the Inaugural Fellows Convening, held on 21 November 2023, facilitated by Dr. Takwa Suifon Zebulun- a UN-designated representative released from the UN Office in Zimbabwe to support the Society's agenda-setting process.

Body of Fellows

SPSP has five membership categories: Honorary, Student, Associate, Full, and Fellow- the highest cadre. SPSP Fellows are distinguished professionals in the peace and security space, selected for having attained the highest level of expertise and impact in the field.

While Fellowship awards have been conferred over the years, there had been no coordinated platform to harness the expertise of these Distinguished Fellows nationally and globally. Recognizing this gap, the current leadership-ably led by Mr. Nathaniel Msen Awuapila, fspsp-advanced the concept of a structured leadership and engagement framework for the Body of Fellows. With the endorsement of the Board of Trustees, the Society convened its Inaugural Fellows Convening in 2023.

The Body of Fellows is envisioned as a think tank aligned with SPSP's strategic direction and committed to advancing the AU Agenda 2063 and the UN SDGs-particularly SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

Held on November 21, 2023, at Denis Hotel, Wuse II, Abuja, the Inaugural Fellows Convening was chaired by the late Maj. Gen. Jones Arogbofa, fspsp, former Chief of Staff to the President of Nigeria, with Ambassador Fatima Sa'ad Abubakar, fspsp, as Distinguished Guest of Honour. The technical session was facilitated by Dr. Takwa Suifon Zebulon, fspsp, Senior Peace and Development Adviser in the Office of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Zimbabwe. He was specially released by the UN to support the formulation of an operational framework for the Body of Fellows and position it as SPSP's official think tank.

Aim of the Body of Fellows:

"To be the source and medium by which the Society for Peace Studies and Practice operates as a Think Tank contributing to sustainable peace and development in Africa, and globally."

Objectives of the Inaugural Convening:

1. Constitute and inaugurate a coordinating team for the Body of Fellows in alignment with the Society's leadership structure.
2. Formulate an Operational Framework for the Body of Fellows.
3. Develop and adopt an Action Plan for contributing to SDGs 16 and 17 in collaboration with national, sub-regional, and continental stakeholders.

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