

## LAUNCH OF THE MASHARIKI SECURITY JOURNAL

Remarks by Ruth Kagia, Board Member

27<sup>th</sup> February 2025

- Inspector General of Police (Rtd), Joseph Boinnet, representing Amb. Dr. Monica Juma, National Security Advisor,
- Brig (Rtd) Dr. Robert Kabage, Chief Executive Officer of Mashariki Research and Policy Centre,
- Government representatives present,
- Members of the diplomatic corps,
- Friends of Mashariki Research and Policy Centre,
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning!

On behalf of the MPRC board I am pleased to welcome you to the launch of the Mashariki Security Journal. We are a relatively new board. We seek to provide strategic direction to the Centre which will make it the “go to” institution for credible analysis and thought leadership on peace and security in the Eastern Africa region.

Mashariki Research and Policy Centre is the right institution at the right time. The geo-political landscape is evolving at a dizzying speed and placing us in uncharted territory on development aid in general and on international support to peace and security in particular. Even if the Centre had not been established it would have needed to be established in response to the emerging reality.

Look at what has happened to global cooperation in the last one month.

- 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2025. President Trump froze USAID funding. USAID, the world’s biggest aid donor, managed a budget of around \$50 billion in 2024. It plays a key role in African development projects, many of which have now been paused or shut down due to the funding freeze. <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/elon-musk-says-trump-are-shutting-usaid-rcna190388>
- 14<sup>th</sup> February 2025. The Swiss government cut its funding for UN agencies. Budget cuts will also impact bilateral cooperation projects in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia. However, peace promotion, humanitarian aid and aid for Ukraine will remain intact. <https://genevasolutions.news/global-news/switzerland-to-slash-funding-for-un-agencies>
- 20<sup>th</sup> February 2025. The Dutch government announces that it will henceforth take a Netherlands-first approach with development aid, They are making significant cuts into projects focused on gender equality, education, and climate, among others. <https://nltimes.nl/2025/02/20/dutch-govt-taking-netherlands-first-approach-development-aid>
- 25<sup>th</sup> February 2025. UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced that Britain would raise its military spending to 2.5 percent of economic output by 2027 and concurrently cut overseas development aid from 0.5 percent of gross domestic product to 0.3 percent arguing “*At times like this, the defense and security of the British people must always come first,*” <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/25/world/europe/uk-defense-spending-starmer.html>

We expect more cuts in the aid budget to be announced in the coming months. The UK Foreign Secretary, David Lammy captured the current mood in Western countries when he said on February 25 “ *we are a government of pragmatists not ideologues - and we have had to balance the compassion of our internationalism with the necessity of our national security*”. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/foreign-secretary-article-on-defence-spending-february-2025>

This is happening at a time when conflicts in Africa are becoming more vicious and complex. Throughout 2024, many of Africa's crises worsened: Sudan's civil war escalated, tensions between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo grew, and militants in the Sahel continued to spread south toward coastal states. The journal we are about to launch highlights the complex nature of some of these conflicts.

An investigative report on February 11, 2025 titled **“The Islamic State has regrouped in Somalia – and has global ambitions”** spoke to this issue and pointed out *“Large numbers of foreign fighters have flowed into Somalia, establishing a formidable force that now threatens Western targets. The group has also become a key source of funding for other Islamic State affiliates around the world, which have killed thousands of people”* <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/02/09/somalia-islamic-state-puntland-terrorism/>

What happens to global peace and shared prosperity when nations begin to look inwards and to focus on self-interest? What are the implications for Mashariki Research and Policy Centre?

At a minimum the evolving geopolitical landscape necessitates developing countries to strengthen home grown solutions. It calls for MRPC to work in close partnership with you all and with the new AU leadership to generate and implement transformative ideas in an increasingly complex and unpredictable world.

MRPC through its journals and related work offers a platform for engaging in these issues.

MRPC will:

- (i) Provide evidence and unbundle complex security issues. You will note that this journal ably highlights the pervasiveness and complexity of conflict in the Horn including the role of external actors,
- (ii) Catalyze and present innovative ways of approaching security in Africa,
- (iii) Highlight the critical links between peace and security and development.

The journal we are launching today reflects these objectives.

In closing, I applaud the authors and the editorial board for production of this inaugural issue of the *Mashariki Security Journal*. This is a great start that positions MPRC as a leading voice during what promises to be a consequential period for peace and security in Africa.

Thank you again for gracing this event today. *Asanteni Sana*

**Ends.**