

Welcome Remarks-Launch of *Mashariki Security Journal*- Brig (Rtd) Dr. Robert Kabage, PhD, EBS,-CEO MRPC-27th Feb 2025

- Our Chief Guest, Hon. Amb. Dr. Monica Juma, DPhil (Oxon), EGH, the National Security Advisor,
- Mr. Jacob Narengo from the Ministry of Interior and National Administration and Mr. Arthur Olanda from Ministry Foreign and Diaspora Affairs,
- Dr Ruth Kagia, Member of MRPC Board
- Senior government officials present,
- Members of the diplomatic corps,
- Representatives of intergovernmental agencies,
- Distinguished invited guests, journal contributors, esteemed researchers, academia, and friends of MRPC present and those following us virtually from across the globe, Good morning from Nairobi.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the launch of *Mashariki Security Journal*, a flagship publication of Mashariki Research and Policy Centre. Allow me to start my remarks by sincerely thanking each one of you for honoring our invitation and for taking time off your busy schedules to join us during this great day for the MRPC family. Why is the day important to us?

It is important, since, besides launching our inaugural journal, we are celebrating our first anniversary (1st birthday) as an institution, and we are also launching our revamped website... for reasons that I will explain shortly.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen. Let me take a moment to introduce Mashariki Research and Policy Centre (MRPC), by sharing a short history of our journey. MRPC was founded last year in February in response to market needs around the fields of security and strategic studies. The Centre's establishment was informed by a scientific process largely centered on stakeholders' consultation and benchmarking with existing

think tanks. At the end of that process, the Centre took a regional focus and hence its name '*Mashariki*' denoting the East African region in Kiswahili.

MRPC is, a non-profit, interdisciplinary and independent think tank headquartered here in Nairobi. We conduct evidence-based research and analysis to inform policy formulation and decision-making processes to states, non-state actors, intergovernmental agencies and the private sector.

Our work is anchored by five research programs, to include; Security and Peace building; Geopolitics and World Order, Trade and Development, Climate Change and the Environment and finally Technology and Governance. Among the Centre's research and policy outputs include working papers, policy briefs, policy papers, media articles and topical commentaries.

Now to the next question...why revamp the website?. After operating for the past one year and as a professional organization, we have taken time to evaluate our work, our reach and our impact, considering the peace and security complexities prevailing in our region. The evaluation comprised a three-step process to include; literature review, Think Tank mapping and expert interviews. We found out that there is need for the Centre to adopt a robust and forward looking posture, so as to remain relevant in the Eastern Africa region, in line with our motto; "*Towards a secure and prosperous region*".

The results of the process have necessitated a re-alignment of our research focus areas, which we are in the process of implementing. Moving forward, the Centre shall adopt a security foresights oriented approach to inform policy and action through tailored evidence based analysis. This will enable us to provide our clients with insights derived from forecasting ,trends analysis ,simulations and scenario development to anticipate future threats; that will support their decision making process.

We also intend to diversify our target audience to include governments, the private sector and even private investors seeking risk assessments and other entities keen to understand attendant geopolitical shifts influencing the regional security posture. This has necessitated the launching of a revamped website to enable us engage our clients more effectively.

Now to the *Mashariki Security Journal*. This is our inaugural journal. It responds to filling a gap for security and policy discourses in the region. The initial process of developing the journal was muted early last year as we were engaging stakeholders on some of the products that they would find useful from a newly founded think-tank...like MRPC then.

They advised us to remain guided by research excellence and to always promote innovativeness in our research endeavors. The journal is therefore founded on the premise of excellence and continuous improvement as advocated by the Kaizen philosophy.

It discusses threats to contemporary peace and security in the region to include; state fragility, transnational threats, elections management, political economy and identity challenges. It is envisaged to be a critical voice in scholarship that will directly contribute to shaping regional security dynamics from a problem- solving perspective.

The targeted readers are policy makers in the continent, assorted researchers, and lovers of security related knowledge. It will encourage scholars to pay attention to regional security complexities and also to prepare for threats arising from inside and outside the continent. It will also serve policy makers in weighing their options as they make decisions. To quote our distinguished professor and member of the editorial board...Prof Macharia Munene..."*Mashariki Security Journal is a needed publication*".

At this juncture, I wish to sincerely thank all those who contributed to the successful publication of this journal, from authors of the various articles, to the reviewers and the editorial team,...to you all...ahsanteni sana.

Allow me to assure authors whose papers could not find space in this first issue of the journal , to bear with us...we received a record 35 papers from our partners and friends from as far as India, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Somali and other areas and this 1st issue could only take 8 papers. We are however working on them and they will appear in the next issue of *Mashariki Research Journal* that will be out before the end of the year. The journal is envisaged to be published bi-annually.

As I, conclude the milestones that we have accomplished so far, signal to the growing MPRC brand and its vision to be the premier "go-to think tank" for security analysis in the Eastern Africa region. This has been made possible partly by the immense support that we have received from you...our partners. The Centre will continue to count on your support in future....given our commonality of purpose around securing the Eastern Africa region. We are also keen on forging new partnerships.

Once again... thank you so much for honoring us with your presence today...we do not take it for granted.

-Before I invite our Chief Guest, Hon. Amb. Dr. Monica Juma, DPhil (Oxon), EGH, the National Security Advisor to deliver the key note address, I wish to invite:

-Dr Ruth Kagia, one of our board members to deliver reflections of the board. She will then be followed by the representative from the Ministry of Interior and National Administration, then the rep from the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs. In that order....Dr Ruth Kagia please....

-It is now my singular honor and privilege to invite our Chief Guest, Hon. Amb. Dr. Monica Juma, DPhil (Oxon), EGH, the National Security Advisor to deliver the key note address.