

The Fourth Conference on National Dialogues, 11–12 June 2019

The House of the Estates, Helsinki

The role of regional organisations in fostering inclusive, cross-border dialogue –

The case of the Lake Chad Basin

Objective of the session

African regional organisations play a key role in the promotion of peace on the continent. Their significant convening power can be harnessed to guide and support national peace processes and generate shared ownership for such efforts on the regional level. They are uniquely placed to foster dialogue across borders, to address common threats to peace and the root causes of transnational conflicts. This session will discuss the requirements and benefits of inclusive cross-border dialogue that are supported by regional organizations, based on the case study of stabilisation efforts in the Lake Chad Basin region.

Background

The decade-long insurgency waged by extremist groups known collectively as Boko Haram has since 2015 taken on a decidedly regional dimension, with the armed conflict and humanitarian emergency now impacting the four Lake Chad Basin countries of Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. The transnational dynamics of the conflict and its underlying root causes have highlighted the need for a regional response that goes beyond a purely military or humanitarian approach, including inclusive dialogue that can address these challenges.

Recognizing this need, the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), and the African Union (AU) developed a Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery & Resilience of the Boko Haram-affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin region (Regional Stabilisation Strategy or RSS). The RSS provides an overarching framework to address the complex root causes of the conflict and build peace in the long term. It recognises the importance of channelling the views and concerns of affected populations into the stabilization process, to bridge the gap between citizens and decision-makers. Highlighting the need for new forms of regional dialogue, it attributes a significant role to civil society actors as well as to the Lake Chad Basin Governors' Forum for Stabilisation, Peacebuilding and Sustainable Development, a dialogue platform established in 2018. As implementation begins, the LCBC and the AU are in a unique position to support national and local actors in their efforts to define joint, locally owned solutions to their shared challenges.

Genuine national ownership is crucial for the success of any peace process. In cross-border conflicts, building shared ownership among border communities pose particular challenges, which can be addressed through the design of innovative processes and platforms that take into account local, national and regional dynamics. This session broadens the concept of national dialogues by shedding light on the



complexity of cross-border conflicts and on how inclusive dialogue platforms and processes can be designed with a regional perspective.

Key questions

- How can the AU, together with other regional organizations, support national state and non-state actors in setting up platforms for national and regional dialogue, while fostering ownership and agency?
- How can the Regional Stabilisation Strategy be used for promoting and catalysing inclusive, cross-border dialogue in Boko Haram affected areas?
- How can regional organizations, such as the LCBC, support dialogue initiatives and incorporate cross-border channels for dialogue in their efforts to address regional threats to peace?

Composition of the session

- Ms Fatima Askira, Executive Director, Borno Women's Development Initiative
 - Dr Alhaji Sarjoh Bah, Head of Conflict Management and Post-Conflict Reconstruction Division, African Union
 - Mr Boubakari Mana, Technical Director of Lake Chad Basin Commission
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- *Moderator: Ms Johanna Poutanen, Head, Women in Peacemaking, CMI*

