Experiences of the Kenya and Ethiopia Cross-Border Programme in Preventing Violent Extremism and Conflicts

Report of the High-level Side-event held during the African Regional Conference on Preventing Violent Extremism

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1.0. Background

Terrorism and the underlying spread of violent extremism are major threats to international peace and security, sustainable development, and human rights. They are complex global challenges that have reached unprecedented levels and affect all societies. The international community is facing a new challenge in the fight against terrorism with several transnational networks operating simultaneously. Following the territorial collapse of ISIL in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, foreign terrorist fighters are returning or relocating to new countries.

Africa has been struck by terrorism in the Sahel, in West and East Africa, and North Africa. The continent is increasingly becoming the new frontier in the global struggle against terrorism. In recent years, there has been a significant rise in terrorist attacks, so has been an increase in the number of African countries affected. Terrorist groups and their violent extremist supporters continue to evolve, spreading into new regions, exploiting new technologies and tactics, and promoting their insidious narratives both offline and online.

The UN is taking a leading role in assisting the Member States in their effort to prevent and counter all manner of terrorism, including violent extremism. In 2017, the United Nations Office for Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) was established by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the United Nations Secretary-General to enhance coordination and coherence in the implementation of the UN support. This was further strengthened by the launch of the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact and other 36 UN entities, the INTERPOL, and the World Customs Organization. The goal of this move was to enhance and align the UN delivery of counter-terrorism capacity-building on the ground with the broader UN strategies and approaches.

On 28-29 June 2018, the Secretary-General convened the first-ever United Nations High-Level Conference of Heads of Member States' Counter-Terrorism Agencies. This was immediately after the sixth biennial review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which took place on 26-27 June. This counter-terrorism week, held at the United Nations headquarters in New York, reaffirmed the need for a comprehensive approach and cooperation at all levels with a view to preventing and countering the persistent, yet evolving threat of terrorism. The Secretary-General announced his intention to convene the next High-Level Conference on June 2020. He added that, in the lead-up to this conference, the United Nations would liaise with the Member States to organize regional events on key thematic issues to maintain the momentum of the current collective efforts.

On 10-11 July 2019, the Republic of Kenya and the United Nations convened the *African Regional High-Level Conference on Counter-Terrorism and the Prevention of Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism* at the United Nations Office at Nairobi. The objectives of the conference were to enhance understanding of terrorism threats faced by African countries, to share good practices and lessons learned, and to identify how cooperation between the member states and the United Nations can be made more effective. The goal of the regional conference is to report to the next United Nations High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies to be held on June 2020.

A high-level side event to discuss the "Role of the Ethiopia/Kenya Cross-Border Programme in Preventing Violent Conflicts and Extremism" was also held.

1.1. Introduction

The Ethiopia-Kenya Cross-Border Programme launched in 2015 by the two governments, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the United Nations, aims to promote cross-border cooperation and to ensure a peaceful resolution of border disputes. The programme is designed to support the local governments of Borana/Dawa Zones, Ethiopia, and Marsabit County, Kenya to efficiently and effectively prevent, manage and resolve conflicts and violent extremism, and to enhance the capacity of international cross-border conflict management. In this regard, the programme has "simultaneously addressed violent extremism, human trafficking, economic development, local governance and inter-communal peace with mutually-reinforcing objectives and means.

Within the broader EU cross-border programme in the Horn of Africa, the project between Ethiopia and Kenya, which is aimed at preventing conflict and peacebuilding in Marsabit-Moyale cluster is supported by the EU's Trust Fund, whose objectives are to improve peacebuilding, local governance and conflict prevention, and reducing forced displacement and irregular migration. The project also responds to the EU Trust Fund Strategic Orientation Document that "emphasizes the need for a new approach to peripheral and cross-border areas, providing a more targeted response to tackle the main determinants of vulnerability (marginalization, exclusion, destitution) and targeting populations at risk (particularly the youth)."

2.0. Objective of the Side Event

The objective of the side event was to showcase the innovative approaches of Kenya and Ethiopia cross-border programme at devolved levels to prevent radicalization and violent extremism and conflict. It also aimed at exchanging experiences in the Horn of Africa (HOA) and beyond. It also presented an opportunity to explore ways to advance the effective implementation of the Kenya-Ethiopia cross-border initiative to address conflict and violent extremism.

3.0. Session One: Setting the Stage

Various UN and government leaders (annex 1) provided their thoughts on the overall cross-border programme and how it links with other initiatives within the region and the HoA. The focus was on sharing experiences and the progress of the initiative, including lessons from other areas that have implemented a similar programme.

3.1.1. Highlights from the UN

- The Kenya Government, through the Ministry of Devolution and Arid and Semi-Arid Lands, is leading in moving forward the cross-border programme. A similar initiative will be launched in August 2019 when an MoU will be signed between Kenya and Uganda to implement similar cross-border initiative in the Karamoja area.

- The initiative is slowly picking up with requisite staff on board to ensure seamless implementation.

- The results of this innovative initiative will be consolidated to include the lessons shared/learned and expand the programme to other regions.

- The innovative approach of Ethiopia and Kenya cross-border programme that uses devolved levels of governance is meant to prevent radicalization, violent extremism, and conflict. The programme aims at transforming the economically and culturally linked border region of the two countries into a prosperous and peaceful area with resilient communities. The two countries have recorded significant progress in operationalizing this initiative.

- The cross-border programme, which focusses on conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the Borana, Dawa and Marsabit regions, was launched in 2015. The implementation of support for effective cooperation and coordination of this cross-border initiative was initiated in the same year.

- The unconventional cross-border programme approach aims to jointly address violent conflict as well as bring about sustainable peace in the region. It is expected that the programme will contribute to the prevention of violent extremism in the HoA. This is informed by the fact that violent extremism in several parts of Africa have dramatically reversed hard-won development gains and threatened prospects for sustainable development for decades to come.

- Advancing integrated area-based and transformative initiatives is complex and can at times be a daunting process, but the initiative has attracted unflinching political will from the two governments, and the refreshing partnership commitment offered by development partners who include the EU, IGAD, and the UN Country teams in both Ethiopia and Kenya.

- A key challenge faced by governments includes delivering peace and sustained stability and ensuring the pace and benefits of economic growth as well as keeping up with the expansion of the youthful population. However, the winds of positive change are blowing in the HoA. After decades of hostility and rivalry, Ethiopia and Eritrea signed a peace agreement and were later joined by Somali and Djibouti, heralding hope for long-term peace in the region. Investments in infrastructure such as roads and ports, and in agriculture, have transformed some of the economies of the other countries in the HoA into some of the fastest-growing in Africa, making the region more attractive to investors and visitors alike.

- The political reforms and peace agreements signed between the various governments in the HoA are significant milestones in the right direction. They will definitely bring sustainable peace and security in the region. The policy shifts will also create a conducive environment for economic cooperation and integration in the region. It is envisaged that the region's leadership and the new policy direction will lead to a reversal of extremism in Africa.

- The region still faces challenges. Some of these include internal ethnic divisions and strife. There are other stresses, such as the influence of competing global and regional powers, which could complicate transitions to a peaceful and prosperous region. The regional and global partnerships need to deal with these issues with extreme patience and by adopting a strategic approach that includes sharing knowledge and providing technical assistances.

- Resolving conflict and consequently preventing violent extremism is about reaching the farthest behind first. For example, 56% of households in Borana and Dawa in southern Ethiopia are considered dynamically poor or trapped in poverty. Likewise, in Marsabit, Kenya, poverty levels stand at 82% with women on both sides of the border bearing its heaviest burden. The cross-border initiative aims to transform these dynamics, establish cooperation and trust between the communities towards mitigating and managing conflict and transforming communities into prosperous, healthy, peaceful and resilient entities.

- The UN Resident Coordinator Offices in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia have drafted a fresh concept to expand further and operationalize the cross-border programme in the HoA. The aim is to use cross-border strategies to prevent violent conflicts before they erupt into fully-fledged crises. Interventions should be catalytic and focus on making real and permanent positive changes in the lives of the most marginalized.

Participants at the side event

- Within the context of the conference, the focus is on the theme of building partnerships and strengthening multilateral cooperation between the African countries. The cross-border programme is an example of practical cooperation, not just between governments, but between peoples, and between communities involved in the Kenya-Ethiopia border.

- Empirical evidence has shown that PVE is only effective if local drivers of conflict among communities are addressed. This calls for a process that includes not just the community leaders, but youth and women's groups, traditional leaders and others. The goal is to work towards a collective local approach and then expand the process across borders. This is applicable not only in the African context but also around the world. It demonstrates that building stronger, more effective, organic borders, and not building walls, results in effective and practical cross-border cooperation between communities and fosters resilience. It is also about building sustainability since this fosters a sense of ownership among communities.

- The initiative, which the office of counter-terrorism strongly supports, promises to reap huge dividends in the future.

3.1.2. Highlights from the European Union

- The initiative has progressed well. It has become probably one of the most successful examples of UN-EU cooperation in the whole world. EU recognizes that borders can be a major cause of conflict, and it is important to have strategies for cooperation and peace as is the case with the European Union, which solved border problems by abolishing borders.

- The EU seized the opportunity of the *Emergency Trust Fund for Africa* that was launched in 2015 to the tune of 68 million euros as a way of demonstrating its commitment to a new, peaceful, and prosperous HoA.

- EU provides an inspirational model that closely interlocks its regional interests and prevents wars after centuries of prolonged military conflicts.

- While each regional experience brings its distinct challenges and opportunities, long-term political will and responsible leadership, and sound economic strategies are paramount. As the Kenya government leaders show the way, across the border, the Ethiopian government leadership has taken up the brave challenge of bringing the country together.

- The programme consists of seven clusters, each addressing specific objectives, which range from managing peace and resolving local conflicts on the Kenyan-Ethiopian border, to promoting economic development and greater resilience, particularly among the youth, women and displaced people in the Omo Delta, and also on the Mandera triangle.

The EU Ambassador to Kenya, H.E Stephano Dejak and the UN RC of Ethiopia, Mr. Aeneas Chuma at the Side Event

- While seeking to foster political support, the cross-border programme has received high-level engagement. Various components support national and local governments in sound policy and decision-making, from regional cooperation to the management of trans-boundary resources. At the local level, several project components focus on peacebuilding efforts across borders such as the UNDP-managed component of the Kenya-Ethiopia border. The implementing partners, working in marginalized areas and across borders, face extremely complex challenges that the EU can help with by mobilizing support.

- On top of the political pillar, the EU programme is incorporating the development of sound economic strategies. The overall goal is to provide crucial investment to support the socio-economic transformation of these areas through cross-border trade, greater resilience and diversified livelihoods. For example, through the Boresha cluster implemented by a consortium of NGOs led by the Danish

Devolution & ASALs Cabinet Secretary, Hon. Eugene Wamalwa, with UNDP Assistant Administrator and RBA Director, Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa

- Refugee Council based on the Kenya-Ethiopia-Somalia border, three business development centres have been set up to provide advisory services and technical assistance to emerging entrepreneurs. Six hundred (600) youth and women will receive training in apprenticeship, subsidies and cash grants to help them start or grow existing micro-businesses. Besides, Boresha will provide access to livestock insurance, vaccination for their herds, and build new water pump points to ensure better access to water throughout the year.

- The EU is of the opinion that these investments could be the magic bullet that will kick-start peace and prosperity in cross-border areas that have for decades had to grapple with violent conflict, climate shocks and marginalization, which have resulted in acute poverty, desperation, and widespread exclusion besides increased discontent and radicalization, especially among the youthful population. In addition, the negative impacts of climate change have led to increased competition for land and water, further putting the local populations in dire straits.

- The EU continues to firmly support a regional approach, mainly to harness the economic potential, reinforce stability, and tackle marginalization from a political and economic angle that spans across state borders.

Ethiopia's Ambassador to Kenya, H.E Meles Alem, UN RC of South Africa, Ms. Nardos Bekele-Thomas, and the Deputy President of Oromia Regional Government, H.E, Dr. Girma Amante were among the dignitaries present at the Side Event.

3.1.3. Highlights from the Governments

- The initiative is a testimony of the contributions of multilateral and regional organizations, not only on revamping development along common borders but also in contributing, albeit partly, to the containment of terrorism and violent extremism.

- The role of the government in the implementation of the programme is to make life easy for people. In this regard, the cross-border programme will have a great impact, not only in making life easy but also in addressing issues of terrorism and extreme violence.

- Ethiopia has managed to contain the surge of violent extremists through preventative and proactive measures. The Ethiopian government, in partnership with other African countries, has contributed to peacekeeping forces in Somalia, from where Al-Shabaab, a terrorist group, is launching attacks on neighbouring countries such as Kenya.

- Addressing the challenges of terrorism and violent extremism requires a multi-dimensional and multi-faceted approach that would cascade into the local communities to address poverty, marginalization and regional and social inequality, which must be prioritized before dealing with terrorism on the battlefield.

- The programme is a model and a very innovative strategy for handling cross border challenges. It seeks to demonstrate how borders can be transformed from barriers to bridges of integration among communities with many similarities in terms of culture and livelihood. This model will be replicated in the Kenya-Uganda border, which hosts the Turkana and the Karamoja communities, who face similar challenges to those experienced by communities in the Kenya-Ethiopia border. The communities across the border have so much in common, just like the Maasais of Kenya and those of Tanzania.

- The governments of Kenya and Ethiopia are considering replicating this model in other border areas in their respective countries.

- Beyond geopolitics, cross-border communities share deep historical and cultural relationships. An integrated regional framework governing cross-border interaction is the ideal solution for common problems, particularly cattle rustling, high poverty levels, inadequate food and water, smuggling of contraband goods, access to education and health, and the outbreak of diseases.

- Peace spurs development, and, conversely, development reinforces peace. In the interconnected world, factors which may appear far removed from local settings tend to impact local situations. For instance, disease outbreaks do not respect national boundaries. Human conflict force people to seek temporary safety across borders. Pastoralists are not restrained by borders when searching for water and pasture for their animals.

- The borders are very artificial. For generations, communities lived without borders. The concern by governments has been that pastoralists' struggle for resources, particularly water and pasture, has mutated into sophisticated, armed combat involving deadly militias. In the process, schools and hospitals have been raided and looted. The deadly spiral of violence had to be checked through dialogue and joint development programmes, which include projects that bring border communities together with a view to improving their livelihoods.

- In Kenya, the twin pursuit of peace and sustainable peace in cross-border regions is coordinated by the Ministry of Devolution and the Development of Arid and Semi-Arid Lands. The Kenya government has a dedicated senior team that is working towards achievement and realization of the Ethiopia-Kenya cross-border programme. The team is also leading the finalization of the Kenya-Uganda initiative.

- The Ministry of Devolution in Kenya and the Ministry of Karamoja Affairs of Uganda, in collaboration with the United Nations Country Teams and other stakeholders, have held a series of meetings, both in Nairobi and in Moroto, which have culminated in a framework to guide the cross-border initiative.

- The multi-sectoral programmes proposed should focus on:

    - Developing amicable resource sharing mechanisms among the two communities.
    - Joint infrastructure improvements by the two governments on both sides of the border.
    - Supporting cultural community activities such as the annual Loyangalani Festival.
    - Supporting youth empowerment through entrepreneurship and employment.
    - Intensifying research on the real causes of recurrent conflict. The issue of women and children suffering disproportionately during the conflict should also be addressed.

- Some of the lessons learned from the programme include the importance of staying in constant touch with elders, women and the youth, and politicians to enrich peacebuilding. The local leadership in all its dimensions must be involved in the programme to realize its goals.

Some of the participants at the side event

4.0 Session Two: Ethiopia-Kenya Cross-border Initiative: A Regional Strategy for Preventing Conflict and Extremism

The objective of this session was to share lessons, bearing in mind that the borderlands of Africa have been historically marginalized. The main lesson from conflicts in the borderlands is that nations cannot afford to leave any region behind, whether it suffers insecurity or not. Governments and partners need to look at borderlands as part of humanity and civilization, and a part of larger communities, which should not be left behind.

Nonetheless, borderlands are tough places for development. Investing in such areas involve taking huge risks, which many are not prepared to take since the areas are volatile, and it is not immediately apparent that one would receive a favourable return on their investment.

4.1 Issues from the Ground

Like many other places, the youth in the programme area lack jobs and opportunities. It is therefore important to put resources in the hands of the young people to help them realize their potential. Rebuilding young people's trust, which has been destroyed over the years by their leadership and the international community, is critical. The challenge is how to make good the promises made to the young people.

UNDP has entered into a partnership with the private sector foundation for the Sahel youth. The goal of this partnership is to identify talent and youth with credible business ideas and then fund them with US$5000 cash grants to help them realize their dreams. This approach is informed by the fact that microcredit and finance, and payback options that were used in the past to get youth involved in

innovation and businesses have not worked. Empowering the youth is, therefore, critical in getting them out of the doldrums of deprivation and poverty.

Most borderlands are facing the twin challenges of insecurity and the devastating effects of climate change. For some reason, they are also on the frontlines of vulnerability to climate. The areas will require the deployment of relevant climate action strategies to mitigate the ravages of drought, whether cyclical or otherwise. Among interventions to help the borderlands communities deal with the adverse impacts of climate change include deploying new technologies, improving infrastructure, among others. The abundance of sunshine in these areas can be used to generate electricity, a dimension that has not so far been explored. These initiatives require partnering with the private sector.

There are commitments from respective countries, regional authorities, some serious donors, and multilateral agencies to scaling up and boldly transforming these corridors. For instance, the discussion on Marsabit-Moyale cluster was narrowed to what is happening on the ground.

Key speakers during the side event

4.2. Regional Perspectives from Oromia Regional Government of Ethiopia

The communities in these areas are living in a fragile environment affected by the effects of climate change. Issues to do with water, forage, food are critical as these resources become scarce by the day. Besides, the traditional coping mechanisms that the communities have for a long time relied on are no longer effective in helping them cope with the recurrent challenges. This crucible of challenges calls for an integrated, participatory, and adaptative approach.

The issues are built into the programme methodology to enable a more holistic and comprehensive approach. Although both Kenya and Ethiopia have in the past attempted to address these challenges through various initiatives, the current programme provides a platform that brings together all the initiatives from both sides of the border. The initiatives have been harmonized and rationalized for the benefit of the cross-border communities, who share the same culture and face similar problems and challenges.

According to the regional governments, the communities have one big challenge: water. The programme should assess water availability in the area as a way of addressing this challenge. For instance, in the Borana area, there is very little surface water or rivers. The regional government of Oromia has conducted a groundwater assessment, which has pointed to the huge potential for groundwater in the area, which is available on both sides of the border. In some of these areas, ground tests and drilling have been commissioned, and results indicate the presence of quality water from both sides of the border.

These initiatives and similar ones from Kenya should guide a comprehensive approach in the border area. However, the pace and progress of the project are extremely slow compared to the harsh challenges on the ground. While there are other challenges such as poor infrastructure and lack of, or dilapidated facilities, the key challenge in this area, which must be addressed first, is insufficient water.

Communities have their traditional conflict management mechanisms such as customary institutions like the *Gada* system. It is important to synchronize the formal system with customary and traditional systems when addressing challenges since, in most cases, the local community understands its problems better than an outsider.

A project by one of the universities titled *Peace Centre for Climate and Social Resilience*, supported by USAID in Borana area, has tried to get communities to talk and share their expertise and experiences with one another. The result has been a dramatic reduction in the number of conflicts.

The regional governments have also jumped on board by opening up infrastructure. For example, Ethiopia is constructing an airport and a university in Borana. Besides, there are local investments on both sides of the border that can capitalize on government-sponsored projects in these areas.

Studies conducted in Borana have shown that droughts are increasing, and communities are losing their livestock and agriculture. Therefore, unless communities are supported to start alternative livelihoods, the situation will get even direr. Alternative livelihoods should capitalize on the value addition of existing resources such as the livestock population. For instance, the Borana cattle breed is the best in the area. Other support programmes in the area promote agro-industrial initiatives to create jobs for the youth and the restless pastoralists.

The regional government is highly committed to support and make use of all the inputs and outputs of the projects for the successful implementation of the programme.

4.3. Regional Experience from Marsabit County

Marsabit faces a myriad of challenges that range from poverty, unemployment, poor or inadequate infrastructure, health, water, climate change impact, among others. However, violent conflict and extremism is the major challenge in the county. Since terrorism is a global challenge, joint efforts towards its prevention are key. Marsabit County has experienced cases of terrorism due to the prevailing drivers and triggers of terrorism, which are common to other areas of Kenya, especially the northern parts due to proximity to porous borders.

Due to youth unemployment, peer pressure, availability of small arms and weak security checkpoints, and porous international borders with countries such as Somalia, border counties have been a fertile ground for the expansion of terrorism. However, with the help of several partners, religious organizations, the national government, and with the opportunities heralded by devolution, partners have put in placed concerted efforts to close potential loopholes that most perpetrators of terrorism exploit.

The Kenya-Ethiopia cross-border programme has greatly contributed to peacebuilding and conflict-resolution efforts in Marsabit County and the Borana and Dawa zones of Ethiopia. The efforts by the UN cross-border programme to foster inclusivity in conflict resolution among all relevant stakeholders, including peace committees, youth, women, religious organizations, and all local and traditional leadership structures, is a commendable step towards prevention of terrorism. This strategy has also been endorsed by the Marsabit County. Recently, the UN was on the ground in Marsabit to meet with the county's and the community leadership to encourage peaceful co-existence among communities in the area.

The county has fully implemented the requirement by the national government that stipulates that 30% of procurement tenders in the county be set aside for the youth, women, and persons with disability. This affirmative action will go a long way in *leaving no one behind* in terms of development at the local level. In addition, employment opportunities have been set aside for the youth at the county government, which has resulted in the employment of many young people. Although there is still room for progress since the youth challenge is massive, these developments are a step in the right direction.

The County, to address security issues, is sharing information with the relevant security structures on the ground to contain extremist activities while at the same time sensitizing and creating opportunities for the youth by making available information that they would not otherwise have. Marsabit County is the largest in Kenya. One corner of Marsabit County is almost 500 kilometres removed from the headquarters of the county, which means communication over such an expansive area is a challenge.

While the County receives capital transfers from the central government in terms of revenue sharing, these resources are not adequate, but the deficit is helped by contributions from other partners. Several non-state partners have come on board to help the county to at least reach all areas of Marsabit County with critical, and actionable information.

Despite the county having created a free polytechnic for the youth with a view to imparting them with requisite skills, the challenge has been accessing capital to start businesses once they acquire the skills. The County would like to support the youth by providing seed capital to help them start income-generating initiatives of their choice. However, even where the youth have access to enterprise funds, the issue of resources is still a challenge.

The County government, with the help of UNDP, has established a *Biashara* Centre in Marsabit, which provides avenues for entrepreneurial skills for the youth. The County has a close working relationship with the Marsabit Interfaith Council, which is made up of all the religious groups in Marsabit. The Council includes Muslims and Christians, who make up the Interfaith Council. The Council also helps the County government in handling peace and security issues in the area.

The County has recently developed a youth policy framework to address issues affecting the youth. At the county government level, some wards are setting aside funds to provide livelihoods for the youth, which include seed capital and opportunities for internship.

4.4. UNDP Perspectives

UNDP will maintain her commitment to stay on course and see the programme to fruition. So far, results indicate that the programme is proceeding as expected. Some of the initiatives so far undertaken include the *Biashara* Centre in Marsabit, support for the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) to ensure development is on course besides providing a holistic view of the SDGs and how they filter down to the grassroots.

Field visits provide actors with an opportunity to hear, learn and see how a programme can be translated into realistic, practical next-steps. The commendable results so far achieved will further inform future phases of the programme, especially with the three newly introduced clusters that have come on board with the help of UNDP. The field offices in these clusters will provide a centralized UN operational platform, with UNDP supporting the leadership of the Coordinator to start translating and coordinating programme activities, whether they are on the PVE side, or on the economic empowerment of women, or issues pertaining to water.

RC from South Africa Ms. Nados Bekele making her contribution

4.5. Perspectives from the Participants

Poverty is one thing; losing dignity is another. It is important that the initiative strives to restore dignity to ensure people in the area are considered a part of a nation. Equally important is that the UN fulfils its mandate, which requires taking risks. Already, the project is contributing to the economic growth of the area, transforming it from a place of desperation to one of hope, and restoring dignity to the people.

The vision is to make the entire area an economic hub, in essence, transform it into the Dubai of Kenya and Ethiopia. This is possible through collaboration and collective harnessing of resources.

There are initiatives on either side of the border that can benefit the communities in the area. For instance, the university built by Ethiopia should be used by communities from both Ethiopia and the Kenyan side. It makes no sense for Kenya to build a university in the same area. Instead, Marsabit can build something else, such as a big hospital, an abattoir, etc. to maximize and optimize the available resources.

For instance, the one *Biashara* centre established in Marsabit should serve not only Marsabit residents but also the neighbouring communities in Ethiopia. It can be expanded into a digital hub where people can access innovative technologies. Parallel examples are business social centers in Moroto and Gulu in Uganda built by the UN to help communities in the poor border areas of northern Uganda. The programme was a sort of cross-border initiative in the volatile Karamoja area.

4.6. Mandera County Perspectives

The region is cognizant of the importance of the Marsabit and Moyale cross-border social-economic development. Mandera County, which borders both Ethiopia and Somalia, and right on the border, is faced with a lot of challenges from the unstable Gedo region. The County is closely watching the current initiative.

CAS Ministry of Devolution & ASALs, UNDP RR Kenya, Governor of Mandera County, and, the Deputy Governor of Marsabit County

Mandera and southern Ethiopia are known for their problems. With the introduction of devolution in 2013, the pressure for this region to develop was immense, especially since the area had lagged behind in terms of socio-economic development. To restore economic equilibrium, the Mandera County government decided to facilitate education access from Bula Hawa and Suftu in Ethiopia. It also provided access to healthcare in Mandera.

Despite government bureaucracy, all patients were attended to, including those without Kenyan documents. The downside to these developments is that, on the one hand, there has been an over-dependence on the health system in Mandera, and the education system in Bula Hawa and Suftu in Ethiopia, on the other. Besides, public awareness of the services provided by these institutions is limited to the local communities. To compound matters further, the national government does not supplement these institutions, although they serve cross-border communities. The reality on the ground is that the hospital is serving three countries, but at the national level, this situation is not clearly understood, a scenario that further complicates work on the ground.

Mandera has been involved in the initial discussions of Marsabit-Moyale initiative to ensure the County is on board. It has keenly followed the progress of the current initiative with a view to adopting it for the Mandera or Omo-Turkana Triangle, for which it hopes to get a lot of support.

As the implementation of the initiative proceeds, care must be taken to avoid duplication of resources. The key is to look at the competitive, comparative and absolute advantages of the region to understand the relevant regional perspectives. This will require the development of a regional strategic document to guide the programme, which is already underway.

An important issue to note is that the three governments, the regional government, and donor organizations are willing to expedite this agenda.

Another important consideration is that the different regions are not at the same level of development, nor do they have similar resources or opportunities. Some regions, such as Gedo have more problems than others. Therefore, one needs to take into perspective the state of underdevelopment in each region to provide for equitable investments across the region. This will avoid a situation where one side of the border lags behind in terms of development due to socio-economic challenges. To make sure no region is left behind, these dynamics need to be factored into the programme.

The soft approach that targets the mind through the creation of opportunities and inter-dependencies between communities is a win-win strategy, both from the perspectives of conflict and violent extremism, but also from that of socio-economic wellbeing of communities in the region. The Omo-Turkana-Mandera Triangle shares the same challenges and opportunities that Marsabit and Borana have. It is, therefore, advisable to bring partners from Turkana, South Omo, and Somali on board. Any strategy for peace and development in Mandera that does not include Omo and Somali on the Madera side is bound to fail.

In terms of sharing resources, Mandera is the epicentre of health facilities for both Ethiopians and Somalis across the border. It is the same story in Ethiopia; Communities from Turkana and South Sudan share the same schools and hospitals in South Omo. Governments should scale up these opportunities and expand awareness of these limited resources among their people.

Participants from the EU Delegation in Kenya at the side event

4.7. Perspectives from Participants

Terrorism thrives mostly in conflict areas. These are fertile recruitment grounds. It is, therefore, important to act in a coordinated and integrated manner to address the root causes of insecurity/terrorism.

Conflict is a vicious cycle that requires traditional methods of managing and resolving it to be revamped and aligned to work alongside other established legal mechanisms. One way of doing this is by facilitating elders' movements and providing them with a stipend since they work without a salary. Empowering local elders is a key component of the drive to end the conflict in the region.

Besides, implementing teams should reach out to the communities and get their perspectives to reflect the practical and relevant realities on the ground.

5.0 Conclusion

One key takeaway from this discussion is to prioritize water in the programme area. While this is being done, consultations should be held with the grassroots communities to identify what their real, and not perceived, needs are.

Efforts should be put in place to stem the spread of violence. Conflict is part of human nature, but when it turns violent, it sets back nations and communities for many years. Besides, it destroys lives and sows seeds of disharmony from which it takes years to recover. Since both the infrastructure for peace and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms already exist, all that is required is facilitation. Such facilitation should involve a framework that incorporates engagement with traditional conflict resolution systems.

The idea of borderless social services should be promoted to avoid duplication of facilities and infrastructure on either side of the border. This should be followed by a mechanism that allows for the sharing of resources, and a deliberate commitment by the governments to sensitize their communities about the availability of these facilities.

The youth should be at the heart of every initiative. This should go beyond skilling them and include the provision of startup funds so they can engage in income-generating activities of their choice. The approach should be transformative rather than looking at scaling up small initiatives.

The private sector should be brought on board to discuss development in these regions. The aim should be to provide an enabling, secure environment where they can invest with confidence. Private investors should be assured of the security of their investments.