

**Pre-Tana Regional Multi-stakeholders Forum**  
**Human and Drug Trafficking in Africa: Unlocking Human Freedom**

**19 August, 2021 | Hybrid Forum Sheraton Hotel and Zoom**  
**Outcomes Report**



 **TANA  
FORUM**  **HUMANITY  
UNITED**

Pre Tana Regional Multi-stakeholders forum

**Human and Drug Trafficking in Africa:  
Unlocking Human Freedom**

 19 August 2021

 10:00 AM-3:30 PM (GMT+3)

 Hybrid (Sheraton Hotel and ZOOM)

25-29 October  
Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

Managing Security  
Threats: Building Resilience  
for the Africa We Want



#tanaforum | [tanaforum.org](http://tanaforum.org)

## **I. Introduction**

The Tana Forum Secretariat in partnership with Humanity United organized a regional multi-stakeholders Pre-Tana Forum on the theme “Human and drug trafficking: Unlocking Human Freedom” on August 19, 2021 at Sheraton hotel, Ethiopia, utilizing a hybrid format – face-to-face interaction and virtual platform. The forum brought together representatives from AU Member States, AUC, RECs/RMs, experts, youth organizations, women’s networks, funding partners, development partners, representatives of foreign governments, research organizations, think tanks, and academics to bring forth open and frank discussions on the threats drug and human trafficking poses to peace and security in Africa. This is the outcomes Report of the Forum.

## **II. Background**

Drug and human trafficking is not only a global issue affecting everyone from all corners of the world but also an extensive and prevalent threat to peace and security in Africa. The challenges of drug trafficking has risen above all five regions of the continent where some are experiencing a rapid and disastrous decline. Besides engaging in illegal cultivation, manufacture, distribution and sale of prohibited substance, drug trafficking fosters other forms of crime, such as money laundering, corruption etc. It is also employed to raise income necessary to acquire weapons either by corrupting government officials responsible for the enforcement of law, the military or by misusing funds allocated to conflict resolution. This among others further set hurdles and lengthen the duration of armed conflicts making them more fatal. It is also an ideal source of money for terrorist groups, sustaining crime, criminal acts and deteriorating the rule of law. The continent is not only a major transit route in the international trade of controlled drugs but also major consumer and distributor. Coupled with the youth bulge and growing level of unemployment, this scenario poses further threats to security in Africa.

On the other hand, regardless of the various initiatives taken by the African Union including Ouagadougou Action Plan, the Migration Policy Framework for Africa, in 2006, and the African Union Commission Initiative against Trafficking (AU.COMMIT) in 2009, human trafficking remains a growing threat in Africa. Millions of men, woman and children are trafficked to the Western Europe and the Middle East from Africa. Women and children are also victims of intra -regional trafficking for purposes of agricultural and domestic work, prostitution including inscription in the military especially in the sub-Saharan region. Researches indicate that close to 3.7 million people in Africa live in modern slavery at any given time generating close to 13.Billion USD. The stringent fact about human trafficking is the fact that the close family members, relatives, friends and communities are the ones at the centre, more than half of it being female actors. Organized criminal groups are also recognized to take part in the human trafficking for various forms of

exploitation making it more complex and threatening. This situation is further worsened by the impacts of the Covid-19 and other health pandemics leaving devastating impact on the trafficked ones.

It is against this background that the Tana Forum Secretariat in partnership with Humanity United, organized this multi-stakeholder Pre-Tana Forum, along the margins of the 10th edition of the Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa which will take place on 25-29 October 2021, under the theme, "Managing Security Threats: Building Resilience for the Africa We Want".

### **III. Expected Outcomes**

The expected outcomes of this multi-stakeholders Pre-Tana Forum were to:

- Unpack the concept and nature of drug and human trafficking,
- Identify the causes, actors and impacts of drug and human trafficking on peace and security in African communities;
- Assess the current situation and regional responses to human and drug trafficking as well as identify challenges faced, lessons learnt and ongoing initiatives/measures put in place to curb drug and human trafficking on the continent;
- Determine the role of the AU, member states and RECs/RMs, communities and other stakeholders in deterring the effects of drug and human trafficking in Africa.
- Propose practical and sustainable policy recommendations targeting stakeholders;

### **IV. Welcoming and Opening Remarks**

Ms. Lettie T. Longwe, Interim Director of the African Peace and Security Program (APSP) and Head of the Tana Forum Secretariat, Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) warmly welcomed the participants and pointed out the fact that there was a need for African led solutions to address security threats posed by drug and human trafficking on the continent. In his keynote address, Mr. Sabelo Mbokazi, Head of the Labour, Employment and Migration Department of Social Affairs at the African Union (AU), thanked the organizers, on behalf of the AU, for responding to the phenomena of human and drug trafficking which is affecting Africa. He briefed participants on the existing Migration Policy Framework for Africa that was adopted by Heads of States in 2018 and informed participants that the AU was seized with the Libyan case where the situation is evolving from migration to human trafficking and other illicit activities. He further called on all stakeholders to work together in order to confront and deal with illicit activities as it poses security threats to Africa. Mr. Sabelo Mbokazi ended his address by wishing participants a fruitful deliberation.

## V. Proceedings of Session I: Human, Drug Trafficking and Security in Africa

The first session was moderated by H.E Amb. Salah S. Hammad (PhD), Head of the African Governance Architecture (AGA) Secretariat at the African Union (AU). The session addressed the impact of human and drug trafficking on peace and security in Africa. The aim was to identify the causes of human and drug trafficking on the continent and discuss the current situation as well as the impact of COVID-19 on the twin phenomena.

The first panelist of the session, Ms. Maureen Achieng, Chief of Mission to Ethiopia and Representative of the International Organization for Migration to the AU and UNECA, gave an overview of the current situation and scenarios of human and drug trafficking in Africa. She noted that human trafficking in Africa is increasingly prevalent with 23% of global human trafficking taking place on the continent. With regards to the current situation in different regions of the continent, Ms. Maureen highlighted the fact that Eastern and Southern regions of Africa continue to dominate in terms of smuggling and migrants while West Africa accounts for the highest number of human and drug trafficking despite their free movement regime. The region totals an estimated 3336 out of 4800 victims of illicit movements from sub Saharan Africa and these figures are likely to increase due to the COVID-19 pandemic which is scaling up the threat. She equally mentioned the fact that North Africa has become an important hub of transit activities for migrants originating from sub Saharan Africa and with the objective of getting to Europe. Ms. Maureen finally highlighted commendable initiatives that have been undertaken by some African countries to address the issue of irregular migration, trafficking and smuggling. This notably included, community sensitization in Ethiopia and the IGAD National Coordination Mechanisms.

Mr. Julius Lemaku, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer, Law Enforcement Expert at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Regional Office for Eastern Africa, intervened as second panelist on causes and contributing factors of human and drug trafficking in Africa. He noted that socio-political and economic factors such as lack of employment, demand for cheap labor and the search for greener pastures were some of the push and pull factors for drug and human trafficking on the continent, with women and children being the most vulnerable and targeted groups. He further informed participants that the UN ODC in its efforts to curb the effects of drug and human trafficking in Africa, support member states upon request, by building capacity of law enforcement officers and national institutions involved in the fight against drug and human trafficking. They equally strengthen policies of member states and create awareness among the youth and victims of human and drug trafficking.

The last panelist for this session was Mr. Francis Xavier Rwego, Special Representative of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) to the African Union. He addressed the impact of COVID-19 and other contributing factors scaling up human and drug trafficking in Africa such as weak law enforcement, weak border control management, corruption, armed conflicts, large family sizes and lack of educational and economic opportunities for the youth. Moreover,

the COVID-19 pandemic has created a larger pool of vulnerable persons who due to their worsening socio-economic situation are recruited for human trafficking. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic brought new trends to drug trafficking with maritime routes increasing due to borders closure, while increased stress and more free time triggered an increase in the use of illicit drugs. Mr. Francis pointed out the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic did not deter drug and human trafficking but instead increased the vulnerability of victims of these illicit practices. He therefore emphasized on the need for states to improve maritime security and address weaknesses of border controls in order to reverse this trend.

## **VI. Proceedings of Session II: Unlocking human freedom: Measures and responses to drug and human trafficking**

Session two assessed regional responses to human and drug trafficking on the continent and was moderated by Ms. Achieng Akena, Executive Director at the International Refugee Rights Initiative.

Ms. Raheemat Momodu, Head of the Human Security and Civil Society Division Directorate of Humanitarian and Social Affairs, Department of Social Affairs and Gender, ECOWAS Commission, outlined the various initiatives and responses from ECOWAS to tackle human and drug trafficking in the region. She informed participants that ECOWAS was applying a protection framework approach to the issue of human trafficking and other vulnerabilities. To that effect, the Regional Economic Community (REC) is implementing a project called Organized Crime: West African Response to Trafficking (Funded by the European Union and German Federal Foreign Office). ECOWAS equally promotes the integrated human security approach by undertaking high level capacity building and coordination in member states to deal with trans-border organized crimes and other issues that contribute to vulnerabilities and victimization of the individual. She further mentioned that ECOWAS organizes annual review meetings with focal national institutions working in the area of human trafficking to produce annual synthesis reports on the issue. They equally enhance the collection of data in the area of drug trafficking through the West African Epidemiology Network on Drug Use (WENDU). She highlighted some of the texts and action plans put in place by ECOWAS to prevent, suppress, and punish trafficking in persons such as the ECOWAS Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons. Moreover, ECOWAS cooperate with ECCAS on joint maritime security, engages in capacity building and training for those in areas of drug education, enhances forensic capacity, facilitates bilateral agreements and establishes coordination mechanism within member states on trans-national organized crime.

The second panelist, Mr. Richard Chelin, Senior Researcher at the Institute for Security Studies, touched on some challenges, significant lessons learnt, positive results achieved, and measures put in place to curb the impact of human and drug trafficking. He pointed out the fact that despite the existence of policies, strategies, conventions and protocols such as the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, their

implementation remains challenging. The need to take into account other challenges such as insufficient capacity, funding and resources was equally highlighted. Mr. Richard ended his intervention by emphasizing on the need to learn from survivors who are key actors in shaping policy and changing attitudes towards these illicit practices.

Ms. Maria Kisumbi, Senior Advisor, Policy & Government Relations, at Humanity United, closed this session by addressing the collaborative role of the AU, RECs, and member states in curbing the effects of drug and human trafficking in Africa. She emphasized on the importance of using a victim's centered approach to address issues of drug and human trafficking. She underlined that a human right based approach that involves victims and survivors will enable policy makers to address the root causes and find sustainable solutions to human and drug trafficking.

## VII. Recommendations and Takeaways

A number of perspectives emerged in the general discussions on practical and sustainable solutions to drug and human trafficking in Africa. The following recommendations and key takeaways were formulated by participants;

- Strengthen collaboration between the AU, RECs, member states, CSOs and other anti-trafficking actors in order to dismantle and eradicate trans-organized crime in Africa;
- Promote information campaigns and community conversation at grassroots level to provide livelihood options to communities as alternatives to irregular migration;
- Enhance community sensitization with a view to ensure a good understanding at community level of the negative impacts of drug and human trafficking;
- Adopt a human right based approach/victims centered approach to curb human trafficking and guarantee the rights of victims;
- Engage survivors and learn from their experience with a view to inform policy and provide practical solutions to human and drug trafficking.

In conclusion, participants envisioned further discussions on the interconnection between drug, human and arm trafficking in order to identify innovative approaches to fundamentally disrupt trans-border organized crimes in Africa.