



# ANCIP

AFRICAN NON-MILITARY CONFLICT  
INTERVENTION PRACTICES

## Working Papers

No. 1

August 2024

### **Inclusivity and Resistance: Lessons from peace agree- ment monitoring and over- sight mechanisms in Africa**

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# Inclusivity and Resistance: Lessons from peace agreement monitoring and oversight mechanisms in Africa

Dimpho Deleglise and Gilbert Khadiagala

## Summary

As part of its quest to promote 'African solutions to African problems', the African Union (AU) has played a prominent role in successfully mediating peace agreements on the continent, and monitoring their implementation. Scholars and practitioners agree that involving a broader range of parties and role players in monitoring the implementation of peace agreements can be practically and strategically beneficial, and ensure their long-term viability. However, pressing for greater representation in these structures also runs the risk of provoking resistance and opposition from political and military elites. To gain insight into the factors that contribute to inclusive peace accord implementation oversight mechanisms, we look at the African Union's most recent oversight body, the AU Monitoring, Verification, and Compliance Mechanism (AU MVCM), which operates in Tigray, Ethiopia. It was created as part of a peace deal reached through exclusive negotiations involving a small number of actors, and has retained a similar structure and operating model. The AU has emphasised numerous of its accomplishments. However, its operations and working methods are not widely known, in part due to a confidentiality clause that restricts public access to its reports and activities. Little is also known about its handling of agreement breaches by the parties. Some civil society organisations have expressed concern about its lack of a civilian component, arguing that it has impeded their ability to significantly influence reform initiatives and may unintentionally accommodate violent spoilers.

We compare the AU MVCM to similar mechanisms, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo's Joint Military Commission (JMC) and Burundi's Implementation Monitoring Committee (IMC), to demonstrate how increased transparency and representation can boost these mechanisms' legitimacy and public buy-in, while reducing spoiler effects. We propose three improvements to future AU-led mechanisms for supervising the execution of peace agreements in African countries. Firstly, their design should be based on a highly inclusive normative framework to reflect diverse representation, irrespective of the initial negotiations' closed nature. Secondly, in order to improve their overall effectiveness and public credibility, they should make the data they use more widely accessible to promote more evidence-based analysis of the quality and pace of a peace agreement's implementation. Third, resistance to diversifying representation in these structures should be recognised as a significant threat to the sustainability of both the agreement and its implementation, and one that requires a strategic response tailored to the context in which the agreement is being implemented.

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## Table of Contents

Abbreviations	4
1. Introduction	6
2. Terminologies and political dynamics	7
3. Comparative experiences	9
3.1 Burundi	9
3.2 The Democratic Republic of Congo	11
3.3 Ethiopia	13
4. Key findings	16
5. Conclusion	17
6. References	18
Imprint	22

## Abbreviations

AMIB	African Union Mission in Burundi
APRA	Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement (Burundi)
ARCSS	Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan
AU	African Union
AU MVCM	AU Monitoring, Verification, and Compliance Mechanism
AUC	AU Commission
CMD	Conflict Management Directorate
CNDD-FDD	Council for the Defence of Democracy–Force for the Defence of Democracy
CoHA	Cessation of Hostilities Agreement
DDR	disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ENDC	Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission
ENDF	Ethiopian National Defence Forces
FDN	Forces de Défense Nationale (Burundi)
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
ICGLR	International Conference of the Great Lakes Region
ICD	Inter-Congolese dialogue
IGAD	Inter-governmental Authority on Development
IDPs	internally displaced persons
IMC	Implementation Monitoring Committee (Burundi)
JCC	Joint Ceasefire Commission (Burundi)
JMEC	Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (South Sudan)
JMC	Joint Military Commission (DRC)
IMC	Implementation Monitoring Committee (Burundi)
MDRP	Multi-Country Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (Burundi)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MONUCUN	Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC
NCDDR	National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, and Rehabilitation (Burundi)
NDRP	National Demobilization and Reintegration Programme
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
ONUBUN	Operation in Burundi
PACTM	Political Agreement on Consensual Management of the Transition in the DRC
Palipehutu-FNL	Palipehutu-National Front for Liberation
PAPS	Political Affairs, Peace and Security
PSCF	Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework for the Great Lakes region
RPI	Regional Peace Initiative on Burundi
SADC	Southern African Development Community

SAPSD	South African Protection Service Detachment
SSR	Security sector reform
TGoB	transitional government of Burundi
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front
UN	United Nations
UNGA	UN General Assembly
UNICEF	UN International Children's Emergency Fund
UNSC	UN Security Council

## 1. Introduction

The African Union (AU) has played an increasingly important role in leading peace initiatives in Africa as part of executing its peace and security mandate and promoting the development of the continent. This has involved not only mediating peace agreements but also structuring mechanisms for monitoring their implementation. African peace processes have also been designed to be more inclusive, bringing together civil society groups, women, opposition politicians, and other third-party actors. But this can provoke strong resistance from various role players and even communities on the ground. However, studies of the implementation of peace agreements emphasise the importance of involving local, regional, and international third-party actors in compliance, monitoring, and verification mechanisms, thereby helping to ensure the impartiality, effectiveness, and sustainability of peace processes (Paffenholz et al. 2017; Joshi et al. 2017; Paladini and Molloy 2019; Aeby 2022). The literature also shows that 'decentralised' oversight through multi-stakeholder participation can help clear blockages in implementing particularly tenuous agreements, and even deal with 'spoilers' (groups with an interest in sabotaging the process) and the public rejection of peace settlements (Mitchell and Paul 2007; Mattes and Savon 2009).

Considering the potential for friction during the implementation of peace accords, it is essential to assess the inclusivity of the institutions set up to monitor and oversee their implementation. Understanding how the African Union (AU) conceptualises these mechanisms is particularly important since it increasingly presides over them to ensure continuity between the work of its mediators and high-level intervenors and the subsequent monitoring and compliance arrangements developed (Deleglise 2024a). The AU's expanding role in governing these mechanisms reflects its commitment to promoting African ownership of peace processes while addressing concerns from its members states about unwarranted international involvement in their internal affairs.

In this paper, we examine how these mechanisms are designed, how they function, and the factors contributing to their success and limitations. We focus on the deployment of the AU's Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mechanism (MVCM) in Ethiopia. The mechanism was conceptualised at the end of an exclusive peace process that resulted in the Permanent Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA), signed on 2 November 2022 by the Ethiopian government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), ending a two-year-long armed conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region. The MVCM is a clear example of how closed negotiations may inhibit inclusive monitoring and adherence to peace accords, as well as limiting excluded groups' ability to contribute constructively to the implementation process.

Oversight mechanisms are commonly determined during peace negotiations. If negotiators as well as the parties involved in the conflict prioritise the inclusion of a diverse group of actors during peace talks, their composition are more varied, and their methods of working are more transparent. For instance, various actors, including civil society groups and international partners, were involved in the negotiations for the August 2015 Agreement for the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS), mediated by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). They established the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) under Chapter seven of the ARCSS, with half of its members drawn from South Sudanese businesses, civil society groups, political parties and women's organisations, and the other half from the international community (Motsamai 2017: 7; Verjee 2020: 17). The Reconstituted JMEC, formed from a High-Level Revitalisation Forum (HLRF) of the ARCSS Parties following the agreement's breach in July 2016, maintained its former structure while incorporating previously estranged groups to improve prospects for a more

permanent ceasefire and the full implementation of the ARCSS (RJMEC 2023).

By contrast, when negotiations are limited to a narrow group of belligerents, as was the case during the Tigray armed conflict, the ensuing agreement and oversight structures do not clearly assign operational roles to civil society and other concerned actors. This shows that inclusive oversight mechanisms are strongly predicated on inclusive peace processes. It also implies that political actors may oppose the establishment of inclusive peace agreement implementation oversight mechanisms, or view them in zero-sum terms. Neither policymakers nor researchers have adequately addressed this problem in their analyses.

In this paper, we explore the variations in the design and working methods of peace agreement monitoring and oversight mechanisms, as well as the political and operational circumstances under which they function. Through a comparative study of these mechanisms, we aim to gain insight into their successes and how those led by African organisations may leverage more diverse and therefore more effective partnerships. We review scholarly work to investigate the different contexts in which these mechanisms were conceptualised and implemented, as well as the factors influencing their credibility and peace-building potential. The paper begins by discussing the concepts and terminologies used in the development of oversight structures, as well as the political contexts and dynamics that surround them. It then looks at Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo's experiences in developing these mechanisms as well as their operational frameworks and contexts. This is followed by a discussion of the MVCN, some general findings, and a conclusion.

## 2. Terminologies and political dynamics

The use of mechanisms to monitor, verify, and ensure compliance with peace agreements in Africa is not new. These mechanisms were initially focused on technical supervision to ensure compliance with ceasefires or arrangements for the cessation of hostilities during wars (Boulden 2000; Brickhill 2007, 2018; Molly and Bell 2018). More comprehensive peace treaties led to a growing need for more robust monitoring and oversight mechanisms with broader sets of responsibilities (Verjee 2020; Molloy and Bell 2019). Today, peace agreement implementation oversight mechanisms play numerous important roles in transitions from armed conflicts to peace.

The first is a purely monitoring and verifying role with regard to the general state of implementation of a peace agreement. A distinction is usually made between monitoring and verification. Monitoring refers to the technical process of collecting data and information about a particular activity or development about which verification judgements are to be made (Carl 2019: 33; Ross 2017: 15). Both the sources of the data and their reliability are decisive in making judgements about parties' compliance to a peace agreement. Data may stem from multiple sources, including the parties to the agreement, a dedicated on-site observer team, the general public, technological surveillance, as well as external sources operating on the ground.

Verification is the process of using monitoring information to assess parties' compliance with the provisions of the relevant accord. It entails a much broader investigation, analysis, and evaluation of information and evidence to detect or deter potential violations (Paladini and Molloy 2019). Ceasefires and other security-related elements of peace agreements, such as the withdrawal of forces, disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR), as well as cantonment to prevent a resurgence into violence, are frequently covered by monitoring and verification responsibilities. These are typically achieved by creating schedules,

standards and/or benchmarks used to assess compliance in implementation and support sustainability. These mechanisms can also play an active role in resolving disputes that arise during an agreement's implementation, determining breaches and issuing rulings on the disputes at hand (Molloy and Bell 2019: 12). They may also remedy exclusive accords if they provide platforms for direct or indirect civilian involvement, and establish constructive avenues between armed groups and civilians, particularly in implementing often difficult security sector reforms (Buchanan et al. 2021: 8). However, they seldom have any meaningful power to curb abuses.

The composition and structure of these mechanisms vary. But they frequently involve representation from a range of role players, including belligerents, expert monitors, and impartial third parties, as well as actors that do not necessarily exert coercive power over a peace process or a political transition (Ramsbotham 2022: 8). At the political level, they are overseen by joint commissions or implementation councils, with a neutral chairperson and other third-party or civil society representatives (Ramsbotham 2022: 8–9). Research indicates that oversight mechanisms are more effective when the information they use is easily accessible and widely disseminated (Mattes and Savun 2009). This happens when implementation bodies and actors are mandated to report to them in transparent ways, when parties grant them unrestricted access, and when they allow monitors to operate freely and impartially.

Monitoring, verification, and compliance mechanisms are not immune to politics in their contexts. In the wake of conflicts, they function in environments where political interests and calculations significantly influence the parties' political will. This may foster cosmetic compliance and the uneasy and unsanctioned accommodation of spoiler groups. However, they also serve as powerful bargaining tools, providing reassurance about the parties' commitment to the process. They may also become another arena of competition in a peace process because they signal its progress or regression to domestic and international audiences (Mac Ginty 2010: 96). Still, they can work to regain international support, especially if the country in question has suffered economic penalties or reputational damage. Their assessments and findings can thus serve as a confidence-building measure in as much as legitimising specific narratives to coerce political opponents into making concessions.

As with international peace support operations, oversight institutions also rely on the consent and cooperation of the host state to effectively carry out their duties. Without this support, their activities and movements may encounter various obstacles. This can happen when a government's interests conflict with the oversight institution's activities, or when politically influential groups fail to fulfill their commitments and restrict reporting on abuses committed by their members. In extreme cases, host state governments may limit the diplomatic space of these missions to the point where they become irrelevant. Obtaining international political and financial support can also be challenging, particularly when there are resource constraints and concerns about funders interfering with the process or promoting their own agendas. Addressing political sensitivities related to funding may require a significant amount of time, resulting in under-resourced mechanisms and potentially leading to an inability to contribute to the successful implementation of peace accords (Verjee 2020: 20).



### 3. Comparative experiences

#### 3.1 Burundi

On 28 August 2000, following mediation by Burundi's neighbours and various international actors, the long-standing ethnic conflict between the Hutu majority and the Tutsi minority was finally settled when 19 parties signed the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi (APRA 2000). The mediation, led by former South African president Nelson Mandela, produced a partial deal that left out two major Hutu rebel movements: the Council for the Defence of Democracy-Force for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD), led by Pierre Nkurunziza, and the Palipehutu-National Front for Liberation (Palipehutu-FNL), led by Agathon Rwasa. The agreement established a three-year power-sharing transitional government of Burundi (TGoB) based on ethnic quotas in government, the public service, and the security forces. The overall mandate of the TGoB included reaching ceasefire agreements with rebel groups, resettling refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), and drawing up a new constitution before elections at the end of the transition (Southall and Bentley 2005; Badmus 2017).

Because of Burundi's history of the violent manipulation of ethnic identities, the Arusha Agreement provided a detailed implementation framework with tight timelines. During the implementation, various national, regional, and international actors played roles at every phase of the process. In November 2000, the mediators convinced the Burundian parties to constitute an apex institution, the Implementation Monitoring Committee (IMC), composed of 31 members: two representatives of signatories to the agreement; one transitional government representative; six Burundians chosen for their moral integrity; and one representative each from the UN, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), and neighbours constituted as the Regional Peace Initiative (RPI) on Burundi. Meeting every second month as an executive council, the IMC was chaired by the UN Secretary General's Special Representative to the region, Burhani Dinka, an Ethiopian diplomat. The IMC had a broad mandate of monitoring, following up, supervising, co-ordinating and guaranteeing the effective implementation of the Arusha Agreement (APRA 2000: 50–55).

The Arusha Agreement also granted the IMC the oversight and coordination responsibility of commissions to deal with security sector reform (SSR) and disarmament, demobilisation, and rehabilitation (DDR). These included a technical commission to implement procedures for the establishment of a national defence and police force, a Joint Ceasefire Commission (JCC), a reintegration commission, and a national commission for the rehabilitation of displaced people. The agreement justified the dominant role of international actors in implementation by noting that this was "necessary, both as a moral and diplomatic guarantee and as a provider of technical, material and financial assistance" (APRA 2000: 75). The expeditious formation of the IMC before the formal start of implementation signalled the international commitment to Burundian peace, and assisted in building confidence among the parties.

Given the importance of the Ceasefire Commission to the effectiveness of implementation, it was presided over by a delegate of the UN Operation in Burundi (ONUB). It included representatives of the government, combatants, political parties and movements, the UN, the OAU, and RPI. According to the Arusha Agreement, the JCC's responsibilities included monitoring the parties and investigating violations of ceasefire agreements, identifying armed groups, deciding on cantonment areas and the number of armed combatants to be placed in them, monitoring DDR and the disarmament of illegally armed groups, and overseeing army reforms (APRA 2000: 72–73).

In October 2001, following the signing of the Arusha Agreement, South Africa deployed a 700-member South African Protection Service Detachment (SAPSD) to provide security to Burundian leaders returning from exile. This enabled the inauguration of a power-sharing transitional government in November 2001. SAPSD troops also became the precursor to the AU Mission in Burundi (AMIB) that deployed in February 2003. In May 2004, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) authorised the formation of ONUB, which replaced AMIB. With an authorised strength of 5,650 peacekeepers, ONUB operated on a Chapter VII peace enforcement mandate. Its roles were to monitor and provide security, disarm rebel forces, collect and destroy weapons, and monitor the cantonment of troops and disarmament of militias. Moreover, it played a vital role in protecting civilians in areas where its troops were deployed and reported on ceasefire violations (Adebajo 2011: 75–78; Khadiagala 2003: 235–252).

Due to the continued hostilities by rebel groups who had been left out of the agreement, the transitional government and its regional and international partners devoted their energies to convincing the armed rebel groups to accept the agreement. As Joshi (2022: 18) notes, implementation frequently coincides with further negotiations aimed at coaxing recalcitrant parties into embracing agreements. In Burundi, complex negotiations about ceasefires with two main rebel movements continued throughout implementation, with the last ceasefire truce concluded at the end of the transitional period in 2006.

The first ceasefire agreement resulted from the need to end skirmishes between the transitional government and the CNDD-FDD rebel group that controlled three western regions of Burundi. The ceasefire negotiations started in January 2001 under the mediation of South Africa's then deputy president, Jacob Zuma, assisted by the DRC and Gabon. In September 2003, after a protracted two-year mediation, the CNDD-FDD leader, Pierre Nkurunziza, signed the Pretoria Protocol on Defence, Security, and Power Sharing. This agreement allowed the CNDD-FDD to join the transitional government and participate in the JCC. The final ceasefire negotiations mediated by South Africa's minister for public safety and security, Charles Nqakula, lasted for three years until September 2006, when the Palipehutu-FNL leader agreed to participate in the JCC (Ayebare 2010: 81–83; Gasana and Boshoff 2003).

The TGoB and the Ceasefire Commission moved expeditiously to establish offices in all parts of the country that were responsible for the DDR process. To manage the phases of the DDR programme, the TGoB established a National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, and Rehabilitation (NCDRR) in August 2003, which was funded by the World Bank's Multi-Country Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (MDRP) for \$33 million. Due to significant delays in setting up the relevant institutions, the DDR programme only got under way in December 2004 following the parliamentary adoption of laws creating the new national army, the *Forces de Défense Nationale* (FDN) and the new police force, the *Police Nationale* (Boshoff and Vrey 2006: 31–45).

The TGoB allotted one year for the voluntary DDR of members of armed groups and the Burundian army to create a new national army of 30,000 and a police force of 20,000, with both forces divided equally between Tutsis and Hutus. The programme provided for an 18-months financial package for ex-combatants and ex-soldiers who were ineligible for recruitment in the army and the police, to enable them to return to civilian life. Because of restrictions on World Bank MDRP funding to armed groups, the EU supported financial compensations for ex-combatants and ex-soldiers until the end of March 2005, when they were disarmed. In April 2005, ONUB reportedly disarmed 7,329-armed rebels except for the Palipehutu-FNL. The Ministry of Defence achieved its targeted strength of 30,000 for the FDN by the end of 2005. By January 2006, 19,739 ex-combatants and ex-soldiers had been demobilised, marking the completion of DDR (Boshoff and Vrey 2006: 44–46).

Analysts have described Burundi's DDR process as a model for future multi-stakeholder engagements because of the coordination of many actors and the strict adherence to the plans established in the Arusha Agreement. According to Boshoff and Vrey (2006: 46), the success stemmed from the fact that "the process followed the plan." In addition, the engagement of ONUB, the World Bank, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) – for the reintegration of child soldiers –, and the EU provided the process with vital resources. Crucially, the momentum generated by the incremental implementation of ceasefires and DDR helped to unlock other provisions of the Arusha Agreement, such as the resettlement of refugees and IDPs, constitutional reforms, and democratic elections in 2005 (Joshi et al. 2015: 880).

Burundi yields three lessons for the implementation of peace agreements. First, the substantial energies devoted in the arduous negotiations for the APRA paid off because they created a solid basis for peace implementers to work within clear and unambiguous terms of engagement. Second, a large part of the implementation hinged on building confidence among the parties, reducing the disagreements and uncertainties that typically dodge these processes. Finally, the implementation was an exercise in joint ownership of the process by Burundian, regional, and international actors.

### **3.2 The Democratic Republic of Congo**

The DRC has a history of protracted conflicts. Numerous peace accords have been signed over the years, involving various experiments with monitoring and verification mechanisms. When several states in the region invaded the DRC in August 1998 in a bid to overthrow the government of Laurent Kabila, South Africa and Zambia led a mediation initiative that resulted in the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement of July 1999. Although leaders of five states who were parties to the conflict signed this agreement, they excluded Congolese rebel groups. The major issues in the search for a settlement were the withdrawal of regional armies (Rwanda, Uganda, Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe) from the DRC and the prevention of cross-border arms proliferation. Its main provisions included an immediate cessation of hostilities; the formation of a Joint Military Commission (JMC) comprising the belligerent parties to investigate ceasefire violations under OAU-appointed observers; mechanisms to disarm the militias and monitor the withdrawal of regional troops according to a set calendar; and the deployment of a UN Chapter VII force tasked with disarming armed groups, collecting weapons from civilians, and providing humanitarian assistance. Through Resolution 1279, the UN Security Council authorised the formation of the UN Organisation Mission in the DRC (MONUC) to help with implementing the agreement (UNSC 1999; Carayannis and Weiss 2003).

While the JMC aimed at directly involving conflicting parties in implementing the peace agreement, it had significant flaws. Firstly, it assumed that former combatants could seamlessly transition into the role of peacekeepers while still safeguarding their own interests. It also disregarded armed factions operating in the DRC that had no incentive to lay down their arms. Secondly, the JMC lacked substantial authority, with the OAU primarily serving as an observer rather than an enforcer. Lastly, it had unrealistic expectations regarding the prompt deployment of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) to support what became a prolonged peace process. The initial team of MONUC observers, predominantly from Algeria, Nigeria, Senegal, and Malawi served for just one year. Due to an annual funding shortfall of about \$6 million, the AU did not renew the mandate of its observers. All of these factors hindered the implementation of JMC's mandate (Malan and Boshoff 2002).

In July 2002, the former South African president Thabo Mbeki and the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, successfully brokered a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the DRC and Rwanda. This historic agreement led to the withdrawal of Rwandan troops from the eastern DRC and established plans for disarming the former Rwandese army and the Interahamwe forces in the eastern DRC. To ensure the success of this accord, South Africa and the UN took a leading role by establishing a joint secretariat in Kinshasa, the capital of the DRC. This secretariat, which included high-level MONUC officials and representatives from South Africa's security and foreign affairs ministries, worked tirelessly with the JMC, Rwanda, and the DRC to implement a voluntary DDR program for regional-armed forces (UNSC 2002; Carayannis and Weiss 2003). Despite challenges, this initiative signified a concerted effort to bring about peace and stability in the region. Additionally, Uganda and Rwanda established a Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, demonstrating a commitment to preventing disputes along their shared border. Though faced with obstacles, the dedication and cooperation exhibited during this time represented a step forward in the journey toward sustainable peace and security in the Great Lakes region (UNSC 2002).

The ceasefire implementation in the DRC obtained a new lease on life when the UN Security Council, through Resolution 1291 of February 2000, authorised a robust force of 5,537 plus 500 civilian observers to boost MONUC's strength. Working with the JMC, MONUC assumed responsibility for monitoring and implementing the ceasefire agreements reached with regional actors, in anticipation of a political settlement among Congolese parties. This reinforcement significantly spurred the negotiations under the framework of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD) that resulted in the Global and Inclusive Transition Agreement in the DRC signed in Pretoria, South Africa, in December 2002. This agreement required the integration of opposing armed forces, economic reconstruction, national reconciliation, drafting of a new constitution, and humanitarian assistance (Carayannis and Weiss 2003: 302–304).

The Pretoria agreement paved the way for further accords among the major Congolese parties, ultimately leading to the adoption of a new constitution in 2005 and the first democratic elections in 2006. In 2004, in anticipation of the political transition, the UN Security Council amended MONUC's mandate and approved an increase of its personnel by 5,900. This empowered MONUC to establish and maintain a presence in critical areas to facilitate the restoration of security and confidence in the transitional arrangements, deter threats to the political process, and ensure unhindered operations for UN personnel (Muraya and Ahere 2012; Carayanis 2009).

But stability was transient. On 24 February 2013, amidst growing violence in the Eastern DRC, caused primarily by insurgent groups and meddling by neighbouring states, 13 states signed the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (PSCF) for the Great Lakes Region under the auspices of the UN and AU. This was a unique arrangement, since it filled the void left by the Great Lakes region's lack of a robust regional organisation to deal with continued conflicts in the DRC. The PSCF's efficacy has predominantly depended entirely on the power of persuasion through regular national and regional dialogues (Khadiagala 2022: 33). It has four guarantor institutions: the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the UN, AU, and the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). It also encompasses two governance structures: a Regional Oversight Mechanism, which convenes annually at the Heads of State and Government level to discuss the implementation of the national and regional commitments of the signatory countries; and a Technical Support Committee. The governance mechanisms of the Framework are co-chaired by the UN and AU.

The UN subsequently designated its special envoys to help facilitate the agreement's execution. This was primarily a diplomatic endeavour that necessitated coordination with envoys from a diverse array of regional diplomatic missions to support the implementa-

tion of PSCF initiatives. In 2014, UN envoys persuaded the DRC government to establish a National Oversight Mechanism for the PSCF (Khadiagala 2022: 70). The PSCF's Regional Oversight Mechanisms have further been fortified by regular meetings among key actors from Angola, Burundi, Rwanda, Kenya, and Uganda. However, by its tenth anniversary in 2023, the PSCF confronted significant obstacles because of the deterioration in bilateral relations between the DRC and Rwanda. These conflicts have led to deficits in both political will and capital, consequently diminishing the efficiency of the oversight mechanisms (UNSC 2023; Khadiagala 2022).

The DRC's peace process has become more challenging over the years, as conflicts in its Eastern region have persisted, despite the relative calm that has existed in most of the country since the first elections in 2006. The DRC's experience has thus yielded different insights. While there has been gradual inclusion of various political, armed, civil society, and external actors in its oversight structures, incomplete implementation of agreements has limited their efficacy. These agreements have relied on the collaboration of national, regional, and international actors. However, conflicting motives among Congolese players and the involvement of regional actors exploiting various parties in the DRC have often impeded their meaningful participation and constructive impact in overseeing post-agreement activities. Yet the DRC also exemplifies some of the benefits of decentralising implementation oversight through regional and local processes, and combining top-down and bottom-up activities to support the implementation of its peace accords.

### 3.3 Ethiopia

#### *The 2022 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and the AU Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mechanism*

Since its launch on 29 December 2022, the AU-MVCM has been primarily focused on working with the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) to implement the Permanent Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) signed in Pretoria, South Africa, on 2 November 2022 (African Union 2022a). The mission entails monitoring the two CoHA signatories' compliance with the agreement to restore peace, security, and stability in Tigray, one of Ethiopia's 12 semi-autonomous regions. Tigray was the site of a polarizing and devastating conflict triggered by constitutional disputes over the respective powers of the federal government and regional states (de Waal 2021). The conflict claimed the lives of and displaced hundreds of thousands of individuals, and spread to neighbouring regions such as Amhara and Afar. It also generated reports of atrocities committed by both sides (ICHREE 2022; OHCHR 2023; AWA 2023).

Expectations for the MVCM in and beyond Ethiopia have fluctuated (Deleglise 2024b), owing to the severe impacts of the conflict and the difficulties of the post-war setting, as well as its regional reach and internationalisation. Militias from the Amhara region, the country's second-most populous, fought alongside the FDRE military. They eventually rebelled against the Ethiopian government partly due to their exclusion from the peace pact and concerns that the FDRE would reclaim the disputed territory captured during the conflict for the TPLF, which had governed the territory since the early 1990s (ICG 2023). The agreement did not include Eritrea either, which had a rapid rapprochement with Ethiopia when President Abiy Ahmed came into power in 2018. The rapprochement developed into a strong military alliance with Ethiopia against the TPLF, to reduce its influence, following years of antagonism involving power struggles, territorial disputes and a border war lasting from 2008 to 2008 (Lyons 2009). Although Sudan was not actively involved in the conflict,

it reportedly supplied military assistance to the TPLF and acquired some land along its shared border with Tigray (Abel Abate 2023; Horner and Soliman 2023).

The internationalisation of the conflict also contributed to pressures to agree on compromises in order to initiate peace negotiations, and the subsequent development of the MVCM. Criticism from some Western governments, multilateral institutions such as the European Union (EU), and even the UN, whose investigators claimed that the Ethiopian government weaponised starvation and other heinous human rights violations against Tigray's civilian population (OHCHR 2023), pitted the FDRE against many of these actors. There were other suspicions that the US, which was reportedly supporting the TPLF, was pursuing a regime change strategy in Ethiopia similar to that of Libya or Iraq (Bruton and Fritz-Gerald 2021).

The FDRE had declared an offensive military operation in the Tigray region to restore the rule of law and the central government's authority, thereby treating the conflict as an internal matter that it could resolve on its own (Embassy of Ethiopia 2021). Direct negotiations for a settlement in Pretoria, South Africa, therefore took place after a protracted impasse to concede to dialogue and in the face of significant resistance to engage civilian actors and mistrust of Western involvement. Months of backchannel discussions laid the groundwork for the Pretoria talks. They were led by former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, who served as the AU's High Representative for the Horn of Africa, and former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, who was later appointed to the AU High-Level Panel in Ethiopia, along with Phumzile Mlambo, South Africa's former deputy president. A significant amount of covert internal mediation by insiders also occurred, including with the IGAD executive secretary, Workneh Gebeyeh, Ethiopian political and military elites, as well as high-level officials from third-party governments, including the US. The Pretoria front-level negotiations were frequently overshadowed by a preference to operate in the shadows and difficulty in reaching an agreement on the additional involvement of other actors in the negotiations besides the disputing parties. The US, UN, and IGAD were all granted observer status (African Union 2022a).

The TPLF and the FDRE's political and military leaders were the exclusive and primary architects of the CoHA. AU negotiators believed that this would, at the very least, increase their ownership of the accord. Considering the two-year impasse to end the armed conflict, the CoHA was an important milestone. The FDRE and the TPLF agreed to immediately cease hostilities, allowing humanitarian organisations to restore services and provide unimpeded humanitarian access to the Tigray region (African Union 2022a). Article 11 of the CoHA further established a Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mechanism (MVCM) (African Union 2022a: §11). Its stated goals are to assist parties in implementing commitments made in the agreement, lay the foundation for political dialogue among the parties, and monitor the parties' conduct concerning their obligations. Its secondary objectives are to help CoHA signatories find amicable solutions to alleged violations of the agreement; suggest procedures for resolving breaches of commitments; guarantee the complete disarmament of the TPLF combatants; and ensure that the TPLF's weapons have been placed in areas designated by the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF) (African Union 2022a). Still, there were significant points of contention during the negotiations. Among them were disputes over contested territories in Western and Southern Tigray, the precise modalities for the agreement's execution, the timing and sequencing of the DDR process, and the withdrawal of Eritrean troops from Tigray. The DDR was originally planned to be completed within a month. However, the sheer volume of an estimated 370,000 combatants has made it one of the world's biggest, with a projected cost of \$849 million spread out over four to five years (Harter 2023).

Subsequently, three meetings were held to facilitate the CoHA's implementation process, during which crucial decisions regarding its structure, compositions and working procedures were made. The first was a meeting of senior commanders in Nairobi, Kenya from 7–12 November 2022, to define the precise modalities and sequencing of implementation activities as well the measures for disarmament (African Union 2022d). The Commanders signed a "Senior Commanders' Declaration" outlining the MVCM's general operational procedures (African Union 2022b). The second meeting was a Joint Committee formed by senior commanders to develop a comprehensive implementation plan for the disarmament process from 30 November to 5 December 2022 in Shire, Ethiopia. The third meeting in Nairobi, Kenya from 21 to 23 December 2022, produced and approved the Terms of Reference for the deployment of the MVCM's Team of African experts (African Union 2022c).

The mechanism was designed to include ten observers from the home countries of the High-Level Panel members – Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa – as well as two liaison officials from the TPLF and FDRE. It has a Joint Committee headed by delegates from IGAD, the FDRE, and the TPLF, as well as members of the AU High-Level Panel. It does not include a civilian component. The parties also included a confidentiality clause in the mechanism's terms of reference, which prohibits MVCM members, advisors, and support personnel from engaging with the media during and after the conclusion of their responsibilities. This is the reason their reports have remained classified and the operational details of the mechanism are not well understood.

The AU MVCM was officially launched in Mekelle, the capital of Tigray, on 29 December 2022. Its initial six-month mandate was extended three times: in July and December 2023 (see AU Commission 2022; 2023) as well as in January 2024 during the Special Joint Committee meeting convened by the AU Commission to discuss the Tigray peace process. The Committee recommended to the PSC that its mandate be extended from 1 January to 31 December 2024. The mission's monitors submit their reports in a structured and confidential manner to the AU Commission in Addis Ababa. These reports are delivered to a coordination cell within the Conflict Management Directorate (CMD), which is part of the AU Commission's Political Affairs, Peace, and Security (PAPS) portfolio. The CMD director and the PAPS commissioner review the reports weekly and monthly and take necessary actions. Any unresolved issues are brought to the attention of the Joint Committee, which may further refer them to the AU PSC for additional consideration. The reports are not made public, and brief summaries of the findings are released by the AU from time to time.

### *Implementation experiences*

The AU has emphasised the MVCM's achievements in overseeing the implementation of the CoHA in several press statements (African Union 2024b, 2024c). It has mentioned progress made in transferring heavy and medium-sized weaponry from the Tigray Armed Combatants to the Ethiopian National Defence Forces. It has also highlighted the restoration of vital services, humanitarian aid deliveries, economic activities, the establishment of the Interim Regional Administration of Tigray by the FDRE, and the National Commission for Reintegration to oversee the DDR process (African Union 2024b, 2024c). Some of the significant challenges include the resettlement of internally displaced persons (IDPs), especially those from the contested regions, the implementation of the DDR process, which has been subsumed by the National Rehabilitation Commission (UNDP 2023), and a transitional justice initiative as stipulated in the agreement (African Union 2024c). These accomplishments, therefore, indicate that the CoHA's short- and long-term goals are intertwined, suggesting that more diverse involvement in long-term priorities like DDR and transition-

al justice – from local civil society organisations that support women, youth, indigenous groups, victims, and survivors – may be necessary for these initiatives to take root. Trust in political elites and institutions is typically low after conflicts, and Tigray is no exception. Expanding representation to local civil society groups and other actors operational on the ground would harness local expertise and increase the legitimacy of the peace process since local actors are considered nonpartisan (AWA 2023).

The MVCM faced structural issues during its initial months of operation because it was inadequately resourced. Until recently, the Ethiopian government was staunchly opposed to the involvement of external partners in a process that it felt should be entirely Ethiopian-owned. Ethiopia has directed its opposition mostly at foreign funding, unlike the processes in Burundi and the DRC, which have received significant international backing, including political, financial, and technical assistance. International players can play an important role in resolving disputes and applying political pressure on recalcitrant parties. Future activities are scheduled to be sponsored by the AU Peace Fund's Crisis Reserve Facility, which contributed \$1 million to the DDR process (African Union 2024a).

The CoHA is an imperfect accord with several unresolved issues that may be considered unfinished business by the treaty's parties and excluded groups that actively participated in the conflict (Harter 2023; Fana Gebresenbet and Yonas Tariku 2023; Addis Standard 2024). The MVCM's accomplishments therefore demonstrate tensions between short-term efforts to end hostilities and long-term commitments to address both its consequences and root causes. Peace treaties negotiated only by political and armed elites oftentimes deliver only partial solutions, failing to address many of the necessary conditions for long-term peace. Inconsistencies between short- and long-term implementation may jeopardise the peace process's sustainability. By broadening participation in implementation oversight, it is possible to circumvent obstacles, reduce resistance to the reforms, and sustain the momentum of the peace process.

#### 4. Key findings

1. Failures of inclusive peace processes generate exclusive oversight mechanisms which can hinder the ability of other groups to influence and oversee peace deal enforcement. By contrast, oversight mechanisms that open up parallel channels for participation, representation, and influence can help to decentralise implementation borne out of exclusive elite pacts.
2. Third-party facilitators and mediators involved in peace negotiations need to adopt more nuanced approaches to address resistance to inclusion in oversight mechanisms. Although more research is needed to understand the different types of resistance in terms of motivation, actors, and tactics, it is evident that third-party intervenors need innovative strategies to shift conflict actors' perspectives.
3. Oversight mechanisms consisting solely of parties in conflict, and no civilians might lead to a sense of security and impunity and reinforce the power imbalances these mechanisms are meant to surmount. Their operations are often not made public in these situations; which can deprive war-affected populations of timely information about the implementation of vital provisions.
4. Peace agreements negotiated between armed elites frequently only offer partial solutions, since many aspects crucial for long-term peace extend beyond official implementation plans. While these mechanisms attempt to enhance local owner-



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ship of peace agreement implementation, they stand to gain from the involvement of a variety of domestic and external actors with unique resources and responsibilities.

5. While monitoring mechanisms should be rightfully led by continental and regional organisations, external participation can boost their overall effectiveness and credibility by providing technical, financial and political support, in addition to some degree of neutrality.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have shown that resistance to including various parties in peace processes can lead to the creation of oversight mechanisms for peace agreement implementation that are exclusive and obscure. This may undermine their effectiveness and public support. We have also demonstrated that implementing and overseeing an agreement is a complex and time-consuming process that is prone to delays, breakdowns, and collapse. However, we believe that the legitimacy of the oversight mechanisms and the ultimate effectiveness of the agreements are critical to the long-term success of any peace process. We have examined previous oversight mechanisms, such as those in Burundi and the DRC, to shed light on how to design and operate more inclusive oversight structures. However, the circumstances and politics surrounding them are distinct. It is vital to have further studies to comprehend specific forms of resistance, and ways African intervenors might address them, as well as the conditions that boost the efficacy of oversight mechanisms that support sustainable implementation of peace agreements. This paper has emphasized the importance of several factors, including creating comprehensive, inclusive, and high-quality agreements, involving a diverse range of actors in the implementation and oversight processes, and mobilizing economic resources and political will to ensure their sustainability. The unique experiences in implementing peace agreements in Burundi, the DRC, and Ethiopia add significant weight to these arguments. For the AU to continue supervising African peace processes and related oversight institutions, it will be crucial to look into all possible ways to overcome obstacles and reduce opposition to enlarging the purview of peace deal supervision structures.

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### **The Competence Network “African Non-military Conflict Intervention Practices” (ANCIP)**

The competence network “African non-military conflict intervention practices” combines empirical basic research with theory building and strategic policy advice. Funded by the German Ministry for Education and Research for the period 2022-2026, the collaborative project seeks to (1) establish an online database of non-military interventions by the African Union (AU) and African Regional Economic Communities (RECs) (from 2004 onwards), (2) empirically reconstruct non-military intervention practices and routines by specific African actors, and (3) advance the theoretical debate as well as strategic policy advice on these issues. For more information: <https://ancip-project.de/>

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