

OCCASIONAL PAPER

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ABSTRACT

Regional conflicts continue to constitute threats to states and communities within the Eastern African Region. These include border attacks by armed groups and communities straddling the borders, smuggling, motor vehicle thefts, drug trafficking, flows of small arms, landmines, and in recent time's threats of terror networks (ICGLR, 2006). The areas along borders make it ideal for the activities to flourish. Obstacles (terrain, forests, deserts) to accessibility and the absence of penetrative transport and communication channels make the situation even worse. Responses to these threats have been state based and tended to generate security dilemmas and complexities in this region.

Africa's Regional Economic and Regional Mechanisms, working with the AU have made substantial strides in assuming primary responsibility to curb these security problems thus, maintaining peace and security in the region (Berman, E. &Sams, K., 2000). The best known examples of this in the East African Region are: Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), East African Community (EAC) and the International Conference of Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and the Eastern African Standby Force (EASF), which serves as a regional mechanism.

In this paper, Regional Economic Communities (RECS) and Sub Regional Organizations will be interchangeably. The paper is divided into six parts: The introduction, followed by an outline of the nature of conflicts in the Eastern African Region. The next section examines conflict prevention and the importance of sub regional organizations in conflict prevention. The paper then focuses on an examination of the existing sub regional organizations in the area and their efforts in conflict prevention, their success, challenges and limitations. The final session introduces EASF, an initiative by the Africa Union and what its existence in the region means for conflict prevention. The paper closes with some conclusions and ways of enhancing the role of these RECS and Regional Mechanisms (RMs) to become more effective in conflict prevention.