

# GENEVA PEACE WEEK MEETS ADDIS ABABA

JUNE 2025

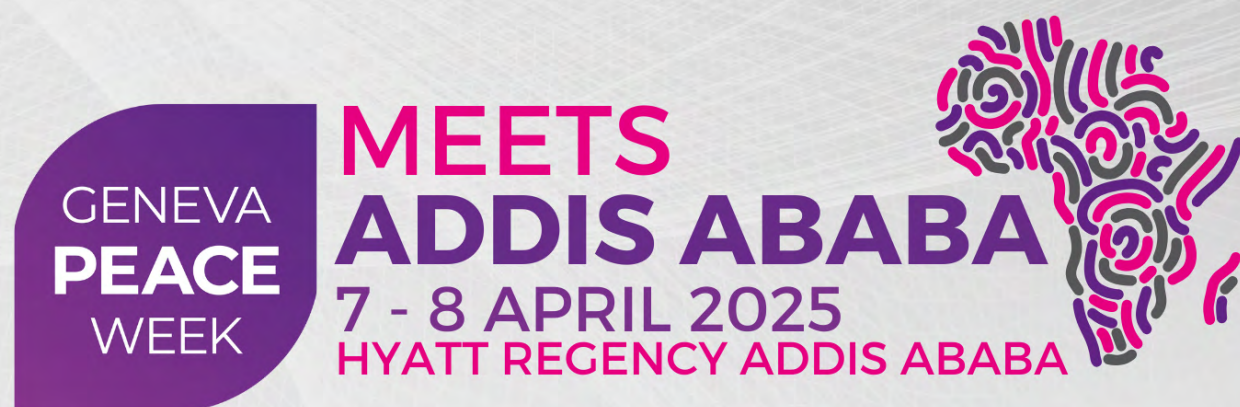


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## FOREWORD

Since its creation in 2014, Geneva Peace Week has been a leading, open and inclusive platform, bringing together diverse voices, perspectives, and practices on peace from Geneva and around the world. The GPW Meets initiative expands the reach of Geneva Peace Week by fostering dynamic, inclusive, and policy-relevant dialogues in and between multilateral centers of peacebuilding. It strengthens collaborations and serves as a bridge between global and regional efforts on peace. Following a successful launch in New York in 2023, which linked Geneva's peacebuilding ecosystem with New York's global diplomatic and peacebuilding architecture, the second edition shifted its focus to Addis Ababa, Africa's diplomatic capital and a vital player in shaping peace and security across the continent and beyond.

Held over two days from 7 to 8 April 2025 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Addis Ababa, this edition featured a dynamic and engaging programme. The first day opened with a high-level plenary session and a Peace Dialogue on Climate, Peace, and Security, setting the stage for meaningful exchanges between Geneva-based and Addis Ababa-based peacebuilding communities.

The second day was composed of two thematic sessions, selected through a call for participation, ensuring the agenda reflected pressing issues and grassroots perspectives on International Humanitarian Law and the challenges posed by new technologies for youth peacebuilders.

The event concluded with a special edition of the PeaceTalks, where speakers shared inspiring personal stories of resilience, dialogue, and transformation, followed by a reception that offered space for informal networking.

Geneva Peace Week Meets Addis Ababa was co-organized by the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, and Amani Africa Media and Research Services. Delivered in a hybrid format, the event attracted broad participation and fostered meaningful exchanges on African peace and security priorities, with a strong emphasis on locally-led efforts and how international actors can better support and learn from these initiatives.

With over 870 session attendances, this edition marked a step toward reimagining and connecting the peacebuilding ecosystems. We look forward to continuing the conversation at Geneva Peace Week 2025, and to building on the momentum sparked in Addis.

# PROGRAMME

## MONDAY 7 APRIL 2025

14:00-16:00, Hyatt Regency Hotel

### HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY: GEOPOLITICAL CHALLENGES FOR PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA

Organizers: Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Amani Africa

16:00-16:30

### COFFEE-BREAK

16:30-18:00, Hyatt Regency Hotel

### GENEVA-ADDIS ABABA PEACE DIALOGUE: CLIMATE, PEACE & SECURITY

Organizers: Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

## TUESDAY 8 APRIL 2025

10:30-11:00

### NETWORKING BREAKFAST

11:00-12:30, Hyatt Regency Hotel

### THEMATIC PANEL 1: ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE PEACE THROUGH IHL

Organizers: International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) , Addis Ababa University International Humanitarian Law Clinic

13:30-14:00

### COFFEE-BREAK

14:00-15:30, Ballroom, Hyatt Regency Hotel

### THEMATIC PANEL 2: OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES, DIGITALIZATION & AI FOR YOUTH PEACEBUILDERS

Organizers: UNDP Regional Service Centre for Africa, UNDP Geneva, the African Union Commission, Inclusive Peace, ISS

16:00-17:00, Fendika, Hyatt Regency Hotel

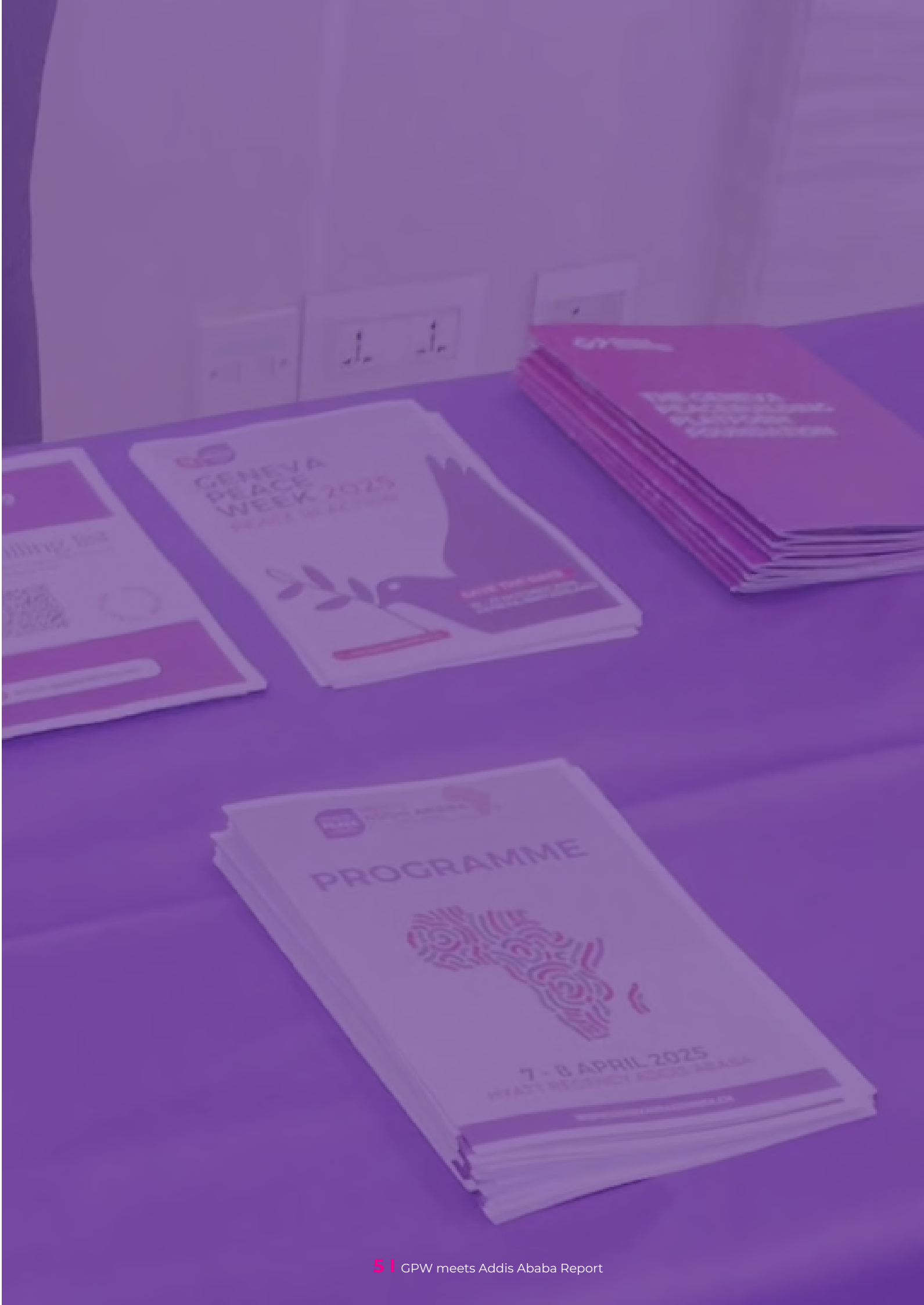
### ADDIS ABABA PEACETALKS

Organizers: Interpeace, Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

17:00-19:00, Courtyard, Hyatt Regency Hotel

### COCKTAIL RECEPTION

Organizer: Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs





# HIGH LEVEL PLENARY: GEOPOLITICAL CHALLENGES FOR PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA

**331 Participants**  
Online: 242 | In-person: 89)

## WELCOME ADDRESSES

- **Amb. Pietro Mona**, Swiss Permanent Representative to the AU, IGAD & UNECA
- **Dr. Annyssa Bellal**, Executive Director, Geneva Peacebuilding Platform
- **H.E Jafar Bedru Geletu**, Executive Director, Institute of Foreign Affairs, Ethiopia

## PANEL DISCUSSION

- **Dr. Patrick Osakwe**, Poverty and Inequalities Branch, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (online)
- **Awa Dabo**, Director & Deputy Head, UN Department of Political & Peacebuilding Affairs (online)
- **Amb. Nathalie Chuard**, Director, DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance
- **Itonde Kakoma**, President, Interpeace (online)

## MODERATOR

- **Dr. Solomon Ayele Derso**, Founding Director, Amani Africa

The opening high-level session brought together African and international peacebuilding leaders to address how Africa is navigating an era of rapidly changing global power dynamics. With major powers shifting alliances and multilateral frameworks under stress, the panel discussed Africa's agency, leadership, and the need for greater inclusion in global governance. The session highlighted the critical role of the African Union (AU) and its member states, stressed that solutions to the continent's peace and security challenges must be Africa-led, and called for a rethinking of international partnerships to ensure equity and sustainability. Panelists also explored the intersections between economic transformation, inclusive governance, and security sector reform as building blocks for lasting peace.

Ambassador Mona opened Geneva Peace Week Meets Addis Ababa with a powerful reflection on the dual nature of our times marked by both profound challenges and emerging opportunities. Quoting Charles Dickens, he framed the current global moment as one of crisis and potential, emphasizing the urgent need for a more inclusive, equitable, and effective multilateral system. He highlighted Switzerland's deep respect for African leadership and local knowledge, underlining that sustainable peace must be rooted in local realities. Stressing the importance of networked multilateralism, Ambassador Mona pointed to the growing need for stronger connections between diplomatic hubs like Geneva and Addis Ababa. He acknowledged the limitations



High level Plenary, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Ballroom © Olivier Chamard



of the current multilateral system, calling for honesty, reform, and renewed trust. He affirmed that Switzerland stands firmly behind African-led initiatives and is committed to fostering inclusive, trust-based partnerships that give African voices a central role, both in shaping local peace efforts and in influencing global decision-making. Despite today's complex geopolitical landscape, he expressed hope that through collective engagement, this moment could become a "spring of hope" rather than a "winter of despair."

**"Peacebuilding can only be sustainable when rooted in local and regional realities."**

In her welcome address, Dr. Bellal underlined the significance of holding Geneva Peace Week in Africa for the first time. She spoke about the need to bridge divides between the Global North and South, and emphasized that knowledge-sharing and inclusive dialogue are vital for effective peacebuilding. Bellal argued that African perspectives and expertise must be more than 'invited' into the global arena, they must shape the agenda. She encouraged innovative and practical collaborations between Geneva-based organizations and African partners and highlighted the role of the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform in facilitating these connections.

**"Geneva Peace Week in Addis is not symbolic, it's a reflection of a needed shift in peacebuilding geography."**

H.E. Geletu offered a compelling case for African ownership over peace and security initiatives, emphasizing that Africa's future must be shaped by Africans. He pointed out the risks of dependency on external actors and called for stronger, more resilient African institutions capable of meeting today's challenges. Geletu also stressed the importance of leveraging Africa's youthful population, natural resources, and regional



Amb. Pietro Mona © Olivier Chamard



Dr. Annysa Bellal © Olivier Chamard

organizations like the AU, and called for enhanced intra-African cooperation to respond to both traditional and emerging security threats.

**"Our institutions must be strong enough to meet the demands of our people and the changing world."**

During the panel discussion, Dr. Osakwe connected Africa's security challenges to persistent economic inequalities and lack of structural transformation. He argued that peace cannot be achieved without addressing deep-rooted poverty and unemployment. Osakwe called for African countries to push for fairer international trade rules and regional integration to drive industrialization, create jobs, and reduce vulnerabilities to conflict. He warned that exclusion from global trade systems and unfair terms perpetuate instability.

Awa Dabo spoke on the urgent need for inclusive governance and youth participation in peacebuilding. She stressed that young Africans are not simply recipients of peace efforts, but active agents of change. Dabo also highlighted the role of preventive diplomacy and the importance of addressing root causes of conflict, including marginalization, weak institutions, and lack of accountability. She called for a shift from reactive to proactive approaches in international support.

**"Young Africans are peacebuilders, not just beneficiaries of peace."**

Itonde Kakoma focused on the importance of community-led peacebuilding and social cohesion. He shared lessons from Interpeace's work across Africa, showing that sustainable peace is only possible when local communities are empowered to identify problems and drive solutions. Kakoma also discussed the significance of resilience, defined as the capacity to adapt



and recover from shocks, as central to peace processes, and cautioned against one-size-fits-all interventions.

Finally, Ambassador Chuard addressed the role of security sector governance as essential to peace and stability. She underscored that security institutions should be accountable, transparent, and people-centered, rather than being sources of power for elites. Amb. Chuard advocated for reforms that build public trust, ensure civilian oversight, and promote human rights. She argued that effective security sector reform must be context-sensitive and responsive to citizens' needs.

**“Accountable security fosters both legitimacy and stability.”**

Dr. Dersso, serving as moderator, emphasized that Africa must move beyond a reactive stance and assert itself as a co-creator of peace and

security norms. He frequently prompted speakers and participants to explore how African agency can be strengthened, not just politically, but structurally and institutionally. He concluded with a strong thought on how to ensure a more sustainable and just multilateral system in navigating this Gramscian epoch when the old order is dying and the new is yet to be born.

**“Africa must stop reacting to global dynamics and start shaping them.”**

He also challenged the international community to recognize and correct imbalances in current partnership models, emphasizing the need for frameworks that ensure Africa's interests are also fairly secured, and its peace and security architecture can be adapted to current and future challenges.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Reinforce African Leadership and Ownership:** International actors should support, not dictate, peace initiatives. African voices and institutions must be at the forefront of strategy and implementation.
- **Reform Multilateral Institutions:** The international system should adapt to reflect Africa's diversity, priorities, and expertise, ensuring the continent has a fair say in global peace and security decisions.
- **Strengthen Local Institutions and Community Involvement:** Invest in grassroots peace infrastructure, civil society, and governance reforms that enable communities to drive their own solutions.
- **Integrate Peacebuilding with Socio-Economic Development:** Address root causes of conflict, such as poverty, inequality, and unemployment, alongside political and security interventions.
- **Promote Inclusive, Accountable Governance:** Engage youth, women, and marginalized groups in peace processes; build transparent and responsive institutions; and ensure security sectors are reformed to serve all citizens.
- **Build Strategic, Respectful Partnerships:** Collaborate globally but on equal footing, emphasizing mutual respect, local context, and shared goals.



Dr. Solomon Dersso © Olivier Chamard



# GENEVA-ADDIS ABABA PEACE DIALOGUE: CLIMATE, PEACE & SECURITY

## 148 Participants

(Online: 101 | In-person: 47)

### WELCOME ADDRESSES

- **Amb. Julien Thöni**, Swiss Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament, Deputy Head, Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN Office and other international organizations in Geneva

### PANEL DISCUSSION

- **Ms. Ko Barrett**, Deputy Secretary-General, World Meteorological Organization (online)
- **H.E. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga**, SRSG and Head of UNOAU
- **Amb. George Orina**, Permanent Representative of Kenya to the AU (tbc)
- **Ms. Faten Aggad**, Climate Diplomacy Expert and Former Advisor at the AU Commission (online)
- **Dr. Abdi Fidar**, Director of the IGAD Climate Prediction and Application Center, ICPAC

### MODERATOR

- **Dr. Annyssa Bellal**, Executive Director, Geneva Peacebuilding Platform

The Peace Dialogue was held during Geneva Peace Week Meets Addis Ababa as a high-level conversation on the nexus between climate, peace, and security, building on a format launched during GPW in Geneva. The session brought together representatives from the UN, African Union, IGAD, WMO, and Switzerland to explore how environmental changes shape regional stability, and how diplomatic, scientific, and institutional actors can collaborate for resilience and prevention.

Ambassador Thöni opened the event by highlighting the urgency of the link between climate, peace, and security, a human security issue. It underscored Switzerland's commitment to it by strengthening climate-related language during its tenure at the Security Council or by supporting conflict-sensitive climate programmes in fragile contexts. It underlined the importance of connecting Geneva and Addis Ababa, bringing together global and regional expertise. He underlined his country's support to the AU's efforts to develop a Common Position on Climate, Peace, and Security, a historic step toward addressing converging challenges in a coordinated and forward-looking way.

**"Climate change is not only a scientific issue, it's a political and security challenge."**

During the panel conversation, Amb. Orina highlighted Kenya's regional leadership on climate and environmental diplomacy, particularly through its work within the AU and UNEP. He emphasized the importance



From left to right, Amb. George Orina and Dr. Annyssa Bellal © Olivier Chamard

of empowering African institutions to lead on climate resilience, and pointed to Kenya's investments in green energy and sustainable development. He also underscored the role of youth and innovation in transforming Africa's climate narrative.

**"Our youth must be empowered to drive the green transition."**

Ms. Aggad gave a strategic reflection on Africa's position in global climate diplomacy. She noted the persistent gap between commitments and actual financing, and emphasized that African states need more agency in shaping the climate-security agenda. She argued for clearer African narratives and pointed out that much of the global discussion on climate and security lacks meaningful

African engagement or leadership.

**"Climate security is too often spoken about in Geneva but not with African voices."**

Dr. Fidar presented concrete examples of how early warning systems are being implemented in the Horn of Africa, including drought and flood forecasting. He showed how ICPAC translates scientific data into usable tools for policymakers and local communities. He stressed the need to move from early warning to early action, and urged stronger integration between climate science and peacebuilding programming.

Mr. Onanga-Anyanga spoke forcefully about climate change as a threat multiplier, especially in fragile and conflict-affected areas.



## "Climate science is peace infrastructure."

He advocated for integrated strategies that connect humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts. He stressed that local realities must shape international responses and that climate-related security risks require political leadership, investment, and coordinated multilateral action.

## "Peace is not possible without environmental security."

Intervening online at the end of the discussion from Geneva, Ms. Barrett presented a data-driven overview of climate change trends in Africa, including the increased frequency and severity of

droughts, floods, and extreme weather. She explained how WMO supports early warning systems and regional forecasting tools, but stressed that science alone is not enough, it must be coupled with policy action.

## "The climate signals in Africa are loud and clear. We must act with urgency."

She emphasized the urgency of acting on scientific knowledge and the importance of making climate data accessible to both governments and communities.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Strengthen Geneva-Addis collaboration** through regular dialogue and joint initiatives linking international and regional peacebuilding.
- **Integrate climate science into peacebuilding policy**, ensuring decisions are guided by early warning data and environmental trends.
- **Elevate African voices and leadership** in global climate-security platforms to ensure locally grounded solutions are recognized and funded.
- **Invest in early warning and early action systems** across vulnerable regions, particularly in the Horn of Africa.
- **Support multi-stakeholder partnerships** that include the AU, UN, civil society, and local governments to bridge peace, development, and climate agendas.
- **Ensure long-term follow-up** through regional consultations, GPW-linked events, and dedicated working groups focused on climate and peace.



From left to right, Amb. George Orina, Dr. Annyssa Bellal and H.E. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga  
© Olivier Chamard





H.E. Mekdelawit Taye © Olivier Chamard

## THEMATIC PANEL 1: ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE PEACE THROUGH IHL

**114 Participants**  
(Online: 59 | In-person: 55)

### WELCOME ADDRESSES

- **H.E. Mekdelawit Taye**, Director, Human Rights Department, International Law Directorate-General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia

### PANEL DISCUSSION

- **Ms. Audrey Purcell-O'Dwyer**, Legal Advisor and Lead on the IHL and Peace workstream of the Global Initiative on IHL, for the International Committee of the Red Cross, ICRC
- **Dr. Joshua J. Niyo**, Regional Legal Adviser for East and Central Africa, Diakonia International Humanitarian Law Centre
- **M. Toufik Naili**, Center of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation (CCHN)
- **Ms. Lea M. Redae**, Director for External Relations and Partnerships, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa University International Humanitarian Law Clinic

### MODERATOR

- **Mr. Hillary Kiboro Muchiri**, Deputy Head of Delegation, ICRC Delegation to the African Union

H.E. Mekdelawit Taye delivered the keynote address, highlighting the Ethiopian government's growing commitment to integrating International Humanitarian Law (IHL) into national frameworks and policies. She underscored that IHL is not simply a set of obligations for times of conflict, it plays a critical role in restoring trust, enabling reconciliation, and laying the legal groundwork for peace. She also spoke about Ethiopia's efforts to increase awareness and capacity-building on IHL within its institutions and the importance of collaboration with international partners in strengthening legal protections for civilians during conflict.

**“Respect for IHL today lays the foundation for trust tomorrow.”**

Ms. Purcell-O'Dwyer addressed the crucial, yet often overlooked, connection between IHL and peace processes. She introduced the ICRC's Global Initiative on IHL and Peace, which explores how IHL can support peace efforts, not just by mitigating violence, but also by shaping the conditions for future reconciliation. She emphasized that IHL, when respected, preserves essential humanitarian space, limits the destruction of infrastructure, and protects civilians and detainees, which in turn can build confidence among conflicting parties and reduce long-term grievances.

**“Reducing suffering in war creates conditions more conducive to peace.”**



Dr. Niyo focused on the role of IHL in transitional justice and post-conflict accountability. He discussed how IHL provides a legal foundation that can guide peace negotiations, especially when it comes to issues like reparations, criminal accountability, and the reintegration of combatants. He also stressed that IHL is more than just a regulatory framework during conflict, it can also help shape inclusive, rights-based peacebuilding processes. He called for stronger legal literacy among mediators and policymakers to better integrate IHL in post-conflict governance structures.

**“Justice delayed is reconciliation denied.”**

Mr. Naili brought a practical field-based perspective, highlighting the power of negotiation in humanitarian access and protection. Drawing on CCHN’s

work, he discussed how humanitarian workers often operate in highly politicized environments where trust-building and dialogue are critical. He emphasized the need to train negotiators not only in technical frameworks but also in empathy, cultural sensitivity, and interpersonal communication, which are often decisive in gaining access and saving lives. He positioned humanitarian negotiation as a bridge between IHL principles and real-world application in conflict zones.

**“Negotiation is not just a skill, it’s a humanitarian imperative.”**

Ms. Redae shared insights from her work at the Addis Ababa University IHL Clinic, focusing on legal education, research, and practical training for students engaged in IHL and human rights. She made a powerful case for localizing and

contextualizing IHL, arguing that African universities and legal institutions should not only implement IHL but actively contribute to shaping it. She also noted that IHL education builds a pipeline of informed future leaders and legal experts who are equipped to deal with complex humanitarian challenges on the continent.

**“Educating young lawyers is investing in the future of peace.”**

As moderator, Mr. Muchiri framed the entire discussion around the idea that IHL should not be viewed in isolation from peacebuilding. He opened the session by laying out how IHL governs the conduct of hostilities and protects civilians, while noting its potential to build confidence and create space for dialogue and de-escalation.

**“Peace and IHL must speak to each other more deliberately.”**

Throughout the session, he prompted speakers to explore how legal, diplomatic, and operational efforts can complement each other in addressing today’s most pressing humanitarian challenges.



From left to right Dr. Joshua J. Niyo, M. Toufik Naili and Ms. Lea M. Redae  
© Olivier Chamard



## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Integrate IHL in peace processes:** Ensure IHL is systematically considered in ceasefire agreements, transitional justice mechanisms, and post-conflict dialogue.
- **Invest in legal education & training:** Support regional institutions and IHL clinics to build local expertise and leadership in humanitarian law.
- **Strengthen humanitarian negotiation skills:** Equip field actors with tools to navigate access and protection negotiations in high-risk areas.
- **Enhance African agency in IHL discourse:** Ensure the integration into and use relevant African customs and traditions for reinforcing IHL's relevance implementation, and compliance.
- **Link accountability to reconciliation:** Use IHL as a basis for transitional justice to foster sustainable peace after conflict.
- **Promote multistakeholder collaboration:** Deepen partnerships between states, civil society, academia, and humanitarian actors to mainstream IHL in peacebuilding.

## THEMATIC PANEL 2: OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES, DIGITALIZATION & AI FOR YOUTH PEACEBUILDERS

**151 Participants**  
(Online: 99 | In-person: 52)

### PANEL DISCUSSION

- **Bethel Gebeyehu Mekonnen**, Program Coordinator, UN Association for Ethiopia
- **Taye Abdulkadir**, Senior Technical Officer, Youth for Peace Africa Program (Y4P), African Union
- **Philip Poppelreuter**, Researcher, Inclusive Peace (online)
- **Dr. Emmaculate Asige Liaga**, Researcher at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS)

### MODERATOR

- **Nirina Kiplagat**, Governance and Peacebuilding Coordinator, UNDP RSCA

This second thematic panel explored how emerging technologies are reshaping the peacebuilding landscape for young people across Africa. Organized by UNDP, the African Union Commission, Inclusive Peace, and ISS, the discussion highlighted both the transformative potential and the risks associated with digitalization and AI. Experts and practitioners examined issues like digital inclusion, misinformation, ethics, capacity building, and the importance of context-specific solutions, offering insights into empowering youth as key agents of peaceful change.

In her intervention, Dr. Mekonnen opened by emphasizing the transformative potential of digital technologies for youth engagement in peacebuilding. She pointed out that while young people are often seen as mere users of technology, many are actually innovators and leaders in creating digital peace initiatives. Mekonnen highlighted successful examples of youth-led digital peace campaigns in Ethiopia and broader Africa. She stressed the importance of investing in digital literacy programs tailored to young peacebuilders, particularly in fragile and marginalized communities where the digital divide remains a major barrier. Mekonnen concluded by advocating for intentional, inclusive policies to ensure that digital peacebuilding efforts do not leave anyone behind.

**“Investing in digital literacy is investing in the future of inclusive peace.”**



From left to right M. Toufik Naili and Ms. Lea M. Redae © Olivier Chamard



Mr. Abdulkadir presented insights from the African Union's Youth for Peace Africa Program, focusing on the dual nature of digital platforms: as tools for youth mobilization and as risks for radicalization. He described how social media and online tools have been effectively used by youth peacebuilders for advocacy, early warning systems, and community dialogue. However, he also warned about the growing threat of online misinformation and extremist content, which can destabilize peace efforts. Abdulkadir called for the development of youth-centered digital governance frameworks to protect young people online while empowering them to lead digital peace initiatives. He urged greater collaboration between governments, civil society, and the tech industry.

**“Technology is a double-edged sword for peace; we must be prepared to wield it wisely.”**

Joining remotely, Mr. Poppelreuter focused on the findings of Inclusive Peace's research regarding digital innovations in peace processes. He cautioned against the assumption that introducing technology will automatically result in better peace outcomes. Instead, Poppelreuter emphasized that context-specific analysis must precede the deployment of any digital tool, highlighting examples where digital interventions had unintended consequences due to lack of local adaptation. He stressed that technology should amplify local ownership and not override or marginalize traditional peacebuilding practices. He also spoke about the risks of techno-solutionism: believing technology alone can fix deep-rooted societal conflicts.

**“There is no one-size-fits-all in digital peacebuilding; local context matters enormously.”**



From left to right, Dr. Bethel Gebeyehu Mekonnen, Mr. Taye Abdulkadir and Dr. Emmaculate Asige Liaga © Olivier Chamard



From left to right, Ms. Nirina Kiplagat and Dr. Bethel Gebeyehu Mekonnen © Olivier Chamard

Dr. Liaga delivered a strong intervention on the security dimensions of digitalization. She discussed how misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech online are not just threats to electoral integrity but to broader peacebuilding efforts. Drawing on her research at ISS, she explained how fragile states are particularly vulnerable to digital disruptions. Dr. Liaga argued for the integration of digital resilience strategies into peacebuilding programs, focusing especially on youth as both targets and defenders against digital threats. She emphasized the need for critical digital literacy, so that youth peacebuilders can discern credible information and become active defenders of peace in online spaces.

**“Misinformation is not just a challenge for elections; it’s a threat to peacebuilding itself.”**

Serving as a moderator, Ms. Nirina Kiplagat set the stage by framing the conversation around the immense opportunities and potential pitfalls brought by digital transformation and AI. She underscored Africa's dynamic youth demographic and its leadership potential in the digital peacebuilding space. She encouraged participants to think critically about how technologies could be tools for solidarity, inclusion, and innovation, but also how they might exacerbate inequality if not carefully governed.

**“Digital tools can bridge divides or widen them. It is our collective responsibility to ensure they build inclusive, sustainable peace.”**





Ms. Nirina Kiplagat © Olivier Chamard

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Invest in Digital Literacy and Critical Thinking Skills:** Equip youth peace-builders not just with access to technology, but with the skills to use it responsibly and safely.
- **Bridge the Digital Divide:** Prioritize expanding digital infrastructure and ensuring marginalized and rural youth have equal access to digital tools.
- **Develop Youth-Centered Digital Policies:** Include young people directly in the creation of ethical frameworks and regulations for AI, digital platforms, and cybersecurity.
- **Safeguard Against Misinformation and Radicalization:** Strengthen resilience against online manipulation through education campaigns and community monitoring initiatives.
- **Contextualize Digital Solutions:** Design digital interventions that are locally informed, culturally sensitive, and based on the specific needs of communities.
- **Promote Inclusive Innovation:** Support young innovators and entrepreneurs working on peace technologies, particularly those from underrepresented regions.



# ADDIS ABABA PEACETALKS

The Addis Ababa PeaceTalks celebrated the powerful role of storytelling in advancing peace. Held for the first time in Ethiopia, the event is part of the global PeaceTalks platform, which showcases the inspirational stories of people building peace around the world. Organized by Interpeace, the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the event featured the journeys of four speakers deeply committed to human rights, peacebuilding, environmental dialogue, and humanitarian work. Moderated by Sarah Noble and Etenesh Tesfa, the PeaceTalks highlighted how hope, resilience, and action drive real change even in the most challenging contexts. The evening concluded with a vibrant musical performance by artists from the Fendika Cultural Center, honoring Ethiopia's rich cultural heritage.



From left to right, Sarah Noble and Etenesh Tesfa © Olivier Chamard

**128 Participants**  
(Online: 54 | In-person: 74)

## SPEAKERS

- **Jean Paul Mugiraneza**, Senior Special Advisor to the President for Peacebuilding and Programme Development, Interpeace
- **Sarah Ntambwe Kyabu**, Human rights defender and peacebuilder, DRC
- **PhD Negusu Aklilu**, Environmental policy expert, climate adaptation practitioner, peacebuilding practitioner and dialogue facilitator, Ethiopia
- **Aida Elsayed**, Secretary General at the Sudanese Red Crescent

## MUSICAL PEROFRMANCE

- **Nardos Tesfaw**, prominent Azmari singer in Ethiopia
- **Emebet Woldetsdik**, Ethiopian singer and dancer
- **Haymanot Wagnew**, Ethiopian singer, dancer and drummer

## MUSICAL PEROFRMANCE

- **Sarah Noble**, PeaceTalks Curator, Interpeace
- **Etenesh Tesfa**, Founder and General Manager of Sew Asset, Ethiopia



Addis Ababa PeaceTalks, Fendika Cultural Center © Olivier Chamard





Jean Paul Mugiraneza © Olivier Chamard

Jean Paul Mugiraneza shared reflections on the importance of local ownership and inclusive dialogue in peacebuilding processes. Drawing from his experience in post-conflict settings, he emphasized that sustainable peace must be built from within communities and supported by genuine partnerships, not imposed solutions.

**“Lasting peace is built not just by ending conflict but by nurturing trust across generations.”**

He also stressed the need to invest in youth leadership and to see peacebuilding as a long-term, generational endeavor, rather than a quick fix.



PhD Negusu Aklilu © Olivier Chamard

PhD Negusu Aklilu shared three remarkable stories of how dialogue transformed relationships and advanced peace processes in Ethiopia, among communities, historians, and political leaders. He highlighted the impact of trust-building, honest conversations, and hope-driven action.

**“Our leaders are not a different species; they are capable of transforming conflict through dialogue.”**

His key message was that sustainable peace emerges not just from agreements but from enduring relationships and that courageous dialogue is critical even in polarized societies.

Speaking passionately in French, Sarah Ntambwe Kyabu (also known as Mama Sarah) recounted her work helping thousands of war-affected street children and women in the Democratic Republic of Congo through her initiative Change Your World.

**“Change begins when we choose to accompany and empower those who have suffered most.”**

Her story emphasized resilience, healing, and empowerment, especially for those most marginalized by conflict. She called for action based on dignity, solidarity, and perseverance.



Sarah Ntambwe Kyabu © Olivier Chamard

Aida Elsayed delivered a deeply moving testimony about leading humanitarian efforts during the devastating war in Sudan. She highlighted the courage and commitment of over 40,000 Red Crescent volunteers operating under extreme conditions.

**“Do not forget Sudan; come, see, and stand in solidarity with those still struggling for life and hope.”**

Aida stressed the urgent need for global solidarity, dignity for displaced communities, and genuine engagement with Sudan’s crisis beyond fleeting headlines.



Aida Elsayed © Olivier Chamard



The event ended with an uplifting musical performance of the Ethiocolor Traditional Band bringing together Ethiopian culture as foundation for peace and unity. The event took place at the Fendika Cultural Center that was established in 2016, while the original Fendika Azmari Bet opened its door in the early 1990s. Participants gathered one more time at the reception that offered space for informal networking and celebration of shared efforts for the success of this edition of Geneva Peace Week meets Addis Ababa.



Ethiocolor Traditional Band, Fendika © Olivier Chamard



# PARTICIPANTS

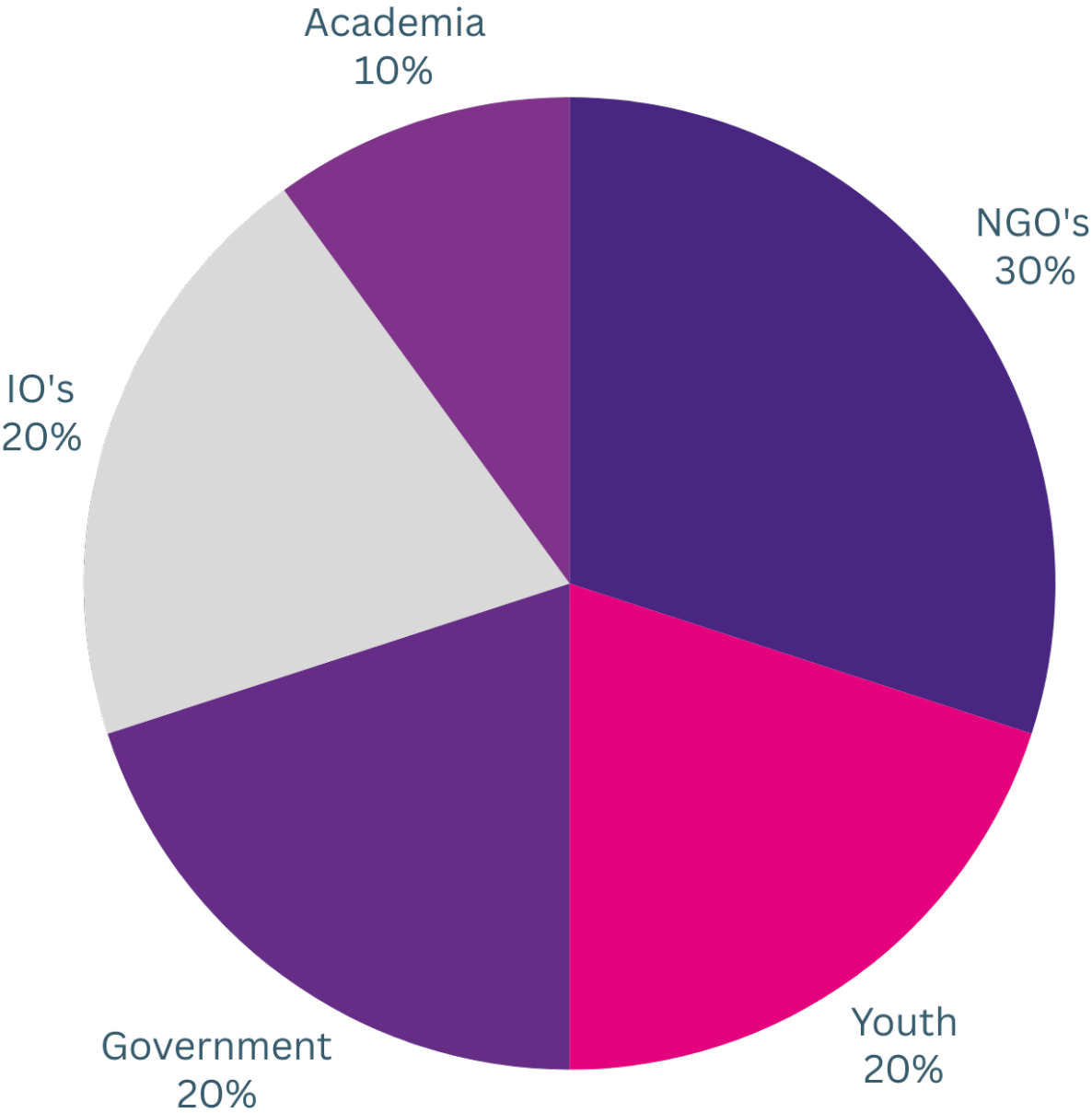
## GPW MEETS ADDIS ABABA: A RESOUNDING ENGAGEMENT

The event brought together an audience of 870 participants over the course of 2.5 days, reflecting strong regional interest and engagement with peacebuilding dialogues. Below is a breakdown of attendance per session:

Session	Total Participation	Online Participation	In-person Participation
Session 1: High-Level Plenary	331	242	89
Session 2: Climate, Peace & Security	148	101	47
Session 3: Advancing Sustainable Peace through IHL	114	59	55
Session 4: Youth, Tech & AI	151	99	52
Session 5: PeaceTalks	128	54	74

## A BROADLY REPRESENTATIVE AUDIENCE

The event welcomed participants from diverse sectors, including governments, international organizations, academia, NGOs, and young peacebuilders, demonstrating a strong cross-sectoral commitment to peacebuilding. Below is the sectoral breakdown of the audience.





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all those who made Geneva Peace Week Meets Addis a reality.

A special thank you goes to our co-organizer, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in Bern, Geneva, and Ethiopia. We are especially grateful to Ambassador Pietro Mona, Andrea Aeby, Pascal Hubatka, and Rascha Osman for their invaluable support in shaping the event.

Our sincere thanks to Amani Africa, particularly Dr. Solomon Dersso and Fikir Getachew, for their invaluable insights into the Addis ecosystem and for helping to connect the event to local realities. We are deeply grateful to our friends at

Interpeace, especially Sarah Noble, for curating yet another inspiring edition of the PeaceTalks, showcasing the power of storytelling in peacebuilding.

A heartfelt thank you as well to the Hyatt Regency staff for their outstanding hospitality and dedication, and to Menbere Gashaw and the Fendika Cultural Center for bringing Ethiopian culture, music, and energy to our gathering.

Our appreciation goes to our partners who organized the remarkable thematic panels:

- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- Addis Ababa University International Humanitarian Law Clinic

- UNDP Regional Service Centre for Africa
- UNDP Geneva
- African Union Commission
- Inclusive Peace
- Institute for Security Studies (ISS)

We are grateful to all the speakers who generously shared their insights, expertise, and personal journeys, enriching the conversations and inspiring all participants.

We also warmly thank the wider Geneva Peacebuilding Platform network for submitting such high-quality applications in response to our call for participation. Although space was limited, we were truly impressed by the proposals received.

A big thank you to the 870 participants who joined us across two days, connecting from Addis Ababa, Geneva, and around the world. Your engagement, ideas, and energy were at the heart of this gathering.

Finally, deep gratitude to the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform team, whose tireless work behind the scenes, from Geneva to Addis, made this initiative possible: Dr. Annyssa Bellal, Dany Diogo, Tatiana Avanthay, Cyprien Fluzin, Claire Inderkummen, Ruslan Pavlyshyn and Olivier Chamard.

We look forward to seeing you all again at Geneva Peace Week 2025 this October in Geneva!



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