The Institute for Strategic and Policy Studies (ISPS)

Southern African Centre for Mediation And Extremism Prevention (SACMEP)

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WEBINAR REPORT

Beyond Raw Exports

Advancing Value Addition as a Strategy for Preventing Violent Conflict and Extremism in Africa

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CO-HOSTED BY Southern Africa Centre for Mediation and Extremism Prevention (SACMEP) and the Institute for Strategic and Policy Studies (ISPS)

PLATFORM Zoom (virtual)

PREPARED BY Charles Moyo (PhD), SACMEP • Magok Chuol Thomas (PhD), ISPS

Contents

1 Introduction 3

2 Purpose and Methodology 3

3 Opening Remarks by Dr Magok Chuol Thomas 3

4 Webinar Overview 4

5 Key Discussion Themes 5

6 Key Outcomes and Lessons 7

7 Recommendations 7

8 Conclusion 8

9 Keynote Speakers, Panellists and Moderators 9

1 Introduction

On 4 June 2026, the Southern Africa Centre for Mediation and Extremism Prevention (SACMEP) and the Institute for Strategic and Policy Studies (ISPS) co-hosted a virtual webinar examining the relationship between Africa's mineral wealth and the conditions that give rise to violent conflict and extremism. The event brought together policymakers, researchers, academia, civil society representatives, private sector actors, and youth and women leaders from across Southern, East and West Africa, alongside international participants, to consider how the continent's continued reliance on raw resource exports has entrenched economic exclusion, weak governance and instability in many resource-rich regions.

The webinar was premised on a straightforward but underexplored argument: that moving from raw export toward local value addition is not only sound economic policy but a viable peacebuilding strategy. Where mineral wealth is processed locally rather than shipped out unrefined, the resulting jobs, income and community benefit can reduce the desperation that often drives recruitment into armed and extremist groups. The discussion sought to unpack this argument in practical terms, examining what governance reforms, industrial strategies and community protections would be needed to make value addition a genuine tool for peace rather than a further avenue for elite capture.

> *Value addition can contribute to conflict prevention only when it is accompanied by transparent licensing, community participation, protection of livelihoods, fair benefit-sharing, accountable institutions, and measurable employment and development outcomes.*

It also emerged clearly that value addition is a potential conflict-prevention instrument, but its peacebuilding effect depends on how benefits are distributed and whether it is accompanied by accountable governance and inclusive institutions.

2 Purpose and Methodology

This report summarises the main arguments, examples, lessons, and recommendations emerging from the webinar. It is based on the opening remarks, keynote presentations, panel contributions, and audience discussion. The report does not necessarily represent the official position of every speaker or participating organisation.

3 Opening Remarks by Dr Magok Chuol Thomas

Dr Magok Chuol Thomas welcomed participants to the webinar on *"Beyond Raw Exports: Advancing Value Addition as a Strategy for Preventing Violent Conflict and Extremism in Africa."* He emphasised that transforming Africa's raw materials into processed and finished products could promote inclusive economic growth, create employment, strengthen communities, and contribute to sustainable peace and stability.

Dr Thomas briefly introduced the Institute of Strategic and Policy Studies (ISPS), a South Sudanese research and capacity-building organisation established in 2012. He noted that ISPS works across areas including public policy, economics, politics, security, environmental management, science and technology, and community empowerment. Its work focuses particularly on supporting marginalised groups, including women, youth, and persons with disabilities, while promoting locally driven research and development. He explained that ISPS's programmes are aligned with frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals, the African Union's Agenda 2063, and East African Community objectives. The organisation has collaborated with national and international partners on research, policy dialogue, conferences, and capacity-building initiatives.

Turning to the webinar's central theme, Dr Thomas observed that dependence on raw commodity exports has contributed in many African countries to economic vulnerability, limited industrialisation, unequal wealth distribution, and political instability. He argued that value addition should therefore be regarded not only as an economic policy but also as a peacebuilding strategy. By creating broader economic opportunities, strengthening resource governance, reducing dependence on volatile commodity markets, and supporting local ownership, value addition can help address some of the structural conditions associated with conflict and extremism. The webinar was presented as an opportunity to examine the relationship between resource governance, industrialisation, conflict prevention, and peacebuilding. Participants were expected to discuss locally driven approaches, relevant policy options, regional cooperation, institutional capacity, technology transfer, and strategies for strengthening African value chains.

Dr Thomas further stressed that successful value addition requires coordinated action by governments, regional organisations, the private sector, civil society, research institutions, and development partners. He highlighted the importance of investment in infrastructure, industrial capacity, innovation, technical skills, and education, particularly for young people and women. He also emphasised that social inclusion, transparency, accountability, and equitable distribution of benefits are essential to ensuring that industrial development contributes to long-term peace.

He concluded by describing the webinar as a platform for sharing knowledge, exchanging experiences, and building collaboration among relevant stakeholders. He called for sustained efforts to move Africa beyond raw exports by strengthening value addition, improving resource governance, and promoting inclusive and resilient economies capable of supporting peace, prosperity, and sustainable development.

4 Webinar Overview

The webinar commenced with welcome remarks and an introduction to the objectives by representatives of SACMEP and ISPS, setting the stage for discussions on the relationship between natural resource governance, value addition, peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict and extremism across Africa.

Professor Sheriff Ghali Ibrahim, Director of the Centre for Contemporary China-Africa Research at the University of Abuja, delivered the keynote address, highlighting value addition as an important component of sustainable peacebuilding, economic resilience and conflict prevention across Africa. He further examined how industrialisation, technological development and international partnerships, particularly lessons from China's development experience, can support Africa's value addition agenda.

The panel brought together **Julius Okoth**, Coordinator of the Kenyans for Tax Justice movement; **Ogonna Beauty Ogbologu**, Research Fellow at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs; and **Dr Wilker Dias**, Executive Director of Platform DECIDE in Mozambique. **Dr Gatwech K. Nyuon**, an associate Research Fellow at ISPS, South Sudan and Researcher at one of Chinese Innovative Centre, and **Michelle Chioniso Murinda** contributed substantively during the open discussion, drawing respectively on experience from South Sudan's oil sector and broader analysis of debt and geopolitics. **Dr Sokfa John**, Acting Director of the Centre for Mediation in Africa at the University of Pretoria, closed the session with a synthesis of key takeaways.

Participants and contributors represented Somalia, Nigeria, Kenya, Mozambique, South Sudan, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo and China, reflecting the breadth of perspective the organisers had sought. The audience included government officials, researchers, civil society organisations, private sector representatives, and youth and women leaders drawn mainly from Southern and East Africa. The 105-minute session followed a structured format of welcome and opening remarks, keynote addresses, panel presentations, open audience discussion, and closing synthesis.

5 Key Discussion Themes

01 Natural Resources, Conflict and Extremism in Africa

Much of the discussion returned to a single observation: Africa's mineral wealth has, in many contexts, deepened rather than resolved insecurity. **Julius Okoth** traced this pattern to the point at which extraction licences are granted to multinational corporations, displacing the artisanal miners, often young men between eighteen and forty, who had previously relied on the same land for their livelihoods. Once excluded and criminalised, he argued, these communities face a predictable spiral of dispossession and economic desperation that leaves them vulnerable to recruitment by armed and extremist groups. He drew a direct line to the experience of the Ogoni people in Nigeria's Niger Delta, where decades-old grievances over oil extraction remain a reference point for how resource exclusion can radicalise a generation.

Dr Gatwech K. Nyuon extended this argument with an example from South Sudan, where a policy requiring a share of oil revenue to be directed to community development has produced little visible benefit: no new schools, hospitals or infrastructure, he noted, because the funds are frequently captured by a small number of politically connected individuals rather than reaching the communities they are meant to serve. This absence of visible state presence, he argued, is a condition that may increase vulnerability to extremist recruitment.

Michelle Chioniso Murinda placed these dynamics within a wider structural frame, arguing that the coups, extremist violence and instability observed across the continent are symptoms rather than causes. Beneath them, she suggested, lies a combination of unsustainable debt, extractive economic arrangements and a steady erosion of African states' bargaining power in dealings with external partners. Participants generally agreed that framing extremism primarily in religious or ideological terms obscures this underlying economic reality.

02 Value Addition as a Peacebuilding Strategy

If exclusion from resource wealth fuels instability, panellists argued that local processing offers a practical corrective. **Julius Okoth** made the case most directly: value addition creates the processing jobs that give young people a stake in the formal economy at precisely the point where their exclusion currently generates the greatest resentment. Countries such as Zimbabwe, Botswana, Uganda and Kenya were cited as examples already moving to restrict raw mineral exports in favour of local processing, treating the policy as both an economic and an employment strategy.

Dr Sokfa John, drawing the panel's contributions together, proposed that the success of value addition as a peacebuilding tool should be judged against concrete indicators rather than assumed automatically: rising youth employment in processing and manufacturing, the formalisation of artisanal miners into recognised cooperatives, and a measurable decline in militancy and attacks on extraction infrastructure. Without such indicators, participants agreed, value addition policies risk becoming another layer of elite benefit rather than a genuine tool for reducing conflict. The panel was careful to note that economic inclusion, rather than growth alone, is what changes the calculation for potential recruits: communities that see tangible, local benefit from resources extracted on their land are markedly less susceptible to extremist appeals.

03 Governance, Transparency and Community Participation

Discussion of governance reform ran through nearly every contribution. **Professor Sheriff Ghali Ibrahim** argued that nationalisation or, at minimum, fully transparent and competitive licensing is the necessary starting point, since opaque agreements between governments and foreign corporations remains a significant contributor to corruption risks and conflict. **Julius Okoth** added that citizens must have access to information about extraction agreements affecting their own land, and that artisanal miners should be formalised into legally recognised cooperatives rather than treated as a problem to be removed.

Dr Gatwech K. Nyuon spoke directly to the role of civil society in this process, arguing that independent monitoring and advocacy remain essential even where governments are reluctant to act, since civil society carries the voice of communities that would otherwise go unheard, and urged civil society actors not to be discouraged by slow progress. Participants broadly agreed that community participation is not simply good governance in the abstract; it is a conflict prevention strategy in its own right. Where citizens are consulted on licensing decisions, see credible monitoring of benefit obligations, and have functioning channels through which to raise grievances, the underlying conditions for radicalisation are substantially weakened.

04 Industrialisation, Technology and Skills Development

China's development trajectory featured prominently as both example and caution. **Professor Sheriff Ghali Ibrahim** noted that China's GDP was comparable to many African economies as recently as 1980, and that its transformation into the world's leading manufacturing power rested on disciplined governance, sustained investment in science and technology, and a deliberate strategy of learning from more industrialised nations. The lesson for Africa, he argued, is not dependence on any single partner but the same deliberate pursuit of technology acquisition and domestic industrial capacity, an opportunity that arrangements such as the zero-tariff provisions under the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation only partly enable while African industrial capacity remains limited.

Professor Melha Rout Biel drew a related but distinct lesson from the China comparison, arguing that what Africa most needs to learn is not industrial technique alone but accountable leadership capable of directing resource wealth toward genuine development rather than elite enrichment. Several contributors linked this to the state of education across the continent, arguing that an overemphasis on the social sciences and humanities, relative to STEM fields, leaves African economies structurally dependent on imported technical expertise. Investment in technical and scientific education, alongside partnerships that include real technology transfer rather than symbolic cooperation, was repeatedly identified as a precondition for any credible industrial strategy.

05 Regional Cooperation and Africa's Resource Future

The final thread running through the discussion concerned Africa's collective bargaining position. Several panellists observed that individual African states are consistently outmatched in negotiations with multinational corporations and external powers, and proposed the creation of a continental association of mineral-producing countries, loosely modelled on OPEC, capable of setting common standards for royalties, environmental protection and community benefit, and negotiating from a position of collective strength.

This regional framing connected directly to the debt questions raised earlier in the discussion. **Michelle Chioniso Murinda's** argument that Africa's external debt, now exceeding one trillion dollars, functions as a driver of conflict as much as a fiscal constraint found broad agreement among panellists: debt servicing that consistently outstrips spending on health and education, several contributors noted, corrodes the same social contract that resource-led development is meant to strengthen. Restructured debt and greater fiscal sovereignty were accordingly framed not as separate economic concerns but as integral to any serious conflict prevention agenda. Panellists closed this thread by returning to intra-African trade, noting its continued weakness between African states themselves and arguing that a genuinely regional approach to resource governance offers the clearest path toward a resource sector that supports peace rather than undermining it.

6 Key Outcomes and Lessons

The webinar affirmed that Africa's resource governance and peacebuilding challenges are closely connected. Participants converged on several practical lessons: that economic marginalisation and displacement, more than ideology, are the primary drivers pulling young people toward armed and extremist groups in resource-rich regions; that transparency and community participation function as tangible conflict prevention tools rather than abstract governance ideals; and that value addition, properly monitored against clear indicators, offers a realistic pathway to reducing the economic desperation that extremist groups exploit.

The discussion also underscored that no single actor can resolve these dynamics alone. Governments, civil society, regional bodies and development partners each hold distinct levers, and the debt and geopolitical pressures shaping the continent's room for manoeuvre make coordinated, rather than fragmented, responses more urgent than before. For SACMEP and ISPS, the exchange reinforced the value of bringing practitioners, researchers and civil society voices into direct conversation on a subject too often left to economists or security specialists alone.

7 Recommendations

Discussions converged on a set of recommendations for different categories of actors.

- **For African governments:** establish transparent and competitive licensing for all resource extraction agreements; legally mandate local processing and community benefit-sharing in new contracts; formalise artisanal miners into recognised cooperatives with access to finance and markets; invest sustainably in STEM education and technical training; and pursue coordinated debt restructuring to restore fiscal space for public investment.
- **For civil society organisations:** continue and deepen advocacy for transparency and community rights in resource governance, and secure a formal, ongoing role in monitoring extraction agreements and their implementation.
- **For regional and continental bodies:** establish a continental association of mineral-producing states capable of negotiating collectively, and develop common minimum standards for royalties, environmental protection and community benefit across the region.
- **For development partners:** support debt restructuring, genuine technology transfer, and capacity-building efforts that strengthen African industrial capacity rather than deepen dependence.
- **For researchers, youth and academic institutions:** continue generating evidence on the links between resource governance and conflict and expand opportunities for young Africans to train in the scientific and technical fields the continent's industrialisation will require.

Table 1: Summary of recommendations

Actor	Action	Possible indicator
National governments	Publish extraction contracts and beneficial ownership information	Contracts publicly accessible
Governments and mining companies	Establish independently monitored community benefit agreements	Annual public implementation reports
Regional bodies	Develop minimum standards for local processing and benefit-sharing	Regional framework adopted
Training institutions	Expand technical training linked to local industries	Number of graduates employed
Civil society	Monitor licensing and community obligations	Community monitoring reports published

8 Conclusion

The webinar demonstrated the value of examining Africa's peace and security challenges through the lens of resource governance rather than security policy alone. The exchange between policymakers, researchers, civil society actors and practitioners from across the continent illustrated both the scale of the challenge and the practical, if politically demanding, steps available to address it.

SACMEP and ISPS remain committed to sustaining this kind of evidence-based dialogue, and to translating discussions of this kind into research, advocacy and policy engagement that supports more inclusive and transparent management of Africa's natural resources. As the continent navigates an increasingly competitive global environment for critical minerals, the organisers see continued collaboration between research institutions, governments, civil society and regional bodies as essential to ensuring that Africa's resource wealth becomes a foundation for lasting peace rather than a continued source of conflict.

9 Keynote Speakers, Panellists and Moderators

Dr Magok Chuol Thomas — Assistant Professor of Economic Policy, Bentiu University of Petroleum, South Sudan; Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Strategic and Policy Studies

Professor Sheriff Ghali Ibrahim — Director, Centre for Contemporary China-Africa Research, Nigeria; Head of the International Centre, University of Abuja

Ms Ogonna Beauty Ogbologu — Legal Practitioner and Research Fellow, Division of International Law and Organizations, Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), Lagos

Prof. Melha Rout Biel — Vice Chancellor (Principal), Bentiu University of Petroleum; Distinguished Professor, Institute for African Studies, Zhejiang Normal University; Founder and Executive Director, Institute for Strategic and Policy Studies (ISPS)

Dr Sokfa John — Acting Director, Centre for Mediation in Africa, University of Pretoria, South Africa; SACMEP Global Partnerships and Peace and Security Strategist

Dr Edknowledge Mandikwaza — Team Leader, Southern Africa Centre for Mediation and Extremism Prevention (SACMEP)