



PRESS STATEMENT

27TH MAY 2024

THE STATE OF PEACE AND COHESION IN KENYA

The National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) is mandated to facilitate and promote equality of opportunity, good relations, harmony, and peaceful coexistence among the diverse ethnic, racial, and religious communities in Kenya. Part of the Commission's mandate is to monitor the state of peace and cohesion in the country and to do the best we could to contribute to harmonious cohesive and peaceful living among Kenyans in every place and all places. Towards that end we have identified six factors that continue to adversely affect social cohesion and peace as we come to the end of the first half of the year 2024.

1. Floods and their consequences

At the onset we wish to condole with the families, relatives, and friends who have lost their loved ones during the floods experienced across the

country. We note with gratitude the interventions by the government and other humanitarian agencies.

Whereas the El Nino did not cause as much devastation as was expected, the recent rains in 2024 have led to destructive flooding that continue to ravage families and communities in most parts of the country. Homes, farms, infrastructure including roads, bridges and institutions have been completely destroyed; so much so that the opening of the schools was delayed because many schools were marooned. The social distress and emotional impact on many Kenyans as a result of many deaths, internally displaced persons and destruction of life will take long to heal. The tragedy of the phenomena is that despite the scientific knowledge of the rain patterns in the last five decades the level of preparedness on the part of the succeeding governments has remained hopelessly inadequate. That is worsened by the irresponsible man-made activities like constructions in the riparian lands and reclaiming wetlands and dams with impunity.

2. Organized Armed Youth Criminal Gangs

The reemergence of organized criminal gangs in some parts of the country and specifically in urban areas should be of great concern to each one of us. In the recent past we have witnessed horrific killings and attacks by

these groups especially in the Coastal region. While it is true that this social phenomenon of young people is a result of lack of formal employment their regrouping and engagement in criminal acts poses a threat to the fragile social cohesion fabric. If not nipped in the bud organized criminal gangs pose severe threat to peace, harmony and cohesion in Kenya and to national security. Once they gain roots in the society, organized criminal gangs attain power capacity to challenge security organs of the state as in Haiti, Colombia and other states in Central America.

The Commission's Conflict Hotspot Mapping study of 2022 identified the role of organized armed youth criminal gangs. Despite efforts by authorities to curb their, activities, these gangs continue to adapt and thrive, using sophisticated strategies to evade detection and maintain their power.

In response to this challenge, NCIC has established the **Peace to the City Initiative** program whose inaugural activity is to convene the Vulnerable Youth Summit in Nairobi in July 2024. Thereafter we will roll out activities in other cities: Mombasa, Kisumu, Nakuru and Eldoret.

3. Rising Insecurity and Banditry Attacks

The rising insecurity and banditry attack in Kerio Valley, parts of Samburu, Isiolo and Meru Counties has remained a threat to peaceful coexistence in the region. The attacks and raids have continued to derail the socioeconomic development in this part of the country.

Over the past months, more than 75 people have lost their lives and many families displaced from their homes. Schools have been closed down, denying children in these regions the right to education. Businesses have been shut down and livelihoods disrupted.

Such development cannot be watched in silence. Therefore we call on the perpetrators to lay down their arms and choose peace! As well we encourage the political leaders from this region to join us in facilitating dialogue while calling on the government to root out the criminals who disguise themselves as cultural warriors.

We applaud the Government's efforts of opening up more security centers in the region as well as intensifying the operation to weed out the criminals thereby serving Citizens respite.

4. Terrorism Attacks

In the recent past, we have witnessed an increase in terror attacks in some parts of the country. The impact and cost of insecurity resulting

from this is massive and not only a threat to Kenya's fragile social cohesion fabric, but also a risk to our economic development agenda.

The radicalization and violent extremism phenomena are disproportionately impacting youth and women from marginalized areas. Notably, the Northern Kenya border regions include Garissa, Mandera, and Wajir; the Coastline border region is **Lamu, Kilifi, Kwale, Tana River, Mombasa**, and parts of **Nairobi county**. As a Commission, we shall continue to work with other key stakeholders to facilitate disengagement and reintegration through psychosocial support and rehabilitation of returnees and leverage conversations based on emerging research to promote social cohesion. We shall continue to partner with inter-religious approaches and opinion leaders as agents of change.

5. Hate speech and Ethnic Contempt

The Commission has continued to monitor hate speech cases both on social media and other public platforms. We are happy to report that the cases have gone down significantly as a result of continuous engagement with the public on the need to mitigate hate speech and ethnic contempt. As the fanning and shaming wall established by the Commission proved to be very effective in curbing hate speech on political platforms.

However, the Commission received 67 cases out of which 43 are under various stages of investigations, 2 are before court, 13 have been concluded and 13 others conciliated as provisions of the NCI Act 2008.

In regards to Social Media platforms, the Commission flagged out 44 cases on discrimination, 24 on incitement, 6 on hate speech, 93 on misinformation, and 68 on disinformation - totaling 268 cases.

6. The challenge of Devolution and Boundary Disputes

As NCIC we have identified land and boundary disputes as enduring sources of conflict in Kenya over time. We estimate that 33 out of the 47 counties have boundary related conflicts. Given that most of the counties have been created along ethnic lines boundary conflict easily translate into ethnic conflict.

This is indeed a matter we are pursuing in order to ensure that devolution does not lead to a trigger of ethnic conflicts. Further the lack of proper demarcation of boundaries has continued to threaten peace and cohesion in several parts of the country. It is for that reason that we have decided to work with the National Survey of Kenya to ensure that all county boundaries are clearly marked out.

As a Commission, we have mapped out boundary disputes along Kericho-Kisumu; Isiolo-Meru; Turkana-Baringo-West Pokot; Kitui-Tana River;

Makueni-Taita, Taveta, and Kisii-Nyamira Kwale-Kilifi; Kisumu-Nandi; Kisumu-Vihiga and Migori and Narok counties. These boundaries continue to be a source of division, exclusion, and discriminative possession heightening ethnic animosity. We are actively working with the National Survey of Kenya in addressing the boundary issues.

We have therefore continued to ensure that communities along the boundaries coexist peacefully through continuous dialogue among the various stakeholders in the regions.

7. Ongoing Interventions

Our blueprint document ***Deepening Peace and Cohesion for a Prosperous Kenya dubbed Amani Kwa Ground 2022-2025*** elaborates our strategies for resolving boundary related disputes.

We have intensified sensitization campaigns targeting various groups in the respective counties as well as engaged political leaders to find lasting peace along the borderlines. We believe that boundaries should be connecting points rather than sources of ethnic division. We wish to applaud political leaders who have continued to foster peace along the boundaries a case in point being Nandi-Kakamega Counties.

Sondu border Initiative as a model

We are happy to inform the public of our recent engagement in Sondu, where we met all the key stakeholders including the Governors and Members of County Assembly from both Kericho and Kisumu County towards the search for lasting peace.

As a result of the meeting, a peace commitment framework was signed by the Kisumu Governor H.E Prof. Anyang' Nyong'o and Kericho Governor H.E. Dr. Erick Mutai who committed to support the Sondu Peace Process towards lasting peace among communities in the area. The two Governors agreed to work with the NCIC to establish a Peace Park and a Peace Monument in the area. The Ministry of Land through the Department of Survey will equally establish the beacons and advise on a clear boundary.

Narok- Migori border conflict

Similarly, the Commission has taken charge to ensure that recently witnessed violent conflict along the border of Transmara South and Ntitaru Sub-counties in Narok and Migori counties is addressed. The Commission is currently spearheading dialogues and reconciliation meetings between the conflicting communities.

In the implementation of the recommendations of our **Ethnic and Diversity Audit 2023 for County Public Service**, NCIC shall advocate

for tabling of a motion in parliament for renaming counties that are identified by specific ethnic groups to eliminate potential discrimination along ethnic lines. These include Meru, Tharaka Nithi, Nandi, Kisii, Turkana, Embu, Samburu, Taita Taveta, West Pokot, and Elgeyo Marakwet counties.

In conclusion, we are committed to ensuring Kenya remains a peaceful society and that the gains made over the last many years are solidified. As such we have commissioned a study on the Social Cohesion Index to establish the state of Social Cohesion among various communities in Kenya.

We are determined to have the report released in the next six months. It is important to note that the last Social Cohesion Index was published in 2013.



Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia, CBS
Commission Chairman
27th May, 2024