



VPSHR VOLUNTARY PRINCIPLES
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Licensing of private security companies receives more attention than sector control and oversight*



I am very pleased to speak on behalf of DCAF – The Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, an international foundation based in Switzerland, and to thank you sincerely for the opportunity to give a few words in the opening of this very important workshop. My name is Anna Marie Burdzy, and as Programme Manager with DCAF, I have been working for 10 years on supporting the implementation of good practices in business, security and human rights.

I take the opportunity to introduce our organisation – DCAF, as a foundation with 60 member States, we are dedicated to improving the security of states and people within a framework of democratic governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

DCAF assists partner states, and international actors, to improve the governance of the security sector through inclusive and participatory reforms based on international norms and good practices.

In the security sphere, the role of private security companies can be particularly challenging for security and human rights. We know that businesses like extractives industries contract private security companies on a massive scale. However, government regulatory processes and efforts to promote responsible business conduct in the industry are rarely aligned. As an impartial actor, DCAF seeks to bridge this gap through strengthening legislation and supporting national oversight of the industry.

We recognise that good private security regulation is essential for security, socio-economic development and respect for human rights. At the international level, DCAF supports innovative initiatives such as the Montreux Document which supports regulation of PMSCs. We work on implementation of the International Code of Conduct on private security companies. We also support implementation of the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights, when private businesses hire private security for their operations. We also partner with international and regional bodies like the African Union to promote applicable norms standards and good practices. In addition, DCAF works with a range of national partners across Africa – governments, parliaments, national human rights institutions, regulatory bodies, the media and civil society – to support effective private secu-

rity regulation.

Why are we here today? Why is regulating private security so important? Firstly, the size of the industry and its clients are significant: The global PMSC industry is flourishing, representing a worldwide value of approximately USD 100–165 billion per year. In Africa, high levels of foreign investment, such as in extractive industries and privatised critical national infrastructure have led businesses to source security from PSCs in order to fill security gaps. Secondly, private security industry growth has also been driven by situations of recent or current armed conflict or other situations of violence, which have, in some cases, led to a lack of trust in public security. In a number of states, national public security institutions are overwhelmed by demand. This further increases the clientele of PSCs, which now include humanitarian non-governmental organisations, peacekeeping actors, and development agencies. Private security providers in the Africa region significantly outnumber public security forces. The scale and scope of the industry makes democratic oversight and accountability a key priority.

There are also impacts on sustainable development: The vast majority of PSCs in the Africa region are local companies. However, their training and professional standards are lacking, creating risks to development and human rights. Where transnational companies hire foreign private security, this may upset the local economy and outcompete local security providers.

Most importantly there are impacts on the safety and human rights of communities: Large numbers of private security can create excessive securitization in communities where large numbers of male security personnel destabilize social relations. Their uniforms may not be easily distinguishable from the police. This can create confusion among people on the roles and responsibilities of private security. They may engage in gender-based violence or harassment.

We must also remember that the provision of security services, inherently, includes a possible need to use force, without which security cannot be ensured. However, using force bears the risk of abuses and misconduct. Certain tasks which are restricted to law enforcement officials require extra training and knowledge, including how to approach and handle a situ-

ation, as well as proper procedures and oversight if incidents occur. For example, managing risks from demonstrations or protests is a task for which private security is generally not adequately trained. As a result, PSCs may handle such situations in ways that escalate rather than de-escalate the situation. Furthermore, because private security does not have any broader law enforcement objectives, the use of force by private security providers must be guided by the personal right to self-defence. Yet private security is often not trained on the legal use of force, nor on de-escalation techniques.

The governance implications of this fundamental shift in the security landscape receives little regulatory attention. Across Africa, policy makers rarely address private security, national parliaments and regulatory bodies provide limited oversight in this area, and the interest of African media and civil society is localised and sporadic. Where national regulation exists, implementation is very challenging. Licensing private security companies receives more attention than monitoring and oversight of the industry. Across Africa, regulatory agencies are under-resourced and the private security industry is not seen as requiring special attention given competing regulatory priorities. However, due to the impact of private security companies on communities - this needs to change.

As we know, Cabo Delgado Province has abundant mineral resources, which have attracted significant foreign investment and raised many hopes of improving the socio-economic con-

ditions of the population of the region and the country as a whole. However, the economic benefits of resource extraction projects have not yet materialised, and the emergence since 2017 of armed violence stemming from various factors, including economic grievances, social tensions and extremist ideologies, has given rise to an even more complex security and human rights context in the province. In this context, good private security regulation and monitoring becomes even more relevant for the province to aim for an inclusive socio-economic development, in the respect of human rights.

We hope that this workshop will shed light on the challenges of the private security industry in Cabo Delgado. We hope it will give you an overview of the good practices, tools and mechanisms that could help with preventing human rights issues. The goal is to reduce risks, solve issues before they arise, and contribute to sustainable development and respect for human rights of communities wherever these companies are operating.

On behalf of DCAF, I wish you a very productive and interesting meeting. Thank you very much.

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EDITORIAL INFORMATION

Property: CDD – Democracia e Direitos Humanos
Director: Prof. Adriano Nuvunga
Editor: Emídio Beula
Author: Anna Marie Burdzy
Layout: CDD

Address:
Rua Dar-Es-Salaam Nº 279, Bairro da Sommerschild, Cidade de Maputo.
Telephone: +258 21 085 797

 CDD_moz
E-mail: info@cddmoz.org
Website: <http://www.cddmoz.org>

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