

Reflection Paper:

Horn Inter-Elite Dialogue (Jigjiga Forum)

Theme: Strengthening Regional Agency for Durable Peace in
the Horn of Africa



Date: 17–19 May 2026
Venue: Shabelley Resort, Jigjiga
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1. Introduction

The Horn Inter-Elite Dialogue, widely known as the Jigjiga Forum, was convened from 17–19 May 2026 at Shabelley Resort in Jigjiga, Somali Regional State of Ethiopia. The forum served as a high-level regional platform aimed at strengthening dialogue among key stakeholders in the Horn of Africa on issues of peace, security, governance, and economic integration.

The event brought together more than 200 participants from Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Kenya. Delegates included senior government officials, policymakers, academics, researchers, media professionals, and representatives of think tanks and civil society organizations. The diversity of participants reflected the forum’s ambition to promote inclusive and multi-level engagement on regional challenges.

2. Organizers and Institutional Context

The forum was jointly organized by the Institute for Foreign Affairs (IFA), Jigjiga University, Hankaal Institute, and the Centre for Responsible and Peaceful Politics. The collaboration among these institutions reflects a growing recognition of the importance of intellectual partnerships in advancing regional dialogue and policy-oriented research.

The conference was held at a critical time when the Horn of Africa continues to face complex and interconnected challenges, including political instability, humanitarian crises, unresolved territorial disputes, and increasing geopolitical competition. In this context, the forum provided a timely opportunity for reflection and dialogue on how regional actors can assume greater responsibility in shaping their own peace and security architecture.

3. Participation of EAIPG

On behalf of the East African Institute for Peace and Governance (EAIPG), the Executive Director, Dr. Anwar Abdifatah Bashir, participated in the forum. EAIPG is a non-profit research and policy institute established in 2019, dedicated to promoting critical inquiry, scholarly research, and intellectual dialogue on peacebuilding, governance, and conflict resolution in East Africa and beyond.

Through its work in research, policy dialogue, conferences, and capacity-building initiatives, EAIPG seeks to generate evidence-based knowledge and contribute to strengthening governance systems and peacebuilding mechanisms. Its participation in the Jigjiga Forum aligns with its broader mission of fostering inclusive dialogue and supporting sustainable peace and resilient institutions across the region.

4. Thematic Focus of the Forum

The discussions at the forum were structured around three key thematic areas:

A. External Engagement, Emerging Alignments, and Security Implications

Participants examined the evolving role of external actors in the Horn of Africa and how shifting geopolitical alignments are influencing regional security dynamics. The discussions emphasized the need for stronger regional agency in managing external influence.



B. Harnessing Cross-Border Communities and Regional Institutions in Managing Fragile Transitions and Conflict

This theme highlighted the importance of cross-border communities, pastoral mobility, and regional institutions in conflict prevention and resolution. Participants stressed that sustainable peace requires leveraging local dynamics and strengthening institutional coordination across borders.

C. Trade and Economic Engagement as a Vehicle for Regional Integration

The final theme focused on economic cooperation as a foundation for peace. Participants underscored the importance of trade integration, infrastructure

connectivity, and economic interdependence as tools for long-term stability and development in the region.



5. Field Visits and Practical Exposure

In addition to formal discussions, participants were taken on guided visits to key institutions within the Somali Regional State, including the regional parliament and other government offices. These visits provided valuable insights into local governance structures and institutional reforms underway in the region.

The exposure allowed participants to better understand the practical dimensions of governance and the efforts being made to strengthen institutional capacity at the regional level.

6. Key Reflections and Insights

The forum provided several important insights:

- The Horn of Africa requires **regionally driven solutions** rather than externally imposed frameworks.
- Sustainable peace depends on strengthening **regional institutions and cross-border cooperation**.
- Economic integration is not only a development agenda but also a **critical peacebuilding tool**.

- Inclusive dialogue among political elites, academics, and civil society is essential for addressing complex regional challenges.

The discussions also reinforced the importance of moving from episodic conferences to sustained institutional platforms for dialogue and policy coordination.

7. Conclusion

The Horn Inter-Elite Dialogue (Jigjiga Forum) was a significant platform for fostering regional dialogue, mutual understanding, and policy engagement among key stakeholders in the Horn of Africa. It created an important space for discussing shared challenges and exploring collective solutions grounded in regional ownership.

One of the key outcomes of the forum was the agreement that the Jigjiga Forum will be held annually. This decision represents an important step toward institutionalizing regional dialogue and ensuring continuity in addressing the pressing political, security, and economic issues facing the Horn of Africa.

Overall, the forum reaffirmed the importance of regional agency, cooperation, and sustained engagement as essential pillars for achieving durable peace and stability in the region.