

The GLOCEPS

Policy Paper

Research and Analysis in Strategic Interests and Transnational Crimes Pillar

Priority programmes for Kenya at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

Ida Gathoni



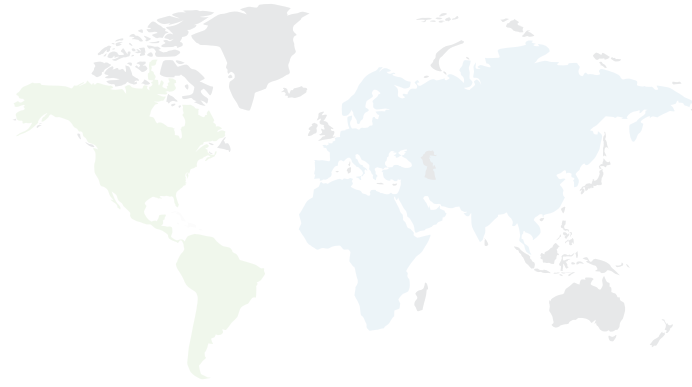
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Executive Summary

This policy paper addresses Kenya's strategic options as she occupies the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) seat in her third tenure. The country's stint at the Council will only be meaningful depending on the programmes she successfully champions. These should include good politics geared towards UNSC reforms; emerging dynamics in counter-terrorism; supporting the women in peacebuilding conversa-

tion; and holistic climate change mitigation efforts. The paper recommends lobbying for reforms towards the establishment of more permanent seats at the UNSC, re-ignition of the conversation on designation of the Al-Shabaab and Ansar al-sunna as emerging terror groups in Africa, and pushing for home-grown alternative dispute resolution mechanisms that are customized to solve African problems.





Introduction

Kenya's third tenure at the UNSC presents her with a unique opportunity to safeguard her interests and be part of the ongoing global realignments. The country aims to maintain her Pan-Africanist agenda while pursuing the achievement of world peace, security, and sustainable development. The seat, therefore, allows her to be influential in matters of global security as she advances her interests in the most influential decision-making forums on international peace and security. There are prospects to stimulate issues regarding peace and security in the Global South, climate change, international development, gender equality, and human rights.

The country's diplomatic behavior at the UNSC is bound by her core foreign policy priorities which include enhancement of global peace and security; promotion of economic development and prosperity; leadership in addressing global environmental issues; promoting better relations through her rich culture; and enhancing her stature in the international arena. These are anchored in the key pillars of peace, economy, diaspora, environment, and culture. The country aims to improve bilateral ties, promote regional

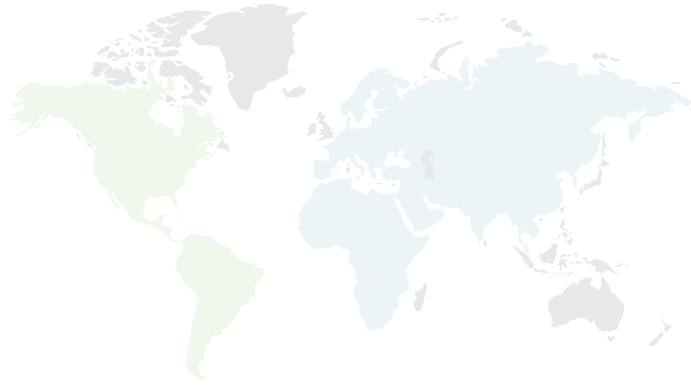
integration, and encourage strategic collaborations on a continental and multilateral level.

Although much time is spent on African issues, many UNSC members regard them as minor in comparison to Syria, North Korea, or the Middle East peace processes. Yet, the recent outbreak of conflict in Tigray, Ethiopia; Sudan's uncertain political transition; and Somalia's disputed electoral process might all contribute to increased instability within the region. The simmering tension between Ethiopia and Egypt over the Nile river; border dispute between Ethiopia and Sudan; and ongoing maritime dispute between Somalia and Kenya are bound to exacerbate discord across the region. These issues have the potential to sabotage good neighborliness and complicate the regional security cooperation function. The deteriorating state of affairs in the Horn of Africa equally present a strategic opportunity to play a more active role in peace and security. This paper, therefore, addresses the need for Kenya to improve strategic relations within and out of Africa through the UNSC seat and gives recommendations on the programmes the country should champion to guarantee a successful term.



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Background

Kenya was elected in June 2020 to serve a third term as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the period 2021-2022. The country's campaign was focused on a ten-point agenda targeting building bridges to promote peace and tolerance. Her tenure is pegged to a four-point agenda anchored in her foreign policy framework. It encompasses strengthening the role of Africa and the Global South in the multilateral systems; ensuring that the Covid-19 pandemic does not become a major driver of insecurity; leveraging the knowledge and buy-in of stakeholders closest to crises and supporting the UNSC and related agencies to strengthen the capacity of state institutions during post-conflict reconstruction.

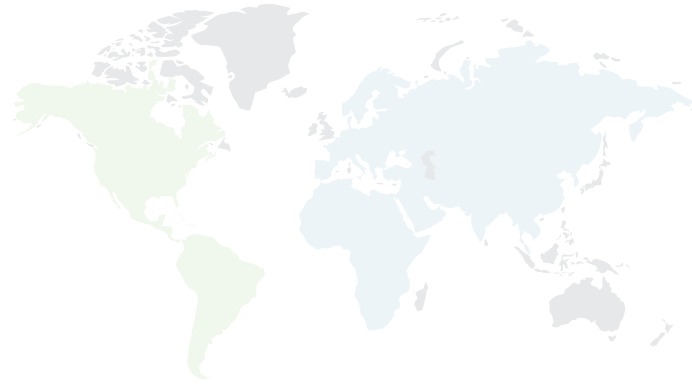
The country's current ascent to the UNSC comes

at a time when she is going through significant diplomatic disquiets. Key among them are the Covid-19 pandemic and an unresolved maritime border dispute with Somalia, which are greatly undermining the opportunity for regional cooperation. Similarly, there are simmering tensions between the conceptual East and the West principally provoked by the United States and China trade wars as Russia struggles with strained relations with the other Western States. The lack of unity among key decision-makers could pose a significant challenge for Kenya's potential impact at the Council. Nevertheless, there lies great potential to influence global peace and security by the time she descends from the seat. All in all, the seat symbolises a renewed desire for the country to assert herself as a leading regional and continental player strategically and diplomatically.



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Key Issues

The following issues remain focal in the discussion on improving Kenya's diplomatic posture through her seat at the UNSC.



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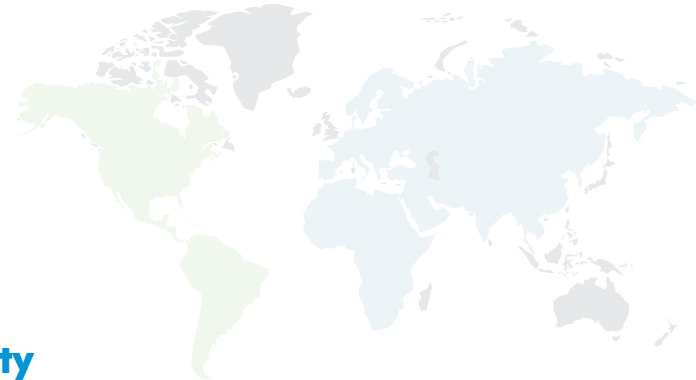
Pursuit of UNSC reforms

The non-permanent seat is critical for Kenya in advancing UNSC reforms per the African Union Ezulwini Consensus that aims at expanding Africa's position on security and peace at the global level. The push for reforms in the structure of the UNSC remains a top priority for most of the UN members except the UNSC Permanent members- United States (US), China, United Kingdom (UK), France and Russia, (hereafter referred to as the P5). This would be a major achievement as it involves tempering the P5. Moreover, the main proponents for UNSC have for the most part been big economic powers including Germany and Japan, that were left out in 1945. The key issue is the permanent membership status- with or without veto power, but with better global regional representation.

Kenya should remain cognizant that this is unlikely to happen within her two-year tenure. However, it will remain an act of good politics and goodwill in the eyes of the Global South.

She should rekindle this dialogue while downplaying the World War II logic where the interests and security of the P5 were critical to the creation of the United Nations. But she should conduct this agenda from a non-aggressive standpoint to avoid jeopardizing her relations with her benefactors within the P5. This can be done by creating an enabling environment for public declarations and discussions supporting the Ezulwini consensus on UNSC reforms. She should also float the reforms agenda on the floor, consistently maintaining a non-aggressive stance. Since she is presently serving at the UNSC together with India, a member of the G4 group which is earnestly pursuing UNSC reforms, she can use this standpoint to gather the support of the rest of the G4 members (Japan, Brazil and Germany) and become the African liaison for the group's agenda. This would win her critical audience as a champion of reforms and pave way for a favourable bid for permanent membership when the time for reforms comes.





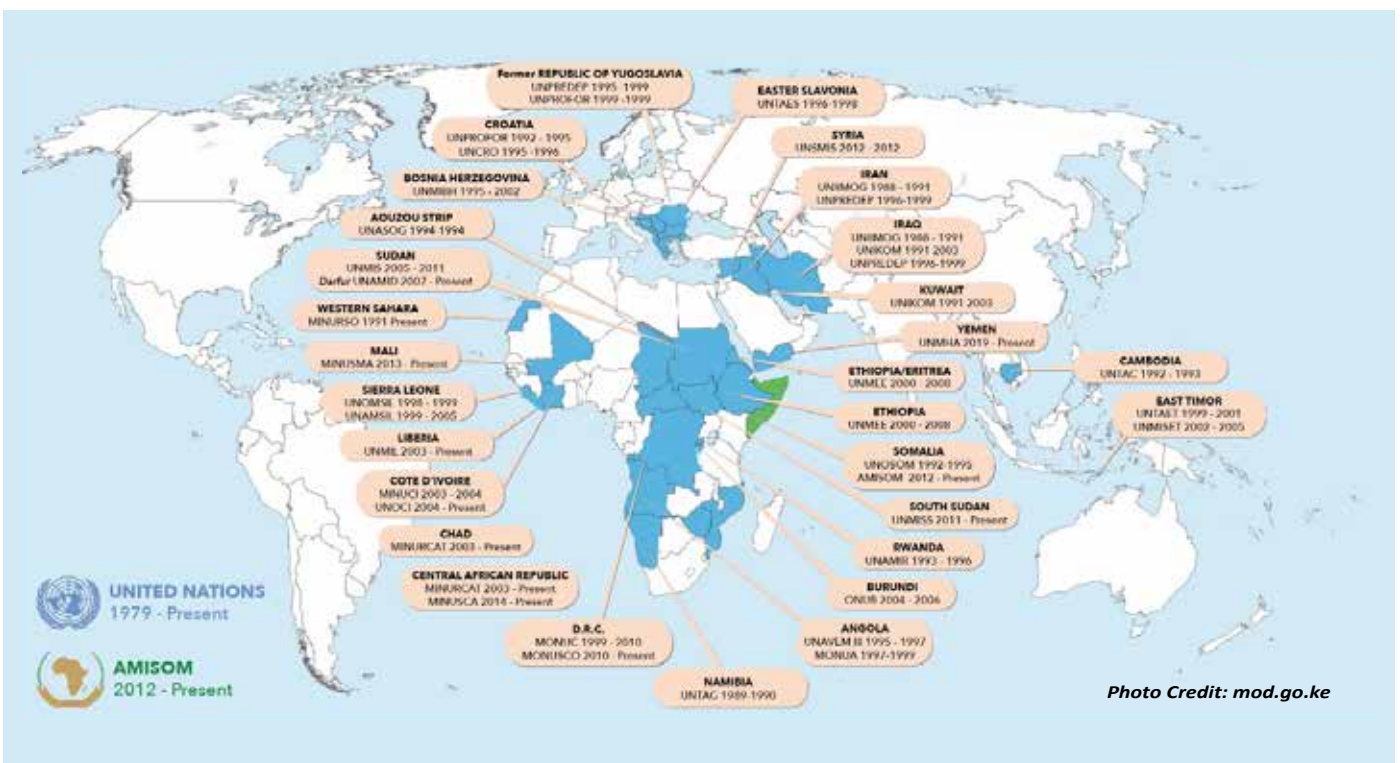
Peace and security

The UNSC is an opportunity for Kenya to intensify her peacemaker role and leverage multilateral organs to capacitate fragile states. This is achievable during her tenure as Kenya has had vast expertise in peace support operations through various peace-keeping missions around the world. The country is also privileged to host one of the Africa's centre of excellence in peace and security- the International Peace Support Training Centre (IPSTC), which trains peacekeepers at strategic, policy, and operational levels. In addition, she is on the way to having the largest Counter-Improvised Explosive Device (C-IED) Centre in Africa.

One of the biggest challenges in peace and security in Africa is the amount of time it takes for the AU and the UN to mobilise against conflict due to inadequate funding for peace-keeping activities. For instance, the response to the Cabo Delgado insurgency was delayed, leaving Mozambique to permissively act after extensive

damage had already occurred. Similarly, the delayed response to political concerns in Rwanda by United Nations Assistance Mission to Rwanda (UNAMIR), between 1993 and 1996, led to the Rwandan genocide, despite Rwanda sitting at the UNSC in 1994. With the UNSC passing a budget of \$6.7 billion in 2019 for peace-keeping missions around the world, Kenya is in a position to leverage for more financing and resource mobilisation for Africa.

As a UNSC non-permanent member, Kenya has the opportunity to mobilize the deployment of experts in peace and conflict to Mozambique through the European Peace Fund which has made the mobilisation of peace-keeping funds easier. It is important to acknowledge her recent deployment of the Kenya Defence Forces Quick Reaction Force to eastern DRC. She could still borrow a leaf from what Rwanda is doing in restoring peace and tranquillity in Cabo Delgado. Her involvement in such conflict-resolution



Kenya's Peace Keeping Missions





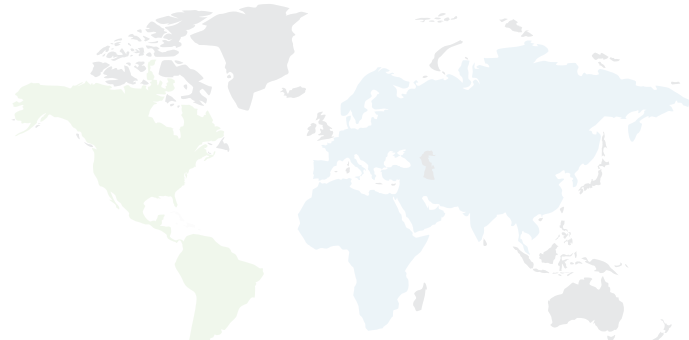
initiatives would catapult her posture in the international arena and aid her to make more proactive moves in the handling of African conflicts while strengthening her foreign policy.

The country has been a proponent of African solutions to African problems especially in areas of conflict prevention and resolution. Her tenure, therefore, puts her in the position to spearhead an African voice towards producing African-generated solutions to prevent a repeat of the Rwanda genocide and the aftermath of the Libya crisis. The country is also serving on the Africa Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC). These concurrent memberships put her in a strategic position to gain more influence in the peace and security arena. By bringing forth the adaptation of African solutions, Kenya has an

opportunity to leverage in the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) which aspires to achieve a sense of self-reliance, responsibility, pride and ownership amongst all African states. The maxim holds great possibilities for Kenya to be viewed as a peace and security hegemon in the continent in the years to come.

Kenya should give emphasis to advocating for financing and resource mobilization programmes for her peace and security efforts. Concurrently, she has a duty to endorse the cementing of home-grown solutions for African problems. Her concurrent membership to the AUPSC gives her decision-making legitimacy, credibility, leverage and lobbying power across multiple platforms.





Emerging terrorism dynamics in Eastern Africa

Kenya has the opportunity to spearhead the conversation towards security resilience against terrorism. This agenda is supported by emerging dynamics in the terror sphere in Eastern Africa. First, the terrorists seeking to escape the onslaught of the Rwanda forces in Cabo Delgado in the north of Mozambique are bound to look up to Kenya and Tanzania for refuge given the extensive recruitment efforts of the Ansar al-sunna of Mozambique from the two countries. Second, the response of Al-Shabaab of Somalia to Covid-19 has especially brought out new fears in the dynamics of radicalisation in their swift response to provide humanitarian care during the pandemic. Third, the Taliban's recent conquest of Afghanistan has heightened fears that their 'success' may embolden extremist groups, particularly al Qaeda allies in Africa.

Finally, the future of the UNSC is currently wanting in terms of its ability to respond to contemporary terror challenges. In 2019, the United States (US) led the UNSC in blocking Kenya's push to toughen sanctions on the Al Shabaab under Resolution 1267. This followed a previous unsuccessful attempt in 2014 which was vetoed by the United Kingdom. There are allegations that the two countries, alongside China, Russia and Saudi Arabia are financiers of terrorism. This raises the question of the sufficiency and willingness of the P5 to deal with and make decisions regarding global terrorism. With the Al Shabaab spreading its influence beyond East Africa to Cabo, Delgado, Mozambique, Kenya has an opportunity to change the narrative and present the Al-Shabaab concern as an African problem with potential impact on the entire African continent as opposed to Somalia and neighbouring countries.



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Military officers from the Kenya Defence Forces during the 8th UN Female Military Officers Course

The gender conversation on peace and security

The implementation of the women, peace and security agenda is more important than ever in the contemporary peace and security context, which is characterised by new and growing dangers such as COVID-19, violent extremism, election-related violence, climate change, and extended displacement. This emphasizes the need to spearhead the gender and conflict conversation at the UNSC.

Kenya has been at the helm of the progressive achievement of gender equality in peace-keeping. With one of the highest percentages of female officers serving in peace-keeping missions, she is set to dynamically engage in the promotion of the women, peace, and security agenda during her tenure as a non-permanent member of the UNSC. For instance, Kenya's Ministry of Interior and National Government Coordination has been able to integrate gender reforms into its peace and security architecture, with the number of women in peace committees increasing two-fold from 14% in 2013 to 29% in 2018. In addition, the country is in the second

phase of implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) through The Kenya National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2020–2024 (KNAP II). It recognises the role and urgency of women and women-led community organisations in peace and security, based on their analysis, expertise, and capacity to advance sustainable peace.

The country should therefore leverage on these accomplishments to encourage more implementation and adjustments that pay more attention to gender issues and women's participation in peace-building processes. Presenting herself as an ally to the women in peacebuilding conversation positions her to benefit from entities such as the Canadian Elsie Initiative. The programme was established to increase the meaningful participation of uniformed women in UN peace operations. It focuses on establishing missions that better reflect the populations they serve, which majorly comprises of women and children.





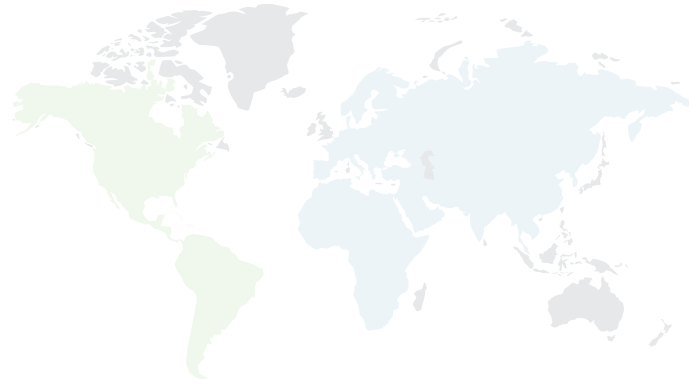
Photo credit: University of Oxford

Boosting climate-change resilience in Africa

Climate change is increasingly shaping security narratives as its implications become clearer. Conflicts related to climate will increase in the coming years unless quick action is taken. For the time being, Africa appears to be the most vulnerable to climate-related conflict, but sections of Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East are also at risk. A case in point is Egypt and Ethiopia that have traded military threats over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam project (GERD) on the Nile due to Cairo's fears that the dam will exacerbate already severe water scarcity. While the link between conflict and climate change is ambivalent, much depends on

how inclusively nations are administered; whether they are well equipped to mediate resource conflicts; and whether they can provide for citizens when disaster strikes. The Africa Union Peace and Security Commission (AUPSC) in a recent summit provided a blueprint towards climate change resilience in the continent, with emphasis on prevention, and strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus. By virtue of hosting a global environmental headquarters, Kenya possesses significant expertise on climate change which should be leveraged and mobilised to inform and support decision-making.





Conclusion

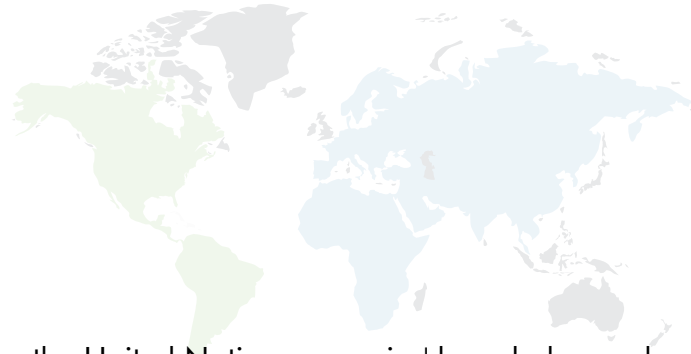
The limited opportunity to represent Africa at the highest level of multilateral international cooperation calls for tact in crafting a Kenya-centric agenda. Certainly, some of these priorities, such as the UNSC reforms, are strategically for good politics, which will give Kenya international recognition and influence. Kenya should be part of the re-ignition of the conversation on UNSC reforms positioning herself for the consideration of a permanent position when the reforms occur. Nonetheless, achievable priorities include pushing her counter-terrorism agenda, creating opportunities for women in peacebuilding to give Kenya higher quotas in peace-keeping missions and advancing her interests in the climate change discourse.



Recommendations

1. Kenya should re-ignite the conversation on designation of the Al-Shabaab and Ansar al-sunna as emerging terror groups in Africa under the UNSC.
2. Kenya should lobby for the establishment of a global climate change research headquarters in Nairobi. This is to increase the country's global visibility, advocacy and legitimacy on all matters of climate change.
3. Kenya should push for alternative dispute mechanisms that are home-grown African and custom-made to solve African problems under the office of the AU, particularly on the GERD.





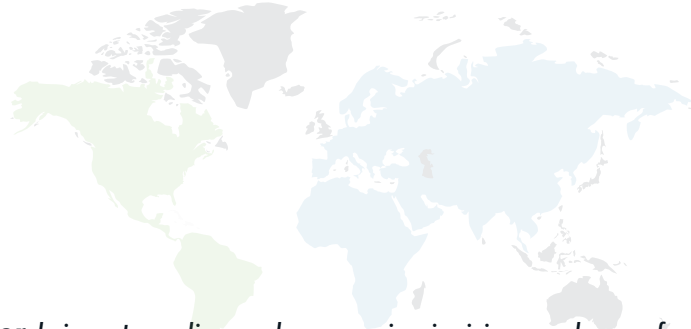
4. Kenya should leverage the United Nations agencies' knowledge and capacity to work closely with the African Centres of Excellence such as IPSTC. This will facilitate resource mobilisation for upscaling the programmes of these centres for successful peace support operations.
5. Kenya should take advantage of The European Peace Fund to support nations ready to respond quickly to complicated conflicts as she focuses on championing African home-grown solutions.
6. Kenya should pursue a partnership with Canada on the Elsie Initiative to identify and implement effective methods to increase the meaningful participation of women in peace operations.
7. Kenya should liaise with India to gather the support of the G4 and be the leading African voice in UNSC reforms in order to position herself for permanent membership status.



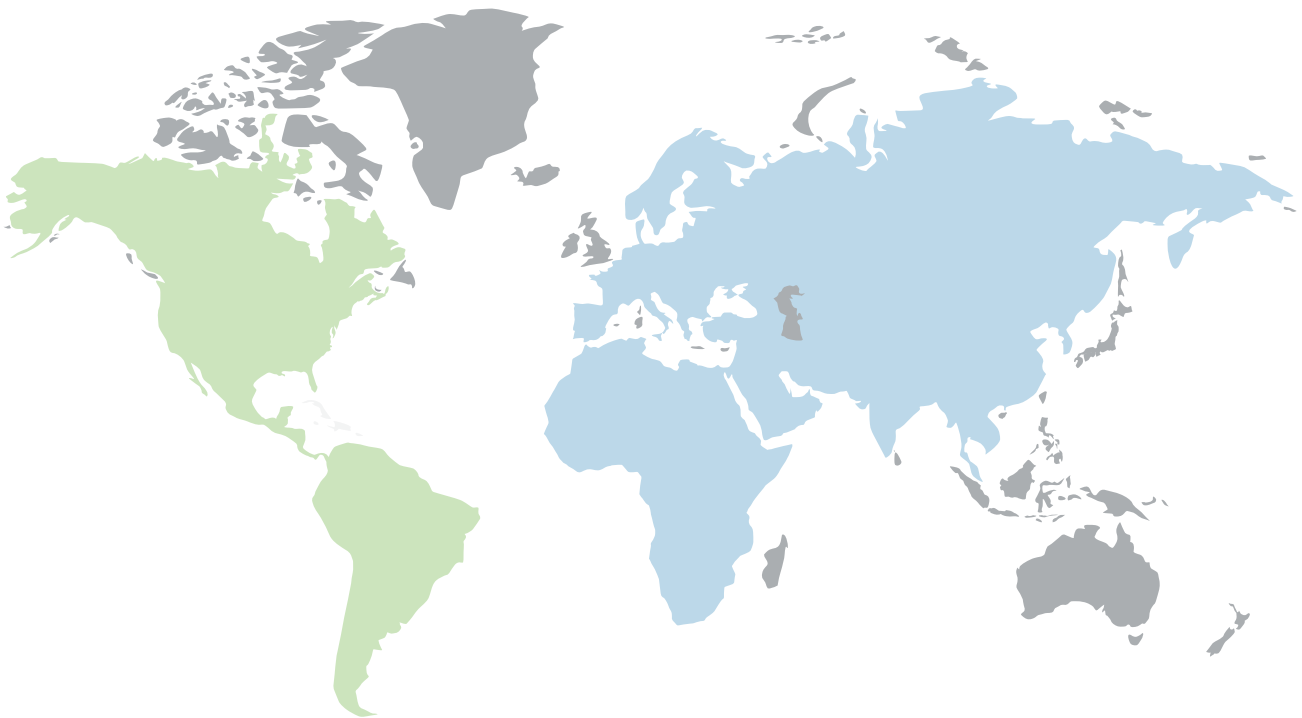
Photo Credit: apaunr.org

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