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Plataforma DECIDE, in partnership with the Centre for Mediation in Africa (CMA) at the University of Pretoria, held a dialogue on 04 February 2026 at the Future Africa Campus in Pretoria under the theme “Human Security and Community Resilience in the Face of Growing Instability in Northern Mozambique.” The event, conducted in a hybrid format from 09:30 to 11:30, brought together academics, researchers, diplomatic representatives, and stakeholders working in peace, security, and development across the SADC region. The dialogue created an open and critical space for reflection on the persistent challenges facing Cabo Delgado and the broader northern region of Mozambique.

The session featured contributions from Prof. Cori Wielenga, Director of the Centre for Mediation in Africa and specialist in mediation and peace processes; Isakki Halli, representative of the European Union; Dr. Wilker Dias, Executive Director of Plataforma DECIDE; Dr. Edknowledge Mandikwaza, academic and expert in conflict and mediation in the SADC region; and Martin Ewi, Senior Researcher at the Institute for Security Studies, among other invited participants.

In her opening remarks, Prof. Cori Wielenga emphasized that the crisis in Cabo Delgado cannot be analyzed solely as a military problem. She argued that it is a complex reality in which ideological, political, religious, and socio-economic factors are deeply intertwined, directly affecting the survival of local populations. Drawing comparisons with other African contexts such as Nigeria and South Sudan, she noted that protracted conflicts tend to worsen when dialogue and mediation are not positioned as central response mechanisms.

Speaking from field experience, Dr. Wilker Dias highlighted the historical exclusion of local communities from development processes. He stressed that large-scale projects, including those led by TotalEnergies, must integrate local communities, women's organizations, youth, and the regional private sector from the outset, otherwise risking the deepening of already existing structural inequalities. He further noted that many families live in such precarious conditions that their primary concern remains daily survival. In several community meetings, he reported, people expressed: “We are hungry; we cannot think about solutions.” These socio-economic vulnerabilities, he explained, are exploited by armed groups that use desperation and lack of opportunity as recruitment tools.

Dr. Edknowledge Mandikwaza warned that the root causes of the violence remain largely unresolved, particularly in the socio-economic sphere and in the quality of governance. He argued that mediation and dialogue must take place at both community and national levels, serving as essential instruments to address the real needs of affected populations. He also underscored the importance of critically assessing democratic processes and governance standards across the SADC region in a context of growing instability that demands more coordinated and inclusive responses.

During the discussion, participants emphasized the need to strengthen relationships between intelligence services and local communities, grounded in trust, active listening, and knowledge of local realities. It was acknowledged that openly discussing Cabo Delgado remains sensitive in certain public and academic spaces, reinforcing the importance of creating safe environments for informed and constructive dialogue.

Addressing the regional dimension of the conflict, Martin Ewi explained that Cabo Delgado should not be viewed as an isolated case. According to the Institute for Security Studies researcher, there are concerning signs of increasing radical activities in other parts of the region, while political responses regarding conflict financing and the illicit economies linked to the insurgency remain limited. This analysis reinforces the need for a coordinated regional approach that goes beyond exclusively military responses.

In turn, the representative of the European Union Delegation to Mozambique, Iisakki Halli, reaffirmed the European Union's commitment to continue supporting the country. He advocated for an integrated approach that combines support to security missions with investments in education, health, and community development as a means of addressing the structural causes of instability.

Throughout the roundtable, participants also discussed the severity of the humanitarian crisis, the links between insurgency and organized crime, the role of technology in conflict prevention, and the lasting impact of historical exclusion in Cabo Delgado. In closing, Prof. Cori Wielenga thanked the speakers and participants, reaffirming that sustainable peace requires continuous dialogue, inclusive solutions, and the active involvement of affected communities.

Plataforma DECIDE therefore reiterates its commitment to promoting spaces for dialogue, mediation, and citizen participation as part of broader efforts to build effective human security and lasting peace in Northern Mozambique.