

# Call for Policy Papers

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**Theme:** Promoting Peaceful Coexistence and Cooperative Security Across the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea, and the Middle East

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## The First Horn and Red Sea Security Forum

Organized by the Institute for Strategic Insights and Research (ISIR)

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*Venue: Hargeisa, Somaliland*

*Duration: Two Days*

*Conference Date: 4-5 November 2026*

*Deadline for Abstract Submission: 10 June 2026*

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## About the Horn and Red Sea Security Forum

The Horn of Africa, the Red Sea, and the Middle East constitute a strategically significant nexus with far-reaching implications for maritime security, global trade, and international cooperation. This interconnected region encompasses the Bab el-Mandeb, one of the world's most critical maritime straits, and is best understood as a connected strategic space in which developments in one arena increasingly shape security, trade, diplomacy, and political alignments in the others. For this reason, the Horn of Africa and the Middle East, separated by the Red Sea corridor, have increasingly been influential to each other, necessitating the treatment of both regions as one policy and analytical bloc.

In the past decade, the broader Horn and Red Sea region has faced escalating instability, including disruption of economic activities in and around the Red Sea caused by intensifying tensions involving both traditional and emerging regional middle powers in the Horn, Middle East and Gulf Regions. The recent US and Israeli wars with Iran, and the subsequent retaliatory actions across the Gulf, have heightened the risk of regionalized or international conflict with immediate spillover affecting maritime security and commercial shipping routes.

These developments are unfolding amid shifting power relations across both sides of the Red Sea, while the broader Horn of Africa region continues to face internal crises, interstate mistrust, and fragmented regional alignments.

## About the 2026 Horn and Red Sea Security Forum

In response to regional dynamics, the Institute for Strategic Insights and Research (ISIR), headquartered in Somaliland, is establishing a regional platform for interdisciplinary dialogue on peace, security, development, and cooperation in the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea, and the Middle East. The Forum is intended as an avenue for regional collaboration, research exchange, and dialogue on shared challenges across these interconnected regions. To this end, the forum welcomes policy-oriented papers that combine analytical

depth with practical relevance and offer clear recommendations on regional security, trade cooperation, diplomatic engagement, and the climate shocks and mitigation agenda across the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea, and the Middle East. This initiative convenes the first Horn and Red Sea Security Forum, to be held in Hargeisa, Somaliland. The forum will ensure neutrality and inclusiveness through the selection of participants and papers from diverse institutional, national, and disciplinary backgrounds, the inclusion of evidence-based contributions reflecting different perspectives, and the careful moderation of discussions on politically sensitive issues.

## About the Forum's Thematic Issues

Submissions are invited under the following thematic tracks, each intended to guide focused policy analysis and practical recommendations.

### **1. Implications of the Possible Shift in Global Order on the Horn of Africa's Regional Order**

Papers under this theme will examine how global order shifts, driven by the U.S.–China rivalry and competing alliance structures, are reshaping relations among IGAD member states, influencing internal political instability, expanding foreign military presence, and affecting the role of international mechanisms such as the United Nations and the African Union. Relevant submissions may explore major power rivalry, emerging Middle Eastern powers, regional alignments, institutional competition, and their implications for security and political order in the Horn of Africa.

### **2. Red Sea and Maritime Security**

The papers under this theme will examine security dynamics in the Red Sea, with particular attention to maritime security, border cooperation, and migration-related challenges, while also proposing actionable approaches to strengthening interstate diplomatic cooperation and broader social and cultural connectivity. Relevant submissions may address maritime security, trade-route disruption, border governance, migration dynamics, and diplomatic responses to instability in the Red Sea states.

### 3. Peaceful Coexistence of States in the Horn of Africa

This theme calls for papers that explore how rules-based cooperation, peaceful dispute settlement, resource sharing, commercial port access, and land connectivity can strengthen regional stability and shared trade interests in the Horn of Africa. Relevant submissions may address the role of land-linking countries, rule-based port cooperation best practices, shared infrastructure, efforts to avert a return to historical animosities, and cross-border trade arrangements.

### 4. Climate Shocks and Livelihood Security

This theme invites papers that examine how climate change, water scarcity, urbanization, and land-based disputes are affecting social stability, cross-border security, and pastoral livelihoods across the region. Relevant submissions may focus on environmental stress, local conflict, cross-border mobility, and policy approaches that strengthen cooperation among neighboring states.

### 5. Somaliland and International Engagements

This theme invites papers that examine Somaliland's international engagements, with particular attention to recent diplomatic developments, bilateral partnerships, and the opportunities and challenges associated with its relations with Taiwan, China, the United States, Israel, and the United Arab Emirates. Contributions should be analytically grounded and policy-focused and should present policy issues, options, and scenarios.

## Approach and Methodology of the Forum

The forum will bring together researchers, policy actors, private sector representatives, civil society actors, and regional and international organizations from the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea, the Middle East, and beyond. The two-day program will include keynote sessions, policy research presentations, and panel discussions. Accepted participants will present their papers in thematic sessions and contribute to broader policy dialogue across the forum.

## Submission Guidelines

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- Abstracts should be **300–450 words** in length. The abstract must clearly state the **topic, methodology, key recommendations, and relevance to the forum themes.**
- Include a **brief bio (max 150 words)** of the author(s) - focusing on academic and professional experience and contact details.
- Ensure originality of your paper, as abstracts will be selected on the basis of originality, relevance, and clarity of presentation.
- Authors of accepted abstracts will be notified.
- Paper length should range from 2,000 to 5,000 words inclusive of references.
- Paper submission should utilize Times New Roman, font 12, and 1.5-line spacing.
- All papers presented during the forum will be subject to a peer-review process to assess them against the given academic merit and alignment with thematic topics.
- Submissions must be in English.

To submit an abstract, please send your work to [papers@isirinstitute.org](mailto:papers@isirinstitute.org)

Authors of selected papers will be invited to the forum. International researchers who submit their full papers on time and receive approval from the review committee will have their flights and accommodation costs covered by the forum.

## Important Dates

1. Deadline for Abstract Submission: **10 June 2026**
2. Notification of abstract acceptance: **27 June 2026**
3. Deadline for full paper submission: **27 August 2026**
4. Notification of paper acceptance: **7 September 2026**
5. Conference dates: **4-5 November 2026**