

THE INSTITUTE OF DIPLOMACY & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (IDIS), OF UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, HOLDS A SYMPOSIUM ON COUNTERING TERRORISM, MAY 7TH, 2015

The Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies (IDIS) at University of Nairobi (UoN) under the leadership of its Director Prof. Amb. Maria Nzomo, in partnership with the Africa Policy Institute (API) held a one day stakeholders' Symposium on "*Countering Terrorism: In Search of a Grand African Strategy*" at the UoN main Campus, on May 7, 2015. Convened against the backdrop of the massacre of 148 students at the Garissa University College in Northern Kenya on April 2, the forum was attended by more than 350 participants and invited guests including high-ranking government officials, members of the diplomatic corps, academic experts, region organizations, UN agencies in Kenya, religious and civil society group, media and university faculty and students.

The opening panel of experts set the philosophical and conceptual foundation for the subsequent discussion. However, an insightful keynote address powerfully delivered by Dr. Amb. Monica Juma Secretary to the Cabinet Republic of Kenya marked the highpoint of the symposium. Dr. Juma set the tone for the rest of the meeting and challenged the scholarly community to generate empirical and credible research knowledge to underpin policy responses to the threat of terrorism. She suggested seven key pillars to guide the search for a grand strategy, including the need for clear understanding of the 'new Kenya' after the 2010 constitution; the global context of terrorism in Kenya; the entry of terrorism into spaces that were previously considered safe such as schools, colleges and universities; interrogate human rights reporting regimes which tend to abet and aid terrorism; and to analyze the mode of messaging by sections of the media which tend to unwittingly serve the agenda of terrorists.

Immediately following the keynote speech was a High Level Panel comprising of government officials, the diplomatic corps, UN agencies and civil society actors, which brought the dialogue to a whole new level of examining the threat of terrorism. Panelists challenged the university community to produce policy-relevant and action oriented research to inform policy making. To this end, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Nairobi, Prof Peter F. M. Mbithi, committed the University to support policy-relevant research. Moving forward, partners to the symposium will produce reports and policy briefs aimed at enriching subsequent policy dialogues on countering terrorism. Ultimately, IDIS and API will work to institutionalize the Forum as a platform for promoting research and dialogue between researchers and policy communities.

