

FINAL REPORT

Establishment and Launch of the Ateker Leaders Council (ALC)

Lodwar, Turkana County, Republic of Kenya

9–11 December 2025

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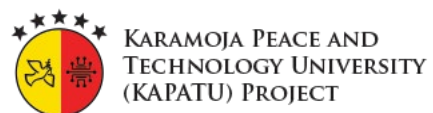
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Abbreviations

ALC – Ateker Leaders Council

AFLI – Africa Leadership Institute

AUBP – African Union Border Programme

CEWARN – Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (IGAD)

EAC – East African Community

GIZ – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit

IGAD – Intergovernmental Authority on Development

KAPATU – Karamoja Peace and Technology University

M&E / MEL – Monitoring and Evaluation / Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

NAC – National Chapter

OWC – Operation Wealth Creation

RoP – Rules of Procedure

SALW – Small Arms and Light Weapons

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

Glossary of Terms

Ateker Communities

A cluster of culturally, linguistically, and historically related Nilotic pastoralist groups distributed across Uganda, Kenya, South Sudan, and Ethiopia. These communities share common socio-cultural institutions and transboundary livelihood systems that predate colonial borders (Schlee, 2010; Mkutu, 2008).

Ateker Leaders Council (ALC)

A transboundary, multi-level governance institution designed to coordinate peacebuilding, cross-border cooperation, and development among Ateker communities, grounded in both customary and formal governance frameworks (African Union, 2014; EAC, 1999).

National Chapter (NAC)

A country-level institutional structure within the ALC responsible for representation, coordination, and implementation, consistent with decentralized governance and regional integration practices (EAC, 1999; IGAD, 1996).

Council Secretariat

The central administrative and technical body responsible for coordination, programme implementation, and institutional continuity, reflecting common models in regional organizations (AU, 2013; UNDP, 2021).

Council of Elders

An advisory body rooted in customary governance systems, providing mediation, legitimacy, and cultural continuity, consistent with traditional conflict resolution models in pastoral societies (Pavanello & Scott-Villiers, 2013).

Transhumance

Seasonal livestock mobility across ecological zones, often crossing national borders, forming a key livelihood strategy in arid and semi-arid regions (Catley, Lind, & Scoones, 2013).

Cross-Border Governance

Institutionalized cooperation across national boundaries to manage shared resources, security, and development challenges (African Union, 2014; IGAD, 2002).

Hybrid Governance Model

An institutional framework combining formal state systems with customary and community-

based governance to enhance legitimacy and effectiveness (Ostrom, 1990; Andrews et al., 2017).

Peace Caravan

A community-based peacebuilding approach involving cross-border dialogue and reconciliation, aligned with local peace committee models (Van Tongeren, 2013).

Results-Based Framework

A management approach focused on outputs, outcomes, and measurable indicators to ensure accountability and effectiveness (UNDP, 2021).

Early Warning Systems

Mechanisms for monitoring and responding to conflict risks, particularly through IGAD's CEWARN system (IGAD, 2002).

Pastoralism

A livestock-based livelihood system adapted to arid environments, characterized by mobility and resource variability (Catley et al., 2013).

Resource-Sharing Agreements

Institutional arrangements governing access to shared natural resources to prevent conflict and promote cooperation (Bromley, 1992).

Cross-Border Corridors

Designated routes enabling regulated movement of people, livestock, and goods across borders, supporting trade and mobility (African Union, 2014).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the process, outcomes, and forward pathway for the establishment and launch of the Ateker Leaders Council (ALC), convened in Lodwar, Turkana County, Republic of Kenya, from 9–11 December 2025. It synthesizes the political, legal, security, and programmatic dimensions of the initiative, and sets out a clear trajectory for implementation.

Purpose and Context

The ALC emerges from a sustained, multi-year effort by Ateker communities and partner States to address structural cross-border challenges—including recurrent conflict, unmanaged pastoral mobility, weak state coordination, and chronic underdevelopment. Building on the Ateker Peace Caravan (2023), the Moroto High-Level Meeting (2024), and subsequent bilateral and technical processes (2025), the initiative has evolved from dialogue to institutional formation.

Core Achievement

The Lodwar Meeting achieved a decisive transition from concept to institution through:

- Adoption and signing of the ALC Constitution, establishing the Council’s mandate, organs, and governance framework;
- Formal launch of the ALC as a transboundary, multi-level governance platform;
- Designation of Lodwar (Kenya) as the Secretariat seat and confirmation of core institutional structures;
- Validation of implementation instruments—including the Activity Plan, Logical Framework, Pre-Launch Work Plan, and Results-Based Budget;
- Agreement on immediate operational milestones, notably the establishment of National Chapters and commencement of priority programmes.

Institutional Design

The ALC is designed as a hybrid governance mechanism that integrates:

- State authority (through National Chapters and political leadership);
- Customary legitimacy (through an Advisory Council of Elders);

- Technical capability (through a professional Secretariat);
- Regional alignment (with EAC, IGAD, and AU/AUBP frameworks).

This configuration enables the Council to address inherently cross-border issues—peace and security, transhumance, resource governance, and development—through coordinated, rules-based, and community-anchored approaches.

Political Status

Uganda, Kenya, and South Sudan provided formal political endorsement and proceeded with adoption of the core instruments. Ethiopia participated constructively but withheld endorsement pending internal legal and procedural processes. The ALC therefore launches with a tri-state operational core, while maintaining an open pathway for Ethiopia’s future integration.

Strategic Significance

The ALC constitutes a flagship regional innovation with implications that extend beyond the Ateker region:

- It shifts security practice from reactive responses to preventive, institutionalized peacebuilding;
- It operationalizes cross-border governance of pastoral mobility and shared resources;
- It advances bottom-up regional integration, complementing AU, EAC, and IGAD frameworks;
- It provides a platform for targeted investment and socio-economic transformation in marginalized borderlands;
- It offers a replicable model for other cross-border regions in Africa.

Key Risks

Notwithstanding the progress achieved, the ALC faces material risks that will shape its trajectory, including:

- Incomplete regional alignment, particularly Ethiopia’s non-signature;

- Legal and sovereignty sensitivities affecting recognition and authority;
- Institutional capacity constraints during early operationalization;
- Financing and sustainability challenges;
- Security and mobility complexities in fragile border contexts.

Immediate Priorities

To consolidate the gains from Lodwar and build early credibility, the following priorities are critical in the next 3–12 months:

- Establish and resource National Chapters and the Secretariat;
- Finalize and operationalize Rules of Procedure and financial systems;
- Launch priority peace and mobility interventions with visible community benefits;
- Secure multi-year financing commitments and partner alignment;
- Initiate structured diplomatic re-engagement with Ethiopia.

Conclusion

The Lodwar Meeting marks a historic turning point for the Ateker region—transforming a shared aspiration into a functioning institutional framework. The ALC now stands as a credible platform for coordinated action. Its success will depend on speed of implementation, strength of governance, sustained political backing, and demonstrable results on the ground.

If effectively operationalized, the ALC can catalyze a transition from conflict-prone borderlands to integrated corridors of peace, mobility, and shared prosperity, while serving as a model for cross-border governance across the continent.

THE LODWAR PROCESS: FROM DIALOGUE TO INSTITUTION

1. Narrative Overview

The establishment of the Ateker Leaders Council (ALC) in Lodwar in December 2025 was not an isolated event. It was the culmination of a deliberate, multi-year political and community-driven process that transformed a shared aspiration into a formal regional institution.

This section provides a narrative account of that journey—capturing the evolution of ideas, the convergence of actors, and the negotiation dynamics that shaped the final outcome.

2. Origins: From Fragmentation to Shared Vision (2023–2024)

The roots of the ALC can be traced to the Ateker Peace Caravan of 2023, which brought together communities across borders in a symbolic and practical demonstration that peace was both possible and desired. The caravan did more than promote reconciliation—it revealed a critical insight:

That cross-border conflict in the Ateker region was not inevitable, but rather a function of weak coordination, unmanaged mobility, and absence of shared governance frameworks.

This realization was consolidated during the High-Level Ateker Leaders Meeting in Moroto in 2024, where political leaders, elders, and technical actors began to articulate the need for a permanent institutional mechanism.

The Ateker Reunion Cultural Festival and Memorandum (2024) further elevated the agenda, translating community concerns into a structured set of demands presented to regional Heads of State. These included calls for:

- coordinated peace and security frameworks;
- cross-border infrastructure and service delivery;
- recognition of pastoral mobility systems;
- establishment of a regional coordination platform.

At this stage, the idea of the ALC moved from conceptual aspiration to political proposition.

3. Consolidation: Diplomacy and Technical Design (2025)

The year 2025 marked a critical phase of institutional consolidation, characterized by parallel tracks of political diplomacy and technical design.

On the political front, bilateral engagements—particularly between Uganda and Kenya—played a central role. High-level consultations involving senior government officials created the diplomatic space necessary to advance the initiative. The July 30, 2025 bilateral engagement between the Heads of State of Uganda and Kenya further reinforced the legitimacy of the process.

At the same time, a technical architecture was being developed. Under the leadership of the Africa Leadership Institute (AFLI), supported by the KAPATU Project, a series of foundational instruments were prepared, including:

- the draft Constitution;
- institutional analysis of governance gaps;
- proposed Rules of Procedure;
- logical frameworks and implementation plans;
- results-based budgeting structures.

This dual-track approach ensured that by the time of the Lodwar meeting, the ALC was not merely an idea, but a fully articulated institutional proposal.

4. Convergence in Lodwar: Negotiation and Decision (December 2025)

The Lodwar meeting brought together a diverse set of actors—political leaders, elders, technical experts, and regional partners—into a single negotiation space. It was here that the initiative faced its most critical test: whether consensus could be achieved across different national interests, legal systems, and institutional expectations.

The deliberations were intensive and, at times, complex. Key issues included:

- the scope of the Council’s mandate;
- representation and inclusivity;
- leadership structures and governance arrangements;

- legal status and institutional authority;
- alignment with national constitutional frameworks.

A defining feature of the negotiations was the effort to balance **three competing imperatives**:

1. the need for a strong and functional institution;
2. respect for national sovereignty and legal systems;
3. preservation of community ownership and customary legitimacy.

5. The Ethiopia Moment: A Critical Inflection Point

One of the most significant moments of the Lodwar process was Ethiopia's decision to **withhold endorsement** of the final instruments.

Ethiopia's position highlighted the inherent challenges of cross-border institution-building, particularly where:

- constitutional constraints require federal authorization;
- negotiation timelines intersect with domestic processes;
- interpretations of agreed positions differ among parties.

While this introduced a degree of uncertainty, it also reinforced an important principle:

That durable regional institutions must accommodate diversity in legal systems and political processes.

The meeting therefore proceeded with a pragmatic approach—**adopting the instruments with willing States while maintaining openness to Ethiopia's future participation**.

6. Breakthrough: From Agreement to Institution

Despite these challenges, the Lodwar meeting achieved a historic breakthrough.

For the first time, Ateker communities and partner States collectively:

- adopted a Constitution;
- established a formal governance structure;

- defined operational and programmatic frameworks;
- launched a regional institution with a clear mandate and direction.

This marked the transition from dialogue to institution, from aspiration to implementation.

7. Significance of the Lodwar Process

The Lodwar process demonstrates several critical lessons:

- Community-driven initiatives can evolve into formal institutions when supported by political leadership and technical rigor;
- Hybrid governance models are essential in contexts where state and customary systems intersect;
- Diplomatic flexibility is key to managing diversity among participating States;
- Institutional readiness matters—the presence of well-developed frameworks enabled rapid transition to adoption.

8. Looking Forward

The Lodwar meeting was not an endpoint, but a starting point for a new phase of regional cooperation. The success of the ALC will depend on how effectively the momentum generated in Lodwar is translated into:

- operational institutions;
- tangible programmes;
- measurable improvements in peace and livelihoods.

The narrative of Lodwar is therefore one of possibility realized—but not yet fulfilled.

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1.1 Historical and Geo-Political Context

The Ateker communities constitute a culturally and linguistically related cluster of Nilotic peoples distributed across the borderlands of Uganda, Kenya, South Sudan, and Ethiopia. These communities share a common ancestry, socio-cultural systems, and pastoralist livelihoods that are deeply interconnected across national boundaries. Their historical patterns of mobility—particularly transhumance in search of water and pasture—have long predated modern state borders.

However, the imposition of colonial and post-colonial boundaries fragmented these historically integrated communities into separate national jurisdictions, often without corresponding governance mechanisms to manage shared resources and cross-border interactions. This has contributed to persistent structural challenges, including:

- cyclical inter-community conflicts, particularly cattle rustling and retaliatory violence;
- competition over scarce natural resources such as water and grazing land;
- weak coordination between state security and administrative systems across borders;
- limited infrastructure, market access, and service delivery in borderland regions;
- entrenched marginalization and underdevelopment relative to national averages.

Over time, these challenges have reinforced one another, creating a complex ecosystem of insecurity, poverty, and limited economic opportunity. The Ateker borderlands have therefore remained among the most fragile yet strategically important regions within the Greater Horn of Africa.

1.2 Emergence of a Regional Ateker Agenda

In response to these persistent challenges, Ateker communities—through their leaders, elders, women, and youth—have increasingly mobilized around a shared vision of peace, integration, and socio-economic transformation. This vision has evolved through a series of deliberate, community-driven and state-supported processes, including:

- The Ateker Peace Caravan (2023), which demonstrated the viability of cross-border dialogue and reconciliation;

- The High-Level Ateker Leaders Meeting in Moroto (2024), which consolidated political commitment across participating states;
- The Ateker Reunion Cultural Festival and Memorandum to Heads of State (2024), which articulated a comprehensive development and peace agenda;
- Bilateral and multilateral engagements between partner states, particularly Uganda and Kenya (2025);
- Structured technical consultations facilitated by regional and continental institutions.

These processes progressively shifted the Ateker agenda from ad hoc dialogue initiatives to a structured proposal for a permanent, transboundary institutional mechanism capable of coordinating peacebuilding, development, and mobility governance across borders.

1.3 Rationale for Establishing the Ateker Leaders Council

The establishment of the Ateker Leaders Council (ALC) is grounded in the recognition that the challenges facing Ateker communities are inherently cross-border and cannot be effectively addressed through isolated national interventions. There was therefore a clear need for a coordinated, multi-level governance platform that:

- bridges formal state institutions and customary leadership systems;
- integrates political leadership, technical expertise, and community representation;
- facilitates joint decision-making on shared resources and mobility;
- promotes harmonization of policies and practices across borders;
- provides a platform for sustained dialogue, conflict prevention, and dispute resolution;
- supports advocacy for investment and service delivery in marginalized border regions.

The ALC is thus conceived not merely as a forum for consultation, but as a functional governance mechanism designed to operationalize cross-border cooperation in a structured and sustainable manner.

1.4 Alignment with Regional and Continental Frameworks

The Ateker Leaders Council is firmly anchored within existing regional and continental legal and policy frameworks, ensuring both legitimacy and strategic coherence. These include:

- The African Union Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation (Niamey Convention), which provides the normative basis for transboundary governance arrangements;
- The Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community (EAC) and its Protocol on Peace and Security, which promote regional integration and coordinated security responses;
- IGAD frameworks, including the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN), which support preventive diplomacy and cross-border stability;
- The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to poverty reduction, peace and justice, and partnerships.

By aligning with these frameworks, the ALC positions itself as a complementary mechanism that enhances, rather than competes with, state sovereignty and regional institutional mandates.

1.5 From Concept to Institutional Formation

The transition from concept to institutional formation was deliberate and phased. Initial community-driven resolutions were translated into technical design processes supported by regional partners and technical institutions. This included:

- development of a draft Constitution and Rules of Procedure;
- institutional analysis to identify governance gaps and risks;
- formulation of operational plans, logical frameworks, and budgets;
- iterative consultations among partner states and stakeholders;
- preparation for formal adoption and launch.

These preparatory processes ensured that by the time of the Lodwar meeting in December 2025, the Ateker Leaders Council was not merely a conceptual initiative, but a fully articulated institutional framework ready for formal establishment.

1.6 Significance of the Lodwar Meeting

The Lodwar meeting represented the culmination of this multi-year process. It provided the platform for:

- formal validation and adoption of the ALC constitutional and governance instruments;

- political endorsement by participating states;
- transition from planning to implementation;
- establishment of institutional structures and operational timelines.

As such, the Lodwar meeting marks a historic transition from fragmented, project-based interventions to a coordinated, institutionalized approach to peace, mobility, and development across the Ateker region.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE LODWAR MEETING

The Lodwar Meeting (9–11 December 2025) was convened as a decisive transition point from conceptualization to formal institutionalization of the Ateker Leaders Council (ALC). The objectives were deliberately multi-layered—spanning political endorsement, legal consolidation, security coordination, and programmatic readiness—reflecting the complex, cross-border realities of the Ateker region.

2.1 Strategic (Political–Diplomatic) Objectives

1. Secure High-Level Political Endorsement

Consolidate prior bilateral and multilateral understandings into a formal, collectively owned regional initiative, with clear buy-in from participating States and alignment with national interests, sovereignty considerations, and regional integration agendas.

2. Institutionalize a Home-Grown Regional Mechanism

Transition the Ateker agenda from ad hoc dialogue platforms and peace caravans into a **durable, state-recognized, community-rooted institution** capable of sustained engagement across political cycles.

3. Anchor the Initiative within Regional and Continental Architectures

Position the ALC as a complementary mechanism within AU, EAC, and IGAD frameworks—thereby enhancing legitimacy, facilitating diplomatic support, and unlocking pathways for technical and financial cooperation.

2.2 Legal and Governance Objectives

4. Adopt and Confer Foundational Legal Instruments

Review, refine, and formally adopt the **Constitution of the Ateker Leaders Council**, ensuring clarity on mandate, membership, institutional organs, decision-making modalities, and compliance with national legal systems.

5. Operationalize Governance through Rules of Procedure

Establish a coherent procedural framework to guide Council operations, including:

- leadership structures and roles;
- quorum and decision-making rules;

- committee systems;
- ethical standards and conflict-of-interest provisions.

6. Clarify Institutional Architecture and Authority

Define the relationship between:

- the Council (political organ),
 - National Chapters (implementation arms), and
 - the Secretariat (technical/administrative engine),
- while integrating customary advisory structures such as the Council of Elders.

2.3 Peace, Security and Cross-Border Governance Objectives

7. Establish a Coordinated Framework for Peace and Security

Strengthen mechanisms for conflict prevention, early warning, and response—building on existing IGAD/CEWARN systems and traditional dispute-resolution practices.

8. Promote Harmonized Cross-Border Resource Governance

Create a platform for coordinated management of transhumance, grazing corridors, water resources, and shared ecosystems—reducing conflict drivers and enhancing resilience.

9. Enhance State–Community Security Synergy

Bridge gaps between formal security institutions and community-based mechanisms, ensuring that local knowledge, elders’ mediation, and state enforcement operate in a complementary manner.

2.4 Development and Economic Transformation Objectives

10. Align the Ateker Agenda with Development Priorities

Translate community demands—articulated in prior memoranda—into structured development pathways covering infrastructure, livestock productivity, education, health, and market integration.

11. Provide a Platform for Investment and Resource Mobilization

Position the ALC as a credible vehicle for attracting financing from:

- partner States;
- regional organizations;
- development partners;
- private sector actors.

12. Integrate Borderlands into National and Regional Economies

Advance policies and initiatives that transform border regions from zones of insecurity into corridors of trade, mobility, and economic opportunity.

2.5 Programmatic and Implementation Objectives

13. Approve Core Implementation Instruments

Validate and adopt key planning tools, including:

- the Activity Plan;
- the Logical Framework;
- the Pre-Launch Work Plan; and
- the Results-Based Budget.

14. Establish a Results-Based Implementation Framework

Ensure that the ALC is guided by clear outputs, indicators, timelines, and accountability mechanisms—moving beyond declaratory commitments to measurable impact.

15. Define Immediate Operational Milestones

Agree on concrete next steps, including:

- formation of National Chapters;
- nomination of delegates;
- establishment of the Secretariat;
- commencement of priority programmes.

2.6 Institutional Launch Objective

16. Formally Launch the Ateker Leaders Council

Culminate the meeting with the official establishment of the ALC as a functioning regional body, including:

- designation of the Secretariat seat;
- endorsement of governance structures;
- articulation of a shared vision for implementation.

3. PARTICIPATION

Participation in the Lodwar Meeting was deliberately structured to reflect the multi-level, cross-border, and multi-stakeholder character of the Ateker Leaders Council (ALC). The composition of delegates and institutions was not incidental; it was a strategic design choice aimed at ensuring political legitimacy, community ownership, technical credibility, and regional alignment.

3.1 State Representation and Political Leadership

The meeting brought together official delegations from:

- The Republic of Uganda;
- The Republic of Kenya;
- The Republic of South Sudan; and
- The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Each delegation comprised a mix of senior political leaders, including ministers, members of parliament, and local government representatives from Ateker-inhabited regions. This ensured that deliberations were anchored in both national policy authority and sub-national realities of borderland governance.

Uganda's delegation, in particular, reflected a high level of political commitment, including representation from Karamoja and Teso leadership structures, cultural institutions, and technical actors. This composition enabled Uganda to play a central role in bridging political, cultural, and technical dimensions of the discussions.

Kenya, as host, provided both political leadership and logistical coordination, reinforcing its strategic interest in stabilizing and developing Turkana and adjacent Ateker regions. South Sudan's participation underscored the importance of integrating fragile border areas into regional peace frameworks. Ethiopia's presence—despite its eventual reservation—was critical in maintaining the broader vision of a four-country Ateker platform.

3.2 Community, Cultural and Traditional Leadership

A defining feature of participation was the systematic inclusion of customary authorities and community representatives, including:

- senior elders and cultural leaders;
- representatives of traditional institutions;
- leaders of community-based structures and pastoralist networks.

This ensured that the ALC remained grounded in the lived realities, norms, and conflict-resolution practices of Ateker communities. The presence of elders was particularly significant in legitimizing the process, given their central role in traditional dispute resolution, social cohesion, and inter-community mediation.

Participation from women and youth leaders—though still evolving—signaled a deliberate shift toward more inclusive governance, recognizing their critical role in peacebuilding, livelihood transformation, and social stability.

3.3 Technical and Institutional Participation

The meeting was supported by a robust layer of technical expertise drawn from:

- policy analysts and institutional design experts;
- legal consultants and governance specialists;
- development planners and programme designers;
- monitoring and evaluation professionals.

These actors were instrumental in translating political intentions into coherent institutional frameworks, including the Constitution, Rules of Procedure, logical frameworks, and results-based budgets.

A central role was played by the Africa Leadership Institute (ALI) under the KAPATU Project, which provided technical leadership in:

- institutional analysis and constitutional drafting;
- governance structuring;
- programme design and logical frameworks;
- documentation and synthesis of deliberations.

This technical backbone ensured that the ALC was not merely a political declaration, but a fully articulated and operationally viable institution.

3.4 Regional and Continental Institutional Partners

Participation by regional and continental bodies provided strategic anchoring and legitimacy.

Key partners included:

- The East African Community (EAC) Secretariat;
- The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD);
- The African Union Border Programme (AUBP);
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

These institutions contributed in multiple capacities:

- facilitating dialogue and coordination among partner states;
- providing normative frameworks and policy guidance;
- supporting technical processes and documentation;
- mobilizing financial and programmatic support.

Their involvement positioned the ALC within a broader ecosystem of regional integration, peace and security cooperation, and cross-border development initiatives.

3.5 Security and Cross-Border Governance Stakeholders

Given the security-sensitive nature of the Ateker region, participation also implicitly engaged actors and perspectives linked to:

- cross-border security coordination;
- conflict early warning and response systems;
- local and national administrative structures in border areas.

While not always formally categorized as security delegations, the presence of political leaders, technical advisors, and regional bodies ensured that security considerations were integrated into all deliberations, particularly in relation to disarmament, mobility management, and conflict prevention.

3.6 Development and Programme Stakeholders

The inclusion of development partners and programme actors reflected the recognition that peace and governance outcomes must be matched with tangible socio-economic transformation. Participation therefore extended to actors involved in:

- infrastructure and service delivery planning;
- livestock and pastoral systems development;
- education and human capital development;
- cross-border trade and market integration.

This multi-sectoral participation enabled the meeting to move beyond normative discussions to practical, implementable development pathways.

3.7 Character of Participation: A Hybrid Governance Model

Taken together, participation in the Lodwar Meeting reflects a hybrid governance model, characterized by the convergence of:

- state authority (political leadership);
- customary legitimacy (elders and cultural leaders);
- technical expertise (policy and programme specialists);
- regional oversight (EAC, IGAD, AU structures);
- development support (partners and implementing agencies).

This hybrid configuration is central to the ALC's design and effectiveness. It enables the Council to operate simultaneously as:

- a political coordination platform;
- a culturally legitimate dispute-resolution mechanism;
- a technical and programmatic implementation vehicle;
- a bridge between communities and states.

3.8 Implications for Legitimacy and Effectiveness

The breadth and diversity of participation confer several strategic advantages:

- **Political legitimacy**, through formal state representation;
- **Community ownership**, through inclusion of elders and local actors;
- **Technical credibility**, through structured institutional design;
- **Regional coherence**, through alignment with EAC, IGAD, and AU frameworks.

However, participation also revealed emerging tensions—particularly in relation to national processes and timing—which were most evident in Ethiopia’s subsequent reservation. This underscores the importance of continued diplomatic engagement and adaptive institutional design as the ALC transitions into its operational phase.

4. KEY DELIBERATIONS

The Lodwar Meeting was characterized by substantive, structured, and multi-dimensional deliberations that bridged political negotiation, legal drafting, security considerations, and programmatic planning. Discussions were not merely descriptive; they were decision-oriented, aimed at resolving outstanding issues and translating prior consultations into binding institutional outcomes.

The deliberations can be understood across five interrelated domains: institutional design, legal and constitutional consolidation, peace and security architecture, development programming, and implementation readiness.

4.1 Institutional Design and Governance Architecture

Participants undertook a detailed examination of the proposed institutional structure of the Ateker Leaders Council (ALC), with particular attention to ensuring functionality, legitimacy, and adaptability across diverse national contexts.

Key issues deliberated included:

- the composition and role of National Chapters as the primary interface between the Council and member states;
- the structure and mandate of the Council Secretariat, including its coordination role across borders;
- the integration of customary governance through an Advisory Council of Elders;
- the need for clear leadership arrangements, including chairing, rotation, and executive coordination mechanisms.

A central concern was balancing political authority and community legitimacy. Participants emphasized that the ALC must not become a purely elite political forum detached from grassroots realities, but rather a hybrid institution that integrates elected leaders, traditional authorities, and community actors.

There was also recognition of the need to ensure equitable representation, including women, youth, and pastoralist groups, while maintaining operational efficiency.

4.2 Constitutional and Legal Consolidation

A significant portion of the deliberations focused on the draft Constitution, which serves as the foundational legal instrument of the ALC.

Participants engaged in clause-by-clause review, addressing:

- the scope and clarity of the Council’s mandate and functions;
- principles of representation and inclusivity;
- decision-making procedures, including consensus and voting thresholds;
- provisions on resource mobilization, budgeting, and financial accountability;
- institutional organs, including the Secretariat and advisory structures;
- alignment with national legal systems and regional frameworks.

Particular attention was given to ensuring that the Constitution:

- reflects both customary norms and formal governance standards;
- is legally coherent and implementable across different jurisdictions;
- provides sufficient flexibility for future amendments;
- establishes a credible basis for engagement with development partners.

While broad consensus was achieved on the overall structure, some areas required compromise, particularly regarding the depth of institutional detail and sequencing of implementation.

4.3 Peace, Security, and Cross-Border Stability

Given the historical context of conflict in the Ateker region, peace and security considerations were central to the deliberations.

Participants explored how the ALC could:

- strengthen early warning and response mechanisms, building on IGAD/CEWARN systems;
- support community-based conflict resolution through elders and traditional institutions;

- complement state-led disarmament and security operations;
- facilitate dialogue on cross-border resource use, particularly grazing and water access;
- reduce drivers of conflict linked to mobility, competition, and marginalization.

There was strong consensus that security cannot be addressed in isolation, and must be integrated with governance and development interventions. The ALC was therefore positioned as a platform for preventive diplomacy and coordinated action, rather than reactive crisis management.

4.4 Cross-Border Governance and Mobility Management

Participants deliberated extensively on the governance of transhumance and shared resources, recognizing these as both a source of livelihood and a driver of conflict.

Key areas of focus included:

- harmonization of transhumance calendars and migration corridors;
- development of cross-border agreements on resource sharing;
- mechanisms for dispute resolution related to land, water, and livestock movement;
- coordination between local authorities across borders;
- integration of customary practices with formal regulatory frameworks.

The discussions underscored the need for **predictable, rules-based systems** that reduce uncertainty and prevent conflict, while preserving the flexibility required for pastoral livelihoods.

4.5 Development Programming and Economic Transformation

The meeting placed strong emphasis on linking peace and governance outcomes to tangible socio-economic benefits.

Participants reviewed priority areas for development intervention, including:

- infrastructure development (roads, water systems, telecommunications);
- livestock value chains and pastoral productivity;
- education, with particular attention to access for girls;

- health services in remote border areas;
- trade facilitation and market integration.

There was consensus that the ALC should serve as a platform for advocacy and coordination, enabling Ateker regions to attract investment and align with national and regional development plans.

4.6 Resource Mobilization and Financial Sustainability

Deliberations addressed the need for a sustainable financial framework to support ALC operations and programmes.

Key considerations included:

- contributions from member states;
- support from regional organizations and development partners;
- community-based contributions and locally driven initiatives;
- potential for income-generating activities consistent with legal frameworks.

Participants emphasized transparency, accountability, and alignment with best practices in financial management as essential to building credibility and attracting support.

4.7 Operational Planning and Results Frameworks

A major strength of the deliberations was the integration of detailed programmatic tools, including:

- the Activity Plan;
- the Logical Framework;
- the Pre-Launch Work Plan; and
- the Results-Based Budget.

These instruments were reviewed and validated as the basis for implementation, ensuring that the ALC is guided by:

- clearly defined outputs and outcomes;

- measurable indicators;
- realistic timelines;
- structured monitoring and evaluation systems.

This approach reflects a deliberate shift from normative commitments to results-oriented programming.

4.8 Institutional Coherence and Implementation Sequencing

Participants also deliberated on the sequencing of implementation, recognizing that institutional credibility depends on early, visible progress.

Key priorities identified included:

- establishment of National Chapters;
- nomination and confirmation of delegates;
- operationalization of the Secretariat;
- adoption and enforcement of Rules of Procedure;
- initiation of priority programmes in peacebuilding and mobility management.

There was consensus that the transition from launch to implementation must be rapid, coordinated, and well-resourced, in order to sustain political momentum and community confidence.

4.9 Areas of Divergence and Negotiated Compromise

While the meeting achieved broad consensus, deliberations also revealed areas of divergence, particularly in relation to:

- timing and sequencing of adoption of instruments;
- alignment with national legal and constitutional processes;
- levels of institutional detail in the Constitution;
- modalities of participation by all partner states.

These differences were managed through negotiation and compromise, resulting in a set of agreed instruments while leaving space for future refinement. The discussions involving Ethiopia were particularly illustrative of the need to balance regional ambition with national procedural requirements.

5. KEY OUTCOMES

The Lodwar Meeting yielded a set of definitive, high-impact outcomes that collectively transitioned the Ateker Leaders Council (ALC) from a negotiated concept into an operational regional institution. These outcomes span legal establishment, political endorsement, institutional structuring, and implementation readiness.

The significance of these outcomes lies not only in their formal adoption, but in their strategic coherence—linking governance, peacebuilding, and development into a unified regional framework.

5.1 Formal Adoption of the Constitution

The meeting culminated in the adoption and signing of the Constitution of the Ateker Leaders Council, thereby establishing the foundational legal and institutional framework of the ALC.

This outcome:

- confers formal identity and legitimacy to the Council;
- defines its mandate, objectives, and guiding principles;
- establishes institutional organs and governance structures;
- provides a basis for engagement with partner states, regional bodies, and development partners.

The Constitution represents a negotiated compromise that balances:

- political considerations of sovereignty;
- customary governance traditions;
- modern principles of accountability, inclusivity, and institutional functionality.

5.2 Official Establishment and Launch of the ALC

The Ateker Leaders Council was formally established and launched as a transboundary governance platform.

This marks a critical transition:

- from informal and project-based cooperation;

- to a structured, institutionalized mechanism with defined authority and continuity.

The launch signals the collective commitment of participating States and stakeholders to operationalize cross-border cooperation in a sustained and coordinated manner.

5.3 Political Endorsement and Regional Ownership

The meeting secured explicit political endorsement from participating States—Uganda, Kenya, and South Sudan—thereby anchoring the ALC within national governance systems and policy frameworks.

This endorsement:

- elevates the ALC from a technical initiative to a politically recognized platform;
- strengthens prospects for integration into national development and security strategies;
- enhances credibility in engagements with regional and international partners.

At the same time, Ethiopia’s reservation—while not negating the overall outcome—introduced a dynamic of partial regional alignment, underscoring the need for continued diplomatic engagement.

5.4 Designation of the Secretariat Seat

Lodwar, Turkana County (Kenya), was designated as the official seat of the ALC Secretariat.

This decision has both symbolic and operational significance:

- it situates the institution within the heart of Ateker territories;
- reinforces Kenya’s leadership role as host;
- provides a physical anchor for coordination, documentation, and programme implementation.

The designation also creates a focal point for partner engagement, resource mobilization, and institutional visibility.

5.5 Confirmation of Institutional Structures

The meeting confirmed the core institutional architecture of the ALC, including:

- **National Chapters (NACs):**
Serving as country-level structures responsible for representation, coordination, and implementation of Council decisions.
- **Council Secretariat:**
Functioning as the technical and administrative engine, coordinating cross-border activities and supporting decision-making processes.
- **Advisory Council of Elders:**
Providing cultural legitimacy, guidance on customary norms, and support for traditional dispute resolution mechanisms.
- **Standing and Ad Hoc Committees:**
Addressing thematic areas such as peace and security, transhumance, culture, finance, and legal affairs.

This structure reflects a hybrid governance model, integrating political, technical, and customary elements.

5.6 Adoption of Implementation Timeline and Milestones

A clear implementation timeline was agreed, including a critical milestone of 31 January 2026 for:

- establishment of National Chapters;
- nomination and confirmation of delegates;
- initial operationalization of Council structures.

This outcome is particularly significant in ensuring that the ALC does not remain a declaratory institution, but rapidly transitions into an operational entity with tangible outputs.

5.7 Validation of Programmatic and Planning Frameworks

The meeting reviewed and validated key implementation instruments, including:

- the Activity Plan;
- the Logical Framework;
- the Pre-Launch Work Plan; and

- the Results-Based Budget.

These frameworks collectively:

- define priority interventions and strategic focus areas;
- establish measurable indicators and performance targets;
- outline timelines and sequencing of activities;
- provide a costed roadmap for implementation.

Their adoption positions the ALC as a **results-oriented institution**, capable of delivering measurable impact rather than merely facilitating dialogue.

5.8 Resource Mobilization and Partner Engagement

The meeting called upon regional and international partners—including EAC, IGAD, AUBP, and GIZ—to support the operationalization of the ALC.

This includes:

- technical assistance;
- financial support;
- policy alignment;
- facilitation of cross-border cooperation initiatives.

At the same time, participating States committed to integrating ALC priorities into national planning processes, thereby enhancing sustainability and ownership.

5.9 Recognition of Ethiopia's Position and Future Engagement Pathways

The meeting formally acknowledged Ethiopia's decision to dissociate from the adopted instruments, while maintaining openness for future participation.

This outcome:

- preserves the inclusive vision of a four-country Ateker platform;
- avoids institutional fragmentation;
- creates space for continued diplomatic engagement and eventual alignment.

It reflects a pragmatic approach that balances progress with inclusivity.

5.10 Establishment of a Foundation for Long-Term Regional Transformation

Collectively, the outcomes of the Lodwar Meeting establish a **robust foundation for long-term transformation** of the Ateker region, including:

- institutionalized peacebuilding and conflict prevention mechanisms;
- coordinated cross-border governance of resources and mobility;
- enhanced regional integration and cooperation;
- structured pathways for socio-economic development.

The ALC is thus positioned not only as a governance platform, but as a catalytic mechanism for transforming historically marginalized borderlands into zones of stability, cooperation, and shared prosperity.

6. ETHIOPIA'S POSITION

Ethiopia's position in the Lodwar Meeting represents a critical diplomatic and legal dimension of the Ateker Leaders Council (ALC) process. While Ethiopia actively participated in deliberations and contributed to the evolution of the initiative, it ultimately withheld endorsement of the adopted instruments, thereby introducing a layer of complexity to the regional architecture of the ALC.

6.1 Nature of Participation

The Ethiopian delegation engaged constructively throughout the preparatory and plenary processes, demonstrating:

- recognition of the shared cultural and socio-economic ties of Ateker communities, including the Nyangatom;
- willingness to participate in regional dialogue and cooperation frameworks;
- openness to the principle of establishing a cross-border mechanism for peace and development.

Ethiopia's participation therefore affirmed the strategic relevance of the ALC concept, even as questions remained regarding modalities of formal engagement.

6.2 Basis for Reservation and Non-Endorsement

At the conclusion of the meeting, Ethiopia formally dissociated itself from the signed Constitution, Report, and Resolutions.

The position articulated by the Ethiopian delegation reflects several interrelated considerations:

(a) Constitutional and Legal Constraints

Ethiopia underscored that its national constitutional framework does not permit sub-national communities or regional actors to enter into cross-border institutional arrangements without explicit federal authorization. This creates a structural requirement for:

- internal consultations;
- federal-level review and approval;

- alignment with national legal procedures.

(b) Procedural and Process Concerns

The delegation indicated that certain understandings reached during negotiations—particularly on 10 December 2025—were not fully reflected in the final adopted instruments. This raised concerns regarding:

- adherence to agreed negotiation processes;
- incorporation of Ethiopia’s inputs;
- sequencing of adoption relative to internal clearance processes.

(c) Sovereignty and Institutional Clarity

Ethiopia’s position also reflects a broader concern with ensuring that participation in the ALC does not create ambiguity regarding:

- state sovereignty;
- jurisdictional authority over border communities;
- the legal status and mandate of the Council within national systems.

6.3 Interpretation of Ethiopia’s Position

It is important to interpret Ethiopia’s stance not as a rejection of the Ateker initiative per se, but rather as a **cautious, procedurally grounded position** shaped by domestic legal and institutional requirements.

Key characteristics of this position include:

- continued acknowledgment of shared Ateker identity and cross-border linkages;
- expressed willingness to engage in future cooperation;
- preference for alignment through formal state channels and approved frameworks.

In this sense, Ethiopia’s approach reflects a state-centric model of cross-border engagement, in contrast to the more hybrid community–state model embodied in the ALC.

6.4 Implications for the Ateker Leaders Council

Ethiopia's non-signature has several strategic implications:

(a) Partial Regional Coverage

The ALC was launched with the participation of Uganda, Kenya, and South Sudan, resulting in a tri-state operational core rather than a fully inclusive four-state platform.

(b) Operational and Programmatic Gaps

The absence of Ethiopia—particularly the Nyangatom areas—creates potential gaps in:

- cross-border mobility coordination;
- conflict prevention mechanisms;
- coverage of shared ecosystems and migration routes.

(c) Diplomatic Sensitivity

The situation introduces a need for **careful diplomatic management**, ensuring that the ALC remains open and inclusive while respecting Ethiopia's internal processes and sovereignty considerations.

6.5 Pathways for Future Engagement

The Lodwar Meeting implicitly and explicitly leaves space for Ethiopia's future participation. Constructive pathways forward include:

- **Structured Diplomatic Engagement:** Continued dialogue through bilateral and multilateral channels to align the ALC framework with Ethiopia's legal requirements.
- **Incremental Integration:** Allowing Ethiopia to engage initially through observer status, technical cooperation, or specific programme components.
- **Legal Harmonization:** Exploring modalities that ensure compatibility between the ALC Constitution and Ethiopia's constitutional provisions.

- **Confidence-Building Measures:** Joint activities—such as peace dialogues and cultural exchanges—that reinforce trust and demonstrate the practical value of the ALC.

6.6 Strategic Outlook

Ethiopia's position underscores a broader reality of cross-border institution-building in the region: progress is often non-linear and must accommodate varying national legal systems, political priorities, and institutional capacities.

The ALC's ability to remain flexible, inclusive, and diplomatically responsive will be critical in:

- sustaining momentum;
- preserving the vision of a unified Ateker platform;
- ultimately achieving full regional participation.

In this regard, Ethiopia's current stance should be viewed as a transitional phase rather than a structural impediment, with significant potential for future alignment as dialogue continues and institutional trust deepens.

7. STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE

The establishment of the Ateker Leaders Council (ALC) represents a strategic inflection point in the governance of cross-border pastoral regions in the Greater Horn of Africa. Its significance extends beyond the Ateker communities themselves, positioning the ALC as a prototype for integrated, multi-level, cross-border governance in fragile and historically marginalized regions.

The strategic importance of the ALC can be understood across interlocking domains: peace and security, governance innovation, regional integration, socio-economic transformation, and geopolitical relevance.

7.1 Peace and Security Transformation

At its core, the ALC addresses one of the most persistent challenges in the Ateker region: cyclical, cross-border conflict driven by resource competition, mobility pressures, and weak coordination between state and community systems.

The ALC introduces a shift from reactive security responses to preventive, institutionalized peacebuilding, through:

- embedding dialogue mechanisms at both political and community levels;
- strengthening early warning and response systems in alignment with IGAD/CEWARN;
- integrating traditional dispute resolution practices led by elders;
- facilitating coordinated approaches to disarmament, conflict mediation, and reconciliation.

This integrated approach enhances the prospects for sustainable peace, moving beyond episodic interventions toward long-term stabilization.

7.2 Innovation in Cross-Border Governance

The ALC represents a significant innovation in governance design by operationalizing a hybrid institutional model that combines:

- state authority (through national chapters and political leadership);

- customary legitimacy (through councils of elders and cultural institutions);
- technical capacity (through structured secretariat systems);
- regional oversight (through EAC, IGAD, and AU frameworks).

This model challenges traditional, state-centric approaches by demonstrating how community-rooted and state-aligned systems can coexist and reinforce each other.

It also provides a practical mechanism for managing issues that inherently transcend borders, including transhumance, shared natural resources, and cultural linkages.

7.3 Advancing Regional Integration and Cooperation

The ALC contributes directly to the broader objectives of regional integration under the EAC, IGAD, and African Union frameworks by:

- creating functional linkages between border communities and regional institutions;
- facilitating policy harmonization across participating states;
- strengthening cross-border coordination in security, development, and resource management;
- promoting people-to-people integration alongside formal state cooperation.

In this sense, the ALC acts as a bottom-up complement to top-down regional integration processes, enhancing their effectiveness and legitimacy.

7.4 Socio-Economic Transformation of Borderlands

The Ateker region has historically been characterized by underinvestment, limited infrastructure, and restricted access to services. The ALC provides a platform for reversing these trends by:

- advocating for targeted investment in roads, water systems, and telecommunications;
- promoting livestock value chain development and pastoral productivity;
- facilitating cross-border trade and market integration;
- expanding access to education and health services, particularly for marginalized populations;

- supporting resilience-building in the face of climate variability.

By linking peace and governance to development outcomes, the ALC enables a transition from marginalized peripheries to economically integrated border corridors.

7.5 Strengthening State–Community Relations

The ALC plays a critical role in bridging the longstanding gap between state institutions and border communities. Through its hybrid structure, it:

- enhances state presence and legitimacy in remote areas;
- incorporates community knowledge and customary practices into formal governance;
- builds trust between citizens and public institutions;
- creates channels for inclusive participation in decision-making.

This contributes to more responsive, accountable, and context-sensitive governance systems.

7.6 Strategic Security and Stability Implications

From a broader security perspective, the stabilization of the Ateker region has implications beyond local communities. The region intersects with wider dynamics in the Greater Horn of Africa, including:

- small arms proliferation;
- cross-border criminal networks;
- climate-induced migration pressures;
- regional instability spillovers.

By addressing these challenges through coordinated governance and development interventions, the ALC contributes to national, regional, and continental security objectives.

7.7 Alignment with Continental and Global Frameworks

The ALC is strategically aligned with key policy frameworks, including:

- the AU Niamey Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation;
- the EAC Treaty and Peace and Security Protocol;

- IGAD's CEWARN and regional resilience strategies;
- the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This alignment enhances the ALC's ability to:

- attract technical and financial support;
- integrate into broader policy ecosystems;
- contribute to continental and global development and peace agendas.

7.8 A Prototype for Replication

The ALC has the potential to serve as a model for other cross-border regions facing similar challenges. Its key replicable features include:

- community-driven institutional formation;
- integration of customary and formal governance systems;
- results-based programmatic frameworks;
- multi-stakeholder participation;
- alignment with regional and continental structures.

If successfully implemented, the ALC could inform the design of similar mechanisms in other parts of Africa and beyond.

7.9 Strategic Outlook

The long-term significance of the ALC will depend on its ability to transition from institutional establishment to effective implementation. Its success will be measured by:

- sustained peace and reduction in cross-border conflict;
- improved livelihoods and economic opportunities;
- strengthened governance systems;
- deeper regional cooperation.

In this regard, the ALC stands as both a **strategic opportunity and a test case** for innovative, inclusive, and cross-border governance in Africa.

8. KEY CHALLENGES AND RISKS

While the establishment of the Ateker Leaders Council (ALC) represents a significant institutional breakthrough, its long-term success will depend on how effectively it navigates a complex set of political, legal, security, institutional, and socio-economic risks. These challenges are inherent to cross-border institution-building in fragile regions and require proactive, adaptive, and coordinated responses.

The risks identified below are not merely constraints—they are critical determinants of whether the ALC evolves into a functional and credible regional mechanism or remains a symbolic platform.

8.1 Incomplete Regional Alignment and Political Cohesion

The absence of Ethiopia's formal endorsement introduces a fundamental structural challenge to the ALC's vision as a four-state platform.

Key risks include:

- fragmentation of cross-border coordination mechanisms;
- gaps in coverage of shared ecosystems and migration routes;
- reduced effectiveness of peace and security interventions;
- potential emergence of parallel or uncoordinated arrangements.

More broadly, variations in political priorities, governance systems, and levels of commitment among participating states may affect the consistency and sustainability of engagement.

8.2 Sovereignty Sensitivities and Legal Constraints

Cross-border institutions inherently operate within a sensitive space where national sovereignty, jurisdiction, and legal authority must be carefully balanced.

Risks include:

- reluctance by states to delegate or share authority on cross-border issues;
- inconsistencies between the ALC framework and national legal systems;

- delays in domestic ratification or alignment processes;
- ambiguity regarding the legal personality and enforceability of ALC decisions.

Failure to address these issues could limit the Council's ability to function as an effective governance mechanism.

8.3 Institutional Capacity and Operational Readiness

The transition from establishment to implementation requires rapid development of institutional capacity at both regional and national levels.

Key risks include:

- delayed establishment or weak functionality of National Chapters;
- limited technical and administrative capacity within the Secretariat;
- inadequate systems for coordination, communication, and data management;
- over-reliance on a small pool of technical actors.

Without strong institutional foundations, the ALC may struggle to translate its mandate into tangible outcomes.

8.4 Financial Sustainability and Resource Mobilization

Sustainable financing remains a critical challenge for the ALC.

Risks include:

- over-dependence on external donor funding;
- inconsistent or insufficient contributions from member states;
- delays in mobilizing resources for priority programmes;
- weak financial management systems undermining credibility.

A lack of predictable and diversified funding could constrain implementation and erode stakeholder confidence.

8.5 Governance, Accountability, and Risk of Elite Capture

There is a risk that the ALC could evolve into a predominantly elite-driven forum, disconnected from grassroots realities.

Key concerns include:

- insufficient representation of women, youth, and pastoralist communities;
- weak enforcement of ethical standards and conflict-of-interest provisions;
- politicization of decision-making processes;
- limited transparency and accountability mechanisms.

If not addressed, these risks could undermine legitimacy and community ownership.

8.6 Security and Conflict Dynamics

The Ateker region remains characterized by complex and evolving security challenges.

Risks include:

- persistence of cattle rustling and inter-community violence;
- proliferation of small arms and light weapons;
- climate-induced resource scarcity exacerbating tensions;
- limited coordination between formal security forces and community structures.

There is also a risk that the ALC may be perceived as a substitute for, rather than a complement to, state security mechanisms—potentially creating gaps or overlaps in responsibility.

8.7 Cross-Border Mobility and Resource Governance Complexity

Managing transhumance and shared resources remains inherently complex due to:

- variability in ecological conditions and seasonal patterns;
- differing national policies and regulatory frameworks;
- competing local interests and historical grievances;

- lack of formalized and enforceable agreements.

Without clear, harmonized systems, mobility can continue to act as both a livelihood strategy and a source of conflict.

8.8 Development–Security Nexus and Implementation Risks

The success of the ALC depends on its ability to link peacebuilding with tangible development outcomes.

Risks include:

- failure to deliver visible socio-economic benefits in the short to medium term;
- misalignment between ALC priorities and national development plans;
- limited absorption capacity for development investments in fragile areas;
- uneven distribution of benefits, potentially fueling new grievances.

If communities do not experience tangible improvements, confidence in the ALC may decline.

8.9 Coordination Complexity and Stakeholder Alignment

The multi-stakeholder nature of the ALC—while a strength—also introduces coordination challenges.

Risks include:

- overlapping mandates among regional organizations and partners;
- fragmentation of initiatives and duplication of efforts;
- communication gaps between political, technical, and community actors;
- differing expectations among stakeholders regarding roles and outcomes.

Effective coordination mechanisms will be essential to maintain coherence and efficiency.

8.10 Implementation Momentum and Political Will

Sustaining momentum beyond the launch phase is a critical challenge.

Risks include:

- declining political attention after initial endorsement;
- delays in implementing agreed milestones;
- shifting national priorities or leadership changes;
- loss of stakeholder engagement over time.

Maintaining consistent political will and institutional focus will be key to ensuring continuity.

8.11 Reputational and Credibility Risks

As a newly established institution, the ALC's credibility is still being formed.

Risks include:

- failure to meet early expectations;
- perceived inefficiency or lack of results;
- governance or financial irregularities;
- inability to manage internal disagreements effectively.

Early successes and transparent operations will be critical in building trust among stakeholders.

8.12 Strategic Risk Outlook

Collectively, these challenges highlight that the ALC operates within a high-risk, high-opportunity environment. Its success will depend on:

- adaptive leadership;
- strong institutional systems;
- sustained political commitment;
- effective resource mobilization;
- continuous stakeholder engagement.

The ability to anticipate, manage, and mitigate these risks will determine whether the ALC evolves into a transformative regional institution or remains constrained by the very dynamics it seeks to address.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are designed to translate the outcomes of the Lodwar Meeting into actionable, sequenced, and institutionally grounded steps. They are structured across diplomatic, legal, security, governance, financial, and programmatic dimensions, and are intended to guide both immediate operationalization and medium-term consolidation of the Ateker Leaders Council (ALC).

9.1 Diplomatic and Political Engagement

1. Structured Re-engagement with Ethiopia

- Establish a dedicated diplomatic track (EAC/IGAD-facilitated) to address Ethiopia's legal and procedural concerns;
- Explore interim modalities (observer status, technical participation in specific programmes);
- Align ALC instruments with Ethiopia's federal approval requirements and sequencing.

2. Sustain High-Level Political Sponsorship

- Institutionalize annual ministerial-level reviews of ALC progress;
- Integrate ALC priorities into national cabinet agendas and cross-border cooperation frameworks;
- Designate focal ministries in each State (e.g., Interior, EAC Affairs, Karamoja/Turkana Affairs).

3. Formalize Inter-State Coordination Mechanisms

- Establish a standing inter-governmental liaison group to ensure policy coherence;
- Harmonize positions across Uganda, Kenya, and South Sudan on key operational issues (mobility, security, financing).

9.2 Legal and Institutional Consolidation

4. Clarify Legal Status and Recognition

- Secure formal recognition of the ALC within each participating State’s legal framework;
- Define legal personality (capacity to contract, hold assets, and employ staff);
- Conclude host country arrangements for the Secretariat in Lodwar.

5. Finalize and Adopt Rules of Procedure (RoP)

- Approve comprehensive RoP covering leadership, decision-making, ethics, committees, and financial procedures;
- Ensure alignment with the Constitution and national legal systems;
- Disseminate RoP to all National Chapters and stakeholders.

6. Strengthen Leadership and Governance Organs

- Operationalize Chairperson and Bureau/Executive Committee structures with clear mandates;
- Implement rotational leadership principles to ensure equity among States;
- Formalize the Council of Elders with defined composition, tenure, and advisory functions.

9.3 Peace, Security, and Cross-Border Governance

7. Operationalize a Joint Peace and Security Framework

- Integrate ALC mechanisms with IGAD/CEWARN early warning systems;
- Establish cross-border coordination cells linking security agencies and community structures;
- Institutionalize regular peace dialogues and mediation platforms led by elders.

8. Harmonize Transhumance and Resource Governance

- Develop and adopt cross-border protocols for grazing corridors and seasonal mobility;
- Negotiate localized resource-sharing agreements in hotspot areas;
- Map and monitor migration routes using community-informed data systems.

9. Address Small Arms and Localized Conflict Drivers

- Support coordinated disarmament efforts with community buy-in;
- Link security interventions with livelihoods and resilience programmes;
- Strengthen community policing and trust-building initiatives.

9.4 Institutional Capacity and Operations

10. Establish and Resource the Secretariat

- Recruit core staff (executive head, programme, finance, M&E, communications);
- Set up administrative systems (finance, procurement, HR, records, digital platforms);
- Develop a communications and stakeholder engagement strategy.

11. Operationalize National Chapters (NACs)

- Ensure formal nomination of 20 delegates per State in line with inclusivity principles;
- Establish functional National Chapter Secretariats;
- Define clear reporting lines between NACs and the Council Secretariat.

12. Build Technical Capacity

- Provide targeted training on governance, financial management, M&E, and conflict sensitivity;
- Leverage AFLI–KAPATU for continuous technical backstopping;
- Establish knowledge-sharing platforms across States.

9.5 Financing and Resource Mobilization

13. Adopt a Sustainable Financing Framework

- Introduce assessed contributions from member States with agreed minimum thresholds;

- Formalize multi-year partnership agreements with EAC, IGAD, AUBP, GIZ, and other partners;
- Explore own-source revenues (events, advisory services) consistent with legal provisions.

14. Strengthen Financial Management and Accountability

- Implement financial regulations, procurement procedures, and audit requirements;
- Establish a Finance, Audit, and Resource Mobilisation Committee;
- Publish annual financial statements and audit reports.

15. Develop an Investment and Partnership Pipeline

- Package priority programmes (peace caravans, mobility corridors, livestock value chains) for funding;
- Engage private sector actors in livestock, logistics, and trade;
- Align proposals with donor priorities (resilience, climate adaptation, peacebuilding).

9.6 Programme Delivery and Development Impact

16. Implement a Results-Based Programme Framework

- Activate the Logical Framework with clear outputs, indicators, and baselines;
- Prioritize quick-win interventions (peace dialogues, corridor agreements, market linkages);
- Sequence medium-term investments (infrastructure, services, value chains).

17. Integrate ALC Priorities into National Plans

- Mainstream ALC programmes within national development plans and budgets;
- Align with county/state plans in Turkana, Karamoja, and border regions;
- Coordinate with existing regional initiatives to avoid duplication.

18. Promote Inclusive Participation and Community Ownership

- Enforce minimum thresholds for women and youth representation;
- Support community-based organisations and pastoralist associations;
- Institutionalize feedback mechanisms from border communities.

9.7 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)

19. Establish a Robust MEL System

- Implement quarterly progress reporting and an annual State of Ateker Report;
- Define key performance indicators (peace incidents, mobility agreements, service access);
- Conduct independent evaluations every three years.

20. Adopt Adaptive Management Practices

- Use real-time data to adjust programmes and strategies;
- Institutionalize learning loops across NACs and the Secretariat;
- Document best practices for replication.

9.8 Communications, Visibility, and Stakeholder Engagement

21. Develop a Strategic Communications Framework

- Position the ALC as a flagship regional initiative;
- Regularly communicate outcomes, impacts, and opportunities;
- Manage expectations through transparent reporting.

22. Strengthen Multi-Stakeholder Engagement

- Convene annual stakeholder forums (States, partners, communities);
- Formalize partnerships with academia and research institutions;
- Engage media to amplify peace and development narratives.

9.9 Implementation Sequencing and Milestones

23. Immediate (0–3 months)

- Establish NACs and Secretariat;
- Adopt RoP and financial regulations;
- Initiate diplomatic engagement with Ethiopia.

24. Short Term (3–12 months)

- Launch priority programmes (peace caravans, corridor agreements);
- Secure initial financing commitments;
- Produce first annual report and audited accounts.

25. Medium Term (1–3 years)

- Scale development programmes and infrastructure linkages;
- Achieve full institutional consolidation;
- Pursue Ethiopia's formal integration into the ALC.

9.10 Strategic Imperative

Collectively, these recommendations emphasize that the ALC must move with speed, discipline, and coordination from establishment to delivery. Early, visible results—combined with strong governance and sustained political backing—will be decisive in building credibility and ensuring that the ALC evolves into a durable, high-impact regional institution.

10. CONCLUSION

The Lodwar Meeting of 9–11 December 2025 marks a defining milestone in the institutional and political evolution of the Ateker region. It represents the culmination of a multi-year, community-driven and state-supported process that has successfully translated a shared vision of peace, integration, and development into a formalized regional governance mechanism—the Ateker Leaders Council (ALC).

10.1 From Vision to Institution

The transition achieved in Lodwar is both substantive and symbolic. Substantively, it resulted in the adoption of a Constitution, establishment of institutional structures, validation of implementation frameworks, and agreement on operational timelines. Symbolically, it signals a shift in how Ateker communities and partner states approach cross-border challenges—from fragmented, reactive engagements to coordinated, institutionalized cooperation.

The ALC therefore represents not merely a new organization, but a new paradigm of engagement, grounded in shared identity, mutual interests, and structured collaboration.

10.2 A Hybrid and Context-Sensitive Governance Model

One of the most significant achievements of the process is the creation of a **hybrid governance model** that integrates:

- political authority of States;
- legitimacy of customary institutions;
- technical rigor of structured programme frameworks;
- support of regional and international partners.

This model reflects a deep understanding of the realities of the Ateker region, where durable solutions must bridge formal and informal systems. It provides a practical template for addressing complex, cross-border challenges that cannot be resolved through conventional state-centric approaches alone.

10.3 Strategic Opportunity and Immediate Imperatives

The establishment of the ALC creates a strategic window of opportunity to transform the Ateker region into a zone of peace, cooperation, and shared prosperity. However, this opportunity is time-bound and contingent upon effective follow-through.

The immediate imperative is to move decisively from institutional establishment to operational delivery, through:

- rapid establishment and resourcing of National Chapters and the Secretariat;
- implementation of priority peace and mobility interventions;
- demonstration of early, tangible benefits to communities;
- sustained political and diplomatic engagement, particularly with Ethiopia.

Early success will be critical in building credibility, maintaining momentum, and securing long-term support.

10.4 Managing Complexity and Sustaining Momentum

The ALC operates within a complex environment characterized by:

- diverse national legal and political systems;
- persistent security challenges;
- socio-economic vulnerabilities;
- multi-stakeholder coordination demands.

Navigating this complexity will require:

- adaptive leadership and decision-making;
- strong institutional systems and accountability mechanisms;
- continuous dialogue among States, communities, and partners;
- flexibility to refine and evolve institutional arrangements over time.

The experience of Ethiopia's reservation underscores the importance of balancing ambition with pragmatism, ensuring that progress is inclusive while respecting national processes.

10.5 A Platform for Regional Transformation

If effectively implemented, the ALC has the potential to deliver transformative outcomes, including:

- sustained reduction in cross-border conflict;
- improved governance of mobility and shared resources;
- enhanced livelihoods and economic integration;
- strengthened state–community relations;
- deeper regional cooperation aligned with AU, EAC, and IGAD frameworks.

Beyond the Ateker region, the ALC stands as a potential model for cross-border governance in Africa, demonstrating how locally rooted initiatives can be scaled into structured, regionally aligned institutions.

10.6 Final Reflection

The Lodwar Meeting did not conclude a process—it initiated a new phase of collective responsibility and action. The true measure of success will lie not in the documents adopted, but in the lived realities of Ateker communities in the months and years ahead.

The Ateker Leaders Council now stands at a critical juncture: with a strong foundation, broad support, and clear direction. The task ahead is to translate this foundation into measurable impact, sustained cooperation, and lasting peace.

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