

DCAF **25**
YEARS

Annual Report 2024

PUTTING SECURITY
GOVERNANCE AT THE HEART
OF THE CONVERSATION



THANK YOU

As you read this, we are celebrating our 25th anniversary and all that we have achieved over the years with our partners and our generous donors who have made it all possible.

Thank you for your trust, your support, and for being an important part of DCAF's legacy.



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Foreword

2024 brought a further intensification of global challenges that tested the resilience and legitimacy of security institutions around the world. For years now, the international security landscape has undergone a profound shift. The resurgence of interstate conflict, including in Europe, the attacks on multilateralism, the growing competition between global powers as well as rapidly evolving digital threats, climate change, and forced displacement are redefining the priorities of states and international institutions alike. Hard security has made a comeback and with it accelerated security spending that brings greater risk of failure of governance, institutional overreach, and human rights abuses. This past year has again made clear that security sector governance cannot be an afterthought - it must be a central pillar of sustainable development and peace efforts.

In this increasingly fragile landscape, DCAF's mission has only grown in relevance. Our commitment to supporting effective, transparent, inclusive, and accountable governance of the security sector is more important than ever and has driven our work in many complex environments. In the highly challenging and conflict-affected contexts in which we were active in 2024, such as Ukraine and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, there is the need to navigate between addressing immediate threats and ensuring that security institutions are grounded in legitimacy, legality, and accountability. Long-term engagement in these contexts and operational agility are key to being able to support the security sector and provide a platform for citizen engagement and the strengthening of oversight bodies.

During the last year, two situations also stood out as emblematic of the role of the security sector and our commitment to seize momentum. In Bangladesh, the year brought a renewed focus on civil-military relations while in Syria, political transition has come with numerous challenges and opportunities for the stability of the region and safety of the population. Good governance can play a crucial stabilizing role by ensuring that security institutions operate transparently, accountably, and according to the rule of law.

These experiences, among many others that you can discover in this Annual Report, underscore the importance of context-sensitive, principled engagement. Across all our work in 2024 - whether in contexts with increased fragility or criminality, those affected by conflict, or in stable democracies - we have remained guided by the conviction that good governance of the security sector contributes to the prevention of conflict, strengthens social cohesion, and leads to sustainable peace and development and human dignity for all.

As you read this, DCAF is crossing two milestones - our 25th anniversary and the launch of our Strategy 2025-2030. While the world has drastically changed since 2000, our organization has constantly adapted. Our new Strategy articulates a new streamlined set of thematic and geographic priorities that is grounded in our deep knowledge of the environments in which we operate, and DCAF's principles supporting human rights, gender equality, and national ownership. It draws on lessons that we have learned, and accounts for the contributions we will continue to make towards a long-term vision, together with our partners.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to everyone we work with around the world for their continued trust and collaboration, and to our donors and the members of our Foundation Council, especially Switzerland, for their steadfast support. I would also like to thank DCAF's team members in Geneva and our 15 country offices in Africa, Europe, and the Middle East, who make this work possible. Together, we are striving to put security governance at the heart of the conversation and continuing to advocate for security institutions that serve people - not power. The path ahead may be uncertain, but our purpose remains clear and our commitment unwavering.



Ambassador Nathalie Chuard
Director



Celebrating 25 years of advancing security sector governance and reform



The President of the Swiss Confederation, Adolf Ogi, and founding Director of DCAF, Dr. Theodor Winkler, signed our Founding Act in Geneva in 2000.

Photo: DCAF



The Maison de la Paix
Geneva, Switzerland

Photo: Q. Hermann

Since our founding in 2000, DCAF has been advancing the security of people and states by supporting nationally-owned, inclusive, and participatory security sector reforms based on international norms and good practices.

Our work spans the globe and partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders in the security sector: security institutions, governments, lawmakers, civil society, international organizations and the media. They each have a key role to play in ensuring that security sectors are transparent, effective, and accountable.

In everything we do, we adhere to the principles of impartiality, national ownership, inclusive participation, and gender equality. These values are our strength, and because of them we are trusted across the spectrum of state and non-state actors to accompany them through long and complex reform processes.

As we reflect on the progress of our first 25 years we remain focused on the future. In this period of broad geo-political shifts, challenges to multilateralism and the core concepts of democracy, we are continually learning and innovating and adapting our approach in order to keep security governance at the heart of the conversation about how to achieve peace and sustainable development.

Our sincere gratitude goes to our dedicated staff, partners, and donors for making this journey possible.

“DCAF did unimaginable reform that most people thought wasn’t possible in the intelligence sector in a state where there was such a big concentration of power in one institution. It was mission impossible, but today it is possible.”

Participant
CSO/media capacity building workshop
North Macedonia

**Learn more
about our journey:**



Strategy 2025-2030

Throughout 25 years supporting reforms and good governance initiatives in more than 60 countries, we have witnessed firsthand how a democratically-governed security sector is an essential component of just, peaceful, and inclusive societies. This is especially true in our increasingly volatile and divided world.

Our last strategic period 2020-2024 underlined the importance of understanding the security and justice needs of individuals and communities through participatory, inclusive, and equitable approaches. It also emphasized the need to strengthen our partnerships with state and non-state actors as well as bilateral and multilateral partners and organizations.

A significant part of DCAF's work is in conflict- and violence-affected contexts such as Burkina Faso, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Niger, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Somalia, and Yemen. In a world with a resurgence of hard security and where ever more people are living amidst fragility and instability, classic approaches to SSG must be adapted to ensure they are effective and put people first.

Looking ahead to the next five years, we will put a special focus on the unique challenges of undertaking security sector reforms in fragile contexts and adopt a stronger people-centred approach in order to identify entry points for broader efforts while also demonstrating the value of SSG as an effective problem-solving and prevention tool in the short run. We will also strengthen our engagement with security sector actors to promote gender equality and intersectional approaches to addressing discrimination and injustice.

Through our operational, advisory, policy, and research functions, we are determined to reinvigorate our influence on bilateral and multilateral actors and reinforce engagement on SSG on the world stage.

Our strategic commitment to learning

In support of this ambition, we will create a new learning, monitoring and evaluation hub to facilitate communities of practice, and we will forge new knowledge sharing partnerships with other organizations to continually refine and improve on our policies and programmes.

We envision a world in which democratically governed security sectors serve the needs of all people without discrimination and contribute to just, peaceful, and inclusive societies.



OUR OBJECTIVES FOR 2025-2030

Empower national partners to promote and strengthen democratic SSG based on international norms and good practices and develop responses to new security challenges that place good governance at the core.

Identify and capitalize on innovative and secure entry points to advance good SSG in highly adverse environments, such as those marked by substantial democratic reversal, extensive civilian violence, and open violent conflict.

Engage with security sector actors to promote gender equality and intersectional approaches in addressing discrimination and injustice through SSG/R.

Influence bilateral and multilateral actors to reinforce international engagement on SSG/R.

We invite you to take a few moments and review our full Strategy 2025 -2030



BUILDING COMMUNITY CONFIDENCE IN POLICING

FOCUS



Photo: PNH

Since 2018, with the support of Swiss funding, DCAF has supported the Honduran National Police (HNP) with its ongoing transformation from a militarized force to a modern service grounded in international policing standards. In response to past criticisms about excessive use of force, DCAF supported the HNP to update its community policing model and produce a new use-of-force manual that was adopted into legislation and the standard training curriculum.

These measures have given police officers clear guidelines for their behaviour and improved public confidence. The HNP has adopted community surveys to monitor its progress and by 2024 had already found a reduction in observations of physical mistreatment by police and an increase in citizen confidence with police performance.

“Thanks to DCAF, we have improved our internal processes to give a better response to the citizens,” said Silvia Marcela Amaya Escoto, Executive Director of Interdisciplinary Affairs of the HNP. “And at same time we have improved our external communication so that the citizens know better what we do, and now they have ways to report bad police practices.” Evidence shows that greater accountability improves public confidence in policing which can, in turn, help mitigate criminal activity and reduce recidivism.

DCAF also supported the HNP to shift its culture toward a more gender-equal institution. This included a gender self-assessment and the creation of its first-ever Gender Policy. The policy was underpinned by a new Gender Equity Diploma at the Police University, and annual public campaigns promoting International Women’s Day and advocating for the elimination of violence against women.

These efforts sent a strong signal both to the public, and to the officers themselves. One of the results is a change in the perception of the police as an attractive employment option for women. Though women made up only 25% of National Police officers in 2024, over 60% of new recruits entering the police academy were women, a promising sign that efforts to be more inclusive are successful.

DCAF’s programme in Honduras concluded in 2024 but its impact will continue to be felt through the integration of public trust, greater accountability, and gender equality as central pillars of the HNP’s 2025 - 2030 Strategic Plan.

“We greatly appreciate the accompaniment provided by DCAF and their commitment to the Honduran Security agencies to maintain efficiency in their work and to strengthen citizen confidence.”

Director
Directorate of Police Disciplinary Affairs

THINKING



DCAF bridges the gap between national and international policy and practice through comparative research and analysis grounded in operational experience across 60 countries. A think tank with a global reputation for innovation, DCAF has been at the forefront of the development and evolution of the core concepts and principles of security sector governance and reform.

Our Strategy 2025 – 2030 puts a special focus on research of fast-evolving security challenges such as climate change, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and disinformation. Each year we produce dozens of evidence-based reports, case studies, and analysis that draw on both the core theoretical concepts of SSG and the practical lessons learned from implementing reforms across a wide variety of contexts.

We also provide training in a wide range of reform and governance related issues tailored to the particular needs and contexts of security institutions, law makers, civil society groups, donor states, and multilateral institutions all over the world.

“The security implications of climate change will threaten the stability and security of many nations. As the guidance note... shows very rightly, the security sector will play a critical role in responding to the threat posed by climate change. It is time for the security sector to prepare for this role.”

Maj Gen. (ret.) Muniruzzaman
President of Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies

HIGHLIGHTS

DATA-DRIVEN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN SOMALIA

In support of the creation of Somalia's six-year strategic security sector reform framework, DCAF conducted an affordability analysis to help officials understand the financial and budgetary implications of the proposed reforms. This resulted, in 2024, in DCAF being retained to support four of the five Somali Federal Member States to develop their local security strategies and implementation plans. As part of this project, we created a new budget policy simulation tool that collects raw data on revenue and expenditures and creates data-driven simulations to assess the outcomes, risks, affordability, and sustainability of various reform scenarios. The quality of the data directly shaped the effectiveness and suitability of some of the proposed solutions. Officials from the Galmudug State in central Somalia reported that they are already using it to test various scenarios in the development of their local security strategy.

PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF MILITARY CONSCRIPTS

Under international human rights law, military conscripts enjoy the same fundamental rights as ordinary citizens, such as freedom from forced labour and ill-treatment. In 2024, through open-source research, standardized surveys, and visits to military units, DCAF supported national and regional dialogue on human rights in the armed forces across Europe and Central Asia. In Georgia, we delivered human rights training to commanders and personnel of a new agency tasked with drafting conscripts under the incoming Defence Code. In Kyrgyzstan, we trained military officers and conducted an information campaign on conscripts' rights and internal complaint mechanisms on military bases. In collaboration with the National Center of the Kyrgyz Republic for the Prevention of Torture, we developed internal security protocols to safeguard staff who work on the prevention of inhumane treatment of troops.



PUBLICATION

Military justice:
A comparative study of parliamentary oversight in Euro-Atlantic countries



PUBLICATION

Addressing trauma
as a missing element
in security sector
governance and reform



E-LEARNING

The environment
and security sector
governance and reform

PROVIDING EXPERTISE IN INTELLIGENCE GOVERNANCE IN MOLDOVA

DCAF's work in Moldova supports security sector reforms and empowers civil society organizations to participate in security policy discussions. This led to the launch in 2024 of a comprehensive review of legislation that defined the powers and functions of the intelligence service. DCAF contributed expertise throughout a series of Parliamentary hearings on the drafting of two new laws aimed at strengthening judicial and parliamentary oversight. DCAF's advice resulted in substantial improvements to the laws, such as stricter limits on the powers of the intelligence service, and controls over its access to databases.

SUPPORTING SECURITY INSTITUTIONS TO ADAPT TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Security institutions are serving as frontline responders to natural disasters and conflict driven by the climate crisis. However, in many countries they are under-prepared for this task. In response, the United Nations engaged DCAF to help create its first-ever guidance module on SSR and climate change. Designed for policymakers and practitioners, it outlines how national security sectors can mitigate, adapt, and respond to the climate crisis and fulfil their government's legal and moral obligations under international climate law. DCAF helped launch the module at a high-level panel at COP29 in Baku, an important step forward in putting this often-overlooked aspect of the climate crisis on the table for discussion. The module is part of the UN SSR Crossroads project that provides user-friendly, action-oriented guidance notes on the spectrum of SSR/G. DCAF is partnering with the UN to develop 16 more modules for the Crossroads Project, including ones on gender equality and national security planning.

HELPING THE OSCE LEARN AND IMPROVE ON SSG

Ten years ago, DCAF's mapping study for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) helped develop a more coherent and effective approach to supporting nationally-led security sector reform processes. In 2024, DCAF advised the OSCE on the development of a lessons learning exercise to evaluate its progress after ten years. In addition to the mapping study, DCAF's long strategic partnership with the OSCE led to the development of the first set of internal guidelines on SSG and review of their implementation at the annual workshop for SSG/R focal points within OSCE structures.



**SSR
BACKGROUNDER**
The Youth, Peace and
Security Agenda



PUBLICATION
Addressing new
challenges of private
military and security
companies to SSG/R

KEY MOMENTS



Photo: DCAF

ASSESSING MARITIME SECURITY GOVERNANCE IN THE GULF OF GUINEA

The Gulf of Guinea has been a hotspot for maritime piracy in recent years. DCAF met with a wide range of stakeholders in Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire, including local community groups such as the Union of Women's Fisheries Cooperative, to learn how piracy is affecting their lives and livelihoods. This informed discussions between African Union Member States, ECOWAS, and international partners on how to improve maritime security governance and bring piracy under control in the Gulf.



Photo: DCAF

SUPPORTING HUMAN SECURITY AT THE STOCKHOLM FORUM ON PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

At the SIPRI Forum DCAF brought together panels of experts to discuss the challenges and opportunities for implementing people-centered security reforms and governance in complex, conflict-affected contexts like the Sahel and Ukraine.



Photo: National Defence College of the Philippines

ADDRESSING EMERGING THEMES IN SSG IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

Through a network of national and regional working groups, DCAF organizes roundtables and public webinars to explore emerging themes in SSG and support the development of national reform processes in Asia-Pacific. In 2024, over 400 people working for civil society organizations, local and national governments, security institutions, and academia joined the discussions on AI governance, youth, peace and security, and cybersecurity.



Photo: DCAF

OSCE-DCAF SUMMER SCHOOL ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND HUMAN SECURITY

In Kyrgyzstan, we delivered a 5-day training on the implications of climate change for SSG and security actors with creation of “back home action plan”. It included a day trip to the Ala-Archa Gorge where the participants saw first-hand the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation in high mountain areas.

LEGAL IDENTITY AND ACCESS TO SECURITY AND JUSTICE

FOCUS



Photo: Moses Sukali

“We have the right to access national identity cards, but in Northern Kenya, this is not the case.”

Halima Kahiye
Journalist
Wajir Community Radio

In Kenya, as of 2022, an estimated 100,000 people lacked legal identity documents, leaving them vulnerable to insecurity, crime, fraud, and exploitation. Despite a nationwide investigation into statelessness in 2015 by the Commission on Administrative Justice – Office of the Ombudsman of Kenya (CAJ), the situation remains critical, especially in Northern and Upper Eastern Kenya. Rural, nomadic, and marginalized ethnic communities and people in borderland regions are the most affected.

In 2024, the CAJ enlisted DCAF’s support to conduct a public inquiry into the issue in Wajir County in northeastern Kenya, an area predominantly inhabited by ethnic Somali Muslims. Over 300 community members participated in the week-long inquiry, the first of its kind. Many complained about the vetting committees who do background checks for national ID cards. “They ask for 3,000 to 10,000 Shillings from every applicant. We are buying ID cards, basically and literally,” according to Hashim Mohamed, a Wajir community activist.

The inquiry also spoke to government officials, security agency representatives, and members of civil society groups. It identified systemic barriers - from practical and logistical challenges to corruption and discrimination. Security organizations were accused of delaying the issuance of national identity cards to some ethno-religious groups. “We have the right to access national identity cards,” said Halima Kahiye of Wajir Community Radio, “but in Northern Kenya, this is not the case.”

With support from DCAF, the CAJ produced a report with recommendations to improve the structure, process, and oversight of the vetting committees. Not long after, President William Ruto announced plans to eliminate the committees. “Every Kenyan should be treated equally,” he said. “I will issue a policy to ensure we don’t discriminate on the basis of religion or region.”

In April 2024, the government introduced new guidelines for issuing national identity cards and abolished the use of vetting committees in many regions, including Wajir County. State authorities later reported that the average wait time for identity documents in borderland counties dropped from many months, to just 21 days.

While much remains to be done, the introduction of the guidelines is a significant step toward ensuring that all Kenyans, regardless of ethnic or religious background, can enjoy their right to legal identity and the security and justice services that come with it.

IMPLEMENTING

Establishing effective governance of security sector institutions requires the participation of many stakeholders, including the institutions themselves, like police and military, as well as lawmakers, government officials, ombuds organizations for armed forces, civil society organizations, and the media.

Through 15 country offices on three continents, DCAF partners with these groups to develop and implement tailored reforms that aim to enhance community safety, strengthen trust, prevent conflict, and support sustainable peace and development.

While each context and institution are unique, the fundamental elements of good governance remain the same. It begins with establishing laws, policies, and regulatory frameworks that reflect international standards and are reinforced by strong oversight mechanisms. These are underpinned by fostering a culture of accountability and respect for the rule of law, human rights, and gender equality in security institutions. And finally, building the capacity of the media and civil society to play an effective role in citizen oversight.

“It’s been a very long time since we’ve attended a meeting like this, which includes tribal representatives from all the Yemeni governorates. Our discussions have been very fraternal and have focused on the role that tribes can play to support peace without partisanship - something that hasn’t happened for a very long time.”

Participant
Yemeni security dialogue

HIGHLIGHTS

FOSTERING COMMUNITY SAFETY COUNCILS IN LIBYA

Since 2022 in Libya we have helped build bridges between the police, local authorities, and communities through the creation of Community Safety Councils in which specific security needs and concerns can be raised. In 2024, the Council in Hay Al-Andalus created a new Advisory Body for Police and Community Safety that includes authorities working with women and youth, as well as clan leaders. The first issue they tackled was how to have more effective coordination in responding to cases of domestic violence. In Yefren, the Council has also tackled issues such as arms control and land disputes. In October, there were clashes between military forces and local residents over an attempt to reopen police stations and reinforce the security presence in Yefren. The Council was invited to mediate among the parties and worked closely with local and national representatives to help defuse the situation.

FACILITATING DIALOGUE AMONG PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT IN YEMEN

DCAF has been bringing together tribal leaders and representatives from security institutions and civil society organizations for ongoing dialogue on security concerns. For several, these discussions are the first time they have met face-to-face since the early stages of the conflict. Over the years participation has grown from 10 people to nearly 60 in 2024. These dialogues have identified shared security issues, such as the closure of roads by armed groups. Given the sensitivity of this topic for ongoing peace negotiations, in 2024 DCAF provided research to help reframe the discussion around freedom of movement and options to improve it. The discussions contributed to the opening of parts of the Marib-Sanaa and Taiz-Al Habawn roads, which had a significant impact on people's livelihoods and improved access to humanitarian aid. The volatility of the situation can easily see gains reversed, but these results show the value of inclusive dialogue to address immediate security concerns and build longer-term security arrangements as part of future peace talks.



PUBLICATION

Understanding private surveillance providers and technologies



PUBLICATION

Reference guide to the Palestinian security and justice sectors



PUBLICATION

Monitoring media coverage of the security sector in Lebanon

SUPPORTING MOZAMBIQUE TO JOIN THE VOLUNTARY PRINCIPLES INITIATIVE

In 2024, following several years of DCAF's support to the government and civil society groups, Mozambique was accepted as an Engaged Member of the Voluntary Principles Initiative (VPI). Comprised of over 75 companies, governments, and non-governmental organizations, the Initiative supports the implementation of the Voluntary Principles of Security and Human Rights that guide companies on how to conduct security operations while ensuring respect for human rights. Mozambique is helping to lead the way in Africa as the second country to become an Engaged Member of the VPI. Before achieving full member status, Mozambique must create a National Action Plan detailing steps to promote security and human rights, particularly relating to its large extractive sector. DCAF has been requested by the government to advise and help develop its plan.

TAKING A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO PREVENTING TORTURE IN LEBANON

Since 2020, DCAF has been providing technical assistance to the Lebanese Internal Security Forces and the Directorate General of State Security to establish internal regulations and oversight mechanisms to prevent torture and other forms of ill-treatment. In 2024, amidst the ongoing conflict, DCAF supported the National Human Rights Commission's Committee for the Prevention of Torture with an emergency initiative to review the legal status of about 1,000 detainees in accordance with the Lebanese Code of Criminal Procedure, leading to the release of many. These efforts were crucial in addressing severe prison overcrowding — a condition exacerbated by the conflict and directly linked to increased risks of ill-treatment. Similarly, at the request of the Ministry of Justice, DCAF also supported the Council for the Reduction of Sentences and its team of psychiatrists and social workers to review the status of people held in closed psychiatric hospitals.



VIDEO

Challenges facing journalists in Latin America



CASE STUDY

Understanding how gender-based violence capacity-building in peacetime has an impact during conflict - Mali



VIDEO

Security policies and reforms in Moldova

IMPROVING RELATIONS BETWEEN JOURNALISTS AND THE POLICE IN COLOMBIA

Building on the successful project strengthening the oversight role of journalists and social leaders in SSG in Colombia, DCAF is running a regional multi-year programme in Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, and Peru. A key element is fostering better working relationships between the media and police. In February 2024, the Colombian National Police announced the implementation of the *Guidelines to Strengthen the Relationship between The National Police and Media*, a result of numerous DCAF-led trainings and dialogues between journalists and police officers. In May, five journalists were assaulted by police officers while covering the assassination of the Director of La Modelo Prison in Bogotá. In a landmark response, General Salamanca, then General Director of the National Police, condemned these actions in a televised public apology, recognizing them as a threat to freedom of expression and reaffirming the police's commitment to upholding human rights.

ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH IN THE ARMENIAN ARMED FORCES

The Armenian Ministry of Defence engaged DCAF to help strengthen mental health care within the military, an especially important issue in the aftermath of the second Nagorno-Karabakh War. DCAF supported the Ministry to assess its existing mental health care system, raise awareness among senior military leadership about the importance of mental health, and facilitate a training-of-trainers programme for officer-psychologists to better cascade the awareness down through military units. Additionally, DCAF is assisting the Ministry to develop a comprehensive long-term strategy to promote mental health care in the armed forces through institutional and structural reforms.

BUILDING MORE EFFECTIVE INTERNAL CONTROLS IN THE MADAGASCAR MILITARY

DCAF has been supporting the Madagascar Ministry of Defence to establish robust internal control mechanisms for the prevention, reporting, and investigation of fraud and misconduct. In 2024, we did an assessment of the institutional capacities of the Ministry's Inspection Services Department, which is responsible for oversight of the application of laws, policies, and ministerial decisions regarding administrative and financial management of the armed forces. In addition to a directive on the implementation of an internal control system, the Ministry adopted our recommendations and appointed five inspectors at each of the three military branches. An impactful decision, as the Land Army was the only branch that had an inspector at that time. To support the inspectors to fulfill their oversight role, we produced a bespoke manual for the planning, preparation, and execution of inspections, audits, report writing, and monitoring that was specific to the local context.

KEY MOMENTS



SUPPORTING A MORE PEOPLE-CENTERED APPROACH TO POLICING IN ZAMBIA

We worked with our partner in Zambia, the Southern African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, to conduct perception surveys and focus groups with community members, youth, and women to better understand their security needs and concerns. This laid the groundwork for a cooperation agreement with the Zambian Police to implement a comprehensive police reform project.



REGULATING PRIVATE SURVEILLANCE AND DATA PROTECTION IN NIGERIA

Nigeria is one of Africa's largest consumers of citizen surveillance technologies, yet it lacks a comprehensive legal framework to regulate their use. We trained civil society groups, the media, policy makers, and private security companies on international best practices for regulating surveillance and its implications for human rights.



NEW RULES ON PROFESSIONAL ETHICS AND INTEGRITY IN UKRAINE

DCAF supported the Ministry of the Interior with the drafting of new ethics and integrity rules for its employees. The official presentation of the rules was attended by the Ministry's leadership and key departments, representatives from NATO, the European Union, and civil society organizations. The rules entered into legal force in May 2024.



Photo: DCAF

INCLUSIVE DIALOGUE ON CITIZEN SECURITY IN LIBYA

In Libya DCAF has been supporting the effort to bring parties to the conflict around the table by fostering a locally-led dialogue with stakeholders from across the political spectrum to identify shared security challenges and common solutions. Held in Geneva, the event bridged regional and political divides with representatives from security sector institutions, civil society, and local communities.



Photo: DCAF

MONITORING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN NIGER

After a successful pilot phase, a DCAF-supported human rights monitoring system expanded from 8 to 13 communes. It tracks violations, such as gender-based violence, and provides the authorities with data-driven insights to improve the security sector's response to victims and vulnerable groups.

IMPROVING SECURITY FOR JOURNALISTS IN COLOMBIA

DCAF partnered with the Ombuds Office of Colombia to improve security of journalists and social leaders while promoting knowledge sharing and best practices with human rights institutions in Honduras, Ecuador, Mexico, and Peru. As part of this initiative, local police and journalists met to discuss working relations, press freedom, and the risks faced by journalists in the region.



Photo: Orjan Ellingvag

PUTTING PEOPLE'S NEEDS AT THE CENTRE OF SECURITY IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

FOCUS



Photo: DCAF

Since 2005 DCAF has been working in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to help strengthen the accountability and effectiveness of the security sector and reinforce its legitimacy by being more responsive to the needs of Palestinians.

When the Gaza war began in October 2023, we were wrapping up a comprehensive perception survey among Palestinians. In 60 workshops and focus groups in the West Bank, Gaza, and refugee camps, 1500 people answered the question, “what does security and justice mean to you?”

In these neutral spaces, Palestinians from across the social and political spectrum were able to voice their perceptions, fears, and needs. One representative of a civil society group in the Gaza Strip said, “We need to ensure that our security apparatus is built on the principle of citizen’s trust and makes addressing the needs of the people a priority.”

The survey helped bridge the gaps between authorities, security institutions, and communities, and was designed to feed into the development of a shared vision and joint National Security Policy across the Palestinian divide. The war put these ambitions on hold.

In 2024, DCAF mapped the actors who were providing security and justice services in Gaza during the war, detailed the emergence of a new generation of armed groups, and assessed the institutional memory loss due to the war. To inform this research we brought together representatives of security institutions and Palestinian political factions who would not normally discuss security and justice related matters.

Through our research, we were able to offer international donors and multilateral organizations a clearer understanding of the complex on-the-ground realities and policy advice in a rapidly-evolving situation. Bringing the Palestinian experience and reality to international discussions is central to shaping the future of the security sector in Gaza and the West Bank.

In the midst of conflict, dialogue on security arrangements can help bridge the gap between security forces, factions, and local communities and set the stage for so-called “day after” discussions.

Through our long presence and commitment to people-centered security in the OPT, DCAF has been able to support the Palestinian Authority’s post-conflict planning in Gaza in particular in the justice sector.

“Security is the opposite of fear. I am afraid all the time.”

Youth
Gaza City

INFLUENCING

Since its founding in 2000, DCAF has played a leading role in advancing good governance of the security sector as a foundation for peace and sustainable development around the world. Our research and advice have informed the creation of international norms, standards, and best practices. DCAF has provided long-standing policy support to key international organizations in the development of SSG policy frameworks, supporting their implementation, influencing and linking SSG to broader international agendas such as 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We also influence national SSG policies and practices by providing technical assistance and capacity building to governments, security institutions, civil society groups, the media, and oversight bodies to help them tailor reforms and governance mechanisms and permit each to play their important part. In all our work, DCAF promotes inclusive, gender-responsive security policies and practices that ensure accountability, transparency, and the protection of human rights.

“DCAF has supported us in bringing our national cybersecurity legislation in line with EU standards.”

Dušan Polović
Director General

Directorate for Infrastructure, Information Security,
Digitalisation, and e-Services
Ministry of Public Administration of Montenegro



HIGHLIGHTS

SUPPORTING AFRICAN UNION MEMBER STATES TO ESTABLISH EFFECTIVE SSG

DCAF supported the African Union (AU) and some of its Member States to put the AU's SSR Policy Framework into action in their own countries. In The Gambia and Lesotho, we piloted a self-assessment tool to identify ways to strengthen their national ownership of security sector reforms. In Comoros, DCAF was engaged by the government to assess its security and defence sectors and help develop a roadmap for a national reform strategy that will reflect the state's and the population's security needs and concerns.

ADOPTING INTERNATIONAL CYBERSECURITY STANDARDS IN MONTENEGRO

For many years DCAF has been supporting cybersecurity and cyber resilience in the Western Balkans by building national capacities, aligning legislation with European Union (EU) standards, and fostering more effective regional cooperation. Among the notable achievements of this cooperation, in 2023 we assisted Montenegro in drafting a new information security law—the first in the region to fully align with the EU's NIS2 Directive on cybersecurity. The law was adopted in 2024, and Montenegro's Ministry of Public Administration subsequently engaged DCAF to work with the private sector to establish the information-sharing models required by the new legislation.



VIDEO

Verifying if the state is illegally wiretapping citizens in North Macedonia



E-LEARNING

Integrating gender in project design



VIDEO

Elsie Initiative - testimonies from Jordan, Senegal, and South Africa

INFORMING SWITZERLAND'S DISCUSSIONS ON SSG AT THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

Throughout its tenure on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) (2023-2024), Switzerland relied on DCAF to provide detailed analysis of the security sector reform aspects of UN-mandated peacekeeping operations and special political missions that were up for review or renewal. We did the first-ever comprehensive analysis of UNSC mandates on SSR over a ten-year period to identify good practice and recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of SSR elements. Additionally, we prepared 15 briefing notes for the Swiss government covering SSG/R, gender, police, and justice work in peacekeeping missions in Africa and the Middle East. A DCAF briefing that made a recommendation related to SSG and elections security in South Sudan subsequently informed the UNSC's deliberations on how to support peaceful elections in the country.



PUBLICATION

The contribution of ombuds institutes to SDG 16 through security sector governance and reform

PROVIDING ADVICE AND EXPERTISE TO THE UN PEACEBUILDING ARCHITECTURE REVIEW

In 2024 DCAF's long-standing support to the United Nations took the form of a collaboration with the UN SSR Task Force to contribute to the 2025 UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review, a process undertaken every five years to strengthen and refine UN peacebuilding efforts worldwide. Together we convened a consultation of nearly 50 participants, including representatives from three UN peace operations. The resulting submission provided suggestions for language to more fully integrate SSG into peacebuilding efforts as a vital element for the prevention of violence and the establishment of sustainable peace and development.



REPORT

Security sector governance in Moldova

HELPING TO SHAPE THE PACT FOR THE FUTURE

The adoption of the Pact for the Future at the United Nations, alongside the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration for Future Generations, marks a significant step forward in global cooperation and the vision of a multilateral system that reflects the realities of today and that delivers for everyone, everywhere. In 2024, DCAF contributed to the consultation phase of this historic document by organizing and participating in several policy events and providing suggestions for policy language that reflects values central to SSG such as transparency, accountability, gender equality, and the protection of human rights. These were reflected in the final Pact. For example in Action 7, which notes the importance of building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions, to achieve peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

KEY MOMENTS

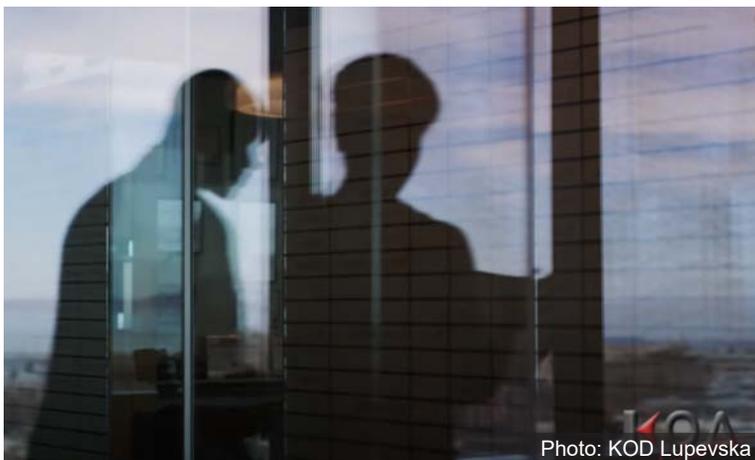


Photo: KOD Lupevska

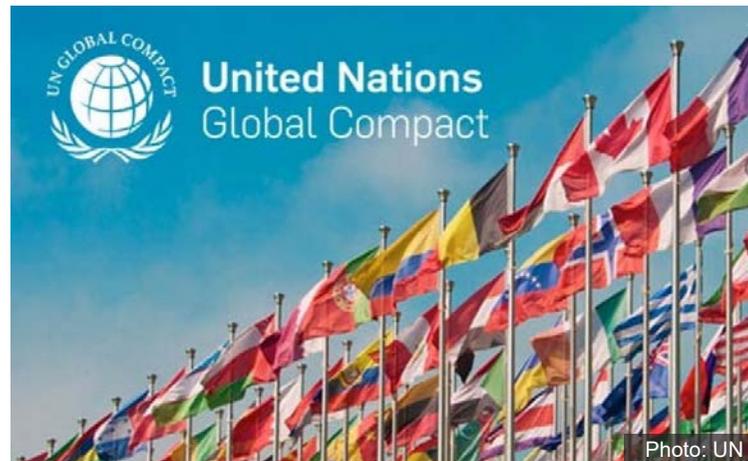


Photo: UN

DCAF JOINS THE UN GLOBAL COMPACT

DCAF has been providing technical expertise to the Global Compact since 2012, and in 2024 we became a formal member of the network in Switzerland and Liechtenstein that supports the private sector's adoption of the Compact's Ten Principles for responsible practices in the areas of human rights, labour, the environment, and anti-corruption.

BUILDING THE MEDIA'S CAPACITY TO COVER INTELLIGENCE REFORM IN NORTH MACEDONIA

As part of our larger reform programme in the country, DCAF has been building the capacity of journalists to report on security sector governance issues in North Macedonia. In 2024, this resulted in a nationally-televised documentary by investigative journalist Mimir Serafinović examining proposed reforms to the intelligence and security sectors. Serafinović also did the first-ever interview with the newly-appointed Head of the National Security Agency, showing an improving role for the media in fostering transparency in this highly sensitive policy area.

LAUNCH OF THE TOWARDS EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN IN THE DEFENCE SECTOR REPORT

DCAF is proud to have been the UN's research partner in the development of this first-ever global evidence-based analysis of the participation of women in national defence institutions. The report, covering 55 countries, provides a geographically-diverse set of observations, challenges and good practices and the identification of seven 'accelerators' for improving gender equality.



Photo: UNSSR



Photo: DCAF

PROMOTING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN CYBERSECURITY

We collaborated with female cybersecurity experts to run workshops for cyber professionals from the Western Balkans on the state of women's representation and leadership in cybersecurity in the public sector and discuss strategies to improve it.

“This event changed my perspective. Even though I have worked in IT and cybersecurity for over 30 years and always thought that we women were treated equally. I now realize that more needs to be done to give women more leading roles.”

Participant

Montenegro cybersecurity workshop



Photo: WPS-HA Compact/Babita Patel

ADVANCING THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

DCAF has re-affirmed its commitment to gender equality through the signing of the Global Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action. DCAF's ambition is to develop the skills of security sector actors to address the intersectional nature of discrimination which puts women and girls in vulnerable situations.



Photo: Phototek Media Lab

16TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF OMBUDS INSTITUTIONS FOR THE ARMED FORCES

Every year DCAF brings together ombuds practitioners to exchange experiences, good practices, and strengthen peer-to-peer learning. This year's ICOAF conference, co-hosted by the German Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces and DCAF, took place amid growing pressures on armed forces worldwide, marked by rising military spending, geopolitical uncertainty, and the challenges of hybrid warfare.



Photo: DCAF

BALKANS CYBERSECURITY DAYS 2024

In collaboration with local partners from the Western Balkans we brought together more than 120 participants in Albania to share insights on cybersecurity, take hands-on training, and network with their regional counterparts. One participant said the annual event, “truly exemplified the power of collaboration and innovation in the field of cybersecurity.”



WORLD POLICE SUMMIT

DCAF joined the World Police Summit 2024 in Dubai to exchange best practices and expertise with law enforcement leaders from around the world. Taking part in two high-level panels, we highlighted the importance of legitimacy, good governance, police integrity, and community policing.

CELEBRATING AND REFLECTING ON 10 YEARS OF OSCE WORK IN SSG

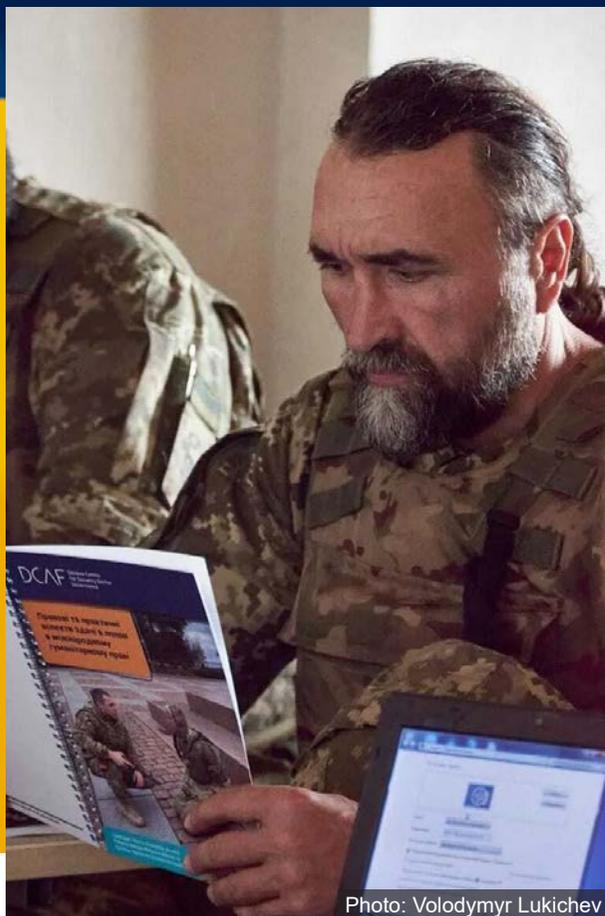
DCAF participated in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe’s Group of Friends of SSG/R meeting. We discussed coordinated approaches in the work of international organizations in SSG/R, and looked at how the OSCE’s approach to SSG/R, based on the DCAF mapping study in 2014, continues to shape the organisation’s engagement in this area.



Photo: OSCE 24MT

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE IN THE MIDST OF WAR

FOCUS



When Russia launched its full-scale invasion in 2022, Ukraine had to act fast to mobilize and increase the size of its army in response, which brought new and difficult challenges to governance of the armed forces. That included ensuring that everyone - from commanders at the top, to the soldiers on the battlefield - understood and fulfilled their responsibilities under International Humanitarian Law (IHL), the law which regulates the conduct of war. “Adherence to IHL serves as a key advantage for the Ukrainian military over the aggressor,” said the Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces.

Already working with Ukraine to update its military justice system, the Ministry of Defense asked for DCAF’s additional support to reinforce compliance of its armed forces with IHL. As a first step, we assessed what was working and - more importantly - what was not. Then we created a training programme in line with NATO standards that spoke to the realities that soldiers faced on the battlefield.

It was not a one-size-fits-all approach. The programme was tailored for different roles and ranks, and focused on practical needs in order to help soldiers respect human rights if, for instance, Russian soldiers surrendered to them or they found evidence of war crimes. These are not easy experiences to manage, but essential when the stakes are so high. DCAF prepared guidance and materials and trained military trainers who then cascaded it down through the ranks along with IHL information cards for soldiers to carry with them.

The training was reinforced with strong policies. DCAF supported the Ministry of Defence to update the order that dictates how IHL should be implemented and the Ministry created a new unit to oversee compliance, the International Law Division. It’s now the go-to for ensuring adherence to IHL, coordinating with law enforcement, and investigating war crimes. Inna Zavorotko, Deputy Head of the Division, said, “DCAF is gamechanger in mainstreaming and reinforcing accountability with International Humanitarian Law.”

The goal, as always, is lasting change. By equipping Ukraine’s armed forces with the knowledge and tools to uphold IHL, DCAF has helped to reinforce good governance in the midst of war. It is a work in progress, but Ukraine’s armed forces are better prepared to fight, not just effectively but ethically - something that will matter long after the guns fall silent.

“DCAF is a game changer in mainstreaming and reinforcing accountability with International Humanitarian Law.”

Inna Zavorotko
Deputy Head - International Law Division
Ukrainian Ministry of Defence

Flexible funding mechanisms

DCAF manages several multi-donor funds focused on geographic and thematic priorities that are designed to provide rapid, agile assistance and coordinate donor contributions in the most efficient and cost-effective way possible.

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY SECTOR ADVISORY POOLED FUND

DCAF draws from across its research and operational expertise to provide tailored support to donor governments and multilateral organizations who are members of our International Partners' Group. Through training, research, and technical advice, we help improve national security and justice reform processes. In 2024, the core donors were Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Additional members were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Norway, Slovakia and the USA, as well as the African Union, the European Union, OECD, OSCE, Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, the United Nations, and the World Bank.

TRUST FUND FOR NORTH AFRICA (TFNA)

Established in 2012, this year the TFNA supported SSG initiatives of local governments, parliaments, security institutions, civil society, and communities in Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia. These initiatives range from establishing community safety councils, strengthening external oversight of the security sector, to supporting judicial responses to gender-based violence. Through the TFNA, DCAF operates with agility and sustainability, while also creating a platform for exchange and collaboration with international partners. TFNA members include France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Switzerland.

SECURITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISM (SHRIM)

The SHRIM supports responsible business conduct and the protection of human rights, especially in fragile and conflict-affected contexts such as Colombia, Peru, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, and Nigeria. The SHRIM is committed to improving security on the ground by supporting locally-led and cost effective multistakeholder projects that include the government, communities, and the private sector. Donors to the SHRIM in 2024 were the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and the Netherlands.



Photo: Ines Della Valle

NORTH MACEDONIA POOLED FUND FOR INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

The Fund supports ongoing efforts to reform North Macedonia's security apparatus and intelligence services with the aim of advancing the country's strategic objective of European Union membership. These efforts focus on aligning legal frameworks and institutional capacities with Euro-Atlantic principles, international good practices, and respect for human rights. Activities to strengthen internal and external oversight of the intelligence and security sectors include building the capacity of key actors to address security challenges, fostering public dialogue on security policy, and promoting gender equality. Donors to the fund in 2024 were Switzerland, Sweden, the Netherlands, and the European Union.

TRUST FUND FOR PALESTINE (TFP)

Founded in 2024 with the Netherlands, the TFP fosters risk-sharing, strategic alignment, and joint programme design in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in light of the Gaza war. It advances good governance through three key pillars: supporting people-centred security provision; empowering young Palestinians to participate in SSG decision-making; and providing policy recommendations to the international community informed by insights from the local partners and DCAF's SSG expertise.

“Security sector institutions have tried to be more open-minded since DCAF arrived in North Macedonia. Transparency is getting better.”

Participant

CSO/media capacity building workshop



Photo: DCAF

SHIFTING THE GROUND ON GENDER EQUALITY IN SENEGAL

FOCUS



Photo: MONUSCO / SENFPU Bunia

Major Rokhaya Lô's journey up through the ranks is not just a story of personal triumph - it highlights the structural barriers that women face in security institutions and how change can come through both individual courage and institutional support.

In 2012, fresh out of a master's degree in Trade and Management of International Affairs, Major Lô decided to enter the school of gendarmerie. Since then, she earned a second master's degree, in Gender and Peacebuilding, and became the first woman to command a unit in the Senegalese Gendarmerie. Throughout Major Lô has navigated a landscape rife with challenges, from limited resources to entrenched attitudes about the roles and abilities of women.

Her breakthrough came as the head of the Gender Division of the Gendarmerie, where she worked to expand the scope of gender training from short workshops to comprehensive, multi-day programmes. This progression was pivotal when she became the first female commander to lead a Senegalese police unit in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

"Sometimes I come up against a seemingly questioning face," she said at the time, "but that may be due to the fact that they had never seen a woman as the head of the police unit. At the end of the day, they encourage me and respect me."

"It helped us see the barriers that held women back and gave the command the confidence to trust my leadership."

Major Rokhaya Lô

Reflecting on her success, Major Lô credits the Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peacekeeping (MOWIP) methodology for driving institutional change. Created by DCAF and the University of Cornell, the MOWIP is used by national security institutions to identify barriers and opportunities to increase women's meaningful participation in UN peace operations. "It helped us see the barriers that held women back and gave the command the confidence to trust my leadership," said Major Lô.

Her story underscores that structural change requires both institutional frameworks and bold individuals ready to push boundaries. Her journey shows that while personal resilience is key, real progress comes when institutions are ready to evolve and fully support women's leadership.

Our culture

IMPROVING SAFEGUARDING TOOLS AND PRACTICES

To help build our capacity for safeguarding staff, partners and stakeholders, DCAF staff in Geneva took part in an interactive theatre experience about the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment. Presented with real-life workplace scenarios, they role-played the appropriate responses from the point of view of victims, survivors, bystanders, and managers. The event was organized in cooperation with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and DCAF's sister centres in the Maison de la Paix, the Geneva Centre for Security Policy and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining. DCAF is also creating a Safeguarding Committee to help reinforce a safe and healthy environment for staff, contractors, partners, and project beneficiaries.

OUR COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY

At the heart of our principles and our new Strategy 2025-2030 is the promotion of gender equality in all that we do. Each year our Director makes commitments as an International Gender Champion. In 2024, they included not participating in single-sex panels and zero tolerance for gender-based violence, and sexist attitudes and behaviours in the workplace. In addition, we created an e-learning version of the training in gender-responsive project design and made it freely available on our website. All DCAF staff were trained to implement this on their projects. We are proud that 45% of DCAF's projects now build in gender from the start as per the OECD-DAC Gender Equality Marker.

FOSTERING BETTER COMMUNICATION AND TEAMWORK

As part of our ongoing commitment to a supportive work environment, DCAF organized a series of workshops designed to reinforce dialogue and trust through effective communication. Team members learned about their own communication styles and that of their colleagues, and practiced giving and receiving constructive feedback. In addition, the whole extended senior management team underwent 360° feedback evaluations that highlighted their managerial strengths and competencies, and then worked with a professional coach to create a professional development plan to improve where needed.



“Our commitment to gender equality reflects our core values and principles as an organization. This is why it matters to me personally and as DCAF’s Director that it is embodied in our work and implemented every step of the way.”

Ambassador Nathalie Chuard

Our offices



Geneva, Switzerland



Banjul, The Gambia



Beirut, Lebanon



Belgrade, Serbia



Brussels, Belgium



Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



Bamako, Mali



Chişinău, Moldova



Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo



Kyiv, Ukraine



Niamey, Niger



Ljubljana, Slovenia



Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso



Ramallah, Occupied Palestinian Territory



Skopje, North Macedonia



Tunis, Tunisia

219
staff members

52% women
35% in country offices

15
country
offices

Budget in
2024
35 million
CHF

Foundation Council

DCAF is a Swiss foundation that was established in 2000 on the initiative of the Swiss government. In 2024, our Foundation Council included 44 members representing 41 countries and the Canton of Geneva.



Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Canada, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, France, The Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mali, Malta, Mexico, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Niger, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and the Canton of Geneva.

In July 2024 we welcomed Amin Awad as the new President of DCAF's Foundation Council. Of Sudanese and Swiss nationalities, over his 35-year career he has worked on critical peace and security operations in the Middle East, Asia, Africa, the former Soviet Union, and former Yugoslavia. Most recently he was UN Assistant Secretary-General and UN Crisis Coordinator for Ukraine. We are grateful for his guidance and expertise in this strategic role at the head of our Foundation Council.



Photo: A. Awad



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