

**REGIONAL
DEMOCRACY
CONFERENCE ON
THE HORN OF AFRICA**

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ADDIS ABABA

**SPEAKERS'
BIOGRAPHIES**



**HORN
CENTER FOR
DEMOCRACY**

NURTURING DEMOCRACY



Sinikinesh Beyene Jimma

Sinikinesh Beyene Jimma is a founding member and Chair of the Executive Board of Horn Center for Democracy (HCD). She is the Chief of Marine and Coastal Ecosystems of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Sinikinesh has worked in different leadership and senior positions for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Africa, Asia and the Pacific regions for more than a decade. Prior to joining the United Nations, she worked for the government, NGOs, and bilateral organisations in various senior positions.

Sinikinesh engages in various voluntary development initiatives and serves on Executive Boards. Currently, she is a member of the Executive Board of the Global Fund for Coral Reef (GFCR), the Steering Group for the Marine Regions Forum and alternate for the Global Seaweed Coalition Strategic Advisory Council. She has served as a member of the Executive Board of the African Centre for Disaster Risk Management, the Landmine Survivors Network and the National Steering Committee of GEF-SGP. She is passionate about significantly contributing to the advancement of human rights, democracy and peacebuilding, which are the fundamental requirements for the achievement of sustainable development.

Sinikinesh is a PhD candidate in Business Management (Sustainability) to be completed in 2024. She holds an MBA from the Australian Institute of Business, a Masters in Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation for Natural Resources Management from ITC, The Netherlands and a BA Degree in Geography from Addis Ababa University.



Dr. Paul-Simon Handy

Paul-Simon Handy is Director of the ISS Regional Office for East Africa and the Horn, based in Addis Ababa. He first joined the ISS in 2007 and held various positions, including division head, research director and acting deputy executive director. He was on the UN Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic between 2013 and 2018 before rejoining the ISS in 2019 as a senior advisor. Paul-Simon is a visiting lecturer at Rhodes University in South Africa and held teaching positions at the Free University of Berlin before acting as Associate Fellow with the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik in Berlin. He studied political science and international relations at the universities of Yaounde, Berlin and Leipzig where he obtained his PhD in 2005.



Joachim Beijmo

Joachim Beijmo is currently the Head of Regional Development Cooperation in Africa Head of Regional Development Cooperation in Africa. His previous professional experience includes Deputy Head of Mission/ Head of Cooperation, Embassy of Sweden in Kinshasa; and advisor to the Chair of OECD-Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC). Joachim served in the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) for more than ten years in various responsibilities including Chief of Staff, director of communications, and communication strategist.



Hassan Shire

Hassan Shire is the executive director of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (DefendDefenders) and Chairperson of the Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network (PAHRD-Net). Under Shire's leadership, DefendDefenders provides emergency protection, advocacy, awareness raising, capacity building, and technological support to human rights defenders. Shire founded and co-directed the Dr. Ismail Jumale Human Rights Centre (1996-2001) and was the Chairperson of Peace and Human Rights Network (1998-2001) in Mogadishu, Somalia.

He is a Visionary Leader with a demonstrated history of working in the civic & social organization industry. Skilled in Movement Building, Building Protection Programs for Human Rights Defenders, Team Manager and Networking. Strong professional with a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) focused in Political Science and Government from Delhi University; Master of Arts (M.A.) in Economics from J.M.I University, New Delhi. HRDs Protection Researcher at CRS, York University, Toronto.



Dr. Dereje Feyissa Dori

Dereje Feyissa is an eminent Ethiopian scholar with a regional focus on the Horn of Africa. He holds a doctorate in Social Anthropology from Martin-Luther University, Halle, Germany. He has extensive experience as a Research Fellow at Osaka University in Japan; at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology and the Alexander von Humboldt in Germany. Dereje has worked as Research Professor at the International Law and Policy Institute (ILPI) and attached to ILPI Centre for African Studies as Africa Research Director. Dereje also worked as Senior Research Advisor to the Life and Peace Institute, Horn of Africa Regional Program. Besides, he holds an Adjunct Associate professor position at Addis Ababa University at the College of Law and Governance.

Dereje has extensive fieldwork experience and has conducted research on ethnicity and conflict; Islam in contemporary Ethiopia; the political economy of development and the transnational politics of migrants, among other topics. He is the author and co-editor of several books on ethnic identity, centre-periphery relations and migration-related issues in the Horn of Africa. Additionally, Dereje has authored numerous articles in peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes. He has also conducted extensive consultancy works for international organizations, inter alia projects on the issue of indigeneity in Ethiopia for the WB; nexus between education and peacebuilding for UNICEF and rural to urban migration to secondary cities in Ethiopia for the EU Trust Fund.



Dr. Addiswork Tilahun Teklemariam

Currently, she is the Associate Dean for Research and Technology Transfer of the College of Law and Governance at Hawassa University; and her previous work experience include a Governance and Institution cluster leader at the Institute of Policy and Development Research (IPDR) of Hawassa University, and a Senior Researcher at the FDRE Justice and Legal System Research Institute. Dr. Addiswork holds Ph. D in Policy and development studies from Norwegian University of Life Science and Hawassa University, and Masters of Laws in Development from University of Warwick.



Dr. Muhammad Dan Suleiman

Dr. Muhammad is an academic, Assistant Professor of International Relations, and analyst of the African politics and West African security expert. His primary expertise lies in transnational terrorism, conflict and security with a focus on West Africa; and the international politics of Africa. He is also a researcher, with over ten years of combined research, administrative, institution-building, education, humanitarian and community support work, and mentoring experience.



Dr. Seife Ayalew Asfaw

Dr. Seife Ayalew Asfaw is a seasoned professional with over 15 years of experience in governance, human rights, and conflict research. He completed his Ph.D. in Conflict Analysis and Resolution from George Mason University and is currently serving as a Program Director for the African Civic Leadership Program (ACLP) in addition to various teaching, advising and consultancies he undertakes, which enrich his impactful project designing skills. His expertise extends to conducting comprehensive research, providing well-informed policy recommendations, and effectively communicating them through public presentations. He is committed to advancing social justice and contribute to the betterment of society. Areas of Expertise include: Policy Research & Governance Advisor [Governance] Human Rights| Conflict Resolution.



Dr. Adem Kassie Abebe

Adem Kassie Abebe is a senior advisor on constitution-building processes at International IDEA. He supports transitions from conflict and authoritarianism to peace and democracy, generates cutting edge knowledge, convenes platforms for dialogue and advocates for change, in countries as diverse as South Sudan, Sudan, Gambia to Myanmar. Adem is also Vice President of the African Network of Constitutional Lawyers, which promotes democratic constitutionalism across the continent. Adem serves in the Executive Committee of the International Association of Constitutional Law, in the Advisory Board of the International Journal of Constitutional Law, in Advisory Council of the (Bonavero) Institute of Human Rights at Oxford University. He has been invited as a neutral expert (*amicus curiae*) in prominent court cases, including by the Kenyan Supreme Court and the Ethiopian Council of Constitutional Inquiry. In addition to his practical and policy engagements, Adem has edited books and published articles and book chapters in prominent academic journals on comparative constitutional law and practice. He delivers lectures in universities across the world, including as Extraordinary Lecturer at the University of Pretoria. He has been featured and/or cited in prominent international, African, and Ethiopian outlets; has regularly appeared as commentator on major global radio and television broadcasters (including the BBC, Al Jazeera, France24).



Dr. Aleu Garang (Ass. Prof.)

Dr. Garang serves currently as, the Head of Governance Unit at IGAD; governance expert with focus on good governance, human rights, democratisation and transitional justice. He is a legal practitioner with extensive experience in international law, administrative law, and is a peace and security specialist of preventative diplomacy, mediation, conflict prevention and peace building. Garang holds LLM in Laws, a PhD in International Law, and a Diploma & MA in Peace and Security Studies. Dr Garang served in public sector (Sudan and South Sudan) in various legal capacities for about 13 years and his last posting was Senior Legal Counsel posted as the Legal Advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of South Sudan. Garang has worked at various international organizations namely, NRC, UNDP, UNMIS and W.B.



Azmera Kassahun

Azmera Kassahun has over ten years' experience working in areas of gender equality, women rights and inclusion both at the national and regional level. She is currently a Gendre Program Specialist at UNICEF. Prior to joining UNICEF, she was the program coordinator for the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Program. Azmera has also worked for the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) in the Regional Development Cooperation Portfolio for Sub-Saharan Africa as a Program Manager for Gender Equality. In this position, she has managed regional and multi-country gender equality programs in various areas including Women's Political Participation, Women's Economic Empowerment, and Women Peace and Security (WPS). She also worked for international CSOs such as Catholic Relief Services and Research Triangle Institute International as a Gender Manager and a Gender and Inclusive Education Advisor respectively. Azmera holds a masters degree in Human Rights Lw and a Bachelor Degree in law.



Dr. Bireete Sarah

Dr. Bireete Sarah is a founding Partner and Executive Director for Center for Constitutional Governance (CCG), a Uganda Constitutional Watchdog (Non-Governmental Organization) based at Plot 14, Muwafu Road, Ministers Village - Ntinda, Kampala. Previously, she was the Deputy Executive Director of the same NGO from 2011 to 2019. She is a Doctor of Humanities, a lawyer and human rights activist and a partner at Dickens Kamugisha and Co. Advocates in Kampala - Uganda. She is a regular panelist on the National Broadcaster (Uganda Broadcasting Corporation - UBC) political talk show known as UBC Behind the Headlines; a show that runs every Wednesday; a regular panelist on Civic Space TV on Chat Show UG every Friday; as well as a regular political analyst on NTV Uganda. She is a member of several boards of organizations as well as governing committees of schools and students' bodies. She also chairs the national coalition on civic space in Uganda and she is the focal point person for the international human rights defenders group known as Vuka Allies, for Uganda. She has enriched knowledge and understanding of governance issues especially in areas of constitutionalism, human rights, Shrinking Civic Space, land rights, research and advocacy, public interest litigation as well as conflict transformation.



Brian Kagoro

Brian Kagoro is managing director of Programs at the Open Society Foundations. He oversees a diverse portfolio of programmatic opportunities, helping to deliver on Open Society's strategic goals and ensuring that the Foundations' full portfolio of work remains balanced, inclusive, future-focused, and transformative. Kagoro previously served as director of Justice and Intersectionality, responsible for guiding Open Society's global work to advance democratic freedoms. Kagoro brings more than 24 years of strategic leadership experience across international, regional, and inter-governmental organizations, such as the United Nations Development Programme, ActionAid International, and several African Union institutions. His extensive work and activism in the areas of transitional/restorative/reparative justice, human rights, social justice, international development, and accountability allow him to lead from a place of deep knowledge and empathy.

He is a Pan-Africanist, Global Development Practitioner, Leadership Development Expert & Social Entrepreneur; working at the intersection of law, justice, politics, security, economic development, governance, and global policy. Kagoro is an expert in applying the development, human rights and political lense in policy analysis and development of alternatives to lift the voice of citizens.



Dr. Elshaday Kifle Woldeyesus

Dr Elshaday Kifle Woldeyesus is University Lecturer and researcher including on women and governance and women's human rights issues in Ethiopia. She has over a decade of experience in advisory and consulting work with government and non-governmental organizations. Elshaday currently teaches at the Center for Human Rights in Addis Ababa University. She has a PhD in law and politics and an MA in gender and peacebuilding.



Frew Demeke

Currently, the Executive Director at Horn Center for Democracy (HCD), Frew is a well-versed human rights, democracy, public policy and international conflict management academician and practitioner. His extensive experience in the African human rights system and democratization processes, is enriched with lengthy service as Regional Africa Programme Manager on Democratic Governance, Human Rights and Gender Equality at the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) within the Embassy of Sweden in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. He has also served as the Director of the Human Rights Research and Resource Center at the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission.

He has served in various higher academic institutions in Sweden and Ethiopia teaching international courses including human rights and humanitarian law. Frew has published on international humanitarian law and conflict transformation disciplines. Frew has extended studies including Master of Public Policy and International Conflict Management (MPP), Willy Brandt School of Public Policy at the University of Erfurt, Erfurt, Germany; and Master of International Human Rights Law (LL.M), Lund University, Faculty of Law and the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Laws, Sweden.



Gilbert Sendugwa

Currently the Executive Director at Africa Freedom of Information Centre; he is experienced management professional with demonstrated history of working in non-profit organizations. Skilled in Civil Society, Policy Analysis, African Affairs, Human Rights, Transparency and Accountability with a Masters focused in Management Studies from Uganda Management Institute (UMI) and Bachelor's degree from Makerere University.



Professor Kidane Mengisteab

Professor Kidane Mengisteab is Professor of African Studies and Political Science at the Pennsylvania State University. The focus of his current research includes the relevance of 'traditional' institutions in Africa's governance; the socioeconomic implications of the expansion of extractive industries and commercial farming in Africa; and alternative approaches to democratization in the African continent. He is author or editor of several books on Africa. His most recent book is titled *The Horn of Africa: Hot Spots in Global Politics*: London: Polity Press, 2015. Mengisteab's co-edited book, *'Traditional Institutions in Contemporary African Governance'* is in press and he is currently working on a book, titled *Alternative Approaches to Democratization in Africa*.



Dr. Michael Woldemariam

Michael Woldemariam is an associate professor in the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland, College Park, and a Senior Fellow at the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland. Woldemariam's research and teaching interests are in the area of peace and security in Africa, with a particular focus on armed conflict in the Horn of Africa. Prior to joining Maryland, Woldemariam was a faculty member at Boston University's Pardee School of Global Studies and the Director of its African Studies Center. He has held fellowships with Penn State's Africana Research Center, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, and the Council on Foreign Relations.

Prior to joining SPP, Woldemariam was a tenured faculty member at Boston University's Pardee School of Global Studies and the Director of its African Studies Center. He has also worked as a research specialist with Princeton University's Innovations for Successful Societies program and held fellowships from the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and Penn State's African Research Center. In 2020-21, Woldemariam served on the Democratic staff at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee through a Council on Foreign Relations fellowship.



Naomi Mwangi

Naomi Mwangi joined Equality Now in February 2022. As a Program officer in the Legal Equality Program, she works on a campaign that aims to accelerate the ratification, domestication and implementation of the Maputo Protocol by all Member States of the African Union.

Naomi is a human rights lawyer with experience running legal accountability initiatives in Kenya, South Sudan and Tanzania. She holds a Master of Arts in Human Rights, Gender and Conflict studies from Erasmus University, Rotterdam and has a particular interest in the potential of the law to act as a tool for advancing the rights of women and girls on the African continent. Prior to joining Equality Now, Naomi was the gender justice technical lead at Faith to Action Network where she led a multi-country project focused on strengthening and diversifying young women's voices in decision making spaces. She has also worked at Legal Action Worldwide, advocating for accountability for sexual and gender-based violence that occurred in the context of the South Sudan conflicts.

She is greatly inspired by the writings of Kimberly Crenshaw on intersectionality. One of her favorite quotes from her: "Intersectionality draws attention to invisibilities that exist in feminism, in anti-racism, in class politics, so, obviously, it takes a lot of work to consistently challenge ourselves to be attentive to aspects of power that we don't ourselves experience."



Mutemi wa Kiama

A fervent revolutionary and community organiser, Mutemi wa Kiama is also a staunch Pan Africanist, social entrepreneur, movement builder and coach. He excels in strategic planning and communications and he is serving as the #AfricansRising chair of the Engagement and Communication committee in the Coordinating Collective (Board) amongst other roles.



Namara Claire

Claire is a determined and passionate female leader who has devoted her life to fighting for women's rights, marginalized groups and believes in activism as a tool for social change. With a background in leadership as a former Vice President of the student's guild at Kyambogo University, Claire has exhibited a relentless commitment to fighting for equality and social justice.

Claire's dedication has led her to attend a series of training sessions, fellowships where she honed her skills in frontline organizing and mobilizing. To re-echo this, she successfully completed a Rhize Global Coaching Fellowship, a coach fellowship in grass-roots education about civil resistance and movement building, further she successfully completed a training on "The strategic dynamics of civil resistance" with international center on Nonviolent Conflict and has recently undertaken a training on human rights Monitoring, Documentation and Reporting study with Amnesty Netherlands.

Professionally Claire is an Accountant, and currently, volunteers as a coordinator of resource mobilization of Freedom Movement Uganda, a youth led movement focused on building the power of ordinary people to take action against social, economic, and class oppression. She coordinates fundraisers, guides on financial management, plays a supportive role in the communications team and offers leadership in women initiatives. With her resilience and selflessness, Claire is a beacon of hope for so many young girls and women, and those seeking to create a better world for all.



Prof. Prempeh Henry Kwasi

Legal scholar and governance expert Henry Kwasi Prempeh is executive director of the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), where he has served as a board member since the center's founding and was its first director of legal policy and governance and co-editor of its quarterly Democracy Watch from 2001 to 2003.

Kwasi Prempeh taught at Seton Hall University School of Law (New Jersey, USA) from 2003 to 2015, securing tenure as a full professor in 2008. He was also a visiting professor at GIMPA Law School from 2010 to 2011 and has co-taught the "Constitution-Building in Africa" course at the Central European University, Budapest, Hungary, since 2014. In 2013-2014, he served as constitutional adviser to the UN Special Envoy to Yemen. A 2011 Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy, Kwasi Prempeh is a renowned expert on democratization, governance, and constitutionalism in Ghana and Africa and has published widely in the field, including articles in the influential Journal of Democracy and International Journal of Constitutional Law.

He previously practiced law in Washington, D.C. A 1993 graduate of Yale Law School, Kwasi Prempeh also holds a master's degree in business administration from Baylor University (Texas, USA) and a bachelor's degree from the University of Ghana. He is a member of the Ghana Law Reform Commission.



Yemisrach Kebede

Yemisrach brings her extensive experience in the realm of African policy and advocacy arena, having worked over the last fourteen years, in senior advisory and programme management positions within continental representational and policy/advocacy offices for reputable INGOs with strong exposure to the African Union (AU), RECs and Member States. She is an effective and dynamic policy strategist and program implementer with exceptional expertise in advocacy and Pan-African/regional network building. She has designed and implemented multi-year programmes and capacity-building strategies and managed diverse teams from multi-disciplinary backgrounds. She's currently serving as the Programme Director for the Horn Center for Democracy, having previously served as the Life & Peace Institute- Programme Manager for the Horn of Africa Regional Programme and the Head of Office in Addis Ababa as well as the Resident Representative of the Norwegian Refugee Council to the African Union. She has amassed vast knowledge in the regional policy formulation processes and contributed substantially in analyzing trends and presenting on matters with significant political and security dimensions. She is an ardent believer in the timely and effective implementation of global and regional rights-based instruments to bring about lasting change in the lives of African citizens.



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