

CONCEPT NOTE

**Round-Table:**

**President Ruto's State Visit to the United States and its Implications for Kenya**

**HIGHLIGHTING THE STRATEGIC ISSUES**

**Date:** May 30, 2024: **Time:** 9:00 am – 12:00 pm: **Location:** UON



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI



The African Centre  
for the Study of the  
United States of America

**Background**

President William Ruto will be in the United States (US) on May 23<sup>rd</sup> 2024 on a state visit hosted by US President Joe Biden. The visit comes on the coat-tails of steadily warming relations between the two countries since William Ruto's election in 2022. He becomes the first African Head of State to be extended a state visit in 20 years. The visit underscores Kenya's pivotal position in the US – Africa foreign policy at the critical juncture of re-awakening Pan-Africanism championed by President Ruto himself, intensifying global geopolitics and US -Africa policy re-orientation.

Kenya and the US boast of 60 years of strong ties and strategic cooperation in trade, security, investment, development and capacity building, as well as political cooperation. As such, President Ruto's state visit is not just important as a key African partner or historic, it is rich with meaning, substance, expectations, visions and goals for both countries. Underneath the pomp and circumstance, is US view of Kenya as an African partner now and in the long-term, and vice versa.

The visit should thus be interpreted in terms of the symbolism; the timing; the issues; the interests; the dynamics; the opportunities; and the implications for Kenya's diplomacy. It is also critical to decipher the visit with reference to Presidents Daniel Moi and Mwai Kibaki's state visits to the US, and leverage on the lessons thereof.

The HORN International Institute for Strategic Studies, in partnership with the Africa Center for the Study of the United States (ACSUS) based at the University of Nairobi's Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies (IDIS) and selected media will convene a roundtable on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2024 to analyze and project the visit by President William Ruto.

**Round-Table Objectives:**

The round-table aims at analyzing the strategic implications of President Ruto's state visit to the US, reflecting on the dynamics thereof and positioning the US-Kenya relations in the US-Africa

policy.

More specifically, the roundtable aims to;

- A. Critically analyze the historical, diplomatic and strategic importance of President William Ruto's state visit to the US
- B. Identify the opportunities for Kenya as an anchor state in Eastern Africa, in the intensifying partnership with the US in the areas of regional stability, peace and security, capacity building, digital technologies, trade and investment.
- C. Analyze Kenya's balancing strategy between the West and the East in the era of renewed global geopolitical competition and rivalry.

### **Discussion Sessions (1 hour each):**

**Session One: Diplomacy:** Analyzing the historical context, diplomatic symbolism and Kenya's diplomacy leading to the state visit.

**Session Two: (Geo)politics:** Analyzing the political factors underlying the state visit, locally and internationally.

**Session Three: Bilateral Implications:** Assessing the potential impact of President Ruto's state visit on shared interests in regional security, trade, investment and development cooperation.

### **Participants**

The roundtable will feature a total of 40 participants with six distinguished experts and practitioners in history, foreign policy, diplomacy, security, geopolitics and strategy as discussants.