

# Proposed future events for GISF members and associates

## Concept Note

### Summary

- GISF is proposing to pilot a global event, known as the NGO Safety & Security Conference. This will consolidate the existing North America and Europe Spring Forums into one larger global event with wider sector participation.
- GISF will continue to maintain its existing member-only Autumn Forums in both North America and Europe.
- GISF will pilot an additional regional event, known as the GISF Regional Exchange. This will rotate through regional hubs to widen participation of regional security staff and connect global discussions with country-level security forums and networks.
- GISF is consulting members on this future events concept through a [survey](#). We are seeking feedback on the focus, format, target audiences, and possible content of each event.

### Background

The bi-annual Member and Associate Forums are GISF's flagship coordination, networking, and knowledge sharing events, where members meet in person and/or virtually for two days. The agenda typically includes a closed-door case study session, where members and associates share lessons from a recent critical security incident; thought-provoking group discussions on key challenges within security risk management (SRM); and presentations of GISF's ongoing operational research and technical publications. Forum sessions draw together a diverse panel of SRM practitioners, academics, and government and private sector representatives.

GISF holds four Forums each year. These comprise two Spring and two Autumn events in both Europe and North America. In recent years, GISF has attempted to bring both European and North American members together by running Forums as global 'hybrid' events. However, in response to member feedback, these events have shifted back to in-person only events.

### Why change?

GISF fully appreciates that these Forums remain one of the key attractions of membership, providing a unique and regular opportunity for SRM professionals to come together, socialise and network. The Forums also create a trusted space for members to share information and discuss the various challenges they face within their respective organisations. This openness and transparency is epitomised by the member-only case study sessions, which routinely receive the most positive feedback. While these elements should be prized and maintained, there are other factors that support an update to the current Forum structure and format.

#### ▪ *For members:*

- ⇒ The twice-a-year Forum format has not changed for many years and is at risk of becoming tired.
- ⇒ Some members do not have the budget to travel to both Forums in a year. Deciding on which to attend is difficult given the similarity between events and that planned dates and locations are not publicised until after the previous event.
- ⇒ With little differentiation between the 'Spring' and 'Autumn' Forums in terms of structure and content, this can cause attendees to be more ambivalent about attendance.
- ⇒ The current structure reinforces power imbalances in the international aid and development sector, focusing attention on INGO HQs in Western Europe and North America. It misses an opportunity for cross-pollination of ideas and greater engagement with security networks and professionals based in the global South, which could be improved with more regional-based events.

- ⇒ While online-only and hybrid Forums enabled the continuation of Forums throughout the Covid years and provided greater access for regional security staff, on the whole members do not like the hybrid format as they feel it stifles interaction and discussion. Members overwhelmingly want to see a return to in-person only events. Several have also pointed out that they find it difficult to get sign-off for travel to Forums if hybrid is presented as an option.
- **For the GISF Secretariat:**
  - ⇒ A lack of differentiation in structure and focus between the Forums makes delivering four per year difficult, especially in terms of coming up with engaging content within a constrained format.
  - ⇒ There is an uneconomic use of GISF's resources in delivering parallel Forums, in both North America and Europe twice a year, and the return on this investment could be improved.
  - ⇒ Hybrid Forums require significant additional planning and staffing to maintain the production hub.
  - ⇒ To date, planning for Forums does not start until the previous ones have ended. Some efforts have already been made to be more methodical in the selection of venues, ensuring deconfliction with other events that may affect travel prices and availability. A 12-month planning cycle, with venues and flights booked well in advance, would benefit GISF and its members.
- **For GISF's governance and strategy:**
  - ⇒ As an independent legal entity, GISF is required to hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM). This will be the principal opportunity for members to engage with the Board of Directors and discuss GISF performance and future plans.
  - ⇒ Given GISF's financial reporting calendar and statutory requirements, the AGM should be held in the Spring. It is important that the AGM has participation from GISF's full membership. Therefore it should coincide with events that bring the largest gathering of members together. There is rightly an expectation that the AGM will not exclusively be held in Europe.
  - ⇒ Bringing the Europe and North America members together provides an opportunity to further enhance coordination, collaboration, and networking.
  - ⇒ GISF's evaluations have shown that there is an opportunity to widen engagement, increase impact, and contribute to localisation goals, by broadening participation in our events. Many senior security staff and regional security managers are based outside of Europe and North America.
  - ⇒ Expansion of membership beyond INGOs based in Europe and North America is made difficult by the Forums being solely delivered there.
  - ⇒ The Forums not only provide an opportunity to advance mainstreaming of security within NGOs. They also enable GISF's network to advocate and influence the policy agenda with audiences on the periphery of NGO SRM (UN, donors, analysis, access, civ-mil, etc) offering members access to wider professional and operational circles.

## Proposal

GISF is proposing to run three distinct events.

- An annual **NGO Safety & Security Conference** will bring together GISF's North America and European members, together with representatives from other relevant organisations and academia to discuss strategic and cross-cutting security issues and strengthen collaboration.
- GISF's existing member and associate-only **Autumn Forums** in North America and Europe will be maintained. However, these will only be delivered once a year and will have greater focus on operational SRM and sharing experiences and practical solutions.
- **GISF Regional Exchanges** will help to widen participation of regional security staff and connect global discussions with country-level security forums and networks.

Further details on the three types of events are outlined in the following table.

	<b>NGO Safety &amp; Security Conference</b>	<b>GISF Member &amp; Associate Forums</b>	<b>GISF Regional Exchange</b>
<b>Aim &amp; Focus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wider sector engagement, advocacy and collaboration</li> <li>Focus: strategic SRM; leadership and personal development in SRM; global trends and challenges in aid worker security; security mainstreaming within organisations; cross-sector collaboration and coordination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Networking and knowledge sharing</li> <li>Member and associate-only event. Emphasis is on preserving and growing trusted space</li> <li>Focus: operational SRM; innovation, tools and processes; implementation challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional engagement and support</li> <li>Focus: regional/country level SRM, contextual analysis, networking and information exchange</li> </ul>
<b>Timing &amp; Location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Held in February/March each year</li> <li>Pilot will be Dublin in 2025, North America in 2026</li> <li>Future locations and rotation to be determined</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Held in September each year. Next Forums are Edinburgh and Washington D.C. 2024</li> <li>Europe Forum rotates through key European cities, depending on hosts and availability of support</li> <li>North America Forum held primarily in Washington D.C., but options to hold Forums in other locations, depending on interest and possible hosts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timing will vary depending on location, other events, and GISF capacity</li> <li>Meetings will rotate through regional hubs (Nairobi, Amman, Panama, Bangkok, etc.)</li> <li>Regional meetings could be linked with other GISF workshops/trainings</li> <li>Pilot planned for Nairobi in 2025</li> </ul>
<b>Principle Attendees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>INGO/HQ security leads (members) – two spaces per member</li> <li>GISF associates – one space per associate</li> <li>UN and donor representatives</li> <li>Roles and organisations relevant to cross-functional integration of security (analysis, access, civ-mil, legal, HR, etc.)</li> <li>Affiliates, Business Partners and event sponsors will be invited to specific sessions and social events</li> <li>Options to expand attendance and encourage specific target groups, for example early-career SRM staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>INGO/HQ security leads and teams (members)</li> <li>INGO Regional Security Managers (regional members)</li> <li>GISF associates</li> <li>More spaces available for members and associates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>INGO regional Security Managers (regional members)</li> <li>Global/HQ security leads (members) invited</li> <li>Members of relevant regional security networks and forums</li> <li>Chairs/Leads from country NGO security networks and forums</li> <li>Invited national NGO SFPs. GISF will look to fund a limited number of national NGO SFPs from the region to attend, and will seek further funding to create more opportunities</li> <li>Possibly open to access and analysis staff in the region</li> </ul>
<b>Sessions &amp; Events</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keynote sessions with leading speakers</li> <li>Specific event themes with linked sessions</li> <li>Mix of panel discussions/presentations, parallel sessions, breakout groups, lightning talks/world café sessions</li> <li>Side area for exhibitor stalls/demonstrations</li> <li>Evening networking event</li> <li>GISF AGM (hybrid) and subgroup meetings</li> <li>Side meetings for specific groups (donors, rights-based organisations, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Member case studies</li> <li>Member showcase sessions (demonstrations of SRM systems and tools)</li> <li>Mix of panel discussions/presentations, small group discussions and member exchanges</li> <li>Mix of external speakers and members – all sessions chaired by members</li> <li>Informal group meal and drinks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional case studies</li> <li>Detailed context analysis sessions</li> <li>Session topics adapted to specific regions</li> <li>Mix of presentations and workshops</li> <li>Speakers identified from within the region</li> <li>Informal group meal and drinks</li> <li>Delivery of GISF workshops/trainings</li> </ul>
<b>Format</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three-day event including separate AGM</li> <li>Live streaming of specific sessions</li> <li>Event sponsorship to assist with costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two-day in-person only event</li> <li>Hosting support provided by member, where available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One- or two-day in-person only event</li> <li>Co-hosted with an INGO regional security forum/network</li> </ul>

## Other Events

In addition to the three proposed events, GISF will continue to run other events for members.

<b>GISF Events</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Capacity Building Workshops / Trainings</b>	Workshops and training sessions based on findings and recommendations of research products play a crucial role in bridging the gap between research and practical implementation. These events are important in ensuring the knowledge generated through research reaches a wider audience and has a tangible impact on SRM practices. GISF will continue to organise in-person workshops and trainings in Europe and North America and key regional hubs for security staff.
<b>Research Launches</b>	These events present the findings of GISF's most recent research to members and other stakeholders including academic institutions and donors.
<b>Webinars</b>	These are regular interactive events where a key speaker or a panel of experts present on a specific topic of interest to members and wider SRM audiences.
<b>Roundtables</b>	Semi-structured events for members to discuss specific contexts or topics.
<b>Crisis Roundtables</b>	Crisis Roundtables are time-sensitive coordination meetings organised during the first days and weeks of an acute crisis that requires coordination and information exchange between HQ-based security teams.
<b>Networking Events</b>	Social and networking opportunities for members to meet and engage with each other.

## Feedback

We are currently consulting members on these proposed changes to GISF's events for members and associates. Therefore, we would really value your thoughts and suggestions on the proposal and especially your views on the focus, format, target audience, and possible content for the different events. Please take time to complete the following [survey](#).