

**Concept Note**  
**Africa and the transformation of the Multilateral System - Side Event at UNGA 78**  
**26 September 2023**  
**New York, USA**

**Overview:** The world is facing a number of challenges, including war, poverty, climate change, and inequality. The United Nations (UN) Secretary-General has warned that the world is approaching a point of instability. This is due to a number of factors, including impunity for mass killings, jihadist insurgencies, meddling outside powers, and a deadlocked UN Security Council. The multilateral system, which is supposed to help us solve these problems, is not working as effectively it should. Therefore, it is necessary that Member States examine ways to reform the system to work for all. Multilateralism has been under sustained assault from threats of violence, populist nationalism and protectionism, and the failure of the international system to uphold the minimum levels of collective action in the face of unprecedented global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis.

The High-Level Process on Africa and the reform of the multilateral system in the changing global order is an initiative of the Government of the Republic of Namibia and Amani Africa, with the aim of bringing together experts from different fields to examine the challenges facing multilateralism and articulate robust proposals reflecting Africa's position for a more representative and fairer multilateral system that also caters for the interests of the peoples of the continent.

On peace and security issues specifically, the UN Secretary General's *new agenda for peace* is a comprehensive vision for multilateral efforts for peace and security, based on international law, for a world in transition. The Secretary-General has called on Member States to work together to implement this agenda, which he believes is essential to building a more peaceful and sustainable world for all. For the African Group the centrality of the growing number of peace and security issues on the agenda of the Security Council, makes a strong case for Africa to safeguard its interests in relation to predictable, adequate and sustainable financing to support peace operations in Africa. It is a critical that in advocating for UN system wide reform, prominence is given to the reform of the UN Security Council. One of the major setbacks in the credibility of multilateralism emanates from the inequitable representation of states, most importantly Africa. To be able to discharge its obligation to protect global peace and security, the UN Security Council needs to earn the goodwill of the people of the world, which is hinged significantly on reform. The present make-up of the Council, and its lack of inclusive legitimacy is hobbling its ability to command the respect and regard it requires to fulfil its mandate. There is a need for a strategic review and reform of the UN Security Council in view of making it more representative to enhance its legitimacy, credibility, and acceptability.

Also of importance for Africa, as the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of Namibia pointed out in her keynote address in Windhoek during the convening of the high-level process, are the reform of the multilateral financial, economic and

trade architectures. The UN and its programmes, especially in the areas of culture, social issues and values should be neutral in approach and content and avoid the temptation of instrumentalization that may be used to impose values. In a situation where states are grappling with fast changing technologies and globalized public square to preserve their unique cultures and identity marks, the UN should play an affirmative role.

**Objective:** This engagement is a continuation of a series of events of a High-level Panel, conceptualized on the margins of the African Union (AU) Summit in February 2023, launched in Windhoek, Namibia on 17 and 18 July 2023, and its consultations here at the UN General Assembly. The High-Level Panel, composed of experts from a variety of fields, including academia, government, diplomacy, and civil society, aims to develop recommendations on how to address various challenges to multilateralism and promote a strengthened system. The event will present an opportunity to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing the UN multilateral system in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and to propose specific reforms to improve the effectiveness and legitimacy of the UN, particularly around the areas of the composition and structure of the UN Security Council, the role of the UN General Assembly and other UN organs, and the international financial system. The African Group is uniquely positioned to play a strategic role in the context of the Summit of the Future in 2024 and the Panel hopes to galvanize an African voice, which has long been missing and ignored in the wider international discussions.

**Format:** The Amabssadorial level meeting will be held at on Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023 from 11:00 AM to 01:00 PM at the AU Permanent Mission to the UN. The meeting will be open to African Union Member States (1+1), and interpretation will be provided in English and French. Hon. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of Namibia will deliver her keynote address. The full agenda of the event is provided below with full details.

**Guiding Questions:** Here are some guiding questions for a discussion on how to further the reform of the multilateral system and the new agenda:

- What are Africa's main asks from the proposed reform or transformation of multilateralism?
- What kind of transformation of the multilateral system would ensure that Africa's interests for achieving the development aspirations of the peoples of the continent should be articulated particularly vis-à-vis the transformation of the financial, economic and trade architectures of the multilateral system?
- How can we coalesce a strong and present African voice within the context of ongoing discussions at the UN?
- What are the opportunities to formulate a Common African Position on the reform of the multilateral system, specifically in the face of new and emerging global developments? How best can the Africa Group become the catalyst for seizing the opportunity of the ongoing momentum on system-wide reform to advance its cause for a rectification of the historical injustice done to the African continent, within the context of the reform of the UN Security Council?



- What else apart from securing permanent and veto holding membership in the UNSC would facilitate Africa's meaningful role and agency in the maintenance of international peace and security, including in Africa?