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“Towards a Multilateral African Foreign Policy? Africa’s evolving role in global governance and its implications at the UN and the AU”

**High-Level Panel Discussion organized by
Namibia, Embassy of Switzerland in Addis Ababa and Amani Africa**

Concept Note

1. Rationale

The trend towards a stronger and more unified voice of Africa on global governance and related aspects of the multilateral system in an evolving global order has been noticeable in the past several years. At the political level, this translates into the emergence of Common African Positions and increased visibility of Africa and the AU on the reform of the UN Security Council and the global IFI architecture, vaccines, trade, food security, or the future of peacekeeping on the continent, including the question of UN assessed contributions for AU peace operations. These political developments have been accompanied by structural and institutional developments at the AU and may ultimately lead to the emergence of a multilateral African Foreign Policy.

The most recent forum for which such unified policy positions will need to be developed is the G20, to which the AU was admitted in September 2023. This historic achievement for the AU entails significant challenges in terms of institutional decision-making and procedures, capacities, and smooth negotiating arrangement for developing common or consensus positions on the full spectrum of issues covered by the G20. It also holds the promise of fostering more consistent external agency of the AU on issues relating to, but also those going beyond the African continent.

Another forum where increasingly African policy positions are being developed is the UN and in particular the UN Security Council. The outbreak of armed conflict in the Sudan coupled with violence in others parts of the continent and an expected departure of UN peacekeeping troops in Mali and the DR Congo, exacerbates the quest for workable solutions in the interplay between the AU and the UN. African members of the UN Security Council (the A3) alongside supportive other elected members of the UNSC, play a significant role in shaping the collaboration and discourse on policy and operational matters relating to both the UN and the AU. The relations between the UN and the AU are increasingly framed by and perceived through the prism of global governance challenges and the enhanced African voice, including through the increasingly collective voice of the African 3 members of the UNSC.

In the context of the wider global policy discourse on the reform of the multilateral system, Namibia and Amani Africa have initiated a high-level process on Africa and the reform of the multilateral system with a view to assemble the views of African experts and practitioners for informing the formation of a common African position with respect to various areas of the reform. Switzerland, as a first-time member of the UN Security Council, has a track-record in supporting exchanges between the A3 and the AUPSC and has included African voices on global policy issues during its UNSC presidency in May 2023. More globally, while not a G20 member, Switzerland shares with many African nations the need for a global order based on the UN Charter and international law, enabling effective multilateralism as a peaceful mechanism to deal with diverging views and to promote peace, security and sustainable development.

2. Objective

The high-level panel will discuss and analyse the progress and obstacles on the way towards a common multilateral African Foreign Policy beyond those global issues that are of direct concern for other parts of the world but remain of interest to Africa as member of the global community, with concrete examples of the G20 accession of the AU as well as the UNSC - PSC relationship. The event therefore also sheds light on the documentation and institutionalization of the relations between the A3 and the AU PSC as possible sources in forming global African policy, examines thematic and geographic linkages and explores possible courses of action for the future, including for other Elected Members supportive of this cause.

3. Participants and Format

The event, jointly organized by Namibia, Switzerland and Amani Africa, with the participation of the Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of Geneva, will allow for contributions and analysis from a current and/or former Permanent Representative from an A3 Member State and a Permanent Representative from a current PSC Member State, combined with an academic perspective from Addis and Geneva through Amani Africa and the University of Geneva respectively.

Draft Agenda

14:30 – 14:40: Arrival and Registration

Moderator: Tsion Hagos, Senior Researcher, Amani Africa

14:40 – 14:45: **Opening Remarks** by H.E. Ambassador Pietro Mona, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the African Union, IGAD, UNECA and Djibouti

14:45 – 14:50: **Welcoming Remarks** by Mr. Rodney Sikopo, Deputy Permanent Representative of Namibia to the AU and UNECA

14:50 – 15:20: **Insights** from the role of the A3 on African multilateral foreign policy by Dr. Tekeda Alemu, Former State Minister of Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the UN Security Council

15:20 – 15:50: **Reflections** on current developments and recent trends in Africa's role in global governance and implications for multilateral foreign policy by Dr. Ueli Staeger, Research and Teaching Fellow in International Relations and Security at the University of Geneva

15:50 – 16:20: **Discussion** with inputs from Prof. Tim Murithi, Head of Peacebuilding Interventions, Institute for Justice and Reconciliation

16:20 – 16:30: **Closing Remarks** by Dr. Solomon Dersso, Founding Director of Amani Africa