

## Concept Note

### **Confronting Instability, Rebuilding Agency: The 39<sup>th</sup> AU Summit and insights from AU's efforts in 2025**

**6 March 2026**

#### **Background and Rationale**

As the 39<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly in February 2026 came to a close against the background of deepening insecurity and weakening African agency for advancing peace on the continent, questions abound on whether the summit served as opportunity for recalibrating the role of the AU and advancing policies that match the gravity and urgency of the crises facing the continent, aggravated by rising global geopolitical tension and fragmentation directly affecting the continent. While the Summit addressed a wide range of continental priorities, this policy dialogue focuses particularly on decisions and commitments with direct implications for Africa's peace, security and governance architecture.

Outcomes of the summit included Member States' pledged for an extraordinary summit on peace and security to be held in Luanda, Angola, while reaffirming climate-security integration, and to uphold a zero-tolerance stance on unconstitutional changes of government, while reiterating the AU's commitment to 'silence the guns' across the continent. These priorities were accompanied by a renewed emphasis on institutional reforms for continental stability, endorsing PSC enhancements, APSA revitalization, and advancing greater coherence between the African Governance Architecture and APSA, particularly through efforts to improve early warning and early response capacities. Alongside these institutional measures, leaders underscored the imperative of ensuring sustainable and predictable financing for peace efforts, including through the operationalization and expansion of the AU Peace Fund and renewed calls for support to AU-led peace support operations in contexts such as Sudan, Somalia, and the Sahel. Beyond the immediate peace and security domain and in addition to enhancing AU's institutional setup for a more effective participation in the G20, discussions emphasized repositioning Africa's place in the world through the elaboration of a common foreign policy and a unified African position in a multipolar world order.

While some of the decisions offer important entry points for reasserting AU's agency, it remains doubtful that they are adequate and targeted enough to inject the required speed and strategic positioning for influencing the direction of conflicts and the geopolitical factors in the major hotspots such as Sudan, Sahel, South Sudan and DRC. Drawing on Amani Africa's annual signature publication, [2025 Review of the AU Peace and Security Council](#), this policy dialogue on the outcome of the 39<sup>th</sup> AU summit will examine how to take forward the key policy decisions of the summit for making a difference on the ground.

As Amani Africa's review established, Africa's peace and security landscape in 2025 marked a 'crystallization of the new era of instability and unraveling of multilateral orders, characterized by the relentless expansion of armed conflicts, deepening state fragility, and cascading humanitarian crises across multiple fronts. The *Review* documents this deterioration, spotlighting Sudan's

spiraling civil war, which displaced millions and triggered famine risks; the protracted violence in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), fueled by M23 advances and regional meddling; the Sahel's jihadist insurgencies and military coups eroding governance; and South Sudan's stalled political transition amid inter-communal clashes. These hotspots compounded inter-state tensions, such as Ethiopia-Sudan border disputes and Horn of Africa rivalries, while climate-induced shocks, droughts, floods, and resource scarcity, exacerbated vulnerabilities, intertwining environmental degradation with conflict dynamics in the Lake Chad Basin, Horn, and beyond.

The AU grappled with these multifaceted challenges amid institutional erosion and external pressures. The Review assesses its 2025 performance across regional theaters, noting limited mediation gains, stalled coordination efforts, and reactive responses to governance breakdowns and enduring deadlocks. Thematically, the PSC advanced climate-peace-security linkages through frameworks like the Addis Ababa Declaration, yet struggled with implementation amid chronic funding shortfalls for the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). Humanitarian access denials underscored enforcement gaps, while the lack of factoring in geopolitical rivalries and external influences in policy making and response to crisis increasingly undercut the AU agency.

Multilateralism itself frayed under these strains. The Review critiques the PSC's diluted authority, over-reliance on ad hoc coalitions, and failure to convene high-level retreats or field missions decisively. It warns of 'unraveling regional orders,' with Regional Economic Communities (RECs) undermined by internal mistrust. It called for a declaration of a continental state of emergency to rally emergency measures to contain the downward spiral of the security situation with a focus on priority conflict hotspots. Underscored the need for Pan-Africanism's renewal, and prioritization of peacemaking (by investing in the exercise of leadership in advancing political strategy for prevention and resolution and mobilizing consensus for collective action, principled courage and strategic communication and demonstration of responsibility), middle-power diplomacy and building AU enhanced trust by African actors to counter 'forum-shopping' by conflict actors seeking external patrons.

Against the foregoing and the planned extraordinary summit on peace and security in Angola, the policy-dialogue plans to examine what more can be done to restore the agency of the AU and reinforce the impact of these decisions, including by drawing on Amani Africa's 2025 Review. While dissecting Summit outcomes ensures accountability, it also helps to promote understanding on what was achieved and how implementation can be advanced.

## **Objective**

The main objective of the event is to provide a platform for evidence-based policy dialogue on the implications of the 39th AU Summit outcomes for the future of continental governance and Africa's evolving peace and security landscape.

Specifically, the event aims to:

- Provide a platform for reflection on the major decisions and priorities emerging from the 39th AU Summit.
- Analyze the evolving peace and security trends shaping Africa's strategic environment.

- Examine the implications of AU institutional reform efforts for strengthening the effectiveness of continental governance.
- Advance strategies for ensuring the success of the extraordinary summit on peace and security planned to be held in Luanda, Angola

## **Key Themes and Guiding Questions**

The policy dialogue will focus on the following key thematic areas:

### **1. Africa's Changing Peace and Security Landscape**

- What are the key trends defining Africa's current peace and security environment and how and why?

### **2. Performance and Effectiveness of the AU and its Peace and Security Architecture, as well as Africa's role in the global order**

- What insights emerge from the review of AU's engagement in 2025 regarding the implementation of the objectives set out in the PSC Protocol?
- What additional measures should be taken for changing the direction of both the security situation and Africa's agency in advancing peace and security on the continent?
- What opportunities will the AU institutional reform process avail for repositioning the APSA and strengthening coordination, accountability, and implementation capacity?
- How can the AU enhance Africa's agency in global governance processes?
- What strategic frameworks and partnerships are necessary to address emerging global challenges?
- What does the Summit's reaffirmation of zero tolerance for unconstitutional changes of government and commitment to Silencing the Guns imply for strengthening the AU's preventive diplomacy, enforcement credibility, and response mechanisms going forward?

### **3. Extraordinary summit, Institutional Reform and AU Effectiveness**

- What are the implications of the 39th AU Summit's commitments, including the plan for the extraordinary summit in Luanda, Angola?
- How can ongoing reform efforts strengthen coherence between continental governance and peace frameworks, particularly through harmonization of APSA and AGA, and more effective early warning and early response mechanisms?
- How does the 2025 Review contribute towards informing the crafting of a successful extraordinary summit that is not just declaratory?
- How can recent proposals, such as articulating a common African foreign policy and advancing unified continental positions, enhance Africa's collective agency in global governance and multilateral engagement?

## **Agenda**

**9:30 – 10:00 am:** Registration and Tea/Coffee

**10:00 – 10:15 am:** Opening Segment

- Welcoming Remarks by Ms. Susanne Stollreiter, Resident Representative, Fredrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Ethiopia
- Opening Remarks by Dr. Solomon Dersso, Founding Executive Director, Amani Africa Media and Research Services

**10:15 – 11:45 am: Panel Discussion — Africa’s Peace and Security Agenda: The outcomes of the 39th AU Summit, Challenges and Reforms**

The panel discussion will examine the evolving peace and security dynamics shaping Africa’s strategic environment in light of the outcomes of the 39th AU Summit. Drawing on insights from Amani Africa’s 2025 Review, the discussion will explore the drivers of the current deterioration in security conditions, including the expansion of armed conflicts, deepening fragility, and geopolitical rivalries. The session will also reflect on whether the Summit’s decisions are adequate to address the urgency and complexity of today’s crises.

Furthermore, the session will focus on the effectiveness of AU’s peace and security architecture and the implications of ongoing institutional reform processes for strengthening continental governance. It will explore pathways for revitalizing APSA, improving coordination with the African Governance Architecture, and ensuring sustainable financing. The discussion will also assess priorities and expectations for the planned Extraordinary Summit on Peace and Security in Luanda and consider how reforms and strategic positioning can enhance Africa’s agency in global governance.

**Host / Moderator:** Rubiyat Mohammed, Peace, Security and Governance Programme Manager, Fredrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Ethiopia

**Panelists:**

- H.E. Ambassador Liberata Mulamula, African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security
- Mr. Biniam Berhe, Chargé d’Affaires, Embassy of Eritrea
- Ambassador Frederic Gateretse-Ngoga, Focal point for Partnerships, AUBP and Regional Security Mechanism of the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department
- Desire Assogbavi, Advocacy Advisor for Africa, Open Society Foundations
- Dr. Solomon Dersso, Founding Executive Director, Amani Africa Media and Research Services

**11:45 – 12:30 pm: Audience Q&A**

- Interactive session for participants to engage with panelists and ask questions related to Africa’s peace and security challenges, priorities and institutional reforms.

**12:30 – 12:45 pm: Closing Segment**

- Closing Remarks - Ms. Susanne Stollreiter, Resident Representative, FES Ethiopia