

UNGA 80 Side Event Briefing- From Ezulwini to an Equitable World Order: Power, Peace, Prosperity and Reparations

I. Background:

In March 2005, then UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, urged Member States to adopt a set of concrete proposals to tackle global problems and enable the UN to better respond to challenges the world faced at the time. This appeal was in a document titled: In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all. In the paper, Mr. Annan emphasized that: 'No reform of the UN would be complete, without Security Council reform. The council's present makeup reflects the world of 1945, not that of the twenty-first century. It must be reformed to include states that contribute most to the organization, financially, militarily, and diplomatically, and to represent broadly the current membership of the UN.'

To that end two models were proposed for expanding the council from 15 to 24, with one option creating six new permanent seats and three new non-permanent ones; and the other creating nine new non-permanent seats. Neither model expanded the veto power held by the five permanent members (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States). The bold statement for fundamental reforms of the international body was immediately followed by "The Ezulwini Consensus", an African common position on UN Security Council reform. Based on an Assembly Decision adopted in Addis Ababa two decades ago in 2005, it calls for Africa to have "not less than two permanent seats" and five non-permanent seats on the Security Council as follows:

'enlarge the Security Council in both the permanent and non-permanent categories and improve on its working methods; accord the new permanent members the same prerogatives and privileges as the current permanent members, including the right of veto; grant Africa two permanent and five non-permanent seats in the Security Council and increase its membership from fifteen to twenty-six with the eleven (11) additional seats distributed as follows: Permanent Members Two from Africa, Two from Asia, One from Latin American and Caribbean States, One from Western European & Other.'

No AU member state has a permanent seat. But Africa has three non-permanent seats, known as the A3. The common position further states that while Africa is opposed in principle to the veto, "so long as it exists, and as a matter of common justice, it should be made available to all permanent members of the Security Council". This was further reaffirmed in the Sirte Declaration. Africa, as a block, has 54 contributing member states, or just over a quarter of the UN's total membership, and features in 70% of the Council's agenda.

In 2023, the AU's Committee of Ten (C-10), which advocates for the Ezulwini Consensus—Algeria, Equatorial Guinea, the Republic of Congo, Kenya, Libya, Namibia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Uganda, and Zambia held a summit meeting in Oyala, Equatorial Guinea. They "reaffirmed that the Common African position, as espoused in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration. They stated that these processes and pronouncements were the only viable option for Africa to successfully achieve its objectives of UN security council reforms. They also went further to buttress the point of reforms as addressing the "historical injustice" of African underrepresentation'.

On the margins of the UNGA 79 in 2024, the Report of the Joint Namibia-Amani Africa High-Level Panel of Experts on Africa and the Reform of the Multilateral System, presented the areas for reform of the collective peace and security system anchored on the UN Charter. The issue of the penholder system has also been met with soft resistance. The arrogation of custody of leadership in crafting the agenda and shaping debate in conflict countries in Africa, to non-African countries mainly the P3, France, UK and US, remains a cause of concern. The

Joint Namibia-Amani Africa High-Level Panel of Experts Report noted that: ‘the P3 – France, the UK, and the US – currently act as penholders of 14 of the 15 African situations, which perpetuates a system of paternalism by Western countries towards Africa and replicates the power relations that existed during colonialism and the Cold War.’

The 2025 BRICS Summit in Rio de Janeiro featured, for the first time, three finance-related declarations, in addition to a statement on climate finance. One declaration focused on the demand for a reform of International Monetary Fund (IMF) quotas, including a call to revise the “gentlemen’s agreement” on representation at the IMF and the World Bank (which involves appointing a European and an American to lead each institution). The general declaration by finance ministers and central bank governors reinforced the importance of multilateral trade negotiations and introduced a new feature: the creation of a multilateral guaranteed mechanism, to be incubated within the New Development Bank (NDB).

The year 2025 also marks a globally historical period. The Second CARICOM-Africa took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It aimed to strengthen the partnership between the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the African Union, with a focus on inter-regional trade and investment, South-South cooperation, and operationalizing a Memorandum of Understanding.

The UN celebrates its 80th anniversary, Africa marks the 20th anniversary of the Ezulwini Consensus, and the African Union’s designated Year of Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations. These convergent milestones present an unprecedented opportunity to address the most glaring democratic deficit in global governance: Africa’s exclusion from permanent Security Council membership, and the intertwined historical injustices of the past. These must be repaired for a more equitable future. Beyond its rightful demands for equitable representation, the Ezulwini Consensus also offers a strategic foundation for Africa to redesign the very architecture of global governance. Africa’s vibrant youth, collective economic leverage, and diasporic power—driven by remittances, sovereign wealth funds, strategic mineral reserves, and expanding intra-African trade through the AfCFTA—already position the continent as a decisive geopolitical actor. Grounding Ezulwini in this reality shifts Africa’s stance from reform petitioner to co-architect of a new, reparative, and sustainable global order.

By linking Security Council reform to self-determination and reinvention of systems, Africa can move beyond inclusion in existing systems toward the creation of systems that reflect African priorities, agency, and leadership.

Amani Africa produced a report that articulates these very necessities and concluded that: *‘Reparative justice entails and conceives of a more egalitarian system of global order with international mechanisms of distribution that would offset the structural inequalities of trade. A transformed global security architecture that ends the exclusion of those affected by these historical injustices from seating at the decision-making table with full rights.’*

II. Overview to unlocking the conversation

A Presidential roundtable, which builds directly on the political foundation of the Ezulwini Consensus, which articulated Africa’s demand for permanent representation on the UN Security Council, remains diplomatically respected but institutionally ignored. In the face of escalating calls for reparations, climate justice, and multilateral reform, the roundtable asks pertinent questions.

- Can the Ezulwini Consensus be repositioned — not only as a locator of global power-sharing, but as a political manifesto for African sovereignty and reparative justice?

- How can reparations be presented as a core infrastructure for global peace and future-making — not just historical redress, but as a proactive investment in future global stability and system redesign?
- How can Africa's exclusion from global decision-making bodies not as a bureaucratic failure, but as a form of structural violence requiring systemic correction, be repositioned and genuinely addressed?
- How can AU member states, through a robust transcontinental partnership framework with CARICOM, Latin American States, and the African diaspora build the needed solidarity and momentum, enhance Global South cooperation and reshape the debate on multilateralism and reparative justice?
- How can transform Africa's its leverage — in trade, finance, and resources — into negotiating power that shapes new governance norms rather than adapting to existing ones?

III. Objectives

- To resuscitate the conversation around UN Reforms through the lens of reparative justice and equity.
- To facilitate the articulation of strategic guidance on repositioning the Ezulwini Consensus building on the AU theme of the year
- To embed the Ezulwini Consensus within a broader strategy of repair and redesign of global governance systems, ensuring Africa is not only represented but holds co-architectural power in reshaping global norms.

Date: Sunday 21 September 2025

Time: 09H00-11H00

**Location: Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union to the United Nations,
Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza,**

Address: 305 E 47th St, New York, NY 10017, United

Host: African Union & Africa Governance Institute

Agenda:

Time	Activity	Focal Point
08H30	Arrival and Registration	AU& AGI
09H00	Welcome Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dr Abdoulie Janneh, Executive Director of AGI - Binaifer Nowrojee, President Open Society Foundations - H.E. Mahmoud Youssouf, Chairperson of the African Union Commission - H.E. Andry Rajoelina, President of Madagascar 	Chairperson: Jeggan Grey-Johnson , Advocacy Advisor, OSF
09H45	Presentations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated Report of the Africa High-Level Panel on: Reforming the multilateral system • Strengthening the Voice of Africa at the UN Security Council: Understanding and Supporting the Role of the A3 and A3+ 	Facilitator: Shamala Kandiah , Security Council Report Dr Solomon Dersso , Exec. Dir Amani Africa Amb. Dawit Yirga , Security Council Report
10H00	Respondents	Heads of State and Representatives of Governments
10H30	Interventions from the floor	ALL
11H00	Closing Statements	Amb. Bankole Adeoye , Commissioner African Union Political Affairs, Peace and Security Commission Brian Kagoro , Managing Director & Africa Geo Lead, OSF