

ECOSOCC /CIVIL SOCIETY PRE-SUMMIT SYMPOSIUM ON THE 2025 AFRICAN UNION THEME OF THE YEAR

“Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations”.

 **10th February, 2025**





 **Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

CONCEPT NOTE

Economic Social & Cultural Council

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The process of reparatory justice should extend beyond the historical wrongs of slavery and colonialism to encompass the ongoing systemic challenges that continue to affect the African continent and its diaspora. For instance, the adverse impacts of climate change disproportionately affect African nations, despite the continent's minimal contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions. The industrialized nations of the Global North are historically responsible for the emissions therefore they should take responsibility for the environmental degradation and climate related crisis that currently burdens Africa. In this context, reparations through climate financing and technology transfer to Africa are essential for mitigating the impacts of climate change across the continent. Thus, there is a need for developed countries to fulfil the commitments adopted at the COP28 including the replenishment of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the establishment of the loss and damage fund.

Additionally, reparatory justice should address the economic disparities between Africa and the Global North. The wealth accumulated by colonial powers through the extraction of Africa's natural resources has played a foundational role in their industrial and economic development. Today, these historical injustices constitute activities of multinational corporations in the extractive industries which continue to operate in ways that often disregard the rights of local communities and the environment. For instance, the Democratic Republic of Congo

1.0 BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

Reparatory justice for historical injustices against Africans and people of African descent remains one of the key cornerstones of the decolonization process initiated by the Organization of the African Unity (OAU) since 1963 and carried forward by the African Union (AU). The legacies of colonialism, trans-Atlantic slavery, apartheid, and systemic racial discrimination have left deep socio-economic, cultural, and psychological scars across the African continent and its diaspora. These injustices continue to shape global inequalities and underdevelopment in Africa. Hence, addressing these multifaceted harms through reparations is crucial for achieving justice, fostering global equity and promoting sustainable development across the continent.

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(DRC) remains a disheartening case of how the extraction of valuable minerals such as cobalt and coltan fuels global supply chains whilst leaving behind a legacy of environmental degradation, labour exploitation and conflict.

Reparations, therefore, should be approached holistically, encompassing financial restitution, cultural restitution, and systemic redress, environmental accountability and any other forms crucial for addressing the historical wrongs and fostering equitable global development. By addressing both historical injustices and their contemporary manifestations, reparations can serve a pathway to healing, justice, and equitable global development..

2.0 THE 2025 AU THEME OF THE YEAR

In this regard, the AU has made significant strides in advocating for justice, including efforts to secure reparations and the restitution of looted cultural artifacts to African nations. Notably, the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union held on 17-18 February 2023 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia adopted the theme for 2025 as the year of “Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations.” This declaration underscores the need to address the enduring effects of colonization, trans-Atlantic slavery, and systemic discrimination, recognizing their continued impact on global inequality and underdevelopment in Africa. The reparations agenda is not only about righting past wrongs but also about transforming the present and building a just future. It serves as a call for Africans and the global African diaspora to unite in their pursuit of justice, equity, and redress. Moreover, the scope of this agenda goes beyond historical injustices and extends into contemporary issues such as systemic racial discrimination, exclusion from global decision-making, and the economic marginalization of African nations.

While, the adoption of the 2025 TOTY is a commendable milestone and opportunity for the AU to take leadership on the African reparations agenda, as well as to bring together the African citizenry and the African diaspora to build a common and united front for the cause of justice and payment of reparations to Africans and people of African Descent, there remains a misunderstanding and lack of clarity on its implementation. Misunderstanding about the scope and objectives of the theme, coupled with limited institutional coordination may hinder effective and impactful implementation of activities. For the reparations agenda to gain traction, there is need for clear strategies, robust partnerships, and active involvement from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Regional Economic Communities (RECs), government representatives, and diaspora groups.

Recognizing these challenges, the African Union Economic Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) serving as the civil society advisory organ of the AU, with the mandate to popularise and create awareness of the policies and programmes of the African Union, in collaboration with Amani Africa, Trust Africa and the Ethiopian CSOs Council will host a symposium on 10 February 2025 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to popularize, demystify and discuss the AU’s adopted roadmap for the implementation of the 2025 AU theme. The symposium seeks to foster greater awareness, strengthen coordination amongst implementing institutions, and provide a platform for multi-stakeholder engagement.

3.0 OBJECTIVES :

- To present the concept note and roadmap for the Implementation of the 2025 AU Theme of the Year to participants
- To enhance understanding of the 2025 AU Theme of the Year's scope, objectives and implementation strategies to ensure alignment and clarity amongst stakeholders.
- To establish structured mechanisms for collaboration between AU organs, Member States, CSOs and the African diaspora and for grassroots action.
- To articulate how the restitution of Africa's cultural heritage is vital to reparative justice for Africans and the diaspora.
- To mobilize support from a wide range of stakeholders, including AU member-state officials, cultural institutions, civil society, and international development partners to support the restitution agenda.
- Co-Strategize: Discuss and develop strategies for implementing restitution policies in line with the Common African Position (CAP) on the Restitution of African Heritage.

4.0 EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

- ✓ Enhanced clarity and understanding of the 2025 AU Theme of the Year.
- ✓ Established pathways for sustained coordination between AU organs, Member States, and CSOs for effective implementation.
- ✓ Enhanced understanding of the role of civil society in supporting the implementation of the 2025 Theme of the Year.
- ✓ A strategy developed for implementing the Common African Position on restitution of African Heritage

5.0 PARTICIPATION

The symposium will gather up to 200 participants, including Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), AU officials, diplomatic missions, Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) members, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Cultural and Academic Leaders, directors from African museums, universities and strategic development partners.

6.0 5. DATE AND VENUE

The symposium will be held in person at the Ethiopian Skylight Hotel in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 10 February 2025 on the margins of the Summit of Heads of State and Government to be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Further arrangements will also be made for virtual participation to ensure broader participation from civil society and diaspora.

7.0 PARTNERS

7.1. Amani Africa Media and Research

Services: an independent pan-African policy research, training and consulting think tank with expertise in the African Union with specialization on the AU Peace and Security Council. It aims to advance evidence-based and policy-oriented knowledge on the AU and African regional bodies and current African policy issues, with a particular focus on the multilateral process on peace and security in Africa. Through its work, organized to cover areas on research and publication, technical support and advice, convening outreach activities and strategic communications, Amani Africa is driven by the mission of providing an authoritative source of information and analysis as well as technical support on multilateral policy process on Africa.

7.2. TrustAfrica: A Pan-African foundation dedicated to securing the conditions for democratic governance, equitable development, and African philanthropy. It works with partners across the continent to address key challenges such as peace and security, economic justice, and inclusive governance. Trust Africa supports civil society, academic institutions, and philanthropic organizations in advancing Africa's development agenda

7.3. Ethiopia Civil Society Organisations Council:

Serves as the leading representative body for over 4,000 civil society organizations, consortia, and associations in Ethiopia. Operating with full independence, the Council is tasked with the vital role of coordinating and advocating for the CSO sector. The Council acts as a significant catalyst in creating and sustaining an environment that supports the inclusive participation and operation of non-state actors

7.4. Reform Initiatives: Reform Initiatives (RI) is a multi-thematic organisation. It is an independent, non-partisan policy and advocacy institution. The organisation has a blend of experience and expertise that range from governments to intergovernmental and non-governmental engagements. It is an ethics-driven Pan-African institution with a mission to elevate African discourses on reparatory justice, human rights and democracy. RI operates in Ghana, Sierra Leone, Namibia and the United States of America. Reform Initiatives works with others to advance liberatory policies and institutional reform processes that amplify people-centred African solutions to human rights, democratic, and socio-economic challenges.

7.0 PARTNERS (CONT'L)

7.5. TJNA: Tax Justice Network Africa (TJNA) is a regional network of civil society organisations. It is composed of think tanks, trade unions, feminist groups, youth led & faith-based organisations, and community-based organisations spread across African countries. The network has set an ambitious new target to grow the network to reach 100 members by the end of 2025. The network envisions an Africa where tax justice prevails and contributes to equitable, inclusive, and sustainable development. In spearheading tax justice in Africa, it advocates for pro-poor tax policies and tax systems that curb leakages and optimise domestic resource mobilisation (DRM). Through policy influencing, it mobilises citizens and institutions to demand fair tax systems

7.6. FEMNET: The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) is a pan- African, feminist and membership-based network that facilitates and coordinates the sharing of experiences, ideas, information, and strategies for human rights promotion among African women's organizations through networking, communication, capacity-building and advocacy at the regional and international levels. Since inception in 1988, FEMNET has strategically positioned herself as a convenor, organizer and facilitator on dialogues around critical issues including women's involvement in governance and leadership, promoting women's economic justice, advocating for women's sexual and

reproductive health and rights, ending gender-based violence and harmful practices (such as female genital mutilation and child marriage) and strengthening the women's movement in Africa.

7.7. STOP BLEEDING CAMPAIGN: The Stop the Bleeding Campaign (STBc) is a CSO founded movement bound by a shared vision of African citizens living with dignity in a just, integrated and prosperous Africa. The Stop the Bleeding campaign is about financial resources leaving the continent to tax havens and secret jurisdictions. Debt repayments and debt accrued that are odious or illegitimate or that have been looted are also forms of financial resources leaving the continent. The members include the African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD); Africa Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET); International Trade Union Confederation Africa (ITUC Africa); Pan African Lawyers Union (PALU); Tax Justice Network Africa (TJNA); Nawi – Afrifem Macroeconomics Collective (Nawi Collective); and Trust Africa (TA).

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