

Wednesday 5 November – Thursday 6 November
Sheraton Addis, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Africa's rising influence

Advancing agency in foreign policy and global governance



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Wednesday 5 November – Thursday 6 November 2025 | Sheraton Addis, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia & Online via Zoom

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Agenda

DAY 1 | Wednesday 5 November

- 08:00 – 09:00 **Registration and refreshments**
- 09:00 – 09:15 **Welcome**
Tighisti Amare, Director, Africa Programme, Chatham House
Dr. Solomon A. Dersso, Executive Director, Amani Africa
Dr. Jide Martyns Okeke, Director, Regional Programme for Africa, Regional Service Centre for Africa, UNDP
- 09:15 – 09:45 **Opening Keynotes**
H.E. Dr. Gedion Timothewos, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Ambassador Mohamed El-Amine Souef, Chief of Staff, Cabinet of the Chairperson, AU Commission
Chair: **Tighisti Amare**, Director, Africa Programme, Chatham House
- 09:45 – 11:00 **Power, partnerships, and the global order: Africa's role in a multipolar world**
Dr. A. Korir SingOei, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, Republic of Kenya
Ambassador Seif Kandeel, Director General, Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding
Professor Eghosa E. Osaghae, Director-General, Nigerian Institute of International Affairs
Hanna Tetteh, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya & Head, United Nations Support Mission in Libya; Minister for Foreign Affairs, Republic of Ghana (2013–2017) *[Virtual]*
Chair: **Dr. Solomon A. Dersso**, Executive Director, Amani Africa
- 11:00 – 11:30 **Comfort break**
- 11:30 – 12:15 **Spotlight session | Regional-continental coordination for global impact**
H.E. Mohamed Abdi Ware, Deputy Executive Secretary, Intergovernmental Authority on Development
Ambassador Jevin Pillay Ponisamy, Permanent Representative, Office of the Southern African Development Community to the AU
Chair: **Tighisti Amare**, Director, Africa Programme, Chatham House
- 12:15 – 13:15 **African priorities in sustainable development, climate diplomacy, and biodiversity**
Saliem Fakir, Executive Director, The African Climate Foundation *[Virtual]*
Dr. Chantelle G. Moyo, Programme Manager, Regional Programme Economy – Africa, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung
Romanus Kasino, Energy Analyst, Hyphen Hydrogen Energy; Sustainable Development Practitioner
Caroline Kimani, Carbon Lead, Africa Carbon Partners
Chair: **Robert Dewar**, Associate Fellow, Africa Programme, Chatham House
- 13:15 – 14:15 **Lunch**
- 14:15 – 14:45 **Keynote address**
Hon. Bogolo Joy Kenewendo, Minister of Minerals and Energy, Republic of Botswana *[Virtual]*
Engr. Faruk Yusuf Yabo, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Solid Minerals Development, Federal Republic of Nigeria *[Virtual]*
Chair: **Christopher Vandome**, Senior Research Fellow, Africa Programme and Critical Minerals Initiative, Chatham House
- 14:45 – 16:00 **Advancing stronger, sustainable economic growth and financial resilience**
Zainab Ahmed, Executive Director, EDS25, World Bank Group; Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Federal Republic of Nigeria (2019–2023) *[Virtual]*
Christopher Legilisho, Economist, East Africa, Standard Bank
Chipokota Mwanawasa, Policy Advisor to the President & Deputy Head, Presidential Delivery Unit, Republic of Zambia
Chair: **David Lubin**, Senior Research Fellow, Global Economy and Finance Programme, Chatham House

DAY 2 | Thursday 6 November

08:00 – 09:00

Registration and refreshments

09:00 – 11:00

Strengthening African-led peace and security initiatives

Leaders panel

H.E. Ambassador El Hadji Ibrahima ‘Boly’ Diene, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission for Somalia & Head, African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia

H.E. Ambassador Liberata Mulamula, AU Special Envoy, Women, Peace and Security; Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation, United Republic of Tanzania (2021–2022)

El-Ghassim Wane, Former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali & Head, United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

Chair: **Ahmed Soliman**, Senior Research Fellow, Africa Programme, Chatham House

Experts panel

Dr. Jide Martyns Okeke, Director, Regional Programme for Africa, Regional Service Centre for Africa, UNDP

Lidet Tadesse Shiferaw, Fellow, Rift Valley Institute

Leonard Onyonyi, Former Peace and Security Expert, East African Community (EAC) Secretariat

Dr. Angela Muvumba Sellström, Senior Researcher, Nordic Africa Institute

Dr. Abel Abate Demissie, Associate Fellow, Africa Programme, Chatham House

Chair: **Dr. Solomon A. Dersso**, Executive Director, Amani Africa

11:00 – 11:30

Comfort break

11:30 – 12:30

Africa’s soft power: Cultural diplomacy and global influence

Nkiru ‘Kiki’ Mordi, Investigative journalist; Founder, DocumentWomen

Dawit Abraham, Co-founder & CEO, Beemi; Co-founder & CEO, Qene Games

Dr. Nkiru Balonwu, Founder, Africa Soft Power Group

Chair: **Lisa Musumba**, Outreach and Communications Coordinator, Africa Programme, Chatham House

12:30 – 13:00

Spotlight session | Turning leverage into impact: Africa’s strategic moment

Moeletsi Mbeki, Political Economist; National Chairman, South African Institute of International Affairs *[Virtual]*

Cynthia Chigwenya, Youth Advisory Council Member, Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security

Chair: **Tighisti Amare**, Director, Africa Programme, Chatham House

13:00 – 13:15

Concluding remarks

Tefesehet Hailu, Researcher, Amani Africa

Ahmed Soliman, Senior Research Fellow, Africa Programme, Chatham House

13:15 – 14:15

Lunch

End of conference

Biographies



Dawit Abraham is the Co-Founder and CEO of Beemi, an interactive streaming platform focused on games; and also the Co-Founder and CEO of Qene Games, a mobile game publishing company based in Ethiopia. Qene Games aims to showcase the richness and beauty of Ethiopian culture in the global gaming and entertainment industry. After graduating from Addis Ababa University with a bachelor's degree in electrical and computer engineering, Dawit's career began in 2015 at iCog-Labs, an Ethiopian company specializing in AI and robotics. In 2020, he was a game developer at Turing, a US-based Software Talent Outsourcing company.



Zainab Ahmed is the World Bank Group Executive Director representing Angola, Nigeria and South Africa. She has held this role since November 2024, and was previously the Alternate Executive Director from July 2023. Ms. Ahmed is a seasoned accountant and (politician) a public sector executive with extensive experience in public finance and economic planning. She served as Nigeria's Honourable Minister of Finance, Budget, and National Planning from 2019 to 2023 and previously held the position of Minister of State for Budget and National Planning from 2015 to 2018.



Tighisti Amare is the Director of the Africa Programme at Chatham House, a position she assumed in August 2025 after more than 15 years at the Institute, including her most recent position as Deputy Director. She is responsible for the Programme's strategic direction, fundraising, and oversight of research quality and impact. She also leads efforts to deepen engagement with a wide network of stakeholders across Africa and globally. Her work includes directing high-impact research initiatives and convening policy dialogues with senior African and international decision-makers on issues related to political economy, security, governance and Africa's international relations.



Dr. Nkiru Balonwu is the Founder of The Africa Soft Power Group, which includes the Africa Soft Power Project, ASP Global, and African Women on Board. Nkiru advises some of the world's foremost organizations on effective stakeholder engagement and strategic communication, as well as crafting successful strategies tailored for Africa. Prior to her work with ASP Group, Nkiru was CEO for Spinlet, and has also served as the inaugural Lecturer of Gender & Law at the University of Lagos. She holds a doctorate from the University of California, Berkeley and has been called to the bar in England, Nigeria, and New York. Nkiru was a Senior Fellow from 2022-2023 at the Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business and Government, Harvard Kennedy School.



Cynthia Chigwenya is a Member of the Youth Advisory Council of the Roméo Dallaire Institute for Child, Peace and Security, supporting initiatives to end the recruitment and use of children in armed violence. She is an experienced political researcher and pracademic. Her roles have included coordinator of the Political Dialogue for Sub-Saharan Africa programme at the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, and research positions in the South African Parliament and National Genocide Commission in Rwanda. From 2022 to 2024, she served as the AU's Youth Ambassador for Southern Africa and in 2023 briefed the UN Security Council on future-proofing trust for peacebuilding.



Dr. Abel Abate Demissie is an Associate Fellow in the Africa Programme at Chatham House, specializing in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa region, and he also serves as an Advisor at the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. Abel previously worked for Interpeace as a Country Representative/Senior Advisor and before that as a political advisor for the British Embassy in Addis Ababa from 2015-19. Prior to that, he was a senior researcher and later a programme head at the Ethiopian Foreign Relations and Strategic Studies Institute, a government-run think tank, from 2012-15. Abel has extensive experience in providing analysis and high-level policy briefings to a variety of organizations and government departments. He has collaborated with and advised numerous international organisations involved in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, governance and democratization. Abel received a PhD in Global and Area Studies from the University of Leipzig, Germany.



Dr. Solomon A. Dersso is the Executive Director of Amani Africa. A leading legal scholar and analyst of peace and security and current African and AU affairs, he served as the Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights from 2019-21. Previously, he worked as Head of the Peace and Security Council Report Program of the Institute for Security Studies, and was also a research fellow at the South African Institute for Advanced Constitutional Law. Apart from documenting and publishing on AU policy issues and processes, Dr Dersso has delivered high-level policy briefings and presentations for bodies including the AU Peace and Security Council, IGAD, the Panel of the Wise and the AU High-Level Panel on Egypt.



Robert Dewar is an Associate Fellow with the Africa Programme at Chatham House. He was formerly a UK diplomat and served predominantly in sub-Saharan Africa, working in most regions including as High Commissioner to Nigeria (and Permanent Representative to ECOWAS) from 2007-11, Ambassador to Ethiopia (and Permanent Representative to the AU) from 2004-07, High Commissioner to Mozambique (2000-03) and Ambassador to Madagascar (1996-99). He has also served as a Trustee of the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and of the British Red Cross. He was awarded a CMG in 2006.



H.E. El Hadji Ibrahim 'Boly' Diene is the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM), a role he has held since April 2025. Prior to this, Ambassador Diene served as Chief of Staff at the United Nations Office for Central Africa from 2023-25, and held various roles at the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. Ambassador Diene has extensive military experience, having served as a pilot and a Senior Military Officer with the Senegalese Air Force from 1989-13, and has taken part in several peacekeeping missions, including in the DRC and Syria.



Saliem Fakir is the Executive Director of the African Climate Foundation, which he founded as a beacon for innovative climate solutions across the continent. He is a global thought leader at the intersection of climate and development, with a career spanning over two decades. He has previously held roles including Head of WWF South Africa's Policy & Futures Unit; Associate Director for the Centre for Renewable and Sustainable Energy at Stellenbosch University; and Director of the World Conservation Union, South Africa. He is the author of the book *Navigating Africa's Climate Development Nexus* and serves as an adjunct senior lecturer at the University of Cape Town.



Tefesehet Hailu is a Researcher at Amani Africa. She has previously worked for organizations including the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, the AU Commission's Office of the Legal Counsel and the AU Commission on International Law. She has also contributed as a pro-bono advocate for a human rights project and as a retained lawyer for a foreign company where she dealt with numerous cases. She has actively participated in research projects, seeking to enhance her research skills and contribute to ground-breaking research projects as well as advocacy initiatives that lead to equitable and just policies in human rights, maritime security, the rule of law and good governance. She received her Bachelor of Law Degree from Addis Ababa University and an LL.M in International Maritime Law from the IMO International Maritime Law Institute.



Ambassador Seif Kandeel is the Director General of Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCPA), a role he assumed in January 2025. A career diplomat since 1995, he has extensive experience in multilateral diplomacy and peace and security issues, as well as economic and developmental affairs. Ambassador Kandeel has held several key positions at the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in Egyptian embassies abroad. Most recently, he served as Egypt's Ambassador to Gabon (2020-24) and as Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for UN Specialized Agencies (2018-20). From 2013-17, he served as Political Coordinator at the Permanent Mission of Egypt to the UN in New York.



Romanus Kasino is an Energy Analyst at Hyphen Hydrogen Energy, developing one of Namibia's largest green hydrogen projects and hydrogen standards. He is a sustainable development specialist with over a decade of experience in environmental and social safeguarding, renewable energy, biodiversity conservation and inclusive development. Romanus has previously worked for Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, coordinating youth empowerment, climate change advocacy, and social sustainability; and with organisations such as UNDP, where he currently serves as a Social and Environmental Safeguards Consultant for a project addressing human-wildlife conflict and wildlife crime.



Hon. Bogolo Joy Kenewendo is the Minister of Minerals and Energy of the Republic of Botswana, a role she has held since November 2024. Her current role builds on her contributions as a Specially Elected Member of Parliament and as a Cabinet Minister of Investment, Trade and Industry in Botswana. She has served in various corporate and philanthropic boards including as Chairperson of Bank Gaborone, and as Non-Executive Director of the Africa Free Trade Area Adjustment Fund Corporation and the Africa Center for Economic Transformation. Minister Kenewendo has advised multilateral institutions including as part of the G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council and the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation. She is also a member of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Trade Advisory Group and is recognized as a WEF Young Global Leader.



Caroline Kimani is the Carbon Lead at Africa Carbon Partners, where she spearheads the design and development of large-scale carbon removal and emissions reduction projects across Africa. With over eight years of experience in nature-based solutions and carbon markets, she has advised and partnered with leading global institutions including CAP-A, FSD Africa, and the Rockefeller Foundation. Caroline has led the technical development, due diligence and audits of afforestation/reforestation, REDD+, biochar, regenerative agriculture and energy projects across more than 15 countries in Africa, as well as Asia. Her expertise bridges carbon accounting, policy, and benefit-sharing with local communities.



Christopher Legilisho is an Economist at the Standard Bank Group. He covers macroeconomic research, fixed income and currency strategy, with a primary focus on East Africa. Prior to joining Standard Bank, Christopher served for over 14 years at the Central Bank of Kenya, where he worked in financial markets, specialising in debt management, foreign exchange and reserves management. He is a Fellow of the Milken Institute, the International Finance Corporation and the Capital Markets Program at the George Washington University School of Business. He is passionate about macroeconomics, capital markets, and working towards the development of vibrant and globally competitive capital markets in Africa.



David Lubin is the Michael Klein Senior Research Fellow in the Global Economy and Finance Programme at Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs. Before taking up this position in January 2024, he was managing director and head of emerging markets economics research at Citi, where he led a team of some 30 economists in 15 locations globally. Previously he had worked as an economist at HSBC. David's book, *Dance of the Trillions: Developing Countries and Global Finance*, was published in 2018 by Brookings Press, and was selected by the Financial Times as one of the best economics books of that year.



Moeletsi Mbeki is the Chairperson of the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), based at the University of the Witwatersrand. He is a political analyst, author and entrepreneur, and has previously served on the council of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London. His journalistic career spans over 40 years. After returning to South Africa from exile in 1990, he was appointed Head of Communications for the Congress of South Africa Trade Unions (COSATU) and Media Consultant to the African National Congress. He is the author of *Architects of Poverty: Why African Capitalism Needs Changing* and most recently co-authored *A Manifesto for Social Change: How to Save South Africa*, with his niece Dr Nobantu Mbeki.



Nkiru 'Kiki' Mordi is an Emmy-nominated investigative journalist, documentary filmmaker, and founder of Document Women. She is also founder of the Stack Journal, a digital publication exploring the intersection of technology, culture and society. Kiki's work has exposed widespread sexual harassment in West African universities, as well as police violence and sex trafficking in Nigeria, and has been featured on BBC Africa Eye, Wired UK and Native magazine. Her work has influenced policy change, including the passage of the Anti-Sexual Harassment Bill (also known as the Sex-for-Marks Bill) in Nigeria. She is also a founding member of the Feminist Coalition, a group of Nigerian women driving equality and social change.



Dr. Chantelle G. Moyo is a Programme Manager of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung's Regional Program Economy – Africa. She is an environmental lawyer and seasoned researcher in the fields of natural resource and energy governance, mining law and climate change, among others. She has over a decade of experience in academic institutions in South Africa and Zimbabwe and working in international development. Dr Moyo has also provided independent advisory services to organizations such as the International Development Law Organisation, Natural Resource Governance Institute, Oxfam Africa and USAID on matters related to climate change, energy governance, mining law and environmental governance in Africa.



H.E. Ambassador Liberata Mulamula is the African Union Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security. She is a distinguished Tanzanian diplomat and stateswoman with over 35 years of experience in foreign affairs, peacebuilding and governance. Ambassador Mulamula previously served as Minister for Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. As Special Envoy, she is mandated to drive the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda across the African continent, leading initiatives that ensure women's full and equal participation.



Lisa Musumba is the Outreach and Communications Coordinator for the Africa Programme at Chatham House, and host of the Programme's podcast, *Africa Aware*. She supports the dissemination of the Africa Programme's wide-ranging work – including events, publications and multimedia content – and coordinates external media engagement for its team of researchers. She holds an MA in Media in Development from SOAS University of London.



Chipokota Mwanawasa serves as Policy Advisor to the President of Zambia, where she shapes national policy and strategic reform agendas across both public and private sectors. She brings extensive experience in leading high-value, multi-stakeholder government-to-government, business-government transactions, including in the energy, mining and agriculture sectors. Her work spans high-impact policy reform, cross-ministerial coordination, and the structuring of public-private partnerships that drive investment and value creation at scale. Chipokota holds a master's degree in public policy from the London School of Economics and Political Science, and law degrees from the University of Cape Town and University of Kent.



Dr. Jide Martyns Okeke is the Director of the Regional Programme for Africa at the UNDP. In his previous capacity, Dr. Okeke was the Head of Policy Development on Peace Support Operations within the AU Commission's Peace and Security Department, where he oversaw the development of policies and initiatives, including those related to financing, for Africa-led, AU-mandated peace operations. Subsequently, he held the position of Senior Adviser on Preventing Violent Extremism at the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre in Norway. He has also undertaken research roles at several prominent policy institutes, such as the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and the Institute for Security Studies (ISS). He holds a PhD in Development Politics from University of Leeds, MA in Conflict Resolution from University of Bradford and an MPA from the Harvard Kennedy School.



Leonard Onyonyi is a peace and security consultant with nearly four decades of experience. From 2006-22, he served as a Peace and Security Expert at the EAC Secretariat, following 20 years with the Government of Kenya, where he founded and coordinated key initiatives such as the National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management. He has played a vital role in multiple regional mediation processes, including the UN-mandated Inter-Burundian Dialogue, where he advised HE Benjamin Mkapa, Former President of Tanzania, and the Nairobi Process, serving as Coordinator at the EAC Secretariat level.



Professor Eghosa E. Osaghae is the Director-General of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), and a tenured Professor of Comparative Politics at the University of Ibadan. Prior to this, he served as Vice Chancellor of Igbinedion University, Okada from 2004-18. Professor Osaghae has played several important roles within multilateral institutions, including most recently as a member of the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters, and earlier as Chair of the Panel of Quality Control of the UN Economic Commission for Africa. His current positions also include Extraordinary Professor of Political Science at the University of Pretoria, South Africa and a member of the Lloyd George Study Group on Global Governance.



Ambassador Jevin Pillay Ponisamy is the Permanent Representative of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to the African Union, a role he has held since March 2022. He was previously Head (Senior Liaison Officer) of the SADC Liaison Office to the AU between 2019 and 2022. Prior to joining SADC, Ambassador Pillay Ponisamy was a career diplomat for the Republic of Mauritius. In this position he served at the High Commission of Mauritius to South Africa from 2016-19, and previously served in the High Commission of Mauritius in India from 2011-14.



Dr. Angela Muvumba Sellström is a Senior Researcher at the Nordic Africa Institute (NAI) in Uppsala, Sweden and has contributed to policy research in Africa, Sweden and internationally for over 20 years. Previously she worked at Uppsala University from 2018-20 as Director of the Department of Peace and Conflict Research's International Training Programme in Dialogue and Mediation. She also serves as Vice Chairperson of the Board of Directors at the Life & Peace Institute, and as a Non-Resident Fellow at the International Peace Institute. At the NAI, she leads research on the UN Security Council, focusing on its elected member states and how African and Nordic governments can influence outcomes.



Lidet Tadesse Shiferaw is a fellow at the Rift Valley Institute and a distinguished peace and security analyst and practitioner. She specializes in the geopolitics of the Horn of Africa; African multilateral approaches to peace and security; Africa's partnerships with the EU, China, and Gulf states; and the continent's role in global governance. With over a decade of experience advising African and European governments, intergovernmental organizations and civil society actors, her research and commentary have been featured in leading academic, policy and journalistic publications. Lidet most recently served as Head of Inclusive Governance at ECDPM.



Dr. A. Korir SingOei, CBS is the Principal Secretary of Foreign Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs of the Republic of Kenya. Prior to his role as Principal Secretary, he served as Senior Legal Advisor to the Deputy President of the Republic of Kenya. He is an international law expert with over two decades of legal experience in Kenya and abroad. Other roles held by Dr SingOei have included Litigation Director at the Katiba Institute; Conflict and Rule of Law Advisor at USAID; and Founding Director of the Centre for Minority Rights Development. He is the National Convenor of the Open Government Partnership and Board Member of the Global Partnership on Sustainable Development Data.



Ahmed Soliman is a Senior Research Fellow with the Africa Programme at Chatham House, where he leads work on the Horn of Africa region, as well as on conflict, peace and security. He has over a decade of experience in producing policy-relevant research that influences thinking on these issues. His core research focus is on the political economy of Sudan and Ethiopia, as well as geopolitical connectivity across the Horn and Red Sea region. Ahmed is the author of multiple publications and comment pieces, and oversees the implementation of the institute's research projects, activities and outputs on the Horn of Africa. He regularly contributes to media reporting on the region.



Ambassador Mohamed El-Amine Souef is the Chief of Staff in the Cabinet of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, a role he has held since March 2025. He previously served as Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission for Somalia and Head of the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), appointed on 1 September 2022. He also served as Regional Head of Office at the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSMA) in Gao, Mali. With extensive experience in peacekeeping and foreign affairs, Ambassador Souef has held multiple high-level positions, including serving as Comoros' Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation from 1999 until 2006.



Hanna Tetteh is the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). Prior to this, she held several senior positions at the UN, including as UN Special Envoy to the Horn of Africa from 2022-24, and Special Representative of the Secretary General and Head of the UN Office to the African Union from 2019-22. She served as Minister for Trade and Industry for the Republic of Ghana from 2009-13 and as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration from 2013-17. During this time, she also held the role of Chairperson of the Council of Ministers and of the Mediation and Security Council of ECOWAS when Ghana chaired the organization.



H.E. Dr. Gedion Timothewos is the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Prior to this position he has served as the Minister of Justice, and Deputy Attorney General of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Before joining the current administration, he has been a faculty member at the Addis Ababa University School of Law. He has studied Law at the Addis Ababa University and at the Central European University.



Christopher Vandome is a Senior Research Fellow with Chatham House's Africa Programme and Global Economy and Finance Programme, and leads the Institute's Critical Minerals Initiative. His research focuses on the political economy and international relations of Southern Africa, as well as regional and continental peace and security, environmental issues and extractive industries. He has extensive experience project managing research on African political economy issues, including coordinating inclusive multi-stakeholder research processes, conducting extensive field work, and organizing international events and conferences as well as events with senior international political figures. He is currently a PhD candidate in international relations at the University of Witwatersrand.



El-Ghassim Wane served as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) from 2021-23, managing a large-scale operation in a complex political and security environment. He has over 30 years of diplomatic, strategic advisory and conflict management expertise. He previously held key positions at the UN Secretariat, including Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, where he provided strategic guidance to global missions. Additionally, he has held senior roles with the Organization of African Unity and the AU. Mr. Wane has also lectured at George Washington University, Sciences Po Paris, and is a senior research fellow at the African Leadership Centre, King's College London.



H.E. Mohamed Abdi Ware is the Deputy Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a role he has held since December 2023. Previously, he served as the Special Presidential Envoy for Civilian Protection and Stabilization in Somalia. He is a former President of Hirshabelle State, Somalia, where he also served as the first Vice President of the Council for Interstate Cooperation (CIC). He has previously worked with international organizations including the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the UNDP. He is currently pursuing a graduate degree in International Relations at Harvard University's School of Extension Studies.



Engr. Faruk Yusuf Yabo is the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Solid Mineral Development of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, a role he has held since May 2025. He was previously Permanent Secretary of the Nigerian Ministry of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy. Prior to these roles, he served in the Federal Ministry of Power, Works and Housing of Nigeria for almost 10 years, including as Deputy Director and then Acting Director of Renewable and Rural Power Access.

This conference, in partnership with Amani Africa and the United Nations Development Programme, examines how Africa can assert greater strategic influence across a rapidly evolving global landscape.

Africa is increasingly exerting more influence in global governance. The African Union's debut at the G20 and the continent's collective call for UN reforms reflect growing momentum towards increased leadership representation and impact. Initiatives to advance African-led security frameworks and reform global financial institutions are gaining traction; however, their success also remains conditional on support from key international allies.

Efforts to strengthen Africa's collective bargaining power are unfolding amid deep geopolitical uncertainty. Growing intra-regional rivalries and declining cohesion within the AU raise doubts about whether current frameworks remain fit for purpose, and Africa's ability to shape global outcomes continues to be constrained by structural inequalities and fragmentation. Navigating new and more flexible partnerships, strengthening leadership and regional integration, and advancing peace and economic sovereignty will be critical to shaping Africa's trajectory in an increasingly multipolar world.

Held ahead of the G20 meeting in Johannesburg – the first to take place on African soil – this conference will examine how Africa can assert greater strategic influence across a rapidly evolving global landscape. It will explore the continent's approach to multipolarity, the imperative of deeper regional and continental coordination, strategies for boosting economic resilience and inclusive growth, and the role of African-led solutions in peacebuilding, climate action, and soft power diplomacy. Speakers will assess how Africa can more effectively drive global conversations and translate its growing political presence into meaningful action and outcomes for the continent's future.

This conference is supported by:

*Open Society Foundations and the United Nations
Development Programme*

