Principles with Pragmatism:
Insights for African Foreign Ministries' UN Strategies

Methodology and Collaborative Process

This document was compiled by Gustavo de Carvalho (SAIIA), Mandira Bagwandeen (Stellenbosch University) and Tim Murithi (Institute for Justice and Reconciliation), in collaboration with workshop participants. The analysis represents a collaborative synthesis of diverse perspectives and does not reflect the official positions of participating institutions or the individual views of any specific participant.

This document was developed during a collaborative workshop organised by the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR), and Stellenbosch University titled 'From Principle to Pragmatism: Africa's Strategic Choices for UNGA 2025.' It brought together over 35 participants from universities, think tanks and practitioners from across Africa and New York, in Pretoria on 11-12 September 2025.

This document emerged from a deliberate collaborative methodology designed to capture diverse perspectives and generate actionable insights for African foreign ministries ahead of the UN High-Level General Debate. Each workshop session was recorded and transcribed using AI tools, with an initial draft summarising core themes generated from these transcripts, participant notes, and flipchart insights to expedite development within the session timeframe.

This preliminary synthesis provided participants with a structured foundation during working group sessions, where they refined arguments, added insights, challenged assumptions, and ensured coherence across different perspectives. The approach ensured that both formal presentations and informal discussions contributed to the final analysis while maintaining the analytical rigour necessary for policy relevance. The expedited timeline was deliberate, enabling circulation to African foreign ministries before the critical High-Level week beginning 23 September 2025, when strategic positioning becomes paramount.

We extend our gratitude to the additional workshop participants who chose to remain anonymous in this document.

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Overview

Africa stands at a crossroads in global diplomacy. As the post-Cold War multilateral system fractures under pressure from competing powers and the selective application of international rules, the continent faces a fundamental choice: unite to shape the changing world order or remain passive as change happens around it. This critical juncture has prompted serious reflection among African policymakers and scholars about how the continent can better navigate an increasingly complex diplomatic landscape.

A collaborative workshop organised by the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR), and Stellenbosch University examined this challenge through the lens of practical diplomacy. The initiative, 'From Principle to Pragmatism: Africa's Strategic Choices for UNGA 2025' brought together over 35 participants from universities, think tanks and practitioners from across Africa and New York, in Pretoria on 11–12 September 2025.

A defining moment

The timing was particularly significant. The 80th General Assembly session arrives at a moment heavy with both promise and peril. The UN80 initiative, designed to mark the organisation's eighth decade, represents more than a ceremonial milestone. It aims to restore faith in multilateral cooperation, streamline outdated mandates, and create a more coherent institutional framework for an increasingly fragmented world.

African engagement with multilateralism has evolved dramatically since the Organisation of African Unity's (OAU) founding principles emphasised non-interference and sovereignty. Today's continental framework, embodied in Agenda 2063 and the institutional architecture, envisions a more assertive Africa that shapes rather than responds to global governance decision-making. Yet translating these aspirations into an effective multilateral strategy remains challenging, particularly when African states must balance continental solidarity with national interests and navigate between competing global powers.

This year's General Assembly session coincides with the launch of the Second UN International Decade for People of African Descent and takes place during South Africa's G20 presidency under the theme 'Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability'. These overlapping responsibilities provide additional platforms for African leadership but also require careful strategic coordination to maximise impact.

Core Insights

Systemic Transformation

1

The international system faces accelerating hyper-regionalisation, with competing regulatory regimes emerging across trade, technology, and finance.

2

Africa risks becoming a rule-taker rather than a rule-maker without coordinated efforts and input on standards development.

3

Some participants described the UN as being on its 'deathbed' drawing parallels with the League of Nations, which collapsed in the run-up to the Second World War.

4

If great powers continue abandoning multilateral norms, Africa must prepare for scenarios where the AU and other regional forums must assume greater responsibility for development, peace and security.

5

This potential transition requires capacitating and possibly reforming or restructuring current African institutions to become substantially more robust.

Core Insights

Solidarity As A Pragmatic Strategy

Pan-African solidarity has become existential rather than merely aspirational. Africa's 54 UN member states represent the largest regional voting bloc in the UN General Assembly, yet this numerical advantage rarely translates into coherent leverage without effective coordination. The AU's new G20 seat presents an early test of whether the continent can demonstrate unity or reproduce familiar fragmentation patterns.

Over the past decade, the A3+ (comprising the three African UN Security Council (UNSC) non-permanent members plus, occasionally, a diaspora-connected state representing Africa's sixth region, currently Guyana) has steadily increased its coordination and influence; however, episodes of disunity continue to blunt its effectiveness at critical moments. The 14 November 2024 vote on UNSC Resolution 2760 on Sudan starkly exposed these vulnerabilities: Russia's veto succeeded partly because the A3+ failed to present a unified position or lead the drafting process, leaving an African crisis vulnerable to geopolitical manipulation. By contrast, the 28 February 2025 Al-Shabaab sanctions negotiations that resulted in the unanimous adoption of UNSC resolution 2775 demonstrated improved A3+ coordination, with the bloc maintaining unified positions throughout complex negotiations. However, the outcome reflected broader UNSC compromises rather than distinctly African agenda–setting. These fluctuations indicate that progress in AU-A3+ coordination mechanisms has not yet translated into consistent collective influence when it is most crucial.

The current coordination of the A3+ remains too dependent on informal arrangements and individual relationships rather than institutionalised processes, leaving the African bloc in the Council vulnerable to fragmentation precisely when coherence becomes essential for advancing African interests in high-stakes negotiations. Similar weaknesses in strategic coordination trouble the Africa Group, and merit more systematic exchange, consolidation and communication of Africa's common positions. Beyond the UN, Africa's lack of cohesion undermines its strategic multilateralism, as powerful states secure bilateral deals that conflict with continental positions, especially around critical minerals and other strategic resources.

Core Insights

Law Over Slogans

The notion of a 'rules-based international order' has become weaponised rhetoric, but adherence to international law remains paramount for achieving political and economic equality. Workshop discussions emphasised that this phrase has devolved into geopolitical branding rather than a substantive principle.

For Africa, the stronger foundation lies in international law, the International Court of Justice and humanitarian principles. The continent's comparative advantage emerges from exposing double standards (of other global and regional actors) and building coalitions around legal frameworks rather than malleable slogans.

Strategic Non-alignment

Non-alignment represents a complex foreign policy approach that has evolved significantly from its Cold War origins, particularly for developing countries navigating intensifying great-power competition while pursuing development priorities. Modern non-alignment involves taking principled positions on an issue-by-issue basis while maintaining strategic and sovereign autonomy, but this flexibility comes with inherent tensions and trade-offs.

As exemplified by South Africa's approach, non-alignment means 'strategic independence' where the country 'engages all partners, makes case-by-case decisions using constitutional values and international law, and refuses bloc allegiance,' prioritising sovereignty-based diplomacy over automatic alignment. However, this strategy faces persistent criticisms of inconsistency and opportunism, with partners often viewing such positioning as morally equivocal or unreliable. The approach requires sophisticated diplomatic capacity to manage complex and sometimes conflicting relationships simultaneously.

While non-alignment (or multi-alignment) allows countries to engage constructively with multiple partners and avoid the constraints of exclusive alignment, its effectiveness depends heavily on material capabilities, institutional coherence, and domestic legitimacy. States pursuing this path must balance the benefits of enhanced manoeuvrability against the costs of perceived unreliability, recognising that abstention or flexible positioning may be interpreted as weakness rather than strategic wisdom by some international partners. The sustainability of such approaches ultimately depends on their compatibility with effective multilateral cooperation and crisis management.

Institutional Credibility Crisis

Africa's persistent demands for UNSC reform are undermined by its failure to adequately fund its own intergovernmental organisation, the AU itself, echoing the UN's own struggles with chronic underfunding and liquidity pressures that have necessitated ongoing reform efforts. External partners fund 58.1% of the AU's regular budget, with member states contributing 32.9%, according to the 2025 budget breakdown. The dependency is even more stark for peace support operations, which are funded entirely (100%) by international partners. This dependency raises fundamental questions about the AU Commission's independence and credibility, potentially giving external donors disproportionate influence over continental priorities.

Africa's engagement with multilateral institutions reveals a complex pattern of financial constraints that extends beyond simple non-payment. At the UN, African states generally demonstrate stronger compliance with dues than several major powers, and the African Group has been a consistent advocate for the organisation's financial health. In contrast, the record within continental institutions is far weaker. Almost half of its 55 members were under sanctions for non-compliance with payments by mid-2024, despite the AU's relatively modest financial requirements compared to those of the UN.

Reform Framework At A Crossroads

The Ezulwini Consensus, adopted in 2005, represented Africa's unified demand for two permanent UNSC seats with veto powers. While this maximalist position reflected legitimate frustrations with Africa's exclusion from the UN's highest decision-making body, its rigid framework has increasingly constrained rather than advanced reform efforts.

Nearly two decades later, even some African diplomats privately question whether the consensus remains viable, with several describing it as having become counterproductive to meaningful progress. The all-or-nothing approach has contributed to the broader stalemate in UNSC reform negotiations, where competing maximalist positions from different regions have effectively cancelled each other out.

The challenge now lies in updating Africa's approach without abandoning core principles of equity and representation. A more flexible framework could incorporate review mechanisms, allowing for iterative progress rather than requiring comprehensive transformation in a single negotiation. This might involve pursuing intermediate steps such as expanded elected membership, restrictions on veto use or new categories of membership that could later evolve. Opportunities exist for strategic coalition building with the Group of Four, comprising India, Brazil, Germany and Japan, which campaigns for Security Council expansion with new permanent seats, and with the L.69, a cross regional coalition of developing states from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, including many small island developing states, that advocates comprehensive, time bound reform. Convergences on procedural mechanisms, working methods and review clauses that mandate periodic stocktakes could underpin a joint platform to unlock stalemates in the intergovernmental negotiations, treating these partnerships not as compromises but as pathways to the broader transformation Africa seeks.

Performance Over Size

Influence in New York correlates with clarity of priorities, continuity of expertise and disciplined messaging rather than mission size. Counter-intuitively, small, focused states often outperform larger, more diffuse actors. Pacific Island States exemplify this principle, collaborating closely but playing differentiated roles to amplify their unified message on climate issues. Nordic countries their foreign ministries institutional.

The challenge for Africa is particularly acute: most African missions operate with minimal staff, making them vulnerable to external influence and unable to effectively cover their extensive priorities. Examples include instances where better-resourced countries embed experts within African delegations during UNSC terms, as Rwanda did with Mozambique. Brazil and Argentina's historical collaboration in New York also showcases alternative approaches, maintaining forward-planning systems and sharing of technical expertise that enable effective long-term strategic positioning.

Continental Legitimacy Gap

African legitimacy on global security issues is being eroded as continental crises receive disproportionately less attention than other conflicts. At UNGA 2024, 140 states addressed Gaza, while only 65 mentioned Sudan, with fewer than half being African states themselves. This asymmetry undermines Africa's claims to collective ownership of continental security and risks normalising neglect of African crises.

The pattern reveals a troubling disconnect: African states advocating for global influence while failing to prioritise their own regional conflicts. Rather than focusing solely on institutional mechanisms, Africa needs to demonstrate sustained diplomatic engagement with its own crises, ensuring they receive appropriate attention and resources in multilateral forums.

Financial Architecture Challenges

Africa's financial constraints reflect deep structural challenges that extend far beyond fiscal mismanagement. African countries allocated $163 billion to debt service in 2024, a staggering 335% increase from $61 billion in 2010. External debt service now consumes 14.8% of Africa's export earnings, up from 4.5% in 2011, while 30 African countries spent more on interest payments than on public health in 2023. These crushing debt burdens create a vicious cycle where governments cannot invest in institutional capacity, leaving little fiscal space for either domestic priorities or multilateral commitments.

Global momentum is building around debt relief and financial architecture reform, from the UN's fourth Financing for Development conference in mid-2025 in Seville to the G20. The conference's outcome, the Sevilla Commitment points to solutions through domestic resource mobilisation, effective debt relief frameworks, and tripling the multilateral development bank lending capacity.

South Africa's historic G20 presidency in 2025 has prioritised debt sustainability, while the AU's first Debt Conference in May 2025 proposed concrete reforms, including the establishment of a Pan-African Credit Rating Agency and changes to the G20 Common Framework. Rather than emphasising reparations, which encounter entrenched political resistance, advancing these practical debt relief mechanisms could deliver immediate fiscal relief while strengthening both continental institutions and Africa's global influence.

Strategic Actions and Recommendations

Building diplomatic capacity through think tank and civil society partnerships

Africa should systematically replicate the AU's successful think tank partnership models to strengthen diplomatic capacity in other multilateral settings, particularly for smaller missions with limited analytical resources. The AU's Africa Think Tank Platform and Network of Think Tanks for Peace demonstrate how structured partnerships between research institutions and policy departments can enhance institutional effectiveness.

Organisations such as ACCORD, Amani Africa, the Institute for Security Studies, and the Institute for Peace and Security Studies have provided comprehensive document repositories, regular analysis, and policy for the AU and its member states in Addis Ababa for decades, demonstrating the value of sustained analytical support.

The T20 South Africa convenors present the T20 High-Level Recommendations at the T20 Midterm Conference on 20 June 2025.

Building on this continental experience, African missions in New York should establish formal partnerships with consortia of African think tanks to provide regular UN briefings, rapid—response policy analysis for UNSC debates, and institutional memory support. The think tank partnership model shows that sustained, flexible support enables think tanks to align research with national priorities rather than donor interests.

SAIIA, the Institute for Global Dialogue and the Institute for Pan—African Thought and Conversation's co—leadership of the Think20 group during South Africa's G20 presidency demonstrates how think tanks can champion African priorities on global stages. This approach would create shared analytical resources, enabling smaller delegations to access the same quality of policy support available to larger missions while ensuring African perspectives are grounded in continental expertise and priorities.

Strengthen The A3+ Operating Model

Building on existing AU–A3+ coordination mechanisms, Africa should enhance rather than replace current systems. This involves establishing a small coordination cell within the AU Permanent Observer Mission in New York, creating opportunities for seconding incoming A3+ staff to current member capitals, and instituting more regular, institutionalised interaction bridging linkages between the AU, UN, and member states' capitals. A weekly drafting rhythm and a shared pool of experienced drafters would provide continuity.

Under a first refusal rule, when African issues arise in the UNSC, the A3+ automatically receives the first opportunity to serve as penholders – those that lead the drafting and negotiation of the text – on conflicts in Africa, before other UNSC members can assume this role, unless the A3+ explicitly declines. This would prevent situations where non-African countries control the narrative and language around continental crises while preserving A3+ flexibility to decline when strategic considerations or capacity constraints make African leadership inadvisable.

Procedures for selecting future A3+ members should be determined well in advance within the AU, supported by comprehensive handover mechanisms that allow new members to deepen long–term institutional capacity and mitigate the burdens of non-permanent status. Regions like Latin America know years in advance when their term on the Security Council is due, an approach that should be developed within the AU as well. A partnership of incoming and outgoing members could be considered, similar to the G20's troika of past, present and future chairs working together.

Reform Peace And Security Financing With Measurable Benchmarks

Anchor AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) decision—making to the AU's existing dues-sanctions regime, making financial compliance inseparable from institutional authority. Require current certificates of good standing for PSC candidacy, with speaking, voting, and chairing rights contingent on avoiding sanctions. When states fall into the AU's cautionary, intermediate, or comprehensive tiers for non-payment, their PSC participation should pause until the arrears are resolved. This approach builds on established mechanisms rather than creating parallel systems and provides clear enforceability: by mid-2024, the AU Executive Council had sanctioned 26 of 55 member states for contribution arrears.

Strengthen transparency and accountability through a quarterly compliance dashboard that tracks both member state contributions and partner flows into peace operations. Link early, full payment to predictable Peace Fund allocations while maintaining force-majeure payment plans for countries facing exceptional distress under existing provisions. The AU's records demonstrate substantial partner underwriting of peace operations and significant Peace Fund growth since 2017, resources that can be leveraged more strategically with improved compliance.

Expand the current AU contribution model, where five countries pay 15% each of the general budget, to encompass 6–8 countries contributing between 6–10% each to a dedicated peace support operations budget. Implement concrete benchmarks: achieve 75% dues compliance within six months, 95% within 12 months, and finance at least one AU peace operation without external reimbursement. Generate sustainable revenue through member state transfers of 5% of national defence budgets to the AU, supplemented by modest levies on outgoing air travel and financial transactions. This 'no vote without pay' principle would fundamentally link decision-making authority to financial commitment.

Translate AU–UN Engagement Into Operational Field Integration

Deploy permanent joint AU–UN liaison teams with co-located command structures in active conflict zones, establishing institutionalised shared situation rooms with unified intelligence gathering rather than ad hoc coordination. Despite improved coordination through annual AU PSC–UNSC consultative meetings since 2007, desk-to-desk meetings since 2008, biannual UN–AU Joint Task Force meetings since 2010, the UN Secretary–General's engagements with the AU, and informal seminars since 2016, these headquarters-level mechanisms have yet to translate into effective field operations, as missions continue to operate in parallel.

Develop binding standardised transition protocols with clear and mandatory handover periods, agreed asset inventories, and joint assessment teams that evaluate readiness against measurable criteria rather than political timelines. Establish dedicated field–level budget lines for coordination activities, addressing the gap where coordination costs fall between institutional mandates, while implementing joint reporting mechanisms that replace parallel chains with integrated assessments.

Position Africa Strategically On UN Relocations

Rather than responding reactively to UN Secretariat cost-cutting measures, Africa should convene an Africa Group–A3+ task group to establish clear positions before Fifth Committee budget negotiations. An 'African Efficiency and Equity Note' should clarify which functions benefit from concentration in African locations like Nairobi, Kigali, and Kampala; what must remain in New York for effectiveness; and how to safeguard African staff positions and procurement opportunities while ensuring relocations create genuine development benefits rather than merely shifting costs.

The UN's current relocation of UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women operations to Nairobi by 2026, moving over 800 staff as part of the UN80 efficiency initiative, demonstrates the potential for strategic African positioning in global governance restructuring. However, the competition between Kenya, Rwanda, and Botswana to host relocated UN offices risks fragmenting African leverage and creating a race to the bottom on concessions. The move will also be expensive and may not end up cutting costs. Africa should coordinate these bids through AU mechanisms, ensuring that any relocation agreements include binding commitments for African procurement contracts, local capacity–building programmes, and guaranteed career progression pathways for African nationals into senior UN positions.

Persistent underrepresentation of African staff in senior UN positions and Africa's low representation in leadership roles despite hosting 40% of country-specific UN missions underscores the need for proactive advocacy beyond relocation discussions. The Africa Group should establish specific benchmarks: 30% African representation in middle to senior management (P–4 and above) positions by 2030, mandatory African procurement quotas for relocated operations, and guaranteed African deputy positions in all agencies moving to the continent. This approach transforms cost–driven relocations into strategic opportunities for African institutional empowerment while maintaining UN operational effectiveness through proximity to programme beneficiaries.

Develop Common African Positions Through Strategic Coalition Sequencing

Africa should strengthen, develop unified continental common positions first, then strategically deploy these through carefully sequenced partnerships. Current fragmented approaches see African countries participating in multiple overlapping initiatives without coordination, or caught up in bilateral dynamics, thereby diluting their collective influence while external actors exploit these divisions.

Africa should establish continental position-setting processes within AU frameworks, building on existing binding agreements where necessary, but also on various global issues such as debt restructuring, climate finance, and conflict prevention. Deploy these through strategic sequencing: begin with receptive partner regions, build momentum, then expand to broader multilateral forums. A unified African debt position could first be tested with Caribbean Small Island States, and expanded to include Pacific Islands, before presenting a consolidated Global South position to G20 creditors.

When common African positions prove impossible, implement 'variable geometry': establish minimum African standards all countries commit to upholding, while allowing subregional blocs to advance more ambitious positions. Countries pursuing higher standards coordinate with the AU to ensure initiatives complement rather than undermine continental objectives, creating pathways for broader adoption once successful precedents are established. This prevents continental paralysis while maintaining strategic coherence and ensuring African interests remain primary.

Revitalise UNSC Reform Through Pragmatic African Leadership

Africa should revisit the Ezulwini Consensus to develop multiple reform pathways rather than maintaining a single maximalist position that enables continued deadlock. This requires acknowledging that full African unity on permanent seats may not be achievable, while identifying areas where continental convergence is possible. The AU should present a menu of reform options, including semi–permanent renewable seats with review clauses, expanded non-permanent representation, and enhanced penholding authority on African issues, allowing African countries to support different combinations while maintaining overall momentum for change.

Africa must seriously consider invoking Article 109 of the UN Charter to force Charter review discussions, then systematically build Global South coalitions to support this procedural approach. Following the invocation, Africa should engage with P5 members individually to explore which aspects of the Charter review they might accept, while coordinating with other developing country groups around specific discussion modalities, whether focused review of particular Charter provisions, the establishment of expert committees, or structured dialogue processes. Liaise with Latin American, Asian, and Caribbean countries to frame Article 109 as creating space for inclusive negotiation rather than a confrontational ultimatum, offering multiple engagement pathways while establishing credible reform pressure through legal procedure. This approach transforms procedural deadlock into substantive discussions by making reform avoidance more politically costly than reform engagement for permanent members.

Develop Incremental Foreign Policy Coordination AU Level

Africa should enhance foreign policy coherence through systematic coordination mechanisms that build continental diplomatic capacity while respecting national sovereignty concerns. This should be pursued incrementally rather than through immediate institutional overhaul. Rather than creating an AU 'foreign minister' that might face sovereignty resistance, Africa should begin with issue-specific coordination mechanisms on themes where interests naturally converge, such as climate finance, UNSC reform, and peace operations.

Starting with targeted areas demonstrates value while building practical coordination experience, allowing successful coordination on specific files to gradually progress toward broader foreign policy alignment through regular Sherpa consultations and coordinated bilateral outreach during major multilateral events. This progression from narrow to comprehensive coordination enables African governments to observe concrete advantages before committing to broader alignment, while permitting learning and adaptation of mechanisms based on early experiences.

Such an approach acknowledges that African countries maintain diverse foreign policy priorities and alliance structures that cannot be immediately harmonised through institutional decree. Better coordination mechanisms should include establishing permanent African liaison networks in major capitals, creating shared intelligence and analysis capabilities, and developing coordinated messaging protocols for multilateral negotiations.

The AU should establish dedicated foreign policy coordination units that support rather than replace national diplomatic services, providing shared research, coordinated talking points, institutional memory, and systematic consultation processes. Regular African ambassadorial meetings in key capitals like New York, Geneva, and Brussels should move beyond information sharing to active strategy coordination.

 At the same time, digital platforms enable real–time consultation on emerging issues, creating sustainable coordination capacity that transcends individual summits and embeds systematic African cooperation into daily diplomatic practise.

Strategic Considerations For Ongoing Attention

Navigating Secretary–General Succession

"What commitments should Africa secure on peace operations financing, budget priorities, and development issues in exchange for possibly supporting a Latin American candidate? Should Africa advance its own candidate with strong peace and security credentials to appeal to P5 members concerned about UN effectiveness in conflict zones?"

The strategic considerations centre on whether an African candidacy serves continental interests better than a strategic partnership with Latin America that captures African priorities and involves the African Diaspora within a successful campaign. This requires weighing the trade-offs between maintaining flexibility in candidate selection and early coalition-building with the Group of Latin America and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC), while considering how to leverage the succession process to advance broader African multilateral objectives, regardless of the eventual outcome.

Addressing The Crisis Attention Gap

"How can Africa ensure its own emergencies receive commensurate diplomatic priority when continental crises consistently receive less international attention than conflicts elsewhere? Should some formal thresholds or criteria trigger mandatory collective action by African states when continental crises emerge?"

The challenge extends beyond external attention to internal commitment. For Africa to strengthen its voice on global crises, it must first demonstrate consistent engagement with continental challenges in Addis Ababa, requiring sustained political will and resources that many member states struggle to provide.

Balancing A3+ Independence And Continental Coherence

"How can Africa build on existing mechanisms to ensure genuine coherence on key peace and security positions without constraining the tactical flexibility that A3+ members need to be effective?"

The relationship between AU policy guidance and A3+ operational flexibility presents ongoing tensions. While the A3+ needs sufficient independence to respond to nuanced UNSC dynamics and emerging situations, excessive divergence undermines continental positions and weakens Africa's collective influence.

UNSC Reform Strategy In A Stalled Process

"Rather than pursuing one transformative breakthrough that remains elusive, how can the continent identify incremental victories that accumulate into meaningful change over time, while maintaining strategic coherence and building the coalitions necessary to achieve concrete progress?"

With the momentum for UNSC reform waning, particularly in Washington, Africa needs pragmatic alternatives for 2025–26 that still deliver tangible progress.

Preparing For Multilateral System Evolution

"What risks does further UN weakening pose for African interests, and could the AU realistically expand its role in addressing global challenges like climate change, health emergencies, conflict prevention, and development financing?"

The UN's institutional challenges raise questions about Africa's diplomatic strategy should multilateral erosion continue. This scenario planning requires an honest assessment of African institutional capacity and the resources needed to assume greater global responsibilities.

Conclusion

Africa possesses the moral authority, demographic weight, and resource endowment to be indispensable in shaping global futures and outcomes. But these assets remain latent until institutions are funded, coordinated, and modernised. Credibility depends on delivery: paying dues, financing peace operations, modernising diplomatic frameworks, further institutionalising AU–UN cooperation, and tabling pragmatic reform proposals. UNGA80 represents a critical test. The continent must show it can act with coherence, pay its way, and put forward concrete solutions. The choice remains stark: move from principles to pragmatism and shape the global order, or stay fragmented and reactive, shaped by others.
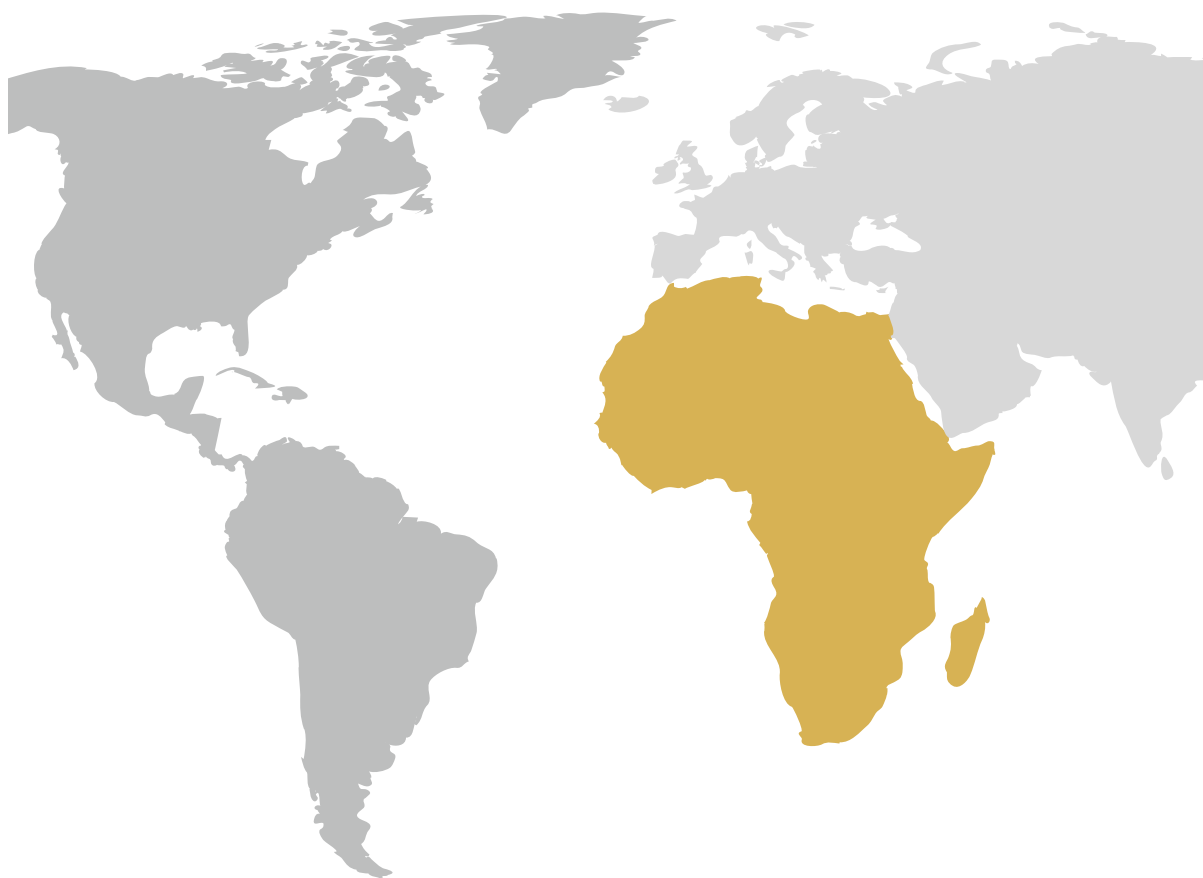
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