

Peace & Security Council Report



The UN slavery resolution is a milestone – but Africa must act
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The UN slavery resolution is a milestone – but Africa must act

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly on 25 March 2026 adopted a Ghana-led resolution declaring the trafficking of enslaved Africans and racialised chattel enslavement the ‘gravest crime against humanity’. Most countries (123) voted in favour, while 52, including all 27 European Union (EU) states, abstained. Argentina, Israel and the United States (US) voted against.

The resolution requires member states, individually and collectively, to take part in inclusive, good-faith dialogue on reparatory justice, including formal apologies, financial compensation and restitution. The UN General Assembly vote is a win for Africans and people of African descent worldwide, but it is non-binding and has no enforcement mechanism.

The UN’s 2001 Durban Declaration against racism and intolerance described the slave trade as a crime against humanity that requires remedies, but it’s seen no measurable outcome. While the declaration acknowledges that all forms of slavery and slave trade are crimes against humanity in principle, the new resolution focuses on transatlantic slavery, qualifying it as the gravest of crimes and calling explicitly for reparations.

Opposition to the resolution from the US and abstentions by most European countries, the United Kingdom (UK), Australia, Canada, Japan and New Zealand underscore stark divergences on historical accountability, exposing bleak prospects for the resolution.

African and Caribbean agenda

The Ghana-led resolution builds on African Union (AU) momentum. African leaders at the 14 and 15 February AU summit adopted a declaration recognising ‘slavery, deportation and [colonisation] as crimes against humanity and genocide against the peoples of Africa’. This crystallised

Acronyms and abbreviations

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area	CISSA	Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa
AFRIPOL	African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation	DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
APRM	Africa Peer Review Mechanism	EU	European Union
AU	African Union	PSC	Peace and Security Council
AUC	AU Commission	R-ARCSS	Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan
AUCTC	African Union Counter-Terrorism Centre	UK	United Kingdom
C5	AU High-level Ad-hoc Committee	UN	United Nations
CARICOM	Caribbean Community and Common Market	US	United States

Africa's long-held views of the impact of slavery, colonialism and continued imperialism expressed during the first Pan-African conference on reparations in 1993.

Advocacies by African and Caribbean stakeholders led to the 2001 declaration against racism and the August 2021 formation of the UN Permanent Forum on People of African Descent as an adviser to the Human Rights Council. The forum seeks to improve the safety, quality of life and livelihoods of those of African descent.

Africa's reparation agenda reached its crescendo with the AU's 2025 theme 'Justice for Africans and people of African descent through reparations'. By mid-2025, the AU declared 2026 to 2035 the decade of reparations, charging Ghana's President John Mahama to champion the cause.

The February AU summit decision called for an African-based global reparations fund to support programmes for indigenous peoples' development, education systems, restitution, cultural institutions and activities that address systemic racism. The AU called on transatlantic slave trade and colonialism beneficiaries – including states, institutions and the private sector – to contribute.

The proposed fund would be managed by the AU and Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), which is equally playing a key role in setting the pace for a reparations agenda for countries and people of African descent, having established a reparations commission in 2013 and a 10-point plan for justice in 2014.

Uncertain fate

During debates at the UN Assembly in March, the US, UK and EU recognised slavery's ills, but argued against hierarchies among crimes against humanity and against retroactive application of international rules.

Indeed, concerns over describing transatlantic trade as the 'gravest' crime against humanity are justified given the history of horrendous crimes against humanity across the globe. These include the world wars, genocides such as those in Rwanda, Namibia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the holocaust and the trans-Sahara slave trade where African actors were culpable.

However, the 25 March vote recognised the long-term debilitating impact of transatlantic slavery, which forcibly displaced millions of Africans. It created a global diaspora through a brutal system of slavery and colonialism that reshaped the demographic, economic and social fabric of the modern world. Its impact continues in systemic racism, neocolonialism and predatory economic partnerships such as the CFA franc currency system controlled by France and used by 14 central and west African countries.

The US suggests that the resolution is a cynical use of historical wrongs as a leverage point to reallocate modern resources to people and nations

Current PSC Chairperson

H.E. Ambassador Hirut

Zemene, Permanent

Representative of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the AU and PSC Chairperson for April 2026

PSC members

Algeria, Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Lesotho, Morocco, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, and Uganda

distantly related to historical victims. In his speech at the 62nd Munich Security Conference on 14 February 2026, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio urged European countries to take pride in their heritage. But aspects of his remarks were widely criticised for appearing to valorise colonialism as a foundation of western civilisation.

Rubio's comments came amid US criticism of Europe's migration policies and the UK's decision to cede Chagos Islands sovereignty to Mauritius given legal rulings and 2019 UN General Assembly resolutions recognising Mauritius's sovereignty over the islands.

Western opposition to the demand for reparations reflects historical amnesia and indicates that any expectations for reparation will be met with pushbacks or tokenism that might lead to re-victimisation. Affected countries and populations must be proactive in setting the pace on achieving reparations.

Pathways to meaningful reparation

The results of persistent activism and judicial processes leading to the UK's decision to recognise Mauritius's sovereignty over the Chagos Islands and the return of artefacts to African countries suggest that sustained and constructive engagement is crucial.

Driven by decades of activism, Belgium in 2020 and 2022 expressed regrets for colonial atrocities in the DRC. Germany officially apologised in 2021 for the 1904 to 1908 Namibia genocide and pledged reconciliation funds.

Key multilateral efforts include the ongoing AU-led drive for common positions on global issues, the proposed global reparations fund, UN Security Council reform, restructuring of international financial systems to reflect African interests as well as activism to cancel unfair debts.

However, African countries often agree on collective, multilateral measures, but succumb nationally to external sway. Many welcome foreign military bases in their territory, for example, despite regular Peace and Security Council (PSC) decisions urging that states be circumspect and to inform their neighbours and African institutions of such bases. Hence, decisive efforts are needed nationally, especially to address injustices in

current and future resource agreements with external powers and multinational corporations.

Tanzania approved laws in 2017 enabling it to renegotiate mining deals to secure a greater revenue share from its natural resources. In the DRC, the government led many deals between 2023 and 2024 to renegotiate its 2008 agreement with Chinese firms. These required China to increase infrastructure investment commitment from US\$3 billion to US\$7 billion. The Economic Community of West African States and the Alliance for Sahel States are also separately considering currencies to replace the French-controlled CFA franc, although this has been proposed for decades and viability is in question.

Countries seeking reparations must be accountable, addressing corruption and resource mismanagement

Despite Africa's vast resource potential, years of providing cheap raw resources to industrialised nations have sustained poverty and underdevelopment which are major causes of instability on the continent. African countries must push for resource trading structures that foster industrialisation in the medium- to long term to improve resources' economic value. And countries seeking systemic reparations must improve domestic accountability, addressing corruption, resource mismanagement and consent to unfair deals.

African countries and the AU must double down on dialogue and, where necessary, introduce conciliatory measures to secure the return of cultural properties and artefacts. The November 2025 Addis Ababa Declaration on Reparations calls for robust monitoring of reparations. Such a system must provide coordination and support structures to maintain pressure where reparation efforts stall locally, nationally, continentally and globally. Lasting reparations depend on addressing internalised racism and the deep-seated inferiority complex engendered by slavery and colonialism.

The AU and Caribbean countries, with diaspora communities globally, must work with international partners to emphasise that the demand for restitution is not adversarial but a striving for mutual redress and reconciliation.

Can APRM-PSC cooperation finally drive preventive action in Africa?

The Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and PSC interface represent a structural paradox at the heart of the AU: one generates detailed governance intelligence; the other wields the authority to act on it. Yet no binding mechanism connects the two.

The fifth joint APRM-PSC retreat was held in April 2026 in Burayu outside Addis Ababa under the theme 'Governance, early warning and preventive diplomacy'. It advanced efforts to integrate governance assessment into continental peace and security decision-making across the AU ecosystem. A key outcome was the Burayu Declaration, a framework for enhanced cooperation between the two bodies, including commitments to stronger early warning integration, institutional interaction and follow-up.

Despite this progress, the cooperation continues to face structural constraints that hinder the two parties' ability to translate governance analysis into preventive action. This article assesses this situation through four challenges: absence of decision-making channel, institutional duplication, institutional relevance and operational constraints.

Absence of decision-making channel

A central weakness in APRM-PSC cooperation is the lack of a formal mechanism linking governance findings to PSC decision-making. The APRM diagnoses governance risks; the PSC has the authority to prevent peace and security threats. But no institutionalised, consistently applied channel requires the PSC to regularly consider APRM findings.

Even after the institutionalisation of joint retreats since 2021, which started 18 years after the APRM was established, that organisation's outputs remain advisory rather than actionable. The Burayu Declaration improves coordination language but does not establish mandatory referral thresholds for high-risk governance findings, time-bound PSC responses to APRM alerts nor enforcement mechanisms for follow-up.

The declaration signals intent to address these gaps, including efforts to formalise APRM into a continental early warning process. However, implementation modalities remain unclear, preventing systematic

conversion of governance intelligence into preventive action.

This gap is exacerbated by weak compliance with the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, ratified by 39 states but with limited reporting, with only two implementation reports (state-party reports) submitted under Article 49 of the charter. This reinforces weak accountability.

Institutional duplication and fragmentation

APRM-PSC coordination is further constrained by overlapping AU governance and security frameworks. Alongside the APRM, member states are subject to charter governance obligations, Continental Early Warning System assessments and tools such as the Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework and Country Structural Vulnerability Mitigation Strategy.

While these instruments share the objective of preventing instability, they operate in parallel, using similar indicators and producing overlapping reports. This has created duplication of assessments, fragmented reporting obligations and a diffusion of responsibilities. Rather than being a unified system, the AU governance architecture functions across many diagnostic streams with no single action pathway.

The Burayu Declaration acknowledges the need for harmonisation, but has not yet established a consolidated governance reporting framework. This is despite calling for enhanced coordination and information sharing across the African governance and peace and security architectures.

Is the APRM still necessary?

A recurring but underexamined question is whether the APRM remains necessary given the proliferation of AU governance and security instruments. On one hand, it is the most comprehensive governance diagnostic mechanism in Africa, covering political, economic and institutional governance across 45 states acceding to it, the latest being Somalia, which joined in February 2026. It has also expanded into emerging technologies, particularly through the inclusion of digital governance as a sixth theme in its 2025 to 2028 strategic plan,

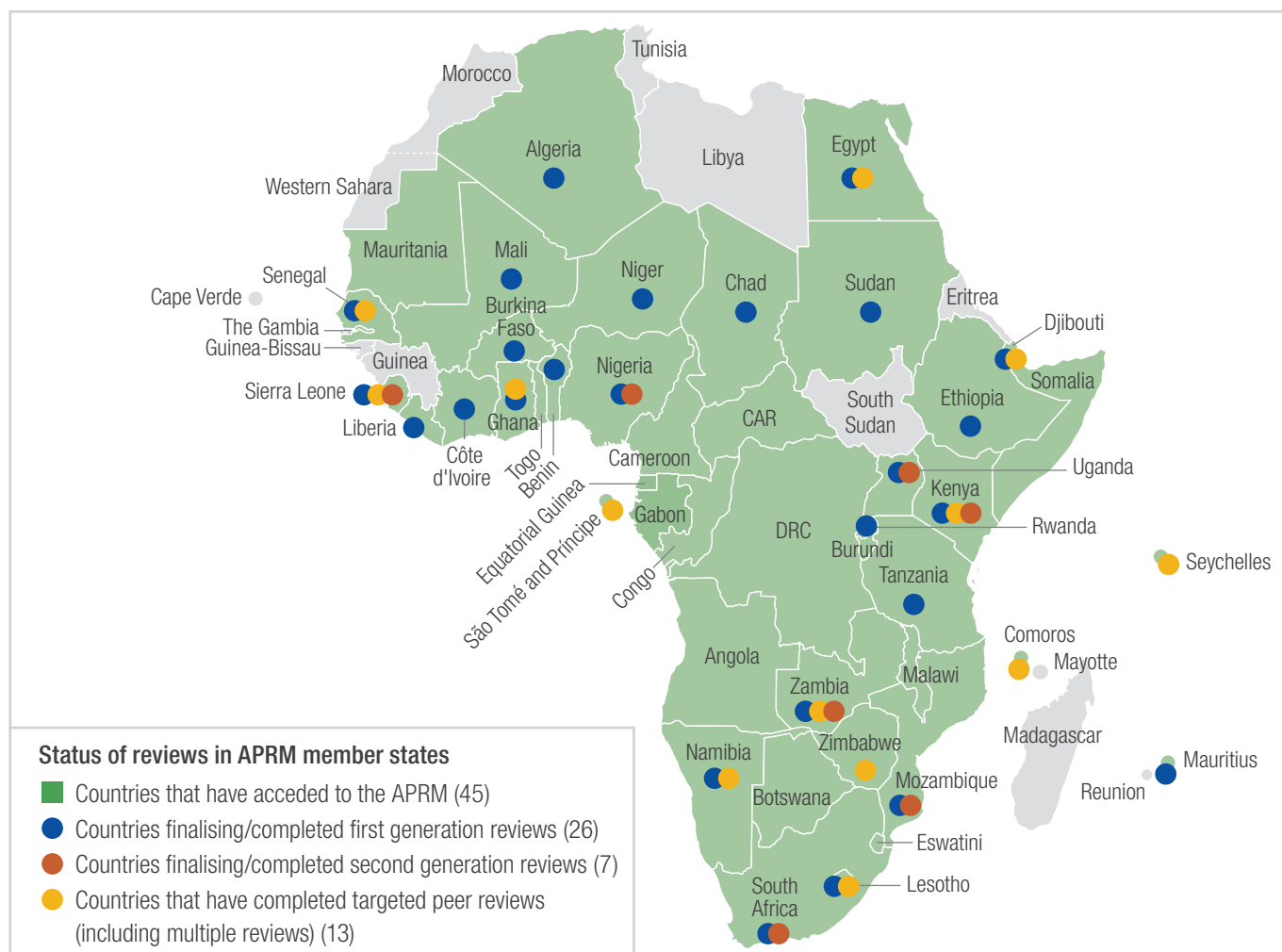
alongside strengthened attention to cross-cutting governance challenges such as climate-related risk and financial integrity.

As stated by APRM Chief Executive Officer Marie-Antoinette Rose-Quatre at the fourth APRM-PSC retreat in 2025, the APRM's preventive value is reinforced by evidence from past reviews, which have repeatedly identified governance risks well before escalation. These included early warnings on xenophobic violence in South Africa (2007 review) and centre-periphery governance tensions that led to the conflict in Tigray in 2020 (2011 review). It also flagged electoral violence risks in Mozambique (2019 review) and structural civil-military imbalances in Sudan (2020 governance gap analysis). These cases underscore that governance-security risks are often diagnosed early but not acted on in time.

This concern is echoed in the declaration, which emphasises the need to strengthen the link between governance assessments and early response mechanisms. On the other hand, its voluntary nature and weak enforcement capacity limit its ability to influence state behaviour, creating a persistent gap between early warning and prompt intervention. Yet, despite clear linkages to peace and security risks, APRM findings are not systematically integrated into AU organ decision-making.

The core issue is not redundancy but lack of institutional integration. The APRM provides deep analysis, while the PSC wields decision-making authority. The absence of structured linkage between the two creates inefficiency. The evolution of joint retreats since 2021, culminating in the declaration, reflects a gradual recognition feeding into enforcement-capable institutions rather than operation in isolation.

Chart 1: Status of reviews in APRM member states



Source: PSC Report

Capacity and implementation gaps

Even where coordination improves, the APRM faces chronic funding instability, reliance on voluntary contributions and uneven technical capacity across member states. This reality is acknowledged by AU Assembly decisions at the 39th AU summit in February 2026, which repeatedly stressed the need for increased APRM financial and human resources.

Nationally, implementation of recommendations remains weak due to limited institutional capacity for absorption and competing political priorities. Without a strong foundation, improved coordination – despite strong diagnostics – could weaken execution. The declaration also highlights the need to strengthen national capacity and resources to implement action plans following APRM reviews.

Evolution of cooperation

Before 2021, cooperation between the APRM and PSC was largely informal, characterised by ad hoc exchanges with limited institutional follow-up. Since the first joint retreat in 2021, cooperation has gradually evolved.

The declaration and planned roadmap are the most formal articulation to date of APRM-PSC coordination and include commitments to institutional interaction, early warning integration and implementation tracking.

Notably, the final declaration narrowed draft references on worsening conflict trends and prolonged political transitions while dropping broader language linking youth empowerment to the African Continental Free-Trade Area (AfCFTA), agricultural transformation and employment.

It expanded provisions on intelligence coordination with African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL), Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA) and the African Union Counter-Terrorism Centre (AUCTC), suggesting a shift toward a more institutionalised and security-oriented framing of the governance of prevention.

However, this evolution remains incremental rather than transformative, as implementation mechanisms remain only partially defined and largely dependent on follow-through whose crystallised outcome would be expected in the roadmap.

From coordination to better cooperation

The APRM-PSC interface reflects a broader structural AU challenge: the gap between governance, and intelligence and security action. The declaration and roadmap signal growing political recognition of this gap and provide a structure for cooperation. However, it remains to be seen whether it will resolve the core constraint: the absence of binding mechanisms that translate governance assessment into timely PSC action.

The key challenges are no longer analytical capacity, but institutional design –specifically, how to ensure that governance risks identified by the APRM systematically trigger preventive diplomacy or intervention by the PSC. Until formal escalation protocols, unified reporting systems and enforcement mechanisms are established, APRM-PSC cooperation will remain consultative rather than operational. The test for the AU is whether it can move from generating governance knowledge to acting on it before it escalates into instability.

Chart 2: Evolution of the five APRM-PSC retreats

Retreat	Year and location	Focus/outcome
First	December 2021 – eThekweni (Durban), South Africa	Established through the eThekweni Conclusions the foundation for cooperation between governance and peace and security institutions
Second	2022 – Durban, South Africa	Shifted toward applying APRM findings to governance fragility and political transitions
Third	2023 – Johannesburg, South Africa	Emphasised structural drivers of conflict, including diversity management and inclusion
Fourth	April 2025 – Johannesburg, South Africa	Focused on operationalising the governance-early-warning-early-action nexus, particularly the APRM's role in conflict prevention
Fifth	April 2026 – Burayu, Ethiopia	Adopted the Burayu Declaration and decided on a joint roadmap, signalling a move to more structured APRM-PSC cooperation and enhanced integration of governance analysis into peace and security decision making

Can South Sudan be stabilised ahead of the upcoming election?

In December 2026, South Sudan plans an election that could significantly reconfigure the country's future. This will be the third attempt to wind up the transition period outlined in the 2018 Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS). Given the country's fragile political and economic situation, three peace initiatives have emerged, each aiming to prevent a full-scale war. The key question, however, is not if the election will happen, but whether any of these initiatives can deliver peace singularly or collectively, where previous efforts have fallen short.

Elusive election

South Sudan's first post-independence election was scheduled for December 2015. Then conflict broke out in December 2013, triggering an arduous peace process culminating in the Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan in 2015. This agreement collapsed in 2016, triggering another round of negotiations that produced the R-ARCSS, through which an election was initially planned for December 2022 to formally end the transitional government's term in February 2023.

As this deadline approached, the transition was extended to February 2025 due to inadequate preparations, insecurity in the country and lack of funding. In September 2024, elections were postponed again for reasons such as disagreements within the government and among key political groups. The transitional government then faced intense domestic and international pressure to hold an election in December 2026, with no further delays.

Fragile peace deal

In early-2025, concerns about the 2026 election emerged. The Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, tasked with overseeing the peace process, began warning about rising insecurity nationwide. Ethnic militia groups such as the White Army and organisations including the National Salvation Front increased their armed activities, leading to retaliations from the South Sudan People's Defence Forces.

This escalation culminated in the infamous Nasir Incident, which Uganda's Peoples' Defence Forces used as a pretext for intervention, citing the need to secure the capital of South Sudan and safeguard Uganda's interests. At the same time, the deadlock within the unity government intensified as the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-In Opposition, President Salva Kiir Mayardit's main political ally in the R-ARCSS, split into factions supporting or opposing the detained leader, Riek Machar.

Political missteps in Juba included Mayardit's unpredictable reshuffling of senior officials, inciting defections within the opposition and failing to effectively implement R-ARCSS. These, coupled with economic decline and worsening humanitarian situation, put the country on a dangerously

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unstable trajectory and cast doubt on the prospects of an election. By December 2025, the risk of a relapse into full-scale conflict was increasing, as peace attempts such as the Kenyan-led Tumannini Initiative and the AU High-level Ad-hoc Committee (C5) had lost momentum and become fragmented.

Conflict persists in South Sudan, destabilising regions such as Upper Nile, Unity and Jonglei. In Jonglei alone, recent clashes displaced more than 280 000 people, raising the number of internally displaced persons in the country to more than two million. The South Sudan National Elections Commission, already facing credibility gaps, continues to lack the funds, technical infrastructure and regulatory frameworks to conduct elections. Even if resources were suddenly available, as hinted at the cabinet meeting of 27 March, the December election is unlikely to take place due to seasonal flooding during that month, which will further disrupt logistics.

In this context, R-ARCSS signatories started discussions in late 2025 on how to salvage the now-defunct agreement and conduct elections by December. Mayardit's unity government faction and its allies proposed, among other measures, separating R-ARCSS from the constitution-making process and diminishing its standing within South Sudan's legal framework before elections. This proposal received lukewarm reception both within South Sudan and among its development partners, who saw it as an effort to undermine the R-ARCSS once and for all.

Averting a relapse

The first of the peace initiatives, the Elections Dialogue Committee, was established by Mayardit on 30 January and includes R-ARCSS signatories and other key stakeholders. This high-level leadership group aims to achieve consensus on election issues, building on previous proposals to suspend certain provisions of the R-ARCSS. Although this is widely viewed as compromised and illegitimate, it remains the preferred approach for Mayardit's powerful allies, even if it is not favoured by him.

The Tumannini Initiative, reintroduced in late January 2026, advocates a national consensus charter for peace and democracy. This is based on a framework that intends to focus negotiations on stabilisation, civilian protection, humanitarian access, trust-building, holding elections

and ending hostilities. The revitalised Tumannini, which holdout groups have already distrusted, was scheduled for launch on 9 February but was delayed pending the outcome of the 39th AU summit.

The third initiative is the AU C5+ process launched during the AU summit and grounded in the primacy of the R-ARCSS. It calls for an immediate ceasefire, urges a leadership retreat in South Africa and involves appointing a former head of state to mediate between Mayardit and Machar.

C5+ and Tumannini don't tackle the Kiir and Machar rivalry, seeing a political role for both

On 22 March, Mayardit returned from a visit to South Africa, which his office stated was part of C5+ efforts. Others described it as a routine medical visit since the Middle East, where he regularly went for treatment, is now inaccessible. On 27 March, Mayardit's council of ministers endorsed C5+ proposals, combining them with its own, but did not publicly clarify whether Machar would be released or if elections would be funded immediately.

Although each proposal varies in scope, all aim to address political deadlock, insecurity and humanitarian crises. But they share a flaw, namely endorsing an extra-constitutional election and postponing until after the election key R-ARCSS tasks such as unifying militia-led armed forces, drafting a permanent constitution and implementing transitional justice reforms.

Consequently, if the election takes place, the winner could claim a new mandate, which might not include explicit commitments to implement the remaining provisions of the R-ARCSS. The C5+ and Tumannini plans also fail to effectively tackle the country's main fault-line – the rivalry between Kiir and Machar – envisaging a role in political life for both before and/or after the election.

Refreshing change of perspective?

On March 24, the AU chairperson appointed former Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete as the high representative for the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea, in line with an AU declaration resolution. He began focusing primarily on South Sudan, seemingly sidestepping Eritrea

and Ethiopia, which are also key parts of his mandate but where political negotiations might take longer to gain traction. This prioritisation reflects a preference for 'manageable' situations and highlights the AU's desire for quick, tangible results to deconflict in the already complex conflict landscape in the Horn of Africa.

Kikwete's visits to South Africa, Uganda, South Sudan and Kenya also reflect an effort to invigorate mediation, but will unintentionally preserve these countries' interests in South Sudan. Notably, Uganda wields significant influence in South Sudanese politics and maintains a military presence there. This makes Uganda's support for C5+ and Tumaini vital to any agreement, and to the stability of the country, Kikwete hopes to keep it from collapse.

Priorities for Kikwete

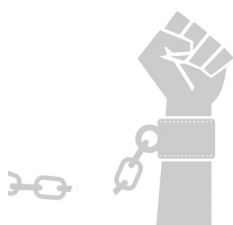
As the AU PSC prepares for its visit to South Sudan, Kikwete must coordinate and unify the fragmented mediation highlighted in the C5+ declaration. First, he must design and establish a single multilayered mediation or facilitation platform involving the AU, Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the international community, with a transparent mechanism for the involvement of South Sudanese communities. This approach should deliberately discourage forum shopping, resolve the deadlock between Kirr and Machar, and prepare to mobilise humanitarian assistance for communities as December nears.

In the short term, Kikwete needs to deliver quick, concrete results, such as freeing political prisoners or, at a minimum, developing a credible election roadmap and securing funding for the election. He should do so, knowing the South Sudanese population has high expectations of him and the elections are still uncertain.

Secondly, Kikwete should take a pragmatic approach that integrates proposals from civil society, opposition armed groups, political parties, and the South Sudanese public into a single text. This approach is essential to preserve his independence and credibility, especially since Kiir's cabinet, which last met on April 18, approved plans to amend the R-ARCSS, subtly aligning Kikwete with their influence.

Without this, Kikwete's efforts risk losing momentum, with the country reverting to the old pattern of political mistakes that lead to violence, mediation and relapse. Indeed, South Sudan's elites are skilled negotiators who have excelled at exploiting mediation loopholes or perceived vulnerabilities of potential mediators. For example, they might prolong discussions over the legality of releasing political detainees, whom they consider criminals. This strategy could be used to justify postponing the election, with Kikwete and his process cited as the reasons.

Nevertheless, Kikwete must avoid South Sudan's total collapse by emphasising stable, incremental progress rather than rushing into elections, which are fraught with challenges. This, unfortunately, might involve negotiating an entirely new agreement based on the R-ARCSS and Tumaini.



KIKWETE NEEDS TO DELIVER QUICK, CONCRETE RESULTS, SUCH AS FREEING POLITICAL PRISONERS

How did Angola perform as the AU chair?

Angola assumed the AU Assembly bureau chairship on 15 February 2025 during the 38th ordinary summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It's taking over from Mauritania, continuing the rotating regional chairship as provided for in Article 6(4) of the AU Constitutive Act. It was a leadership transition from north to south.

Unlike its predecessor, which was unprepared due to regional struggles over the AU Assembly leadership seat between Morocco and Algeria, Angola had a full year to hone plans for its tenure. It was part of the outgoing bureau in line with the AU institutional troika, which features the incumbent, the past chair and the incoming chair. As the troika was not limping, as in 2023 during Comoros' tenure, AU learning was fostered within the Bureau, enabling Angola to prepare better.

The review focused on achievements and challenges that could offer lessons for the current and future chairs

Such readiness was evident in the country's assumption speech, which outlined clear priorities in crucial continental policy, including peace, governance and security, infrastructure, education and human capital development. Given the pivotal role Angola has played in African peace and stabilisation, it had

sufficient credentials to thrive. This was notable in the DRC crisis, its regional positioning in the Southern African Development Community, its PSC membership and its economic development.

Much was expected from the past chair's tenure. Angola's handing over of the AU Assembly leadership to Burundi during the AU 39th ordinary summit in February 2026 was an opportune time to look back on its term. The review focused on achievements and challenges that could offer lessons for the current and future chairs.

Recalling Angola's priorities

From Angolan President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço's chairship speech during the AU 38th summit, six priorities were identified (see table below). According to the *PSC Report*, he prioritised peace and security as foundational to development in Africa, in line with the Agenda 2063 'silencing the guns' agenda. Another focus was infrastructure development, which, according to some AU staff, was considered a precondition for the success of AfCFTA.

However, Angola did not depart from its predecessors, Comoros and Senegal, retaining a comparable range and number of priorities. These continued efforts to address continental challenges contrast with the AU Assembly's calls for narrower priorities. Delivering on several priorities has been a test for AU chairs.

Chart 3: Angola stated its priorities in February 2025

Priority	Focus	Strategic objectives
Peace and security	Conflict resolution, counter-terrorism, post-coup transitions and unconstitutional changes of government	Enable stability and silence the guns
Infrastructure development	Transport, energy and digital infrastructure	Drive industrialisation and connectivity
Global multilateralism	Debt relief, climate finance, Africa Impact Finance Initiative reform, G20 and the United Nations	Improve access to capital and autonomy, and increase global influence
Continental integration (AfCFTA)	Intracontinental trade facilitation and commercial corridors	Boost intra-African trade
Human capital and resilience	Education, agriculture and climate resilience	Strengthen long-term capacity
AU reform and financial autonomy	Efficiency and member state funding	Improve implementation capacity

Source: President Lourenço's speech during the AU 38th ordinary summit

Marking achievements

Angola's impact was perceptible mostly in advocating infrastructure development. One achievement was the Luanda Infrastructure Financing Summit. Held from 28 to 31 October 2025, it sought to generate strategic orientations on how infrastructure can unlock Africa's industrial potential under AfCFTA. The theme was 'Capital, corridors, trade: investing in infrastructure for AfCFTA and shared prosperity'.

It brought together continental decision-makers and partners, including the private sector, international development agencies and financial institutions, such as the African Development Bank and Afreximbank. It gave African-led infrastructure initiatives momentum and secured the commitment of financial institutions to support ongoing and upcoming Agenda 2063 projects.

Angola's impact was perceptible mostly in advocating for infrastructure development, with the Luanda Infrastructure Financing Summit being one example

Unlike previous forums, said a policymaker, private sector participation at the Luanda summit was unprecedented, with the private sector owning the debates on the African infrastructure development vision.

Angola also stepped up its conference diplomacy to advance African agency in global fora. United Nations Security Council reform and Africa's meaningful participation in the G20 through the AU were prominent on the agenda. Although Angola wasn't the first country to prioritise these issues, it helped keep up its political momentum.

Moreover, Angola hosted the seventh AU-European Union summit on 24 November 2025, which delivered strong support for multilateralism, a strengthened partnership and shared commitment to a rule-based international order with the UN at its core. Issuing a joint press release as they did was commendable, given that the two partners didn't agree on outcomes during previous meetings. This demonstrated Angola's ability not only to drive consensus among AU states but to assuage partners, especially when fragmentation has become the norm in global multilateralism.

Other impacts included the executive council's deliberation on the AU Commission's skill assessment and competency audit during the July 2025 AU and regional economic communities/regional mechanisms mid-year coordination meeting. The adoption of the AU Assembly's new working methods was also commendable.

This facilitated the ongoing implementation of outcomes from an eight-year-long process, resulting in the placement of 617 staff deemed fit for continuation at the AU Commission and the separation of 187 unfit staff.

617

STAFF MEMBERS WERE
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Many observers and AU staff believe the decision could boost the commission's delivery capacity. Many praised Angola's leadership in advancing the competency audit process, an essential pillar of ongoing AU reform, in close collaboration with AU reform champion, Kenya's President William Ruto.

The new working methods, adopted at the 39th summit, also streamlined meeting agendas and reduced meeting length. According to most policymakers consulted, this is an Angolan strategic legacy for the AU, as full implementation could ensure greater focus on key issues, optimal use of resources and reduced duplication of decisions.

Shortcomings

Despite the outgoing chair's achievements, stakeholders, including policymakers from member states and AU Commission experts, have raised three main challenges. The first is the prioritisation of six vast domains. Addressing peace and security alone has been daunting, given the persistence of major crises in Angola, the DRC, the Central Sahel and countries experiencing unconstitutional changes of government.

Even though the chair, as a PSC member until 31 March 2026, and the AU Assembly bureau accelerated efforts to address these situations, their impact is perceived largely as scratching the surface. Angola's efforts were watered down by antagonistic parties that were not committed to African-led processes.

Addressing peace and security has been difficult for almost all chairs over the last five years, as the same crises persist

An expert told the Institute for Security Studies that DRC President Felix Tshisekedi did not inform Lourenço about his visit to Luanda before the Doha talks. At some point, Rwanda was not receptive to numerous calls for direct talks with the DRC. Such slippages did not ease Angola's mediation.

Furthermore, addressing peace and security has been difficult for almost all chairs over the last five years, as the same crises persist. Similar issues were evident with human capital and resilience, as well as AU financial

autonomy, which have not gone beyond conference diplomacy and rhetoric.

Many experts and AU staff interviewed noted that the chair was overstretched across priorities. Thus, it tended to focus on Agenda 2063 areas that aligned more closely with its national interests, notably AfCFTA, infrastructure, with the Lobito Corridor at the centre.

Even though numerous priorities compete for continental leadership's attention, a short tenure needs focus

Then there are the AU's chronic financial challenges, especially given that its programme budget is funded 85% by external partners. Despite its expressed will to foster AU financial autonomy, Angola couldn't reverse the curve, given member states' limited commitment. Moreover, crucial areas such as peace support operations, including the AU Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia, remain underfunded.

The third limitation was the lack of clear success metrics and a publicly available work plan. Angola suffered from an endemic flaw that AU chairs have faced: the absence of AU Assembly chairship guidelines defining key performance indicators and prioritisation criteria.

Lessons from Angola's tenure

Even though numerous priorities compete for continental leadership's attention, a short tenure needs focus. The AU Assembly bureau should make this a must. Identifying priorities accurately requires a collegial rather than chair-led decision.

Furthermore, clear guidelines should be considered to generate institutional metrics for assessing tenures. A clear work plan with performance indicators could complement the guidelines to foster accountability and learning.

Ultimately, complex issues are handled quickly. Therefore, the milestone approach would be better suited than the informal 'achievement vs failure' criteria by which chairs are currently assessed.

Transitional justice gains momentum but accountability gaps persist

African states are involved in transitional justice, yet political constraints, resource gaps and implementation challenges remain, says Dr John Ikubaje, Head of the Transitional Justice Unit in the Department of Political Affairs at the AUC.

How would you assess the progress made by the AU in implementing the 2019 transitional justice policy in its member states?

The policy was a milestone, the culmination of nearly 10 years of consultations with member states, civil society, academia and practitioners. That inclusive process was crucial because transitional justice was initially misunderstood, often reduced to criminal accountability or imprisonment of political leaders.

In reality, it encompasses accountability, reconciliation, institutional reform and victim-centred approaches. Before the policy, the AU was already involved in justice-related work, but there was no single framework that brought these elements together. Because member states were involved in the policy's development, they see it as their own, which has eased implementation.

The AU Transitional Justice Unit has focused on technical support. We have assisted countries such as The Gambia, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Lesotho, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In Ethiopia, for example, we deployed technical experts to shape the national transitional justice policy and its implementation roadmap. Even before the policy was formally adopted, the draft served as a guide for The Gambia's Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission.

We also developed a guide to the AU Transitional Justice Policy and a continental implementation roadmap. We established a member states platform that brings together countries at different stages of transitional justice implementation. This helped build peer learning and demand for AU support, which has grown significantly in recent years.

How is the AU working beyond national frameworks?

Many justice challenges are cross-border, but national transitional justice policies cannot fully address violations of this nature. That is why we also work with regional

economic communities and regional mechanisms. For example, the Economic Community of West African States and the Lake Chad River Basin Commission requested assistance in developing a regional transitional justice framework, which is particularly important given that insurgency and human rights violations affect multiple countries.

The AU also supported the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in the formulation of its draft transitional justice framework, currently awaiting adoption. In addition, it provided technical support for the Southern African Development Community's post-conflict reconstruction and development and transitional justice framework in 2025. Regional frameworks can address issues such as cross-border accountability, displacement, human rights violations and shared victim experiences through commissions of enquiry.

How is the AU integrating traditional justice mechanisms?

The policy promotes traditional and indigenous justice mechanisms, which are often more accessible and culturally relevant. These mechanisms can handle many cases and promote reconciliation at the community level. However, we emphasise that they must comply with international human rights standards, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Certain practices cannot be accepted – for example, harmful or degrading traditional procedures. Thus, the approach is not to romanticise traditional justice, but to adapt and regulate it. To support this, we are developing continental guidelines on mechanisms to inform member states. We have also translated the policy into languages beyond the AU's official languages to ensure accessibility.

How does the AU balance stability over accountability in fragile contexts?

We promote a balanced narrative. Some actors prioritise reconciliation, while others emphasise accountability. Both are important, but one cannot substitute for the

other. Without accountability, reconciliation risks being superficial. It is like covering a wound without treating it – it will reopen.

In contexts such as South Sudan's, the tendency is to prioritise truth-telling and reconciliation, given the fragility of the political environment. While sequencing may be necessary, we consistently emphasise that accountability is essential for sustainable peace. That country's transitional justice framework includes a truth commission, a reparations authority and a hybrid court. Progress has been made on some elements, but accountability mechanisms have been slower to advance.

Should transitional justice wait until conflicts end?

No. Even in active conflict settings such as Sudan, violations can be documented, victims given psychosocial and mental health support and the groundwork laid for accountability. Waiting until conflicts end risks neglecting victims and losing crucial evidence. We also include transitional justice in peace agreements, as in Ethiopia. This ensures that processes are embedded from the outset of political transitions.

What are the main constraints to meaningful victim participation?

Victim participation is central to the policy, but several constraints exist, the most significant being limited funding, particularly for reparation programmes. While the policy provides for a transitional justice fund, resources have been a major challenge. Institutional capacity is another issue, as many countries lack the structures to address victims effectively.

To address this, we advocate establishing victim support centres. These exist in countries such as The Gambia and South Sudan, where they help organise victims, amplify their voices and facilitate engagement with national processes. We also emphasise the importance of managing expectations. Transitional justice processes cannot meet all victim needs immediately.

How does the AU adapt transitional justice frameworks in cases of violent extremism?

In regions such as the Lake Chad Basin, transitional justice must be inclusive and context-specific. This includes engaging, where possible, with non-state actors and affected communities. Excluding such actors can limit the effectiveness of transitional justice processes.

We encourage member states to adhere to the policy's principles, particularly inclusivity, participation and accountability, while adapting its implementation to their circumstances. However, the AU cannot impose solutions. Member state ownership remains paramount.

What monitoring and evaluation tools or benchmarks are used to assess implementation, and where are the biggest accountability gaps?

We report to the AU Peace and Security Council and use high-level transitional justice forums. Peer learning platforms among member states are key, as is engagement with civil society. Our forums allow states to present progress, share challenges and receive feedback from other stakeholders. Civil society also plays an important role in monitoring, providing independent assessments of transitional justice processes.

Where are the key research and policy gaps?

There is significant research on transitional justice in Africa. The challenge is not a lack of knowledge but the translation of research into policy. Many policymakers do not engage with lengthy academic outputs, preferring concise, targeted policy briefs that present actionable recommendations. We encourage researchers to focus on how their work can directly inform policymaking, for example, by producing short briefs tailored to ministries of justice or peace.

How does the AU target youth and women?

We have invested heavily in the African Youth for Transitional Justice and African Women for Transitional Justice platforms, which are active in research, advocacy and policy engagement. They produce policy briefs, participate in consultations and contribute to continental implementation processes – essential for inclusive and sustainable transitional justice.

What are the main challenges?

Resource constraints, political resistance and implementation capacity. Simultaneously, demand for justice support is growing, as evidenced by the need for assistance from more member states. The task now is to scale up support while maintaining quality and ensuring that transitional justice contributes meaningfully to sustainable peace, justice and development across Africa.

About the PSC Report

The *Peace and Security Council Report* analyses developments and decisions at the African Union Peace and Security Council (PSC). The monthly publication is the only one of its kind dedicated to providing current analysis of the PSC's work. It is written by a team of ISS analysts in Addis Ababa.

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