

**Africa Programme  
Conference Summary**

# **Africa's rising influence**

## **Advancing agency in foreign policy and global governance**

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## Introduction

Africa is increasingly exerting more influence in global governance. The African Union (AU)'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, the success of these initiatives remains conditional on support from 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; 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 – the conference examined how Africa can assert greater strategic influence on the global stage. Key questions included:

- What approaches should Africa adopt to navigate a rapidly evolving multipolar world and balance relationships with both established and emerging powers?
- How can deeper continental and regional coordination enhance Africa's collective leverage in global decision-making?
- What strategies can Africa pursue to strengthen economic resilience, promote inclusive growth, and advance its priorities in global economic debates?
- How can Africa strengthen and resource African-led peace and security initiatives to shape global norms and respond effectively to evolving security challenges?
- In what ways can African-led initiatives in climate action and soft power diplomacy bolster Africa's global influence and deliver meaningful outcomes?

## SPEAKERS

**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

## Opening keynotes

H.E. Dr Gedion Timothewos delivered an opening keynote address, emphasizing the need for African countries and institutions to move beyond mere participation in global forums such as the G20, and to translate presence into influence and tangible outcomes. He stressed the imperative of regional coordination and interdependence for Africa to become a true 'co-author' of the evolving global order.

Reforming global governance structures – including the UN Security Council (UNSC) and international financial institutions – remains a central collective aspiration, aimed at securing greater access to development finance, climate adaptation resources and debt restructuring mechanisms. The inseparable link between peace and prosperity also remains key, and the minister reiterated the need for African-led solutions to address the continent's security challenges.

Moving beyond politics and economics, the minister called for the soft power of culture, creativity, ideas and identity to become a central pillar of Africa's collective foreign policy. He stressed the importance of choices made today, such as preserving sovereignty over the continent's resources and channelling the energy of Africa's youth towards constructive goals, as critical to laying the foundations for an 'African century' in the 22nd century.

Ambassador Mohamed El-Amine Souef delivered a keynote address on behalf of the AU Commission Chairperson H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf. He affirmed that Africa is no longer a passive observer of global affairs but is actively participating in defining international agendas and delivering outcomes, which not only concern the continent but humanity at large, by contributing to a more equitable world order.

Reinforcing Africa's negotiation power and policy agency on the international stage can only happen through greater regional integration, to unlock Africa's full potential in the trade, digital and green industrialization domains. He stressed the importance of regional initiatives in consolidating peace and favouring economic resilience on the continent, notably through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). The ambassador called for a sustained and predictable access to climate finance of \$100 billion per year to support the energy transition, and to make use of the first G20 on African soil to increase African representation on the UNSC and in international financial institutions.

## SPEAKERS

**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 (2013–17) [Virtual]

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

# Panel 1 | Power, partnerships and the global order: Africa's role in a multipolar world

- Speakers explored how Africa should define its strategic autonomy within an international order that is increasingly multipolar. Autonomy is not only about self-awareness – recognizing the continent's assets and vulnerabilities – but also about making a decisive shift towards conscious collective action. Africa stands at a watershed moment and must aim to move from the periphery to the centre of global affairs. While the AU's Agenda 2063 offers a guiding vision, autonomy will ultimately only materialize if African states translate aspiration into tangible outcomes: creating jobs, ensuring energy security, harnessing technology and artificial intelligence (AI), securing peace and addressing governance challenges.
- A key question is how Africa should balance its relations with both traditional and emerging powers while reinforcing intra-African cooperation. The continent should avoid taking sides in geopolitical rivalries and instead prioritize its own interests. Africa must position itself as a champion of a rule-based international system grounded in law, while African countries most coordinate more effectively with one another in multilateral forums. The UN is where Africa has its greatest strength, as the continent represents the largest constituency in the UNSC. Engagement with new power centres like the BRICS and alignment with the Global South will be essential, alongside cultivating a supra-African perspective that embraces collaboration over domination – reflecting the spirit of *ubuntu*.
- Achieving greater internal coherence was emphasized as an essential prerequisite to a common foreign policy position in Africa. Domestic policies must align with shared continental aspirations. It is only after this that collective action on urgent priorities – such as climate change, technology and AI governance, and peace and security – can be taken. Instability heightens the risk that the continent's critical minerals will continue to be exploited by those who profit from conflict, rather than serving as a source of prosperity for Africans.

## SPEAKERS

**H.E. Mohamed Abdi Ware**,  
Deputy Executive Secretary,  
Intergovernmental Authority on  
Development (IGAD)

**Ambassador Jevin Pillay  
Ponisamy**, Permanent  
Representative, Office of the  
Southern African Development  
Community to the AU

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

# Spotlight session | Regional– continental coordination for global impact

- Speakers discussed how regional economic communities (RECs) could improve coordination to advance Africa's collective interests on the world stage. Peace and security remain integral to their success, and political dissatisfaction among the youth was raised as a key issue that risks fuelling leaderless uprisings – leaving young people vulnerable to recruitment by extremist and terrorist groups, from the Sahel to the Horn of Africa.
- Another concern raised was the limited influence of Africa as a collective actor compared to key individual states, weakening the continent's shared influence. To address this, establishing an African equivalent of the G20 was proposed: comprising the continent's largest economies, established either through the AU or RECs, and building on Africa's permanent seat at the G20. The principle of subsidiarity was highlighted, with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) – one of the AU's RECs – cited as an example of effective sub-delegation and coordination, particularly in advancing climate leadership and peace and security initiatives across its member states.
- The under-implementation of the Abuja Treaty (1991) and subsequent agreements – including the 2008 AU-REC Memorandum of Understanding which defines the working relationship between the AU and RECs – was identified as a critical issue. Speakers stressed the importance of reviving and fully operationalizing these frameworks to strengthen continental integration and coordination. A clear division of labour among the AU, RECs and member states remains essential. Yet some of the AU's institutional reforms, proposed in 2017 when Rwanda's President Paul Kagame led the Reforms Unit, have been adopted. IGAD currently chairs the Inter-REC Coordination Platform, working to create synergies and define responsibilities in collaboration with the AU.
- Speakers reiterated that the success of the AfCFTA depends on the active support of RECs, particularly in areas such as tariff harmonization and monetary integration. Encouragingly, collaboration is already under way through initiatives such as the Tripartite Free Trade Area between the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), which was highlighted as a critical step towards AfCFTA implementation. Progress so far includes efforts to harmonize trade policies, reduce duplication of frameworks and invest in regional infrastructure.

## SPEAKERS

**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

## Panel 2 | African priorities in sustainable development, climate diplomacy and biodiversity

- New non-European actors are increasingly asserting influence across Africa. Middle powers such as the Gulf states and Turkey play a significant role in this shift and should not be ignored; they offer important opportunities for collaboration in climate diplomacy. At the same time, the African Group of Negotiators remains central to shaping climate diplomacy both regionally and globally.
- The AfCFTA remains a key driver of sustainable development. Green industrialization is a strategic investment focus of the AfCFTA, and is essential to fostering sustainable growth and regional trade. Indeed, economic development and green industrialization are not mutually exclusive. Climate-led investments and new technologies can accelerate diversification, enabling African economies to move beyond commodity dependence.
- Local-led climate action is often overlooked in climate agendas that focus on national-level strategies. The challenge is making this ‘middle space’ work to ensure inclusive governance in energy, waste and food systems. Strengthening institutional capacity is essential to ensure sub-national actors have clearly defined roles, supported by robust accountability and transparency measures so that benefits reach intended communities. Equally important is the alignment of global and national priorities to create coherent and inclusive climate governance frameworks. Countries need to prioritize projects with multiple co-benefits and foster cross-country dialogue.
- Carbon markets in Africa need to be redefined. Despite delivering multiple co-benefits, African carbon credits remain significantly undervalued. Countries should establish strong national agendas and implement clear regulatory frameworks that create enabling environments for ‘high-integrity’ carbon markets, fostering investor confidence and leveraging Article 6 of the Paris Agreement to advance the Sustainable Development Goals. Short-term grants alone are insufficient; dedicated financial mechanisms like the Climate Justice Fund are needed to address climate-related economic and non-economic losses, ensuring that the most vulnerable communities have equitable access to climate finance and a meaningful voice in decision-making.

## SPEAKERS

**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

## Keynote address

- The AU's entry into the G20 and its persistent calls for UNSC reform signal a growing awareness that Africa can no longer remain a passive recipient of global decisions. To become a co-architect of a new global order, Africa must translate these aspirations into tangible outcomes: economic transformation, sustainable development, and improved quality of life for its people.
- A critical starting point lies in rethinking the extractive industry. Africa's resource wealth remains underutilized, often confined to raw commodity exports. The shift must be towards knowledge-based resource management and value addition. The permanent secretary gave an example of Nigeria's renewed mining agenda, which prioritizes value addition and local processing as well as transparency and accountability via digital mining reforms. It also emphasizes community inclusion, environmental sustainability and regional cooperation to combat illegal mining while promoting cross-border investment flows.
- Nigeria's mining strategy is not only important for the country's GDP growth but also for Africa's strategic autonomy. By supplying inputs for Africa-led clean energy technologies, infrastructure development and local manufacturing, decarbonization presents an opportunity. For a just energy transition, regional harmonization is pivotal: creating a regional critical minerals strategy aligned with AfCFTA agreements. This strategy must enable Africa to negotiate fair trade agreements that prioritize local processing and foster intra-African industrial linkages.
- The permanent secretary asserted Nigeria's strong support for the establishment of an African Minerals Alliance, building on the existing African Mineral Strategy Group, as a collective platform to harmonize policies. The success of the AfCFTA ultimately depends on deeper coordination between the AU, RECs and member states. Regional cooperation must evolve beyond fragmented bilateralism towards functional integration.
- Collective action is essential to overcome structural inequalities that limit Africa's influence on global finance and governance systems. Equally important is Africa's cultural and intellectual renaissance, which must form part of its foreign policy. By investing in education, science, technology and the creative industries, Africa can become not only resource-rich but knowledge-rich – shaping global narratives rather than being shaped by them. Ultimately, Africa's influence will not be measured by the number of seats it occupies on global platforms, but by the extent to which it improves the lives of its people.

## SPEAKERS

**Zainab Ahmed**, Executive Director, EDS25, World Bank Group; Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Federal Republic of Nigeria (2019–23)  
*[Virtual]*

**Christopher Legilisho**, Economist, East Africa, Standard Bank

**Liliane Mouan**, Human Rights and Sustainable Development Advisor, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

**Ambassador Salvator Matata**, Head, COMESA Liaison Office to the AU

Chair: **David Lubin**, Michael Klein Senior Research Fellow, Global Economy and Finance Programme, Chatham House

## Panel 3 | Advancing stronger, sustainable economic growth and financial resilience

- The link between the peace–security nexus and regional integration is significant. Governments face the challenge of balancing infrastructure investment with social priorities such as health, education and youth employment, particularly as many African countries continue to recover from global shocks and political unrest. A whole-of-government approach to development is thus critical, ensuring that there is policy coherence. Discussions should extend beyond the manufacturing and extractive ministries to include education, health and finance. Industry as well as financial and capital markets should also be involved in designing industrial policies, replacing competing investment codes that stifle growth.
- Trade depends on fiscal connectivity. Investments should be made not only in hard infrastructure such as transport and energy networks, but also in soft infrastructure including corridor development. Prioritizing regional value chains is also critical to buffer against global commodity shocks. At the same time, Africa should move beyond thinking of resilience only in the short term; the continent should invest in a transformative approach that guarantees the free movement of goods, services, capital, technology and information, underpinned by political and macroeconomic stability.
- The World Bank focuses on boosting infrastructure and connectivity, backing various regional corridors. Public–private partnerships (PPPs) are a vital mechanism for mobilizing private capital and expertise. Equally important is creating enabling environments and fostering entrepreneurship – establishing markets and then going on to strengthen them to attract sustained private investment. Alongside physical connectivity, investing in human capital is essential for building a competitive industrial sector – aligning skills with emerging industry needs and ensuring growth that leads to job creation and is sustainable, inclusive and climate-resilient. Success will depend on strong governance, political will and strategic partnerships.
- Greater attention should be given to the role that special economic zones – both national and cross-border – can play in driving private sector investment. Fiscal incentives should extend beyond multinational corporations to include micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, providing space for such groups to contribute to economic growth and actively participate in shaping the discussion.

- Finally, there is a need to rethink how growth is measured. Beyond GDP, metrics should incorporate vulnerability indices, public participation and the voices of marginalized communities, recognizing that inequality directly impacts peace and security. Investment in high-quality data and its effective use in policymaking is essential. Data should drive inclusion, with statisticians and planners trained to integrate aspects like gender, disability and geographic diversity into economic policy and development planning.

## SPEAKERS

**H.E. Ambassador El Hadji Ibrahima 'Boly' Diene**, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission for Somalia & Head, AU 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 (2021–22)

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

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

# Panel 4 | Strengthening African-led peace and security initiatives

## Leaders' panel

- The principle of African-led solutions was strongly reaffirmed. African actors should take the lead in defining the problems they face and identifying context-specific solutions before seeking external support. This approach is crucial because local perceptions of justice and reconciliation often differ from those promoted by international organizations. Many conflicts on the continent are civil wars, where neither side is entirely innocent or guilty, making simple judicial approaches ineffective. Speakers emphasized that flexibility and creativity are essential for effective peacekeeping strategies.
- Speakers agreed that the main challenges and solutions lie in implementation. Implementing existing frameworks and mechanisms is more important than creating new normative and policy instruments in the AU. The lack of member states' funding towards AU peace operations was also highlighted, with different ideas on the way forward. Suggestions ranged from the AU leaving large-scale peacekeeping operations to the UN, to strengthening continent-led peace operations with innovative funding approaches like public–private partnerships and tax levies to increase member states' contributions. What was agreed, however, was that the AU should retain a strategic role in shaping and guiding these operations. Experimentation with contact groups composed of eminent African experts has proven effective in safeguarding African-led initiatives from external interference. Clear communiqués that articulate the AU's vision for resolving conflicts were also highlighted as potential tools to strengthen the AU's position, particularly in situations where it may lack leverage.
- Speakers agreed on the need for greater investment and emphasis on preventative measures. Over-reliance on military solutions as a first response was identified as a major issue, often sidelining diplomacy and the importance of prevention. Preventative action should leverage existing mechanisms such as the Peace and Security Council (PSC) Protocol – which ensures peacekeeping operations are not obstructed by member states invoking sovereignty barriers – and stronger investment in early-warning and rapid-response systems. UNSC Resolution 2719 – which enables funding for AU-led peace support operations through UN-assessed contributions – remains in force and must be fully implemented.
- Beyond the importance of flexible and locally grounded solutions, the need for genuine inclusivity in peacekeeping efforts was stressed. The exclusion of women, youth and grassroots actors has been a persistent issue, eroding trust and fuelling frustration. Inclusion should focus on the influence and impact these actors bring, rather than token representation or numbers.

## SPEAKERS

**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 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

## Experts' panel

- Greater investment in knowledge production is essential to understand how Africa has asserted its role historically and to lay the foundation for future leadership. Successful peace agreements over the past decades highlight the value of local participation in the design of agreements, the importance of thoughtful selection of mediators, and the positive role that external actors can play in catalysing success. At the same time, the constraints of multilateral organizations such as the EU and UN, combined with shifting global dynamics, must be understood. A key gap identified is the absence of an ad hoc group of political leaders that transcends borders – a model that proved effective in peace operations in the past. Without such internal efforts, initiatives to reassert African agency and deal with interference between states or from external actors will be undermined.
- State fragility – linked to contestation over ownership, identity, governance and resource sharing – and a lack of continental leadership remain key drivers of conflict, even in relatively stable states. The AU is often sidelined and struggles to intervene effectively, as seen in Sudan, highlighting the need to look beyond preventative diplomacy. Innovative approaches that explore the role the AU's potential role in power-sharing, constitutional reform and national dialogues, while respecting state sovereignty, should be examined. The AU can lead these conversations, though its momentum depends heavily on member states and RECs.
- Indeed, the capacity of RECs to support peace operations should be better leveraged under the principle of subsidiarity. Addressing asymmetrical threats requires coordination between the AU and RECs and better use of specialized institutions and frameworks such as the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and AFRIPOL rather than new mechanisms. The idea of 'ownership' goes beyond financing – it also means political will, which remains the biggest barrier to implementation.
- The lack of political will in peace operations is ultimately both a crisis and an opportunity. Military interventions, which often dominate response strategies, rarely deliver sustainable peace – particularly when externally supported actors are involved. More creative approaches to building peace are needed. Long-term peace depends on protecting civilians and rebuilding a civic bargain. The APSA should be reimagined to integrate women and youth agendas. Peace must be reframed as gender justice, equality and an intergenerational covenant – moving beyond prevention to include recovery, relief and inclusive political participation. Grassroots, youth and women's movements should be central to this vision.

## SPEAKERS

**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

## Panel 5 | Africa's soft power: Cultural diplomacy and global influence

- Africa's cultural renaissance is thriving yet remains fragmented. Despite the global appeal of African culture, the continent's governments often overlook the commercial-cultural nexus: how cultural influence can translate into economic growth, as demonstrated elsewhere by the rise of K-pop for example. To harness this potential, a centralized movement is needed: one that leverages cultural power as a tool of diplomacy and embraces the African diaspora. A digital-first approach is central to this vision, with the intersection of culture and technology offering immense opportunities.
- Technology, however, presents both promise and peril. AI remains underutilized for positive impact and overexploited for harm, with disinformation as its most pervasive export. Ethical standards for tech entrepreneurs and strong regulation against fake news are essential to ensure AI serves Africa's interests. Regional entities like the AU must lead in setting these frameworks, as the EU does.
- Media plays a critical role in shaping narratives. African media should prioritize local stories rather than play 'catch-up' in debunking narratives in the Western media; it should amplify overlooked voices and foster resource-sharing across countries. Consistency and integrity are vital to counter disinformation, especially as AI becomes more influential. Data remain one of Africa's greatest challenges, yet data are key to shaping narratives and driving policy.
- Big technology companies – including Google, Amazon and OpenAI – often treat Africa as an afterthought, limiting access to AI platforms and shaping fundraising realities. This undermines productivity and competitiveness, raising urgent questions about equity. Africa must assert itself as both a market and a maker of global technology.
- Finally, while Africa exports culture, it rarely owns the platforms that monetize this influence. Reforming weak intellectual property laws and creating mechanisms to protect and finance cultural value are urgent priorities. Leveraging soft power requires strategic policy and stronger continental negotiation to ensure AI and technology work for Africa, not against it. Without a supportive policy environment, there is a risk that entrepreneurs will leave for markets where systems work, depriving Africa of its creative and technological potential.

## SPEAKERS

**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

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

- Africa's greatest challenge is not a lack of resources but a lack of effective leadership. Corruption and weak governance continue to prevent the continent from leveraging its vast mineral wealth and strategic position in the global economy. Historically, Africa has demonstrated its influence – such as when African countries played a decisive role in granting China a permanent seat on the UNSC. Yet today, this leverage remains underutilized. Lessons from other regions show what is possible: China's deliberate control of rare metals transformed these resources into geopolitical power, even shaping US sanctions policy.
- Equally critical is the role of youth in shaping Africa's future. Sustainable development cannot be achieved without placing young people at the centre of decision-making. Too often sidelined, Africa's youth hold immense potential to address economic, governance and security challenges. The surge of youth-led startups during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated young people's capacity for innovation, but their contributions extend far beyond business. Shifting perceptions of young people, from being seen merely as a demographic statistic to being recognized as drivers of transformation, is essential.
- Recent waves of protests across the continent reflect a growing frustration with democratic systems that fail to deliver. This momentum must be channelled into meaningful reform – expanding youth participation beyond symbolic roles in major institutions, and embedding young people's voices in inclusive governance structures at both national and continental levels. Strengthening AU frameworks for youth, peace and security agendas – supported by domestic funding – and ensuring global recognition of continental priorities will be critical to building inclusive, resilient systems that reflect Africa's aspirations.

## Conclusion

The conference brought together current and former representatives of governments, regional institutions, and leading foundations and think-tanks, generating a wealth of insights. Discussions spanned international and regional partnerships, economic resilience, sustainable development, climate diplomacy, peace and security, and the role of soft power and cultural influence in shaping Africa's global presence. Some key takeaways include:

- Inclusive governance must remain central across all domains – peace and security, sustainable development, climate diplomacy and soft power. Youth, women and grassroots organizations should be actively engaged, not as token participants but as influential actors.
- Context-specific approaches and preventative measures are critical, particularly for peace support operations. While external actors can play a role, African actors must lead in defining problems and identifying the most suitable solutions.
- Implementation remains the greatest challenge in effective governance. Existing institutions and mechanisms must be utilized and leveraged to improve regional coordination and integration on the most urgent issues facing the continent.
- Peace and prosperity are inseparable, and both are closely linked to regional integration. Fiscal and trade connectivity is vital for economic growth, but domestic policies must align with shared continental aspirations before collective action on urgent priorities can take place.
- Africa's cultural assets – including music, sport and art – should be elevated as 'soft power' tools of foreign policy alongside political and economic influence.

Chatham House, Amani Africa and the UN Development Programme would like to thank all of the speakers, participants and staff who contributed and took the time to share this discussion with us.

