TENTATIVE CONCEPT NOTE

AFRICAN AGENCY AT A TIME OF GLOBAL DISORDER: MOBILIZING SUPPORT FOR ARTICLE 109 ON UNITED NATIONS CHARTER REVIEW

Friday 23rd October 2026, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

Background

The world is experiencing a major upheaval and a historic moment of rupture due to geopolitical conflicts and the evident failure to prevent and resolve wars in Africa — such as in Sudan, DRC, Mozambique, the Sahel, and Somalia — as well as internationally, including the US-Israel-Iran, Israel-Palestine, and Russia-Ukraine wars. The threats posed by potential nuclear war, climate catastrophe, and the precarious, exponential, and unregulated growth of artificial intelligence demand urgent initiatives to transform the multilateral framework system to address global challenges of the 21st Century effectively. Now, more than ever, African agency must be amplified during this moment of global disorder to ensure the region assumes its rightful place as an equal partner alongside major and emerging powers on the global stage. For more than two decades, African leaders through the African Union (AU) have consistently called for reform of global governance institutions. The AU Committee of Ten on the Reform of the United Nations Security Council (AU C-10) has maintained a consistent continental stance on Security Council reform, and the AU C-10 Model adopted in Lusaka, Zambia, in July 2025, advocates for a more democratic and accountable UNSC, which will require a review of the UN Charter.

This aligns with the African Union's mandate, as articulated in its Pan-African vision and aspirations outlined in Agenda 2063, which calls for Africa to become "a global and influential actor." It is now urgent to amplify African agency to advocate for and build coalitions to design and create new structures for managing and governing the planet.

The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR), Amani Africa Media and Research Services and Tana Forum are jointly convening this Policy and Expert Roundtable as a Side Event of the Tana Forum to create a platform for an exchange of views between policy makers, academics, and analysts on these issues, with a view to generating actionable recommendations for consideration by the AU's policy organs.

Article 109 of the United Nations (UN) Charter provides for the convening of "a General Conference of the Members of the UN to Review the Charter." In June 1945, when the UN Charter was drafted in San Francisco, USA, much of the African continent was under the yoke and exploitation of European colonialism; only Egypt, Ethiopia and Liberia were independent. Consequently, African countries were not adequately represented during the deliberations to establish the UN. Drawing on the theme of the African Union Decade of Justice for Africans and People of African Descent through Reparation 2026-2036, a strong case exists for restitution for Africa's historical exclusion from the establishment of the UN system. The UN Pact for the Future echoes this, specifically Action Point 39, which calls for redress for Africa's historical exclusion from the formation of the existing multilateral system. To practically transform multilateralism, the UN General Assembly should invoke Article 109 to convene a United Nations Charter Review Conference that the Permanent Five members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) cannot veto. Importantly, the UN Charter Review is not limited to reforming the UN Security Council and will also focus on transforming the global financial architecture, notably the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). On 24th September 2026, on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Brazil, South Africa, and India (the IBSA Forum) issued a Joint Ministerial Statement calling for a comprehensive UN Charter Review under Article 109.[1] Africa has an opportunity to shape broader, more fundamental reforms that make the whole UN system work for the continent.

The African Union's Constitutive Act acknowledges the important role analysts, academia, and civil society across the continent can play in advancing its work. The Policy and Expert Roundtable can help raise awareness of the issue's importance by adopting and integrating the invocation of Article 109 into its global

[1] IBSA Ministerial Statement on the Margins of the UN General Assembly, 24th September 2026, https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents?dtl/41832/Media_Statement_14th_IBSA_Trilateral_Ministerial_Commission_Meeting_New_York_September_24_2026
See also India, Brazil, South Africa (IBSA), IBSA Forum Leaders Statement, Paragraph 11, available at: https://thepresidency.gov.za/sites/default/files/2024-11/IBSA%20Leaders%E2%80%99%20media%20statement.pdf accessed 8th April 2026.

agenda, positioning Charter reform as essential to building a more equitable and effective international system. Africa has a strong interest in transforming multilateralism. As the continent's leading institution, the African Union and its regional economic communities are uniquely positioned to generate the political momentum needed to catalyse global support for Article 109 and seize this moment for meaningful reform.

Objectives

This Policy and Expert Roundtable responds to the call by African governmental and societal leaders for a fundamental shift in global power dynamics. In this regard, Africa's agency must be amplified in this moment of global disorder to ensure it assumes its rightful place as a partner on the global stage. In practical terms, African governments and societies can help mobilise for more equitable and effective global governance and secure a seat at the table in shaping the next world order.

The objectives of this Expert and Policy Seminar are to contribute to identifying a strategy for mobilising "a coalition of the leading" African countries to amplify, assert, and project Africa's agency, in collaboration with other regions of the world, to initiate the process of transforming the multilateral system. This could include mobilising key governments to draft and adopt a UN General Assembly Resolution to invoke Article 109 to convene the General Conference to review the UN Charter.

Expected Outputs

Deliberations and findings from this event will be compiled into a joint Policy Brief and disseminated to key policymaking hubs across the African continent, including the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, as well as key regional economic communities and UN centres across the continent and internationally.

Format

The Policy and Expert Roundtable will allow key speakers to provide a 20-minute input on the topic, after which the moderator will facilitate a discussion that incorporates participants' views and engages the speakers.

Duration

2 hours

Language

English