

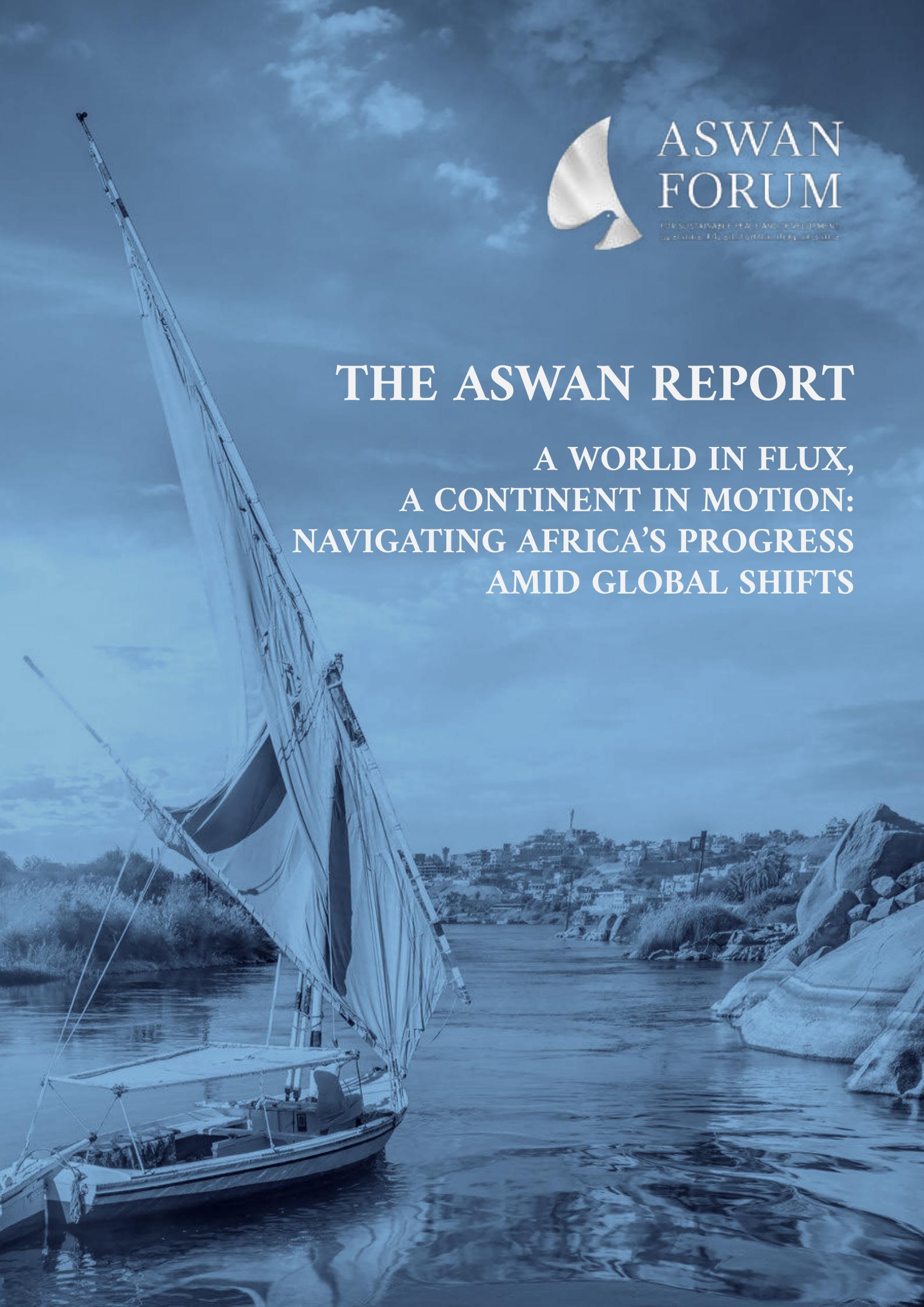


ASWAN
FORUM

FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT
Sustainable Peace, Stability, Development

THE ASWAN REPORT

A WORLD IN FLUX,
A CONTINENT IN MOTION:
NAVIGATING AFRICA'S PROGRESS
AMID GLOBAL SHIFTS





ASWAN FORUM
FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT
منتدي أسوان للسلام والتنمية المستدامة



Report of the Fifth Edition of the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development

19-20 October 2025



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CAIRO INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR CONFLICT
RESOLUTION, PEACEKEEPING & PEACEBUILDING
مركز القاهرة الدولي للتسوية للصراعات وحفظ وبناء السلام

FOREWORD

At a moment when the multilateral system is under profound strain, tested by geopolitical fragmentation, dwindling development and humanitarian resources, and a deepening mistrust in collective governance – Africa is not standing still. We are gathering, leading and shaping the future on our own terms.

This spirit was powerfully embodied during the Fifth Edition of the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development, held on 19-20 October 2025 in the city of Aswan, Egypt, under the theme “*A World in Flux, A Continent in Motion: Navigating Africa’s Progress Amid Global Shifts.*” While today’s global challenges affect all, their impacts are felt most acutely across Africa and the broader Global South. Yet, these same regions also hold vast reserves of resilience, innovation, and home-grown solutions.

In this complex global context, the Aswan Forum continues to serve as a vital platform – bringing together leaders from governments, regional and international organizations, the private sector, think tanks, and civil society to exchange insights, debate pressing issues, and chart pathways toward a more secure and prosperous future for Africa and beyond. Together with our partners, we reaffirmed a shared commitment not only to understanding and addressing Africa’s interlinked peace, security, and development challenges, but also to doing so through African voices, African solutions, and African leadership.

Hosted in the beautiful city of Aswan – long regarded as the gateway to the heart of the African continent – the Fifth Edition convened a wide and diverse range of participants. It underscored a simple yet powerful truth: that Africa is not merely seeking solutions, but generating ideas, driving innovation, and providing leadership at a moment when both the continent and the world need it most.

This report draws on the rich and dynamic discussions held during the Forum, further enriched by insights from preparatory workshops and key findings from ongoing policy and research efforts. It stands as a testament to the depth of expertise and lived experience that emerge from Africa, for Africa, and with the support of regional and international partners.

This edition was made possible through the steadfast support of our partners, whose commitment to the Forum and to the continent has been invaluable during a particularly challenging period for international cooperation. I wish to express my deep appreciation to the partners of the Aswan Forum and of the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Peacebuilding (CCCPA) for their continued support of our work. I also extend my sincere appreciation to the participants and speakers whose contributions and voices not only enriched the discussions but also helped shape and inspire much of this report.

This edition was also brought to life by the able team of CCCPA. I extend my heartfelt thanks to them for their dedication, hard work, and perseverance.

As we look ahead, CCCPA, as the Secretariat of the Aswan Forum, remains committed to strengthening the bridge between policy and practice, advancing the peace–development nexus, and driving forward the “Aswan in Practice” agenda through future editions, thematic reports, and continuous efforts in capacity building, convening, and research. Our ultimate objective remains clear: to make a meaningful and tangible contribution to the pursuit of sustainable peace and development across the African continent.

Sincerely,



AMBASSADOR SEIF KANDEEL

Director General, CCCPA
Executive Director, Aswan Forum Secretariat

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In its capacity as the Secretariat of the Aswan Forum, CCCPA extends its sincerest gratitude to all partners over the years, especially those whose support made the Fifth Edition of the Aswan Forum and this report possible.

This year's endeavor would not have been realized without the invaluable guidance and personal commitment of H.E. Dr. Badr Abdelatty, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, whose unwavering support and strategic vision were central to the success of this edition. His efforts have been instrumental in ensuring the continued relevance and growth of the Forum, and its return to the city of Aswan where the Forum initially started.

CCCPA further acknowledges the valuable contributions of the various departments of the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whose cooperation and dedication facilitated the smooth organization of this year's activities. Special gratitude is extended to H.E. Ambassador Ihab Awad, Former Assistant Foreign Minister for African Affairs and Permanent Representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations.

We also express our deep appreciation to the Governor of Aswan for once again welcoming the Forum to the historic and inspiring city of Aswan, and for providing the support necessary to ensure a seamless convening on the ground.

Our sincere gratitude extends to our valued partners, whose collaboration continues to enrich the Forum's impact:

Strategic Partners:

- The Government of Denmark, through the Danish-Egyptian Dialogue Initiative (DEDI)
- Open Society Foundations (OSF)

Associate Partners:

- Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA)
- Konrad Adenauer Foundation Stiftung (KAS)
- African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank)

Thematic Partners:

- Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), through UN Women
- The European Union
- Elsewedy Electric
- The International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF)
- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

Institutional Partners:

- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- The Egyptian Agency of Partnership for Development (EAPD)
- The African Union (AU)
- The Operational Unit for Development Assistance (OUDA)

To all speakers, moderators, returning colleagues, and new participants who joined us this year, we extend our sincere gratitude for the depth of your insights, the richness of your contributions, and the vibrancy you brought to the discussions. The Forum draws its value from the voices within it - and this year, it has truly resonated.

This report is a contribution from the Secretariat of the Aswan Forum, offered in the conviction that Africa's most pressing challenges merit both clarity of understanding and honest reflection. More importantly, it seeks to illuminate the immense potential of our continent – its capacity to shape home-grown solutions not only to Africa's own complex realities, but also to the challenges confronting today's world. It further endeavors to capture and document the invaluable ideas, aspirations, and perspectives emerging from Africa and for Africa at a pivotal moment when deep reflection is urgently needed.

This report was drafted by Maya Ragab, Program Coordinator and Seba Issa, Coordinator of the Fifth Edition of the Aswan Forum, CCCPA.



LIST OF ACRONYMS

A3	The three African non-permanent members of the UN Security Council
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AGA	African Governance Architecture
AI	Artificial Intelligence
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
AU	African Union
AUSSOM	African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia
CCCPA	Cairo International Centre for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Peacebuilding
CRSV	Conflict-related Sexual Violence
E10	The ten non-permanent, elected members of the UN Security Council
HDP	Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus
MSMEs	Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PBC	United Nations Peacebuilding Commission
PCRD	Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development
PIDA	Program Infrastructure Development for Africa
PPPs	Public-Private Partnerships
PSD	Peace-Security-Development Nexus
PSO	Peace Support Operations
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
RMs	Regional Mechanisms
RSF	Rapid Support Forces
StREAM	Suez-Red Sea Economic and Maritime Initiative
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
YPS	Youth, Peace and Security

ABOUT THE ASWAN FORUM

FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

Acting in its capacity as the Chairman of the AU and the Champion of Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) in Africa, Egypt launched the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development in 2019. Owned by Africa, and supported by international and regional partners, the Forum is a high-level, multi-stakeholder platform that brings heads of states, leaders from national governments, international and regional organizations, financial institutions, private sector, and civil society, together with visionaries, scholars, and prominent experts, for context-specific, action-oriented, and forward-looking discussions on the opportunities, as well as the threats and challenges, facing the continent. It provides the first-of-its-kind platform in Africa that seeks to operationalize the “peace-development nexus”, by championing African solutions to African problems, including through strengthening the links between policy and practice. <https://www.aswanforum.org/>



ABOUT CCCPA

THE CAIRO INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION, PEACEKEEPING AND PEACEBUILDING

Founded in 1994, CCCPA is an Egyptian public agency; an AU Center of Excellence in training, capacity building and research; and the Arab world's leading civilian training center on issues of peace and security. It is a major voice of the Global South on a wide range of topics, including conflict prevention and resolution, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, peacemaking, preventing radicalization and extremism leading to terrorism, combating transnational threats, climate, peace and development, and the implementation of the women, peace and security (WPS) and the youth, peace and security (YPS) agendas.

<https://www.cccpa-eg.org>



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	03
Acknowledgement	05
List of Acronyms	07
ABOUT THE ASWAN FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT	08
ABOUT THE CAIRO INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION, PEACEKEEPING AND PEACEBUILDING (CCCPA)	08
TABLE OF CONTENTS	09
Background and Context: Africa's Agency in a World in Flux	11
Chapter 1: Introduction	15
Chapter 2: Navigating Africa's Complexities: Peace, Security, and Development in a Changing World	18
Beyond Conflict Management	19
The Human Cost of Instability in Africa: Humanitarian Crises and Forced Displacement	20
Climate-Induced Shocks and Food and Water Security	21
Navigating Development Amid Economic Fragility and Structural Weaknesses	22
The Dual Edge of AI in Africa's Peace and Security Landscape	23
Converging Pressures and Contextual Realities: How Structural Challenges Take Shape Across Africa	24
Navigating Conflict, Humanitarian Crisis, and Pathways to Peace in Sudan	24
Stability at a Crossroads: Challenges and Prospects in the Sahel	25
Safeguarding a Strategic Corridor: Security, Stability, and Development in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden	27
Chapter 3: Africa Rising - Security, Inclusive Development, and Sustainable Cooperation	30
The Security-Development Dilemma: Navigating Today's Global Trade-Offs	30
The New Development Paradox: Rising Needs, Declining Resources	31
Placing Inclusivity at the Core	32
Chapter 4: Charting a New Course - Africa's Emerging Opportunities in a Changing World	35

Reorienting Africa's Peace, Security, and Governance Architecture in a World in Flux	35
Revitalizing the Global Peace and Security Toolkit for Africa	36
Harnessing Talent, Innovation, and Partnerships for Africa's Prosperity	37
Unlocking the Human and Financial Capital of the African Diaspora	37
Driving Growth from Within	38
Conclusions of the Fifth Edition of the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development "A World in Flux, A Continent in Motion: Navigating Africa's Progress Amid Global Shifts" 19-20 October 2025	40



BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Background and Context:

AFRICA'S AGENCY IN A WORLD IN FLUX



For too long, Africa's agency in international affairs has often been exercised reactively, responding to external pressures and adapting to pre-defined global scripts designed to preserve relative stability. Today, however, the world stands at a critical inflection moment - and so does Africa. The international order is shifting at an unprecedented pace toward an era of great uncertainty; multilateralism is fraying, established norms are being contested, and former architects of the global rules are increasingly bypassing the very rules they once set.

This "World in Flux" is testing the foundations of the multilateral system, now strained by overlapping crises, from geopolitical rivalries and economic fragmentation to climate shocks and technological disruption, with persistent violence, conflict, and fragility further compounding these challenges. In 2024 alone, 56 active conflicts were recorded - the most since World War II, while in 2022, 92 countries were engaged in conflicts beyond their borders. These dynamics exacerbate inequality, fuel humanitarian crises, and erode trust in collective solutions, stalling progress toward sustainable peace and development.

Amid this turbulence, Africa, a "Continent in Motion", finds itself at a pivotal juncture. The continent's demographic vitality, expanding markets, and growing regional integration efforts reflect immense untapped potential. Agenda 2063 articulates a shared vision of a peaceful, integrated, and prosper-

ous Africa, while the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reinforces a global commitment to inclusive growth and social justice. Yet, persistent structural challenges - ranging from governance deficits and external dependencies to climate vulnerability - continue to impede the realization of these aspirations.

This is a moment that demands clarity, not mere consensus. It calls for Africa to move beyond the legacy of managed dependency and embrace a more assertive, self-determined role in shaping its future. In this spirit, the Fifth Edition of the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development, held under the theme "*A World in Flux, A Continent in Motion: Navigating Africa's Progress Amid Global Shifts*", convened at a pivotal moment as global governance and multilateral action undergo profound transformation.

As the world remains in flux, this edition offered a unique opportunity for Africa to assert its leadership in navigating global shifts, forging equal partnerships, driving transformative change, and shaping the future of global peace, security, and sustainable development by spearheading tangible progress. It served as a vital and timely platform for Africa to engage in strategic discussions on the future of global cooperation and governance - identifying practical pathways to position Africa at the heart of its own peacebuilding and development strategies.

The Fifth Edition of the Aswan Forum brought together leaders from governments, regional and international organizations, regional economic communities and regional mechanisms (RECs/RMs), financial institutions, the private sector, and civil society, along with opinion leaders, scholars, key experts, practitioners, and other stakeholders, to:

- Explore forward-thinking solutions and strategic planning to address the continent's most pressing peace, humanitarian, and development challenges, with a particular focus on empowering women and youth.
- Facilitate dialogue to foster mutual understanding and bridge divides between global and regional stakeholders, promoting collaboration and shared ownership of solutions.
- Identify strategic partnerships both within Africa and with the global community to promote Africa's role in reshaping global governance and driving inclusive growth.
- Advance efforts to strengthen the integration and implementation of the Peace-Security Development (PSD) and Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP)

Nexuses, building on priorities established since the Forum's inception in 2019 and on the progress achieved through the implementation of successive Aswan Conclusions through the "Aswan Cycle" framework.

- Devise innovative solutions and financing mechanisms to unlock Africa's potential for economic growth and for sustainable peace and development.

This report draws upon the rich discussions that unfolded during the various sessions of the Fifth Edition of the Aswan Forum, complemented by insights from preparatory workshops held in the months leading up to the Forum, as well as key findings from relevant policy and research efforts. Its purpose is not to prescribe instant remedies or one-size-fits-all solutions, but rather to reflect the wealth of expertise, experience, and perspectives shared by Africa and its regional and international partners throughout the process. By highlighting context-specific and home-grown solutions, it aims to contribute to Africa's ongoing efforts to navigate global shifts and advance sustainable peace, development, and prosperity.

In line with the established "Aswan Cycle", this report culminates with the Conclusions of the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development, launched at the end of each edition. These Conclusions encapsulate the key takeaways and actionable recommendations emerging from the Forum's deliberations. Serving as a bridge between dialogue and implementation, they mark the transition from the preparatory process and the Forum's convening to the implementation phase — focusing on translating commitments into concrete actions and tracking progress across Africa's peace and development agendas.

A scenic view of a riverbank, likely the Nile, with many sailboats (feluccas) on the water. The foreground features palm trees and some buildings. The background shows a city skyline with modern and traditional architecture. The image has a blue-tinted, slightly overexposed look.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The rules-based international order, once identified as a cornerstone of global stability, is now under mounting strain. Escalating conflicts across the world - many with devastating humanitarian consequences - have exposed the inadequacies of existing legal and institutional frameworks. Amid these crises, perceptions of selective enforcement and double standards are increasingly prominent, undermining the credibility of international norms and institutions.

Today, there is a shared sense of urgency to restore and strengthen multilateralism - not only as a principle, but as a practical system grounded in respect for sovereignty, non-interference and the consistent application of international humanitarian and human rights law. These principles remain essential as the sole safeguard for rebuilding global trust, justice, and stability in a rapidly changing world.

The current global system reflects the dynamics of "world order" shaped by post-World War II realities that no longer exist. Its structures are increasingly misaligned with contemporary realities. The Global South, and Africa in particular, remain underrepresented in global governance, from the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to the Bretton Woods system and other key decision-making bodies.

This underrepresentation is not merely symbolic; it has tangible consequences for legitimacy, effectiveness, and inclusiveness. The misuse of the UNSC veto - as seen in the Gaza and Ukraine crises - demonstrates how concentrated powers can paralyze collective action and deepen global mistrust, particularly when the international community faces paralysis in responding to unprecedented humanitarian crises.

The international community's failure to uphold international law and humanitarian principles - whether by overlooking the use of starvation and rape as weapons of war, turning a blind eye to the genocide and atrocities committed in Gaza and Al-Fasher, Sudan, or responding unevenly to crises and mass forced displacements - has deepened global skepticism toward these inconsistent responses. Unmet commitments on debt relief, climate financing, as well as stalled institutional reforms and inadequate representation, further reinforce the perception that the international system is both ineffective and unjust. These disparities feed into a broader narrative that the current international order is no longer fit for purpose.



The only safety net for overcoming these challenges is African solidarity and unity, especially as we navigate this historic and difficult period. Either to be or not to be. We cannot accept business as usual with the double standards we are witnessing now.



DR. BADR ABDELATTY

Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Emigration and Egyptian
Expatriates, Arab Republic of
Egypt



This erosion of trust is compounded by the actions of the very actors who once shaped and championed the system yet are now undermining it, whether through unilateral action, inconsistent moral positioning, or a failure to lead with principle. The result is a fragmented and uncertain global landscape in which power is diffuse and leadership is elusive.

Amid this rapidly shifting multilateral order, the global landscape of international cooperation is undergoing profound alteration as well. As resources become increasingly scarce, priorities are being reshaped to reflect new realities and competing priorities. Partners' agendas - once focused primarily on development - are evolving in response to rising geopolitical tensions and security concerns. Meanwhile, multilateral budgets continue to shrink, leaving institutions under-resourced and ill-equipped to respond effectively to global crises.

These shifts have led to a growing emphasis on hard security over development, with defense and security spending taking precedence over peacebuilding, humanitarian, and development assistance. For Africa, these changes are not abstract; they are deeply tangible and have already shown far-reaching consequences. Protracted conflicts, persistent development gaps and heightened climate vulnerability have been further exacerbated by reductions in international support and the broader reorientation of global priorities. The world's largest humanitarian

crisis now suffers from extremely limited visibility and catastrophic underfunding, with only a quarter of UN appeals being met, both inside and outside Sudan.

The implications for Africa, and for the Global South at large, are profound. Persisting inequities in development and climate financing, coupled with limited access to global decision-making, continue to undermine the continent's ability to realize its full potential. Financial support must be equitable, concessional, and tailored to reflect the realities faced by the Global South. Solidarity is not charity; it is a prerequisite for collective security and progress. Despite Africa representing a significant share of the UNSC's agenda, African-led initiatives rarely receive the global support they deserve - exposing persistent imbalances in international cooperation.

Unsurprisingly, the consequences of weakened multilateralism and shrinking development support fall hardest on those already most at risk - women, youth, and groups in vulnerable situations - underscoring the urgent need to place their voices and needs at the center of Africa's peace and development agendas.



We must amplify the voice of Africa, strengthen influence, consolidate the structure of peace, and create partnerships that not only benefit Africa but all of humanity. Only through this will international systems become truly universal.



TETE ANTONIO

Minister of External Relations,
Republic of Angola, and Chair
of the Executive Council, African Union





CHAPTER 2

**NAVIGATING AFRICA'S COMPLEXITIES:
PEACE, SECURITY, & DEVELOPMENT
IN A CHANGING WORLD**

Navigating Africa's Complexities:

PEACE, SECURITY, AND DEVELOPMENT IN A CHANGING WORLD

Amid an increasingly fragmented and unpredictable global landscape, Africa is navigating a period of profound transition defined by shifting power dynamics, shrinking resources, and competing priorities. For the continent, these global transformations are not distant phenomena; they intersect directly with Africa's ongoing struggles for peace, stability, and sustainable development.

Despite progress under the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and African Governance Architecture (AGA), Africa continues to face numerous and evolving threats. The current state of peace, security, and development reflects the convergence of multiple, overlapping crises that continue to test the continent's resilience - including protracted conflicts, political instability, terrorism, humanitarian crises, forced displacement, climate-induced shocks, as well as structural economic fragility. Contexts such as Sudan, the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea illustrate both the scale of these challenges and the urgent need for integrated, context-specific responses. Collectively, these persistent threats hinder development and slow progress towards the aspirations of Agenda 2063, including the goal of silencing the guns across Africa.

According to the Global Peace Index (2025), while half of the countries in the continent have seen improvements in overall peacefulness, the other half have experienced deterioration. Three of the ten least peaceful countries in the world are located in Africa. The region also faces multiple security crises, including rising instability and heightened terrorist activity in the Central Sahel. Six of the ten countries with the highest terrorism impact are found in Africa, underscoring the scale and severity of the security challenge confronting the continent.

Discussions during this edition of the Aswan Forum addressed many of these complex and interconnected challenges, examining their root causes and broader implications for Africa's peace, security, and development agenda.



If the international security architecture is not working, mediation is affected. Mediation all over the world is suffering from one phenomenon, it is managing problems rather than finding solutions.



AMRE MOUSSA

Member, Panel of the Wise,
Former Foreign Minister,
Arab Republic of Egypt,
Former Secretary General,
League of Arab States



Beyond Conflict Management

Conflicts in Africa have become increasingly protracted and, in some cases, are perpetuated by entrenched political, economic, and security interests that benefit from continued instability. These conflicts often evolve beyond their initial causes, sustained by recurring cycles of violence, weak governance structures, external interference, and the polarization of ethnic and communal tensions. The persistence of these crises further complicates conflict dynamics, as spoilers, armed groups, and other actors exploit peace processes for strategic gain, thereby undermining mediation efforts and long-term stabilization.

In addition, mediation efforts in Africa face persistent and multifaceted challenges that reflect both the complexity of contemporary peacemaking and the fragility of trust in the multilateral system. Despite established regional and international frameworks, the effectiveness of the UN peace and security architecture - and by extension, that of regional organizations - remains constrained by institutional fragmentation, limited resources, lack of genuine political will, and competing mandates.

In Africa, where conflicts are shaped by deep-rooted political, socio-economic and identity-based factors, the success of conflict resolution and mediation efforts depends on the ability to design context-sensitive and inclusive processes that ensure local ownership, address the structural drivers of conflict, and mobilize political will for peace. However, inconsistent coordination among international, regional and local actors, as well as the inadequate integration of Track II and Track III efforts, continues to hinder sustainable outcomes. As a result, mediation efforts are too often reduced to a tool for conflict management rather than a pathway to transformation, raising fundamental questions about their legitimacy, coherence, and long-term impact on peacebuilding across the continent.



There is a dissonance between the mediation efforts we hear on the Track I level and between the work that we do in community-based mediation, where I believe that peace exists.



FATIMA AKILU
Executive Director,
Neem Foundation



“We must utilize our comparative advantages, because the focus is never on the mediators themselves, but on the process and the peace to be achieved on the ground.



SIBYLLE OBRIST
Head of the Peace
and Human Rights
Division,
Federal Department
of Foreign Affairs,
Swiss Confederation



The Human Cost of Instability in Africa: Humanitarian Crises and Forced Displacement

The structural and institutional challenges that perpetuate protracted conflicts in Africa extend far beyond political and security dynamics; they manifest in profound human consequences. Persistent instability, weak governance structures, and fragmented conflict-resolution efforts shape the daily realities of millions, driving large-scale humanitarian crises and protracted displacement across the continent -underscoring the human cost of unresolved conflict.

Forced displacement in Africa and the Arab region has shifted from a temporary survival strategy during crises toward a prolonged coping mechanism, fueled by the convergence of protracted conflicts, terrorism, climate shocks and institutional fragility. The deliberate destruction of infrastructure as a tactic of war further disrupts recovery efforts, triggers new waves of displacement, and constrains States' capacities to restore stability - even after peace agreements are reached.

Existing frameworks and traditional responses to displacement have proven insufficient in addressing the scale and complexity of today's protracted crises. Host countries face mounting pressure as resources become increasingly squeezed, development financing remains limited, and tensions rise between host and displaced communities over land, livelihoods, and access to basic services. Data gaps and limited analytical capacities continue to hinder evidence-based policymaking, while fragmented responses and inadequate coordination among international, regional, and national actors limit the effectiveness of interventions. Collectively, these challenges perpetuate cycles of vulnerability, dependence, and instability - making the pursuit of durable solutions increasingly difficult.

Addressing the evolving displacement landscape remains constrained by limited national capacities, fragmented coordination, and the absence of coherent, development-oriented strategies. The scale and protracted nature of displacement continue to strain already-overburdened host communities, while insufficient financing hinders effective and inclusive policymaking. Although nationally led and participatory approaches are increasingly recognized as essential, translating these principles into practice remains uneven across the continent.

The dynamics of displacement also underscore persistent challenges in achieving effective and integrated border governance. Misalignment among national institutions and delays in implementation of regional frameworks continue to fragment governance and impede operational efficiency. Trust deficits, inadequate digital infrastructure, and limited analytical capacity further undermine the role of borders as spaces for mobility, cooperation, and development. While technological innovation and more coordinated approaches offer potential pathways for progress, significant institutional and resource gaps persist.



A sustainable solution to displacement can only be achieved if countries, regional actors, and the international community work together. We must look beyond short-term responses and address the root causes, ensuring access to education, financial support, and proper registration for all refugees and asylum seekers.



DR. VINCENT BIRUTA
Minister of Interior,
Republic of Rwanda



“

We must shift from fragmented responses to solutions. Solving displacement requires integrated, locally driven approaches that reduce humanitarian caseloads, embed preparedness, and build community resilience to withstand future shocks and promote lasting stability.



MOHAMMED ABDIKER

Chief of Staff, International Organization for Migration (IOM)

”

These pressures are compounded by the growing influence of climate-related shocks, particularly those affecting food and water security. Recurrent droughts, land degradation, and declining agricultural productivity are increasingly driving mobility and heightening competition over scarce resources, further intensifying existing vulnerabilities. Strengthening national ownership, enhancing institutional coherence, and adopting more anticipatory, evidence-based approaches can help states better manage these interconnected challenges while ensuring that displacement is addressed in a holistic manner that upholds human dignity and advances durable solutions and long-term stability.

“

Refugees and displaced people are not merely victims - they are agents of change and peace-builders. Their voices must be heard, and their participation must shape the solutions that define their future.



NADA FADOL

Refugee Leader and Founder of the Rouh Initiative

”

Climate-Induced Shocks & Food & Water Security

In many African contexts, water and agriculture continue to be managed as separate policy areas, resulting in gaps that undermine coordinated planning and efficient allocation of resources. Fragmented governance structures have produced duplication of efforts, inefficiencies, and missed opportunities for synergy. Although the agricultural sector has recorded notable growth, progress remains insufficiently inclusive, and benefits are unevenly distributed. Structural barriers, including the absence of coherent policy frameworks, institutional mechanisms for implementation, and limited integration of local and traditional knowledge, continue to impede effective climate adaptation. Translating research into tangible adaptation outcomes remains a persistent challenge, as communities are often treated as passive recipients rather than active partners. Short term emergency responses frequently overshadow systemic, long-term planning, reducing the sustainability of food and water security interventions.

Addressing the interconnected challenges of food and water insecurity requires an integrated approach guided by unified national strategies that strengthen institutional coherence and foster cross-sectoral coordination. Sustainable finance and investment, mobilizing both public and private resources, can enhance irrigation infrastructure, restore degraded soils, and protect ecosystems essential to agricultural productivity. Youth participation and targeted investment in skills, technology adoption, and innovation ecosystems can help transform agriculture into a dynamic, profitable sector that drives inclusive growth. Experiences from the Sahel

and North Africa demonstrate that inclusive participation, local ownership, and context-specific solutions can advance climate resilience. Multi-lateral and technical cooperation, coupled with proactive, systemic planning, will enable evidence based policies, integrated adaptation strategies, and community resilience - positioning Africa to lead in shaping global approaches to sustainable development approaches.



Climate-resilient agricultural transformation is, in fact, a peacebuilding strategy and cannot be separated from it.



NARDOS BEKELE-THOMAS
Chief Executive Officer, African Union Development Agency - New Partnership for Africa's Development



Navigating Development Amid Economic Fragility and Structural Weaknesses

Africa continues to face multiple challenges in harnessing development opportunities amid shrinking resources and a shifting multilateral order. The growing prioritization of security over development risks undermining long-term stability, while the persistence of siloed approaches, low levels of trust among stakeholders, and weak

accountability mechanisms impede effective cooperation. Dependence on traditional aid frameworks and Official Development Assistance (ODA) constrains innovation, and heavy debt burdens continue to restrict development efforts. Moreover, inadequate mobilization of Africa's own resources - coupled with limited engagement of the private sector, philanthropic organizations, the diaspora, and local communities - further constrains the continent's potential for sustainable growth and inclusive development.

In addition, Africa's pursuit of integrated and inclusive development through infrastructure expansion and connected markets continues to face structural and systemic challenges. Despite a clear vision articulated in frameworks such as Agenda 2063 and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), progress is often hindered by fragmented implementation, shifting political priorities, and inconsistent policy execution. A lack of policy continuity across leadership transitions undermines investor confidence and disrupts long-term planning. Infrastructure development efforts often emphasize national rather than regional priorities, leading to fragmented value chains and missed opportunities for synergy. Weak regional coordination, limited institutional capacity, and regulatory misalignment further impede cross-border projects. An estimated USD 120 billion annual infrastructure financing gap continues to constrain progress, compounded by low domestic resource mobilization and persistent dependence on external funding. These constraints are exacerbated by challenges related to peace and stability, without which trade and connectivity remain fragile.



There has been growing interest in philanthropy as an actor to fill the ongoing funding gap. Of course, Open Society is not trying to become the new USAID or to fill the enormous gap we currently see. Rather, we are seeking to resource differently, by supporting and investing in local philanthropic institutions in ways that foster autonomy, particularly on the continent and across the broader Global South.



SEMIHA ABDULMELIK ALI
Associate Director Transformative Peace in Africa, Open Society Foundations



Without peace, trade will always be fragile - and without trade, peace will always be fragile.



YUSUF DAYA
Director, AU/AfCFTA
Relations and International
Cooperation, Afreximbank

The Dual Edge of AI in Africa's Peace and Security Landscape

In addition to traditional peace and security tools, emerging technologies, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI), are reshaping the landscape of security, governance, and development, offering both new opportunities and new risks. The continent's limited digital infrastructure and heavy dependence on imported technologies constrain meaningful participation in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Many States lack the data systems, technical expertise, and research capacity necessary to design or adapt AI tools to local realities. This has created an emerging AI divide in which only a small number of actors can innovate, while others remain passive users. Without deliberate inclusion - especially of youth, women, and diverse linguistic and cultural contexts - AI risks reinforcing existing social, economic, and digital inequalities, rather than supporting resilience, development, and peace.

These accessibility gaps are compounded by weak governance and limited regulatory readiness. Across much of the continent, frameworks for the responsible use of AI remain underdeveloped, with inadequate mechanisms for monitoring, enforcement, and multidisciplinary oversight. This poses serious challenges as AI becomes embedded in sensitive domains such as elections, public services, and security operations. Autonomous weapons systems represent a particularly urgent risk, raising unresolved legal and ethical questions related to accountability, civilian protection, and compliance with international law and international humanitarian law. At the same time, the misuse of AI to generate misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech threatens social cohesion, erodes public trust, and destabilizes already fragile contexts.

Addressing these risks requires coordinate, forward-looking governance rather than reactive re-

sponses. Strengthening regulatory capacity, investing in local talent and infrastructure, and ensuring transparent, rights-based oversight are essential to preventing harmful applications.

Continental initiatives — such as the AU's AI strategy and emerging advisory mechanisms — signal meaningful progress, but their implementation must be supported by adequate resources and broad participation. Without inclusive access, ethical safeguards, and shared global responsibility, AI could deepen existing divides and amplify insecurity. With the right foundations, however, it can become a transformative tool for peace, protection, and sustainable development — ensuring Africa is not left behind in the digital era.



Those who design and develop AI are not going to follow international law and standards on their own.

The purpose of AI is not inherently to serve humankind - those who create it do so for profit. It is therefore essential to first examine and understand the motives behind existing AI systems in order to truly address AI trustworthiness.



CEDRIC DE CONING
Research Professor,
Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI)

Converging Pressures and Contextual Realities: How Structural Challenges Take Shape Across Africa

These cross-cutting challenges manifest most acutely in regions that are already under severe strain, where existing vulnerabilities amplify their impact. Specific contexts - such as the ongoing turmoil and humanitarian crisis in Sudan, the persistent instability across the Sahel, and the climate-driven pressures and precarious situation in the Horn of Africa and Red Sea regions - underscore the interconnected nature of these threats. Each faces a distinct combination of security challenges, economic hardship, and humanitarian need, yet all are shaped by shared structural constraints. Together, they illustrate just how complex and interwoven Africa's peace, security, and development landscape truly is. Understanding these dynamics is essential to designing more effective, sustainable, and context-sensitive solutions.

Navigating Conflict, Humanitarian Crisis, and Pathways to Peace in Sudan

Sudan faces a complex array of challenges in its pursuit of peace and development. The involvement of multiple external actors has made progress toward conflict resolution slow and costly, underscoring the need for greater coordination and coherence among peace and humanitarian initiatives. Ensuring national ownership, leadership, and non-interference in internal affairs is critical to preserving Sudan's territorial integrity and maintaining one sovereign authority and national army. Violations committed by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) require explicit condemnation and accountability, and both parties must not be treated on equal footing. The continued use of gender-based violence, including the use of rape as a weapon of war and other forms of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), must be met with full justice for victims, along with adequate medical and psychological support. The cessation of hostilities, facilitation of humanitarian operations, and protection of civilians remain urgent priorities.

The humanitarian situation in Sudan - the largest ongoing crisis globally - is compounded by insufficient funding and short-term relief efforts, highlighting the need for sustainable, development-oriented



Partners should resume development aid to allow Sudan to access global financing and to place the Sudanese people - not politics - at the center of peace efforts.



MOHIELDIN SALIM

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Republic of Sudan



interventions in sectors such as education, infrastructure, and health, particularly to address trauma. Key challenges also include ensuring the voluntary and safe return of displaced persons, promoting equitable burden-sharing among the eight neighboring countries already under strain, and mobilizing resources for post-conflict reconstruction. Restoring livelihoods, safeguarding infrastructure, and ensuring the delivery of essential services all require coordinated and sustained commitment from national, regional and international actors.

Despite these challenges, Sudan offers significant opportunities for durable peace and sustainable development, offering a unique chance to realize the HDP Nexus by linking immediate relief with long-term human progress. Coordinated post-conflict reconstruction can strengthen essential sectors, restore livelihoods, and safeguard critical infrastructure and health services - providing vital entry points for confidence-building and future reconstruction initiatives. Facilitating Sudan's access to international financing mechanisms, unifying positions toward the conflict, enhancing coordination among mediators, and investing strategically in resilience building

efforts can enable the adoption of a sustainable development approach that moves beyond short-term humanitarian aid. Supporting the implementation of a permanent ceasefire and launching an inclusive dialogue among Sudanese national forces can lay the foundation for a successful political process, while promoting regional stability and shared responsibility for lasting peace.



Stability at a Crossroads: Challenges and Prospects in the Sahel

Traditionally defined by persistent security challenges and economic vulnerability, the Sahel now stands at a critical juncture. The region faces an increasingly complex security landscape shaped by severe humanitarian pressures and enduring structural drivers such as poverty, the impacts of climate change, food insecurity and socio-economic fragility. These factors exacerbate instability and create conditions in which violence and insecurity can thrive. Among the most pressing threats in the region is the continued surge of terrorism - a transnational phenomenon extending beyond the main Sahelian countries of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, and increasingly affecting neighboring countries and the wider West African region. Approaches that rely solely on military force have

repeatedly fallen short, under-scoring that durable stability depends equally on restoring public trust, revitalizing basic services, and reconnecting governance structures with local needs.

Efforts to strengthen cooperation frameworks across Africa should emphasize unity of purpose, inclusiveness, and respect for national ownership. Coordinated African-led initiatives, complemented but not directed by external partners, are essential to counter asymmetric threats, support reconstruction

and expand economic opportunity. Such cooperation should also address long-standing constraints, including barriers to legitimate security assistance and unequal access to development finance, while fostering continental approaches that integrate peace, governance, and socio-economic transformation.

A durable approach also requires a novel narrative that reframes the Sahel not solely as a region of crisis, but as a region of significant potential. Opportunities linked to natural resources, demographic vitality, renewable energy, and regional markets can only be realized through stability, predictable governance, and long-term investment. Development must be embedded into the security agenda, ensuring that reconstruction, livelihood creation, climate adaptation and institutional reform advance in tandem. This integrated vision both reinforces sovereignty and reduces the vulnerabilities that terrorist groups exploit to secure further footholds.

Central to these efforts is sustained dialogue - within the Sahel, across the continent, and with both international and regional partners. Constructive engagement, rather than isolation or punitive measures, is critical to rebuilding trust and fostering pragmatic problem-solving. Open channels of communication help reconcile differing perspectives, prevent further fragmentation and create space for realistic, locally grounded, and nationally owned solutions. Past experiences have shown that military action and punitive mea-

sures have often proven counterproductive. In fact, in many instances, such responses have disproportionately affected civilians and undermined regional stability. Moreover, external interference and inconsistent international engagement have, at times, exacerbated tensions - underscoring the importance of locally driven, nationally owned, and regionally coordinated approaches.

The persistent ambiguity over if, how, and when regional and international partners will re-engage in supporting the Sahel continue to exacerbate the already fragile security environment, and erode national institutional capacities. These dynamics leave state institutions overstretched and under-resourced, undermining their resilience and effectiveness, and thereby tipping the balance of power in favor of terrorist networks that exploit the resulting governance and security vacuum.

Given the region's current inflection point, it is essential for regional and international partners to consider a pragmatic, coherent, and coordinated course of action, prioritizing timely interventions. Such an approach is critical to halting further deterioration and preventing the Sahel from descending into a deeper and more destabilizing crisis, before it is too late. A lasting solution to the region's challenges must be grounded in the principles of African ownership, mutual respect, and solidarity, guided by sovereignty and non-interference. Ultimately, collective security in the Sahel will depend on a shared and sustained commitment to cooperation, respect, and continuous engagement - anchored in an African-led vision and strategy that weaves together peace, security, development, and governance.





Safeguarding a Strategic Corridor: Security, Stability, & Development in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden

The Red Sea and Gulf of Aden region stands at a critical geopolitical juncture, where intensifying security threats intersect with humanitarian, political, and economic crises. Armed conflict, terrorism, and the growing influence of non-state armed groups - including al-Shabaab and the emerging ISIS-affiliated networks in Somalia and Yemen - continue to undermine stability across the region. Climate related shocks, recurrent droughts, and large-scale displacement further strain already fragile systems, deepening vulnerabilities and complicating national recovery and post-conflict efforts.

The security implications of instability in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden are global, not merely regional. More than 12 percent of global trade and roughly 30 percent of container traffic transit the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, making the Red Sea a vital artery for international supply chains. Instability along this corridor has already triggered billions of dollars in economic losses and heightened concerns about the emergence of ungoverned maritime spaces. Preserving the security and sovereignty of this strategic waterway is therefore an urgent priority for Arab and African littoral states, working in partnership with international partners to safeguard freedom and safety of navigation.

Effective governance of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden must be led exclusively by littoral states, with international partners aligning behind nationally and regionally defined priorities. Coordination among all actors is essential to avoid fragmented, duplicative, or overly militarized responses that fail to address root causes or reflect the needs of local communities.

Addressing these multidimensional threats requires a holistic peace and development nexus approach - one that advances security, governance, and socio-economic development in parallel rather than in isolation. Strengthening state institutions and preserving national sovereignty are essential to preventing non-state actors from exploiting governance vacuums. In this regard, the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) remains a cornerstone of the regional security architecture, with a primary goal of supporting the Federal Government in Somalia in areas where capacity challenges persist. Continued political, financial, and logistical support for AUSSOM is critical to empowering the Somali Government in its fight against terrorism, preventing territorial reversals, and advancing long-term stabilization and peace.

The Red Sea region holds immense potential to serve as a driver of stability, regional integration, and economic growth. Harnessing this potential requires a parallel

developmental track that reinforces security gains and expands opportunities for inclusive prosperity. Strengthened South-South cooperation, particularly among Arab and African littoral states, can further accelerate this shift by mobilizing shared expertise and innovative regional investment models tailored to local contexts. Investment in infrastructure, industrial zones, and regional trade facilitation is essential to address structural vulnerabilities, reduce the appeal of illicit economies, and consolidate progress in counterterrorism and maritime security.

Looking ahead, the region must prioritize the prevention of ungoverned maritime spaces, protection and development of critical underwater infrastructure, and the alignment of security frameworks with long-term development goals. Deeper cooperation in education and vocational training, sustainable resource management, and harmonized trade procedures can foster greater economic interdependence and shared prosperity.

In this spirit, Egypt announces the Suez–Red Sea Economic and Maritime Initiative (StREAM) - a comprehensive blueprint that underscores the blue economy, environmental transformation, and the development of advanced port systems, representing Egypt's concrete contribution to advancing integration among Arab and African nations and driving long-term prosperity in the Red Sea region.

StREAM rests on a simple but powerful premise: the security of the Red Sea can only be sustained through inclusive and sustainable development - and development itself can only thrive within a safe and stable regional environment.



Through the StREAM Initiative, Egypt is working with regional and international partners to transform the Red Sea into a hub of prosperity and stability, linking security with sustainable development.



ABU BAKR HEFNY

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Arab Republic of Egypt



The Red Sea is not just a connector or a divider. It's our future that depends on the materials under the Red Sea. The future depends on coordination, ownership, and regional economic integration - fighting piracy or insecurity alone is not enough.



ANNETTE WEBER

Special Representative for the Horn of Africa, European Union



A high-angle, dark-toned photograph of a coastal scene. In the upper left, a large, multi-story building with a series of arched windows or entrances is built into a rocky cliff. The water below is dark and filled with numerous small, white boats, some moored and some moving. The surrounding land is rugged and appears to be a mix of natural rock and some sparse vegetation. The overall atmosphere is somewhat somber and dramatic.

CHAPTER 3

AFRICA RISING: SECURITY, INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT, AND SUSTAINABLE COOPERATION

Africa Rising:

SECURITY, INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT, AND SUSTAINABLE COOPERATION

As the world changes, models of cooperation are also shifting, and many traditional assumptions no longer hold relevance. A profound transformation is underway as the global order shifts from a predictable, rules-based system toward one that is increasingly transactional. Power dynamics increasingly revolve around bilateral bargaining and interest-driven engagement, undermining the legitimacy of institutions designed to ensure fairness and collective peace, security and development.

The Security-Development Dilemma: Navigating Today's Global Trade-Offs

Simultaneously, development assistance is being overshadowed by rising defense spending. Around the world, military expenditure continues to surge while development financing is increasingly constrained. Global military spending rose by 9.4% in 2024, reaching a record USD 2.7 trillion - often in response to geopolitical tensions, new forms of technological warfare and shifting global power dynamics - ultimately fueling a full-fledged arms race.

The increasing reliance on securitization as the primary policy approach has effectively transformed security into a predominantly military project, narrowing the scope of how security and stability are defined. The more resources spent on war

machines, the fewer remain for investments in systems that genuinely keep people safe - education, employment, accessible health services, and equitable economic opportunities. Africa mirrors this global pattern.

While security threats are real, this imbalance undermines the long term stability that development is meant to sustain. In a continent where insecurity already drains nearly USD 97 billion annually, - more than double the amount of development aid Africa receives - the consequences of this global shift are particularly stark.

The African experience demonstrates that development, not firepower, is what ultimately moves societies toward peace. When trust is restored between communities and their governments, when schools reopen and cross-border trade resumes, attacks have, in some contexts, declined. The more young people see hope, the less likely they are to turn to violence. This reality directly challenges the global assumption that more weapons automatically translate into greater security.

Persistent threats such as terrorism and extremism across Africa have proven to be not primarily ideological battles, but rather manifestations of deep development deficits. If even a fraction of global and continental military spending were redirected toward education, innovation, and youth opportunity, the return would be safer societies and more resilient economies.



Peace will not be built by adding higher walls of defense, but by constructing broader bridges of possibility.



AHUNNA EZIAKONWA

Assistant-Secretary-General,
Director for the Africa Bureau,
United Nations Development
Programme (UNDP)





Looking ahead, no crisis in Africa or elsewhere will be addressed and resolved without development, that's very clear [...] development organisations and financial institutions need to take more risk to invest in fragile situations [...] This is how the bridge with humanitarian will be finally resolved, and space exists in Sudan to do that."



FILIPPO GRANDI

High Commissioner for Refugees,
United Nations



Real national security, in Africa and worldwide, depends on ensuring that young people are connected to the world, have pathways to grow, and feel they have something to lose. In addition, research shows that investment in conflict prevention and resilience-building yields a hundred-percent rate of return for countries that choose this type of investment.



The New Development Paradox: Rising Needs, Declining Resources

The global landscape is increasingly defined by a widening gap between urgent humanitarian needs and the dwindling resources available to meet them - even as budgets contract and shift toward other priorities. The multilateral and global system itself is undergoing two major paradigm shifts: first, away from rules-based cooperation toward a more transactional global order; and second, away from development assistance toward heightened security and defense spending.

This dual shift has created both a funding crisis and a crisis of legitimacy for traditional development models. As a result, the long-standing development-humanitarian dilemma has deepened - emergency relief is consuming already scarce resources, while long-term development financing is increasingly difficult to secure, trapping many African countries in a cycle of repeated shocks and incomplete recovery.

Yet, disruption also creates space for innovation. The development community must therefore adopt a "21st-century software upgrade" for cooperation - rethinking funding architectures, redesigning implementation approaches, and building mechanisms capable of working across continental, national, and local levels without adding more bureaucratic complexity.

True cooperation must evolve toward co-creation, co-design and co-decision-making, with prevention strategies placed at the center, given their high impact and low cost. Addressing structural leakages is equally critical: Africa loses tens of billions of dollars annually through illicit financial flows - more than the total volume of aid the continent received. Tackling these losses, using concessional funds to de-risk productive investment, and mobilizing diverse contributors can collectively generate resources far exceeding traditional assistance.

However, even as new models and innovations emerge, they cannot fully replace the core pillars of the international development system - and the global shift away from traditional assistance is unfolding faster than many countries can absorb. The world must therefore be cautious about rushing away from Official Development Assistance (ODA) altogether. Many countries facing debt pressures, climate shocks, and inflationary constraints cannot suddenly replace ODA with market-based financing without severe social consequences. The path forward must therefore be one of ODA+ - a gradual evolution rather than an abrupt exit.

These pressures underscore the need for diversified financing, smarter negotiations, and institutional structures able to manage the convergence of aid, investment, and finance. Innovative instruments such as debt-for-development swaps provide practical, tested ways to convert liabilities into long-term assets, while stronger alignment between cooperation ministries and investment authorities will be essential for navigating an increasingly mixed funding ecosystem.

The shrinking aid envelope does not signify the end of development financing, but rather a call to adapt intelligently and modernize the way Africa engages with the world.

Placing Inclusivity at the Core

Despite a quarter century of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and a decade of the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda, a persistent gap remains between global commitments and meaningful participation. In a context of rising polarization and unprecedented humanitarian crises, closing the implementation gap, investing in local leadership, and strengthening mechanisms for accountability and closing the implementation

gap are critical to unlocking the transformative power of women and youth as central agents of peace, stability, and development.

Africa's rapidly growing youth population represents one of the continent's greatest strategic assets - carrying immense potential to drive peace and sustainable development if meaningfully empowered and included. This underscores the urgent need to integrate young people across the full peace continuum - from early warning and prevention to peacebuilding and reconstruction - while strengthening strategic partnerships that expand youth entrepreneurship, job creation, and youth-driven digital tools and skills.

Similarly, Africa's women are central to peace and development, yet meaningful participation remains limited. Closing the WPS implementation gap requires operational National Action Plans, gender-responsive budgeting, predictable and sustained funding for women-led initiatives, and localized peace efforts grounded in grassroots networks.



Real change must happen within institutions adapting structures to young people's realities. Inclusion succeeds when institutions meet youth's perspectives in their communities.



FELIPE PAULLIER

Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs, United Nations



Capacity - building, digital tools, and mentorship strengthen leadership and accountability, while South – South cooperation and private sector engagement help translate commitments into tangible outcomes, ensuring women's protection, empowerment, and sustained participation across all peace and security frameworks.

As these efforts to strengthen youth and women's inclusion progress, it becomes equally important to address the underlying economic structures that shape opportunity, access, and long-term stability. This is where approaches that redefine how resources are managed and shared become critical to sustaining peace. Initiatives and economic models such as the reparative economy hold significant potential to advance inclusive and sustainable peace and development by

directly confronting the systemic injustices and structural inequalities that often drive conflict.

By decentralizing power and wealth, prioritizing community ownership, and ensuring that local populations benefit from the resources around them, reparative economic approaches help rebuild trust between communities and institutions, fostering resilience and autonomy. In the African context, reparative economies offer a transformative pathway for harnessing natural resource management, stronger state–community partnerships, and empowered local communities as agents of nation-building. In doing so, they lay the foundation for a more equitable development trajectory and contribute meaningfully to achieving durable peace and the aspirations of frameworks such as Agenda 2063.





CHAPTER 4

CHARTING A NEW COURSE:

**AFRICA'S EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES
IN A CHANGING WORLD**

Charting a New Course:

AFRICA'S EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES IN A CHANGING WORLD

Amid mounting global uncertainty and persistent regional challenges, Africa's story is not solely one of crisis; it is also one of resilience, innovation, and emerging opportunity. Over the past decades, Africa's considerable untapped potential has become increasingly evident - marked by a rapidly expanding youth population, emerging economies, and abundant natural resources. Yet this potential is shaped not only by economic indicators, but also by the agency of Africans themselves and by their capacity to ensure peace, prosperity, and opportunity for their people.

The Fifth Edition of the Aswan Forum, like the four editions before it, did not view Africa through a lens of challenges or deficits. Instead, it centered its discussions on how to turn these challenges into opportunities for sustainable growth, peace, and resilience. It underscored that, despite an evolving landscape of threats, Africa possesses the tools, ideas, and partnerships needed to transform challenges into opportunities - reaffirming the continent's growing role as a source of its own solutions and innovations in a changing world.

Reorienting Africa's Peace, Security, and Governance Architecture in a World in Flux

Africa enters this World in Flux not as a continent lacking normative frameworks or policy and operational guidance, but as one endowed with a rich reservoir of norms, institutions, and homegrown mechanisms designed to promote peace, resilience, and collective security. Consistent with the guiding philosophy of the Aswan Forum, the challenge before Africa is not to reinvent solutions, but to activate, align, and amplify the tools already at its disposal. Most importantly, Africa must adapt these tools to the dual pressures of a rapidly evolving global environment and its own challenges.

At the core of this architecture lies the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), with its comprehensive mechanisms for early warning, preventive diplomacy,

conflict management and post-conflict reconstruction, an operational toolbox that has matured over two decades, complemented by the African Governance Architecture (AGA). Anchored in the aspirations of Agenda 2063 and propelled by the continent's flagship initiative "Silencing the Guns", this review is therefore not about creating new frameworks, but about enhancing coherence, strengthening implementation, and ensuring that Africa's existing tools are fully aligned and activated to respond to a rapidly evolving world.

Coupled with the ongoing reforms at the UN and across the broader international level, the AU reform process presents an unmatched opportunity to advance a stronger, more effec-



Our aim is to lead in prevention, peace support, and reconstruction. Today, we must enhance collaboration and synergy between the AU and sub-regional organizations.



SELMA MALIKA HADDADI

Deputy Chairperson, African Union Commission





tive partnership between both organizations and to create new avenues for Africa to leverage global shifts, unlock stalled processes, and overcome longstanding decision-making deadlocks.

Revitalizing the Global Peace and Security Toolkit for Africa

Efforts to overcome geopolitical divisions and revitalize the global peace and security toolkit also present important opportunities to strengthen Africa's leadership in shaping international norms, while better equipping the continent to address its own evolving peace and security challenges.

In the face of growing geopolitical fragmentation, moments of resilience have revealed alternative avenues of collective diplomacy, such as the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and coordinated engagement among the ten non-permanent elected members of the UN Security Council (E10) and the African Three (A3), or recourse to the UN General Assembly to overcome gridlock within the UNSC system. Such tools and initiatives should be strategically leveraged to advance consensus and maintain momentum in crisis settings across Africa, the broader Global South, and beyond. By helping bridge political divides, they can foster more coherent and inclusive international responses.

Among the most visible expressions of multilateralism in action are peace operations. Whether UN-led, AU-led, or hybrid, such missions must be anchored in credible political processes, guided by realistic mandates, sequenced flexibly, and safeguarded against premature mission drawdowns that risk reversing hard-won gains.

The implementation of Security Council Resolution 2719 (2023) must be accompanied by predictable financing, rigorous accountability, and jointly developed planning frameworks that reinforce shared responsibility between the UN, AU, and RECs. Capacity support for mission planning, logistics, and compliance mechanisms will be essential to realizing the resolution's transformative potential.

Regional organizations should be strengthened as first responders through investment in their readiness, particularly the African Standby Force and sub-regional contingents—via sustained financing, enhanced interoperability, and streamlined coordination with UN structures.

Overall, the peace and security toolkit does not require reinvention but revitalization. The challenges are political – insufficient unity, inconsistent follow-through, and inadequate financing – rather than structural. Durable peace requires coherence between global and regional efforts, genuine African ownership, and strategic, patient investment in long-term stabilization.

Conflict management alone cannot secure sustaining peace and cannot substitute for a holistic approach, it must be reinforced by complementary interventions and embedded within a wider peace continuum that address structural drivers and root causes of conflicts, and sustaining peace.



How do we rebuild trust? This is a question of legitimacy, and therefore of effectiveness.



JEAN PIERRE LACROIX
Under-Secretary General for Peace Operations, United Nations





Harnessing Talent, Innovation, and Partnerships for Africa's Prosperity

Significant opportunities exist to foster sustainable development through innovative partnerships and local ownership. Engaging the private sector, diaspora, and philanthropic actors can expand resources and knowledge-sharing, while South–South cooperation and bottom-up approaches enable context-specific and needs-driven initiatives. By nurturing ecosystems that encourage collaboration, innovation, and capacity building, Africa can shift its focus from managing aid to creating wealth. Instruments such as debt for development swaps present opportunities to convert debt obligations into productive investments that enhance development outcomes. Empowering local communities, harnessing demographic and human capital, and promoting inclusivity and localization can anchor resilient development systems, strengthen accountability, and reinforce long-term peace, prosperity, and stability.

In addition, AI offers significant potential to enhance prevention, protection, and prediction across peace, security, and development frameworks. Africa can harness this transformative potential by strengthening governance frameworks, promoting African-led, contextually relevant, and legally compliant AI solutions, and investing in infrastructure, innovation hubs, and regional training centers to build local capacity. Youth engagement, private-public

partnerships, and open-source technologies can drive innovation, reduce dependency on foreign systems, and promote ethical, transparent, and human-centered AI applications. By leveraging these opportunities, Africa can advance research and cross-sectoral collaboration, building an inclusive AI-powered ecosystem that addresses inequalities, enhances development outcomes, and supports sustaining long-term peace and security.

Moreover, Africa holds immense potential to drive regional integration and sustainable growth through a unified, forward-looking infrastructure agenda. By aligning national priorities with continental frameworks and prioritizing projects that strengthen regional value chains, the continent can transform infrastructure from a physical network into a driver of economic convergence and shared prosperity. Political will, institutional coherence, and long-term policy stability are essential to ensure continuity and attract sustained investment.

The private sector is a cornerstone of Africa's transformation, able to drive innovation, create jobs, and build competitive industries when supported by stable regulations and sustainable financing. Mobilizing domestic capital,



Artificial Intelligence is a transformative and game changing tool that is instrumental in several areas including protection, prediction, and prevention. We must continuously stand firm to prepare our world, continent, and youth to embrace this revolution.



BANKOLE ADEOYE

Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, African Union Commission



strengthening African financial institutions, and developing homegrown instruments can close funding gaps and promote self-reliance. Empowering youth through education, innovation, and digital skills is essential to unlocking Africa's demographic dividend and building a workforce capable of advancing modern infrastructure.

In addition, youth and women are central to sustainable development. Their meaningful involvement in policymaking and implementation—together with the private sector, diaspora, and local actors—is crucial to maximizing Africa's human and financial capital. Excluding them risks lost potential, continued marginalization, and slower progress.

Ultimately, African-led and African-financed solutions rooted in peace, stability, and cooperation can ensure that infrastructure transformation becomes the backbone of a connected, competitive, and prosperous Africa.



Unlocking the Human and Financial Capital of the African Diaspora

The African diaspora represents a significant, yet underutilized human and financial asset for the continent. Recognized by the AU as individuals of African origin living outside the continent who are willing to contribute to Africa's development, this global community - estimated at over 200 million professionals , including innovators, academics, entrepreneurs, artists and cultural leaders - holds substantial potential to accelerate integration and growth. Beyond their expertise, the diaspora contributes more than USD 100 billion in



There is a huge role that the African diaspora plays and can play in influencing the narrative related to Africa, and everything related to financing of African Development.



AMR EL JOWAILY

Director, Directorate of Citizens and Diaspora Organizations, African Union



annual remittances, exceeding ODA to Africa. While these transfers sustain African families, they also represent a stable source of capital that can be strategically leveraged for investment, infrastructure and enterprise development. This momentum builds on the commitments of the 2012 Global African Diaspora Summit, which called for practical mechanisms such as an African Diaspora Investment Fund, volunteer programs, and enhanced professional networks that connect expertise across borders.

As Africa asserts its position as a rising global actor, strengthening diaspora engagement has become an integral part of the continent's broader shift toward continental self-reliance and strategic agency. Harnessing the skills, capital, and influence of Africans abroad reinforces the continent's ability to shape its own peace, security and development priorities, rather than over-relying on external intervention or assistance. By mobilizing the diaspora as partners in innovation, investment, and diplomacy, Africa advances a model of shared responsibility and mutual benefit - one that aligns with Agenda 2063 and the vision of a secure, integrated, and prosperous Africa.

Ultimately, leveraging the diaspora is not only an economic strategy, but also a reaffirmation of Africa's commitment to taking ownership of its future and driving solutions from within.

Driving Growth from Within

As Africa's population is projected to reach 2.5 billion by 2050, leveraging this demographic dividend through enhanced connectivity, renewable energy expansion, and cross-border market access will be central to transforming potential into shared prosperity. In this evolving landscape, strategic infrastructure and land corridors are emerging as the backbone of connectivity, economic transformation, and post-conflict recovery with the private sector playing a critical role in driving investment in trade infrastructure and advancing regional integration. Realizing this vision requires mobilizing both the continent's financial and human resources toward common goals.

The continent has long been constrained by the notion that it can only survive through external financing. Yet Africa's economic potential lies not in external dependency, but in unlocking the resources within its own borders. The continent holds significant dormant capital in pension funds, sovereign wealth funds, and external reserves - assets frequently invested abroad, even as many African countries borrow at high interest rates from those same markets. Redirecting these resources toward domestic development priorities would curb capital outflows and strengthen Africa's financial self-reliance. Just as Africa's financial capital remains under-utilized, so too does its vast human potential.

As such, equally important is the continent's youthful and highly talented population, whose creativity, innovation, and digital capacity constitute a powerful engine for future growth. By investing intentionally in technology, entrepreneurship and emerging industries - including the creative sector - Africa can generate new markets, expand private-sector participation, and reduce the long-standing habit of externalizing its development journey. Complementing these domestic efforts, trade and market integration form a central pillar of Africa's economic transformation.

While the continent holds 30 percent of the world's minerals, the goal is no longer to export raw resources but to shift toward industrialization and value addition. Frameworks such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) are beginning to make this possible by promoting coordinated policies, joint economic diplomacy, and greater participation in global value chains. Yet trade cannot be viewed in isolation - it depends on investment, predictable and transparent policies, and reduced perceived risk to attract manufacturing and processing industries. With 54 countries, progress requires collective action, strengthened connectivity across borders, and a decisive shift from potential to performance. If Africa mobilizes its internal capital, builds enabling institutions, and leverages regional integration, it can transform its markets from fragmented to globally competitive - becoming not merely a resource-rich continent, but an economically unstoppable one.

Realizing this potential also requires strong institutions, policy consistency, and infrastructure that support long-term national goals, rather than shifting with every change in leadership. Frequent policy resets have repeatedly set back progress, underscoring the need for stable frameworks that enable public-private partnerships (PPPs) and broaden participation beyond large corporations to include micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) - which collectively account for around 80 percent of job creation. Strengthening both physical and digital connectivity will enable innovation ecosystems to scale across borders, ensuring that Africa's capital, talent, and productivity serve its own development rather than leaking outward.

This inward focus is especially critical at a moment when external financing is declining - creating a moment of opportunity to build resilient, self-sustaining systems capable of addressing African problems through African solutions.

Conclusions of the Fifth Edition of the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development

A World in Flux, A Continent in Motion: Navigating Africa's Progress Amid Global Shifts

19-20 October 2025

1. Restoring the rules-based international system by upholding international law and promoting inclusive and equitable global governance is vital. Africa relies heavily on these principles to address its peace and development challenges. There is an urgent need to strengthen compliance with international law by creating mechanisms that monitor and penalize violations, promote accountability to combat impunity, and eliminate double standards. Ensuring consistent and principled responses to conflict - where all crises are addressed on an equal footing - are essential to restoring credibility in the system. It is essential to address historical injustices faced by Africa, most notably in the membership structure of the UNSC.

2. Reforming and recalibrating the multilateral peace and security architecture to reflect this period of profound uncertainty, marked by rising geopolitical tensions, polarization, and the increasing influence of non-state actors is urgently needed. This includes strengthening the role of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, E10, and A3; ensuring full use of the UN General Assembly's mandates and mechanisms to uphold international peace and security; and activating Chapter VIII of the UN Charter to empower regional organizations. Timely implementation of UNSC Resolution 2719 is key for financing African-led peace operations. Capacity support for mission planning, logistics, and compliance mechanisms is essential to operationalizing the resolution's potential. Regional organizations along with Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) must be equipped to act as first responders in conflict prevention, peace support, and

peacebuilding. This global reform effort must go hand in hand with the ongoing reform of the African Union's peace, security and governance architecture to ensure coherence, complementarity, and effective collaboration across levels.

3. Reforming the global financial and trade systems to make them more inclusive and responsive to Africa's unique vulnerabilities is crucial. Improved access to fair, predictable financing - especially for debt relief, climate action, and development - can give African countries the fiscal space to invest in vital infrastructure. Infrastructure, in turn, supports sovereignty, boosts intra-African trade, fosters peace and stability, and drives development and market integration. Equally important is reducing aid dependency and promoting self-driven development in Africa. The continent must enhance intra-African trade and deepen regional integration, especially through implementing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). This involves aligning national infrastructure plans with continental frameworks like AfCFTA, the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), and the revised PCRD policy to boost connectivity and unlock regional value chains.

4. Advancing regional integration and sustainable development in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden region presents a strategic opportunity for Arab-African economic initiatives, infrastructure investment, and state-building among Arab and African coastal states. By strengthening the capacities of African and Arab littoral states, these efforts aim to enhance connectivity, maritime security, safety of navigation and regional stability. In this context, the Forum

witnessed the launch of the Suez Red Sea Economic and Maritime Initiative "StREAM initiative as a comprehensive roadmap built around four key pillars: the blue economy, infrastructure and port development, environmental preservation, and deepening economic integration.

5. Fostering innovative and equitable partnerships to support a resilient, self-driven Africa is key. This means shifting to country-led models, improving coordination, prioritizing internal resource mobilization, and aligning donor support with national capacities. South–South and multi-stakeholder cooperation can enhance regional collaboration and inclusive partnerships.

6. Ensuring inclusive mediation that tackles root causes, with strong AU-UN-international partnerships that capitalize on African mediation expertise, is necessary. There must be more inclusive Track I mediation, as well as better coordination across multi-track mediation efforts, especially among Track II mediators. The Forum called for strengthening Track III mediators, such as community leaders who are key to legitimate, inclusive, and lasting peace. There is also a need to strengthen capacities in the mediation field, focusing on building adaptability to evolving conflict drivers. In addition, there is a growing need to expand mediation in the area of natural resource management, given the increasing number of conflicts over natural resources.

7. Restoring the social fabric as a central pillar of post-conflict recovery is essential. Rebuilding after conflict is not only about institutions but also about people. Addressing mental health, trauma, and post-conflict stress is a collective responsibility. Those affected by violence, displacement, and instability need comprehensive psychosocial support and rehabilitation to achieve healing, resilience, and social cohesion.

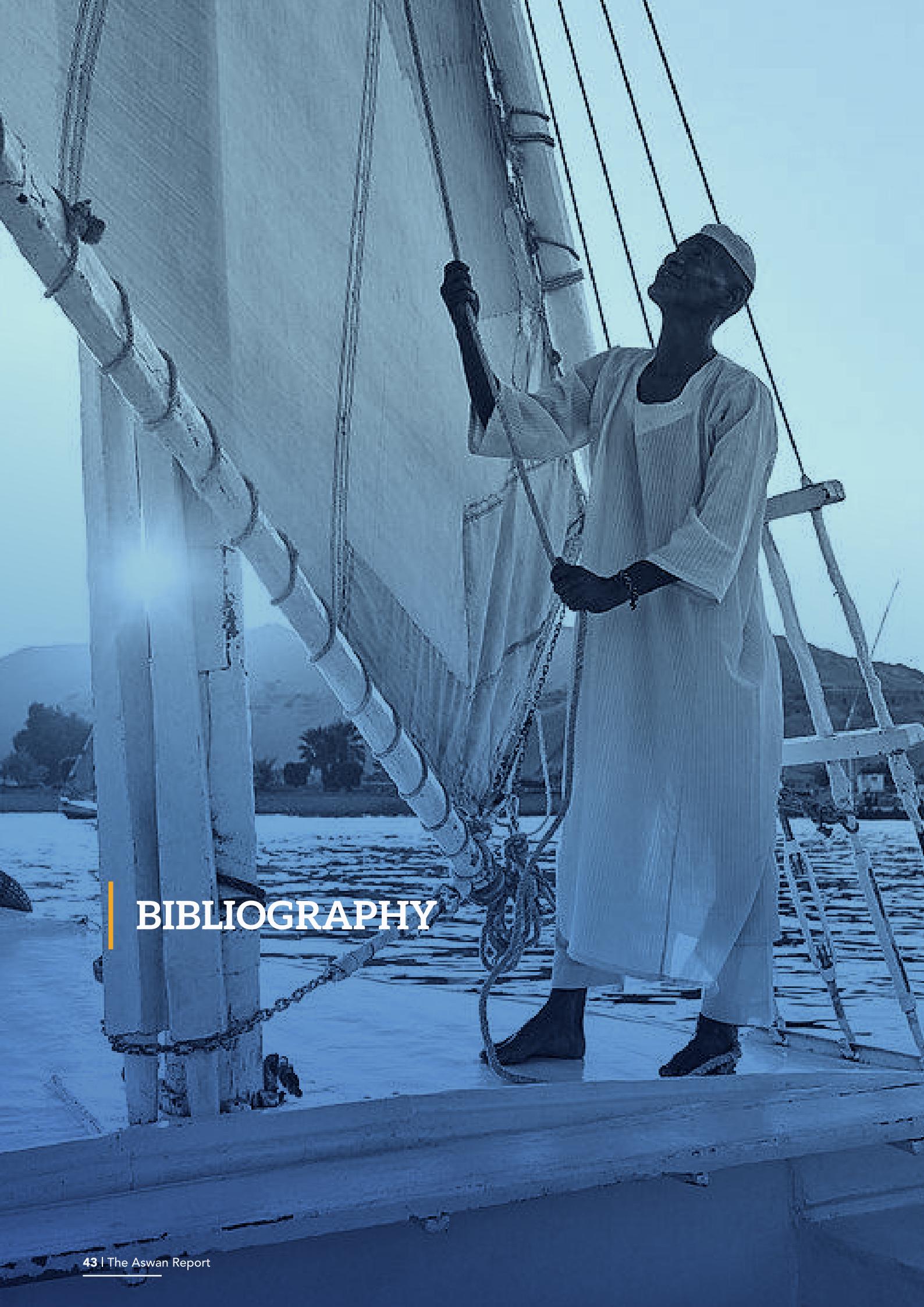
8. Sustaining peace and resilience by addressing cross-border issues such as displacement, terrorism, and transnational organized crime is imperative. There is an urgent need for stronger integrated border governance and migration management along key African migratory routes. With Africa and the Arab region hosting some of the world's highest levels of forced displacement, it is crucial to integrate displacement responses into national policies, strategies, and action plans, especially in host countries.

9. Institutionalizing integrated water resource management and climate-resilient agricultural transformation as central pillars of national peacebuilding and sustainable development strategies is vital. This requires overcoming sectoral silos to ensure coherent, adequately financed, and cross-ministerial strategies; mobilizing sustainable public and private investment that recognizes agriculture and water systems as peace-enabling public goods; and embedding long-term resilience within short-term crisis responses — positioning climate-resilient agriculture as a strategic pathway to stability.

10. Harnessing innovation and AI for sustainable peace and development in Africa is essential. This entails accelerating the implementation of existing AI governance frameworks; institutionalizing robust regulatory, surveillance, and monitoring systems; promoting open-source and locally adapted AI solutions; investing in regional training centers and innovation labs; fostering a conducive environment for meaningful partnerships and cooperation in cybersecurity; and providing actionable insights through innovative convening platforms.

11. Deepening inclusivity and participation of women and youth in peace and development efforts is paramount. Marking the anniversaries of WPS and YPS agendas, the Forum reaffirmed that the meaningful inclusion of women and youth is not only a normative imperative but a strategic necessity for building sustainable peace and resilient societies. African governments, regional organizations, and international partners are urged to move beyond tokenism and ensure their full, equal, and safe participation in decision-making, particularly in conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacebuilding, and PCRD efforts. Women and youth are not merely beneficiaries of Africa's development; they are central drivers of it. Engaging them alongside the private sector, diaspora, and local actors is essential to fully harness the continent's human and financial capital. Neglecting their role risks leaving potential untapped, perpetuating exclusion, and undermining progress toward inclusive, resilient, and sustainable development.





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