



ASWAN FORUM
FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT
منتدى اسوان للسلام والتنمية المستدامين

CONCEPT NOTE

Aswan Forum V

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

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

BACKGROUND

The Fifth Edition of the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development will convene amidst a period of profound global shifts. Evolving power dynamics and unconventional diplomacy are reshaping international cooperation, challenging longstanding international norms and multilateral frameworks. A shift in global priorities from peace and development toward national security and defense is amplifying protectionism and isolationism, thereby hindering globalization and threatening the rules-based international order.

This “World in Flux” tests the very foundations of the multilateral system—now under pressure from simultaneous and compounding pressures. Concurrently, protracted conflicts, violence and fragility—evidenced by 56 active conflicts in 2024 and 92 countries involved in conflicts beyond their borders in 2022—exacerbate inequalities and human suffering, eroding trust in global cooperation and hindering progress toward sustainable peace and development.

Africa, a “Continent in Motion,” stands at a pivotal moment amid these global uncertainties. The continent's immense potential remains evident, with significant opportunities for growth, resilience, and unity driven by the energy and ambition of its vibrant youth. The past decades have revealed Africa's significant untapped potential, characterized by a rapidly growing youth population, emerging economies, and abundant natural resources. Agenda 2063 articulates Africa's vision of a peaceful, integrated, and prosperous continent. However, significant obstacles persist as Africa continues to strive to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030.

The multifaceted challenges confronting the African continent are further compounded by recent global shifts. Geopolitical competition, growing global polarization, protectionist measures hindering access to global markets, major power competition over the continent's abundant natural resources, disrupted supply chains, declining investment, and escalating debt—all of which are exacerbating existing development challenges and widening socioeconomic inequalities.

While African governments and the African Union (AU) have achieved significant strides to address security challenges—through frameworks and initiatives such as the African Peace and Security Architecture, the African Governance Architecture, and the Silencing the Guns Master Roadmap—the continent continues to grapple with persistent and evolving threats, and the repercussions of conflict around the world. Ongoing crises in Gaza, Sudan and Russia-Ukraine have had far-reaching effect contributing to regional instability across the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and the Red Sea. The Sahel region remains a global epicenter of terrorism, accounting for over half of global terrorism-related deaths. In addition, Africa faces climate-induced security risks intensify existing challenges related to food, water and energy security.

Moreover, Africa continues to face persistent challenges related to illegal migration, illicit arms trafficking, transnational organized crime, protracted displacement, and escalating cybersecurity threats, all of which disproportionately affect women and youth, whose meaningful engagement is essential for building sustainable peace.

Nevertheless, Africa today has a significant opportunity to strengthen its unity, deepen economic integration, advance its approaches to peace, security, and sustainable development, and explore new pathways toward self-reliance and full ownership of its ambitions. Across the continent, there is a growing recognition that Africa must leverage its vast natural resources and strategic potential through equal and mutually beneficial partnerships, ensuring that Africans receive their fair share of the value generated from their resources.

A dynamic new generation of Africans is emerging as a driving force in shaping the continent's trajectory, offering innovative homegrown solutions and a strong sense of ownership over Africa's future and resources.

Realizing these aspirations necessitates concerted efforts, including leveraging the revised AU Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) policy to establish a stronger foundation for sustainable peace and security, justice, and development across the continent. Furthermore, the AU's Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy can be used to harness technology for development, while the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) can accelerate regional integration, enhance trade, attract investment, and drive economic growth.

Strategic trade routes such as the Lobito Corridor, the Cairo–Cape Town Corridor and the proposed Safaga–Ndjamena Corridor exemplify how infrastructure can support the operationalization of the AfCFTA, enhancing cross-border connectivity, unlocking new economic opportunities and placing African economies at the heart of the emerging global supply chains. Notably, these crucial economic arteries facilitate efficient movement of goods and services and further advance regional integration, and provide opportunities for socio-economic development.

Businesses and the wider African and global private sector can also play an increasingly vital role in advancing sustainable peace and development amid shifting global priorities and shrinking development funding – positioning them as key partners in building resilient economies and fostering inclusive growth that is able to sustain the continent's peace and security.

OBJECTIVE

In this spirit, **the Fifth Edition of the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development will convene at a pivotal moment, as global governance and multilateral action undergo profound transformation.** As the world remains in flux, this edition offers 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 will serve 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 will bring 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 resolve the continent's most pressing peace, humanitarian, and development challenges, with a 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, promoting 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) nexus, building upon the priorities established since the forum's inception in 2019, and the achievements made through the implementation of the successive Aswan Cycle Conclusions through the Aswan Cycle concept.
- Devise innovative solutions and financing that can unlock Africa's potential for economic growth, and for sustainable peace and development.

GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Aswan Forum's International Advisory Board comprises eminent African and global figures, including the Forum's strategic partners and key contributors. This Board provides strategic direction and guidance to the Forum, collaborating with African and international think tanks and knowledge partners. The Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCCPA) serves as the Forum's Secretariat.

PREPARATORY PROCESS

The preparatory process for the forthcoming edition is strategically designed to build upon the outcomes of the previous four editions, while also addressing the current dynamics and challenges facing the world today.

This year's preparatory process includes a series of workshops and webinars intended to stimulate thought-provoking discussions and generate insights that will directly inform the design of the Fifth Edition of the Aswan Forum. These activities include but are not limited to:

1. "Twenty-Five Years of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda: A Call to Revive Africa's Leadership", April 2025, Cairo.
2. "Charting the Future of Peace Operations Post-Berlin Ministerial through an African Lens", June 2025, Addis Ababa.
3. "A New Era of Peace, Security, and Development Powered by Artificial Intelligence", August 2025, Hybrid Format.
4. "The Stakes of Mediation in the Arab Region: Expanding Roles and the Needed Complementarity Amid Regional Shifts", September 2025, Cairo.
5. "Two Reviews, One Continuum: Shaping the Future of Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding as the UN Turns 80", September 2025, New York.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

The Forum will yield the "Aswan Conclusions on Sustainable Peace and Development," a synthesis of key outcomes derived from extensive and strategic deliberations. The Aswan Conclusions will be implemented through specific, measurable deliverables within the scope of the Aswan Cycle, in collaboration with the Forum's partners.

VENUE

The Fifth Edition of the Aswan Forum will bring the spirit of sustainable peace and development back to the heart of Aswan—the city that hosted the Forum's inaugural edition.

DATES

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مجلس أسوان للسلام والتنمية المستدامة

Tel : +20 (2) 2792 8950
Fax : +20 (2) 2792 8940
secretariat@aswanforum.org
www.aswanforum.org

 Aswanforum

 Aswanforum

 Aswanforum

 aswanforumegypt

