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Note from the IJR Executive Director



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – PROF CHERYL HENDRICKS

This September, we spotlight critical developments shaping Africa's future. Our focus on preventing violent extremism emphasizes home-grown solutions tailored to local contexts. We also explore the ongoing debate around UN Security Council reform, highlighting the need to rethink global governance structures, including calls to rewrite the UN Charter.

I'm pleased to announce a new partnership as IJR and the University of Botswana have signed an MoU to collaborate on governance and peacebuilding initiatives. Our 3rd D4GA Stakeholders' Convening reaffirmed commitments to strengthening democracy and human rights, while the GNU Youth Roundtable showcased the importance of youth leadership in South Africa's future. We also commend African Parliamentarians for embracing a data-driven approach to education.

Together, let's continue working toward a more peaceful and just Africa.

Preventing violent extremism in Africa: Exploring new approaches and home-grown solutions



By Prof Cheryl Hendricks and Patrick Hajayandi

The shift of global terrorism from the Middle East to the Sahel region has situated Africa as the 'global epicentre of violent extremism'.

The Sahel accounted for half of all terrorism-related deaths in 2023, and Burkina Faso ranks at the top of the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) for the impact of terrorism. Ten of the top 20 countries listed in the GTI are in Africa: Burkina Faso, Mali, Somalia, Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Kenya and Egypt.

An increasing number of countries are impacted by the insecurity generated by violent extremists across Africa, with at least 25 countries being affected. According to the 2023 GTI, from 2007 to 2022, the region went from accounting for only 1% to 43% of the global total terrorism-linked deaths. The Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS), Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP), Boko Haram, Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), al-Shabaab (Somalia), Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar al-Din and Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamma'ah (ASWJ) are just some of the violent extremist groups currently operative on the continent. They exist along with hundreds of other militia groups operative in localities across the continent.

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Africa and the US 'non-proposal' on UN Security Council reform



By Prof Tim Murithi

The reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has emerged as one of the most contentious and polarising issues under negotiation in the lead-up to the UN's [Summit of the Future](#) on 22/23 September.

The intergovernmental negotiations framework which has compiled the outcome document effusively billed as the UN Pact of the Future essentially kicked the can down the road as far as undertaking any concrete decisions on UNSC reform. Twenty years ago, the Africa Union (AU) adopted the "Common Position on the Reform of the United Nations Security Council", known as the [Ezulwini Consensus](#), through which AU member states demanded two permanent seats on the UNSC "with all prerogatives and privileges of current members", including the right to invoke the veto.

For the two intervening decades, all of the Permanent Five (P5) members of the UNSC – the US, UK, France, China and Russia – paid lip service to the idea of UNSC reform, and Africa's inclusion as a permanent member, but in effect rejected any genuine attempts to place the issue on the agenda.

This status quo maintenance strategy of the P5 appears to have been disrupted by the announcement from US ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield, who announced that [the US was prepared to consider two seats for Africa](#) as permanent members of the UNSC, with a significant snag being that those seats would exclude veto powers.

In effect, the US non-proposal would relegate the African continent's 1.4 billion people to the category of permanent second-class citizens

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University of Botswana and IJR Sign MoU for Collaborative Projects



In the month of September, the University of Botswana and the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate on various projects until December 2026. The partnership aims to address issues related to governance, peace, conflict resolution, security, and transitional justice in Africa. The institutions will work together on research, training programs, policy analysis, and joint advocacy initiatives, focusing on capacitating African academia, institutions, and civil society. Both parties will engage in joint fundraising and knowledge-sharing to promote peacebuilding and good governance across the continent.

The MoU outlines a comprehensive framework for collaboration between the two institutions, emphasizing the development of teaching materials, joint policy briefs, and hosting workshops, seminars, and conferences. Through these initiatives, the University of Botswana and the IJR aim to foster knowledge production and capacity building in areas critical to promoting peace and security in African countries. Their efforts will target diverse stakeholders, including governments, civil society, and academic actors, ensuring a broad impact across multiple sectors.

A key aspect of the partnership is its focus on addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting sustainable peace in Africa. By co-convening training programs and policy dialogues, the collaboration seeks to contribute to good governance and transitional justice efforts in various African countries. This partnership also aligns with regional and international protocols, such as those established by the African Union and the United Nations, as both parties strive to support the continent's peacebuilding agenda.

Key Outcomes from the 3rd D4GA Stakeholders' Convening on Governance, Democracy, and Human Rights

The 3rd Data for Governance Alliance in Africa (D4GA) Stakeholders' Convening on Governance, Democracy, and Human Rights in Africa took place in Cape Town between 9 and 13 September, where stakeholders from civil society organizations, and regional bodies came together to tackle the continent's most pressing challenges. The Southern Africa edition of this landmark event underscored the urgent need for action on issues such as education, climate resilience, transitional justice, and the power of data in driving policy reform.

Participants from across the region laid out ambitious strategies to turn data insights into action, with the shared goal of creating a more inclusive, accountable, and resilient Africa.

A poignant highlight of the convening was the tribute to Dr Webster Zambara, a distinguished peacebuilder whose legacy continues to inspire. Dr Zambara's commitment to fostering dialogue and resolving conflicts was celebrated by many who shared their personal stories of his impact. His dedication to peace and reconciliation was a guiding light throughout the convening, reminding attendees of the profound difference one individual can make in advancing human rights and governance.

Inclusive education took centre stage as stakeholders reiterated the importance of equitable access for marginalized communities, particularly children with disabilities. The sessions highlighted the urgent need for improved legal frameworks, increased funding for inclusive education, and the removal of systemic barriers. Key advocacy messages included "Inclusive Education as a Fundamental Right" and "Stop Discrimination Against Students with Disabilities."



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The UN Charter needs Rewriting



By Heba Aly, Brenda Mofya, Andreas Bummel and Tim Murithi
(published by Al Jazeera)

Despite the less-than-revolutionary outcome of the UN Summit for the Future, hope for much-needed change remains. It can be introduced through a reform of the UN Charter.

The world's governments made a series of commitments to transform global governance at the United Nations Summit of the Future in New York. The ambitiously named summit was described as a "once-in-a-generation opportunity" to "forge a new global consensus on what our future should look like."

Indeed, we are at a critical time when change is urgently needed. The world faces "a moment of historic danger", with increasingly imminent risks – from nuclear war to a planetary emergency, from persistent poverty and widening inequality to the unhindered advancement of artificial intelligence – threatening humanity's very existence. These are global challenges that cannot be solved purely at the national level: The people of the world need – and deserve – better coordinated global action.

Yet our global governance institutions have proven incapable of addressing current crises, from the wars in Ukraine, Gaza and Sudan to the increasing impacts of climate change.

And in an increasingly multipolar world, emerging powers that find the current system – particularly the composition of the UN Security Council – unfair and unrepresentative are losing faith in multilateralism and risk withdrawing from it altogether. That doesn't serve anyone, including the so-called great powers.

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African Parliamentarians Embrace Data-Driven Approach to Education

In a significant move towards improving education across the continent, African parliamentarians have shown keen interest in adopting data-driven governance approaches. This development came to light during recent high-profile events at the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) in Midrand, South Africa, held from September 16–20, 2024.

Nyasha Mpani, Project Leader of the Data for Governance Alliance (D4GA) at the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, participated in the proceedings. Mpani presented "Using Data to Improve Education: Creating Strong and Inclusive Learning Systems in Africa" to the various parliamentary committees. The presentation emphasised the critical role of data in addressing educational challenges such as access, affordability, and high student-teacher ratios.

Mpani urged the members of parliament to adopt data-driven governance approaches, against the backdrop of the 2024 African Union year of education. This call to action aligns with Article 17 of the African Charter, which aims to build resilient education systems preparing citizens for 21st-century challenges.

The events also included a joint seminar on "Agenda 2063: Fostering an Africa Fit for Children," attended by various AU organs and civil society organizations. Douglas Wanja, East Africa Coordinator of D4GA, presented findings from Afrobarometer, highlighting challenges that make education unfit for African children.

Parliamentarians showed interest in obtaining country-aggregated data, underscoring the perceived value of data in improving policy and citizens' lives. This interest was further reinforced during the 12th Annual Conference of Speakers of National and Regional Parliaments, which focused on building resilient education systems in Africa.


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GNU Youth Roundtable Reflection



By Songezo Ndungane, Intern, Executive Director's Officer, IJR

On 22 August 2024, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation hosted a pivotal Government of National Unity (GNU) Youth Roundtable in Cape Town. The gathering sought to reflect on the state of national affairs in South Africa, that have unfolded since the most recent national elections, under the theme, "Which Way Does the GNU Go?"

The institute convened youth stakeholders, bringing together delegates from various political youth organizations, non-governmental organizations, think-tanks, and student representative bodies from across the Western Cape. The event was attended by two panellists who brought philosophical and public affairs insights into the prospects for youth within the GNU framework. This roundtable offered an essential platform for youth to engage with the pressing questions of our time, particularly concerning the future of governance and youth participation in South Africa.

Mr Olerato Mogomotsi, a lecturer in philosophy at the University of Cape Town, opened the discussion by exploring the concept of national unity in a deeply divided society. His presentation emphasized the need for political reconciliation and unity, particularly in a country grappling with polarized political realities. He argued that youth should play a pivotal role in forging national cohesion.

Advocate Jennica Beukes, a doctoral researcher at the Dullah Omar Institute at the University of the Western Cape, expanded on current public affairs, focusing on coalition politics and the role of youth in strengthening democratic institutions. She emphasized that youth participation is critical to the long-term sustainability of South Africa's democracy, particularly in addressing governance challenges and reinforcing democratic values.

The youth roundtable was dynamic and transformative, fostering the co-creation of a collective youth vision and an actionable roadmap for this new democratic epoch. Among the most poignant contributions were the discussions around governance, unemployment, corruption, representation, and the complexities of coalition politics. The underlying call was for youth to organize, exercise agency, and work towards achieving inclusive governance and policymaking in today's evolving political landscape. Moreover, South Africa continues to grapple with deep-rooted structural and systemic challenges, many of which stem from its historical legacy. The complexities of these issues—unemployment, poverty, and inequality—require an all-hands-on-deck approach. This means engaging not only youth structures but also the public and private sectors to forge sustainable and impactful solutions.

Looking ahead, the IJR's commitment to future youth engagements will centre on fostering youth inclusion in local, regional, and international discourses. The focus will be on capacitating youth in cultivating democratic outcomes, striving for Pan-African standards for inclusive governance, and empowerment. In this current moment in national, regional, and global politics, where political landscapes are shifting and policymaking reforms are on the rise—from South Africa's foreign policy on Ukraine and Israel, to the limitations of the African Union's peace architectures, and the reconfiguration of the United Nations—youth must be at the forefront.

The time has come for youth to be fully empowered, to take their rightful place in the checks and balances of power structures, and to actively contribute to the pursuit of peaceful and democratic governance. Their voices, their agency, and their organizing capabilities are essential to achieving the unity, peace, and justice we all seek. This is our shared national journey, and our youth are its most vital architects.

Policy Briefs in support of the African Peace Mission and Ukraine Peace Formula

Experts from leading institutions have developed three crucial policy briefs in support of the African Peace Mission and Ukraine Peace Formula:

- Nuclear Safety During Military Invasion: The Ukraine-Russian Case Study.
- Ukraine Children Under Russian Control: Addressing Abduction, Deportations, Repatriation, and Justice.
- The Impact of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine on Peace and Security in Africa. Explore these critical insights to understand their impact on global security and human rights.

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