



# CONNECT

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Inter-Governmental Briefing on UN Security Council Reform
- Africa in the G20 and Debt Sustainability
- Centre for Human Rights, Afrobarometer, and IJR Convene Public Briefing to Unpack South Africa's 2025 Afrobarometer Survey Findings
- Reimagining Realpolitik: Africa's Diplomacy of Principle and Pragmatism at the UN
- Call for African Unity and Data-Driven Governance at D4GA Continental Convening in Ghana
- South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission at 30
- Antiracism Week
- Erasmus University Rotterdam Law Delegation Visits IJR
- Capacity Building Summit with Women and Youth Traditional Leaders on Conflict Prevention, Mediation and Peacebuilding



## Note from the IJR Interim Executive Director

As we reflect on a productive and impactful period at the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, this edition of IJR Connect highlights our engagements across local, continental, and global platforms. From advancing dialogue on UN Security Council reform and Africa's role in the G20, to unpacking critical Afrobarometer findings on South Africa's democratic trajectory, our work continues to foreground evidence-based reflection and policy engagement.

We have also leaned into timely conversations on Africa's evolving diplomatic posture at the United Nations, as well as highlighting the continued need for data-driven governance, underscored at the Data for Governance Alliance continental convening in Ghana. Closer to home, we marked significant milestones such as the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission and participated in Antiracism Week, reaffirming our commitment to justice and social cohesion. Our partnerships remain central to this work. We were pleased to host the Erasmus University Rotterdam Law delegation and to convene a Capacity Building Summit with women and youth traditional leaders, strengthening community-level peacebuilding efforts.

Together, these engagements reflect IJR's ongoing commitment to bridging research, dialogue, and practice in pursuit of a more just and inclusive society.

– Dr Fanie du Toit

## Inter-Governmental Briefing on UN Security Council Reform



On 16 April 2026, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation was represented by Senior Advisor, Prof Tim Murithi at an Austrian Embassy, Open House Discussion in New York, on the United Nations Security Council Reform. This is an issue gaining renewed urgency in a rapidly shifting global landscape and a system of collective security that is unravelling.

The Open House Discussion on UN Security Council Reform aimed to support the ongoing Intergovernmental Negotiations chaired by Kuwait and Netherlands. The discussion focused on ensuring that a future Security Council reflects the realities of today's world, represents the global community in a more equitable manner, and is capable of effectively addressing contemporary peace and security challenges in line with its mandate under the UN Charter.

This convening took place against the backdrop of growing momentum for reform. Notably, world leaders had reached a historic agreement in the UN Pact for the Future, which through its Action Point 39 called for redress for Africa's historical exclusion, in 1945, from the design and operationalization of the current multilateral system of collective security. The discussion called for Africa's inclusion in a future system of collective security, the African Union has outlined its Model which was developed by the AU Committee of Ten Heads of State on the Reform of the UN Security Council, which was formally adopted by the AU Summit, in Addis Ababa, in February 2026.

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## Africa in the G20 and Debt Sustainability

By Bitania Tadesse, Patrick Hajayandi, Tim Murithi

The African Union's admission to the G20 as a permanent member in 2023 gave the continent its first collective seat at one of the most important forums for shaping international policy on debt, trade, climate finance, and development. Four consecutive Global South presidencies created a favorable context for advancing African priorities, culminating in South Africa's 2025 presidency focused on debt sustainability, disaster resilience, critical minerals, and the just energy transition. The AU's membership corrected a long-standing representational gap, though key questions remain on how its institutional presence will translate into substantive influence.

The mechanics of AU's participation in the G20 are being consolidated. The AU has established a representation framework across both the sherpa and finance tracks, but the G20 Coordination Unit to be established in the AU sherpa office is not yet fully operational, and the absence of leadership in specialized technical committees have hampered engagement in some of the working groups. Experts are also divided over whether the AU's participation will genuinely foster AU unity or make the G20 more effective.

Nonetheless, African leadership has generated momentum on some continental priorities, particularly on debt sustainability. South Africa's presidency secured a dedicated ministerial declaration on debt and convened an Africa Expert Panel proposing concrete reforms, including a borrowers' club, enhanced debt transparency, and a multilateral sovereign debt-resolution mechanism. However, the declaration reaffirmed the G20 Common Framework despite its documented limitations, a proposed cost-of-capital commission did not materialize, and Africa's growing reliance on private creditors and systematically inflated credit-rating premiums remain structural obstacles that existing G20 instruments do not adequately address.



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## Centre for Human Rights, Afrobarometer, and IJR Convene Public Briefing to Unpack South Africa's 2025 Afrobarometer Survey Findings



On 13 April 2026, the Centre for Human Rights, Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria, in collaboration with Afrobarometer and the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, convened a public briefing to present the results of the 2025 Afrobarometer survey in South Africa. Held at the University's Hatfield campus, the event brought together civil society actors, legal practitioners, and researchers to examine the systemic challenges of corruption and their implications for the country's democratic trajectory.

The empirical core of the briefing was presented by Preston Govindasamy, Project Manager at Afrobarometer, and Asafika Mpako, Communications Coordinator for Southern Africa. Their analysis revealed that 92% of South Africans believe the government is performing poorly in its fight against corruption – the lowest rating among 38 surveyed African countries. Corruption ranks as the fifth most pressing national concern, following unemployment, crime, water supply, and infrastructure.

Attention was also drawn to disparities between urban and rural experiences of corruption, with limited access to information in rural areas shaping both perception and reporting. Local government was identified as a critical yet under-scrutinised site of corruption, where weak oversight mechanisms and limited civic engagement contribute to accountability gaps.

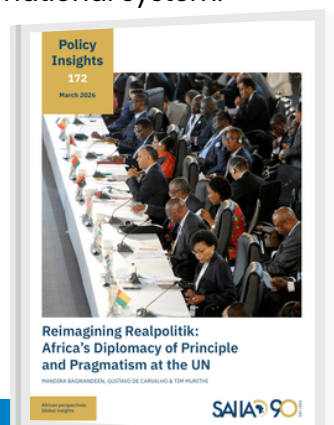
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## Reimagining Realpolitik: Africa's Diplomacy of Principle and Pragmatism at the UN

By Mandira Bagwandeem, Gustavo de Carvalho & Tim Murithi

Africa's recent voting behaviour and diplomatic strategies at the UN have attracted much scrutiny. African voting patterns on the conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine vividly illustrate shifting global dynamics. While several Western governments anticipated significant alignment with their positions, African states often abstained or adopted non-aligned positions. In Global North capitals, these choices were frequently portrayed as expressions of hypocrisy, opportunism or fence-sitting on a fundamental question of international order. For African diplomats, however, abstention or selective engagement was neither accidental nor indecisive. Instead, it reflected an attempt to balance long standing principles such as sovereignty, non-intervention and solidarity with pragmatic considerations of pursuing national interests, partnerships and strategic autonomy in a world marked by intensifying power rivalries.

This policy insight (published by the South African Institute of International Affairs) examines how African states are redefining realpolitik through a form of diplomacy that balances principle and pragmatism within an increasingly fragmented global order. Drawing on voting behaviour and diplomatic strategies at the UN, it argues that Africa's approach, rooted in sovereignty, solidarity and anti-colonial justice, embodies a form of principled pragmatism that balances the competing demands of commitments and strategic autonomy. Rather than abandoning ideals, African states use moral and legal narratives to legitimise flexible diplomacy, leveraging opportunities such as the AU's G20 seat, UN financing for AU-led operations and cross-regional coalitions. Yet coherence, capacity and credibility remain persistent challenges. Africa's evolving realpolitik reflects a politics of navigation, a deliberate recalibration of conviction and calculation aimed at transforming, rather than merely adapting to, the international system.



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## Call for African Unity and Data-Driven Governance at D4GA Continental Convening in Ghana



At the Data for Governance Alliance (D4GA) Continental Convening held in Ghana from 20–24 April 2026, leading voices from across the continent underscored the urgent need for stronger African unity and more effective, data-driven governance.

In his welcome address, Afrobarometer Senior Adviser E. Gyimah-Boadi stressed that strengthening civil society's capacity to use data is critical to tackling governance challenges and driving meaningful change. Delivering the keynote, Amb. Salah Hammad called for honest reflection on Africa's governance commitments, highlighting the pressing need to close the gap between policy and implementation.

Afrobarometer CEO Joseph Asunka reinforced the call for deeper cooperation rooted in African voices, institutions, and solutions. He noted that as global cooperation is increasingly tested, Africa must double down on unity—bringing civil society and public institutions together to shape its own development path. Adding to the discussion, Prof. H. Kwasi, Executive Director of CDD Ghana, emphasised that despite ongoing political challenges, democratic aspirations across the continent remain strong and resilient. The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, as a D4GA partner, was represented at the convening by Nyasha Mpani, Project Leader, contributing to discussions on advancing data-driven governance and accountability.

As the convening progressed, focus also turned to how data-driven approaches can support more accountable and responsive systems across Africa.

## South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission at 30

This year marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. To mark this, the University of Cape Town, the Foundation for Human Rights and the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation hosted a three-day event which brought together organisations from around the country and the continent. While the event was to mark the 30<sup>th</sup> year of the TRC, it was also an opportunity to critique the efficacy of the TRC, and to look at what has happened across the continent.

As South Africa marks 30 years since TRC started its work is an important moment for us to reflect on the legacy of the TRC and the work that still needs to be done. This anniversary is both a reminder and a time for reflection—highlighting the successes as well as the gaps in justice, reparations, accountability, and social healing that continue into the present. For the IJR, this anniversary reaffirms its mandate to deepen reconciliation by addressing structural inequality, strengthening the rule of law, and fostering inclusive dialogue, particularly for generations who continue to live with the unresolved consequences of the past.

The conference gave IJR an opportunity to participate in a discussion on "Reconciliation for whom?" Dr Fanie du Toit, IJR's Interim Executive Director, reflected on the way in which the TRC was a disruption from the past: it effectively created a disjuncture from the narrative of the apartheid state and laid bare what it had long tried to bury. The Khulumani Galela Campaign, represented by Nomarussia Bonase, noted that reconciliation is still a pipe-dream for many of the survivors, victims and their families who have not received reparations.

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## Antiracism Week

By Felicity Harrison and Edwin Cleophas

South Africa commemorates Human Rights Day on 21 March, the anniversary of the Sharpsville Massacre, to remember the sacrifices that were made for democracy and freedom. Civil society organisations around the country came together to organise events to highlight the past and to recognise present struggles. This year, the IJR joined the Social Justice Agency in combining online events with in-person experiential learning.

Two national online webinars brought together government, legal experts, academics, and activists. The first webinar, *Non-Racialism vs Anti-Racism & the Constitution* explored constitutional limits, institutional racism, accountability, and responsibility. The second, *The Constitution and Structural Racism – Reform, Reinforcement, or Reimagination?* Addressed land reform, economic justice, inequality, and constitutional debates. The third event was an in-person Human Rights Day Slave Walk at the Castle of Good Hope, the District Six Museum and the Slave Lodge in Cape Town. Noted historian, Patric Tariq Mellet, provided historical, place-based learning on slavery, colonialism, and their links to modern structural racism.

The three events reached a national audience through the webinars and combined that with the experiential learning of the walking tour. The participants expressed profound gratitude for the opportunity to be a part of the discussions and showed the demand for such spaces. The walking tour made an impact on all who attended, demonstrating a strong demand for experiential learning and using different modes of interaction. Participants described the events as: “Powerful”, “Necessary” and “Deeply engaging.” The events had an impact beyond individual experiences, it enabled critical public dialogue on structural racism, constitutional limitations, economic and land inequality, and institutional accountability. It helped to shift understanding from passive non-racialism to active anti-racism; strengthened historical consciousness, linking slavery, colonialism, apartheid, and present-day inequality; highlighted the gap between constitutional ideals and lived realities; reinforced the need for institutional and individual accountability, not just dialogue; filled a critical gap in South Africa’s public anti-racism discourse; sparked continued interest in ongoing engagement, future programmes, and collaboration; and contributed to policy-relevant conversations through government collaboration.

**“Racism is not about individual bad actors; it is about systems that produce predictable outcomes”**  
– Dante King.

Global and national events have shown us that racism is still very much embedded in the institutions, structures and fabric of society. We need to move away from seeing it as an individual moral failing, to an understanding of the ubiquitous, pervasive nature of white supremacy.

## Erasmus University Rotterdam Law Delegation Visits IJR



The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation hosted law students from the Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands, as part of an academic visit focused on justice, accountability, and international law in practice on 9 April, at the organisation’s offices in Cape Town. The engagement offered students an in-depth introduction to transitional justice in South Africa, highlighting both the achievements and the enduring shortcomings of the post-apartheid transition.

IJR’s Senior Practitioner, Felicity Harrison and Prof Tim Murithi, Senior Advisor, engaged with the students, expounding on the work of the IJR in South Africa and across the continent, acknowledging that justice and reconciliation are ongoing processes.

“IJR was born out of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, recognising that justice and reconciliation are ongoing processes,” Harrison explained, further expounding on the work of the organisation that has since expanded from South Africa across Africa, focusing on post-colonial transitions and conflicts, and the mutual exchange of lessons between South Africa and other countries.

Discussions explored some of the most pressing unresolved issues in South Africa today, including apartheid denial, the failure to fully implement reparations, and ongoing efforts to reopen apartheid-era inquests into the deaths of political activists. Particular attention was given to the frustration of survivors and families who continue to face delayed justice due to missing evidence, legal obstruction, and a lack of political will. The visit also addressed broader challenges of public trust, corruption, and institutional legitimacy, as well as the limits of legal frameworks without effective enforcement. From a global perspective, conversations extended to international law, reparations for historical injustice, and South Africa’s role in activating international legal mechanisms.

## Capacity Building Summit with Women and Youth Traditional Leaders on Conflict Prevention, Mediation and Peacebuilding

Women and youth traditional leaders play a critical role in community level conflict resolution, social cohesion and early response to emerging tensions. Their role is particularly important across the different stages of conflict, from early tensions to mediation and recovery, where local knowledge and trust are essential.

To this end, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, in partnership with the Institute of African Royalty (IAR) and the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (CONTRALESA), and with the support of the Embassies of the Netherlands and Ireland in South Africa, convened a three-day Capacity Building Summit for women and youth traditional leaders on conflict prevention, mediation, and peacebuilding in Johannesburg from 26 to 28 April 2026. The summit aimed to build on existing practices and strengthen collaboration with women and youth traditional leaders in advancing community-level peacebuilding.

IJR's Board Chairperson, Mrs Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge gave the key address, noting that the summit aimed to strengthen women and youth traditional leaders to prevent conflict, mediate disputes, and build sustainable peace.

"Inclusion is not a concession; it restores what African governance has long known: women's leadership strengthens legitimacy," Mrs Madlala-Routledge said.

The summit formed part of a broader effort to strengthen the role and recognition of women and youth traditional leaders within peacebuilding processes and to expand the reach of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda within rural communities. It was designed as a foundational engagement that will contribute towards the development of a more sustained and context responsive capacity building programme. It also provided a platform for women and youth traditional leaders to share practical insights and lived experiences in conflict prevention within their communities.





A New Chapter for the IJR

**WE'RE MOVING**

We are pleased to share that the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation is entering an exciting new chapter as we relocate to new offices in Woodstock, Cape Town, South Africa.

From 4 May 2026, our new home will be:

**2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, The Armoury  
Buchanan Square  
160 Sir Lowry Road  
Woodstock, Cape Town**



This move marks an important step in our continued growth and commitment to a Just, Inclusive, Peaceful and Thriving Africa.

**Latest Publication**

**Africa in the G20 and Debt Sustainability**

AU's inclusion in the G20 not only corrected a long-standing imbalance in global representation but also acknowledged the continent's growing geostrategic and economic relevance.

**About the authors:**

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