

Concept Note
Post-AU Summit Hybrid Seminar

39th AU summit outcomes: does the AU focus on the right priorities?

Hybrid Seminar: Skylight Hotel (New Building), Addis Ababa and online
Thursday, 19 February 2026, 10:30 to 12:30 (East African Time)

Background

The Thirty-Ninth Ordinary Session of the African Union (AU) Assembly Heads of State and Government convened amid heightened geopolitical uncertainty, protracted insecurities, and mounting internal and external pressures on the Union's response capabilities. The AU is making strides to enhance its effectiveness and Africa's voice in global politics through the broad AU reform processes, G20 membership, and the developmental goals outlined in Agenda 2063.

The AU's theme of the year is '*Assuring sustainable water availability and safe sanitation systems to achieve the goals of Agenda 2063*'. It offers an opportunity for African states to tap into the dividends of the blue economy and hydropower while ensuring that Africa's hydro-politics lead to developmental outcomes rather than conflict. This year's theme cuts across climate governance, sustainable development and peace and security, which speak to Aspiration 1 of Agenda 2063 '*A Prosperous Africa Based on Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development*'.

Against this backdrop, the Summit deliberated on a range of interlinked priorities, notably on peace and security, continental integration under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the ongoing institutional reform including coordination between the AU, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms (RMs).

While AU summits routinely generate significant political declarations and policy commitments, enduring questions remain regarding implementation, institutional coherence, and the extent to which the AU and its organs can respond proactively and effectively to Africa's rapidly evolving and emerging challenges.

These developments underscore the need for timely and critical reflection on the most consequential issues debated and decided upon by Heads of State and Government. Such reflection is essential not only to assess the substance of Summit outcomes, but also to evaluate their feasibility, execution, and broader implications for Africa's peace, security, governance, and developmental trajectory.

This post-Summit seminar offers a dedicated platform to unpack the key outcomes of the 39th AU Summit, drawing directly from Heads of State and Government decisions, and to critically examine whether the AU's institutional architecture is fit for purpose in delivering on its stated priorities.

Aims of the Seminar

This Post-Summit Seminar will analyse key dynamics with a view to achieving the following objectives:

- **The key takeaways:** Identify and analyse the most salient issues emerging from the Summit agenda and Heads of State/Government deliberations.
- **The multidimensional implications:** Examine the implications of Summit outcomes across key priority areas such as peace and security, AU-REC relations, governance, and economic integration.
- **AU effectiveness:** Assess the effectiveness, coherence and coordination of AU institutions and organs in delivering on Summit commitments.
- **The theme of the AU:** Explore priorities, threats and opportunities arising from the AU's 2026 theme, "*Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063.*"
- **Policy relevant recommendations:** Generate policy relevant insights and action-oriented recommendations to strengthen AU responses, implementation capacity, and coordination mechanisms.

Target Audience

This seminar, being organised by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in collaboration with the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS), will bring together participants including government officials, representatives from the African Union, ambassadors and embassy officials from various African countries and beyond, international agencies, policymakers, researchers, academia and civil society organisations to reflect on the issues above. Its outcome is to facilitate policy understanding and deliberations of the the Summit's outcomes.

Agenda
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9:30 – 10:30	Tea, Coffee and Registration
10:30 – 10:40	Welcoming Remarks & Introduction of Speakers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Paul-Simon Handy, Institute for Security Studies (ISS), Regional Director East Africa and Representative to the African Union (AU) • Dr. Mercy Fekadu, Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS), Director
10:40 – 11:40	Panel Discussion: 39th AU Ordinary Summit: Challenges, Priorities and Policy Options <p>Moderator: Dr. Joseph Sany, Senior ISS Research Fellow, Former Vice president of the United States Institute for Peace (USIP)</p> <p>Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Willy Nyamitwe, Ambassador of the Republic of Burundi to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and Permanent Representative to the African Union (AU) • H.E. Ambassador Lilly Stella Ngyema Ndong, Ambassador of the Gabonese Republic to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the African Union (AU) • H.E. Galma M. Boru, Ambassador of the Republic of Kenya to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and Permanent Representative to the African Union (AU)(TBC)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E., Prof. Miguel César Domingos Bembe, Ambassador of the Republic of Angola to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and Permanent Representative to the African Union (AU) (TBC) • H.E. Ambassador Mohamed Arrouchi, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco to the African Union • H.E. Ambassador Hirut Zemene, Permanent Representative of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) to the African Union (AU) (TBC) • H.E. Michelle Ndiaye, Africa Director, Open Society Foundations, Former Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC) and Head of the African Union (AU) Liaison Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)
11:40 – 12:25	Questions and Discussions
12:25 – 12:30	Closing Remarks Master of Ceremonies (MC): Cynthia Happi, African Solutions Journal (AfSol) Managing Editor, IPSS
12:30	Lunch