



REPORT

Africa's Rising Influence: Advancing Agency in Foreign Policy and Global Governance

Chatham House

**Sébastien Limbourg
Research Assistant**



European Business Council for Africa and the
Mediterranean (EBCAM)



www.ebcam.eu



+32 456 79 11 50



Avenue Toison d'Or 77
1060 Brussels - Belgium



On 5-6 November 2025, Chatham House in partnership with Amani Africa and UNDP organised “Africa’s Rising Influence: Advancing Agency in Foreign Policy and Global Governance” by a series of high-level discussions exploring how Africa can strengthen internal coordination and project greater influence in the evolving global order.

The Spotlight Session on Regional–Continental Coordination for Global Impact focused on how the African Union (AU) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) can achieve greater coherence in trade, diplomacy, and development. Panellists stressed that Africa’s collective voice depends on clear delineation of roles between continental and regional institutions. The AU was described as the political face of African integration, while RECs act as the technical engines driving implementation. Speakers called for a permanent coordination mechanism between the AU Commission and REC Secretariats, shared monitoring tools, and joint funding pipelines to prevent duplication and improve accountability.

Participants also emphasised the RECs’ central role in implementing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), noting that customs harmonisation, digital trade systems, and logistics reforms are vital to translate policy commitments into tangible regional commerce. The Guided Trade Initiative was highlighted as an encouraging pilot, though further investment in capacity-building and data systems remains essential. The debate extended to Africa’s broader architecture, with some questioning whether the current REC structure remains fit for purpose amid overlapping memberships and resource fragmentation. Proposals included creating cross-regional “issue-based coalitions” to tackle challenges like digitalisation, energy transition, and climate resilience. Speakers agreed that inclusivity—through structured engagement with youth, women, and the private sector—is crucial to ensuring legitimacy and building public trust in integration efforts.

The subsequent Economic Policy Session on Advancing Stronger, Sustainable Growth and Financial Resilience examined how Africa can mobilise capital and strengthen regional value chains to drive industrialisation. Experts urged governments to prioritise strategic sectors such as EV-battery minerals, agro-processing, and pharmaceuticals, pairing industrial strategies with investment roadmaps to de-risk early projects. Participants supported scaling up customs modernisation, One-Stop Border Posts, and digital certification systems under the AfCFTA to deepen regional value chains. The panel further explored operationalising a credible African Credit Rating Agency (AfCRA), designed to reflect reform progress and intra-African trade linkages, thus reducing reliance on external agencies.

Concluding this policy cycle, the conference examined how Africa can translate internal coherence into external agency. Discussions highlighted the continent’s growing assertiveness in multilateral negotiations, global governance reforms, and south–south partnerships, emphasising that credibility abroad depends on unity at home. Participants underlined that effective AU–REC coordination, sustainable economic strategies, and inclusive leadership form the foundation of a confident, self-reliant Africa able to shape its global narrative rather than react to it.