



# REPORT

## Shaping Multilateral Peace and Security Reforms: The Role of Africa and Europe

ECDPM, Online  
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On 24 February, ECDPM and the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), in partnership with the Global Challenges Foundation, convened a public webinar to examine how stronger African Union–European Union relations can contribute to reforming multilateral peace and security governance, with particular emphasis on the United Nations Security Council. The discussion took place against a backdrop of intensifying geopolitical fragmentation, declining trust in global institutions, and growing dissatisfaction among Global South actors regarding representation and decision-making power in the international system.

Speakers:

- Gustavo de Carvalho, Senior Researcher at SAIIA
- Richard Gowan, Program Director, Global Issues and Institutions at the International Crisis Group
- Sophie Desmidt, Associate Director, ECDPM
- Steven Gruzd, Head of African Governance and Diplomacy, SAIIA
- Célia Beckmann, Researcher ECDPM

The webinar opened with reflections on the mounting pressures facing multilateral peace and security frameworks. Speakers highlighted how protracted conflicts, geopolitical rivalry among major powers, and increasing use of veto powers within the Security Council have exposed structural weaknesses in the current system. In this context, calls for reform—especially from African states—have gained renewed urgency. Africa remains underrepresented in permanent decision-making structures despite being disproportionately affected by Security Council resolutions and peacekeeping mandates, a discrepancy widely regarded as undermining both legitimacy and effectiveness.

A central theme of the discussion was the evolving partnership between the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU) in peace and security cooperation. Participants noted that the AU has developed significant institutional capacity over the past two decades, including peace support operations, mediation frameworks, and early-warning mechanisms. However, predictable and sustainable financing remains a persistent constraint. The recent progress toward enabling UN-assessed contributions to support AU-led peace operations was cited as a breakthrough, though speakers stressed that operationalisation and political consensus will determine its long-term impact.

The EU's role was examined both as a financial partner and as a normative actor committed to multilateralism. Panelists argued that Europe has a strategic interest in supporting inclusive reform of global governance institutions, not only to reinforce the rules-based international order but also to strengthen its partnerships with African states. At the same time, speakers acknowledged tensions between rhetorical support for reform and the political complexities surrounding Security Council restructuring, particularly debates over permanent membership expansion and veto reform. The African Union's Common African Position, which calls for permanent African representation with full prerogatives, including veto power, was highlighted as a key reference point in ongoing negotiations.



Beyond institutional reform, the conversation addressed broader questions about effectiveness and ownership in peace and security governance. Participants underscored that reform must go beyond representation to include improvements in coordination between regional and global bodies, clearer mandate design, and more predictable funding streams. There was also recognition that peacebuilding, prevention, and development are increasingly interconnected, requiring more integrated approaches that bridge the security-development divide.

The webinar concluded with a consensus that AU–EU cooperation can serve as a catalyst for pragmatic reform, provided it is grounded in mutual respect and aligned interests. Strengthening joint advocacy on Security Council reform, supporting African institutional capacity, and ensuring sustainable financing mechanisms were identified as areas where coordinated action could yield tangible results. In a context of global turbulence and institutional strain, participants agreed that revitalising multilateral peace and security governance will depend not only on structural change but also on deeper political commitment from both African and European actors to uphold and modernise the multilateral system.