

From the Margins to the Center: The Rise of the A3 in the UN Security Council



Permanent Representatives of
Ghana, Gabon and Mozambique
Briefs Press on Financing of African
Union Peace Support Operations
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Introduction

The three African members of the Security Council, known as the A3, have come of age as a cohesive and influential group, shaping both country-specific and thematic discussions within the UN Security Council. Over the years, they have steadily enhanced their coordination in pursuit of a common African position. This growing unity is most visibly reflected in their increasingly consistent practice of speaking with one voice—delivering joint statements and presenting unified positions during Council meetings. In addition, the A3 have in recent years organised themselves as a cohesive negotiating bloc, significantly boosting

their influence within the Council. Both individually and collectively, the A3 have played an increasingly active role in spearheading the adoption of Council outcomes on key African priorities, thus enhancing their influence in the Council.

This has created a lot of interest in the group, not only among other Council members but also the wider UN membership. There is a desire to understand how the group operates, and influences decision-making, as well as how it is likely to impact the Council’s work in the future.

This research report attempts to provide insights into the inner workings of the A3. It

Introduction

- 1 Introduction
- 3 Origins of the African Trio in the Security Council
- 5 Institutionalisation of the A3
- 8 Speaking with One Voice
- 9 Negotiating as a Bloc
- 12 Advancing African Priorities
- 14 Composition Matters
- 16 Taking the Lead from Addis Ababa
- 18 Feedback Loop
- 19 African Solidarity
- 20 The A3 Plus Mechanism
- 21 Council and Wider Dynamics
- 25 Challenges
- 28 Observations and Way Forward

looks at the genesis of the group, focusing on the context that led to its emergence within the Council. It also reviews the evolution of the A3 over the past decade, including the mechanisms established to promote its coordination and cohesion as a group. Additionally, the report examines how the A3 began speaking with one voice, negotiating as a bloc, and advancing African priorities over the past decade, including by proposing Council outcomes. It will also explore the A3's coordination with Addis Ababa and how this has evolved over the years.

Incoming A3 members are keen to understand how the group operates and how they can build on and strengthen the work of their predecessors. Securing a seat at the “Horse-shoe Table” is a source of pride that, for many African member states, comes only once in several decades. When given this rare opportunity, many of them believe that they must demonstrate to the broader AU membership that supported their candidacy that they are advocating not just for their national interests, but also for the interests of Africa as a whole. In doing so, they draw inspiration from the successes of their predecessors on the Council while also seeking to learn from their shortcomings. To facilitate this objective, this report provides comprehensive documentation and analysis of the experiences of the A3 over the years. It takes stock of their efforts and draws valuable lessons from the group's work since its founding in 2013.

The story of the A3's evolution includes the emergence of the “A3 Plus” mechanism, which has facilitated collaboration between A3 members and Caribbean countries in the Security Council. Although the mechanism is relatively new, it has already attracted considerable attention within the Council and beyond. Prospective “plus” members from the Caribbean closely follow the A3's work, aspiring to engage with, and in some cases, eventually join the group. In this regard, the report examines recent experiences of “Plus” members and ongoing discussions aimed at institutionalising this mechanism.

While the A3 is generally viewed positively, the group has strengthened its role and visibility amid a fractured multilateral environment.

The Security Council has become increasingly paralysed in responding to conflicts and crises around the world, as geopolitical tensions among the permanent members have reached levels unprecedented in the post-Cold War era. Africa often suffers the consequences of this gridlock, with no resolution in sight for some of the continent's most intractable conflicts, including the ongoing war in Sudan and the more than decade-long instability in Libya. In this context, the A3's position in discussions and negotiations plays a significant role in shaping the Council's actions—or inactions—on matters of conflict and crisis management. This research report examines how the A3 is influencing Council dynamics, including its engagement with both permanent and elected members.

Despite its enhanced status within the Council, the A3 continues to face significant challenges, partly stemming from the internal dynamics shaped by its membership. The group's effectiveness hinges on the commitment of its members to uphold their obligations to the AU to advance African priorities. The A3's effectiveness also depends on the level of political support and strategic guidance it receives from the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa. Key AU bodies—including its policy organs, the AU Commission, and the Permanent Observer Mission in New York that it oversees—have distinct roles in supporting and backstopping the A3. Although coordination between the AU and the A3 has improved significantly over the years, there remains considerable room for improvement. A3 members also face significant external pressure from powerful states, which at times makes it challenging to balance their national interests with advancing the common African position.

The A3 has the potential to play a unique role in building bridges and lessening geopolitical and other tensions on African issues within the Security Council—provided it functions as a coherent unit. This research report outlines the A3's key achievements and challenges over its 12-year existence and concludes by offering recommendations to further strengthen the group's impact moving forward.

Origins of the African Trio in the Security Council

The Early Years

The Security Council consisted of only 11 members—5 permanent and 6 non-permanent—until it was expanded to 15 members following reforms adopted in 1963.¹ In the UN's early years, only a small number of African countries were independent, and very few served as elected members of the Council. Egypt was the first, taking a seat in 1946–1947, and later serving an additional term in 1949–1950. Libya joined the Council in 1956–1957, shortly after gaining independence in 1951. Liberia, a UN founding member, had a seat in the Council in 1961, sharing a two-year term with Ireland.² Ghana served on the Council in 1962–1963 following its independence in 1957.³

The wave of independence across Africa and much of the “Global South” during the 1950s and 1960s significantly expanded UN membership and increased calls for more equitable representation, ultimately leading to the expansion of the Security Council in 1965. This allowed for expanded participation of African countries in the Council.⁴ Several of them made Africa's decolonisation process and the settlement of intra- and inter-state conflicts on the continent a matter of priority during their membership. In one of the few occasions where it met outside of New York, the Security Council convened in Addis Ababa in early 1972. This meeting was prompted by a request from the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the AU's predecessor, to consider several issues of peace and security on the continent, including the situations in Namibia, Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), and the question of apartheid in South Africa.⁵

The Post-Cold War Era

With the end of the Cold War, African issues began to dominate the Council's work. The 1990s were marked by a sharp rise in intra-state conflicts and state collapse in Africa.⁶ The situation also led to the emergence of African-led security frameworks, such as the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict, Management and Resolution established in 1993.⁷ At the sub-regional level, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) deployed its forces in Liberia and Sierra Leone before the UN's involvement.⁸ By the late nineties, Africa had become a major theatre for UN peacekeeping

operations in several African countries, including Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Somalia, among others.⁹

During this period, African members steadily expanded their role on the Security Council, advocating for urgent international action in response to crises across the continent. Nonetheless, the UN faced serious setbacks on the continent. Its peacekeeping operations in Somalia were forced to pull out.¹⁰ It also failed to prevent and halt the 1994 genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda, which left a lasting stain on its reputation. Ironically, the Hutu extremist government in Rwanda held a seat on the Council at the time, further complicating the body's response to the humanitarian tragedy.¹¹

Ultimately, these experiences, combined with shifting geopolitical and other dynamics, prompted a major rethink within Africa and led to the transformation of the OAU into the AU at the turn of the last century. This new phase ushered in growing calls for “African solutions to African problems”—a motto adopted by the AU in its efforts to address the continent's numerous peace and security challenges—especially following the establishment of the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC), the institutional successor to the OAU Central Organ.¹² Beginning in 2003, the AU began deploying its own peace support operations in conflict-affected countries such as Sudan, Burundi, and Somalia. Over time, the mission in Darfur (Sudan) evolved into a joint UN-AU hybrid operation, while the mission in Burundi was transformed into a UN peacekeeping operation.¹³ In November 2004, Nairobi hosted the Security Council's second meeting in Africa which, among other things, focused on the situation in Darfur and the peace process between North and South Sudan.¹⁴

In this period, the Council's African members began coordinating more closely than in the past in advancing African issues. Mauritius, which served in the Council in 2001–2002, was instrumental in facilitating the establishment of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, one of the Security Council's subsidiary bodies which remains active today.¹⁵ African members have traditionally chaired this Ad-Hoc Working Group, which promoted Council discussions on specific conflict situations in Africa

1 United Nations General Assembly. Resolution 1991 A (XVIII): Question of equitable representation on the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. (A/RES/1991) (17 December 1963), <<https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/1991%28XVIII%29>>.

2 This was one of the early examples of a split term in the Security Council, which can be an outcome of prolonged and unresolved elections for non-permanent seats.

3 United Nations. Security Council Membership. (Accessed: 4 June 2025), <<https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/security-council-members>>.

4 Of the 60 countries that have never been elected to the Security Council, eight are from Africa: the Central African Republic, Comoros, Eritrea, Lesotho, São Tomé and Príncipe, South Sudan, Seychelles and Swaziland (also known as Eswatini).

5 United Nations Security Council. Resolution 308 (1972) adopted by the Security Council at its 1626th meeting: On Convening Meetings in an African Capital. (S/RES/308) (19 January 1972), <[https://undocs.org/S/RES/308\(1972\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/308(1972))>.

6 Security Council Report. Update Report No. 3: Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa. (Accessed: 4 June 2025), <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/update-report/lookup_c_glkwlemtisg_b_3198353.php>.

7 Organization of African Unity. Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government on the Establishment within the OAU of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. (30 June 1993), <<https://archives.au.int/handle/123456789/2600>>.

8 Adebajo, Adekeye. *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, (2002).

9 United Nations Department of Peace Operations. *Peacekeeping Operations*. (Accessed: 4 June 2025), <<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/where-we-operate>>.

10 United Nations. (1995). *The United Nations and Somalia, 1992–1996*. United Nations Department of Public Information.

11 Barnett, Michael. *Eyewitness to a Genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda*. Cornell University Press, (2002).

12 African Union. *Decision on the Operationalization of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union*. (2003), <<https://archives.au.int/handle/123456789/1236>>.

13 United Nations Department of Peace Operations. (n.d.). *United Nations–African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID)*. (Accessed: 4 June 2025), <<https://unamid.unmissions.org>>; *United Nations*. (n.d.). *African Union Mission in Burundi (AMIB)*. (Accessed: 4 June 2025), <<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/past/onub>>; *United Nations Department of Peace Operations*. (n.d.). *African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)*. (Accessed: 4 June 2025), <<https://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/amisom>>.

14 United Nations. “Security Council Nairobi Meeting Welcomes End of Year Peace Pledge by Parties to Sudan Conflict.” (19 November 2004), <<https://press.un.org/en/2004/sc8249.doc.htm>>.

15 Security Council Report. *Working Together for Peace and Security in Africa: The Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council*. (10 May 2011). <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/research-reports/lookup-c_glkwlemtisg-b-6769467.php>.

Origins of the African Trio in the Security Council

in its initial years.¹⁶ Benin, for example, played a key role as Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group in 2005, facilitating discussions on strengthening the UN's capacity for conflict prevention, with a particular focus on Africa. These discussions contributed to the adoption of resolution 1625 on 14 September 2005, on the role of the Security Council in the prevention of conflicts, especially in Africa.¹⁷

In Addis Ababa, Egypt (a member of the AUPSC at the time) proposed a coordination and consultation mechanism between the Security Council and the AUPSC in 2006. This subsequently led South Africa (a member of the Security Council at the time), together with the UK, to initiate in 2007 the annual consultations between members of the Security Council and the AUPSC.¹⁸ These consultations, which alternate annually between New York and Addis Ababa, have since become a regular fixture of the cooperation between the two Councils.

Following the AU's formal request for the financing of its peace support operations from UN-assessed contributions in 2007, South Africa also spearheaded the adoption of resolution 1809 of 16 April 2008, which for the first time addressed the issue of predictable, sustainable and flexible financing for regional organisations undertaking peacekeeping operations under a Security Council mandate.¹⁹ Other African members continued to champion this important African priority in subsequent years, which ultimately culminated in the adoption of resolution 2719 of 21 December 2023 on the financing of AU-led Peace Support Operations (AUPSOs) through UN-assessed contributions.²⁰

Despite these and other important initiatives, however, the coordination between A3 members was not strong enough to significantly shape the Council's agenda or to influence the outcomes of major deliberations, including on African files, which at the time constituted a substantial percentage of the Council's work. They often acted more independently, representing primarily their national interests rather than a unified African position. While they occasionally aligned on certain issues, there was no consistent mechanism or political will to present a common African position within the Council. Communication between the AU in Addis Ababa and the African members in New York was not robust, and coordination was often ad hoc. Other Council members were less inclined to engage the African members as a bloc, given the absence of a cohesive identity or unified voice. The African members were often reactive rather than proactive participants in Council negotiations.

The Turning Point

It was the 2011 Libyan crisis that eventually triggered serious reflection in Africa about the A3's role on the Security Council. The AU

had developed a roadmap that called for an immediate ceasefire and the launching of inclusive dialogue leading to a consensual transition as a means of resolving the conflict in Libya. However, the Security Council adopted resolution 1973 of 17 March 2011 authorising a no-fly zone and "all necessary measures" to protect civilians, carried out by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries and other member states, which ultimately toppled the Libyan regime. This situation revealed a significant divergence between the approach of the Security Council and the AUPSC to this conflict. The AU was deeply disappointed that its views were not taken seriously, despite its active diplomatic efforts to promote a negotiated solution.²¹

What further complicated the situation was that the A3 (then Gabon, Nigeria and South Africa) voted in favour of resolution 1973, despite the AU position which opposed external military intervention in favour of an inclusive Libyan dialogue to resolve the crisis.²² South Africa later expressed regret for supporting the resolution, claiming that it had been misled about the nature of the intervention that went beyond the resolution's intent by pushing for regime change rather than protecting civilians.²³

The AU came to the conclusion that the situation might have been different had Africa presented a stronger, more unified position within the Council in support of its position. This experience underscored the critical need for the A3 to coordinate more effectively to amplify Africa's voice in the Security Council's decision-making. It also strengthened the AU's belief that a unified A3 group could serve as a crucial bridge between the Security Council and the AUPSC, promoting greater recognition of AU mechanisms and the central role of African-led diplomatic solutions to conflicts and crises on the continent.²⁴

In January 2012, the AUPSC met to consider the Report of the AU Chairperson of the AU Commission on "The Partnership between the African Union and the United Nations on Peace and Security: Towards Greater Strategic and Political Coherence". The communiqué adopted at the conclusion of the meeting stressed the need to strengthen the coordination between the AUPSC and the African members of the Security Council and requested the Commission for proposals on ways and means of achieving this objective.

In his report, considered by a September 2013 AUPSC meeting held in New York at the level of Heads of State and Government, the Chairperson of the AU Commission made several recommendations to strengthen the AU-UN partnership, including the coordination between the AUPSC and the African members of the Security Council. The communiqué adopted at the conclusion of the meeting underscored the need to strengthen consultations between the

16 United Nations Security Council. "Africa Ad Hoc Working Group Chairs". (Accessed: 6 June 2025), <<https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/subsidiary/africa-ad-hoc-wg/chairs>>.

17 United Nations Security Council. Resolution 1625 (2005) adopted by the Security Council at its 5261st meeting (S/RES/1625) (14 September 2005), <[https://undocs.org/S/RES/1625\(2005\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/1625(2005))>.

18 Security Council Report. Working Together for Peace and Security in Africa.

19 United Nations Security Council. Resolution 1809 (2008) adopted by the Security Council at its 5868th meeting (S/RES/1809) (16 April 2008), <[https://undocs.org/S/RES/1809\(2008\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/1809(2008))>.

20 United Nations Security Council. Resolution 2719 (2023) adopted by the Security Council at its 9518th meeting. (S/RES/2719) (21 December 2023), <[https://undocs.org/S/RES/2719\(2023\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2719(2023))>.

21 African Union Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security. "The Oran Process and Africa's Global Peace Agenda". (18 June 2024), <<https://youtu.be/sbiwIK03iRo?si=H8VrLt0MGnvPf-gl>>.

22 United Nations Security Council. Resolution 1973 (2011) adopted by the Security Council at its 6498th meeting. (S/RES/1973) (17 March 2011), <[https://undocs.org/S/RES/1973\(2011\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/1973(2011))>.

23 Smith, David. "South Africa Defends Refusal to Unfreeze Libyan Assets". The Guardian. (25 August 2011), <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/aug/25/south-africa-libyan-assets>>.

24 African Union. AU-UN Partnership: Advancing Peace and Security in Africa. (9 January 2012), <https://archives.au.int/bitstream/handle/123456789/8415/Par%20AU%20UN_E.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

Origins of the African Trio in the Security Council

AUPSC and the African members to ensure that decisions of the AUPSC are effectively promoted and defended within the Security Council. It also reaffirmed the responsibility of the African members to advocate for and advance AU positions in Council deliberations.²⁵ These two communiqués are seen as having played a pivotal role in the formation of the A3 as a caucus within the Security Council.

Subsequently, a High-Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa—hosted by Algeria in December 2013 in collaboration with the AU Commission—laid the groundwork for the A3’s consolidation as a group. The seminar held in Algiers brought together Rwanda as a current member of the Security Council, Chad and Nigeria as the two incoming African members at the time, Gambia as the Chair of the AUPSC for the month of December 2013, and Algeria as the host. The outcome of the seminar generated several ideas, including coordination and information sharing among the A3, coordination between the A3 and the AUPSC, and strengthening the capacity of the AU Commission to provide effective support to the A3. These ideas have been instrumental in solidifying the A3 as a cohesive group.²⁶

The seminar, initiated to support incoming African members in preparing to address African peace and security issues on the Security Council, was eventually institutionalised as a regular platform known as the Oran Process. Named after the city that hosts the annual seminar, the Oran Process now serves not only as a forum for

sharing experiences between incoming and outgoing A3 members but also as a mechanism to strengthen coordination and promote the articulation and defence of common African positions in the Security Council.²⁷

Excerpt from the Report of the High-Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa, Algiers, 8–10 December 2013

- Information sharing between member states represented in the AUPSC on one hand and, on the other, between the AUPSC and the Africa Group as a whole;
- Coordination between the AUPSC and the Africa Group in New York, in particular through the use of the existing Africa Group Advocacy Caucus on questions of peace and security in Africa in support of the A3;
- Working with the UNSC P5 to ensure that the A3 are given the status of co-penholders on African issues on the UNSC agenda;
- Establishment of an African UNSC Caucus of the A3, to develop common positions in UNSC debates and to advocate for AU positions;
- Establishment of a Troika of outgoing, sitting and incoming PSC Chairs, to ensure continuity in the regular interface with the UNSC and the A3;
- Regular video/teleconferencing between the PSC Troika and the A3 Caucus, to ensure information-sharing/exchange of views;
- The A3 Caucus to be supported by the AU Permanent Observer Mission to the UN as its Secretariat;
- Alignment of AUPSC/UNSC monthly calendars through the exchange of provisional monthly programme of work;
- Accountability framework on how the A3 pursue and defend Africa’s interests in the UNSC during their membership.

Institutionalisation of the A3

Formative Stage (2014–2017)

Following the High-Level Seminar in Algiers in December 2013, the A3 started coordinating more formally as a group. The members implemented some of the ideas generated at the seminar, including:

- the establishment of the A3;
- the appointment of an A3 Coordinator; the formalisation of the AU Permanent Observer Mission to the UN as a Secretariat of the A3;
- elaboration of draft modalities of coordination between the AUPSC and the A3; and
- consultation between the AUPSC and the A3 in New York in preparation for the annual joint consultative meeting between the Security Council and the AUPSC.²⁸

During this period, incoming A3 members joined the group right after they were elected and immediately began attending its meetings.

Not all the recommendations from the High-Level Seminar were

implemented, however.²⁹ Although the A3 formally existed, it lacked a strong group identity during this early formative period. It would take several years for the A3 to become a cohesive bloc. In this early stage, the A3 held meetings at the ambassadorial level, but these were not conducted regularly. Occasionally, ministerial-level meetings took place on the margins of the UN General Assembly.³⁰

Despite some informal coordination and mutual support, the A3 did not initially negotiate as a unified group, with a few exceptions. More broadly, members generally advanced positions aligned with decisions of the AUPSC, and the relevant Regional Economic Communities or Regional Mechanisms (RECS/RMs) involved in specific African conflict situations. However, there were divergences on certain issues, and their voting patterns were not always aligned and consistent—often reflecting national priorities and, at times, external pressure from permanent members of the Council.³¹

25 African Union Peace and Security Council. “Communiqué of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 397th Meeting on the Partnership between the African Union and the United Nations in the Area of Peace and Security”. New York, (PSC/AHG/COMM/1.(CCCXCVII)) (23 September 2013), <<https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-peace-and-security-council-of-the-african-union-au-at-its-397th-meeting-on-the-partnership-between-the-african-union-and-the-united-nations-in-the-area-of-peace-and-security>>.

26 African Union Commission. Conclusions of the 1st High-Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa. Algeria, (8–10 December 2013), <<https://papsrepository.africanunion.org/handle/123456789/1493>>.

27 African Union Peace and Security Council. Communiqué of the 983rd Meeting of the PSC on the Theme “Unified Role of the African Members in the United Nations (UN) Security Council (A3) in the UN Security Council”. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, (4 March 2021), <<https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-983rd-meeting-of-the-psc-held-on-4-march-2021-on-the-theme-unified-role-of-the-african-members-in-the-united-nations-un-security-council-a3-in-the-un-security-council>>.

28 African Union Commission. Conclusions of the 2nd High-Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa. Algeria, (9–11 December 2014), <<https://papsrepository.africanunion.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/6535ec49-7b44-472b-acf8-39327871587a/content>>.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 African Union Commission. Conclusions of the 4th High-Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa. Algeria, (17–19 December 2016), <<https://papsrepository.africanunion.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/6535ec49-7b44-472b-acf8-39327871587a/content>>.

Institutionalisation of the A3

Coming of Age (2018-2023)

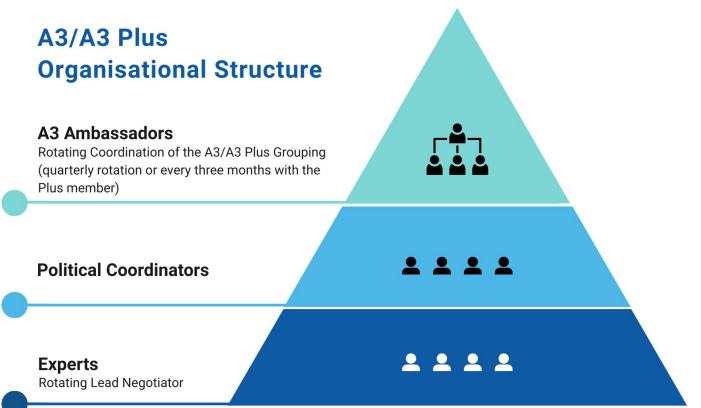
From 2018 onward, the A3 began to evolve into a more strategic and unified group, increasingly delivering joint statements, coordinating positions in advance of negotiations, and aligning with AU priorities and frameworks. A3 coordination meetings became a regular feature with the institutionalisation of monthly meetings at ambassadorial level. Relevant UN officials also started to be invited to these A3 meetings to brief the group about African issues on the Council’s agenda. With the evolution of this practice, the Special Representatives and Heads of UN Peace Operations in Africa are now meeting with the A3 either virtually or in person to brief them as a group ahead of their regular briefing to the Security Council.

The A3 expanded the delivery of joint statements on several African files, which eventually became a common practice. The role of the AU Permanent Observer Mission to the UN as a secretariat and institutional memory of the A3 become firmly entrenched by the late 2010s. The mission started organising an annual A3 Retreat in 2022 to enhance cohesion among the A3.³²

Besides the increased interaction among the A3 ambassadors, the political coordinators began to interact more regularly, which helped to enhance greater coordination among the A3.³³ While the A3 political coordinators usually meet in advance of the monthly A3 meeting at ambassadorial level, they frequently interact with each other daily through digital platforms. A3 experts also began coordinating during negotiations, significantly enhancing the group’s role in the Council. A formal coordination mechanism is now in place, including the appointment of a lead negotiator. In line with established practice, the A3 coordinator, a role which rotates every four months, three when there is a plus member, also serves as the lead negotiator. (There might be some exceptions to this; for example, when a

member has knowledge or expertise on a given file, it could take the lead based on an understanding with the other members.)

Chart 1: A3 Organisational Chart



During this period the AU began to formally request the A3 to champion specific African priorities in the Security Council.³⁴ The A3 also started organising Arria-formula meetings and joint press stakeouts, although it is still not using these tools as often as other Council members.³⁵ Additionally, the A3 started proposing Council products jointly signalling the group’s coming of age. The adoption of resolution 2719 in December 2023 demonstrated the A3’s ability to work as a cohesive bloc in successfully advancing an African priority in the Security Council.³⁶ These activities have led to the A3 becoming an influential player in Council dynamics today.

Table 1: Arria-formula Meetings Initiated by the A3/A3 Plus as a Group³⁷

YEAR	TOPICS	ORGANISER
June 2018	Maritime crime as a threat to international peace and security	A3(Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia) with the Netherlands, United States
October 2018	Silencing the guns in Africa	A3 (Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, South Africa) with Bolivia, China, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Sweden; AU
June 2019	Responding effectively to the needs of refugees, displaced persons and returnees. The role of the United Nations Security Council and its members	A3 (Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, South Africa)
June 2021	Addressing the Impact on the Sahel Region of the Departure of Foreign Fighters and Mercenaries from Libya	A3 plus (Kenya, Niger, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia) Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Libya, Norway, Sudan, together with the AU
October 2021	Beyond the inconvenient truths about underdevelopment in Haiti: seeking pan-African solutions/pathways and supporting national dialogue and reconciliation	A3 + 1 (Kenya, Niger, Tunisia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)

32 African Union. “A3 Plus Annual Retreat 2022”, African Union Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations: New York, (4-5 March 2022); African Union Peace and Security Council. Annual Digest of the African Union Peace and Security Council, Volume 2 (2024). (Addis Ababa: African Union, 2024), <<https://aupaps.org/uploads/final-en-cm-annual-digest-vol2-2024-web.pdf>>.

33 Political coordinators are senior diplomats who play a key role in coordinating the monthly activities of the respective missions on the Council. The important role of political coordinators is recognised in a 12 July 2021 Note by the President of the Security Council.

34 For example, see this decision: African Union Peace and Security Council. “Communique: 770th Meeting”. (2 May 2018).

35 Security Council Report. Status Update no. 68. (November 2018), <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2018-11/status_update_68.php>.

36 Security Council Report. “Vote on a Draft Resolution on the Financing of AU-led Peace Support Operations”. What’s In Blue. (21 December 2023). <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2023/12/vote-on-a-draft-resolution-on-the-financing-of-au-led-peace-support-operations.php>>.

37 United Nations Security Council. Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council: Arria-Formula Meetings. (Accessed: 15 June 2025), <<https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/repertoire/research-tools/Arria-formula>>.

Institutionalisation of the A3

Table 1: Arria-formula Meetings Initiated by the A3/A3 Plus as a Group³⁷

YEAR	TOPICS	ORGANISER
June 2024	Combating the Rise of Terrorism and Violent Extremism in West Africa and the Sahel	Sierra Leone, co-sponsored by Algeria, Mozambique, and Guyana
April 2025	Small Arms Control and Weapons Management in UN Sanctions Regimes	Sierra Leone, co-sponsored by Algeria, Guyana, and Somalia

In another major development, this period saw the emergence of the “A3 plus” mechanism with Saint Vincent and the Grenadines joining the A3 in 2020–2021 as the first “Plus” member, significantly boosting the group’s position within the Council. (For more, see the section below on the A3 Plus grouping.)

The Years Ahead (2024 and Beyond)

This is a period during which African countries that have either emerged from conflict or are currently on the Security Council’s agenda have joined, or will soon be joining, the Council. Sierra Leone, which emerged from a civil war in 2002 and hosted UN peace operations until 2014, began its two-year term in 2024. Somalia, a country that has a UN peacekeeping mission and is on the Council’s agenda, joined in 2025.

The A3 Plus mechanism was used for the second time in 2024–2025, with Guyana joining the A3 as a “plus” member. This has prompted discussion about how to institutionalise this mechanism.³⁸ (For more, see the section on the A3 Plus grouping.)

In 2026, the DRC and Liberia are slated to join the Council. Like Sierra Leone, Liberia emerged from a civil war relatively recently,

while the DRC, which hosts one of the largest UN multidimensional peace operations, remains on the Council’s agenda.³⁹ With current African members Algeria and Sierra Leone set to leave the Council by the end of 2025, the A3 will be composed of the DRC, Liberia and Somalia in 2026, with the latter being the senior member in the configuration.⁴⁰ How this will affect the Council’s consideration of some of these countries on its agenda and how their membership impacts Council dynamics will be closely watched. Somalia is expected to take on greater responsibility in coordinating the group’s activities. The DRC will be joining the Security Council for the first time in 35 years, while Liberia returns after a 65-year absence.

For future African candidatures for membership of the Security Council, see Table 2. The AU Executive Council, which endorses African candidatures for international bodies, has so far only taken note of these candidacies and has yet to formally endorse them. Should Libya and Guinea-Bissau ultimately be elected to the Council in 2027, it would reinforce an emerging pattern of African countries—either recently post-conflict or currently on the Council’s agenda—securing a seat at the Council.

Table 2: Projection of A3 Composition for the Next Five Years

2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
DRC	DRC (Central Africa)	Nigeria/Guinea-Bissau (contested) (West Africa)	Nigeria/Guinea-Bissau (contested) (West Africa)	(West Africa)
Liberia	Liberia (West Africa)	Morocco/Libya (contested) (North Africa)	Morocco/Libya (contested) (North Africa)	(Central Africa)
Somalia	Zimbabwe (Southern Africa)	Zimbabwe (Southern Africa)	Tanzania (Eastern Africa)	Tanzania (Eastern Africa)
	Trinidad and Tobago (Caribbean)	Trinidad and Tobago (Caribbean)		

Ambitious Future

The AU Commission apparently advocated for the formation of the A3 out of a desire to advance continental priorities without having to wait for Africa to secure a permanent seat on the Security Council. At the time, AU officials saw it as more pragmatic to work with the A3 rather than to rely solely on the fulfilment of a distant aspiration.⁴¹ The A3’s growing influence within the Council now appears to have

reinvigorated discussions around Africa’s longstanding quest for permanent representation. Security Council reform remains a key priority for the continent, and several African leaders consistently raise the issue when they speak at the opening of the UN General Assembly every September.⁴² Some observers believe the A3 is laying the groundwork for realising this goal, as articulated in the Ezulwini Consensus—a common African position adopted in 2005—which

38 African Union. “Conclusions of the 10th High-Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa, Oran Process”. (17–18 December 2023), <d682ab_c555b7655584412c893ee-ba2270e44c8.pdf (africanunion-un.org)>.
39 Security Council Report. Security Council Elections 2025, Research Report No. 2. (27 May 2025), <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/[65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9]/unsc_elections_2025.pdf>.
40 Security Council Report. “Episode IV: 2025 Security Council Elections”. in Interactive Dialogues: Season 3. SCR’s Audio Podcast, (3 June 2025), <https://interactivedialogues.buzzsprout.com/1939936/episodes/17275987-2025-security-council-elections>.
41 Interview with a former AU official.
42 United Nations General Assembly. “General Debate of the General Assembly”. (Accessed: 5 June 2025), <https://gadebate.un.org/en>.

Institutionalisation of the A3

calls for at least two permanent seats with veto power and five non-permanent seats for Africa.⁴³

Recently, this issue gained some momentum amid discussions about the UN's future, driven by shifting geopolitical dynamics and the growing need to reform the organisation to better reflect today's realities. The Pact for the Future, the outcome document of the September 2024 Summit of the Future which outlined UN member states' vision for the future of multilateralism, stressed the need to "redress the historical injustice against Africa as a priority...while treating Africa as a special case".⁴⁴

While the inclusion of this language in the Pact is considered a significant win for Africa, its impact will be limited without tangible progress in the Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) process at the UN General Assembly. There are still unresolved questions surrounding Africa's future representation in a reformed Security Council, particularly in the permanent category. This process has been ongoing for over two decades, with limited progress due to the divergent positions within the wider UN membership on how to proceed with Security Council reform.⁴⁵

Former and current A3 members, such as Gabon and Sierra Leone, brought the issue of reform into the Security Council during

their presidencies in October 2022 and August 2024, respectively. In an 11 October 2022 ministerial-level debate on cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organisations, focusing on the partnership with the AU, Gabon encouraged discussion on Security Council reform in light of the renewed interest in the issue in recent years.⁴⁶ It also proposed a draft presidential statement on the UN-AU partnership, which incorporated specific language on Security Council reform, but several members opposed the inclusion of the language, arguing that the IGN is the appropriate forum to address the issue. As a result of a lack of agreement on this and other issues, the draft text could not be adopted.

Sierra Leone, which chairs the Committee of Ten (C10) African Heads of State and Government tasked with advocating for Africa's common position on Security Council reform, convened a high-level debate on 12 August 2024, on "Addressing the historical injustice and enhancing Africa's effective representation on the UN Security Council". Sierra Leone's President Julius Maada Bio echoed the call for "treating Africa as a special case and priority in the Security Council reform process".⁴⁷ Future A3 members may continue to bring attention to this African priority, which resonates very strongly across the continent.

Speaking with One Voice

The practice of the A3 delivering joint statements appears to have started during formal wrap-up sessions convened by the rotating Council presidency at the conclusion of the Council's monthly work. Wrap-up sessions were revived in 2013 after an eight-year hiatus. Held in the Council chamber, these sessions typically featured formal statements from members, including a joint statement by the A3. By 2015, formal wrap-up sessions had become less common. Instead, Council presidencies began to hold informal wrap-up sessions. These sessions are often held in the Toledo format introduced by Spain in 2015, with the outgoing Council president often joined by one or two other members to respond to questions from the wider UN membership about the Council's work, rather than delivering prepared statements. These sessions usually take place outside of the Council chamber in conference rooms at the UN.⁴⁸

The number of joint statements delivered by the A3 began to increase in 2018, as the then-members began to deliver joint statements on conflict-specific situations in Africa—such as the Central African Republic (CAR) and the DRC—as well as on thematic issues

including peacekeeping, peacebuilding and sustaining peace, and the mediation and peaceful settlement of disputes.⁴⁹ This practice became more entrenched in 2019, during which the A3 delivered 16 joint statements. These statements addressed both country- and region-specific situations, including the CAR, DRC, Somalia, South Sudan, and the broader Central and West Africa regions. Thematic areas covered included the protection of civilians in armed conflict, Youth, Peace and Security (YPS), Women, Peace and Security (WPS), and triangular cooperation (among the Council, the UN Secretariat, and troop contributing countries) in peacekeeping. In addition, the A3 held a joint press stakeout on the situation in Sudan.⁵⁰

From 2020 onwards, the delivery of joint statements by the A3 became more frequent, regular, and institutionalised, reflecting the members' growing commitment to consolidating their role as a cohesive group within the Security Council. In 2020, the A3 delivered 35 joint statements, addressing both country- and region-specific issues as well as thematic topics. With Saint Vincent and the Grenadines joining as a "plus" member that year, the scope of these statements

43 African Union. "The Ezulwini Consensus: The Common African Position on the Proposed Reform of the United Nations". 7th Extraordinary Session of the African Union Executive Council. (7-8 March 2005), <<https://old.centerforunreform.org/sites/default/files/Ezulwini%20Consensus.pdf>>; Dersso, Solomon A. "How Africa is Using the A3 as a De Facto Permanent Power Bloc in Global Peace and Security Decision-making". Amani Africa. (21 December 2023), <<https://amaniafrica-et.org/how-africa-is-using-the-a3-as-a-de-facto-permanent-power-block-in-global-peace-and-security-decision-making/>>.

44 United Nations. The Pact for the Future. (A/RES/79/1) (22 September 2024), <<https://docs.un.org/en/a/res/79/1>>.

45 Security Council Report. "In Hindsight: The Long and Winding Road to Security Council Reform". Monthly Forecast. (October 2022), <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2022-10/in-hindsight-the-long-and-winding-road-to-security-council-reform.php>>.

46 United Nations Security Council. Verbatim Record of the 9149th Meeting of the Security Council. New York, (S/PV.9149) (11 October 2022), <<https://docs.un.org/en/S/PV.9149>>.

47 United Nations Security Council. Verbatim Record of the 9702nd Meeting of the Security Council, New York, (S/PV.9702) (12 August 2024), <<https://docs.un.org/en/S/PV.9702>>.

48 United Nations Security Council. Note by the President of the Security Council. (S/2019/994) (27 December 2019), <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_2019_994.pdf>.

49 United Nations Security Council. "Security Council Meetings in 2018". (Accessed: 5 June 2025), <<https://research.un.org/en/docs/sc/quick/meetings/2018>>.

50 United Nations Security Council. "Security Council Meetings in 2019". (Accessed: 5 June 2025), <<https://research.un.org/en/docs/sc/quick/meetings/2019>>.

Speaking with One Voice

expanded to include non-African issues, such as the situations in Haiti and Colombia.⁵¹ In 2021, the “A3 Plus” grouping further strengthened its unified voice, delivering 53 joint statements. This number then rose to 63 in 2022, continuing to demonstrate the group’s active engagement and coordination.⁵² The upward trend continued in 2023 and 2024, with the group delivering 93 and 105 joint statements, respectively. These years saw the group’s joint statements significantly expand to non-African issues such as Syria (political, humanitarian and chemical files), Yemen, and Afghanistan. The figures cited here on joint statements also include the joint Explanation of Votes by the group, which has increased significantly in recent years.

By speaking with one voice, the A3 have demonstrated their capacity to act collectively, thereby enhancing both their visibility and influence within the Security Council. This unified approach has facilitated the advancement of a common African position, aligned with the decisions of the AU. It also makes it easier for other Council members not only to support the African position but to align themselves with it, thereby fostering broader consensus within the Council.

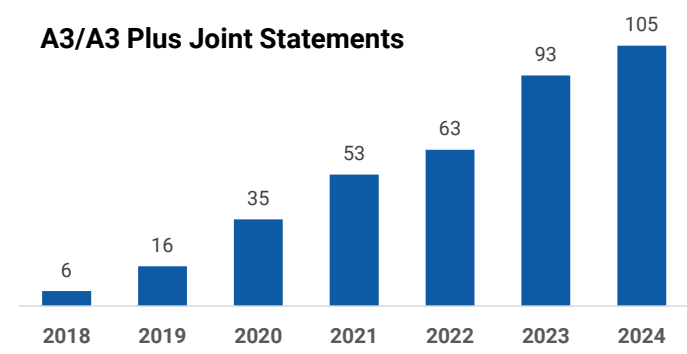
Beyond this, the practice of delivering joint statements offers other practical advantages, particularly for members with limited capacity. It reduces the burden on individual delegations by enabling the shared drafting and delivery of statements. Furthermore, while each A3 member may have in-depth knowledge of their immediate sub-region, they may be less familiar with developments in other parts of the continent. A coordinated division of labour allows a member most familiar with a particular situation to take the lead when related issues are addressed by the Council, thereby leveraging regional expertise and reinforcing collective engagement. This model appears to have generally served the A3 well—provided that the lead member does not hold a controversial national position that could undermine group cohesion or present challenges for the other members.

The group tries to make sure that there is a fair distribution of joint statements among its members. The current practice appears to

be that the A3 political coordinators meet after the adoption of the Security Council’s draft programme of work for the month and agree on the allocation of joint statements during the month, which is then approved by the ambassadors. Usually, the member who drafts the joint statement delivers it in the Council after incorporating inputs and comments from the other members. While having an AU position to follow can be helpful, getting agreement on draft joint statements can sometimes be difficult, given different national positions.

The practice of delivering joint statements has been institutionalised under the framework of the Guiding Principles for the A3 Plus Mechanism, developed by the group in November 2023.⁵³

Chart 2: Delivery of Joint Statements by the A3/A3 Plus



Since 2019, the A3 has also held joint press stakeouts more frequently.⁵⁴ While there does not appear to be consolidated data on the number of these joint press stakeouts, it appears to be relatively low compared to other members, which regularly use this tool. It appears that the group intends to enhance its communication strategy by conducting more media stakeouts, including at the level of Heads of State and Government during the High-Level Week of the UN General Assembly, to project its role and create its own narratives.⁵⁵

Negotiating as a Bloc

Even before the A3 formally emerged as a group, African members coordinated informally during negotiations. However, this coordination lacked institutional structure and a strong collective identity. Other Council members also engaged with African states individually rather than as a bloc. Moreover, with few exceptions, the A3 did not take the lead in proposing Council products on African issues; most of these initiatives have been, and continue to be, driven by

the P3.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, the A3 have historically played an active role in shaping and influencing several Council products, both on country- and region-specific situations in Africa and on broader thematic issues. During the Cold War era, African members were instrumental in advancing African priorities on decolonisation and the fight against apartheid.⁵⁷

51 United Nations Security Council. “Highlights 2020”. (Accessed: 5 June 2025), <<https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/highlights-2020>>.

52 United Nations Security Council. “Highlights 2021”. (Accessed: 5 June 2025), <<https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/highlights-2021>>.

53 African Union. Guiding Principles for the A3+ Mechanism. (Accessed: 5 June 2025), <https://fr.africanunion-un.org/_files/ugd/d682ab_1ea52873ef8946b59fd5284d4aedf109.pdf>.

54 Security Council Report. “In Hindsight: The Evolving Role of the Three African Members in the Security Council’s Work on Africa”. Monthly Forecast. (March 2020), <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2020-03/in-hindsight-the-evolving-role-of-the-three-african-members-in-the-security-councils-work-on-africa.php>>.

55 Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union to the United Nations. Report of the A3 Plus Retreat: “Enhancing the A3 Plus: An Innovative Tool for Sustained Advocacy within the UN Security Council”. The Westin Jersey City Newport, Jersey City, NJ, (13 April 2024), <<https://www.africanunion-un.org/a3plusretreat>>.

56 Security Council Report. Penholders and Chairs: UN Security Council Working Methods. (Accessed: 5 June 2025), <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/i65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9/working_methods_penholders_chairs_2025.pdf>.

57 Adebajo, Adekeye. *The Security Council and Africa: The Cold War and After*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, (2023), 45–47.

Negotiating as a Bloc

In the post-Cold War era, the African members' role in proposing Council products began to gain momentum. In the 2000s, they often aligned themselves with the positions of the OAU/AU and those of the RECs/RMs. For instance, Mauritius facilitated the adoption of a 2002 presidential statement, which highlighted the importance of partnership and strengthened coordination between the UN, the OAU, and subregional organisations in Africa.⁵⁸ Similarly, South Africa spearheaded the adoption of resolution 1809 in April 2008, which emphasised the need for enhanced cooperation between the UN and regional organisations, particularly the AU, in conflict prevention and resolution.⁵⁹

Since the formal establishment of the A3 in 2013, coordination among its members has gradually strengthened, though progress has taken some time as trust and confidence needed to be built. This cohesion also ebbs and flows, influenced by the group's evolving composition, which changes annually. (For more, see the section on composition.) Additionally, having members willing to assume greater responsibility in mobilising the group effectively played a role. At times, however, members with the capacity and political will to take on a leadership role prioritised their national interests over advancing common African positions.⁶⁰

Over time, the growing cohesion of the A3 during negotiations became increasingly apparent to other Council members. The P3 began actively seeking the A3's support to facilitate the adoption of Council products on African issues, while the P2 also began informally factoring in A3 positions when deciding whether to support or oppose P3 initiatives. Additionally, several elected members that had prioritised African issues during their campaigns have increasingly started to align themselves with the A3 in the past couple of years—particularly when the group presented a unified and coordinated position. There were instances where some of these elected members sought to establish informal coordination with the A3, while others worked with individual African members to propose Council products. (For more, see the section on Council Dynamics.)

A more structured form of coordination and collaboration among the A3 eventually emerged through closer engagement between their political coordinators and experts, beginning in the late 2010s and becoming more formalised and institutionalised in the 2020s. Regular interaction at the political coordinator level, coupled with the daily exchange of information and collaboration among experts, helped to

strengthen the A3's coordination and cohesion during negotiations. The subsequent introduction of a rotating lead negotiator further formalised this coordination, marking the A3's transformation into a cohesive negotiating bloc significantly influencing Council dynamics. As a result, the A3's support has become a de facto requirement for the adoption of any Council product concerning African issues.⁶¹

This trend emerged at a time when the P3's perceived legitimacy as penholders on many African files had begun to be questioned within the Security Council. (For more, see the section on Council Dynamics.) In response, the P3 not only sought the A3's support but also began engaging with its members more closely as a group ahead of negotiations. Traditionally, penholders tend to share a zero draft with the P5 before circulating it to the wider Council. Now, drafts on African issues are being shared with the A3, allowing their input to be incorporated prior to wider circulation.

Early experiences of P3 sharing copies of draft resolutions with the AU

The AU had long been urging the P3 to share advance copies of draft resolutions on African issues. Tensions came to a head with the adoption of Security Council resolution 2100 on 25 April 2013, which authorised the deployment of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The AU felt sidelined during the drafting process and issued a communiqué expressing its dissatisfaction that its input on the mandate had been largely ignored.

In the aftermath, individual P3 members in Addis Ababa began informally sharing early drafts with the AU Commission – even before these texts were circulated among the full P5. This shift was widely seen as an effort to avoid another public rebuke that could undermine the legitimacy of their role. For those closely involved, this episode marked a quiet but meaningful shift in how the AU was engaged – and in how seriously its voice began to be taken in Security Council negotiations.

Reflecting its growing influence, the A3 is now actively exploring the possibility of securing penholding or co-penholding responsibilities for all African dossiers—and other issues of interest to Africa—on the Security Council's agenda.⁶² To date, A3 members have primarily held penholding or co-penholding roles on files related to West Africa and the Sahel, as well as the Central Africa region.⁶³ This push to expand A3 members' penholding role has the potential to significantly elevate the group's influence, positioning it as a more assertive player in the Council's decision-making process.

58 United Nations Security Council. Presidential Statement (S/PRST/2002/2): Conflict Prevention, Peacekeeping Cooperation in Africa. (31 January 2002), <<https://docs.un.org/en/S/PRST/2002/2>>.

59 United Nations Security Council. Resolution 1809 (2008): Cooperation between the United Nations and Regional Organizations, in Particular the African Union, in the Maintenance of International Peace and Security, (S/RES/1809) (16 April 2008), <[https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/1809\(2008\)](https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/1809(2008))>.

60 African Union Peace and Security Council. Communiqué of the 595th Meeting on the Role of African Non-Permanent Members of the United Nations Security Council (A3) and the AU Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations. (PSC/PR/COMM.3(DXCV)) (28 April 2016), <<https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-595th-meeting-of-the-psc-on-the-role-of-african-non-permanent-members-of-the-united-nations-security-council-a3-and-the-au-permanent-observer-mission-to-the-united-nations>>.

61 Security Council Report. "In Hindsight: UN-AU Cooperation: A Path Toward Networked Multilateralism or Fragmented Responses?". Monthly Forecast. (November 2024), <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2024-11/in-hindsight-un-au-cooperation-a-path-toward-networked-multilateralism-or-fragmented-responses.php>>.

62 African Union. "Conclusions of the 10th High-Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa, Oran Process". (17-18 December 2023), <[d682ab_c555b7655584412c893ee-ba2270e44c8.pdf](https://www.africanunion.org/press/2023/12/18/conclusions-of-the-10th-high-level-seminar-on-peace-and-security-in-africa-oran-process) (africanunion-un.org)>.

63 Security Council Report. Penholders and Chairs: UN Security Council Working Methods. (accessed 5 June 2025), <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B6FBCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/working_methods_penholders_chairs_2025.pdf>.

Negotiating as a Bloc

Table 2: Council Products Spearheaded by the A3/A3 Plus on Country and Region-Specific Files and Thematic Topics

FILE	PENHOLDERS	CO-PENHOLDERS	OTHER CASES
West Africa and the Sahel	Burkina Faso (2009) Nigeria (2010-2011) Togo (2012-2013) Nigeria (2014-2015) Senegal (2016-2017)	Côte d'Ivoire and Sweden (2018) Niger and Belgium (2020) Niger and Ireland (2021) Ghana and Ireland (2022) Ghana and Switzerland (2023) Sierra Leone and Switzerland (2024) Sierra Leone and Denmark (2025)	
Central Africa		Gabon and the UK (2023) Mozambique and the UK (2024)	
Guinea Bissau	Burkina Faso (2009) Nigeria (2010-2011) Togo (2012-2013) Nigeria (2014-2015) Senegal (2016-2017) Côte d'Ivoire (2018-2019)		
Tigray (Ethiopia)	Ireland (2021-2022)		Ireland worked closely with the A3
Great Lakes	Egypt Kenya		Egypt worked with Ethiopia and Senegal to facilitate the adoption of a resolution on the fifth anniversary of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for DRC and the Region (PSC-F) Kenya facilitated the adoption of a Presidential Statement (S/PRST/2021/19)
DRC	France		France worked with Sierra Leone as co-penholder on DRC sanctions in 2024. Ethiopia and Sweden facilitated the adoption of resolution 2439 on the Ebola situation in DRC in 2018.
Syria Humanitarian		Egypt, New Zealand and Spain (2016) Egypt, Japan and Sweden (2017)	
Counter-terrorism	Algeria (2025)		US is the penholder, but other members occasionally propose Council outcomes
COVID Pandemic		Tunisia and France (2020)	
Gulf of Guinea Piracy		Ghana and Norway (2022)	
Climate, Peace and Security		Niger and Ireland (2021)	
Peacekeeping	Ethiopia (2017)	Côte d'Ivoire and Netherlands (2018)	
Peacebuilding and sustaining peace	Angola (2016) Egypt (2017) Algeria (2025)		There is no clear penholder on this file.
Multinational Joint Task Force	Nigeria (2014) Chad (2015)		

Negotiating as a Bloc

Table 2: Council Products Spearheaded by the A3/A3 Plus on Country and Region-Specific Files and Thematic Topics

FILE	PENHOLDERS	CO-PENHOLDERS	OTHER CASES
Working Methods	Angola (2015) Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (2020-2021)		
International Residual Mechanism for International Tribunals	Gabon (2022-2023)		
Security Sector Reform	Nigeria (2014) South Africa (2020)		
Financing of AU-led Peace Support Operations	South Africa (2008) Libya (2009) Rwanda (2014) Senegal (2016) Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire (2018) South Africa (2019) Kenya (2021) Ghana, Gabon and Mozambique (2023)		

Advancing African Priorities

Even before the emergence of the A3 as a group, African members advanced African priorities either individually or collectively. A notable example occurred in 1963, when they spearheaded the adoption of resolutions 180 and 181, with co-sponsorship of 32 African member states.⁶⁴ Resolution 180 called on Portugal to recognise the right of its colonies to self-determination and independence, while resolution 181 strongly condemned South Africa's policies of racial discrimination, urging the dismantling of apartheid and the release of all individuals imprisoned for opposing those policies.⁶⁵

Following the end of the Cold War, Namibia played an active role in the adoption of resolution 1325 in October 2000, which launched the WPS agenda.⁶⁶ In 2005, Benin, serving as chair of the Security Council's Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, influenced the adoption of resolution 1625, which sought to strengthen the Council's role in conflict prevention in Africa.⁶⁷ Benin was also instrumental in the drafting and negotiations, together with France, of resolution 1612 of 26 July 2005, on children affected by armed conflicts.

In discussions on African-related files, African members have typically aligned their positions with those of the AU and its RECs/RMs even before the establishment of the A3 as a group, unless they had a different national position. In the case of specific conflict situations under consideration by the Security Council, they tend to echo the decisions of the respective RECs/RMs and those of the AUPSC. They also use these decisions as a basis for joint statements and group negotiating positions. This is also helpful in developing consensus within the group, except in instances where a particular member has a national position different from the RECs/RMs or the AUPSC.

Most of the A3 signature events during their presidencies and Council products they facilitate are also usually, but not exclusively, focused on the AU's priorities. A common theme often referenced by A3 members in this regard is the cooperation between the UN and regional and subregional organisations, particularly on strengthening the partnership between the UN and the AU on issues of peace and security in Africa.

⁶⁴ United Nations Security Council. Official Record of the 1056th Meeting of the Security Council. (S/PV.1056) (7 August 1963), <[https://docs.un.org/en/S/PV.1056\(OR\)](https://docs.un.org/en/S/PV.1056(OR))>. United Nations Security Council. Official Record of the 1049th Meeting of the Security Council. (S/PV.1049) (31 July 1963), <[https://docs.un.org/en/S/PV.1049\(OR\)](https://docs.un.org/en/S/PV.1049(OR))>.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ United Nations Security Council. Official Record of the 4213th Meeting of the Security Council. (S/PV.4213) (31 October 2000), <<https://docs.un.org/en/S/PV.4213>>.

⁶⁷ Security Council Report. Working Together for Peace and Security in Africa.

Advancing African Priorities

Table 2: Signature Events Organised by the A3 in the Past Five Years

TOPIC	FORMAT	A3 MEMBER	PRESIDENCY
Small Arms	Open debate	Sierra Leone	November 2025
African-led and development-focused counterterrorism: strengthening African leadership and implementation of counter-terrorism initiatives	Open debate	Algeria	January 2025
Addressing the historical injustice and enhancing Africa's effective representation in the United Nations Security Council	High-level debate	Sierra Leone	August 2024
Strengthening the role of the African state in addressing global security and development challenges	Open debate	Mozambique	May 2024
The impact of development policies in the implementation of the Silencing the Guns initiative	Open debate	Mozambique	March 2023
Counterterrorism in Africa: an imperative for peace, security and development	Debate	Ghana	November 2022
Strengthening the fight against the financing of armed groups and terrorists through the illicit trafficking of natural resources	Debate	Gabon	October 2022
Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security	High-level open debate	Kenya	October 2021
Challenges faced by countries in fragile contexts, in particular on the African continent	Open Debate	Tunisia	January 2021
Cooperation between the UN and regional and subregional organizations (African Union)	High-level debate	South Africa	December 2020
Children and armed conflict: attacks against schools as a grave violation of children's rights with a focus on the Sahel region	Open debate	Niger	September 2020

Over the years, the AUPSC has frequently encouraged the A3 to advance African priorities in the Security Council. For instance, in November 2014, the AUPSC called on the Security Council to authorise the deployment of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), a regional force established to combat Boko Haram and affiliated groups operating in the Lake Chad Basin.⁶⁸ The A3—then composed of Chad, Nigeria, and Rwanda, with Chad and Nigeria serving as troop-contributing countries to the MNJTF—sought to advance this objective, with both countries proposing a number of draft resolutions. However, in response to Nigeria's December 2014 draft text, Council members raised questions regarding the modalities of the MNJTF's deployment and expressed a preference for a presidential statement.⁶⁹ Disagreements also emerged on Chad's draft text over whether the resolution should be adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. In the end, the Council adopted a presidential statement commending efforts to operationalise the MNJTF.⁷⁰

With the AU actively deploying peace support operations, securing adequate, sustainable and predictable funding for these operations became a critical issue in the cooperation between the UN and the AU. The AU argued that it is deploying AUPSOs on behalf of the Security Council, which has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and, therefore, should be able to access support from UN-assessed contributions. In 2007, it formally requested the UN to examine the possibility of funding such operations from UN-assessed contributions.⁷¹

Since then, African members have been working, individually and collectively, to facilitate the discussion on this issue in the Security Council. They have spearheaded six resolutions and eight presidential statements to advance this longstanding priority issue over the past 18 years.⁷² A pivotal moment in the emergence of the A3 as a cohesive bloc occurred in 2018, when they jointly submitted a draft resolution on the financing of AUPSOs, following a request from the AUPSC. Although this initial effort was tested by pressure from a P5

68 African Union Peace and Security Council. Communiqué of the 469th Meeting on the Boko Haram Terrorist Group and Regional Efforts within the Framework of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC). (PSC/PR/COMM.(CDLXIX)) (25 November 2014), <<https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-469th-meeting-of-the-psc-on-the-boko-haram-terrorist-group-and-on-the-efforts-of-the-countries-of-the-region-within-the-framework-of-lcbc>>.

69 Security Council Report. "UNOWA Briefing and Consultations". What's In Blue. (5 January 2015), <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2015/01/unowa-briefing-and-consultations.php>>.

70 Security Council Report. "Security Council Presidential Statement on Boko Haram". What's In Blue. (28 July 2015), <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2015/07/security-council-presidential-statement-on-boko-haram.php>>.

71 African Union. Assembly of the African Union Eighth Ordinary Session. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, (29–30 January 2007), <<https://au.int/en/decisions/assembly-african-union-eighth-ordinary-session>>.

72 Security Council Report. The Financing of AU Peace Support Operations: Prospects for Progress in the Security Council?, Research Report No.1. (26 April 2023), <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/au_financing_2023.pdf>.

Advancing African Priorities

member, which also affected the group's unity, and while the draft was ultimately withdrawn, this effort nonetheless demonstrated the A3's capacity to collectively initiate a Security Council product.⁷³ In 2019, South Africa, supported by other A3 members, made another push, but it also did not work.

Eventually, the A3 managed to facilitate the adoption of resolution 2719 in December 2023 after more than 15 years of strenuous diplomatic efforts.⁷⁴ This is a landmark decision through which the Security Council agreed to authorise support for AUPSOs from UN-assessed contributions on a case-by-case basis. The adoption of this resolution highlighted the A3's potential to act as a cohesive bloc in advancing African priorities within the Security Council.

The A3 also followed through on another request from the AUPSC to spearhead the adoption of resolution 2457 of 27 February

2019 on the "Silencing the Guns in Africa" initiative, an AU flagship initiative aiming to end all wars by the year 2030.⁷⁵ The resolution welcomed the AU's initiative and expressed support for its efforts to find African solutions to the myriad peace and security challenges confronting the continent. Although the draft resolution was proposed by Equatorial Guinea and tabled for a vote during its February 2019 Security Council presidency, the A3 initiated the draft text based on inputs from the AU Commission and worked together to facilitate its adoption. These and other A3 experiences could serve as a useful model for future A3 members in advancing African priorities in the Security Council. The box below demonstrates potential steps that can be taken by the AU and the A3 to advance African priorities in the UN Security Council.

Steps for Advancing African Priorities

- **Mandate from the AUPSC**

A formal decision from the AUPSC guides the A3 to advance a specific African priority within the UNSC, with a focus on securing a concrete outcome (e.g., a resolution or presidential statement).

- **Draft Development and Consultation with the AU**

The A3 – typically led by one of its members – develops an initial draft. This draft is either sent to Addis Ababa for input or shaped based on contributions from the AU Commission, which may provide a baseline document for further development.

- **Roadmap and Timeline**

A roadmap with clear milestones is created, outlining key actions and timelines. This includes joint demarches to key stakeholders to build early support and awareness.

- **Arria-Formula Meeting**

An Arria-formula meeting is convened to test the priority issue, gather stakeholder input, and generate early momentum with Council members and external partners.

- **Joint Annual Consultations between the Security Council and the AUPSC members**

Take advantage of the annual consultations to facilitate discussion on the priority issue and try to build the necessary convergence.

- **Leveraging African Presidencies**

African presidencies are utilised to formally launch discussions on the priority issue. The A3 also engages with other supportive presidencies to generate momentum.

- **Informal Consultations with Council Members**

The A3 conducts informal engagements with both permanent (P5) and elected (E10) members of the Council to share key elements of the draft and solicit initial feedback.

- **Coordination with the African Group in New York**

Regular briefings are provided to the African Group to ensure alignment with broader continental positions and to mobilise political support.

- **Negotiating Strategy**

A clear and coordinated negotiating strategy is adopted, identifying areas open to compromise as well as red lines to maintain the integrity of the AU mandate.

- **Unity and cohesion**

Sustain the necessary unity and cohesion until the end of the negotiations.

Composition Matters

Since the establishment of the A3 in 2013, it has become clear that the group's composition plays a critical role in determining its effectiveness, unity, and influence, which are shaped by its members, their interests, and their level of commitment to advancing common African positions. As membership changes annually, so do the A3's internal dynamics.

The selection of A3 candidates for Security Council membership generally follows a rotational cycle based on the following principles:

- Northern Africa and Central Africa rotate running for one seat every odd calendar year;

- Western Africa runs for one seat every odd calendar year; and
- Eastern Africa and Southern Africa rotate running for one seat every even calendar year.⁷⁶

Broadly speaking, all A3 members vow to advance African priorities within the Security Council. During their election campaigns, they often highlight their commitment to strengthening cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organisations, particularly the AU and its RECs/RMs. The differences are in the degree of commitment and willingness to prioritise these objectives. While some members demonstrate strong dedication, others tend to defer

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Security Council Report. "Vote on a Draft Resolution on the Financing of AU-Led Peace Support Operations".

⁷⁵ African Union. "Decision on the Report of the Peace and Security Council on the Implementation of the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by Year 2020". 31st Ordinary Session, (Assembly/AU/Dec.696(XXXI)) (1–2 July 2018), <[https://portal.africa-union.org/DVD/Documents/DOC-AU-DEC/Assembly%20AU%20Dec%20696%20\(XXXI\)%20_E.pdf](https://portal.africa-union.org/DVD/Documents/DOC-AU-DEC/Assembly%20AU%20Dec%20696%20(XXXI)%20_E.pdf)>.

⁷⁶ Security Council Report. Security Council Elections 2025, Research Report No. 2.

Composition Matters

to national interests—particularly when African priorities appear to contradict with their own positions or when they are under pressure from permanent members of the Council. These dynamics have had a significant impact on the A3's coordination and cohesion.

Small and medium-sized African countries tend to align their positions with their respective regional organisations and the AU, unless they have specific national interests in a given conflict situation or succumb to pressure from the P5. In contrast, larger countries often join the Security Council with a national agenda they aim to pursue during their tenure. When these agendas align with the positions of the AU and RECs/RMs, such countries can play a valuable leadership role within the A3, helping to advance shared African priorities. However, when they choose to take a position based on national calculations, A3's cohesion tends to be weakened and collective efforts to defend African priorities are undermined.

Depending on the A3 composition, members of the group may take differing positions on several issues. For instance, A3 members may not always be aligned in their voting patterns when it comes to the renewal of sanctions regimes in Africa. However, in recent years, the A3 have increasingly coalesced in favour of lifting sanctions, creating the impression that its members are generally opposed to sanctions. This position is often guided by decisions of the AUPSC, which increasingly supports the appeals of African countries targeted by Security Council sanctions for the easing or complete lifting of those measures. The AUPSC has adopted such

decisions on the CAR, DRC, Somalia and South Sudan.

Not all African countries are party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and they take differing positions when it comes to the consideration of issues related to the ICC, reflecting the complex dynamics among national interests, Africa solidarity, and international justice.⁷⁷ In 2013, the AU called for its member states not to cooperate with the ICC in certain situations, particularly regarding investigations into African leaders.⁷⁸ The ICC issue is considered biannually in relation to the Libya and Sudan dossiers, but the A3 does not deliver joint statements during these meetings. A3 members that are States Parties to the ICC join the ICC caucus within the Council and participate in the caucus' joint press stakeouts, which typically take place following Council meetings on the ICC's Libya and Sudan cases. Sierra Leone is currently serving as the Security Council co-focal point on the ICC together with Denmark.

Additionally, human rights issues have at times divided the A3. While some members are particularly sensitive to perceived external interference in domestic affairs, especially regarding human rights in conflict-specific contexts, others may take a more flexible stance based on different considerations. These differences have been particularly apparent when, for instance, the High Commissioner for Human Rights is invited to brief the Council on country-specific situations. Such briefings have triggered procedural votes, during which A3 members do not always vote in alignment.⁷⁹

Table 3: A3 Voting Patterns on Procedural Votes on Holding a Meeting to Consider Country Situations with a Human Rights Element

YEAR	COUNTRY	IN FAVOUR	ABSTENTION	AGAINST
2018	Myanmar	Côte d'Ivoire	Equatorial Guinea and Ethiopia	
2018	Syria		Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea and Ethiopia	
2017	DPRK	Senegal	Egypt and Ethiopia	
2016	DPRK		Senegal	Angola and Egypt
2015	DPRK		Chad and Nigeria	Angola
2014	DPRK	Rwanda	Chad and Nigeria	
2006	Myanmar	Ghana	Tanzania	Republic of Congo
2005	Zimbabwe		Algeria, Benin and Tanzania	

The question of Western Sahara has long been a divisive issue within the A3. With some exceptions, Francophone African countries have generally tended to support Morocco's autonomy proposal, while most Anglophone African countries recognise Western Sahara as an independent state and advocate for the right to self-determination. As a result, the A3 members' votes are often not aligned

during the mandate renewal of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). There have been some changes to this overall trend in the last couple of years, with Morocco gaining diplomatic traction among some Anglophone African countries.⁸⁰ In 2024, Algeria decided not to participate in the vote, questioning the penholder's (the US) impartiality on the issue of Western Sahara and

⁷⁷ International Criminal Court. Assembly of States Parties: "African States". (Accessed: 5 June 2025), <<https://asp.icc-cpi.int/states-parties/african-states>>.

⁷⁸ African Union. Decisions and Declarations of the Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, (12 October 2013), <https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/9655-ext_assembly_au_dec_decl_e_0.pdf>.

⁷⁹ For the A3 voting pattern, please look at Table 3.

⁸⁰ Ghana and Kenya, which served in the Security Council recently, are the latest Anglophone countries to recognise the Moroccan autonomy plan. For more, see Eljehtimi, Ahmed. "Ghana Endorses Morocco's Autonomy Plan for Western Sahara". Reuters. (5 June 2025), <<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/ghana-endorses-moroccos-autonomy-plan-western-sahara-2025-06-05/>>; Eljehtimi, Ahmed. "Kenya Backs Morocco's Autonomy Plan for Western Sahara, Joint Statement Says". Reuters. (26 May 2025), <<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/kenya-backs-moroccos-autonomy-plan-western-sahara-joint-statement-says-2025-05-26/>>.

Composition Matters

arguing that its views were neither considered nor given due weight during the negotiations.⁸¹ It did the same in 2025, underscoring the text’s failure to adequately address the legitimate aspirations of the people of Western Sahara and expressing regret that the U.S.

initiative to promote peace and détente in the region has not been able to gain proper momentum due to the lack of active support from all parties involved.⁸²

Table 4: A3 Voting Patterns on the UN Mission for the Referendum on Western Sahara (MINURSO) Mandate Renewal

YEAR	IN FAVOUR	ABSTENTION	DID NOT VOTE
2025	Sierra Leone, Somalia and Guyana		Algeria
2024	Sierra Leone, Guyana	Mozambique,	Algeria
2023	Gabon, Ghana	Mozambique	
2022	Gabon, Ghana	Kenya	
2021	Kenya, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Tunisia	
2020	Niger, Tunisia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	South Africa	

On the longstanding issue of financing AUPSOs, the A3 have not always shown a uniform level of commitment and support. Some of the larger financial contributors to the AU budget have expressed reluctance, often citing concerns about the operationalisation of the AU Peace Fund, particularly the 0.2 percent levy, and resisting calls for the AU to contribute 25 percent of the budget for AUPSOs. These countries were not entirely satisfied with the adoption of resolution 2719 and may not actively support its implementation. In contrast, African countries that are directly involved in AUPSOs as troop-contributing countries—or view such deployments as essential to addressing security challenges in their regions—tend to strongly support the financing issue and fully recognise its significance for the continent.

Beyond their positions on specific issues, the relationships between individual A3 members and the permanent members of

the Security Council also shape the group’s dynamics and its collective ability to influence Council decisions. Some African countries may be more inclined to work closely with the P3, while others may align more with the P2. While these differing alignments can complicate relationships among the A3, there have been instances where a member’s close ties to a P3 or P2 country proved beneficial in facilitating the adoption of Council outcomes. (For more, see the section on Council Dynamics.)

It has been clear over the past decade that when the A3 acts in a cohesive and principled manner, it strengthens Africa’s voice in the Council and boosts the legitimacy of African-led solutions. Conversely, fragmentation or visible disagreement among the A3 weakens collective influence and can be exploited by other Council members to undermine efforts aimed at advancing African priorities.

Taking the Lead from Addis Ababa

The A3 members are expected not only to reflect the AU’s positions but to defend them in the Security Council.⁸³ The AU Constitutive Act, the Protocol Establishing the AUPSC, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, as well as several other policy documents set out the basic principles and parameters for the A3 in articulating a common African position. Specific policy positions are articulated in the decisions of the AU policy organs. In this regard, the AU Assembly, during its regular sessions, deliberates on the state of peace and security across the continent and adopts decisions covering a broad range of conflict and crisis situations. It also addresses cross-cutting thematic issues and topical matters related to

international peace and security. These decisions serve as important reference points for the A3 in formulating common positions and guiding their engagement in the Security Council.

The AUPSC, the standing AU policy organ on the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in Africa in accordance with its Protocol, is particularly important.⁸⁴ It adopts decisions on addressing various peace and security threats and challenges on the continent. Over the years, these decisions have shaped and influenced the Council’s resolutions on peace and security issues in Africa as the A3 members began to play an increasingly significant role.⁸⁵

81 Security Council Report. “Western Sahara: Vote on a Draft Resolution Renewing MINURSO’s Mandate”. What’s In Blue. (31 October 2024), <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2024/10/western-sahara-vote-on-a-draft-resolution-renewing-minursos-mandate-2.php>>.

82 United Nations. Press Release on the 10030th Meeting of the Security Council. (SC/16208) (31 October 2025), <<https://press.un.org/en/2025/sc16208.doc.htm>>.

83 African Union Commission. Conclusions of the 1st High-Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa. Algeria, (8–10 December 2013), <<https://papsrepository.africa-union.org/handle/123456789/1493>>.

84 African Union. Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. (adopted: 9 July 2002), (entry into force: 26 December 2003), <https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/37293-treaty-0024_-_protocol_relating_to_the_establishment_of_the_peace_and_security_council_of_the_african_union_e.pdf>.

85 For examples, please see Box 3.

Taking the Lead from Addis Ababa

AUPSC requests to the A3

“Reiterates the call for the total lifting of the arms embargo imposed on the CAR and encourages the African Members in the UN Security Council (A3) to ensure that there is a unanimous position on this matter within the UN Security Council”.

Communiqué adopted by the AUPSC at its 1221st meeting, held on 11 July 2024, on the situation in the Central African Republic (CAR).

“Directs the Commission to transmit this Communiqué to the African Members of the UN Security Council (A3) and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and through him, to the United Nations Security Council, as a working document, with a view to ensuring enhanced coordination and harmonization of efforts in Sudan”.

Communiqué adopted by the AUPSC at its 1209th meeting, held on 18 April 2024, on Briefing on the Situation in Sudan.

The AUPSC Troika, comprising the previous, current, and incoming chairs, initiated monthly consultations with the A3 to ensure effective coordination. These meetings aimed to provide the A3 with timely updates and strategic guidance on peace and security issues ahead of UN Security Council deliberations. Efforts have also been made to synchronise the monthly programmes of work of both the AUPSC and the Security Council.⁸⁶ This allows the AUPSC to meet and adopt decisions on African issues prior to their discussion in the Security Council, thereby providing the A3 with political guidance on how to represent a common African position during deliberations.

During the 10th Anniversary of the creation of the A3 in December 2023, the Oran Seminar discussed a Manual on Modalities for Enhancing Coordination between the AUPSC and the A3, which was developed to provide guidance on how the PSC and A3 can promote and defend common African positions within the Security Council in accordance with the UN Charter, AU legal instruments and relevant decisions of the AU Policy Organs.⁸⁷ The manual was finalised by the AUPSC Committee of Experts—comprising designated experts from AUPSC member states and mandated to develop draft documents—and was adopted by the AUPSC on 24 July 2024.⁸⁸

As part of efforts to strengthen coordination with the A3, the AUPSC has been working to enhance cooperation between its Committee of Experts and the A3 experts. Since 2018, the Committee of Experts has travelled to New York ahead of the joint consultation between the Security Council and the AUPSC. These visits have provided an opportunity for direct engagement and consultation

between the AUPSC Committee of Experts and A3 experts. In 2023, Security Council experts also visited Addis Ababa ahead of the annual consultations to meet with their AUPSC counterparts. This year, Council experts once again travelled to Addis Ababa in advance of the 19th annual consultations between members of the two Councils in October.

Under Article 10 of the AUPSC Protocol, the Chairperson of the AU Commission may exercise their good offices to prevent potential conflicts, resolve ongoing ones, and support peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction.⁸⁹ The Chairperson regularly issues statements in response to peace and security developments on the continent, which can serve as a useful reference for the A3. At times, the Chairperson also comments on conflict and crisis situations outside Africa, providing helpful guidance in cases where a common African position has not yet been formulated.

Statement of the Chairperson of the AU Commission on Syria

The African Union is following with concern the ongoing developments regarding Syria. The African Union strongly condemns any use of chemical and other weapons prohibited under international law. The African Union, which is strongly committed to multilateralism, underlines that any response to such acts ought to be based on incontrovertible evidence gathered by a competent, independent and credible entity and comply strictly with international law, including the primacy of the United Nations Security Council for any recourse to force. Africa expects the United Nations Security Council members, especially those that are permanent, to put aside their differences and spare no efforts in the pursuit of global peace and humanity’s common good, in line with the responsibilities conferred upon them by the United Nations Charter. The Syrian people have suffered far too long. In the face of this dire situation, the only sensible course of action is the intensification of international efforts to find a lasting political solution based solely on the interests of the Syrian people and respecting the territorial integrity of Syria.

Addis Ababa, 15 April 2018

The RECs are not only considered the building blocks of the AU, but they also form an integral part of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), often acting as first responders to conflict and crisis situations across the continent.⁹⁰ Their engagement with the AU is guided by the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity.⁹¹ While there are eight officially recognised RECs in Africa, only five are actively involved in peace and security matters within their respective regions.⁹² These RECs regularly adopt critical decisions

⁸⁶ African Union Peace and Security Council. Communiqué of the 983rd Meeting of the PSC on the Theme “Unified Role of the African Members in the United Nations (UN) Security Council (A3) in the UN Security Council”. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, (4 March 2021).

⁸⁷ African Union Commission. Conclusions of the 10th High-Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa. Peace and Security Council, African Union Commission: Oran, Algeria, (PSC/HLS/10 (2023)) (17–18 December 2023), <<https://papsrepository.africanunion.org/entities/publication/5d653a4e-50b3-4e94-96df-a4ae145a49dd>>.

⁸⁸ African Union Commission. Conclusions of the 11th High-Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa. Peace and Security Council, African Union Commission: Oran, Algeria, (PSC/HLS/11 (2024)) (1–2 December 2024), <<https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/conclusions-for-the-11th-annual-hls-on-promotion-of-peace-and-security-on-africa-en.pdf>>; African Union. Communiqué of the 1289th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union. (24 July 2025), <<https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20250724/communique-1289th-meeting-peace-and-security-council-au>>.

⁸⁹ African Union. Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. (adopted: 9 July 2002) (entry into force: 26 December 2003).

⁹⁰ APSA is comprised of the AUPSC, the AU Commission, the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), the Panel of the Wise, the African Standby Force, and the AU Peace Fund.

⁹¹ African Union Commission. Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Area of Peace and Security between the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities and the Coordinating Mechanisms of the Regional Standby Brigades of Eastern and Northern Africa. (AU-RECs/EXP/2(III) Rev. 3) (Addis Ababa: African Union Commission, 2008), <<https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/mou-au-rec-eng.pdf>>.

⁹² These RECs are the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Taking the Lead from Addis Ababa

related to the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts, and the AU often supports and endorses such decisions with some exceptions. As a result, accepting guidance from Addis Ababa also includes considering the positions and decisions of the relevant RECs on specific conflict situations. Some RECs—including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)—have established representation offices in New York, enhancing their engagement with the UN. However, these offices have yet to develop closer coordination with the AU Permanent Observer Mission in New York. Nonetheless, the AU Permanent Observer Mission regularly shares copies of RECs decisions with the A3.

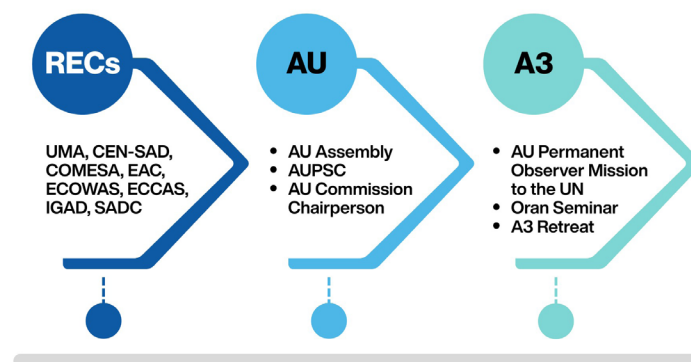
At the 2013 Oran seminar, the AU Commission committed itself to providing technical support to the A3, through strengthening its own capacity, including through the establishment of dedicated units in Addis and the observer mission in New York.⁹³ The mission serves as a key liaison, formally conveying AU decisions and providing coordination support to the A3. It also functions as the A3 Secretariat, facilitating the group's meetings and maintaining a repository of statements, votes, records, and historical data related to its activities, decisions, and initiatives.⁹⁴

Since 2022, the mission has organised an annual A3 Retreat to strengthen cohesion among A3 members. It has since become a regular event, serving as a platform to enhance consultation and coordination within the group and to take stock of progress and challenges, including the implementation of the conclusions and recommendations of the Oran Seminar.⁹⁵ The inaugural retreat took place in early March 2022, in Tarrytown, New York, and was designed to

strengthen cohesion among the A3 members to enhance their collective engagement within the Security Council. The retreat also aimed to advance common African positions and decisions on peace and security issues.

Since then, the AU has continued to facilitate these retreats annually. For instance, the 2024 retreat was held in Jersey City, New Jersey, and the 2025 retreat took place in Georgetown, Guyana, for the A3/A3 Plus members to coordinate their strategies, promote Africa's voice in the Security Council, and collaborate with other stakeholders, including the Caribbean region, to address global peace and security challenges. The retreats have become a key component of the AU's efforts to enhance the effectiveness and unity of African countries within the UN Security Council. The AU Commission's leadership also participates in the retreat, providing guidance on the AU's peace and security priorities in Africa.

Information Flow between the RECs, AU and the A3/A3 Plus



Feedback Loop

In establishing the A3, the AU expected its member states not only to follow directives from Addis Ababa but also to demonstrate accountability in representing and defending Africa's interests during their tenure on the Security Council. In emphasising this responsibility, the AU has specifically referenced Article 7(3) of the AUPSC Protocol, which states: "Member States agree to accept and implement the decisions of the Peace and Security Council, in accordance with the Constitutive Act".⁹⁶

In January 2016, the AU Assembly reaffirmed the A3's special responsibility to ensure that the AUPSC's decisions are effectively reflected in the Security Council's deliberations and decisions on African peace and security issues. In this context, it requested the A3 to submit reports to the Assembly, through the AUPSC, on its efforts to promote and defend African interests within the Security

Council.⁹⁷ Accordingly, the AU Commission Chairperson submits an annual report to the AU Assembly on the activities of the AUPSC and the state of peace and security in Africa. A section of this report is dedicated to covering A3 activities, including its efforts to promote, defend, and champion the AU's positions.⁹⁸ This section usually includes the conclusions of the Oran Seminar, but there seems to be an intention to eventually also provide analytical information based on input from the AU Permanent Observer Mission in New York. As a matter of practice, the mission provides an overall assessment of the A3's activities during the annual Oran Seminar.

The A3 provides updates to the AUPSC in Addis Ababa, a practice which started in 2017, although this has not always been done consistently. The frequency and depth of these updates have varied depending on circumstances and the group's dynamics. In the early

⁹³ African Union Commission. Conclusions of the 1st High-Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa. Algeria, (8–10 December 2013), <<https://papsrepository.africa-union.org/handle/123456789/1493>>.

⁹⁴ African Union Peace and Security Council. Briefing Note on the Activities of the African Members of the Security Council. (29 August 2025).

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ African Union. Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. (adopted: 9 July 2002) (entry into force: 26 December 2003).

⁹⁷ African Union Assembly. "Decision on the Activities of the Peace and Security Council and the State of Peace and Security in Africa". (Assembly/AU/Dec.598(XXVI)), (31 January 2016), <<https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/assembly-au-dec-598-xxvi-e.pdf>>.

⁹⁸ African Union Peace and Security Council. Report on the Activities of the Peace and Security Council and the State of Peace and Security in Africa. (Assembly/AU/4(XXXVII)) (February 2024), <<https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/assembly-au-4-xxxvii-e.pdf>>.

Feedback Loop

stages of the A3's formation, its members were not coordinating as closely or cohesively as they do now, which apparently led to some frustration in Addis Ababa over the group's ability to advance African positions.

In its May 2016 meeting on the role of the A3 and the AU Permanent Observer Mission to the UN in New York, the AUPSC highlighted the negative implications of the lack of coordination and cohesion among African Groups globally (African groups in UN and other multilateral venues across the globe), which it said undermined the collective African interest represented by the AU. Therefore, it urged AU member states to take all necessary steps to address this situation and reminded A3 members that their candidatures had been supported and endorsed by the Union. The AUPSC went further and called on the AU Commission, through the Office of Legal Counsel, to examine the possibility of establishing an accountability mechanism for the A3 by developing a set of criteria to govern the endorsement process of candidatures of AU member states to Security Council non-permanent membership.⁹⁹ So far, there is no indication that the legal counsel has followed through on this decision.

Nonetheless, the situation apparently improved in subsequent years. This seems to have coincided with the AUPSC increasingly requesting the A3 to advance specific African priorities and its members individually and collectively enhancing their efforts to do so. The frequency of reports from the A3 to the AUPSC and the

feedback from the AUPSC also increased. This was particularly the case in the context of the efforts related to securing adequate, sustainable and predictable funding for AUPSOs as well as mobilising support for the “Silencing the Guns” initiative.

This improved relationship was acknowledged in the AUPSC's March 2021 meeting on the “Unified Role of the African Members in the United Nations Security Council (A3),” where the AUPSC expressed its appreciation of the A3's efforts in championing, promoting and defending common African positions and interests in the Security Council. The AUPSC also welcomed the group's enhanced cohesion, cooperation and coordination, including through the increasing practice of delivering joint statements and media stake-outs. Furthermore, the AUPSC commended the A3's efforts to serve as penholders, or co-penholders, on African files and encouraged the group members to agree on a division of labour in this regard.¹⁰⁰

The A3 report to the African Group in New York quarterly. African countries on the Security Council's agenda tend to be particularly interested in these reports, as they rely on the A3 to defend their interests within the Council. For instance, some of these countries are subject to sanctions and expect the A3 to advocate for the lifting of these punitive measures. Others host UN peacekeeping operations and want their priorities and concerns to be accurately reflected during mandate renewal negotiations. (For more, see the next section.)

African Solidarity

With the A3's increasing coordination and cohesion, African solidarity has become a significant factor in shaping the group's positions. More broadly, African solidarity embodies the principles of unity and cooperation among people of African descent—both on the continent and in the diaspora—rooted in shared struggles, history, and a common destiny. It reflects a commitment to mutual support, collective action, and working together for the common good.¹⁰¹ These ideals are encapsulated in Pan-Africanism, which inspired the fight against colonialism and apartheid and laid the groundwork for the establishment of the OAU and its successor, the AU.

One of the core objectives of the OAU, as articulated in its Charter, was to promote the unity and solidarity of African states.¹⁰² This goal was reaffirmed in both the AU Constitutive Act and the AUPSC Protocol, but with a significant and progressive shift: the emphasis expanded to include not only unity and solidarity among member states, but also among their peoples. These two foundational documents marked a departure from the OAU era's strict adherence to the

principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of member states. While this principle is still frequently upheld, the Constitutive Act and the AUPSC Protocol introduced the principle of non-indifference in the face of grave circumstances, such as war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity as encapsulated in article 4 (h) of the Constitutive Act and article 4 (j) of the AUPSC Protocol.¹⁰³

The principle of African solidarity is a key element in A3 identity and underpins the group's efforts to promote coordination and cohesion among its members. Potential A3 council members frequently highlight this principle during their election campaigns, and while it is not the sole factor shaping their priorities, it plays a significant role. This guiding principle also appears to have inspired expressions of solidarity with the African diaspora, including communities in the Caribbean—symbolically recognised by the AU as the sixth region of Africa. Notably, it contributed to the establishment of the “A3 Plus” mechanism, aimed at fostering cooperation with Caribbean countries serving on the Security Council. (See the next section for more details.)

99 African Union Peace and Security Council. Communiqué of the 595th Meeting of the PSC on the Role of African Non-Permanent Members of the United Nations Security Council (A3) and the AU Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations. (28 March 2016), <<https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-595th-meeting-of-the-psc-on-the-role-of-african-non-permanent-members-of-the-united-nations-security-council-a3-and-the-au-permanent-observer-mission-to-the-united-nations>>.

100 African Union Peace and Security Council. Communiqué of the 983rd Meeting of the PSC on the Theme “Unified Role of the African Members in the United Nations (UN) Security Council (A3) in the UN Security Council”. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, (4 March 2021).

101 Adi, Hakim. Pan-Africanism: A History. Bloomsbury Publishing. (2018).

102 Organization of African Unity. Charter of the Organization of African Unity. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, (adopted: 25 May 1963), <https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7759-file-oau_charter_1963.pdf>.

103 African Union. Constitutive Act of the African Union. Lomé, Togo, (adopted: 11 July 2000), <https://au.int/sites/default/files/pages/34873-file-constitutiveact_en.pdf>; African Union, Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. (adopted: 9 July 2002) (entry into force: 26 December 2003).

African Solidarity

In recent years, African solidarity has increasingly come to represent support for African countries on the Security Council's agenda—particularly by amplifying their positions during Council deliberations and negotiations. These countries have become adept at advancing their objectives through the A3, a trend especially visible in discussions related to sanctions. Typically, the concerned states first seek endorsement from their respective RECs/RMs and the AUPSC, whose decisions are subsequently conveyed to the A3. They then engage with A3 members to build support. In some cases, they submit a formal letter outlining their position, which often forms the basis of the A3's stance during Council discussions and negotiations. This coordinated approach has significantly enhanced these countries' leverage within the Council to advance their objectives.

The A3 also extend their support to African countries that are not formally on the Security Council's agenda but whose situations may be perceived as potential threats to regional or international peace and security. These countries often seek to avoid Council scrutiny and turn to the A3 for support in blocking such discussions. For instance, Cameroon has generally been resistant to the situation in its Anglophone regions being discussed by the Security Council and has sought support from the A3 to keep it off the Council's agenda. These regions have seen violent clashes between government forces and separatist groups, leading to a humanitarian crisis. It has been difficult to hold a formal meeting on this situation, although the

Council has discussed the situation in the context of the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), and held an Arria-formula meeting in May 2019, focusing on the humanitarian impact of violence and insecurity in Cameroon.¹⁰⁴

In other cases, the A3 may invoke the principle of subsidiarity, particularly when the matter is being addressed at the regional or continental level. When international pressure makes it difficult to prevent a Council meeting, the A3 may instead work to resist a formal outcome. This was the case during the Tigray conflict in Ethiopia when the A3 faced criticism for stalling Council discussion and action. Even when the situation escalated and humanitarian crises worsened, the A3 were not initially supportive of a Security Council discussion, citing a need to give more time for regional engagement.¹⁰⁵

Occasionally, the A3 has favoured support for African countries, even when this diverges from the positions of the AU or relevant regional mechanisms. For instance, in the early stages of the current crisis in Sudan, the A3 opposed a draft press statement initiated by the UK, the penholder on Sudan, believing that it could lead to duplicate messaging and create complications as both the AU and IGAD were actively involved in efforts to de-escalate the situation and find a peaceful resolution.¹⁰⁶

The A3 Plus Mechanism

The “A3 Plus” mechanism emerged when Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG), a like-minded member of the UN Security Council from Latin America and the Caribbean region, joined the A3 group—then composed of Niger, South Africa, and Tunisia—as a “plus” member during its 2020–2021 term. The idea was first introduced during SVG's campaign for a Security Council seat, when Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves pledged that his country would align itself with the African members, positioning SVG as a “fourth seat for Africa”.¹⁰⁷ This commitment was put into practice early in SVG's tenure. At a 15 January 2020 meeting on the situation in Mali, SVG fully aligned with the A3 by supporting the joint statement delivered by Niger, marking the formal beginning of the “A3 Plus” mechanism.¹⁰⁸

During the remainder of its Council term, SVG coordinated closely with the A3 on Africa-related issues, consistently aligning itself with the group when joint statements were delivered on country- and region-specific agenda items, as well as thematic topics of shared interest. It also participated in A3 meetings as the “plus” member and actively contributed to the group's work. As a small island state, SVG benefited from this innovative approach, which

offered both protection and influence at a time of geopolitical tensions among the major powers.

How Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Joined the A3 as a “Plus” member

“During the first or second week of our tenure on the Council, Niger was delivering a statement on behalf of the A3, and they delivered a magnificent statement. I listened intently and I said to my PC [political coordinator], ‘I want to align with that statement. We had our own statement, but I wanted to align with it. Then I reached across to South Africa, and I said: ‘Is there any method here? Could I just align?’ She said yes. And then I said, ‘O.K., let me go and tell Niger that we will align with them’; and he [Ambassador Abarry] was pleased. So I took to the floor and I aligned with the statement as delivered. That day, the A3+1 formula was born”.

—Excerpt from a PassBlue interview with Ambassador Inga Rhonda King, Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, 2 November 2020

Having an additional member from another region has also benefited the A3. The “A3 Plus” mechanism has come to symbolise the

¹⁰⁴ Security Council Report. “Arriaformula Meeting on the Humanitarian Situation in Cameroon”. What's In Blue. (10 May 2019), <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2019/05/arria-formula-meeting-on-the-humanitarian-situation-in-cameroon.php>>.

¹⁰⁵ Security Council Report. “Ethiopia (Tigray): Informal Interactive Dialogue on the Humanitarian Situation”. What's In Blue. (14 June 2021), <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2021/06/ethiopia-tigray-informal-interactive-dialogue-on-the-humanitarian-situation.php>>.

¹⁰⁶ Security Council Report. “Sudan”. Monthly Forecast. (May 2023), <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2023-05/sudan-19.php>>.

¹⁰⁷ Leimbach, Dulcie. “The Smallest State to Ever Lead the UN Security Council: St. Vincent and the Grenadines”. PassBlue. (2 November 2020), <<https://passblue.com/2020/11/02/the-smallest-state-to-ever-lead-the-un-security-council-st-vincent-and-the-grenadines/>>.

¹⁰⁸ United Nations Security Council. Verbatim Record of the 8703rd Meeting of the Security Council. New York, (15 January 2020), <<https://docs.un.org/en/S/PV.8703>>.

The A3 Plus Mechanism

strengthening of ties between Africa and the Caribbean, reinforcing the relationship between the AU and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). It has enabled the group to play an active role in the Security Council not only on African files but also other files such as Haiti and Colombia.¹⁰⁹ In 2024, the AU and CARICOM signed a memorandum of understanding on the margins of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly to enhance the cooperation and collaboration between the two organisations.¹¹⁰

Following SVG's experience, CARICOM apparently held a briefing on the A3 Plus mechanism, which focused on how to ensure it does not remain a one-off occurrence. A similar sentiment was echoed among members of the Africa Group, with several encouraging Guyana to join the A3 as a "plus" member during its campaign for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the 2024–2025 term.

The desire to ensure continuity prompted the A3 to explore how the mechanism could be institutionalised going forward. In November 2023, the group adopted the A3 Plus Guiding Principles to formalise the mechanism and enhance coordination through a shared set of core principles.¹¹¹ One such principle states: "If the position of the '+' member within the A3 Plus differs from that adopted by the A3, the latter shall deliver a statement as the A3 only, while the '+' member will deliver its statement in its national capacity".¹¹² In addition, the A3 Plus grouping developed a set of Joint Working Methods Commitments—agreed practices and procedures intended to guide the Council's work with greater efficiency, transparency, and effectiveness, which was first submitted in 2021.¹¹³

The 11th Oran Seminar in December 2024 emphasised the need to strengthen the A3 Plus mechanism with a view to securing the support of future Caribbean members of the Security Council.¹¹⁴ It also encouraged the convening of high-level A3 Plus coordination meetings on the margins of the AU Summit and the UN General

Assembly.¹¹⁵ In February 2025, the group convened in Addis Ababa on the margins of the AU Summit¹¹⁶, and in September, it met on the margins of the UN General Assembly and welcomed the two incoming members, DRC and Liberia, into the group.¹¹⁷

Guyana's decision to join the A3 in 2024–2025 provided continuity to the A3 Plus mechanism. The role of coordinating the group, which used to rotate quarterly only among the A3, expanded, with Guyana coordinating the A3 Plus in the first quarter of 2025. Guyana also hosted the A3 Plus retreat in Georgetown from 25 to 28 February 2025. Among other things, the retreat took stock of the progress made by the "A3 Plus" mechanism, highlighting the important contributions of SVG and Guyana in this regard. It drew lessons learned from the experience thus far and strategised on ways to further strengthen cooperation with CARICOM on regional priority issues within the Security Council.¹¹⁸

With Guyana set to conclude its two-year term at the end of 2025, the next potential opportunity to utilise the A3 Plus mechanism will arise when Trinidad and Tobago runs for a 2027–2028 Council seat. According to the candidature list agreed upon by the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC), the Bahamas, Haiti, and Jamaica are apparently the prospective candidate countries from the Caribbean region running for a Security Council seat over the coming decade. The A3 seems intent on limiting the "A3 Plus" mechanism only to Caribbean states, given the region's historic ties to the African continent. Nonetheless, the goal is to move beyond symbolism and build a partnership grounded in mutual interest and shared priorities. The second Africa–Caribbean Summit, which took place in Addis Ababa on 6–7 September 2025, resolved to further consolidate the cooperation between the A3 and their Caribbean counterparts towards the realisation of common objectives regarding the maintenance of the international peace and security.¹¹⁹

Council and Wider Dynamics

A fractured multilateral system and escalating geopolitical tensions among major powers has significantly weakened the Council's capacity to respond effectively to global conflicts and crises, eroding its credibility. In such a polarised environment, elected members face intense pressure—especially when the Council addresses complex

and sensitive issues—and the A3 is no exception. Under these circumstances, efforts by A3 members to strengthen their unity within the Council are less a matter of choice than of necessity. While individual African members may wield limited influence when exposed to political pressure, collectively they are better able to withstand

109 The A3 Plus delivered joint statements regularly on Haiti and Colombia.

110 Caribbean Community (CARICOM). "CARICOM, African Union Sign MOU for Closer Cooperation". (2 August 2022), <<https://caricom.org/caricom-african-union-sign-mou-for-closer-cooperation/>>.

111 African Union. Guiding Principles for the A3+ Mechanism. (Accessed: 5 June 2025), <https://fr.africanunion-un.org/_files/ugd/d682ab_1ea52873ef8946b59fd5284d4aedf109.pdf>.

112 Ibid.

113 Security Council Report. Security Council Working Methods in Hard Times. (2023), <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/working_methods_2023.pdf>.

114 African Union Commission. Conclusions of the 11th High-Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa. Peace and Security Council, African Union Commission: Oran, Algeria, (PSC/HLS/11 (2024) (1–2 December 2024).

115 Ibid.

116 Sierra Leone Permanent Mission to the United Nations (@SierraLeoneUN). "On the margins of the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, members of the A3 Plus (Sierra Leone, Algeria, Somalia, and Guyana) convened for a Ministerial meeting". X (Formerly Twitter) post. (13 February 2025), <<https://x.com/SierraLeoneUN/status/1890025910553743871>>.

117 African Union Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations (@AfricanUnionUN). "On the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York, members of the A3 Plus (Algeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Guyana) convened for a ministerial meeting". X (Formerly Twitter) post. (13 September 2025), <<https://x.com/AfricanUnionUN/status/1970534516738461874>>.

118 African Union. "A3 Plus Annual Retreat 2025", African Union Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations. (Accessed: 6 June 2025), <<https://www.africanunion-un.org/a3plusretreat>>.

119 African Union. Communiqué of the Second Africa-CARICOM Summit on the Theme "Transcontinental Partnership in Pursuit of Reparatory Justice for Africans and People of African Descent through Reparations". African Union Commission: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, (6–7 September 2025), <<https://au.int/en/newsevents/20250907/2nd-africa-caricom-summit>>.

Council and Wider Dynamics

such pressure and become a formidable force. Depending on how they choose to exercise their collective voice, they also have the potential to either bridge divides or deepen existing rifts.

This places the A3 in a uniquely influential role within the Council—a role that has not gone unnoticed. It has led to permanent members courting the group to advance their strategic interests, while other elected members also seek to cooperate with the group. The A3's track record in this context has been mixed. There have been several instances where its members, both individually and collectively, worked to bridge divides, including within the broader E10 grouping. At the same time, the A3 has also leveraged its greater influence to resist certain decisions in coordination with other like-minded members.

A3 and the P5: Shifting Patterns of Cooperation

For many years, the P3, who traditionally hold the pen on most African files, shaped Council discussions on Africa and wielded considerable influence during negotiations. However, their near-monopolistic role has begun to be questioned in recent years. France's relationships in Francophone Africa are more fraught, the UK's influence has diminished in the aftermath of Brexit, and the US began disengaging from the continent during the first Trump administration—a trend that is likely to continue in the second Trump term. Meanwhile, China has enhanced its ties with African countries, notably through the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), launched in 2000. Russia may lack China's economic clout, but it has leveraged its historical ties with the continent—dating back to the decolonisation process—to significantly expand its influence in Africa in recent years through political and military cooperation. Russia has used the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum, which held the first Russia-Africa Summit in Sochi in 2019, to advance its strategic objectives. The second such summit was held in 2023 in St. Petersburg, followed by the first ministerial conference in 2024 in Sochi.

It is amid these major geopolitical shifts that the A3 has raised its profile within the Council. As tensions between the P3 and P2 intensify across various issues on the Council's agenda, both sides have increasingly sought the A3's support—with the P3 turning to the group to bolster their positions, while the P2 have done the same to counterbalance the P3. Over the years, some A3 members have tended to align with the P3, while others have leaned towards the P2. However, generally, no member has fully committed to either camp.

It is also important to note that the P3 today do not always share a unified position on every issue, a reality that has become increasingly evident more recently with the emergence of differing views on developments in the Middle East—particularly regarding the Palestinian question—and Ukraine, CPS and even WPS. Similarly, there are nuances in the positions of the P2. While China and Russia are broadly aligned on many issues, China often demonstrates a degree of flexibility, whereas Russia tends to adopt firmer positions, especially in the context of heightened tensions with the P3.

A3 positions are driven by their members' respective national priorities, bilateral ties with P5 members, and the group's collective

position, which is informed by the AU and regional mechanisms. During sensitive negotiations, the A3 may sometimes take a neutral position or abstain, potentially influencing outcomes by withholding a decisive vote, which can indirectly benefit one side in a polarised setting. At other times, the group may be divided: with some members voting in favour, others abstaining, and occasionally one may oppose a proposal. The voting pattern of the A3 is closely linked to the A3's annually changing composition.

In certain circumstances, individual A3 members working closely with either the P3 or the P2 can play a useful bridging role, leveraging their ties with one camp to help build consensus. For example, in 2023, Ghana—leading A3 efforts on the financing of AUPSOs—worked closely with the US to help secure agreement on the adoption of resolution 2719. This marked a notable shift, as in previous attempts by the A3 to advance discussions on this issue in 2018 and 2019, the U.S. had blocked progress by threatening to use its veto. In 2024, Mozambique served as co-penholder with the UK on UNOCA and played a key role in securing Russia's support for the adoption of a presidential statement. The Council had failed to do so since 2019, largely due to disagreements over references to climate, peace and security (CPS). Similarly, Sierra Leone apparently persuaded China and Russia to support a presidential statement on the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), breaking a deadlock that had stalled negotiations for over two years due to disputes over language related to CPS.

Considering the A3's growing influence, the P3 are increasingly consulting the group to secure its support ahead of proposed Council actions, including on peacekeeping mandate renewals and the implementation of sanctions measures. They also seek to secure the A3's backing on other contentious issues such as Ukraine, the Middle East (particularly the Palestinian question), and Syria, as well as thematic priorities, including CPS, human rights, and WPS, among others. Lately, however, the US appears to be taking a divergent position on these thematic issues, aligning more closely with the P2, whereas France and the UK have aligned their positions with the broader Council membership on the Palestinian issue.

Initially, the P3 began to engage individual African members with specific knowledge or influence over files related to their own regions. There were instances where these members served as “silent co-penholders”, working closely behind the scenes with P3 penholders. This was, for instance, the case with Ethiopia in 2017–2018 in relation to the Horn of Africa files and with Kenya, which served in the Council in 2021–2022. In recent years, however, there has been increasing pressure on the P3 to share the pen with other elected members.¹²⁰ In this context, they have become more open to working with other elected members as co-penholders, including with individual A3 members.

Tunisia, for example, worked with France to facilitate the adoption of a resolution in July 2020 supporting the Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.¹²¹ Sierra Leone worked with France as co-penholder on the DRC file, in connection with its role as Chair of the 1533 DRC Sanctions

¹²⁰ Security Council Report. “ArriaFormula Meeting on Penholdership”. What's In Blue. (11 August 2022). <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2022/08/arria-formula-meeting-on-penholdership.php>>.

¹²¹ United Nations Security Council. Resolution 2532 (2020): “Maintenance of International Peace and Security”. (S/RES/2532) (1 July 2020), <[https://undocs.org/S/RES/2532\(2020\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2532(2020))>.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Committee. Although it is not fully clear if this co-penholdership continued beyond 2024, Sierra Leone and France co-penned three resolutions on the DRC in 2024: resolution 2738 of 27 June 2024, which extended the 1533 sanctions regime; resolution 2746 of 6 August 2024 which authorised the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) to provide logistical and operational support to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mission in the DRC (SAMI-DRC); and resolution 2765 of 20 December 2024, which renewed the mandate of MONUSCO. Sierra Leone also partnered with the UK as co-penholder on a draft resolution aimed at enhancing measures to protect civilians in Sudan. However, the resolution ultimately failed to be adopted following a veto by Russia.

Apparently, France had sought to work with Gabon, which served on the Council in 2022–2023, on the CAR file, at a time when the Council had difficult discussions on the mandate renewal of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the 2127 CAR sanctions regime. However, it seems that Gabon was not keen to be a co-penholder with France on the CAR.

Unlike France and the UK, the US does not appear to have been very active in working with African members as co-penholders. However, there was one instance where Senegal worked with the US in facilitating the adoption of resolution 2320 of 18 November 2016 on UN-AU cooperation. The resolution for the first time expressed the Council's readiness to consider the AU's proposal for future authorisation and support of AUPSOs under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter.

Although the P2 do not hold the pen on African files, they also coordinate with the A3 based on shared interests on a wide range of issues. Broadly, the P2 often emphasise the principle of "African solutions to African problems" when supporting A3 positions. They also stress principles such as sovereignty and territorial integrity—positions that resonate strongly with many African countries on the Council's agenda. The P2 often defend these countries during Council discussions and negotiations, particularly stressing that their views and concerns must be taken on board. The A3 tend to share similar positions. On the issue of sanctions, the P2 argue that sanctions should not be viewed as an end in themselves, but rather as measures that should be regularly reviewed and ultimately lifted—a stance that increasingly aligns with the A3's position in recent years.

China has established a consultation mechanism with the A3 as part of its broader strategic engagement with the African continent through the FOCAC. It seeks diplomatic support from African countries on its core national interests, including upholding the One-China policy regarding Taiwan, countering international criticism over the Hong Kong and Xinjiang issues, and securing its maritime interests in the South China Sea.

The Chinese permanent representative to the UN in New York, for some years, had regular lunch meetings with A3 counterparts to discuss issues of shared interest and concern in the Council.

This practice, which began in 2017, was apparently discontinued for a period, but it appears that this year China has revived this practice. It seems that other permanent members such as France, Russia and the US have also tried to initiate similar kinds of engagements with the A3 recently. It appears that the A3 intends to maintain and strengthen regular engagements with all the P5 members at various levels.

Although Russia may not have a particular arrangement with the A3, it tends to work closely with the members individually and collectively based on its own interests and priorities. Ukraine is Russia's most critical and sensitive issue in the Council, and it has been willing to use its veto to block resolutions criticising its actions in the country. It also maintains strong strategic interests in the Middle East, including with regard to the Palestinian question, Iran, Syria, and Yemen. Russia has significantly enhanced its presence in Africa by promoting military and security partnerships to counter Western influence. For instance, its positions on several African files were apparently aligned with Egypt, which served on the Security Council in 2016–2017, South Africa in 2019–2020, and Mozambique in 2023–2024, among others. Russia tends to support unified A3 positions unless they contradict its own interests.

The Evolving Role of the A3 Within the E10

The A3 is a subset of the broader group of elected members on the Council, known as the E10. The elected members began acting as a cohesive group around 2014 as the divisions between the P5 deepened over issues such as Libya and Syria. The Council's growing paralysis on these issues created an opportunity for the E10 to increase its visibility and assertiveness. A turning point came in 2017, when the E10 members proposed a draft resolution on a chemical weapons attack in Idlib, Syria, in an attempt to break the deadlock on competing P3 and Russian drafts on the matter. Although the resolution was not tabled for a vote, it marked the first time the E10 made a collective effort on a major substantive issue.¹²² African members, particularly Ethiopia, played an important role as part of this collective effort, including by developing the E10 draft text. This effort foreshadowed E10 collaboration on outcomes in more recent years, particularly on Gaza. In this regard, the E10 collectively authored resolution 2728 of 25 March 2024, which called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza for the month of Ramadan.¹²³ So far, the E10 has proposed four draft resolutions on Gaza, three of which failed to be adopted owing to a veto by the US. Among the A3 Plus, Algeria and Guyana have played an active role in the negotiation processes of these draft resolutions.

Many non-African member states running for the Council pledge to support African issues during their election campaigns. In particular, those involved in competitive races campaign across the continent to secure the backing of African countries, which represent a significant voting bloc within the UN General Assembly. For instance, Sweden used "the fourth African" as a slogan for its election campaign in Africa and strived to fulfil that commitment during

¹²² Security Council Report. "Syria: New Draft Resolution on Chemical Weapons Attack and Political Briefing". What's In Blue. (11 April 2017), <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2017/04/syria-new-draft-resolution-on-chemical-weapons-attack-and-political-briefing.php>>.

¹²³ Security Council Report. "The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question: Vote on a Draft Resolution". What's In Blue. (22 March 2024), <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2024/03/the-middle-east-including-the-palestinian-question-vote-on-a-draft-resolution-4.php>>.

Council and Wider Dynamics

its Council membership in 2017–2018.¹²⁴ While on the Council, it cooperated with A3 member Ethiopia to propose a press statement following the signing of a Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship between Eritrea and Ethiopia on 9 July 2018. The two countries also co-penned resolution 2439 of 30 October 2018, on the Ebola epidemic in the DRC. Sweden collaborated with South Africa as an incoming member to initiate dialogue between the E10 and the incoming elected members (I5) in Pretoria in November 2018. This dialogue has now become an annual event in the E10 calendar, with Slovenia hosting the event in 2025.

Other past E10 members sought to establish informal mechanisms to advance their engagement with Africa. For example, Norway launched the Group of Friends of the UN-AU Partnership in Addis Ababa and New York in 2019 and 2020, respectively, in preparation for its Council term in 2021–2022.¹²⁵ Denmark, currently serving on the Council for the 2024–2025 term, now co-chairs the group alongside Egypt. This cooperation between the A3 and Nordic countries appears to be evolving into a more informal coordination. In October, the 22nd Africa-Nordic ministerial meeting took place in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.¹²⁶ Germany, which served as co-penholder with the UK on the Sudan file during its Council term in 2019–2020, also established a Group of Friends of Sudan to mobilise support for the country's transition process following President Omar-Al Bashir's ouster in April 2019.¹²⁷

Some non-African E10 members have collaborated with individual A3 members on thematic issues. For instance, the Netherlands, which shared a split term with Italy in 2017–2018, worked with Côte d'Ivoire on peacekeeping issues and spearheaded the adoption of resolution 2447 of 13 December 2018, on the rule of law in the context of UN peace operations. In 2021, Ireland worked with Niger to propose a draft resolution on CPS, but the draft text failed to be adopted because of a veto from Russia. Switzerland, which served on the Council in 2023–2024, also collaborated with Mozambique on the CPS file, as they co-chaired the Security Council informal working group on that topic.

Other E10 members have partnered with individual A3 members on country and region-specific issues. For instance, it has become common practice for the West African member of the A3 to serve as a co-penholder on the UNOWAS file with European elected members. Since 2018, elected members such as Sweden, Belgium, Ireland, Switzerland, and Denmark have served as co-penholders alongside Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Ghana, and Sierra Leone. In 2022, Norway partnered with Ghana to facilitate the adoption of resolution 2634 on piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea. In 2021, Ireland held the pen on Tigray, Ethiopia, and worked closely with the A3 on Council outcomes. Switzerland collaborated with Mozambique, which served as chair of the Security Council Ad-Hoc

Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, to promote AU-UN cooperation in 2023–2024. During its Security Council presidency in October 2024, Switzerland co-organised with Mozambique the 9th annual joint informal seminar between the Security Council and the AUPSC in Tarrytown, New York. Held in a retreat format, the seminar was designed to foster less scripted, more interactive exchanges between members of the two Councils.

The A3 Plus mechanism has also helped the group expand its influence beyond African issues. Although the A3 may not yet be a major player on other files, its growing tendency to present unified positions and negotiate collectively on non-African issues has given the group additional weight within the Council. With its three votes—occasionally expanded to four under the A3 Plus mechanism—it can form a critical mass by aligning with three or four additional Council members to influence outcomes or block unfavourable decisions.

Council members from GRULAC such as Bolivia, which was on the Council in 2017–2018, also aligned their position with the A3 on several African issues. Among the Council members from the Asia-Pacific Group, Japan—having served on the Council 12 times as an elected member, most recently in 2023–2024—cooperated with the A3 and emphasised its partnership with Africa through the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD).¹²⁸ Japan's engagement with the A3 is also driven by its aspiration, along with Brazil, Germany, and India (the Group of Four or G4), to secure a permanent seat on the Security Council, for which it seeks Africa's support. Japan has a particular interest in non-proliferation issues related to the Korean Peninsula and regularly engaged with individual A3 members to keep them informed of developments and to garner their support during Council discussions on the matter.

The A3 is also part of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) caucus within the Council, which continues to exist in form, though its influence and substantive engagement have significantly diminished in recent decades. As a matter of formality, caucus members report on their activities in the Security Council to the NAM Coordinating Bureau, composed of the permanent representatives of NAM member states to the UN in New York. Some A3 positions, particularly on human rights, are largely shaped by longstanding NAM principles, which emphasise state sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs as well as the importance of cultural diversity and the prioritisation of socio-economic rights. The caucus tends to be more active on issues related to the Middle East, particularly the Palestinian question. However, caucus members may not consistently align with the NAM position.

Each month, the Secretary-General attends a lunch with Security Council members, hosted by the Council Presidency. During this luncheon the Secretary-General chooses two or three pressing and topical peace and security issues to discuss with Council

124 Engelbrekt, Kjell. "Sweden's 2017–18 UNSC Formula: Mobilizing the MFA's Competitive Advantages, Highlighting Africa, and Boosting the E10". *International Peacekeeping* (1 April 2023), 1–22, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2023.2196019>>.

125 Norway Mission to the United Nations. "Launch of the Group of Friends of UN-AU Partnership". (2 October 2020), <<https://www.norway.no/en/missions/un/statements/other-statements/2020/launch-of-the-group-of-friends-of-un-au-partnership/>>.

126 Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Zimbabwe (@MoFA_ZW). "22nd Africa-Nordic ministerial meeting in Victoria Falls", X (Formerly Twitter) post, (4 October 2025), <https://x.com/MoFA_ZW/status/1974357625769689244>.

127 Brosig, Malte. "More Than Just Productive? Evaluating Germany's Term at the UN Security Council 2019–2020". *Journal of European Public Policy* 31, no. 9 (2023), 308–333, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2023.2201678>>.

128 Statement by Ambassador Shimizu Shinsuke (Japan) at the United Nations Security Council Debate on "Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Addressing the Historical Injustice and Enhancing Africa's Effective Representation in the UN Security Council". Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations. (24 December 2008), <https://www.un.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/shimizu081224.html>.

Council and Wider Dynamics

members. In addition, he holds a separate monthly lunch with the E10, hosted by the group's coordinator, a role that rotates alphabetically each month. Apparently, the A3 Plus mechanism has also

recently initiated a luncheon with the Secretary-General, hosted by the group's coordinator, another indication of its rising influence within the Council.

Challenges

While the A3 has made significant progress in recent years, with its members increasingly serving as a collective voice for Africa within the Security Council, it still faces several challenges in realising its full potential. These challenges stem from internal dynamics within the group, the level of support and guidance provided by the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, and persistent external pressures.

Internal Dynamics

The capacity and commitment of A3 members to fulfil the responsibilities of Security Council membership are critical, not only for their effectiveness individually but also their collective work as a group. Particularly, A3 members are expected to adequately staff their missions in New York. Nonetheless, this is not always the case; while some possess the necessary capacity and experience, others fall short in these areas.

Since 2016, elections for non-permanent members of the Security Council have been held six months before the start of their term, and they are invited to observe Council meetings beginning on 1 October of the year preceding their membership. As a result, most incoming members try to deploy their teams well in advance to familiarise them with the Council's working methods, establish contacts with counterparts, learn from outgoing members, and participate in various training opportunities.

However, many A3 members deploy their teams late in the year, which can result in a steeper learning curve compared to other elected members. Individual A3 members may also lack institutional memory; some may have had prior experience serving on the Council, but more commonly, that experience is likely to date back several decades. Others may be joining the Council for the first time, which further limits the group's collective familiarity with the Council's procedures and dynamics.

Another challenge lies in the level of support and coordination between individual A3 missions in New York and their respective capitals. While this varies from one member to another, it could be insufficient to meet the demands of effective engagement on the Security Council. Delayed responses or limited guidance from capitals can constrain missions that are eager to contribute. A further complication arises when national interests do not fully align with common African positions. While New York-based missions may advocate for an A3 common position, capitals may sometimes prioritise national interests.

Ideally, A3 members should receive timely and effective support from their respective diplomatic missions at AU headquarters

in Addis Ababa, but in practice, however, these missions are often understaffed and under-resourced, limiting their ability to assist. Their limited understanding of the Council's dynamics in New York further hampers meaningful support. While some A3 members hold concurrent membership in both the Security Council and the AUPSC, which offers an opportunity to generate synergies, this dual role is often not effectively leveraged to enhance coordination between the two Councils.

Recently, the A3 faced a dilemma when the AUPSC suspended Gabon, which was serving on the Security Council in 2022-2023, from AU activities following a coup d'état.¹²⁹ While the A3 apparently worked out their own modalities that allowed them to continue together in a slightly different manner, the situation highlighted the need to establish clear modalities for addressing similar scenarios in the future.¹³⁰

The A3 has certainly made notable progress in speaking with one voice and articulating common positions, but it continues to face challenges in influencing the tone and direction of Council discussions on African issues through action-oriented solutions. A3 statements are the result of internal negotiations and often reflect a compromise among the group's members. When a situation the Council is considering involves more than one African country, crafting A3 joint statements becomes even more complex. In striving to present a unified position, the group may face difficult trade-offs, which can dilute its agency and impact. Moreover, the A3's ability to drive outcomes remains limited without strong leadership, support, and strategic guidance from the AU and its regional mechanisms. (For more, see the next section.)

Another challenge for the A3 is how to effectively reflect the views of African countries on the Security Council's agenda, while recognising that they may present serious peace and security challenges requiring international attention. Striking a balance between accommodating those concerns and upholding the Council's mandate remains a complex and at times seemingly unattainable goal. A related difficulty lies in balancing expressions of solidarity with African governments in conflict situations and populations most affected by the conflict. In line with the AU Constitutive Act, African solidarity is extended not only to states but also to the people suffering the consequences of violence and instability.

Negotiating as a bloc also presents another challenge for the A3. While this approach has significantly elevated the group's profile within the Council, it demands considerable behind-the-scenes coordination. A3 members must first reach consensus among themselves,

¹²⁹ African Union Peace and Security Council. Communiqué of the 1172nd Meeting of the PSC on the Situation in the Republic of Gabon. (31 August 2023), <<https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-1172nd-of-the-psc-held-on-31-august-2023-on-the-situation-in-the-republic-of-gabon>>.

¹³⁰ African Union. "Conclusions of the 10th High-Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa, Oran Process". (17-18 December 2023), <d682ab_c555b7655584412c893ee-ba2270e44c8.pdf (africanunion-un.org)>.

Challenges

sometimes without timely or sufficient guidance from their respective capitals or the AU. This can lead to delays and, at times, frustration among penholders and other Council members who might be eager to understand the A3's position. Although the A3, both individually and collectively, strive to advance African priorities, they also occasionally struggle to maintain a unified stance. Additionally, the A3's negotiating approach at times appears to lack a coherent strategy or clear tactics for achieving desired outcomes. In some cases, the group insists on certain positions despite strong opposition within the Council, while in other instances, it concedes too early when a firmer stance might have been expected or more effective. At times, other Council members perceive the A3's positions as unconstructive—particularly when they appear to limit the Council's ability to respond promptly and effectively to conflicts and crises in Africa. While instances of the group contradicting the AU or RECs/RMs are relatively rare, such occurrences can nonetheless undermine the credibility of these institutions when they do arise.

Experience has shown that progress often depends on the priorities, capacities, and political will of individual A3 members, as well as the specific composition of the group in any given year. For instance, the A3 composition in 2023 appeared favourable for the adoption of resolution 2719, with one member making the financing issue a key priority and demonstrating the capacity to provide leadership, while the other A3 members fully committed themselves to work together to advance this priority. These crucial conditions were apparently not present in 2025 when the Council discussed the possible application of resolution 2719 to Somalia.

The A3 Plus Mechanism has expanded the group's influence, but it does not mean that the Plus member always concurs with the A3. For instance, on 19 February, Guyana delivered a national statement to clarify its position on the situation in eastern DRC, while still aligning itself with the joint statement presented by the A3.¹³¹ In addition to delivering separate statements, the "plus" member may at times hold a different position from the A3 during negotiations. Although not explicitly outlined in the Guiding Principles, practice has shown that a "plus" member may also vote differently from the A3. This occurred in May, when Guyana diverged from the A3 during negotiations on the renewal of sanctions on South Sudan. While the A3 abstained, Guyana voted in favour of extending the 2206 South Sudan sanctions regime.¹³²

Although the collaboration with Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Guyana as "plus" members is generally seen as having strengthened the A3, there are concerns that expanding the arrangement beyond its current scope in terms of the cooperation between the A3 and Caribbean members could complicate the A3's work and potentially undermine its cohesion. These factors are taken into consideration when the A3 is approached by other elected members interested in engaging with the A3 as "plus" members.¹³³

The Role of the AU

Since the establishment of the A3, the AU has aimed to provide support and guidance to the group. Formal interactions between the AU Commission and the A3 have increased, with the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, meeting regularly with A3 representatives—virtually, in person, and during the group's annual retreat. Despite these engagements, there have been instances where the AU did not provide timely or adequate guidance, compelling the A3 to improvise on critical issues and thereby weakening their ability to effectively advance African priorities. This is particularly evident when the Security Council meets to address conflicts in Africa that the AUPSC has not discussed for an extended period. A notable example is the conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region, which erupted in November 2020. The Security Council held at least nine meetings in various formats before the AUPSC convened to discuss the issue—on 8 November 2021—nearly a year after the war began.

Although the AU Commission is expected to support the A3 from its headquarters, this support has been inconsistent. The A3 has been calling for the appointment of a Focal Point on A3 within the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security, but at the time of writing this position had not been established. Without a clear focal point in the Commission, the A3's communication with Addis Ababa can sometimes be challenging, with responses delayed or absent, prompting the group to rely on informal channels for information and coordination. The AU Permanent Observer Mission in New York serves as the main liaison between the AU and the A3, with two senior diplomats currently managing this relationship, including coordination with the AUPSC. Despite their efforts, institutional capacity constraints continue to hinder the ability of the AU Permanent Observer to effectively serve as the A3 Secretariat—an issue frequently raised at the Oran Seminars. Some African countries have seconded their diplomats to this mission to help address this challenge.¹³⁴

The AUPSC remains the AU's most active political organ in providing guidance to the A3, and its decisions help shape the group's common positions. However, coordination between the two has been uneven. A3 members underscore the need for the AUPSC to always respond swiftly and to provide timely strategic guidance to them.¹³⁵ Although the A3 is expected to brief the AUPSC on a quarterly basis, in recent years, the group does not appear to be consistently fulfilling its reporting obligation. There now seems to be a renewed effort to hold these briefings regularly, with the most recent one held on 29 August 2025, in which Somalia, as A3 coordinator, briefed the AUPSC on the group's activities in the Security Council.¹³⁶ Similarly, the monthly meeting between the AUPSC Troika (incoming, current, and outgoing chairs) and the A3 also does not seem to be taking place regularly. A3 members would like these meetings to be much more regular and institutionalised.

131 United Nations Security Council. Verbatim Record of the 9863rd Meeting of the Security Council. New York: United Nations. (S/PV.9863) (19 February 2025).

132 United Nations Security Council. Verbatim Record of the 9928th Meeting of the Security Council on the Situation of Sanctions on South Sudan. New York: United Nations. (S/PV.9928) (30 May 2025).

133 African Union. Draft Report of the A3 Plus Retreat: "Enhancing the A3 Plus: An Innovative Tool for Sustained Advocacy within the UN Security Council". (Westin Hotel, Jersey City, New Jersey: 13 April 2024), <https://fr.africanunion-un.org/_files/ugd/d682ab_a2086dcb6f4044ecafb3bf6e48df6526.pdf>.

134 African Union Commission. Conclusions of the 11th High-Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa. Peace and Security Council, African Union Commission: Oran, Algeria, (PSC/HLS/11 (2024)) (1–2 December 2024).

135 African Union. Draft Report of the A3 Plus Retreat: "Enhancing the A3 Plus: An Innovative Tool for Sustained Advocacy within the UN Security Council". (Westin Hotel, Jersey City, New Jersey: 13 April 2024), <https://fr.africanunion-un.org/_files/ugd/d682ab_a2086dcb6f4044ecafb3bf6e48df6526.pdf>.

136 African Union Peace and Security Council. "Briefing on the activities of the African members of the Security Council". Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, (29 August 2025), <<https://afripol.peaceau.org/en/article/ambassadorial-virtual-briefing-by-the-african-members-to-the-un-security-council>>. This was an Ambassadorial (virtual) Briefing by the African Members to the UN Security Council-African Union - Peace and Security Department.

Challenges

The Oran Seminar is another platform for interaction, and the 10th session in 2023 apparently saw tensions between AUPSC and A3 members over the negotiations on the financing of AUPSOs in the Security Council. It seems that AUPSC members were critical of the A3's handling of negotiations and wanted the matter to be addressed at the AU Summit in February 2024.¹³⁷ Nonetheless, negotiations proceeded, and the A3 played a key role in the adoption of resolution 2719. Still, some AUPSC members were disappointed with the outcome, having advocated for full UN-assessed contributions to AUPSOs rather than the limit of 75 percent that was agreed in the resolution.

While progress has been made in aligning the Security Council's programme of work with that of the AUPSC, gaps remain. One coordination tool—the monthly teleconference between the incoming Security Council President and the incoming AUPSC Chair—has proven inconsistent, sometimes occurring late in the month. Some Security Council members have described these calls as formulaic, underscoring the need for further improvement to hold these meetings earlier, ideally well in advance of each presidency, in order to enhance their relevance and effectiveness.

The most significant platform for cooperation between the Security Council and the AUPSC is the annual joint consultation, held alternately in New York and Addis Ababa for the past 18 years. The A3 coordinates with the AUPSC in advance of these annual consultations and plays a critical bridging role between the two Councils. However, these consultations tend to be scripted and lack meaningful interaction. Elected Council members often attend these meetings with high expectations, only to be disappointed by the monotonous nature of the discussions. In 2023, Switzerland attempted to inject some dynamism into this event by organising a retreat-style informal seminar ahead of the consultations, but even this format could not avoid the delivery of prepared statements, limiting the opportunity for interactive dialogue.¹³⁸ Although there had been hopes for the retreat format to continue in 2025 in Addis Ababa, this format was not replicated at the 19th annual consultation on 17 October.

Another challenge stems from the asymmetrical nature of the partnership between the Security Council and the AUPSC. This imbalance has led to frustration on the AUPSC side, which seeks a more reciprocal and equal relationship. However, in New York, the AUPSC is often perceived as subordinate to the Security Council, which holds primary responsibility for international peace and security under the UN Charter. In addition, while AUPSC members participate in consultations as a unified bloc with agreed positions, Security Council members engage in their national capacities.

The A3 has actively tried to promote closer collaboration between the Security Council and the AUPSC by advocating for joint visiting missions to Africa—an idea endorsed in principle during previous annual consultations. The A3 even drafted a proposal outlining modalities for such missions, but it did not receive a formal response from Addis Ababa. The prevailing view in Addis Ababa is that joint

visits should involve full participation from all members of both Councils, reflecting a spirit of equal partnership. Drawing on its experience with EU joint missions, the AUPSC supports this approach. However, Security Council members in New York have expressed concerns about the feasibility of such missions due to logistical constraints. They prefer a more incremental approach, beginning with participation by the AUPSC Chair in individual Security Council missions. Nonetheless, although the Council extended invitations to the AUPSC Chair on at least three occasions in the past, it did not get a positive response. Another challenge lies in coordination with the RECs/RMs, which are expected to work with the AU based on the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity, recognising the primacy of the AU in decision-making on peace and security matters on the continent. However, the AU and RECs/RMs sometimes hold differing views on how to respond to specific conflicts or crises. A recent example is the response to the coup in Niger, where ECOWAS adopted a hardline stance, including the threat of military intervention. While the AU broadly supported ECOWAS' efforts, it favoured a diplomatic approach to resolving the situation. In such instances, the A3's efforts to secure support for African initiatives tend to be much more complicated.¹³⁹

External Pressure

External influence continues to challenge the A3's coordination and unity. As the Security Council becomes increasingly entangled in great power rivalries, serving as an elected member has become a far more complex and demanding responsibility. Elected members, including the A3, are often caught between competing interests and forced to take difficult positions on highly sensitive issues.

Although A3 members have made efforts to present a united front, external pressure—particularly from the P5—can strain that cohesion. In some cases, permanent members have directly lobbied A3 capitals to influence decision-making. In the past, there were instances where A3 members used their votes to preserve their bilateral ties, sometimes at the expense of a unified African position.

The pressure from the P5 in the Council can be subtle or overt. In one instance, an A3 ambassador was recalled and reprimanded by the capital after coordinating with fellow A3 members to abstain on a contentious vote—following direct demarches from the P3. In another case, one A3 country was compelled to replace its ambassador multiple times during its tenure on the Council due to sustained pressure from a permanent member over a non-African issue.

A3 members have increasingly recognised that unity not only advances shared African priorities but also offers political cover against external pressure. A cohesive stance allows individual members to defer to the group position when facing such situations. While permanent members continue to exert influence, they also appear to have adapted their strategies, recognising the growing significance of the A3 as a bloc. They are increasingly keen to cooperate with the A3, although they disagree with the group's positions when it does not align with their interests. This is especially evident in discussions on

¹³⁷ Security Council Report. "Vote on a Draft Resolution on the Financing of AULed Peace Support Operations".

¹³⁸ Security Council Report. "UNAU Cooperation". Monthly Forecast. (October 2024) <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2024-10/un-au-cooperation-4.php>>.

¹³⁹ African Union Peace and Security Council. "Communiqué of the 1168 Meeting of the Peace and Security Council on the Situation in the Republic of Niger". African Union PAPS Repository. (PSC/PR/COMM.1168 (2023)) (14 August 2023). <<https://papsrepository.african-union.org/handle/123456789/1920>>.

Challenges

sanctions and responses to unconstitutional changes of government, which tend to be particularly contentious.¹⁴⁰

The P3 have begun to engage the A3 as a group assiduously in recent years, while also cultivating closer ties with individual A3 members seen as more aligned with their interests. For instance, Sierra Leone has worked closely with France and the UK on several Council products. The A3 is now pushing for full penholdership on African files, striving to move beyond co-penholdership arrangements. This more assertive approach is likely to heighten tensions with the P3. While the P3 remain keen to secure A3 support, they are sometimes frustrated by A3 positions they perceive as increasingly aligned with the P2. Consequently, some P3 members view a unified A3 as a challenge—particularly when they try to garner the votes necessary to pass contentious resolutions. This became evident during negotiations on a General Assembly resolution proposed by Egypt on UN-AU cooperation, where a reference to the role of the A3 became a point of contention.¹⁴¹ These members resisted formally recognising the A3, arguing on procedural grounds that no formal groupings exist within the Security Council.

Although in the past A3 members tended to have some reservations on the thematic issues such as WPS and CPS, recent years saw a reversal with A3 members increasingly championing these issues in the Council as a matter of priority. It seems that the discussions held and decisions adopted by the AUPSC on some of these thematic issues were instrumental in bringing about a shift in the A3 members' position. In recent years, the P3 and other like-minded members have tended to consider the A3 particularly supportive of Council engagement on thematic issues, such as CPS and WPS. Since the Trump administration took office in January 2025, the US appears to be aligning itself more closely with the P2 than with France and the UK on these thematic issues, which has created a new dynamic.

Most A3 members consider WPS a priority and have endorsed

the WPS Shared Commitments—a set of principles adopted by like-minded Council members to advance women's rights, promote their full and equal participation in peace and security processes, and integrate gender perspectives into conflict prevention, management, and resolution. Despite this, the P3 and other like-minded members have at times expressed concern when A3 members make proposals they perceive as weakening existing WPS language in draft texts. This happened in the context of recent peacekeeping mandate renewal negotiations, but the A3 defended their views by arguing that they only sought to align the language with information contained in the Secretary-General's report.¹⁴²

The P2 generally support A3 unity and are keen to strengthen cooperation with the group, seeing it as a means to counterbalance the P3 without resorting to vetoes. As a result, they are likely to be annoyed when A3 members succumb to pressure from the P3 and move away from P2 positions. For example, the P2 tends to be uncomfortable when A3 members support P3-backed positions on some thematic issues. A notable case occurred in December 2021, when a CPS resolution co-authored by Ireland and Niger failed to pass, receiving 12 votes in favour, two against (India and Russia), and one abstention (China).¹⁴³

At times, the P2 also face dilemmas when their positions diverge from those of the A3, particularly on African regional responses to unconstitutional changes of government. They may not be comfortable welcoming and endorsing decisions by the RECs/RMs in reaction to these developments. The A3's stance on sanctions has largely aligned with the P2—but not always. In August 2023, for example, Russia vetoed a resolution to extend sanctions on Mali, with China abstaining. The A3 at the time—Gabon, Ghana, and Mozambique—voted in favour, citing the continued relevance of the sanctions regime.¹⁴⁴

Observations and Way Forward

Since its formal establishment in 2013, the A3 has made significant strides. Though it took time to mature into a cohesive bloc, the group has steadily gained momentum, positioning its members as more influential actors within the Security Council. Backed by political guidance from Addis Ababa, the A3 has demonstrated its ability to effectively advance African priorities. Yet its role goes beyond representing African interests. In an increasingly divided Security Council, the A3 has a unique responsibility to act as a bridge-builder and

foster consensus. This is not merely a strategic option—it is a necessity. When the Council is paralysed by great power rivalries, Africa often bears the highest cost, with delayed or insufficient responses to conflicts and crises on the continent. In this regard, several observations and lessons learned can help the group evolve into a more effective and dynamic body, enabling it to play a significantly more proactive role within the Council.

140 Security Council Report. "In Hindsight: The Security Council and Unconstitutional Changes of Government in Africa". Monthly Forecast. (July 2022), <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2022-07/in-hindsight-the-security-council-and-unconstitutional-changes-of-government-in-africa.php>>.

141 United Nations. Draft General Assembly Resolution on "Cooperation between the United Nations and Regional and Other Organizations: Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union" (A/79/L.127), (Resolution adopted: 5 September 2025), <<https://docs.un.org/en/A/79/L.127>>.

142 Security Council Report. "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Vote on MONUSCO Mandate Renewal". What's In Blue. (20 December 2024). <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2024/12/democratic-republic-of-the-congo-vote-on-monusco-mandate-renewal-2.php>>.

143 Security Council Report. "Climate Change and Security: Vote on a Resolution". What's In Blue. (13 December 2021), <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2021/12/climate-change-and-security-vote-on-a-resolution.php>>.

144 Security Council Report. "Mali: Vote to Renew the Sanctions Regime". What's In Blue. (30 August 2023), <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2023/08/mali-vote-to-renew-the-sanctions-regime.php>>.

Observations and Way Forward

Preparing Incoming A3 Members for Impact

Building the capacity of individual A3 members must be a priority. They can only contribute meaningfully to the group if they possess the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their responsibilities effectively. A range of training opportunities is available to incoming A3 members to help them grasp the basics and enable them to hit the ground running. In recent years, the training landscape has become increasingly crowded, with several partner countries offering additional programmes for incoming Council members. For example, the P5 engage with incoming members ahead of their Council tenure. Some of these engagements take the form of training, while others are more akin to political consultations aimed at gauging the incoming members' positions on a range of issues. China has, for some years now, invited the incoming members to Beijing for a capacity-building programme. In addition, the Netherlands, in collaboration with Clingendael (the Netherlands Institute of International Relations), has, since it left the Council in 2019, organised training sessions in The Hague and New York, which usually take place in November.¹⁴⁵

Some countries also provide training specifically tailored for incoming African members based on bilateral relations. Notably, Italy supported a training programme for Somali diplomats in November 2024, which included two weeks of in-person sessions in Rome and one week of online training, delivered in partnership with the Med-Or Foundation and the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).¹⁴⁶ Belgium also recently trained Congolese diplomats in Brussels in collaboration with the Egmont Institute.¹⁴⁷ The A3 participate in training organised by Security Council Affairs Division (SCAD) and UNITAR for incoming members. Security Council Report also provides tailored capacity building for all incoming members including the A3.

The annual Oran Seminar, typically held in December and at a higher level, can be helpful in facilitating exchanges between incoming and outgoing A3 members, but it is not sufficient to fully prepare incoming members for the significant responsibilities they will assume on the Council. Developing a tailor-made program specifically designed to address their unique needs appears essential. Such training should be informed by the practical experiences and lessons learned from past A3 members. The AU may need to develop its own training capacity, in partnership with others, to fill this gap. Equipping the experts of incoming members—who are expected to handle much of the day-to-day work—with strong diplomatic skills is essential. This underscores the importance of incoming members establishing their teams well in advance of their Council term to ensure their experts can take full advantage of available training opportunities.

Incoming A3 members may also need to learn from the emerging practice of other elected members of co-opting skilled and experienced diplomats and staff from outgoing Council members—either

through secondments or direct hiring—to strengthen their teams. This is particularly the case with elected members from the Western European and Others Group and GRULAC members from these groups also often place diplomats both in New York and capital as part of their preparation for being a Council member. The Arab Group has shorter secondments, usually during the lead-up to an incoming Arab members' Council term.

While some A3 members have begun to adopt this practice based on bilateral relations with certain African countries, it does not appear to be pursued strategically to enhance capacity for impact. A more feasible option for the A3 may be to explore the possibility of outgoing members seconding some of their skilled and experienced diplomats to incoming members, in order to build capacity and ensure institutional continuity. Another valuable practice that incoming A3 members could emulate is embedding their diplomats with current A3 members, offering opportunities for on-the-job training and knowledge transfer. This approach requires careful planning, including the early establishment of a Security Council team and proactive coordination with current members to explore and facilitate such arrangements.

The AU had apparently considered requesting member states to second experts—at their own cost—to the AU Mission to support the A3. This is an idea worth revisiting. Ideally, these experts would have prior experience in New York and a solid understanding of the UN system and the Security Council. Their qualifications would be vetted, and they should rotate every two to three years to maximise member state participation.

Driving the Council's Discourse on Africa

The A3 has gained significant influence by speaking with one voice and negotiating as a bloc. Looking ahead, it has the potential to evolve into an agenda-setter by shaping the Council's discourse on Africa—provided it engages effectively and constructively in addressing conflicts and crises across the continent. This will require the A3 to strategically leverage its influence and build the necessary consensus within the Council to advance action-oriented solutions.

Such leadership would be especially welcome at a time when the Council continues to struggle to deliver timely and effective responses to conflicts and crises in Africa. The period ahead is likely to be even more challenging, as the UN faces serious difficulties in sustaining its field presence on the continent due to a deepening liquidity crisis. Humanitarian actors, too, have been forced to scale back—or in some cases, suspend—life-saving operations because of acute funding shortfalls, with devastating consequences for millions of people in urgent need across several conflict-affected regions in Africa.¹⁴⁸

Therefore, there is an even greater need for the A3 to play a more proactive role in facilitating Council discussions and driving actions aimed at finding durable solutions. To this end, it should fully utilise all available tools at its disposal to advance this objective.

¹⁴⁵ Ton, Ron; Zondag, Adriaan. "Training New Members of the UN Security Council". Clingendael. (3 December 2024), <<https://www.clingendael.org/news/training-new-members-un-security-council>>.

¹⁴⁶ MedOr Foundation. "Somalia Joins the United Nations Security Council: Training Program Launched for Somalia's Diplomatic Corp". (29 January 2025), <<https://www.medor.org/en/news/lasomaliaentrelaconsigliodisicurezzaellenazioniuniteaviatounprogrammadiformazioneperilcorpodiplomaticosomalo>>.

¹⁴⁷ The Embassy of Belgium in Kinshasa (@BelgiqueRD Congo). "Belgium strongly condemns the violence in eastern Congo". X (Formerly Twitter) post, (1 March 2025, 9:15 AM CET), <<https://x.com/BelgiqueRD Congo/status/195275542861199006>>.

¹⁴⁸ Security Council Report. "In Hindsight: The Security Council and the UN80 Initiative – What Lies Ahead?". Monthly Forecast. (September 2025), <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2025-09/in-hindsight-the-security-council-and-the-un80-initiative-what-lies-ahead.php>>.

Observations and Way Forward

For example, Arria-formula meetings can serve as a platform to test ideas and build support before bringing them formally to the Council. Informal Interactive Dialogues (IIDs) can be particularly valuable for facilitating behind-the-scenes discussions, especially with officials from the AU or RECs/RMs who may not otherwise be able to brief the Council during closed consultations. The A3 could also adopt a more proactive approach in requesting closed consultations and raise issues under the agenda item “any other business”, where appropriate, to facilitate timely discussions on pressing African peace and security issues requiring the Council’s urgent attention. More often than not, it is the P3 or other elected members who initiate such meetings.

The A3’s growing practice of speaking with one voice on non-African issues should be further reinforced—not only to demonstrate that Africa is not merely a subject of global discussions, but also an active and influential contributor. In today’s fractured multilateral landscape—marked by egregious violations of international law and increasing disregard for negotiated solutions—the way conflicts and crises are managed and resolved globally has significant implications for Africa. The A3 should therefore consistently champion respect for international law; a global order in which established norms are routinely ignored poses serious risks for the continent. The AU headquarters should also continue and strengthen the practice of issuing clear statements on non-African issues to guide the A3 and shield them from undue external pressure, enabling them to reference official AU positions when engaging at the Security Council. The A3’s efforts to secure penholding or co-penholding responsibilities on all African dossiers—and other issues of interest to the continent—would significantly enhance the group’s ability to shape Council discussions and outcomes. Over the years, A3 members have demonstrated the capacity to lead on specific files, initiating Council products both individually and collectively, including on key thematic issues. The A3 served as penholders on resolution 2719; however, the current A3 members appear to have missed an opportunity to assume the penholder role when the Council considered applying the resolution to Somalia as a potential test case. Nevertheless, they may still seize future opportunities to do so should similar test cases arise.

While any Council member can serve as a penholder, as elaborated under Note 507 on working methods, co-penholdership may offer a practical pathway for individual A3 members to gradually assume a greater role in shaping Council decisions, particularly where penholdership arrangements are already in place. In this context, the P3 may be open to cooperating with A3 members to secure support for Council products, but they are more likely to engage with those A3 members they perceive as amenable to collaboration and aligned with their views. However, this may not always work out in practice. Looking ahead, if A3 members assert themselves as penholders, both individually and collectively, this could heighten the potential for tensions with the P3 and would need to be carefully managed.

Revitalising African Agency in Peace and Security Responses

The A3’s proactive efforts in driving Council discourse on Africa may fall short without strong political backing and strategic guidance from the AU and its RECs/RMs. Currently, the AU and RECs/RMs appear to be losing some of their agency, as the once-powerful mantra of “African solutions to African problems” seems to be waning in the face of mounting internal challenges and shifting geopolitical dynamics. External actors are increasingly taking the lead in addressing conflicts on the continent, often overshadowing African-led initiatives. The crises in Sudan and the eastern DRC are recent examples in this regard.

Ongoing discussions on the future of APSA are critical for reinvigorating Africa’s role and leadership in crisis response.¹⁴⁹ Experience has shown that when the AU and its RECs/RMs swiftly act to respond to conflicts and crises in Africa in a coherent and effective manner, they help generate aligned and constructive international support, including from the Security Council. There have been instances in the past where AUPSC decisions were reflected almost verbatim in Security Council resolutions and statements. One example is the AUPSC communiqué adopted on 24 April 2012¹⁵⁰, following the Heglig cross-border incident between Sudan and South Sudan, which was closely mirrored in Security Council resolution 2046, adopted on 2 May 2012.¹⁵¹ Two key factors made a real difference: a clear and well-articulated communiqué by the AUPSC, and a letter from the Chairperson of the AU Commission addressed to Security Council members stating that the communiqué represents Africa’s considered view on what needed to be done. Such proactive leadership, which clearly articulates Africa’s position and specifies concrete steps that need to be taken to address conflict situations, enhances the ability of the A3 to drive the discourse on Africa within the Council and to influence its decisions. This, coupled with démarches with Council members, individually and collectively, and sustained pressure, particularly on the permanent members, could deliver the desired result.

Beyond the general briefing to the A3 on African priorities—typically delivered by the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security—the AU could take a more deliberate and strategic role in guiding A3 efforts to champion specific priorities aligned with Africa’s peace and security needs requiring Security Council support. This would first necessitate the AU reasserting its leadership in the search for solutions to the myriad peace and security challenges facing the continent. It should also focus on revitalising the regional peace and security architectures, which have been strained by internal and external challenges. In this regard, strengthening synergy and complementarity with the RECs/RMs is essential.

149 Ruto, William S. (@WilliamsRuto). “Meeting with the High-Level Panel undertaking a review of the AU Peace and Security Framework”. X (Formerly Twitter) post. (4 September 2024), <<https://x.com/WilliamsRuto/status/1963510859520458820>>.

150 African Union Peace and Security Council. “319th Ministerial Meeting of the Peace and Security Council on the Situation between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan,” PeaceAU. (24 April 2012), <<https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/319th-ministerial-meeting-of-the-peace-and-security-council-on-the-situation-between-the-republic-of-sudan-and-the-republic-of-south-sudan>>.

151 United Nations Security Council. Resolution 2046 (2012) adopted by the Security Council at its 6764th meeting on the Situation in Sudan and South Sudan, (S/RES/2046) (2 May 2012).

Observations and Way Forward

There are ongoing efforts to advance this objective, including consultations between the AUPSC and the conflict prevention, management, and resolution mechanisms of the RECs/RMs, as well as regular meetings between the AU Commission and the RECs/RMs. The AUPSC has also initiated engagements with specific RECs to address peace and security issues within their respective regions—recent examples include its meetings with the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council¹⁵² and the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation.¹⁵³ While these engagements are both useful and important, the AU and the RECs/RMs must move beyond formalities and focus on delivering tangible results to help find durable solutions to the conflicts and crises afflicting the continent.

A reinvigorated AU, working in close synergy and complementarity with the RECs/RMs, would be better positioned to provide the strategic leadership needed to support the A3 in championing African priorities at the Security Council. Such leadership should involve forward planning and a clear vision of what the AU seeks to achieve through the A3's concerted efforts. One possible approach could be the development of a roadmap with a timeframe to guide these efforts, focused on advancing specific, well-defined African priorities. In this regard, the AU could draw valuable inspiration from recent experiences from the adoption of resolutions 2357 and 2719. The A3 could consider initiating a lessons learnt report around these two resolutions to provide insights into best practices in advancing African priorities in the Security Council.

As noted above, the AU has been asked to establish a dedicated focal point within the Commission to support A3 efforts in New York—an initiative that has been agreed in the past but remains unimplemented. Strengthening the capacity of the AU Permanent Observer Mission in New York, including through increased staffing and resources, is equally essential. At the AUPSC level, revitalising the Troika meetings with the A3 would help improve communication between Addis Ababa and New York. In addition, RECs/RMs with representation in New York should actively support the A3 through close coordination with the Permanent Observer Mission.

As the A3's role becomes increasingly vital in advancing African priorities, the endorsement of African candidatures by the five African regions and the AU should not be treated as a routine matter. It is a strategic decision with significant implications for the A3's role and effectiveness as a group. Although members are elected in their national capacity, their willingness and ability to promote Africa's collective interests are critical factors in endorsing their candidature. While the AU has long recognised the value of its endorsement, it has yet to establish the necessary accountability mechanism to make sure that its members fulfil their commitments based on the principles enshrined in the AU Constitutive Act and the AUPSC Protocol.

Passing the Torch

Experience has shown that the A3's efforts to advance African priorities in the Security Council often require sustained commitment beyond the two-year terms of individual elected members. For instance, Nigeria, South Africa and Mozambique played pivotal roles in advancing the Security Council's agenda on Security Sector Reform (SSR) at different times. Nigeria led the adoption of resolution 2151—the Council's first thematic resolution on SSR—in 2014.¹⁵⁴ Building on this, South Africa hosted a ministerial-level debate and facilitated the adoption of resolution 2553 in 2020.¹⁵⁵ In 2023, Mozambique convened an open briefing on SSR to review the Secretary-General's report submitted pursuant to resolution 2553, assessing progress in strengthening the UN's comprehensive approach to SSR.¹⁵⁶

Such sustained engagements are only possible through a deliberate effort to build institutional memory by documenting the work and achievements of previous A3 members. The AU Permanent Observer Mission, as the Secretariat and institutional memory of the A3, is working on a database in this regard, but requires support. Serious consideration should also be given to tapping into the institutional knowledge of outgoing members. While outgoing members are invited to attend the A3 retreats, those who played key roles on specific thematic or country-specific issues could be invited to share their experiences and insights with incoming members. This approach helps ensure continuity and enables new members to build on the foundations laid by their predecessors, rather than starting from scratch.

Building Bridges

Multilateralism holds particular significance in African diplomacy—not only as a historical aspiration rooted in the Pan-African movement, but also as a practical strategy for amplifying the continent's global influence. This is because of a long-held view that a collective approach enhances the continent's bargaining power far beyond what individual countries could achieve alone. However, the current fractured multilateral landscape poses serious challenges for Africa. In particular, a Security Council paralysed by great power rivalry continues to obstruct efforts to resolve some of the continent's most protracted and complex conflicts. History offers a sobering parallel: during the Cold War, geopolitical competition among major powers undermined the Council's ability to address African crises, turning the continent into a proxy battleground. Today, that pattern appears to be re-emerging, with Africa once again becoming a stage for intensifying geopolitical competition among both major and emerging powers. Preventing Africa from being drawn into this geopolitical rivalry appears to be a significant challenge.

2012), <[https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/2046\(2012\)](https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/2046(2012))>.

152 African Union Peace and Security Council. Communiqué of the 2nd Annual Joint Consultative Meeting Between the African Union Peace and Security Council and the Mediation and Security Council of the Economic Community of West African States. Addis Ababa: African Union Commission. (16 May 2025), <https://papsrepository.africanunion.org/communities/a2fabeb6-1288-4a15-89bf-afa40f0016ce?spc.page=1&f.dateIssued.min=2022&f.author=AUPSC-ECOWAS%20MSC,equal&f.has_content_in_original_bundle=true,equal>.

153 African Union Peace and Security Council. Press Release of the Inaugural Meeting Between the African Union Peace and Security Council and the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, 30 August 2024. Gaborone, Botswana: African Union Peace and Security Department. (updated: 17 September 2024), <<https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/press-release-of-the-inaugural-meeting-between-the-african-union-peace-and-security-council-and-the-sadc-organ-on-politics-defence-and-security-cooperation-30-august-2024>>.

154 United Nations Security Council. Resolution 2151 (2014) adopted by the Security Council at its 7161st meeting. (S/RES/2151) (28 April 2014).

155 United Nations Security Council, Security Council Resolution 2553 (2020), adopted by the Security Council on Security Sector Reform, (S/RES/2553) (3 December 2020).

156 Security Council Report. "Briefing on Security Sector Reform". What's In Blue. (15 March 2023), <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2023/03/briefing-on-security-sector-reform-2.php>>.

Observations and Way Forward

The A3 has the potential to enhance its impact in the Council—if the group’s members can engage strategically and leverage their collective influence effectively. Doing so is vital to ensure that African issues receive the necessary attention in the Council rather than becoming collateral in global power struggles. Facilitating consensus also increases the likelihood of meaningful resolutions of African conflicts and prevents external actors from sidelining African mechanisms in favour of foreign-led interventions that may not align with local realities or priorities. This cannot be done, however, without ensuring strong unity and cohesion among A3 members and solid institutional backing and leadership from their respective capitals as well as the AU and its RECs/RMs.

It is important for the A3 to recognise that the E10 are their natural constituency within the Security Council. Building strong relationships and mobilising the support of E10 is essential to fulfilling their role as effective bridge-builders. The greater challenge, however, lies in navigating the often-divergent interests of the P5. This demands principled and strategic diplomacy—rooted in the letter and spirit of the UN Charter, as well as the AU’s Constitutive Act and the broader body of norms that reflect Africa’s collective position on peace and security. Achieving this will not be easy in a global environment increasingly shaped by transactional diplomacy, where short-term national interests are prioritised over long-standing norms and multilateral principles. Nevertheless, such an approach appears essential to revitalising multilateralism and advancing Africa’s strategic interests.

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