

NO REPRESENTATION, NO PEACE

The African demand for a reformed Security Council

Executive summary



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For further information on the issues raised in this paper please email advocacy@oxfaminternational.org

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Cover photo: Refugees fleeing the Sudan conflict, Saud Yosif Idris Mahmou, 40, and her children Asia* and Hassan* at their shelter at the transit center in Renk. Photo: Peter Caton/Oxfam

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THE CORE ISSUE

The current structure of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is fundamentally unequal and ineffective. Africa, despite being the region most frequently on the Council's agenda and bearing the brunt of global armed conflict, holds no permanent seat. This exclusion from decisive decision-making undermines the legitimacy and effectiveness of the international peace and security architecture, with devastating humanitarian consequences, as evidenced in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Western Sahara.

A Unified African Position: Process and Proposal

Africa speaks with one voice on UNSC reform through a deliberate and long-standing diplomatic process. The foundational Ezulwini Consensus (2005) and Sirte Declaration articulate the continent's collective stance. This position is actively championed by the African Union Committee of Ten (C10), a high-level body of Heads of State mandated to represent Africa's interests in UN reform negotiations.

Following a call for detailed models from the UN, the C10 presented the AU Member States' Model on UNSC Reform in 2025. This formal, comprehensive proposal is not a set of aspirations but a concrete plan for negotiation. Its key demands are:

- **Membership:** An expanded UNSC with no fewer than two permanent seats for Africa, selected by the AU itself, plus five non-permanent seats.

- **Veto Power:** A principled stance that the veto should be abolished. However, for as long as it exists, Africa's permanent members must possess it on equal terms with current holders, as a matter of "common justice."
- **Systemic Reform:** The Model also calls for more transparent working methods, enhanced cooperation between the UNSC and the UN General Assembly, and formalized collaboration with regional bodies like the AU under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter.

A Converging Agenda for Change

This briefing aligns Oxfam's evidence-based advocacy with Africa's formal position. Both identify the same root problems: structural imbalance, the paralyzing effect of the veto, and peacekeeping mandates disconnected from local realities. The AU's Model provides the actionable political framework to address these failures to a large extent and should be supported.

Call to Action: Seizing the Moment at the AU Summit

As the African Union prepares for its 2026 Summit, the international community must engage seriously with Africa's formal proposal. A fairer system requires:

1. Securing Africa's Permanent Voice in the UNSC as outlined in the AU Model.
2. Abolishing the Veto to prevent the blocking of life-saving action.
3. Redirecting Resources from military spending to peacebuilding.

4. Formalizing AU-UN Co-Decision Mechanisms for African peace and security issues.
5. Centering Women and Local Actors in all peace processes.
6. Upholding International Humanitarian Law without exception.

This agenda offers a blueprint for transforming a system that has too often failed the people it is meant to protect. Supporting the AU's structured and unified push for reform is essential for a Security Council that is legitimate, effective, and fit for the purpose of sustaining global peace.

About Oxfam

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