

SPECIAL RESEARCH REPORT

RE-ENERGIZING CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION IN AFRICA: A QUEST TO SALVAGE THE APSA?

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I. INTRODUCTION

On 24 September 2025, the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will convene at summit level on the margins of the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to deliberate on the theme *Re-energizing Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa*. This is a timely subject due to two interrelated developments. First, the continent has witnessed a marked increase in the number of conflicts, their geographic spread, and their human toll and socio-economic consequences. Second, the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) has struggled to respond effectively to these mounting challenges.¹ The lead on initiatives for crises in Libya and most recently in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo–Rwanda, and tensions between Ethiopia and Somalia are taken by states outside of the continent, with the AU playing at best a ceremonial role. Together with the erosion of multilateralism, intensifying geopolitical rivalries, and rising foreign involvement in African peace and security affairs, these developments underscore the urgent need for the AU to recalibrate and strengthen its conflict prevention and resolution role.

There is already recognition that the peace and security realities and the changing geopolitical conditions require the repositioning of the AU's peace and security instruments. At the 38th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly in February 2025, Kenya's President

¹ Amani Africa, *Annual Review (2025), 'Africa in a New Era of Insecurity and Instability: The 2024 Review of the Peace and Security Council.'* Available at: <https://amani-africa-et.org/wp-content/uploads/Africa-in-a-New-Era-of-Insecurity-and-Instability-The-2024-Review-of-the-Peace-and-Security-Council.pdf>

William Ruto, serving as AU Champion for Institutional Reform, presented a proposal with eight priority measures to accelerate AU reforms. Among them was the recommendation to review APSA, noting that 'the dire peace and security situation in Africa partly indicts the continent's peace architecture.' Earlier, during its 1163rd ministerial-level meeting on 21 July 2023, the PSC had similarly requested the AU Commission to launch a review of APSA to adapt it to the continent's evolving and complex security landscape.

Efforts are now underway. A high-level panel and a supporting technical team have been established to conduct the APSA review, which have already begun their work during a recent meeting in Nairobi in early September 2025. A key focus of the review is expected to be the revitalization of the AU's preventive and conflict resolution tools—reviving what many regard as a 'golden era' of ambitious, sustained diplomatic engagement.² The upcoming PSC summit-level session is therefore expected to serve as an important contribution to the broader APSA review process.

Over the years, Amani Africa has contributed extensively to advancing this agenda through Special Report papers and its 'Insights on the PSC'.

This report builds on these earlier works referenced. It seeks to inform the forthcoming summit-level PSC session and the broader APSA review

² Amani Africa, *Special Research Report No.20 (May 2024), 'The African Union Peace and Security Council at 20: From a Promising Past and a Challenged Present to a Less Certain Future?'* Available at: <https://amani-africa-et.org/the-african-union-peace-and-security-council-at-20-from-a-promising-past-and-a-challenged-present-to-a-less-certain-future/>

discourse. The report explores some of the key factors undermining the AU's effectiveness and agency in conflict prevention and resolution; and recommendations for restoring the AU's role as a robust and proactive diplomatic actor in this area.

II. CHALLENGES FOR AU'S EFFECTIVE CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION ROLE

2.1. Strategic leadership void

Our major research on *Silencing the Guns* (October 2024) presented a sobering assessment of these trends. It concluded that while conflicts on the continent are multiplying and becoming more intricate, the widening gap between the demand for effective responses and the AU's actual capacity to deliver has steadily eroded the credibility of both the Union and its PSC.

The AU today appears to be performing at a level even lower than its records of yesteryears. Its standing decision-making organ on peace and security, the PSC, is struggling to sustain its basic functions and has seen a steady decline in credibility, largely due to its failure to mount effective responses to the continent's raging conflicts. The Union has clearly lost the golden era of ambitious, robust, and sustained peacemaking diplomacy that once characterized its approach to continental security.

In earlier years, the AU demonstrated its ability to launch credible and effective single mediation processes. The AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) for Sudan and South Sudan is one such testament. That mediation represented

a standard-setting initiative on multiple fronts: the PSC provided strategic guidance and leadership, high-caliber mediators led the process, and technically proficient staff from the AU Commission supported the work. A review of the PSC communiqué from its 319th meeting reveals its substantive richness and clarity. The document laid out a comprehensive roadmap for addressing tensions between Sudan and South Sudan, notable for its strategic precision and inclusion of specific timelines that facilitated follow-up and implementation.

This rare confluence of high-level mediation, robust institutional support, and effective strategic oversight greatly enhanced the credibility of the process and secured broad international backing. Most remarkably, the UN Security Council adopted the PSC's roadmap—breaking a longstanding impasse between the United States and Russia. As highlighted in a lessons-learned review of the AUHIP, this case illustrates how well-led AU processes, underpinned by strong PSC leadership, can shape international consensus and unlocks progress in complex peace efforts.³

By contrast, recent ad hoc peacemaking efforts have yielded no meaningful results. This is most evident in Sudan, where the AU—despite launching multiple mechanisms, including an expanded mechanism, a core group of the extended mechanism, a high-level panel, and the PSC's ad hoc presidential committee—has failed to advance a credible peace process. The presidential

³ See Alex de Waal and Abdul Mohammed (2024), 'Defining the Crisis in the Sudans: Lessons from the African Union High-Level Panels for Sudan and South Sudan,' Thabo Mbeki Foundation in association with World Peace Foundation.

ad hoc committee, for instance, has yet to convene its inaugural meeting, let alone implement its mandate of facilitating direct negotiations between the two warring parties. The AU's inability to establish a single credible peace initiative has opened the door to a proliferation of uncoordinated and competing mediation tracks. Rather than exerting collective leverage to steer the parties toward a settlement, various actors have ended up duplicating, fragmenting, and in some cases undermining one another's efforts.

2.2. Inadequate use of diplomacy as a primary instrument of peace and security

Another challenge to the AU's role in conflict prevention and mediation is its gradual retreat from diplomacy as the primary instrument for addressing peace and security crises. Historically, the AU derived considerable leverage from diplomatic engagement. Over the years, however, this has shifted toward an increasingly securitized approach that is resource-intensive and often ill-suited to the complex socio-political dynamics driving most of the conflicts on the continent.

The prevailing mindset among policymakers—that deploying more weapons is the necessary response to terrorism, insurgency, and armed conflicts—has led to a cycle of militarized interventions with limited success in halting the expansion of violent extremism. Indeed, reliance on force without accompanying political strategy has frequently aggravated rather than mitigated conflict dynamics.

Even in situations where combat operations are unavoidable, they

cannot substitute for diplomacy. On the contrary, they underscore the urgency of anchoring peace operations in a robust political strategy—one that leverages negotiation, mediation, and dialogue. Such diplomacy must also be backed by socio-economic measures, including livelihood restoration, reconciliation, and long-term rehabilitation support, to address the structural conditions that fuel instability.

As our 2022 special research report on terrorism highlighted, the security-first approach reflects a misdiagnosis of the problem.⁴ What is required instead is an approach grounded in the primacy of human-security-centered political strategies to underpin more effective counterterrorism responses.

Without re-centering diplomacy and political strategy as the cornerstone of its conflict prevention and mediation architecture, the Union risks remaining trapped in an unsustainable cycle of securitized responses that neither resolve conflicts nor deliver durable peace.

2.3. Reactive tendencies and neglect of prevention mandate

The PSC has gradually evolved into a reactive body, often likened to a 'firefighter' that intervenes only after conflicts have erupted. Although the PSC Protocol identifies conflict prevention as its central pillar, in practice the Council has leaned heavily toward conflict

⁴ See Amani Africa, 'The growing threat of terrorism in Africa, a product of misdiagnosis and faulty policy response?', Special Research Report 13 (May 2022). Available at: <https://amaniafrica-et.org/the-growing-threat-of-terrorism-in-africa-a-product-of-misdiagnosis-and-faulty-policy-response/>

management and resolution. This gap between principle and practice has left the preventive dimension of its mandate underutilized—a shortfall repeatedly acknowledged by the Council itself.

Structural and operational changes within the AU's peace and security architecture have reinforced this tendency. The restructuring of the Peace and Security Department into the Political Affairs, Peace, and Security (PAPS) division removed the dedicated conflict prevention and early warning structure. Early warning and governance monitoring are now 'mainstreamed' into regional desks, effectively depriving CEWS of its institutional home and clear lines of accountability. The 'Situation Room' now serves PAPS as a whole, rather than supporting a conflict prevention directorate.⁵ This arrangement not only departs from Article 12 of the PSC Protocol but also creates operational difficulties, casting doubt on whether strengthening governance and prevention was a genuine goal of the reform.

Technical weaknesses have further compounded the problem. Gaps in rigorous early warning reporting, the absence of a clear trigger mechanism for preventive action, and limited integration of early warning analysis into PSC decision-making continue to undermine the Council's preventive capacity.⁶

⁵ Amani Africa, *The African Union Peace and Security Council Handbook: Guide on the Council's Procedure, Practice and Traditions* (2024), p.120. Available at: <https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/AU-PSC-Handbook-2024.pdf>

⁶ For more discussion on challenges to the conflict prevention mandate of the PSC, see our 15 April 2024 and 16 December 2024 editions of 'Insights on the PSC', available [here](#) and [here](#), respectively.

Beyond institutional and technical shortcomings, political dynamics also obstruct early action. A persistent 'culture of denialism' among Member States and Regional Economic Communities/Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) often undermines credible early warning assessments.⁷ Sovereignty claims and subsidiarity arguments are regularly invoked to block preventive measures, even when crises are visibly looming. This political resistance, seen repeatedly over the past two decades, runs directly counter to the preventive spirit of the PSC Protocol. The result is a Council that continues to respond reactively to crises, while prevention remains sidelined.

2.4. Coordination gaps between the AU/PSC and RECs/RMs

The PSC Protocol situates RECs/RMs as integral to the Union's overall security architecture, with the PSC at its center. RECs/RMs are expected not only to keep the PSC informed of their activities but also to harmonize and coordinate their initiatives with the Council. Despite some progress, the partnership between them leaves a lot to be desired. As Amani Africa's Special Research Report observes, the AU/PSC-RECs/RMs relationship is 'fraught with various issues that have stifled effective policy coordination and deployment of collective and joint action' to proactively address Africa's peace and security challenges.⁸ Instead of the close

⁷ See for instance the communiqué of the PSC adopted at its 1208th session on 16 April 2024. Available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/1208.comm_en.pdf

⁸ Amani Africa, *Special Research Report No.16, 'Beyond Subsidiarity: Understanding the Roles of the AU and RECs/RMs in Peace and Security in Africa'* (August 2023), p.4. Available at: [Beyond Subsidiarity: Understanding the Roles of the AU and RECs/RMs in Peace and Security in Africa – Amani](#)

collaboration envisioned in the Protocol, both the PSC and RECs/RMs have at times pursued competing or poorly coordinated peacemaking initiatives, compromising effective continental conflict prevention and resolution.⁹

One of the challenges lies in the contested interpretation of subsidiarity. While the PSC Protocol does not explicitly mention the principle, it has come to dominate AU–REC/RM discussions. As the former AU Commission Chairperson noted, ‘subsidiarity has been frankly overused’ and, through a semantic shift, has come to be misinterpreted as ‘substitution.’¹⁰ This has occasionally led RECs/RMs to downplay or bypass the PSC’s primacy in continental peace and security matters, reducing the Council to what appears to be a mere rubberstamp for regional decisions.

The uneven value each side places on the other further undermines coordination. Too often, decisions are made in isolation, with limited consultation on pressing issues. RECs/RMs have, in several cases, shown little interest in engaging substantively with the PSC on military deployments and mediation strategies. This has resulted in divergence and, at times, outright competition. For example, ECOWAS and the PSC adopted conflicting approaches to the military coup in Niger in July 2023. Similarly, SADC’s military deployments in Mozambique (2021) and the DRC (2024) were presented to the PSC for endorsement without meaningful prior consultation. Most notably, in Sudan, Africa

9 Amani Africa, ‘PSC at 20’

10 Speech of H.E Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, during the Thirty Seventh Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union (17 February 2024). Available at: <https://shorturl.at/fnxDR>

following the outbreak of conflict in April 2023, the PSC and IGAD launched parallel and uncoordinated mediation tracks, only later agreeing to coordinate their efforts. This partly contributed to the failure to initiate a credible continental process, opening space for foreign actors to fill the void.

2.5. Changing security dynamics in Africa defying AU’s peacemaking efforts

Conflicts in Africa have not only increased in number and geographic spread but have also grown more complex, with evolving threats and new actors shaping the security landscape.

When the AU proclaimed its commitment to *Silencing the Guns* in May 2013, Africa’s peace and security situation was already fragile. A decade later, instead of receding, conflict incidents have surged. Available data shows that conflict events more than doubled between 2013 and 2023—rising by over 150%—with a sharp spike after 2019.¹¹ Despite a slight decline after peaking in 2022 following the eruption of a new war in Ethiopia in 2020, new crises such as those in Sudan and eastern Democratic Republic of Congo have continued to escalate, further darkening Africa’s security horizon and exposing challenges in its response mechanisms.

The impact and geographic reach of these conflicts have also deepened. No part of the continent is today free of violent

11 Amani Africa, *Special Research Report No.23 (October 2024), ‘Memo to the New Commission Leadership from the Roaring Guns on AU’s First Decade of Silencing the Guns’*, p.14. Available at: <https://amaniafrica-et.org/memo-to-the-new-au-commission-leadership-from-the-roaring-guns-on-aus-first-decade-of-silencing-the-guns/>

conflicts.

A major driver has been the rise of terrorism-related violence. Reports indicate that terrorist incidents and fatalities reached unprecedented levels in 2024. According to the Institute for Economics and Peace's 2024 *Global Terrorism Index* (GTI), the epicenter of global terrorism has shifted from the Middle East to Africa's Central Sahel.¹² For the first time in 13 years, a country other than Afghanistan or Iraq topped the GTI, with Burkina Faso ranked first, while Mali and Niger remained among the most affected.

The threat of terrorism, although most pronounced in the Sahel, is spreading beyond it. Escalating violence in the Central Sahel is increasingly spilling into coastal West African states, including Benin, Togo, and Côte d'Ivoire. This trend makes terrorism the dominant peace and security crisis on the continent, with Africa emerging as a new global epicenter of extremist violence.

In terms of actors, Africa's conflicts are increasingly driven by non-state groups operating within complex webs of socioeconomic and governance crises. While traditional threats such as interstate wars and military coups have resurfaced, newer and more intricate challenges now dominate. Emerging technologies, climate change, and transnational organized crime add further layers of uncertainty, interacting with existing vulnerabilities in ways that current continental frameworks struggle to anticipate or manage. These

¹² Institute for Economics & Peace, 'Global Terrorism Index 2024: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism,' (February 2024), p.3. Available at: <http://visionofhumanity.org/resources>.

shifts underscore how different Africa's security landscape is today compared to two decades ago, when the AU, APSA, and its peacemaking tools were established. Some of those tools—designed primarily for civil war contexts—are proving less effective against today's more fragmented, transnational, and unconventional security threats, highlighting the urgent need to revisit and adapt the AU's peacemaking approaches.

2.6. Growing foreign involvement in conflicts in Africa has not only worsened the humanitarian toll but also complicated conflict resolution.

In recent years, Africa has increasingly become a battleground for renewed global power rivalries, echoing the dynamics of the Cold War and the 'Scramble for Africa.' External actors are vying for influence, driven by the continent's vast natural resources and its strategic diplomatic significance. Moreover, the rising prominence of geopolitical rivalries on the international stage, notably in the aftermath of the Russia-Ukraine war, has intensified foreign involvement by old and emerging powers in conflicts in Africa, drawing Africa into the crossfire with profound implications for peace and security in the continent.

This growing interference by foreign powers is not only shaping conflict dynamics and political behavior but also undermining the agency of regional and continental policymakers in addressing conflicts and political crises, further straining continental conflict prevention, management and resolution mechanisms. As highlighted in Amani Africa's 2023 annual review of PSC

activities, this trend is making a ‘mockery of the already deeply misunderstood and misused mantra of African solutions to African problems.’¹³ Libya and Sudan provide stark examples of how entrenched foreign involvement has paralyzed mediation efforts and sidelined the AU as a leading actor in peace processes.

These dynamics have undermined the effectiveness of continental mediation and peacemaking efforts. Entrenched foreign involvement in African conflicts has denied the AU meaningful leverage over the warring parties, while shifting decisive influence into the hands of external actors. In Libya, resolving the conflict has become extremely difficult due to various foreign powers backing rival factions. In Sudan, AU and the regional bloc IGAD have been sidelined and are not assuming their proper role in leading peace initiatives. In the conflict in eastern DRC and the DRC–Rwanda tensions, although the AU—through the Luanda and Nairobi processes—has made significant efforts to resolve the crisis, these initiatives appear to have been recently overtaken by the United States and Qatar. These developments highlight a concerning trend in which the AU is losing its agency in shaping the resolution of conflicts in the continent.

III. RESTORING AU’S LEAF AND SALVAGING THE AFRICAN PEACE AND SECURITY ARCHITECTURE (APSA)

The grim security situation in the continent, the weakening of the multilateral system, and intensifying global geopolitical tensions have made the PSC and the broader AU more important today than ever before. In this context, the PSC and the AU can no longer afford to operate in a business-as-usual manner. Yet, paradoxically, the AU appears to be performing even less effectively than in previous years, with the PSC barely maintaining its core functions and losing credibility as it cedes agency in conflict resolution to external actors who are playing increasingly dominant roles.

There is an urgent need to reclaim the AU’s golden era of ambitious, proactive, and sustained peace and security diplomacy—an era when diplomacy served as the primary instrument for conflict resolution on the continent. The AU has already demonstrated its capacity and will through credible and effective peacemaking initiatives, such as the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), showing that a more assertive and effective role is possible, albeit with making necessary adjustments to meet the demands of the changing security and geopolitical context.

However, reclaiming this role requires critical reflection on the current context that has led to the AU’s diminishing influence, as well as lessons drawn from past experiences. The upcoming summit level session on ‘Re-energising conflict prevention and resolution in Africa’,

¹³ Amani Africa, ‘The Peace and Security Council in 2023: the Year in Review,’ (February 2024), p. 7. Available at: <https://amaniafrica-et.org/thepeace-and-security-council-in-2023-the-year-inreview/>.

as well as the ongoing review of the African Peace and Security Architecture offers an important opportunity for such introspection.

In this light, the following specific measures should be considered to strengthen the AU's conflict prevention and resolution efforts.

3.1. Rebuild the AU's agency through credible peacemaking processes and the restoration of the primacy of diplomacy as the main conflict and governance crises management and resolution tool

The governance and security challenges and landscape on the continent demand that the AU recalibrates its role as a credible peacemaking actor and restores the prime place of honor of diplomacy as the main conflict and governance crisis management and resolution tool. With rising global geopolitical tensions and a weakened multilateral system, the effective functioning of the AU is now a strategic imperative.

The AU must reinvigorate its proactive, robust and sustained peace and security diplomacy. As the continent faces complex and prolonged political transitions, the impending breakdown of regional orders in West Africa and the Sahel, and the threat of such breakdowns in the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes regions, as well as rising inter-state tensions—such as those between the DRC and Rwanda, and Ethiopia and Somalia—along with their far-reaching consequences for regional peace and security, the need for recommitting member states to the founding principles of the AU, for engaging in the hard work of

exercising leadership through advancing shared vision, extensive consultation, elaborating inclusively negotiated shared strategies for conflict prevention and resolution and for building trust and consensus and mobilizing support for the visions and strategies painstakingly crafted has never been more pressing.

AU's ability to regain its leadership role in conflict resolution largely depends on its capacity to initiate credible and effective mediation processes. Key to this is the careful selection of members for peacemaking mechanisms, including ad hoc committees, the provision of **technically sound and diplomatically robust** strategic guidance and oversight, and effective coordination with all relevant actors—including regional and international organizations and countries with leverage over conflict parties.

Apart from its role in reducing polarisation and establishing common ground between rival powers as highlighted in UN Secretary-General's New [Agenda for Peace](#), in the African context, the effective functioning of the PSC and the APSA and the mobilisation of collective action for peace and security depend on building consensus and the political will of member states for supporting such collective action. **Reinvigorating diplomacy is a strategic imperative for the AU** to contain the tide of these new and increasingly serious threats to peace and security and to adopt to changing geopolitical realities.

Also of paramount significance is the reaffirmation of the commitment of member states to AU instruments and to work collectively. It is additionally critical for the AU Commission to enhance close working relationship with and restore the trust of member states through impartial

delivery of its responsibilities and even-handedly promoting and defending AU commitments on the basis of the obligations that member states assumed under AU instruments. **The Commission also needs to address some of the bottlenecks for timely action, such as authorisation and procurement processes. This it can accomplish by following previous best practices whereby standing authorisation was given for the preventive diplomacy and peace-making instruments.**

A robust support structure is also essential to enable peacemaking mechanisms to function effectively. While the Mediation and Dialogue Division within the Conflict Management Directorate of the Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department (PAPS) is tasked with supporting the AU's preventive diplomacy and mediation work, questions remain as to whether its current staffing and working arrangements are sufficient to meet continental demands. The Division should be strengthened in both areas.

3.2. Prioritize Conflict Prevention and early action through greater credibility of early warning, enhancing the profile of the Panel of the Wise, and the use of non-intrusive and collaborative diplomacy

The PSC should place conflict prevention at the center of its mandate, as envisaged in the PSC Protocol. Despite the well-recognized cost-effectiveness of prevention and the strong normative emphasis on it, the Council has often defaulted to a reactive posture—intervening only after crises escalate. This gap between rhetoric and practice needs to be closed.

To operationalize prevention more effectively, one of the key considerations could be for the AU to reinvigorate its Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) by **re-establishing it as a dedicated structure within the PAPS Department, in line with Article 12 of the PSC Protocol.** CEWS, grounded in human security considerations, is uniquely positioned to anticipate conflict drivers in ways that intelligence-led bodies such as CISSA, ACSRT, or AFRIPOL cannot.

Efforts should be made to increase **trust** in early warning outputs to reduce denialism by Member States and RECs/RMs. Enhancing credibility would also help overcome political resistance to preventive action. **Discreet and non-intrusive responses** at the early stages of crises can further mitigate political sensitivities as well as denialism by avoiding fears of risk of internationalisation of a conflict that is still in the making, which is the reason for denialism or member states resistance.

The PSC should also strengthen its preventive toolbox by **enhancing the profile and working arrangement of the Panel of the Wise.** The Panel of the Wise is established as the preventive diplomacy instrument of the AU under the PSC Protocol. The assumption underpinning the constitution of the Panel is that the standing, gravitas and credibility of its membership is of such a nature that would easily create entry points and secure access to and receive the trust of key national actors. In other words, it is modeled on the Koffi Annan panel of eminent personalities that mediated the post 2007 election crises in Kenya.

Prevention should also adapt to evolving security dynamics. The AU needs to expand its early warning system to

incorporate emerging risks such as public health emergencies, climate-induced crises, and the disruptive impact of new technologies on peace and security. Anticipating these threats will enhance the timeliness and effectiveness of responses as well as their interaction with and implications for conflict settings.

3.3. Anchoring conflict management and resolution interventions on a strategy tailored to each conflict situation

The AU needs to have a requirement for **the development of a conflict management and resolution strategy tailored to each conflict situation**, backed by the requisite technical, diplomatic and financial resources. The strategy needs not only to ensure the design and use of conflict resolution tools tailored to the specificities of each conflict situation informed by such strategy but also to provide guidance on the means and methods of ensuring the effectiveness of the use of such tools.

3.4. Shift from a Security-Heavy Approach to a Comprehensive Strategy Anchored in the Primacy of Politics

The PSC should recalibrate its approach to peace and security by moving beyond an overreliance on military responses and embracing a comprehensive strategy rooted in the primacy of politics. Evidence from the success of various AU's peacemaking initiatives shows that sustainable outcomes are achieved not through the exclusive use of security tools, but through approaches anchored in political solutions.

While security measures remain necessary to contain immediate threats and create

space for dialogue, it is evident that force alone cannot fundamentally transform Africa's peace and security landscape. Sustainable peace requires addressing the structural drivers of extremism and conflict through governance reforms, inclusive political dialogue, economic opportunity, and social resilience. As such, the AU should adopt a balanced strategy that integrates security responses within a broader political framework. This means re-centering negotiation, mediation, and governance reforms as the core instruments of conflict management, while ensuring that security measures are carefully calibrated, rights-respecting, and explicitly linked to political and socio-economic solutions.

3.5. Strengthen and Institutionalise AU-REC/RM engagement in conflict prevention and resolution beyond subsidiarity

The nature and scope of security dynamics on the continent require not only regular interaction but also genuine and substantive engagement between the AU and RECs/RMs to ensure coordination and policy coherence. This cannot be realized through the principle of subsidiarity whose use has only undermined collaboration and joint action by incentivizing competition over leadership. Given the nature of conflict dynamics that are increasingly transregional, which often implicate the role of more than one RECs/RMs, a more effective and conflict sensitive working arrangement between the AU and the RECs/RMs is one that leverages and is premised on the effective use of and coordination between the AU and the concerned RECs/RMs. This can build on and take forward the analysis provided

in the research report titled *Beyond Subsidiarity: Understanding the Roles of the AU and RECs/RMs in Peace and Security in Africa*.¹⁴

¹⁴ Amani Africa, *Special Research Report No 16 (2023), 'Beyond Subsidiarity: Understanding the Roles of the AU and RECs/RMs in Peace and Security in Africa'*. Available at: <https://amaniafrica-et.org/beyond-subsidiarity-understanding-the-roles-of-the-au-and-recs-rms-in-peace-and-security-in-africa/>



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Amani Africa is an independent African based policy research, training and consulting think tank with a specialization and primary focus on African multilateral policy processes, particularly those relating to the African union.

We support the pan-African dream of peaceful, prosperous and integrated Africa through research, training, strategic communications, technical advisory services, and convening and facilitation.

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