

**Security Council**

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Identical letters dated 30 July 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I am pleased to transmit for your attention the concept note for the Security Council high-level debate on “Maintenance of international peace and security: addressing the historical injustice and enhancing Africa’s effective representation on the Security Council”, to be convened on 12 August 2024 by Sierra Leone in its capacity as President of the Security Council for August 2024.

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Michael Imran **Kanu**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the identical letters dated 30 July 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Concept note for the Security Council high-level debate on “Maintenance of international peace and security: addressing the historical injustice and enhancing Africa’s effective representation on the Security Council”, to be held on 12 August 2024

Introduction

1. The current structure of the Security Council reflects the geopolitical realities of the immediate post-Second World War era. Significant changes in the global landscape however have necessitated a review of the Council’s composition to ensure its effectiveness and legitimacy in addressing contemporary global security challenges. The present concept note proposes a debate within the Security Council specifically focused on enhancing Africa’s representation, a longstanding concern with historical context.
2. The Security Council as the primary body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security is mandated by the Charter of the United Nations to take decisions on matters of international peace and security binding on States Members of the United Nations. It is in this regard that the Charter, in its article 24 (1), outlines the collective security scheme in which the States Members of the United Nations confer upon the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and this is to ensure prompt and effective action by the United Nations.
3. Against this background, it is important to note that the continent of Africa, represented by 54 of the 193 States Members of the United Nations, accounts for 1.3 billion of the world’s population, hosts the majority of peacekeeping operations and has four of the top 10 troop-contributing countries to United Nations peacekeeping operations,¹ does not have a permanent seat on the Security Council and is grossly underrepresented in the non-permanent category. This clearly goes against article 2 (1) of the Charter, the principle of the sovereign equality of all Member States. This historical injustice done to the continent, therefore, must be reversed and Africa must be treated as a special case.

Impact of lack of representation on the maintenance of regional peace and security

4. Increasingly required to do more in response to new and emerging threats and toward the enforcement of regional peace and security in the region, the absence of correlating powers and lack of representation on the body with the primary responsibility on matters of peace and security has hampered Africa’s ability to effectively influence Security Council deliberations and to deliver on its mandate of maintaining peace and security on the continent. This has largely made the concept of African solutions for African challenges, with African leadership mainly rhetorical. The effect is that decades after the end of colonization and the dismantling of apartheid, the fate of the continent continues to remain in the hands of other nations

¹ Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana and Rwanda.

with asymmetrical decision-making powers, which often determine the direction of the affairs of the continent.

5. The 2005 World Summit Outcome Document adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 60/1 (of 24th October 2005) reaffirmed the commitment of Member States “to early reform of the Security Council as an essential element of the overall effort to reform the United Nations in order to make it more broadly representative, efficient and transparent and enhance its effectiveness and the legitimacy and implementation of its decisions”. On 15 September 2008, the General Assembly adopted decision 62/557 on the “Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters”, with calls to commence intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform in informal plenary of the General Assembly during the sixty third session of the General Assembly, but no later than 28 February 2009, based on proposals by Member States, in good faith, with mutual respect and in an open, inclusive and transparent manner, on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council, seeking a solution that can garner the widest possible political acceptance by Member States.

6. Since the seventy-third session of the General Assembly, during the intergovernmental negotiations on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council, Member States, as reflected by the co-Chairs, continue to “acknowledge the legitimate aspirations of African countries to play their rightful role on the global stage including through an increased presence in the Security Council as a priority”. In addition, in a paper presented by the co-Chairs, it was noted that the reform of the Security Council should reflect the realities of the contemporary world, especially the increased representation of developing countries, small and medium sized States.

Common African Position on Security Council reform

7. The core demands of the Common African Position on Security Council reform are enunciated in the Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration, and the continent views the common position as the only viable option that reflects Africa’s legitimate right and aspiration to rectify, inter alia, the historical injustice endured by the continent. The Common African Position demands two permanent seats on the Security Council for Africa, with all the privileges and prerogatives of permanent membership including the right to veto if retained, and five non-permanent seats. Under the Common African Position, Africa reserves the right to select the candidates that would be considered for election by the General Assembly. The Common African Position has gained broad support from the Member States participating in the intergovernmental negotiations, and at the highest political level, including by permanent members of the Council.

Objectives of debate

8. The objectives of the debate include:

(a) To acknowledge and address the historical context of Africa’s non-representation in the permanent category and gross underrepresentation in the Security Council. In this regard the discussions are intended to focus on equitable geographical representation and reversing the historical injustice done to Africa as pressing and key for restoring the Council’s legitimacy, credibility, and effectiveness and for reigniting the Council’s ability to deliver effectively on its mandate for preserving international peace and security;

- (b) To bring attention to the Common African Position while mobilizing interest among member States to further consolidate convergences, outlining the path to treating Africa as a special case and priority in the reform process;
- (c) To explore the potential impact of increased African representation on the effectiveness and legitimacy of the Security Council in addressing global security issues, particularly those concerning Africa;
- (d) To identify potential challenges and propose solutions for navigating the Security Council reform process towards a more equitable outcome;
- (e) To serve as a call to action to African nations and supporters of the Common African Position.

Guiding questions

9. The questions to guide the high-level debate include:

- (a) The current structure of the Security Council reflects the historical marginalization of Africa. How can this be rectified?
- (b) The lack of permanent African representation undermines the legitimacy of the Security Council on issues concerning Africa. How can this be addressed?
- (c) How have the historical injustices to Africa hindered the continent's ability to contribute effectively on the global governance stage?
- (d) What are the linkages between lack of representation in the Security Council and the ability of regional authorities to maintain regional peace and security?
- (e) What are the immediate steps that can be taken by member States to provide support for the common African position? How can Africa be treated as a special case and priority in the reform process?

Debate format

10. The format of the meeting will be a high-level debate with the participation, under rule 37 of the Security Council's provisional rules of procedure, of States Members of the United Nations who are members of the African Union Committee of 10 Heads of State and Government on the reform of the Security Council, and one representative from each of the interest groups negotiating in the intergovernmental negotiations and each of the regional groups.

11. There will be three briefers: the Secretary-General of the United Nations; the President of the General Assembly; and a civil society representative.
