

**The Africa We Want and the UN We Need:
A Regional Dialogue for the Summit of the Future
(Africa SOTF Dialogue)**

4-6 March 2024 in Abuja, Nigeria.

Co-Sponsors: Savannah Centre for Diplomacy, Democracy & Development, the Stimson Center, One Earth Future Foundation, U.S. Institute of Peace, Humanity Unbited Foundation, the Global Challenges Foundation, Olof Palme International Centre, Foundation for European Progressive Studies, and the Max van der Stoel Foundation, in collaboration with the following partner organizations: Centre for Democracy and Development West Africa, Global Governance Innovation Network, Kofi Annan Foundation, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Center for Democracy and Development, SDGs Kenya Forum, Global Institute for Strategic Research, Synergos Institute Nigeria, UN University Centre for Policy Research, European Institute of Peace, Institute for Economics and Peace, and Oxfam International

(Updated Project Concept - 12 January 2024)

To prevent recurring global and regional crises in the aftermath of the First and Second World Wars and help to advance human development worldwide, the United Nations was founded in 1945, with only Ethiopia and Liberia qualifying from Africa as original Member States. With political independence, Africa's UN membership rose over time to fifty-four.

Today, many African countries are struggling to meet their development goals due to the impact of severe and mutually reinforcing socioeconomic, environmental, and political shocks. According to the UN Economic Commission for Africa, economic growth dwindled from 4.6 percent in 2021 to 3.6 percent in 2022, helping to push 18 million more persons into poverty on a continent already dealing with a substantial poverty problem. Compounding this situation, nearly 600 million Africans do not have access to sustainable energy. In addition, across Africa today, many intrastate conflicts are being exploited by international state and non-state actors, fueling human suffering and helping to reverse a long-term, global decline in political violence since the end of the Cold War.

More than ever, and in the run-up to the September 2024 Summit of the Future, African perspectives and innovation priorities need to be heard in policy debates on improving the performance of today's global institutions (including the UN system) and African regional institutions (including the African Union, ECOWAS, and other sub-regional organizations), so as to better address the critical issues of sustainable development, peace and security, climate governance, democratic and digital participation, and human rights and humanitarian action.

Proposed Keynote Speakers: H.E. Professor Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, President of the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly and Nigerian Permanent Representative to the UN; H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, former President of Liberia, Nobel Peace Laureate, Member of The Elders, and Co-Chair of the Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism; and H.E. Professor Ibrahim Gambari, Chairman of The Savannah Center for Diplomacy, Democracy, and Development, and former Nigerian Foreign Minister and Chair of the Albright-Gambari Commission; and other senior officials from the African Union and ECOWAS.

Languages: English and French

Objectives:

- To convene leading policy researchers, practitioners, and advocates from Africa and around the world to debate and recommend specific regional and global institutional, policy, legal, normative, and operational innovations that could inform the agenda—and help to raise the ambition—of the Summit of the Future, giving special attention to African perspectives and innovation priorities.
- To establish a [new platform for African policy researchers and advocates](#) to critically discuss and advance policy research on “What Africa Wants” and the type of relationship the Continent needs to have with the UN, World Bank, IMF, WTO, and regional (including African Union and African Development Bank), and sub-regional institutions (e.g., ECOWAS).
- To strengthen African Union, ECOWAS, and UN collaboration, including through the New Agenda for Peace, Global Digital Compact, and Declaration on Future Generations.

Why a Regional Dialogue in Abuja now on African Regional & Global Governance Issues?

Drawing on the Savannah Centre's unique convening power across West Africa and the wider African Continent, the SOTF Africa Regional Dialogue will give special attention to the need for enhanced cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and regional/sub-regional organizations (e.g., the African Union and Abuja-based ECOWAS), between countries in the Global South (South-South Cooperation), and between the United Nations and non-state actors from civil society and the private sector (e.g., the Albright-Gambari Commission's idea of a "UN Global Partnership", to better harness the ideas, networks, capabilities, and diversity of civil society and private sector actors in the work of the, heretofore, primarily intergovernmental United Nations).

The "theory of change" driving the SOTF Africa Regional Dialogue and earlier regional and global policy dialogues is rooted in the conviction that greater results can be achieved when: (1) individual states and non-state actors recognize that their priority issues or institutional reforms can benefit from a regionally and globally systemic, coalition-supported effort; (2) greater opportunities arise for "deal-making" and linkages between innovative proposals across distinct sectors and institutional settings; and (3) momentum for reform is generated and sustained by early wins on easier issues that lay the groundwork for progress on harder questions.

Participants: 45 to 50 select participants from African and global think tanks, universities, civil society organizations, the private sector, and global/regional organizations, including the UN, AU & ECOWAS. 150-200 participants (from mainly Abuja) for opening and closing ceremonies.

Format & Methodology: Expert working groups ("breakthrough groups") will convene on the most pressing challenges facing Africans. After exploring consensus on a particular problem-set and analyzing shortcoming in the global-regional response, each group will identify and elaborate four to five global-regional governance reform proposals (*two of which might build on recommendations in the UN Secretary-General's Our Common Agenda and High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism reports*). These will be presented subsequently to, and critiqued by, a group of African states persons and scholars in the concluding session, to further refine and strengthen the proposals.

Expert Working Groups: (i) Peace, Security & Defence; (ii) Sustainable Development and Democratic Governance; (iii) Human Rights and Humanitarian Action; (iv) Climate Governance; and (v) Rules-Based World Order and the Place of Africa in Global Governance (with gender, youth and technology as cross-cutting issues).

Proposed Conference Venue: Transcorp Hilton Abuja

Findings & Recommendations Report: A widely disseminated, 10-to-15 page report will synthesize chief analytical findings and recommendations, to be advanced by the Savannah Centre, Global Governance Innovation Network & Coalition for the UN We Need before the Summit of the Future.

Media and Communications: The co-sponsors will develop a common press release and social media strategy, as well as media interviews with some of the high-level/expert participants from the SOTF Africa Regional Dialogue.

Organizational Modalities: Co-sponsoring organizations will contribute to: (1) the full development of the SOTF Africa Regional Dialogue full planning document (including the meeting agenda, Spotlight panels experts/panel design, work plan, and budget); (2) identifying possible participants from around the region; (3) co-facilitating the meeting, including expert working groups; (4) designing and implementing a communications strategy (including media interviews, social media, etc.); and (5) supporting basic operational costs (e.g., flights, hotels, meals, Savannah Centre staffing, etc.).

Line-Item Budget: An Africa Regional Dialogue line-item budget, totaling USD \$115,000, may be furnished upon request.

About Savannah

The Savannah Centre for Diplomacy, Democracy and Development (SCDDD) is an authoritative non-governmental Organization committed to research, advocacy, training, and policy analysis in the areas of conflict prevention, management, democratization and sustainable development in Nigeria, Africa, and the world. It was founded in 1993 by Professor Ibrahim Agboola Gambari, CFR; a renowned scholar and seasoned diplomat, former Foreign Affairs Minister of Nigeria, and

former United Nations Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs. Visit:
<https://savannahcentre.org/>

About Stimson

The Stimson Center promotes international security and shared prosperity through applied research and independent analysis, global engagement, and policy innovation. Stimson's Global Governance, Justice & Security Program aims to advance more capable global and regional institutions to better cope with existing and emerging global challenges, and to create new opportunities through effective multilateral action, including with the global business community and civil society. Visit the Global Governance Innovation Network, a collaborative project of the Stimson Center, Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS), Plataforma CIPÓ, and Leiden University: <https://ggin.stimson.org/>