



ECOSOCC
Economic Social & Cultural Council

**The voice of the
African Citizenry**

ECOSOCC CITIZENS' FORUM

Malabo, Equatorial Guinea 2025

Theme

**Reimagining Democracy and
Advancing Reparative Justice:
A New Social Contract**

**TUE, JULY 08 &
WED, JULY 09**

**SIPOPO
CONFERENCE CENTER**



Concept Note

1. Background

Established on 4th July 2004 and now headquartered in Lusaka, Zambia, the Economic, Social, and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) serves as an advisory organ of the African Union. Its primary role is to facilitate a dynamic interface between AU Member States and the African populace, leveraging the expertise of civil society organizations (CSOs) and the broader community, including the private sector, in policy development and implementation. Over the years, ECOSOCC has provided a platform for inclusive engagement, fostering participatory governance and the integration of diverse perspectives in decision-making processes.

The 2024 ECOSOCC Citizens Forum, themed “Democracy and Institutional Resilience,” marked a significant milestone as part of ECOSOCC’s 20th-anniversary celebrations. Hosted in Accra, Ghana, the forum drew over 400 participants, including CSO representatives, AU officials, policymakers, and regional organizations. It served as a critical platform to discuss challenges to democracy and governance in Africa, including Unconstitutional Changes of Government (UCG), governance deficits, and the importance of institutional resilience. The forum culminated in actionable recommendations to safeguard democracy across the continent, emphasizing the need for strengthened frameworks to address Africa’s evolving challenges.

The genesis of the Citizens Forum dates back to 2022, with its inaugural event held in Lusaka. This flagship initiative has since grown into an annual flagship event, enabling African citizens to actively contribute to policymaking processes on the sidelines of the mid-year coordination summit. Each forum builds upon the progress of its predecessors, addressing contemporary challenges while advancing the AU’s Agenda 2063 vision for a prosperous and united Africa. The 2024 forum laid the groundwork for enhanced institutional resilience, providing insights into addressing governance weaknesses and promoting transparency and accountability.

Despite the progress made, Africa continues to grapple with interconnected challenges that hinder its governance aspirations. Political instability, weak institutions, economic inequality, and the resurgence of UCGs remain significant barriers to achieving democratic governance. Established frameworks such as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance (ACDEG), the Lomé Declaration, and the AU Constitutive Act provide a foundation for addressing these issues. However, implementation gaps and enforcement limitations persist, underscoring the urgency for renewed focus and action. The recurrence of military coups, coupled with growing mistrust of regional institutions, highlights the need for robust governance reforms and strengthened institutional frameworks.

The 2025 ECOSOCC Citizens Forum will be held under the theme “**Reimagining Democracy and Advancing Reparative Justice – A New Social Contract.**” This theme reflects the urgent need to rethink democratic governance models in Africa in light of persistent socio-economic inequalities, historical injustices, and the growing demand for accountability, inclusion, and equitable development. It underscores the importance of reweaving the social fabric through a renewed contract between states and citizens one that places justice, dignity, participation, and historical redress at the centre of policymaking and civic engagement.

The Forum aims to build on the successes of previous forums by addressing six critical thematic areas that align with Africa’s sustainable development and governance priorities. These building blocks are designed to provide holistic and integrated solutions to Africa’s pressing challenges while fostering collaboration among stakeholders. Consistent with past practices, the selected themes align not only with Agenda 2063 and the AU theme of the year but also with global discussions at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA),

reinforcing the interconnectedness between continental efforts within member states and global engagement on the international stage.

2. 2025 Proposed Thematic Areas

The proposed 6 thematic areas are:

1. **Reparative Justice and Integration: The Role of Civil Society and Regional Institutions**

This theme explores the role of civil society and regional bodies in advancing reparative justice for Africans and Afro-descendants. Anchored in the AU 2025 theme “Justice for Africans and People of African Descent through Reparations,” the discussion will focus on mechanisms to redress historical injustices, promote regional integration, and empower the diaspora. It aims to chart pathways toward collective healing, dignity, and unity in line with Agenda 2063.

2. **Reimagining Global and Continental Governance: Africa’s Role in UN Reform, Peace, and Democratic Development**

This session will examine how evolving global governance structures, particularly reform of the UN Charter and Security Council, can be reshaped to reflect African priorities. It will discuss the APSA and AGA collaboration, analyze the continent’s conflict resolution efforts, and position the C-10’s advocacy for Security Council reform as central to a renewed multilateral order that truly serves Africa’s peace, democracy, and development goals.

3. **Climate Resilience and Cooperation: African Strategies for a Just Green Transition**

Focusing on mitigation, adaptation, and international collaboration, this theme will explore Africa’s leadership in responding to climate change. Discussions will emphasize climate justice, financing, and inclusive policies that protect vulnerable communities while leveraging Africa’s unique ecosystems and indigenous knowledge systems in the global climate agenda.

4. **Health Sovereignty and Equity: Strengthening African Health Systems Post-Pandemic**

In the wake of COVID-19, this thematic area will address lessons learned, strategies for health system resilience, equitable vaccine access, and investment in local manufacturing. The session will spotlight how African-led innovations and civil society partnerships can ensure universal health coverage and preparedness for future pandemics.

5. **Fiscal Justice and Transparency: CSOs in Africa’s Global Tax Governance Agenda**

This theme highlights the role of African civil society in shaping global tax justice frameworks, combating illicit financial flows, and promoting transparency in natural resource management.

It will assess ongoing reforms and the potential of CSOs to drive accountability and equitable economic systems that serve public interest and development goals.

6. **Artificial Intelligence for Good: Empowering Civil Society in the Digital Era**

This session will explore how AI can be harnessed to promote inclusive development, democratic governance, and human rights. It will also discuss the ethical and regulatory implications of AI in Africa and how CSOs can use digital innovation to expand civic participation, monitor public service delivery, and defend civic space.

This year's forum will provide a platform for high-level discussions, focused workshops, and the development of actionable recommendations to advance Africa's governance and developmental goals.

In essence, the 2025 ECOSOCC Citizens Forum represents a continuation of the AU's commitment to inclusive governance and sustainable development. By addressing these critical themes, the forum aims to deliver impactful outcomes that resonate across the continent, fostering unity, resilience, and accountability.

3. Overall Objectives of the 2025 ECOSOCC Citizens Forum

The 2025 ECOSOCC Citizens Forum aims to achieve the following overarching objectives:

- a. **Advance a New Social Contract Rooted in Justice and Participation:** To catalyze dialogue on reimagining democracy in Africa by promoting inclusive, participatory governance systems that are grounded in justice, dignity, accountability, and historical redress.
- b. **Promote Reparative Justice for Africans and People of African Descent:** To deepen continental and diaspora-wide discussions on reparative justice, regional integration, and the empowerment of Afro-descendant communities, in alignment with the AU 2025 theme and Agenda 2063 aspirations.
- c. **Strengthen the Interface Between Citizens and Institutions:** To reinforce the role of civil society and citizens in influencing AU policymaking processes, thereby enhancing institutional legitimacy, transparency, and citizen trust in governance structures.
- d. **Position Africa at the Centre of Global Governance Reform:** To explore Africa's role in shaping global governance, particularly in relation to UN Charter reform and Security Council transformation, through the lens of Africa's peace, security, and democratic development agenda.
- e. **Tackle Interconnected Development Challenges Through Integrated Dialogue:** To foster multi-stakeholder dialogue on pressing issues such as climate change, global health, fiscal justice, and digital transformation, promoting holistic and innovative policy solutions across these intersecting domains.
- f. **Empower Civil Society to Drive Sustainable and Equitable Development:** To amplify the capacities and voices of CSOs in advancing Africa's development agenda especially in areas of technology, economic justice, public accountability, and environmental resilience.

4. Key Meeting Outcomes

The 2025 ECOSOCC Citizens Forum will deliver a Citizens' Declaration and actionable policy recommendations across six thematic areas. It will strengthen civil society engagement with AU institutions, shape Africa's position on UN reform, and foster multi-stakeholder partnerships for implementation. These outcomes will directly support Agenda 2063 and amplify citizen-led governance across the continent.

5. Methodology

The meeting will take place for (2) days. It will be held in plenary sessions, using a participatory approach to allow for a sharing of experience and an exchange of reflections between the participants, and facilitated by targeted experts. The proposed methodology integrates structured plenary sessions, interactive break-out discussions, and networking opportunities to maximize engagement and collaboration among diverse stakeholders. This approach aims to leverage the expertise and contributions of all participants, ensuring that the outcomes of the 2025 ECOSOCC Citizens Forum are robust, relevant, and conducive to sustainable development and democratic governance in Africa.

The core background documents for the meeting will include:

- ECOSOCC Citizen's forum 1) in 2022 and 2) in 2023 and 3) in 2024
- Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (2001)
- Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020-2030)
- Policy Framework on the Transformative Use of Artificial Intelligence in Africa (AU Draft Framework)
- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981):
- Accra and Malabo Declarations
- African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG)
- Lomé Declaration
- AU Constitutive Act
- Draft Guidelines on Constitutional Amendments
- Experts Study on Root Causes of Unconstitutional Changes of Government (UCG)
- Africa Governance Report 2023 on UCG
- Mbeki Report (2013), the first comprehensive assessment on the state, magnitude, channels, and impact of illicit financial flows (IFF) from Africa, Common African Position on Asset Recovery (CAPAR) (2020) and the African Mining Vision (AMV) (2009)

6. Participation

The Citizens Forum will bring together a diverse range of stakeholders, including selected civil society organizations (CSOs) around the continent comprising a diverse and influential group of international and regional organizations and local organizations, the African Diaspora Union, think tanks, AU member states, academicians, and technical experts from the CSO and the AU Commission and its organs. The event will be structured around four thematic panels as already listed:

- Each panel will feature presentations by experts in the respective fields, followed by discussions involving representatives from AU member states, CSOs, think tanks, and academia.
- Each session will also include a question-and-answer segment to encourage interactive dialogue among participants.

At the conclusion of the event, a closing ceremony will convene all participants to consolidate and summarize the key outcomes from each thematic group. This segment aims to highlight the recommendations and insights derived from the discussions, capturing the essence of the deliberations. It will outline actionable steps forward, ensuring that the conclusions of the forum reflect the diversity of perspectives and contribute effectively to future initiatives and strategies aligned with AU-ECOSOCC's mission and objectives.

7. Date and Venue

The Forum will be convened on 8th and 9th July 2025 at the Sipopo Conference Centre in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea

8. Prospective Partners & Supporters

- All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC)
- TrustAfrica
- Amani Africa
- Women in Peace and Security (WIPC)
- European Partnership for Democracy (EDP)
- Federation of African Journalists (FAJ)
- Africa CDC
- Habitat for Humanity International
- King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID)
- Open Society Foundation (OSF)

- South African Airways (SAA)
- The Institute for Security Studies – ISS Africa

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Government of the Republic
of Equatorial-Guinea



African Union Commission



Common Market for Eastern
and Southern African



Delegation of the European
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