

## Africa and Permanent Membership of the United Nations Security Council: Need or Noise?

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### Abstract

*The Security Council has five permanent members and ten non-permanent members. Decisions on substantive matters require a minimum of nine affirmative votes and no Vetoes by permanent members, reflecting the need for consensus among the world's major powers. The US not too long ago announced its readiness to support the creation of two new permanent seats for Africa though without veto powers. The global consensus on restructuring the P5 is historic. While Africa is under-represented in global governance structures, it is over-represented in the challenges these structures address. This paper finds that reform of the Security Council membership to include permanent African representation with veto power has become imperative in the light of current world events. It finds that for the challenges facing the continent of Africa to be addressed at the world platform, Africa should be represented at the Council. This paper employs a doctrinal method of legal research and advocates that inclusion of the African Continent in the permanent membership category of the Security Council will ensure that decisions affecting Africa are made with direct and meaningful input from those most affected.*

**Keywords:** United Nations, Security Council, Veto Power, permanent membership, Africa.

### 1. Introduction

The formation of the United Nations became necessary, owing to the failure of the League of Nations and the resultant occurrence of the Second World War. The United Nations which was formally referred to as the United Nations Organisation. U.N.O came into being at the San Francisco Conference of 1945,<sup>1</sup> facilitated by the allied forces. It serves

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as world platform with a mission to foster international peace and security among nations. It has a membership of 193 states.

Among the governing principles of United Nations are 1. Sovereign equality of all its members 2. Non-interference in the internal affairs of states 3. Peaceful resolution of disputes. The core mandate of the United Nations are the maintenance of peace and security in the world, the promotion of human rights, the delivery of humanitarian aid, the advancement of sustainable development and the upholding of international law. The United Nations addresses issues that concern the world through its organs like the general Assembly, Security Council, and other specialised agencies like WHO and UNESCO. The Security Council is a critical organ of the UN<sup>2</sup>. It has the powers to make binding resolutions requiring compliance by UN Members<sup>3</sup>. It is saddled with the responsibility to prevent and remove threats to peace, suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of peace and the promotion of peaceful resolutions and adjustments to international conflicts or disputes.<sup>4</sup>

The Council consists of 15 members, composed of 5 permanent members (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States) and 10 non- permanent members.<sup>5</sup> The permanent members have veto powers which allows any one of them to block the adoption of any substantive resolution.<sup>6</sup>

The composition of the United Nations Security Council over the years have shown that the interests of Africa are not a major concern to the world. The veto powers of Council serves to maintain geopolitical dynamics that keep African Nations in a position of independence. Not

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<sup>1</sup> EO Edmund, 'The Web of International Politics, Analysing international Relations,' (Onitsha: Chambers Book limited, 2006)

<sup>2</sup> CFR.org Editors, 'The UN Security Council/Council on Foreign Relations' <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder> 'accessed 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2024

<sup>3</sup> <https://uncca.unmissions.org>. 'United Nations Security Council Resolutions' UNRCCA.. Accessed on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2024

<sup>4</sup> CFR.org Editors, 'The UN Security Council/Council on Foreign Relations' <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder> 'accessed 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2024

<sup>5</sup> <https://main.un.org/content> 'Current Members/security Council – the United Nations' Accessed on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2024

<sup>6</sup> AS Assan and AA Fatai, *Introduction to International Relations*, (Ibadan: College Press and publishers Limited, 2013) 15

too long ago, Mali's foreign Ministry said that the military juntas of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger wrote to the UN Security Council to denounce what they said was Ukraine's support for rebel groups in West Africa's Sahel region.<sup>7</sup> The letter also called on the Council to uphold its responsibility following Ukraine's decision to support terrorism in Africa<sup>8</sup>. This raises legitimacy issue on the Council's mandate in the maintenance of world peace. Also the United Kingdom and the United States are backing Ukraine in the war against Russia. Ukraine with the full backing of these two world powers is now warring against Mali, an African Country which never was in conflict with Kyiv.

This paper advocates that it has become imperative that African interests be represented at the Security Council by expanding the permanent membership of the Security Council to include Africa, with the attendant veto powers.

## 2. Literature Review

Argument for the reform of the United Nations Security Council has been on since the inception of the United Nations. A writer<sup>9</sup> attributed the reason for the absence of Africa at San Francisco in 1945 to represent their own interest to the European colonialism. Africa was under oppressive colonial rule with their voices and interests suppressed by foreign invaders. The writer hence advocated for a correction of the historical injustice. As part of the reasons for a search for a permanent seat for Africa at the UN security Council, emphases was laid on the fact that the Security Council of the UN could be described as a principal organ of the UN with enormous powers to impose binding obligation on the 193 UN members in its core responsibility to assess threats and maintain global security and peace.

The composition of the Security Council and its inability to effectively respond to emerging global conflicts calls for reform. The

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<sup>7</sup> *West African Juntas write to UN over Ukraine's alleged rebel support*, <<https://www.reuters.com.africaa>>, assessed 19<sup>th</sup> October, 2024

<sup>8</sup> 'West African States write to UN over Ukraine's alleged rebel support,' <<https://www.reuter.com>>, accessed on 4<sup>th</sup> of November, 2024

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Felix Kumah-Abiwu 'Africa's search for Permanent Seats on the UN Security Council: A matter of Justice and Democratic Rights'. <https://onpolicy.org>. Published 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023. Accessed on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2024

writer saw the use of veto power by the P5 members to restrict effective response to major conflicts and crises around the world or to block resolutions, especially as it concerns developing countries as unacceptable. The inability of the UNSC to prevent the US war against Iraq, its failure to resolve the civil war in Syria and the ongoing military onslaught on Ukraine by Russia, and the question of Russia's use of veto powers in the conflict are all part of the challenges facing the UNSC. The misuse of the veto powers by some of the p5 members in promotion of their interests at the expense of the other members of the UN was highlighted by the writer. The inactions of the SC was equally seen as a threat to global peace and stability. The Russia military offensive in Ukraine makes the case for reform of the UNSC as a matter of justice and democratic rights.

Other writers have shared the same view but from a different perspective.<sup>10</sup> The writer noted that the credibility of the UN in passing binding resolutions is steadily eroding as it lacks an inclusive and participatory model. The growing discontent that the UNSC (permanent members) seek to promote self-interest through their veto power was pointed out. This they do by actual vetoing of resolutions and threats of the use of the veto powers, thereby dissuading supporters of a resolution from bringing it to vote. The lack of transparency in council meetings, institutional constraints and flaws in working method in UNSC calls greater legitimacy, representation, effectiveness, enhanced capacity and willingness to act in defence of common peace.

The decolonization theory was hugely emphasized to press home the need for a fair representation at the Security Council. The Decolonization perspective is based on the fact that most International Organizations have their origin in colonial ideas, and practices. According to the writer, UN was established at a time when almost all African Countries were under colonial rule. Africa has 54 members but 54 members but no seat at the UNSC which is not good for the continent. Reforming the Council therefore in accordance with the maxim of fair and permanent representation for Africans has become important and

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<sup>10</sup> NM Alene and Others, 'African's Quest for Reform of the United Nations Security Council: A just cause curbed by unrealistic proposals' < <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/...> > Accessed 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2024.

will serve as restorative justice for the continent. It was noted that UNSC failed Africa as regards the genocide in Rwanda. According to the writer, at the run up to the Rwandan Genocide, although the US and France were aware of the potentials for genocide, they made no attempt to convene a meeting of the UNSC to investigate the warnings. The world powers could not intervene but rather sought to protect their position through resolutions. Had Africa been a permanent member of SC, the genocide would have been avoided.

It was also noted that though majority of the resolutions of the SC deal with African issues, Africa is not the global forum where these issues are discussed and resolutions on them made. After decolonisation, the Council still seeks to maintain western colonial and neo-colonial dominance. A reform of the Council for decolonising and deconstructing the Councils' existing unilateralism in decision making scheme. This is to enable Africa have an enhanced presence in global diplomacy. This will ensure that Africa's key security concerns were addressed and assistance provided in many conflicts and crises in Africa.

However, it was noted that Africa's insistence on immediate and full veto power for new entrants and its demand for representation merely through members inside the UN are unfeasible. In the same vein, another writer<sup>11</sup> reported a speech by South African President at the Africa Aerospace and Defence Exhibition Airshow at the Waterkloof Airforce Base in centurion South Africa, where he reiterated Africa's demand for permanent representation at the UN Security Council. Africa deserves not only a permanent seat but also veto right to avoid being relegated to 'second class' participation. Africa has got the capability, know-how and therefore needs to be given its rightful place in the UN system and its various structures. The writer noted that this call came after the United States declared its support for two African countries as permanent members of the United Nations Security Council without veto powers as part of the proposed reforms.

### **3. Conceptual framework for the Membership of the United Nations**

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<sup>11</sup> Andrew Wasike, 'South African President Calls for Permanent seat on UNSC,' <<https://aa.com.tr.africa>> , accessed 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2024.

### 3.1 The United Nations

The United Nations is an intergovernmental organisation whose stated purpose is to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations, achieve international co-operation and serve as a centre for harmonising the actions of nations<sup>12</sup>. It is the world's largest international organisation.

At the Conference of the San Francisco, the United Nations Charter as well as laws of the New International Court of Justice (ICJ) were signed with all the representatives to the conference signing the Charter on the 26<sup>th</sup> June 1945 which came into being in October 1945.<sup>13</sup> Though formed with aims and objectives, the United Nations has transcended its traditional role of prevention of war to maintenance of international peace and security<sup>14</sup>. It provides succour to countries defeated in war. Since 1948, the UN has helped end and foster reconciliation by conducting successful peacekeeping operations in dozens of Countries including Cambodia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mozambique, Namibia and others.<sup>15</sup>

The UN has six principal operational organisations<sup>16</sup>. The General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the international Court of Justice, the UN Secretariat and the Trusteeship. Although the Trusteeship Council has been inactive since 1994. The UN system includes a multitude of specialized agencies, including the World Bank group, the World Health Organisation, the World Food programme, UNESCO and UNICEF.

### 3.2 The Security Council of the United Nations

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<sup>12</sup> Bluebook 'Cooperation in United Nations Activities,' <<https://www.mota.go.jp>>, accessed on 4<sup>th</sup> of November, 2024

<sup>13</sup> 'The San Francisco Conference,' <<https://www.un.org>>, accessed on 4<sup>th</sup> of November, 2024

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>15</sup> un.org 'our success/United Nations peacekeeping,' <<https://peacekeeping>>, accessed on 4<sup>th</sup> of November, 2024

<sup>16</sup> Main Bodies United Nations, <<https://www.un.org/about-us/>>, accessed on 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2024

Chapter v of the United Nations Charter contains provisions establishing the United Nations Security Council. The charter<sup>17</sup> establishes the composition of the Security Council, with 5 permanent members (the Republic of China, (currently People's Republic of China) France, the Soviet Union (now Russian Federation), the United Kingdom, and the United States) and 10 non –permanent members elected by the General Assembly. The non-permanent members<sup>18</sup> serve two year terms and cannot be immediately re-elected. In the selection process for these non-permanent members, the treaty calls for 'due regard specially paid in the first instance to the contribution of members of the United Nations to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the other purposes of the organisation; and also to equitable geographical distribution.'

The Charter gives the Security Council 'primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and requires the Council to act in accordance with the UN's purposes and principles.'<sup>19</sup> The permanent members of the United Nations are the five sovereign states to whom the UN Charter of 1945 grants a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. They are as mentioned earlier China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.<sup>20</sup>

The permanent members were all Allies in World War II (and the victors of that war) and are all states with nuclear weapons. All of them have the powers of veto which enables any one of them to prevent the adoption of any substantive draft Council resolution, regardless of its level of international support<sup>21</sup>. The remaining 10 members of the UN Security Council are elected by the General Assembly, making them a total of 15.

### **3.3 Veto Powers of the Permanent members of the UN**

The veto Powers of the United Nations security Council is the power of the 5 permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States) to veto any 'substantive' resolution. They also happen to be the nuclear

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<sup>17</sup> Charter of the United Nations, Chapter v, Article 23

<sup>18</sup> *ibid*

<sup>19</sup> Article 24

<sup>20</sup> Article 23

<sup>21</sup> Article 27

weapon states (NWS) under the terms of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.<sup>22</sup> The absence of a permanent member, does not prevent a draft resolution from being adopted. Although the UN Charter did not mention 'veto power', Article 27 of the Charter provides that apart from procedural matters, decisions of the Security Council on all other matters shall be made by an affirmative vote of 9 members including the concurring votes of the permanent members, provided that in decision under Chapter vi, and under paragraph 3 of Article 52, a party to a dispute shall abstain from voting.

This veto powers of the Security Council has come under great criticism for a long time. Supporters<sup>23</sup> of the structure regard it as a promoter of international Stability, a check against military interventions, and a critical safeguard against United States domination.

This paper contends that the Security Council as it is presently constituted has outlived its usefulness. Lack of participation of the African Continent in the world decision making body is inequitable and oppressive.

#### **4. Legal Framework for the Membership of the United Nations**

##### **4.1 The United Nations Charter**

The Charter of the United Nations is the foundational Treaty of the United Nations, an intergovernmental organisation. It establishes the purpose, governing structure and overall framework of the UN system including its six principal organs (the Secretariat, the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the International Court of Justice and the Trusteeship Council)

During the Second World War, the United Nations agreed to establish a new post war organisation<sup>24</sup>. Pursuant to this goal the UN Charter was discussed, prepared and drafted at the San Francisco conference that began on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1945. Most of the world's sovereign nations were involved. Following two-thirds approval of each

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<sup>22</sup> Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), <<https://disarmament.unoda.org/wmd>>, assessed 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2024

<sup>23</sup> Permanent Members Veto Power Impacts UN Security Council's Decisions <<https://dailytrust.com>> 'How', assessed on 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2024

<sup>24</sup> The San Francisco Conference, <<https://www.un.org>>, accessed on 4<sup>th</sup> of November, 2024



part, the final text was unanimously adopted by delegates and it opened for signature on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June 1945<sup>25</sup>. It was signed in San Francisco in United States by 50 of the 51 original members<sup>26</sup>. The Charter entered into force on October 24<sup>th</sup> 1945, following ratification by 5 permanent members of the Security Council<sup>27</sup>.

The Charter of the UN mandates the UN and its member states to maintain international peace and security; uphold international law; achieve higher standard of living for their citizens; address economic, social, health and related problems; and promote universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion<sup>28</sup>. It is left to be seen how the effective the UN has been in ensuring the realisation of this lofty ambition through its various organs this is particularly so when the African continent is unrepresented and their issues left unaddressed at the global forum.

#### 4.2 The International Court of Justice

The international Court of Justice is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations.<sup>29</sup> Its seat is at the peace palace in Hague (Netherlands). The court's role is to settle in accordance with international law, legal disputes submitted to it by States and to give advisory opinion on legal questions referred to it by authorised United Nations organs and specialized agencies. The International court of Justice functions in accordance with its Statute.

This court is composed of 15 judges who are elected for terms of one year by the General Assembly and the Security Council.<sup>30</sup> The UN charter intended a close working relationship between the Security

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>26</sup> Preparatory Years: UN Charter History-the United Nations, <<https://www.un.org/about-us>>, assessed on 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2024

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>28</sup> Charter of the United Nations-Wikipedia, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>>, assessed on 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2024

<sup>29</sup> The Court International Court of Justice, <<https://www.icj-cij.org/court>>, accessed 4<sup>th</sup> November 2024

<sup>30</sup> International Court of Justice, <<https://www.icj-cij.org>>, assessed on 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2024

Council and the International Court of Justice (ICJ)<sup>31</sup>. The intension has not been fully realised as the SC scarcely made use of the ICJ as an instrument in the exercise of its responsibility of maintaining peace and security.<sup>32</sup>

The Statute of ICJ is annexed to the charter itself meaning that all UN members' states are automatically parties to the Statute. One of the tools available to the SC to peacefully settle International disputes affecting International peace and security is to make use of the ICJ's jurisdiction in such cases.<sup>33</sup> They can also ask for advisory opinion on legal questions that arise in the council's work.<sup>34</sup> The Charter also gives the Council responsibility for addressing instances of non-compliance by states with the court's judgements brought before the council.<sup>35</sup> The council jointly with the General Assembly elect the judges of the ICJ and the president of the ICJ, briefs the Council in a private meeting annually. This provisions points to the supremacy of the Council over the ICJ.

#### **4.3 United Nations Security Council Resolutions**

The Security Council resolutions are formal expressions of the opinion or will of UN organs. It is an official document accepted by 15 members of the Security Council and is adopted by a vote of the Council members. The resolution is adopted if nine or more of the 15 Council members vote for the resolution, and if it is not vetoed by any of the 5 permanent members. The Council's resolutions may be procedural or substantive. It could concern its work to ensure the peaceful settlement of international disputes and eliminate threats to international peace and security. The resolution may resolve military measures against the offending state, establish international tribunals, approve mandates of peacekeeping forces, and impose restrictive measures (asset freeze,

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<sup>31</sup> 'in Hindsight: The Security Council and the International Court of Justice,' <<https://secitycouncilreport.org>>, accessed 6<sup>th</sup> of November, 2024.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>33</sup> Charter of the United Nations, Article 36(3)

<sup>34</sup> Article 8(1)

<sup>35</sup> Article 94(2)

travel ban) on individuals. Under the Charter of the United Nations, all member States are obligated to comply with the Council decisions<sup>36</sup>

The United Nations Security Council Resolutions have garnered the attention of the world howbeit negatively in some cases. In *Crimean crises and Ukraine v Russia*,<sup>37</sup> following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, Ukraine brought a case against Russia in the ICJ,<sup>38</sup> alleging violations of the International Convention for the suppression of the financing of Terrorism and the International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Racial discrimination. This case centres on events following the annexation, including the conflict in Eastern Ukraine<sup>39</sup>. The Crimean crises and the ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine have brought significant attention to the UN Security Council. The division among its members, particularly Russia's use of veto power, have posed challenges to taking a more decisive step. This is because the agreement of all the permanent members of the UN including Russia is required for any major decision of SC of UN

## 5. Necessity of inclusion of African continent in the permanent membership of UN

The composition of the United Nations Security Council shows that not only that the interests of the Africa are not duly represented but also the structures of influence through the veto power mostly serve to maintain geopolitical dynamics that keep African Nations in a position of independence.

Recently, the top diplomats of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger sent a joint letter to the UN strongly condemning the Kyiv regime and its support extremist insurgents in the Sahel. The joint statement also

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<sup>36</sup> United Nations Security Council resolutions –UNRCCA, <<https://unrcca.unmissions.org>>, assessed on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2024

<sup>37</sup> Ukraine v Russia( Re; Crimea) (Dec) (GC) -20958/14 DECISION 16.12 2020 (GC) ICJ Reports

<sup>38</sup> 'The Court International Court of Justice,' <<https://www.icj-cij.org/court>>, accessed 4<sup>th</sup> November 2024

<sup>39</sup> 'International Court of Justice: *Ukraine v Russia*, <<https://unric.org/>>, accessed on 4<sup>th</sup> of November, 2024

called on the United Nation Security Council to uphold its responsibilities following Ukraine's decision to practically support terrorism in Africa<sup>40</sup>. This action of Ukraine has been condemned and its situations that agitate the mind in questioning the role and legitimacy of the UN and UNSC.

Also, the United States<sup>41</sup> and the United Kingdom<sup>42</sup> are fully backing Ukraine in the conflict against Russia. Russia is one of the permanent members of the Security Council. It is therefore curious and unjust to know that Ukraine, which is a proxy of both UK and US, two of the permanent members of the Security Council, carries out acts of war against an African Country (Mali) that is not engaged in conflict with Kyiv. It means by extension that US and UK, two of the five permanent members of the SC of UN are carrying out war against an African Country (Mali).

In addition, the large number of conflicts on the continent, from Sudan to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRP), certainly calls for greater participation by Africans in their resolution. Who can better appreciate and articulate the issues bedevilling the African continent except Africa itself. The call therefore for inclusion of Africa in the global decision making body is due for actualization.

What then is the hope and future of the African Continent where her interests are not only unrepresented in the international community but are marginalized. Unless steps are taken and urgently at that, the core mandate of the UN among which is fostering international peace and security will merely be elusive. Full representation of Africa at United Nations Security Council is a need and never noise.

The world is currently experiencing a record number of conflicts and crises since the end of the second war. The war in Gaza is severely hitting civilians. There are fighting in Sudan between the Sudanese army (Sudanese Armed Forces SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Force<sup>0</sup> This has caused an enormous humanitarian crises. There

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<sup>40</sup> Mali's spat with Kyiv: Is the Russia-Ukraine War spilling over into Africa <[www.aljazeera.com](http://www.aljazeera.com)>, assessed on 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2024

<sup>41</sup> Statement from President Joe Biden on US Support for Ukraine, <<https://www.whitehouse.gov>>, assessed on 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2024

<sup>42</sup> Support to Ukraine: factsheet-GOV.UK, <<https://www.gov.uk>> publications 'UK', assessed on 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2024

is also Russian invasion of Ukraine. Attacks on civilians and infrastructure have intensified. There is also war in Syria. The crises in Syria was exacerbated by the devastation earthquake it witnessed not too long ago. The Democratic Republic of Congo is also facing one of the world's protracted crises.<sup>43</sup> The question still remains, how effective is the SC of UN is in carrying out its responsibility of assessment of threats and maintenance of international peace and security. African Countries are the worst hit in terms of wars and crises. Africa should be part of those who make resolutions affecting their world.

Though a call for structural reform of the permanent membership of the UN Security Council to include African continent has been on for decades, it has become more imperative in the light of prevailing circumstances shown above.

### **5.1 General Consensus on Restructuring of the Five Permanent Members of UN**

Debates and counter debates on restricting the UNSC has been going on as long as it was created. Among the United Nations Security Council, responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, they have a common understanding that reform and restricting the UNSC to reflect the current balance of forces and improve its working method and ability is necessary.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 2024, the US announced that it would support the creation of two new permanent seats for African Countries and a non-permanent seat for Small Island developing Nations. This statement came after a Pledge in 2022 by President Biden administration to support the expansion of the Security Council. The new permanent seats would come without veto power<sup>44</sup>

The common African position known as 'Ezulwini Consensus' also calls for two permanent seats with all the prerogatives and privileges of permanent membership, including the right of veto, and

<sup>43</sup> '6 Global Conflicts and Crises to Watch in 2024,' <<https://svet.charita.cz?news>>, accessed 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2014

<sup>44</sup> 'UN Security Council: African Countries face hurdles and dangers in getting permanent seats,' <<https://conversations.com.>UN>>, assessed on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2024

five non-permanent seats.<sup>45</sup> It is however unlikely and almost impossible that the continent of Africa will accept a permanent seat at the UNSC without veto powers. It will look as some called it ‘‘Second – class membership status’ or ‘permanent observer status’.<sup>46</sup>

It is therefore contended that the UNSC reform should be inclusive in every way. The Continent of Africa should be included among the P5 with the attendant veto powers.

## **5.2 Capacity of Africa to be among the P5**

The UN officially came into existence on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1945 upon ratification of the Charter by the five then permanent members of the Security Council and other signatories. This is a period when most African Countries were still under colonial rule with no representation at the international level. African continent has evolved. Things have changed. The social, economic and political situations are different now. Africa is the leading contributor<sup>47</sup> to UN peacekeeping operations and yet Africa has been excluded from the position of power and influence which could better its lot. The current population of Africa is 1,525,582,698 as of Sunday, October 20<sup>th</sup> 2024, based on the latest United Nations estimates<sup>48</sup>. African population is equivalent to 18.39 percent of the total world population.<sup>49</sup> The continent houses 54 of the UN’s 193 members and hosts the majority of the UN peacekeeping operations<sup>50</sup>.

In spite of all these, Africa has been underrepresented in the decision- making process that shapes the world. Reform of the structure is imperative. Unless Africa is given a permanent seat at the Security Council it may not be able to positively influence its own affairs through a meaningful contribution to the decision making process of the world.

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<sup>45</sup> Assodesire.com ‘African’s Permanent Seats at UN Security Council: Is the United States Proposal Acceptable. Assessed 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2024

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>47</sup> The Role of Peacekeeping Missions in Africa, <[www.cfr.org](http://www.cfr.org)>, assessed on 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2024

<sup>48</sup> ‘Population of Africa 2024-worldometer, <<https://www.worldometers.info>>, accessed 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2024

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*

## 6. Recommendations and Conclusion

Amendment of the Charter of the United Nations providing for a seat for Africa in the Security Council with veto power is long overdue. This may not be easy considering the fact that Article 108 of the UN charter requires the support of all permanent five members States and a two-third majority of the UN members in general Assembly, to change the composition of the Council.<sup>51</sup> The General Assembly in which all the 193 member states have one vote each, must approve and the reform by a two third majority (i.e. at 128 states). Once approved, the charter is amended. At the second stage, the amended charter must be ratified by at least two-third of the member states, including the five permanent council members. This is in accordance with national procedure.

This means that during the first stage, there is no right of veto as specified in Article 27 of the Charter. However, during the second stage, the parliaments of the five permanent Council members could prevent the entry into force of the amended charter by failing to ratify it.<sup>52</sup>

African leaders must engage in dialogue, be strategic and be focused at a common goal of achieving inclusion in the Security Council as a permanent member. . It is not a time of warring among each other but a time to bond together to liberate the shackles of imperialism and achieve freedom and influence.

Declaration of love for Africa by Washington is no longer enough. There has to be proof of that love by putting something concrete on the table. It therefore behoves on African leaders to push for actualization of the intents through various means available and at every opportunity.

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<sup>51</sup> Charter of the United Nations. Article 108.

<sup>52</sup> 'Reform of the UNSC –questions and answer,' <<https://www.auswartiges.ont.de>> accessed 6<sup>th</sup> of October, 2024