

# African Union

## (AU)

Topic A: Addressing domestic Shia-Sunni violence

Topic B: The development of a Pan-African currency

## Letter From the Chairs

Dear Delegates,

As your dais for the 2021 edition of the African Union (AU), we are pleased to welcome you to ASFMUN 2021. We are co-chair's Mariana Icaza and Alejandro Carregha, both seniors at ASF and very well practiced in the art of MUN. Coming in to ASFMUN we encourage you to have an open mind, and with an excellent understanding of your topics. The best way to succeed in our committee is to come well-versed and ready to engage in thought-provoking dialogue. We encourage you to be sure to bring fresh ideas, and to include other delegations in your vision of solving the issues at mind.

We are glad you decided to step outside the conventional Western focus of the United Nations and into the geopolitics of Africa. As delegates in this committee, you will address specific problems to the African Union while developing a point of view that steps outside the eurocentric box MUN commonly teaches us to think in. The challenge of this committee is to solve problems and develop solutions in an African context, and to rise to the unique situations of the continent. This committee is perfect for delegates who enjoy traditional committee structures, but seek newer topics and to learn about something we usually wouldn't.

We are excited to see what you have to say! If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact us.

Regards,

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## **Committee Policies:**

### **Technology**

Because ASFMUN will be run online this year, delegates will be required to use their laptops and computers to participate in committees. The only websites delegates are allowed to use during committee sessions are Zoom, Google Docs, which delegates will be writing their working papers and resolutions, and any other sources that the Chair permits. Unless there is an emergency, delegates should not be using cellphones or other electronic devices that will give them an unfair advantage. If there is a concern that a delegate is breaking these rules, please contact any member of the Secretariat.

### **Zoom Guidelines**

All committees will use Zoom, and each committee will use the same Meeting ID and Passcode for every committee session. Delegates should never distribute the Meeting ID and Passcode to anybody else. In the meeting, delegates should change their display name to their position. For instance, a delegate representing Mexico should rename their display name to “Mexico”.

Moreover, delegates are expected to have their camera on at all times except when they are standing up, leaving a room, or having connection issues. While in moderated caucuses, delegates must keep their microphone muted until called on to speak.

Delegates should prepare their own placard in advance for roll call, points, motions, and voting. [This Google Drive folder](#) will have instructions on how to make your own placard.

### **Position Papers:**

Position Papers are due on 11:59 pm of 2/22. Please send it in PDF format to [icazam@asf.edu.mx](mailto:icazam@asf.edu.mx) and [carreghaa@asf.edu.mx](mailto:carreghaa@asf.edu.mx). More details can be found on the Conference Information section of [our website](#).

### **Pre-writing and Plagiarism**

Pre-writing of clauses, language, working papers, and draft papers is strictly forbidden.

Delegates are welcome to use Google Drive to collaborate with other delegates when writing documents. However, they must not work on it outside of the conference.

Plagiarism is strictly prohibited and if any attempts are found, delegates will no longer be eligible for any awards.

## Committee Overview

“The African Union (AU) is a continental body consisting of the 55 member states that make up the countries of the African Continent. It was officially launched in 2002 as a successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU, 1963-1999)” (AU). The goals of the union are:

- “To promote the unity and solidarity of the African States;
- To coordinate and intensify their cooperation and efforts to achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa;
- To defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity and independence;
- To eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa; and
- To promote international cooperation, having due regard to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights” (AU).

## **Topic A: Addressing domestic Shia-Sunni violence**

### **Topic A Background**

#### *Statement of the Problem:*

Growing Shia and Sunni divisions in North Africa are rapidly polarizing the region. National majority-Sunni governments are repressing the Iranian-backed Shi'ite tide out of fear of hosting a proxy conflict between Iran and the Islamic State. Crucially, members of Shia communities are in constant jeopardy, and lack the social and political capital to demand the fulfillment of their basic rights. The violent manifestation of such historic feud could destabilize the region, particularly if foreign powers such as the Islamic State opt to intervene in pursuit of their own interests.

#### *Topic history:*

The Shia and the Sunni are two sects within the Islamic religion. Their ancient religious schism is rooted in a debate over succession. While the Sunni believe that individual merit should dictate leadership of Islamic states, the Shia consider that authority should rather follow a divine order. This sectarian clash dates back to 632 C.E. with the passing of Muhammad, the prophet and founder of Islam. The Caliphate—governing body of the newly-established Islamic community—, was left without a leading Caliph. The two potential candidates to assume the throne were Ali ibn Abi Talib, Muhammad's son-in-law and cousin, and Abu Bakr Abdullah ibn Uthman, the Prophet's companion. The Shia supported the former contender, while the Sunni supported the latter. Abu became the first Caliph, and Ali ruled as the fourth. In 661, Ali was murdered, and the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties began targeting Shiites. The religious strife peaked in the 680 Battle of Karbala, one which ended in the massacre of Husayn ibn Ali, Ali's grandson and possible successor of the Caliphate. From that moment onwards, Shia Muslims have been marginalized, and their identity has been based in victimhood. This is evidenced by the Ashura, an annual Shia-only ritual commemorating Husayn's death.

Islam arrived to Africa in the 7th Century CE through the spread of the Umayyad Caliphate. Consequently, all Muslim states in the African continent are majority Sunni. Shia muslims didn't travel West until Centuries later, when Indian sailers traveled down the East African coast to escape the North Eastern Monsoons. In the following centuries, Muslim students were sent to study abroad in the Middle East and returned with knowledge and faith in the Shia division. In the 19th and 20th Centuries, migration from Lebanon and the Iranian Revolution gave rise to Shi'ite communities in multiple North African countries.

In the status quo, 10-13% of the Muslim population is Shia, while the remaining 87-90% is Sunni. With regard to regional divisions, around 15.3% of Muslims in Sub-Saharan Africa are Shias, a number that rises to about 20.1% in the Middle East and North Africa. In the African continent, the country with the highest amount of Shia Muslims is Nigeria, hosting 6,500,000 members primarily in the Northern states of Kano and Sakoto. However, Tanzania, Egypt, Senegal, and Ghana also have a considerable number of Shiites. Additionally, the countries with the largest number of muslims living as minorities in Africa include Tanzania with 0.8% of its population identifying as Muslim, followed by the Ivory Coast, Mozambique, and Uganda.

Shias and Sunnis continue to share their faith in the sayings of Muhammad's and the Quran, but differ in religious practices and their interpretation of the Islamic law. The parting in rituals is also due to the conversion of Christian, Jews and Zoroastrians into Shia following persecution from Sunni leaders of Arab Empires. While Sunnis have overwhelmingly led politics in the Muslim world, Shias look to the Imams—religious leaders—for legitimate guidance.

*Past AU Action:*

The African Union held an "Interfaith Dialogue Forum" in Abuja, Nigeria in 2016 to address the rising violence rooted in religious differences. In addition to its peacebuilding efforts, it aimed to prevent religious strife from intervening in the Union's Africa Agenda 2063. In all African Union Summit Conferences religion is considered as a mitigating or aggravating factor in development policies, as it is interwoven in the social fabric of multiple African countries. However, no Agreement has been reached on growing domestic Shia-Sunni violence.

### *Recent Developments:*

Domestic Shia-Sunni violence is most present in Nigeria, where the Islamic Movement is one of the government's military targets. In 2015, Sheikh Ibraheem Zakzaky, founder and leader of the Movement, was arrested by the Nigerian government, igniting protests across the country. Not only does the Movement reject the government on religious grounds, it has also developed well-organised administrative political structures that allows it to operate public services such as schools and hospitals in northern Nigeria. Similar conflicts have arisen in Algeria, Morocco, and Egypt, albeit to a lesser extent. This includes violations to freedom of the press, and removal of democratic freedoms such as the right to be elected as members of parliament. On the contrary, Tunisia and Senegal have successfully implemented policies of sectarian tolerance that invite religious pluralism and generate an environment where Shias feel comfortable to publicly express their religious views.

### **Resolution Focus**

Delegates should target the structural reasons behind conflicts between Shias and Sunnis, and direct repression of Shias mandated by national governments. While the religious-based divide is unlikely to change, it is the role of delegates to ensure that both groups' social, cultural, and economic realities are not jeopardized by sectarian feuds. It is crucial to consider country-specific religious makeups and reach nuanced, contextual solutions. Similarly, it is of utmost importance to prevent foreign intervention in North Africa from occurring.

### Questions to Consider:

1. To what extent is Islam a deciding factor in political processes in different African countries?
2. What role does religious affiliation play in African countries' foreign policy?

### **Key Players**

- Nigeria, Algeria, Morocco, Senegal, Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan

## **Topic B: The development of a Pan-African currency**

### **Topic B Background**

#### *Statement of the Problem:*

The African Monetary Union (AMU) is a proposed monetary union for the countries of the African Union, administered by the African Central Bank. Such a union would call for the creation of a new unified currency, similar to the euro. This currency is sometimes referred to as the afro or afriq. The Abuja Treaty, an international agreement signed on June 3, 1991 created the African Economic Community. As of 2019, the plan is to establish an African Economic Community with a single currency by 2023.

The big idea behind the euro was a simple one. If you get nations to trade and share their institutions, then they are less likely to go to war. It creates cooperation of all kinds, be it purely economic or political. It seems to be a valid principle, as Western Europe has been at peace for nearly seventy years. The intention of this topic is to debate the necessity and implementation of a single Pan-African currency, similar or different to the euro, in order to spread prosperity around Africa, and in order to strengthen the union. According to the European Union a single currency offers many advantages over national currencies including: making it easier for companies to conduct cross-border trade, stabilizing both national and continent wide economies, and allowing consumers to have more choice and opportunities in what they consume and what they produce (Stas). For the EU, the challenges they faced were “weak political commitment, divisions over economic priorities, and turbulence in international markets” (Stas). The African Union faces similar challenges.

The term Pan-African currency refers to Pan-Africanism which is a movement that aims to encourage and strengthen bonds of solidarity between all indigenous and ethnic groups of African descent. "African people, both on the continent and in the diaspora, share not merely a

common history, but a common destiny" (Africana Age) and Pan-Africanism aims for cooperation and growth.

Other options for a Pan-African currency are Afro, a cryptocurrency created as a non political and neutral tool meant to address general problems with the continent, such as access to banking and loans, with weak infrastructure (Afro Foundation). Another option is regional Pan-African currencies, like the plan for West Africa to escape the CFA franc and for ECOWAS to introduce a new West African regional currency (Gwaambuka). Others call for the use of Bitcoin, although inaccessibility would still be a problem.

#### *Topic History:*

The idea to establish a single unified Pan-African currency is not a new one. Since the inception of the African Economic Community in 1991 the plan was to have a fully established currency by 2023. By 2009, the economic affairs commissioner at the African Union said that he hoped to establish it no "later than 2021...we may bring it down to 2018" (Miriri). His hope for it was that it would attract higher levels of inward investment, boost Africa's competitiveness in global trade, and lift millions of people out of poverty (Miriri). In order for its creation, "free movement of goods and services and the creation of an African Central Bank to be based in Abuja, Nigeria," needed to happen first (Miriri). He hoped that lessons would be learned from the establishment of the European Central Bank. This has stalled out of fear that some countries will lose out from a single currency, "undercut by the disparate economic strengths of the various economic blocs" (Miriri). Experts state that members of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) stand to gain from a common currency. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) with better fiscal policies could lose out. Since then, the creation of the African Central Bank (ACB), due to be completed by 2020, began May 2015 under the sole supervision of the African Finance Regulatory Authority Commission (AFRA). Once finished, the ACB will be the sole commissioner of the African Single Currency.

#### *Recent Developments:*

On top of plans being postponed, and new different plans for more currencies, violent action has been taken. In 2016, declassified released emails revealed that in spite of a U.N.

Security Council Resolution 1973 creating a no-fly zone over Libya with the express intent of protecting civilians, Western nations used NATO as a tool to topple Libyan leader Muammar al-Gaddafi. The NATO overthrow was not for the protection of the people, but instead it was to thwart Gaddafi's attempt to create a gold-backed African currency to compete with Western central banking. This shows that Africa faces serious problems for establishing a shared currency.

### **Resolution Focus:**

Delegates should focus on the validity of a Pan-African shared currency, the effects it would have on their own economy, specific integration plans to ensure its existence, and how it would be different from previous failed or postponed attempts by the AU.

### Questions to Consider:

1. Would a Pan-African currency help my country?
2. Should a Pan-African shared currency exist?
3. How will the African Union ensure its implementation?
4. How will the African Union and African Central Bank slow corruption in order to guarantee its success?
5. How will the African Union separate the currency from politics and foreign relations issues?

### **Key Players:**

- Nigeria: Original plans had the African Central Bank placed in Abuja, Nigeria.
- All other countries should deeply understand how the currency would affect their economy, and the strength they have within the AU.

## **Participating Countries**

- Algeria
- Botswana
- Democratic Republic of Congo
- Egypt
- Ethiopia
- Kenya
- Libya
- Mali
- Morocco
- Namibia
- Nigeria
- Somalia
- South Africa
- Sudan
- Tunisia

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