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Tensions High as Actualising the African Renaissance Is Called Into Question

A recap of the 2026 mock session of the AU's Assembly of Heads of State

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As the culmination of the International Relations class, the 2026 Heads of State simulation featured lively debates over the resolutions drafted during the preceding mock sessions. One of two resolutions was ultimately passed by the African Union simulation, a decision reached following a series of vigorous debates on the grounds of practicality, feasibility, and, most importantly, unity.

Djibouti's bold opening statement, "Africa must unite or perish," was echoed by many other Heads of State in attendance, including representatives from Burundi, Eswatini, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. Opening speeches expressed an enthusiastic commitment to continental unity in favour of Africa's prosperity, aligning with this year's conference theme. Several Heads of State also called for attention to be directed towards impediments to progress, with Guinea emphasising the need to address corruption, a notable obstacle in the ambitious mission of achieving African Renaissance.

As per session procedures, a moderated caucus on the topic of challenging donor dependency and IMF-driven economic models in achieving economic sovereignty was raised and approved by general consensus. Notable contributions were made by Guinea, Djibouti, Nigeria, and Benin. Several pointed exchanges arose via Points of Information, with Eswatini questioning Nigeria's calls for African unity: "How can your country call for unity when you have the highest corruption rates on the continent?" A similar challenge was later directed by Djibouti at Guinea, which promptly exercised its right of reply: "How can you speak of foreign intervention when you have the highest rates of corruption?" While the substance of these statements warrants scrutiny, the exchange grew notably contentious, at times prioritising criticism over constructive dialogue.

However, the discussion then took a positive turn. Benin called for ownership over national resources, while Equatorial Guinea stressed that the uneven distribution of resources across the continent makes their harmonisation imperative. Lesotho and São Tomé offered focused contributions by highlighting the need to align national priorities in the context of financial independence with the continental vision.

This moderated caucus was followed by an unmoderated caucus to discuss Draft Resolution 001. Botswana set the tone by urging Heads of State to adopt resolutions with significant potential impact. A key point of contention centred on clause 4, subclause (a), with some delegates arguing that the phrasing ‘enhanced parliamentary oversight mechanisms’ excludes other governance systems, such as the Kingdom of Eswatini’s monarchy. They proposed amending it to ‘enhanced governmental oversight mechanisms.’ Unlike other proposed amendments, this one passed, and the resolution as a whole was subsequently adopted. During the break, members of the press corps sought the views of delegates, some of whom expressed disappointment at the failure of other proposed amendments. Benin offered a noteworthy perspective: “The resolution aggravates African dependency.”

Constrained by limited time, the session proceeded directly to an unmoderated caucus on Draft Resolution 002. Through press interviews, Guinea raised concerns over proposed clause 1(d), arguing that it would introduce unnecessary bureaucracy and further complicate existing challenges. Eritrea, meanwhile, called for clause 1(a) to be struck entirely, arguing that it was too vague and difficult to implement. Additionally, several delegates proposed a shift in subclause (a) of clause 1, from ‘Harmonising vocational and academic qualification recognition across Regional Economic Communities’ to ‘across all African Economic Communities.’ The session then moved to voting procedures, where the results were mixed; some amendments, such as 1(d), failed, while others, such as 1(a), gained approval. However, Resolution 002 as a whole failed to secure the necessary votes and ultimately did not pass.

This Heads of State session sought to create a space for the countries directly affected by these policies to express their perspectives and ensure that the resolutions made appropriately address the continent’s needs. A number of countries were absent from the sessions due to scheduling conflicts, which may have led to a less comprehensive discussion. Nevertheless, despite these challenges, delegates debated rigorously to ensure that the resolutions ultimately passed do so rationally and in service of the mission of this convention.