

Editorial Introduction to the Themed Section of this Volume: Afrika's Transformation Aspirations Through the Eyes of Decolonisation—From Rhetoric to Action

Angelo Dube

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6959-2401>

University of South Africa

dubeba@unisa.co.za

Rikho Musekwa

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-1331-405X>

University of South Africa

musekrt@unisa.ac.za

This volume of the South African Yearbook of International Law contains articles submitted through the normal manuscript submission protocols on the journal's online portal. It also contains articles that form part of the themed section of the volume. This themed section contains papers sourced from conference presentations in 2022 and 2021 under the auspices of the Afrikan Peer Growth Network (APGroN).

APGroN has been in existence since 2021. The organisation's main mandate is to catalyse the development of junior and emerging scholars, researchers, academics and professionals. In its first year of registration, APGroN hosted its inaugural conference to ensure capacity building of junior or emerging scholars in Cape Town between 28 September and 1 October 2021. A similar conference was held in Pretoria between 21 and 23 November 2022, following a partnership with the University of South Africa's College of Law. The 2023 iteration of the conference was held between 6 and 8 December 2023.

Both emerging scholars and, established researchers and senior professors presented many quality papers from the two previous conferences. Several papers addressed pressing issues for the African continent and sought solutions using the vehicles of Africanisation and decolonisation, using the international legal framework. These papers were then considered for publication in this volume's themed section and other high-impact journals.

Around 2015, university students in South Africa embarked on protracted class boycotts and protests under the umbrella of #feesmustfall. The #feesmustfall movement (FMF) demanded fee-free, decolonised and Afrikanised higher education. Theirs was a push against Eurocentric hegemony in higher education and in knowledge production, and the need to infuse Afrikan values and epistemologies in the curriculum. Fast-forward to

today, these demands have taken up space in mainstream teaching and learning and research across many universities in South Africa.

APGroN's partnership with the College of Law has helped propel scholarship in the various niche areas that form the core of UNISA's current focus, including student support, aviation and aerospace studies, the fourth industrial revolution, womanist *bozadi* theorisations, to name but a few. The conference saw several authors presenting papers in these niche areas. APGroN's approach stimulates multi-, inter-, and trans-disciplinary research by ensuring that its call for papers covers a broad spectrum of issues on the African continent that currently require attention.

The call for papers for the 2021 and 2022 conferences contained themes inclined toward the African continent's developmental and transformational aspirations. In total, the call attracted 52 papers, which were eventually presented at these two conferences.

From the number of quality articles received, the scientific committee selected those that appeared in this themed section and subjected them to double-blind peer review for consideration in this journal. Several high-quality articles did not make it to the list because the subject matter fell outside this journal's scope. The articles that were finally selected for this volume interrogate one or more areas of international law that fall within the themes and sub-themes listed above. These articles appear below:

Sibusiso Nhlabatsi's contribution, "'Peacefully' at 'War': An Analysis of the Southern African Development Community's Institutional Framework's Failure Adequately to Respond to the Ongoing Conflict in Swaziland,' tackles the complex question of classification of conflicts in international law using the protracted state-sponsored violence in the state of Swaziland as an example. His article outlines the background of the conflict and utilises the established principles of international humanitarian law to classify the situation as a non-international armed conflict.

In his article, 'Africa's Contribution to the Discourse on Environment, Renewable Energy and Sustainable Development', **Kenneth Wyne Mutuma** tackles the topical issue of renewable energy on the African continent. Mutuma investigates the impact of imperialism and what he terms traces of neo-colonialism on the energy sector in Africa. He also explores how Africa can push for the adoption of renewable energy by building its industries and tapping into its vast natural resources. The article is framed within the context of the international legal framework, particularly sustainable development and free trade.

Adejoke O Adediran dives into the area of international aviation law in her article entitled 'Regional Collaboration for Aircraft Accident Investigation as Impetus for Aviation Safety in Africa.' She unpacks the role of the International Civil Aviation Authority in promoting aviation safety. She then measures the performance of African

states in the area of accident investigation. She proposes regional collaboration as a possible remedy for some of the below-par performance in this area.

In her article ‘Prospects and Challenges of Extracting Scientific Publications from a Doctoral Thesis in International Economic Law: An Academic Excursion’, **Lindelwa Mhlongo** shares lessons from her experiences. To this end, she details the key steps to be taken by a post-graduate student of international law in converting their paper to a publishable journal article. This article is very useful for the student of international law who wishes to embark on research for publication, and it provides effective ways of ensuring a successful conversion of the academic thesis into a publishable international law article.

Angelo Dube’s contribution titled ‘Restrictions on Freedom of Religion in the Time of National Disaster—Lessons from *Mohamed and Others v President of the Republic of South Africa and Others*’ unpacks the novel question of the right to freedom of religion during a pandemic. Using the case of *Mohamed v the President*, Dube explores whether this right, despite its deep-seated nature in the social milieu, can be limited in the interest of the rights of others, such as the right to health and life. In doing so, he explores the international law obligations of the state of South Africa.