CfP: 14th Annual Conference of the African Society of International Law - Africa, Culture, and International Law (October 17-18 2025, Maputo, Mozambique)

By:

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The African Society of International Law (AfSIL) is pleased to invite paper proposals for its fourteenth annual conference on the theme “Africa, Culture, and International Law.”

African cultural heritage constitutes one of humanity’s most diverse intellectual and artistic legacies, created over millennia by thousands of ethnic groups across 55 nations, and perpetually enriched by contributors from both the continent and its diaspora. From sophisticated mathematical principles in architecture, groundbreaking medical knowledge, and astronomical calculations, to complex philosophical systems like Ubuntu and advanced

agricultural techniques, this heritage encompasses vast domains of human achievement. The continent's artistic expressions have fundamentally shaped global culture—from the geometric precision of textile traditions like Kente, to musical innovations ranging from Mandinka djembe rhythms to contemporary Afrobeats, and the sophistication of visual arts spanning Benin bronzes to modern installations. This intellectual and artistic wealth, preserved across over 2,000 languages and passed down by communities, griots, and poets, has not only survived centuries of colonial suppression and looting but continuously evolved, influencing global culture even under subjugation—from the birth of blues, jazz, and salsa to the foundations of modern art, from literary traditions to contemporary fashion.

Today, African culture stands at a pivotal moment on the international stage. While its cultural heritage has long faced depletion, appropriation, and displacement, we are now witnessing a surge in its global influence and recognition. The success of Afrobeats, alongside the rising prominence of African fashion and art in global markets, underscores how African culture is shaping contemporary creative industries.

On the other hand, the urgency of cultural heritage protection in Africa has been starkly illustrated by recent conflicts on the continent. The destruction of ancient manuscripts and mausoleums in Timbuktu, Mali—recognized as war crimes by the International Criminal Court—and the current threats to Sudan's archaeological treasures demonstrate how armed conflicts continue to endanger irreplaceable cultural heritage. Beyond active conflicts, the persistent challenge of illicit trafficking in cultural objects calls for innovative legal responses and stronger coordination between national, regional, and international authorities.

The conference seeks to explore how international law has historically mediated African cultural expressions and heritage—sometimes enabling their displacement, other times offering protection—and how it can be shaped to better serve African cultural interests and innovation in the future. This includes not only addressing historical injustices through restitution and reparation, or reinforcing current frameworks for the protection of cultural heritage, but also developing robust legal frameworks to protect and promote African cultural industries in the global marketplace. As African cultural expressions gain

unprecedented international recognition and market value, we must ensure that the benefits flow back to African communities and creators. This requires careful consideration of how various branches of international law can be mobilized to protect African interests while enabling cultural exchange and economic opportunity. Additionally, it requires examining how African culture, narratives and legal practices, long marginalized in international legal discourse, have in fact influenced international law and can continue to enrich international legal frameworks. The conference will thus provide an opportunity not just to consider how to make international legal culture more inclusive, but also to ideate and innovate, from a place of agency and excitement, as Africa's foremost scholars and practitioners in international law and culture gather to share and build upon their latest and boldest ideas.

For the ***Conference Themes***, ***Submission Guidelines***, ***Timeline***, ***Venue and Expenses***, see full **Call for Paper here**.

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