

# The GLOCEPS

## Policy Brief

Research and Analysis in Foreign Policy Pillar

### The selling points of Raila Odinga's African Union Chairperson bid

GLOCEPS Team



Photo credit: railaodinga4auc.com

#### Executive Summary

Raila Odinga's candidacy for the African Union Chairmanship (AUC) in February 2025 presents a transformative opportunity to guide the continent towards greater unity, prosperity, and resilience. The upcoming Mjadala Afrika debate on 13th December 2024, presents Raila Odinga with a platform to directly engage with the African citizenry. Leveraging on the platform to sell his bid by emphasizing his strengths in addressing critical issues such as peace and security, intra-African trade, AU reforms, climate change, youth empowerment, and the management of Africa's critical minerals is imperative. Against this backdrop, it is integral for his campaign

secretariat to intensify media publicity to articulate a compelling, solutions-oriented vision for addressing Africa's most pressing challenges by highlighting his key strengths and unique selling points. This can be strategically achieved through an intensive media publicity campaign for the Mjadala Africa debate, complemented by strategically placed billboards featuring him in prominent locations across major African capitals. Additionally, the paper recommends heightening collaborations with influential African media outlets and enhancing the utilization of social media platforms to create targeted campaigns that highlight Odinga's vision and key selling points.



## Context

Raila Odinga's candidacy for the AUC in February 2025 offers Kenya and Eastern Africa a unique opportunity to shape Africa's future, aligning with the vision of Agenda 2063 for inclusive and sustainable development. The AUC role plays a critical role in addressing the continent's pressing challenges, including violent conflicts, political instability, youth unemployment, climate change, and socio-economic inequality. As a seasoned statesman with a proven track record in governance and conflict resolution, Odinga is well-positioned to lead efforts in peace and security, economic integration, and institutional reforms. His leadership could significantly contribute to the implementation of the AU's key policies, particularly those related to financial independence, peacebuilding, and sustainable development, strengthening Africa's global standing and internal cohesion.

As the AUC campaigns enter their final stretch, it is crucial to maintain a targeted and cohesive narrative that highlights Odinga's vision as a visionary leader capable of advancing the AU's core mandate while unifying the continent. It is therefore vital to ensure that the messaging is consistent and strategically positioned in locations that guarantee easy access and broad audience engagement. Against this background, the upcoming Mjadala Africa debate offers Raila Odinga with a broad audience and

a unique platform to effectively articulate his vision for Africa's future by highlighting his key selling points and strengths. This has the opportunity to position him as the candidate who can bring about the necessary changes for Africa's future.

## Key Issues

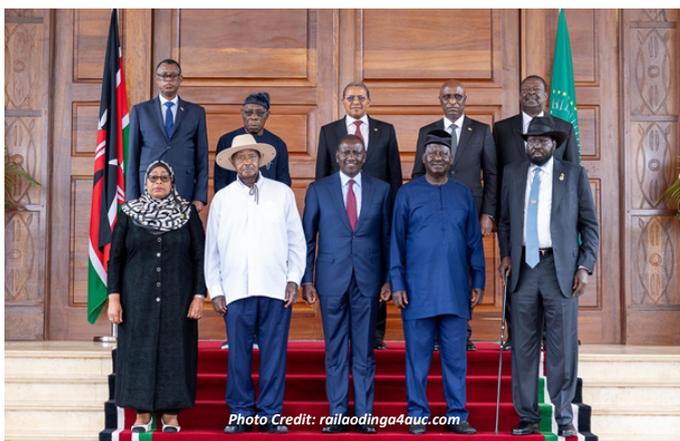
The following critical issues form the key selling points that underpin the success of Raila Odinga's AUC campaign.



## Peace, security, and stability

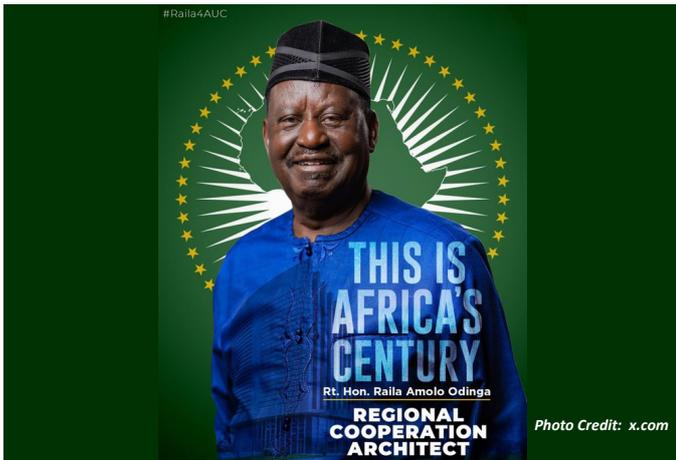
The AUC's role is pivotal in addressing peace and security challenges that Africa is grappling with, including violent conflicts, military coups, violent extremism, and geopolitical tensions. These insecurity threats across Africa undermine stability and progress. As a consequence, Africa seeks an adept chairperson, who can mobilize resources, coordinate diplomatic efforts, and strengthen the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) to enhance AU-led peace initiatives. Odinga's extensive experience in conflict resolution, provides him with a distinct edge in addressing these challenges. He has actively participated in mediating regional disputes, notably in South Sudan and Côte d'Ivoire, and has been a consistent advocate for peaceful power transitions.

Political instability and ongoing conflicts continue to impede Africa's development, making the AU's ambitious Silencing the Guns by 2030 agenda





more critical than ever. To achieve this goal, there is a rallying call for a chairperson who can revitalise the AUPSC and support sustainable conflict resolutions. Odinga's track record in conflict mediation and his dedication to democracy, transparency, and the rule of law position him as a credible candidate to advance these priorities.



### Intra-African trade and infrastructure development

One of the central pillars of Raila Odinga's bid for the AUC is his strong commitment to intra-African trade and infrastructure development. With Africa's leadership increasingly focused on accelerating the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to boost intra-African trade and reduce dependency on external markets, there is a clear demand for a leader who can champion this agenda. His previous tenure as the African Union High Representative for Infrastructure Development from 2018 to 2023 uniquely positions him as a leading contender. In this role, he championed infrastructure as a catalyst for economic integration, advocating for initiatives like AfCFTA and the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA). His work in advancing transnational infrastructure projects, such as transport corridors and energy networks, directly aligns with the AU's Agenda 2063 aspirations for deeper economic integration.

### AU reforms and financial self-reliance

The AU is facing increasing calls for reforms to improve its efficiency, transparency, and financial independence. One of the fundamental challenges is the AU's over-reliance on foreign donors for funding, which undermines its autonomy and ability to address Africa's pressing challenges effectively. There is a growing consensus about the need to reduce dependence on external funding and ensure the AU becomes more self-sufficient. To achieve these reforms, Africa requires a bold leader such as Raila Odinga with the ability to build consensus among member states, encouraging them to increase their contributions and prioritize the union's long-term sustainability. His vision for promoting sustainable financing models and advocating for reforms within African institutions makes him a strong candidate for this role. His well-established networks across Africa and ability to engage with leaders across the continent align with the goals of reducing reliance on foreign donors.



### Climate change

Climate change is severely affecting Africa's economic development and security, with the region experiencing extreme weather events such as droughts, floods, food insecurity, and displacement. These challenges highlight the urgent need for comprehensive strategies that integrate climate action, security considerations, sustainable



development, and effective financing mechanisms. As the continent faces these mounting threats, it is imperative that the next chairperson will play a crucial role in advocating for Africa's climate agenda both regionally and internationally. This includes championing priorities such as the operationalization of loss and damage funds and the delivery of the New Collective Quantified Goals (NCQG), which aim to set financial targets to support developing countries, including African nations, in their climate efforts. Raila Odinga's strong commitment to sustainable development, particularly in building climate resilience positions him as the most suitable candidate who can realize this objective. He has been actively involved in climate negotiations and is a vocal advocate for green energy initiatives in Kenya and across Africa. Additionally, his extensive networks with global partners can be instrumental in advancing Africa's climate needs, negotiating for climate finance and technology transfers, ensuring Africa secures its fair share of the \$100 billion annual commitment for climate adaptation.

### Management of Africa's critical minerals

Africa is endowed with vast reserves of critical minerals, including cobalt, lithium, and rare earth elements, which are essential for global technology and the green energy transition. However, the continent has struggled to fully capitalize on these resources due to exploitation by foreign interests. African states are increasingly looking for leadership capable of negotiating better deals with multinational corporations, securing fair trade agreements, and promoting local beneficiation industries to ensure more value is retained within the continent. Raila Odinga's vision for the effective management of critical minerals, through value addition, local processing, and equitable profit-sharing, aligns with this call to

action to help Africa take control of its mineral sector. His advocacy for policies that prioritize sustainable economic growth and fair resource management will enable Africa to maximize the benefits of its vast natural resources.



### Youth inclusion and empowerment

Africa's demographic boom, with nearly 70% of sub-Saharan Africa under the age of 30, presents both an opportunity and a challenge. While the youth bulge offers potential for economic growth, it also risks deepening instability if widespread youth unemployment is not addressed. Many young people face underemployment or lack of access to opportunities. Empowering youth through inclusion in decision-making, job creation, and skills development is therefore crucial for the continent's future stability and prosperity. Raila Odinga's vision for youth empowerment resonates with the aspirations of many African states, as evidenced by the endorsement of the Pan African Youth Convention. This lobby group brings together influential youth leaders from 13 African countries with proven, transformative programs. His focus on integrating technology, entrepreneurship, and green energy into job creation directly addresses the continent's need for innovative solutions to youth unemployment. His leadership could empower young people across Africa, positioning them as key drivers of economic growth, innovation, and social stability.

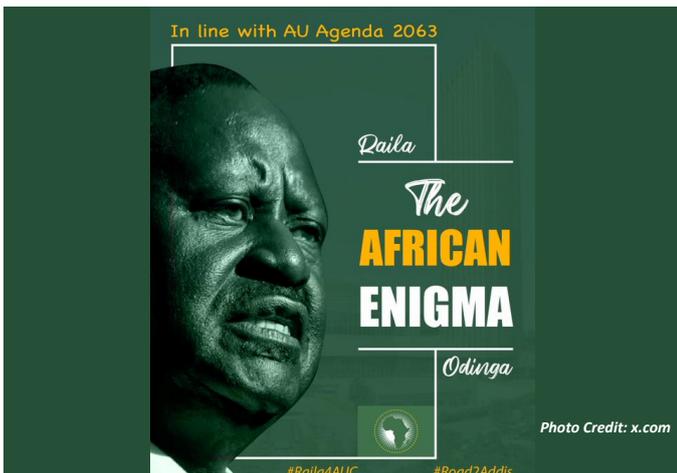




## Africa's global influence

As the world becomes more multipolar, Africa's role in global affairs remains under-leveraged. Africans are eager to see the next AU Chairperson expand the continent's influence, particularly in forums like the United Nations (UN) and the G20. There is a growing desire for a leader who can enhance Africa's negotiating power on global trade, technology, and security issues. Raila Odinga's experience as a statesman equips him with the gravitas to represent Africa's collective voice, particularly in advocating for reforms within international institutions. Additionally, his strong ties with leaders across Africa and beyond, along with his diplomatic expertise, make him uniquely positioned to effectively advocate for Africa's interests. As a result, this will enable him to secure Africa's strategic interests and push for reforms in international institutions to ensure Africa has a stronger, more influential voice on the world stage.

Raila Odinga, with his demonstrated commitment to the agenda and hands-on experience in advancing key projects like the African high-speed railway network as the AU's High Representative for Infrastructure, is uniquely positioned to bridge this gap. Leveraging his influence and implementing a clear and compelling communication strategy is therefore critical in effectively mobilizing public understanding and support, ensuring Agenda 2063 resonates with citizens across the continent.



## Conclusion

Raila Odinga's bid for the African Union Chairmanship is a pivotal opportunity for Africa to address its most urgent challenges with a leader who combines extensive experience and a forward-looking vision. His proven track record in conflict mediation, infrastructure development, and sustainable economic policies positions him as a strong candidate capable of advancing the AU's core mandate. It is therefore vital to amplify his media campaign by leveraging key platforms, such as the upcoming Mjadala Africa debate, to reach a broader audience with a carefully crafted message that emphasizes his key strengths and selling points.

## Communication of AU's Agenda 2063

While Agenda 2063 is vital for Africa's transformation into a global powerhouse, its objectives and flagship projects, remain largely unknown to the broader African public. This lack of awareness limits citizen engagement and ownership, which are crucial for its success in promoting inclusive and sustainable development.



## Recommendations

1. The Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs (MFDA) and Odinga's campaign secretariat should;
  - a) intensify media publicity for the Mjadala Africa debate by strategically placing campaign billboards featuring Raila Odinga at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport and other major African capitals;
  - b) enhance its digital presence by utilizing social media platforms such as X Space, Facebook, Tiktok, and Instagram to create targeted campaigns featuring engaging content, including videos and graphics of Raila Odinga, that highlight his vision and key selling points; and
  - c) heighten collaborations with influential African media outlets to air opinion pieces, and documentary-style features showcasing Raila Odinga's leadership qualities, achievements, and vision for the AU.



THE GLOBAL CENTRE FOR POLICY AND STRATEGY  
(GLOCEPS)

Research | Knowledge | Influence

Off Kiambu Road, Nairobi Kenya  
P.O. Box 27023-00100, Nairobi.  
Telephone: 0112401331  
Email: info@gloceps.org  
Web: www.gloceps.org

