

## Concept Note and Call for Papers

### Fourth UNISA - Afrikan Peer Growth Network (APGroN) International Conference 2024

**Theme: “Advancements in International Law: Navigating the frontiers of aviation, aerospace, maritime studies, and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR)”**

#### 1. Introduction

The University of South Africa (UNISA), in collaboration with the Afrikan Peer Growth Network (APGroN), is pleased to announce the upcoming 4<sup>th</sup> international conference to be held from 18 – 20 September 2024 at the Parow Campus of UNISA in Cape Town, South Africa. Building on the successes of previous conferences in 2021 (Cape Town), 2022 (Pretoria) and 2023 (Pretoria), this event aims to delve into the niche areas of international law, with a specific focus on aviation and aerospace, maritime studies, and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). The conference is framed around the core catalytic niche areas that underpin the developmental agenda of UNISA, together with the United Nation’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Key amongst these catalytic niche areas are student support, 4IR, marine studies, aviation and aerospace studies and feminist, womanist, *bosadi* theorizations.

#### 2. Conference objectives

The primary objectives of the Conference are to:

- Explore the intersections of international law with aviation, aerospace, maritime studies, and the challenges and opportunities presented by the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).
- Foster interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration among scholars, practitioners, and policymakers in these specialized fields.
- Provide a platform for the presentation and discussion of cutting-edge research and developments.
- Facilitate networking and knowledge exchange among participants.
- Encourage the infusion of African perspective(s) and jurisprudence in the discourse of aviation, aerospace and maritime studies, and in evaluating the challenges and opportunities of the 4IR.

#### 3. Themed Book Publication

Selected high-quality papers presented at the Conference will be considered for inclusion in an edited, themed book, titled *‘Contemporary Developments in the Law of the Sea, Land and Air’*. Negotiations are underway with potential publishers (UNISA Press, Springer). The book will consist of three parts, namely:

##### 3.1 International Law and Aviation/Aerospace

- Exploring legal frameworks governing air and space travel.
- Addressing challenges and opportunities in the regulation of aviation and aerospace activities.

### 3.2 International Law and Maritime Studies

- Analyzing legal aspects of maritime activities, including navigation, shipping, and environmental protection.
- Examining the evolving landscape of maritime law in a global context.

### 3.3 International Economic Law

- Investigating the legal dimensions of economic interactions on the global stage.
- Discussing the role of international law in shaping economic policies in the 4IR.

**NB:** The highlighted themes do not represent a closed list of possible focus areas. Authors are at liberty to conceptualise papers that explore unconventional elements within these indicated themes.

## 4. Journal Publications

Selected papers from the Conference will be considered for publication in special issues of prestigious journals, including:

- Comparative and International Law Journal of Southern Africa
- South African Yearbook of International Law
- Journal of Ocean Governance in Africa
- Journal of Law Society and Development.

## 5. Important Deadlines

- Abstract Submission Deadline: 30<sup>th</sup> March 2024
- Notification of Abstract Acceptance: 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024
- Submission of Full Papers: 30<sup>th</sup> July 2024
- Feedback from reviewers: 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024
- Final Paper Submission Deadline: 18<sup>th</sup> October 2024
- Conference dates: 18 – 20<sup>th</sup> September 2024

## 6. Submission Guidelines

Authors are invited to submit original research abstracts related to the conference theme. Submissions should clearly outline the research objectives, methodology, and expected contributions to the field. The abstracts submission should only be in **MS Word (NO PDF submissions will be considered)**. Once the abstract is accepted, the manuscript should be between 8 000 and 10 000 words (including footnotes), case notes should be between 4000 and 6000 words (including footnotes), and should be presented in Arial font 12, with 1.5 spacing, text should be justified. Authors must use OSCOLA Referencing Style, available here: [oscola\\_4th\\_edn\\_hart\\_2012.pdf \(ox.ac.uk\)](https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2019-07/oscola_4th_edn_hart_2012.pdf). Detailed submission guidelines will be available on the conference website.

Abstracts not exceeding 300 words should be sent to:

Ms Vumile Sibiya [sibiyvc@unisa.ac.za](mailto:sibiyvc@unisa.ac.za), cc [callforpapers@apgron.co.za](mailto:callforpapers@apgron.co.za)

## **7. Registration fees payable**

Once the Scientific Committee communicates its decision to the author concerning the abstract submitted, the registration fee for participating in the conference will become payable. The registration fee is broken down as follows:

- (a) Students – R500 (discounted rate)
- (b) Non-students - R1500

## **8. Themes of the Conference**

### **8.1 Sovereignty, self-determination and autonomy in the context of natural resources**

Africa loses over US\$50 billion annually to illicit financial flows, enabled by corrupt corporations, largely from the West. Quite often the discovery of new resources, from natural gas to precious metals becomes a catalyst for the endless conflicts Africa continues to experience. In some instances, as it happened with the Cape Town region, such discoveries strengthen calls for secession, autonomy or self-determination, which often pose a problem in light of the African Union's position on the principle of *uti possidetis*. We welcome papers that delve into natural resource exploitation, natural resource linked demands for self-determination and sovereignty and the land question in Africa and in South Africa in particular.

### **8.2 Contemporary issues in maritime law**

The field of maritime studies is fraught with many issues for which the law ought to present solutions. Advancements in technology also add to the mix of issues that governments, international organisations and practitioners in this field have to grapple with. For instance, the use of unmanned aerial systems, equitable access to the blue economy, the use of autonomous technologies, resource extraction, and the impact of conflicts and climate change on marine resources and the marine ecology are topical issues. We invite papers addressing these and related issues.

### **8.3 Contemporary issues in aviation and aerospace law**

In the ever-evolving realm of aviation and aerospace, addressing regulatory and industry challenges is paramount. This theme delves into the dynamic landscape of international regulations governing these industries. Participants are welcome to engage in discussions about, but not limited to, airspace management, safety standards, and the incorporation of cutting-edge technologies such as drones and supersonic travel. By exploring these challenges, the Conference aims to shape the future regulatory framework in Africa to ensure the safe and efficient progression of aviation and aerospace endeavours.

### **8.4 International cooperation in Space Law**

The exploration and utilization of outer space require robust international cooperation and a well-defined legal framework. This theme explores the legal aspects of collaboration in space exploration, space travel and related activities. Discussions will revolve around topics such as resource extraction in outer space, space debris management, and the role of private entities in shaping the future of space exploration. The conference aims to foster a deeper understanding of the legal dimensions governing human activities beyond Earth's atmosphere.

### **8.5 Legal Challenges of the 4IR**

As the 4IR transforms the aviation and aerospace industries through innovations like artificial intelligence and autonomous systems, understanding the legal implications becomes imperative. This theme considers the regulatory challenges posed by 4IR technologies, exploring issues ranging from data privacy concerns to liability frameworks. Participants will examine the evolving landscape of international law to effectively navigate and harness the opportunities presented by these technological advancements.

### **8.6 Cross-border collaboration and dispute resolution**

Cross-border collaboration and dispute resolution is paramount for fostering peaceful relations and effective functioning of the aviation, aerospace, maritime, and 4IR sectors. As these industries inherently involve multiple nations, navigating the complex web of regulations and resolving disputes requires a concerted international effort. The discussion within this theme would evaluate mechanisms and frameworks facilitating collaboration, exploring the role of international organizations, treaties, and diplomatic channels, including alternative dispute resolution methods to address conflicts efficiently.

### **9. High Level Panel Discussion**

The High-Level Panel Discussion is a side event of the conference, and it aims to shed light on pressing issues within the realm of international law, particularly international humanitarian law, bringing together thought leaders, experts, and policymakers to engage in meaningful discussions. We are honoured to host a distinguished panel of speakers who will share their insights on the following critical themes:

- Policing our waters: challenges and prospects.
- Policing the skies of the Republic: Wither South Africa?
- Internal self-determination, Cape secession (and other territorial claims) and their potential impact on the security of South Africa
- Advances in land border management.

The event will be an enriching experience, providing a platform for the exchange of ideas and the exploration of potential solutions to these complex issues. We anticipate a lively discussion and the opportunity for participants to gain valuable insights that can contribute to the broader discourse on the confluence of law, security and political frameworks. At the end of the deliberations, it is hoped that the role and importance of international humanitarian law, and its enforcement mechanisms will be firmly established in the narrative around these burning issues.

### **10. Conclusion**

This conference promises to be a significant platform for scholars and professionals in the fields of international law, aviation, aerospace, maritime studies, and 4IR. We invite researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to participate actively in this dynamic event, contributing to the advancement of knowledge and collaboration in these crucial areas.