



AFRICAN FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF OBSERVATORY (AFORBO)

“Religious Freedom for the Africa We Want”

INSTITUTIONAL HANDBOOK

— 2026 —



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK.....	3
1.1 Purpose	3
1.2 Who this Handbook is for	3
2. AFORBO AT A GLANCE	3
3. WHO WE ARE.....	4
3.1 Identity and Character	4
3.2 Legal Status and Registration.....	4
3.3 Headquarters and Offices	4
4. WHAT WE DO: FIVE CORE FUNCTIONS	4
5. VISION, MISSION, AND MOTTO	5
5.1 Vision	5
5.2 Mission	5
5.3 Motto	5
6. CORE VALUES	5
7. FOUNDATIONAL INSPIRATIONS	5
8. WHY AFORBO : THE CASE FOR AN AFRICAN OBSERVATORY	6
8.1 The Challenge in Africa.....	6
8.2 Global Frameworks on Religious Freedom	6
8.3 The African Charter and its Enforcement Gap	7
8.4 The Rationale : Six Imperatives.....	7
9. OUR OBJECTIVES	8
10. GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE	8
10.1 Continental Governing Board.....	9
10.2 Chairperson of the Board	9
10.3 Executive Secretariat	9
10.4 Director General.....	9
10.5 Interfaith and Legal Advisory Panels	9
10.6 Compliance and Ethics Committee.....	10
10.7 Meetings and Decision-Making.....	10
11. HOW WE WORK : THE FOUR-LEVEL OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK	10
11.1 Grassroots Level	10
11.2 National Level.....	11
11.3 Regional Level.....	11
11.4 Continental Level.....	11
12. OUR PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES	11
12.1 Monitoring and Reporting.....	11
12.2 Advocacy and Policy Engagement	12
12.3 Victim Support and Legal Aid.....	12

12.4 Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding	12
12.5 Capacity-building : the Certificate Programme in Freedom of Religion or Belief ..	12
Programme Structure at a Glance	13
12.6 Research and Publications	13
13. MEMBERSHIP	13
13.1 Who May Join.....	13
13.2 Categories of Membership.....	14
14. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS	14
15. RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY.....	14
15.1 Grassroots Contributions	14
15.2 National Funding	15
15.3 Regional Support.....	15
15.4 Continental and Global Partnerships.....	15
15.5 Financial Governance	15
16. ACCOUNTABILITY, ETHICS, AND TRANSPARENCY	15
17. OFFICIAL LANGUAGES	16
18. HOW TO ENGAGE WITH AFORBO	16
18.1 International and Intergovernmental Organizations	16
18.2 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).....	16
18.3 Faith-Based Organizations and Religious Denominations	16
18.4 Governments and Regional Economic Communities	16
18.5 Individuals.....	16
19. GOVERNING DOCUMENTS	17
19.1 The Charter	17
19.2 The Bylaws	17
19.3 The Terms of Reference	17
20. KEY LEGAL AND POLICY INSTRUMENTS	17
20.1 International.....	17
20.2 Continental (African Union).....	17
20.3 Interfaith and Thematic	18

1. ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

1.1 Purpose

This Handbook is the principal reference document of the African Freedom of Religion or Belief Observatory. It is designed to introduce AFORBO to a wide range of audiences and to answer, in one place, the essential questions any partner or observer may have: What is AFORBO? Why does it exist? What does it do? How is it governed and funded? And how can one engage with it?

1.2 Who this Handbook is for

AFORBO's work depends on partnership. This Handbook is written especially for:

- **International and intergovernmental organizations** — the African Union and its organs, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the United Nations system, and multilateral human-rights bodies;
- **Civil society organizations (CSOs)** — human-rights, peacebuilding, humanitarian, and community-development actors;
- **Faith-based organizations (FBOs)** — religious charities, missions, interfaith councils, and Justice and Peace commissions;
- **Governments** — national ministries, parliaments, and human-rights commissions;
- **Religious denominations and communities** — churches, mosques, temples, traditional and customary institutions, and their leaders.

2. AFORBO AT A GLANCE

The African Freedom of Religion or Belief Observatory (AFORBO) is a Pan-African, independent, and non-partisan institution dedicated to monitoring, protecting, and promoting freedom of religion or belief (ForB) across the African continent. It is African-led and African-rooted, drawing on Ubuntu philosophy – I am because we are –, the Golden Rule, and the Document on Human Fraternity, while engaging fully with continental and international human-rights frameworks.

Full Name	African Freedom of Religion or Belief Observatory (AFORBO)
Motto	<i>“Religious Freedom for the Africa We Want”</i>
Vision	An integrated, peaceful, and pluralistic Africa where freedom of religion and belief is fully respected, protected, and promoted in every country and community.
Mission	To work with AU institutions, international organizations, RECs, governments, faith-based organizations, academia, and civil society to advance ForB through monitoring, advocacy, research, policy dialogue, and capacity-building.
Legal Status	Registered association under the Associations Act 2022 (Section 3), Republic of Seychelles — Association No. A432027, dated 22 December 2025.

Headquarters	Mahé Island, Seychelles, with provision for liaison offices across AU regions.
Scope	The five AU regions — North, West, Central, East, and Southern Africa — operating at grassroots, national, regional, and continental levels.
Working Languages	English, French, Arabic, Spanish, Kiswahili, and Portuguese.
Aspiration	Observer / consultative status with the African Union and its relevant organs.

3. WHO WE ARE

3.1 Identity and Character

AFORBO is an independent, Pan-African, and non-partisan institution committed to the protection and promotion of freedom of religion or belief in Africa. It was established as a solemn initiative of representatives of religious communities, interfaith institutions, civil society organizations, academic bodies, legal practitioners, and defenders of human dignity from across the continent.

The Observatory is deliberately African-led. While it engages fully with universal human-rights instruments, its analysis, methods, and recommendations are grounded in Africa's own cultural, social, and religious realities — ensuring that solutions are locally relevant, credible, and owned by African communities themselves.

3.2 Legal Status and Registration

AFORBO is a legally registered entity under the laws of the Republic of Seychelles. It was registered as an association under the provisions of the **Associations Act 2022 (Section 3)**, under **Association No. A432027**, dated 22 December 2025. AFORBO enjoys legal personality and the capacity to contract, to acquire and dispose of assets, and to sue and be sued.

AFORBO seeks observer or consultative status with the African Union and its relevant organs, in accordance with established criteria, so that it may formally complement AU mechanisms for the promotion of human rights and peaceful religious coexistence.

3.3 Headquarters and Offices

The permanent Headquarters of AFORBO is established on Mahé Island, Seychelles. To facilitate regional coordination and operations, AFORBO may establish liaison offices in other Member States of the African Union, and National Chapters may be established in individual AU Member States, operating under these governing instruments with adaptations only where required by national law and subject to approval by the Continental Governing Board.

4. WHAT WE DO: FIVE CORE FUNCTIONS

1. **Monitor and report** on the state of religious freedom across Africa through systematic data collection and analysis, culminating in an *Annual State of Religious Freedom in Africa Report*.

2. **Advocate** for legal and policy reform aligned with continental and international human-rights standards.
3. **Support victims** of religious discrimination and persecution through legal aid, moral, and psychosocial assistance.
4. **Build capacity** among faith leaders, policymakers, and civil society — including through a certifiable training programme in ForB.
5. **Promote interfaith dialogue** and peacebuilding to prevent conflict and foster peaceful coexistence.

5. VISION, MISSION, AND MOTTO

5.1 Vision

An integrated, peaceful, and pluralistic Africa where freedom of religion and belief is fully respected, protected, and promoted in every country and community.

5.2 Mission

To work collaboratively with AU institutions, international organizations, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), national governments, faith-based organizations, academia, and civil society to advance the right to religious freedom and freedom of belief through monitoring, legal advocacy, research, policy dialogue, and capacity-building.

5.3 Motto

“Religious Freedom for the Africa We Want.”

6. CORE VALUES

AFORBO’s work is rooted in a set of shared values that guide its conduct, its methods, and its relationships:

- **Human dignity** : the inherent worth of every person as the foundation of all rights.
- **Human fraternity** : the conviction that all people belong to a single human family.
- **The Golden Rule** : “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” present in all major traditions.
- **Non-violence and peacebuilding** : the rejection of coercion and the active pursuit of peace.
- **Ubuntu Philosophy** : “I am because we are,” affirming our interconnectedness.
- **Gratitude and mutual respect** : recognition of and esteem for one another across differences.
- **Freedom of conscience and belief** : the right to hold, change, manifest, or not hold a belief.
- **Intercultural and interfaith dialogue** : encounter and cooperation across traditions.
- **Transparency and ethical governance** : accountability and integrity in all operations.

7. FOUNDATIONAL INSPIRATIONS

AFORBO draws on Africa’s rich philosophical and spiritual heritage and on universal principles of peace and human dignity:

- **Ubuntu philosophy** : “I am because we are,” affirming the interconnectedness and shared humanity of all peoples.
- **The Golden Rule** : the ethic of reciprocity common to all major religious and philosophical traditions.
- **The Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together (2019)** : signed by His Holiness Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, emphasizing peace, coexistence, and mutual respect.
- **The legacies of peacemakers** : Mahatma Gandhi, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Pope Saint John Paul II, and other champions of justice and peaceful coexistence.
- **African Union foundational values** : embodied in the *Constitutive Act of the African Union* (2000), the *African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights* (1981), and *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*.

8. WHY AFORBO : THE CASE FOR AN AFRICAN OBSERVATORY

Freedom of religion or belief is a cornerstone of human dignity and a fundamental human right. It is also a condition for sustainable peace, social cohesion, democratic governance, and spiritual flourishing. Yet across many parts of Africa this freedom remains fragile, and the mechanisms to protect it are often weak, under-resourced, or absent. AFORBO exists to close that gap.

8.1 The Challenge in Africa

Africa, the second-largest continent, is home to extraordinary ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity. This diversity is a source of richness — but where it is not accompanied by mutual respect and effective protection, it can become a fault line. Intolerance toward followers of different religious traditions is both widespread and increasing, fuelled by non-state actors and, at times, by government entities.

In practice, communities across the continent face religious discrimination, violent extremism, coercion and forced conversion, onerous registration requirements, restrictions on gatherings and missionary work, and, in some jurisdictions, blasphemy and apostasy laws that criminalize religious expression or conversion. Ethno-religious tensions frequently escalate into deadly conflict, obstructing African integration and undermining the vision of Agenda 2063. Too often, victims of religious persecution lack any effective access to legal recourse.

8.2 Global Frameworks on Religious Freedom

The right to freedom of religion or belief is firmly recognized in international law. AFORBO’s advocacy is anchored in these instruments:

- **The Charter of the United Nations (1945)** : Article 1(3) commits members to promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.
- **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)** : Article 18 recognizes the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, including the freedom to

change one's religion and to manifest it in teaching, practice, worship, and observance.

- **The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)** : Article 18 makes these protections binding on States Parties, prohibits coercion, and permits limitations only where prescribed by law and necessary to protect public safety, order, health, morals, or the rights of others.
- **The Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (1981)** condemns discrimination based on religion or belief by any State, institution, group, or person.

8.3 The African Charter and its Enforcement Gap

At the continental level, the *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (the Banjul Charter)*, adopted in 1981 and in force since 1986, is the primary human-rights instrument for Africa. Its Article 8 guarantees freedom of conscience and the profession and free practice of religion. However, unlike the UDHR and ICCPR, the Banjul Charter does not explicitly recognize the right to change one's religion, and its enforcement varies significantly across states.

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights oversees implementation of the Charter through reviews, country visits, and resolutions, but its recommendations are largely non-binding and rely on political goodwill. Its broad human-rights mandate, limited resources, and political constraints mean that religious freedom rarely receives the specialized, sustained attention it requires. This is precisely the gap AFORBO is designed to fill.

8.4 The Rationale : Six Imperatives

The case for AFORBO rests on six fundamental imperatives:

1. **Promoting peace and stability** by addressing the religious intolerance that fuels tension within and between communities, and by fostering dialogue that prevents conflict before it escalates.
2. **An African-led approach** : the discourse on religious freedom in Africa is heavily shaped by external actors who, however well-intentioned, often miss the complexities of African societies. An African observatory grounds solutions in the continent's own contexts.
3. **Protecting authentic values and diversity** : championing human dignity and respect for diversity while resisting all forms of ideological imposition inconsistent with communities' own convictions.
4. **Advocating for vulnerable groups** where minorities face coercion, forced conversion, or violence, the Observatory provides legal and moral support and advises governments on protective measures.
5. **Monitoring treaty compliance** : since many African states have ratified international instruments affirming religious freedom, AFORBO offers a transparent mechanism for accountability and recourse.

6. **Complementing the ACHPR** by focusing exclusively on religious freedom and freedom of belief, strengthening data collection and reporting, maintaining independence, and deepening collaboration with stakeholders.

9. OUR OBJECTIVES

AFORBO pursues a multifaceted mandate to safeguard freedom of religion or belief across the continent. Its principal objectives are to:

1. **Monitor and report** on the state of religious freedom and freedom of belief by collecting and analyzing data through surveys, research, and consultation with diverse stakeholders, building a comprehensive picture of best practices, challenges, and progress.
2. **Advocate for legal and policy reform** by providing evidence-based recommendations to governments, RECs, and the African Union, and supporting Member States in aligning domestic law with AU and international standards.
3. **Support victims** of religious discrimination or persecution through legal aid, moral, and institutional assistance, including partnership with the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights and other legal entities.
4. **Build capacity** among community leaders, faith-based organizations, legal professionals, and policymakers on the principles of religious freedom, tolerance, and coexistence.
5. **Promote interfaith dialogue** by creating platforms for collaboration among religious traditions to prevent and resolve conflict and to build a culture of encounter and mutual respect.
6. **Conduct research and inform policy** by producing and disseminating studies on religion, law, and society to guide continental policymaking.
7. **Complement African Union efforts** by collaborating with AU organs such as the ACHPR, ECOSOCC, PAPS, and CIDO, and with RECs, in promoting human rights and peaceful coexistence.
8. **Raise public awareness** of religious freedom through media, education, and community engagement, countering misinformation and intolerance.

10. GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

AFORBO's governance structure ensures balanced regional representation, professional management, expert advice, and independent oversight. It is composed of four principal organs, supported by the office of the Director General.

Organ	Core role
Continental Governing Board	Supreme governing body — sets strategy, approves budgets and reports, elects and supervises the Director General.
Executive Secretariat	Day-to-day management and programme implementation, led by the Director General.

Organ	Core role
Interfaith & Legal Advisory Panels	Technical, legal, and interfaith expertise to the Board and Secretariat.
Compliance & Ethics Committee	Independent oversight of ethics, compliance, and financial transparency.

10.1 Continental Governing Board

The Continental Governing Board is the supreme governing body of AFORBO. It comprises representatives from the five AU regions — North, West, Central, East, and Southern Africa — including faith leaders, traditional rulers, legal experts, human-rights defenders, academic professionals, and institutional partners. Its functions are to:

- Define and approve strategic plans and annual work programmes and priorities;
- Approve the annual budget, financial reports, and policy documents;
- Elect and, where necessary, dismiss the Director General, and supervise the Secretariat;
- Amend the Bylaws and Charter when necessary; and
- Establish ad hoc committees as needed.

10.2 Chairperson of the Board

The Chairperson is elected by the Board from among its members for a renewable term of three years. The Chairperson presides over Board meetings, represents the Board in official functions, and ensures effective coordination between the Board and the Executive Secretariat.

10.3 Executive Secretariat

Based in an AU Member State, the Executive Secretariat is led by a Director General appointed by the Board. It is responsible for the day-to-day management and administration of AFORBO. Its functions are to manage daily operations and implement Board decisions; coordinate programme activities at grassroots, national, regional, and continental levels; interface with AU institutions and RECs; prepare and submit annual reports and budgets to the Board; oversee staff and consultants; ensure publication of the *Annual State of Religious Freedom in Africa Report*; and represent AFORBO before external stakeholders unless otherwise delegated.

10.4 Director General

The Director General is the Chief Executive Officer and legal representative of AFORBO. The Director General coordinates implementation of the Observatory's strategic plan, appoints and supervises staff in accordance with AFORBO's policies, and mobilizes resources for programmatic and operational sustainability.

10.5 Interfaith and Legal Advisory Panels

The Advisory Panels bring together experts in constitutional law, human-rights law, religious studies, African customary and religious law, and interfaith dialogue. They provide technical and policy advice to the Board and Secretariat, contribute to publications, reports, and policy statements, and support interfaith engagement and training initiatives.

10.6 Compliance and Ethics Committee

The Compliance and Ethics Committee is composed of members appointed by the Board for a renewable term of three years. It monitors institutional compliance with ethical standards and legal frameworks, investigates and addresses complaints or allegations of misconduct, and ensures financial transparency and accountability.

10.7 Meetings and Decision-Making

The Continental Governing Board meets at least once a year in ordinary session, and in extraordinary session as necessary; meetings may be held physically or virtually. Quorum is two-thirds of the Board's members. Decisions are taken by consensus wherever possible; where consensus is not reached, decisions are taken by a two-thirds majority vote. The Director General submits annual reports on activities, finances, and impact.

11. HOW WE WORK : THE FOUR-LEVEL OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

To ensure a comprehensive and effective structure for monitoring and promoting religious freedom, AFORBO operates at four interdependent levels. Each level has specific responsibilities, and information flows upward from the grassroots to the continent, while support, standards, and advocacy flow back down.

Level	Primary focus
Grassroots	Monitoring, documentation, awareness, and local mediation by trained focal persons.
National	National Observatories and Chapters, legal and policy alignment, victim support.
Regional	Regional Observatories within each REC, consolidation of reports, best-practice exchange.
Continental	Coordination, AU engagement, the Annual Report, and continental/international legal action.

11.1 Grassroots Level

The foundation of AFORBO's work begins in local communities, which serve as the primary sources of information and advocacy. At this level, AFORBO:

- **Designates and trains focal persons** in each local community to monitor, document best practices, and report violations of religious freedom and liaise with the national observatory;
- **Promotes community awareness and engagement** through capacity-building for religious leaders and local organizations;
- **Establishes secure and confidential reporting mechanisms** to protect individuals from retaliation;
- **Facilitates local conflict mediation** led by trained religious leaders before tensions escalate; and
- **Collaborates with civil society** to document trends and challenges.

11.2 National Level

Building on grassroots data, the national level focuses on policy implementation, legal advocacy, and institutional strengthening. At this level, AFORBO:

- **Establishes National Religious Freedom Observatories and National Chapters** in partnership with interfaith councils and Justice and Peace Commissions;
- **Engages national authorities** to align domestic laws with the African Charter and international standards;
- **Runs public education campaigns** to inform citizens of their rights; and
- **Provides victim support and legal aid** in partnership with legal institutions, and oversees the activities of AFORBO's community clubs.

11.3 Regional Level

At the regional level, coordination is strengthened through the existing Regional Economic Communities (RECs). At this level, AFORBO:

- **Forms Regional Observatories** within each REC to consolidate national reports and provide regional analysis;
- **Organizes best-practice exchange** through workshops and conferences among member states; and
- **Publishes annual regional reports** documenting trends and proposing policy recommendations.

11.4 Continental Level

At the highest level, AFORBO functions as the central body overseeing religious freedom monitoring across Africa. At this level, AFORBO:

- **Provides continental leadership and coordination** through the Board and Executive Secretariat;
- **Advises the African Union** on policies and actions to protect religious freedom;
- **Builds legal partnerships** — notably with the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights — to pursue cases of violations;
- **Publishes the Annual State of Religious Freedom in Africa Report**; and represents Africa in global religious freedom fora.

12. OUR PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

AFORBO translates its mandate into a coherent set of programmes and strategic activities. Together, these establish the Observatory as a monitor, an advocate, a trainer, a convenor, and a source of support.

12.1 Monitoring and Reporting

At the heart of AFORBO's work is credible, evidence-based monitoring. Through its network of focal persons and national and regional observatories, AFORBO collects and analyzes data on good practices, violations, and restrictions, using secure and confidential reporting channels. The findings are consolidated into regional reports and the flagship

Annual State of Religious Freedom in Africa Report, which informs policy and advocacy across the continent.

12.2 Advocacy and Policy Engagement

AFORBO provides evidence-based recommendations to national governments, RECs, international organizations, and the African Union, and supports Member States in aligning laws and policies with continental and international standards. It engages AU organs — including the ACHPR, ECOSOCC, PAPS, and CIDO — and pursues observer status to formalize its advisory role.

12.3 Victim Support and Legal Aid

AFORBO provides or facilitates legal, moral, and psychosocial support to victims of religious discrimination and persecution. Through partnerships with legal institutions, bar associations, and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, it works to ensure that individuals have access to effective legal recourse, and it advises governments on protective measures for vulnerable groups.

12.4 Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding

AFORBO creates platforms for collaboration among different religious traditions, promoting understanding, resolving shared challenges, and building a culture of encounter and respect. It supports local mediation led by religious leaders, and it organizes interfaith summits, forums, and public education campaigns to counter extremism and foster peaceful coexistence.

12.5 Capacity-building : the Certificate Programme in Freedom of Religion or Belief

A flagship capacity-building instrument of AFORBO is its *Certificate Programme in Freedom of Religion or Belief* (ForB) — an interfaith programme for faith leaders, peacebuilders, activists, and policymakers across Africa.

Format	Online programme, replicable as a physical workshop (5-day residential, half-day community workshops, or a modular series).
Duration	8 weeks · 8 modules · approximately 80 notional learning hours.
Audience	Religious and traditional leaders, lay faith actors, activists and human-rights defenders, peacebuilders, policymakers, journalists, educators, and AFORBO focal persons.
Certification	Two-tier model: Certificate of Attendance / Completion, and Certificate of Achievement (with examination and capstone), with optional university co-endorsement.

Programme Structure at a Glance

Wk	Module	Focus
1	Foundations	Concepts, definitions & philosophical foundations of ForB
2	History	Historical approaches to freedom of religion (global & African)
3	Law & Frameworks	International, regional & national legal frameworks on ForB
4	Faith Perspectives	Judaism, Christianity (Catholic, Protestant/Evangelical, Orthodox), Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Bahá'í, African Traditional Religion & humanist views
5	Monitoring & Advocacy	Documentation, legal advocacy & the AFORBO operational model
6	Psychology of Victims	Trauma, accompaniment, healing & reconciliation
7	Dialogue & Practice	Interfaith dialogue, peacebuilding, careers & capstone

Graduates join AFORBO's alumni and focal-person network and pursue roles as ForB focal persons, national and regional observatory officers, monitoring and documentation officers, interfaith dialogue facilitators, community mediators, policy analysts, educators, and more — building the continental network of knowledgeable, skilled, and ethically grounded ForB ambassadors that AFORBO's mission requires.

12.6 Research and Publications

AFORBO partners with universities, think tanks, and research institutions to conduct and disseminate studies on religion, law, and society. Its publications — regional reports, the Annual Continental Report, policy briefs, and thematic studies — provide the evidence base for advocacy and inform continental policymaking.

13. MEMBERSHIP

AFORBO is a broad coalition. Membership is open to individuals and institutions across the continent who share its vision and commit to its values.

13.1 Who May Join

- Religious communities, organizations, and leaders;
- Interfaith institutions;
- Civil society organizations;
- Academic bodies and research institutions;
- Legal practitioners and human-rights defenders; and
- Traditional and community leaders.

13.2 Categories of Membership

Category	Description
Founding Members	Individuals and institutions who established AFORBO and adopted its founding instruments.
Institutional Members	Organizations — religious, academic, civil society, or legal — that affiliate with AFORBO.
Individual Members	Persons who join in their own capacity in support of AFORBO's mission.
Honorary Members	Distinguished persons recognized and conferred membership by the Board.

The specific rights and obligations attached to each category are determined by internal regulations adopted by the Continental Governing Board.

14. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

AFORBO's mission can only be achieved in partnership. The Observatory actively pursues collaboration and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with institutions that share its commitment to human dignity and religious freedom, including:

- The African Union, its organs and specialized agencies, including the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), ECOSOCC, the Political Affairs, Peace and Security department (PAPS), the Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO), the AU Youth Division, and the Women, Gender, and Development Directorate;
- Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and other regional intergovernmental organizations;
- International bodies working for human dignity, the promotion of freedom of religion or belief, and interfaith harmonious coexistence;
- Universities, think tanks, and research institutions dedicated to religious freedom and human dignity; and
- Faith-based and civil society organizations committed to peace, human rights, and interreligious coexistence.

15. RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

AFORBO's sustainability is anchored in a multi-tiered funding strategy that begins at the grassroots and scales up to national, regional, and continental sources. This approach guarantees local ownership, accountability, and long-term viability, while empowering Africans through education and economic development — which AFORBO regards as fundamental to meaningful religious freedom.

15.1 Grassroots Contributions

The foundation of AFORBO's financial sustainability lies within local religious communities, through community contributions from religious institutions and faith-based organizations,

voluntary donations and fundraising, faith-based partnerships with local charities and missions.

15.2 National Funding

At the national level, funding is strengthened through government budget allocations and grants, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) contributions from the private sector, legal-aid grants from legal organizations and bar associations, and education and awareness programmes.

15.3 Regional Support

At the regional level, AFORBO secures financing through Regional Economic Communities' engagement, grants from African and international philanthropic foundations dedicated to human rights and religious freedom, and regional educational and training initiatives.

15.4 Continental and Global Partnerships

At the continental and global level, AFORBO develops diverse funding streams including African Union funding, international donor support, academic and research grants, multilateral partnerships, and an AFORBO endowment and investment fund established for long-term sustainability.

15.5 Financial Governance

All financial operations are governed by internationally accepted principles of accountability, transparency, and ethical stewardship. AFORBO maintains transparent financial records audited annually by an independent auditor, and financial reports are presented to the Board and made available to members and partners. AFORBO prioritizes grassroots-led financial contributions to ensure local ownership and long-term sustainability.

16. ACCOUNTABILITY, ETHICS, AND TRANSPARENCY

Credibility is AFORBO's most important asset. As a non-partisan monitor and advocate, the Observatory holds itself to the same standards it asks of others.

- **Independence and non-partisanship** : AFORBO serves no political party, government, or single religious interest; it acts on behalf of all communities.
- **Independent oversight** : the Compliance and Ethics Committee monitors compliance, investigates misconduct, and safeguards integrity.
- **Financial transparency** : records are audited annually by an independent auditor and reported to the Board, members, and partners.
- **Do no harm** : monitoring and assistance are conducted so as never to expose victims or witnesses to further risk, using secure and confidential channels.
- **Ethical stewardship** : all operations follow internationally accepted standards of accountability and ethical conduct.

17. OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

The official working languages of AFORBO are English, French, Arabic, Spanish, Kiswahili, and Portuguese, in alignment with African Union practice. Documents may be translated into additional African languages as needed to ensure inclusivity and accessibility across communities.

18. HOW TO ENGAGE WITH AFORBO

AFORBO welcomes engagement from every sector. The pathways below indicate how each of our key audiences can partner with the Observatory.

18.1 International and Intergovernmental Organizations

- Enter into Memoranda of Understanding for joint monitoring, research, and advocacy;
- Support the *Annual State of Religious Freedom in Africa Report* and thematic studies;
- Provide technical assistance, funding, or access to global human-rights mechanisms; and
- Collaborate on capacity-building and the exchange of standards and best practice.

18.2 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

- Join AFORBO as institutional members and serve within national and regional observatories;
- Contribute to grassroots monitoring, documentation, and awareness campaigns;
- Co-deliver victim support, legal aid, and community mediation; and
- Partner on public education and interfaith initiatives.

18.3 Faith-Based Organizations and Religious Denominations

- Nominate and host trained focal persons for religious freedom reporting;
- Participate in interfaith dialogue, mediation, and peacebuilding;
- Co-host the Certificate Programme in ForB with dioceses, islamic centres, synagogues, temples, and interfaith councils; and
- Contribute to grassroots financing and local ownership of the Observatory's work.

18.4 Governments and Regional Economic Communities

- Engage AFORBO's technical expertise to align laws and policies with AU and international standards;
- Establish or support National and Regional Observatories;
- Draw on AFORBO's data and recommendations for policy and early-warning; and
- Facilitate AFORBO's pursuit of observer status and its participation in relevant fora.

18.5 Individuals

- Become individual members, volunteers, or professional contributors;
- Enrol in the Certificate Programme in ForB and join the alumni network; and

- Support AFORBO through donations, advocacy, and awareness-raising.

19. GOVERNING DOCUMENTS

AFORBO is governed by a coherent set of foundational instruments. This Handbook summarizes them; the full texts are the authoritative reference.

19.1 The Charter

The Charter is AFORBO's founding instrument. It sets out the Observatory's establishment and legal status; its vision, mission, and motto; its objectives, governance, and operational framework; its strategic partnerships, resource mobilization, and core values; and provisions on amendments, entry into force, official languages, and transitional arrangements. The Charter may be amended by a two-thirds majority of the Continental Board, following a consultative process.

19.2 The Bylaws

The Bylaws are the detailed governing framework for AFORBO's mission, operations, and structure. They elaborate the name and legal status, headquarters and liaison offices, membership, governance organs and their attributions, the operational framework, meetings, partnerships, resource mobilization and financial management, and provisions on amendments, dissolution, and entry into force. Amendments require a two-thirds majority of the Board, with proposals submitted in writing at least sixty days in advance.

19.3 The Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference (ToR) define AFORBO's purpose, objectives, governance, scope of work, and operational modalities to ensure coherence, accountability, and effective implementation of its mandate. They remain in force until reviewed and amended by the Board, with consultations across national and regional observatories every four years or as necessary.

20. KEY LEGAL AND POLICY INSTRUMENTS

AFORBO's advocacy and analysis are grounded in the following instruments:

20.1 International

- *Charter of the United Nations* (1945);
- *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948);
- *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966);
- *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief* (1981).

20.2 Continental (African Union)

- *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights / Banjul Charter* (1981/1986);
- *Constitutive Act of the African Union* (2000);
- *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*;
- *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa* (2003).

20.3 Interfaith and Thematic

- *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* (2019);
- *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965) and selected ecumenical and Evangelical statements on religious liberty;
- *The Marrakesh Declaration* (2016); selected Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Bahá'í, and African Traditional Religion sources on tolerance and coexistence.