Progress and challenges with integration

The launch of the African Union in Durban in 2002 saw the coming together of the two flagship integration projects – the project of political unity as espoused in the OAU Charter, and the project of economic integration as set out in the Abuja Treaty.

Since then, the Regional Economic Communities as building blocks of the AU have been making progress with the integration. Some of the highlights include:

- All accept one of the RECs have moved beyond the first stage of strengthening RECs; five out of eight have achieved stage two, which is the coordination and harmonization of activities and progressively eliminate tariff and non-tariff barriers; and five RECs have launched their free trade areas and customs unions, with East African Community leading the pack by having already achieved this third stage of the Treaty\(^1\).

- The EAC/COMESA/SADC Tripartite that will see 27 countries uniting into a free trade area, collectively representing a positive step in terms of integration. However, the Tripartite is not moving as fast as expected and we should urge that we speed up the implementation of this agreement.

\(^1\) 2012 Africa Regional Integration Report.
• ECOWAS setting the pace on freedom of movement of peoples, with both Ecowas and EAC recording improvements in intra-Africa trade.

• Increase in intra-Africa investment, with Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa amongst top foreign investors in the continent and we also see the growth of African companies with a continental footprint.

• Key continental frameworks also aimed at pooled sovereignty and therefore strengthening integration, including our infrastructure development programmes (PIDA). The Southern region for example is doing well in terms of improving transport networks in the region, but more needs to be done faster.

There are however a number of challenges that we continue to face:

• The RECs, though initially formed around economic and social integration, their agendas are increasingly dominated by peace and security issues, which are important but divert attention away from their core functions of integration and economic development.

• Integration of the RECs much slower than expected, with continued duplication of planning and processes. There is a need for greater coordination on key issues where our collective strength and pooled expertise and knowledge would make considerable difference, e.g. trade negotiations.

• Still inadequate link between continental, regional and national frameworks such as infrastructure, industrial policy, and so on. The challenges remain to ensure that our national, regional and continental frameworks are harmonized.

• The need for progress around soft issues with regards to movement of people, goods and services, and harmonization of policies.

Sovereignty at any time is exercised at three levels, at national level, between country and the rest of the world and our collective global sovereignty and our integration agenda therefore takes this into consideration.

**Agenda 2063 and Integration**

During the debates on the 50th anniversary, which is a yearlong celebration, it was said that today's inheritors of Pan Africanism and African Renaissance are more than just fighters against what Africa does not like. Today's generations must be the architects and builders of
transformation, in order to make a Pan African Renaissance by 2063 possible².

The realization of our vision of an integrated, people-centred, prosperous Africa, at peace with itself is key to this Pan African Renaissance. The broad-based consultations around Agenda 2063 (by the ECA, ADB and AUC) with all sectors of African citizenry, is therefore part of the building a movement and broad-based leadership on the continent of architects and builders of this transformation. We should not only look at our Heads of State and Government as the leadership of Africa’s integration project, but leadership broadly and should involve all sectors of society, state and non-state.

The questions that Agenda 2063 the consultations address are very practical: (a) elaborating the vision for the continent by 2063; (b) the strategies and milestones to achieve this vision; and (c) the role of each stakeholders towards this vision. The Agenda 2063 Framework, which the AUC, ECA and ADB are coordinating will then be presenting to Heads of States and Government in January 2014, then taken for further consultations before finalization by July 2014.

We have to move from a situation of Africa as the least integrated continent, especially with regards to trade and infrastructure, towards pooling our collective resources, skills, markets, industries, experiences and other strengths.

Continental integration is therefore critical to all aspects of Agenda 2063, towards realization of a Pan African Renaissance and to the medium term priorities of the AU Commission. These priorities are:

a) Ensuring a **skills revolution** through investment in education, research, science and technology and innovation. This includes the Pan African University and the harmonization of university curriculums project, in order to build continental centres of excellence and the mobility of skills and of African students. This also requires linkages with industry in key growth sectors so that

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we can engage the private sector on the kind of skills required, on their contribution to training and skills development, and providing job and artisanal opportunities for young graduates.

b) Building Africa’s collective food and nutrition security through investment in agriculture, developing agro-processing, agricultural infrastructure and extension services, and infrastructure to expand trade in agricultural and food products amongst African countries.

c) Speeding up infrastructure development that address key economic and social needs (transport, ICT, energy and other social and economic infrastructure) and that also help to link economies and countries. The PIDA priority projects are important in this regard and cooperation amongst and across countries on these critical projects will also strengthen the foundations and drive for integration.

d) Investment in youth and women, who make up the majority in all countries and the benefits of such investments to growth, development and social cohesion and inclusion is critical.

e) The industrialization of the continent through value-addition and beneficiation of our natural resources, building manufacturing and services around our growing population needs, our domestic market and the development of regional production chains. Encouraging intra-Africa tourism.

f) Mobilising domestic resources, and pooled resources to speed up continental development and leverage external resources. Scale of many of the projects and programmes required pooled resources, planning, implementation and management.

We need to speed up progress on integration issues such as integrating the RECs, building the regional and continental common markets, free movement of people, services and goods and harmonization of policies.

However, integration will gain greater traction when we see greater cooperation in implementing our infrastructure projects; grow our agricultural and agro-processing sectors; industrialize and diversify our economies, increase trade amongst ourselves, build Pan African businesses, people to people links and harmonize our vocational and
higher education sectors to allow for mobility of skills and professions in the continent.

Leadership on regional integration should therefore happen, not only at government level, but at all levels of African society and all institutions – whether business, civil society and private sector.

Thank you