

13

POLICY BRIEF



CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

**FRIEDRICH
EBERT
STIFTUNG**

THE AFRICAN UNION AT TEN: ASPIRATIONS AND REALITY

Berlin, Germany, 30 and 31 August 2012

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Introduction

The Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR), Cape Town, South Africa, and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), Berlin, Germany, hosted a colloquium in Berlin, from 30 to 31 August 2012, on “The African Union at Ten: Aspirations and Reality”.

The African Union (AU) was founded in 2002 on a wave of optimism about the continent’s future, and was equipped with stronger administrative mechanisms and greater powers of intervention in the affairs of its member states than its predecessor, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). In the past decade, the AU has sought to establish integrated frameworks to address Africa’s security, governance, and development challenges. The Berlin 2012 colloquium analysed the AU’s achievements and challenges, and crafted concrete recommendations to strengthen its effectiveness. The meeting considered the history of the AU; reviewed the ten years since the implementation of its peace and security architecture; compared the regional integration efforts of the AU and the European Union (EU); assessed its strategies to achieve socio-economic development; and reviewed the AU’s global role.

“The African Union was founded on a wave of optimism and was equipped with greater powers of intervention than its predecessor”



THE OPENING OF THE 19TH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE AFRICAN UNION ON 15 JULY 2012 IN ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA.

Image source - flickr
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/presidencyza/7581246188/in/photostream/>

1. A Decade of Africa’s Peace and Security Architecture

The OAU, which was created in May 1963, sought to protect Africa’s newly independent states by declaring their colonial boundaries inviolable and forbidding interference in their internal affairs. This led to serious violations of human rights being ignored in some African countries. With the end of the Cold War by 1990, civil conflicts increased on the continent. A genocide in Rwanda in 1994 resulted in about 800,000 deaths. The United Nations (UN) sometimes ignored its responsibilities to keep the peace in Africa, and the OAU often lacked the capacity and the resources for peacekeeping interventions.

The creation of the African Union established a 15-member Peace and Security Council (PSC) with the power to intervene in cases of egregious human rights abuses and unconstitutional changes of government. AU peacekeeping missions were launched in Burundi from 2003 to 2004, and in Darfur from 2004 to 2007, both of which were later taken over by the UN. However, the AU’s lack of influence over external interventions led by the UN Security Council and its five permanent members (P-5) – who often have their own more parochial interests – have sometimes resulted in undesirable outcomes. The continental body’s peace and security architecture includes: an AU Panel of the Wise, which promotes high-level mediation efforts; a rapid-reaction African Standby Force (ASF) built around five sub-regional brigades; a Continental Early Warning System (CEWS); a Military Staff Committee (MSC); and a Peace Fund. The AU has adopted a holistic approach to peacebuilding which links peace, security, and development, and emphasises the importance of national ownership of post-conflict reconstruction efforts. It is mandated to coordinate the efforts of Africa’s

eight major Regional Economic Communities (RECs) – the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the Southern African Development Community (SADC); the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD); the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); the East African Community (EAC); the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU); and the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) – as well as involve civil society actors. The AU’s access to local knowledge and its status as an African institution confer legitimacy on its conflict management efforts – although these have been inhibited by resource constraints and a failure to clarify the necessary division of labour among the RECs, the AU, and the UN.

2. Regional Integration: The African Union and the European Union

The AU has sought to model itself on the European Union, although the supranational template for region-building adopted in Europe may not be appropriate for Africa. Many of the 500 million inhabitants of the 27 countries in the EU have profited from European integration. In contrast, Africa’s integration efforts have failed to redress colonial patterns of commerce – trade among the AU’s 54 countries represents less than 10 percent of the continent’s total – and has delivered few tangible benefits to its 800 million citizens.

The European Economic Community (EEC) was established in 1957 to support peacemaking after the Second World War ended in 1945. The OAU’s creation was informed by a Pan-African ideology of liberation. African integration has moved forward in fits and starts, and not necessarily in alignment with the realities of the continent’s diverse political economy. Although the AU is seeking to move from norm-setting to implementation, the critical engagement of African countries in the work of the AU Commission in Addis Ababa has weakened. The Commission’s effectiveness also continues to be hampered by low staffing levels: it employed 669 people in 2012, compared with more than 33,000 employees at the EU. The European body’s region-building efforts in Africa have been criticised for their ineffectiveness in addressing developmental issues, though €100 million a year has been provided to support the AU’s peacekeeping efforts. Some EU states have also been criticised for supporting autocratic leaders in Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, Uganda, and Rwanda.

“The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), which was established as a core AU economic programme in 2001, has sought annual growth of seven percent and a doubling of agricultural capacity”



FARM WORKERS TEND YOUNG PLANTS AT A PALM OIL PLANTATION NEAR THE TOWN OF BAKO, ETHIOPIA.

Image source - The Guardian
Photo - Jose Cendon/Getty
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/oct/14/myths-about-global-rush-farmland>

3. The African Union and New Strategies for Development in Africa

The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), which was established as a core AU economic programme in 2001, has sought average annual growth of seven percent, as well as a doubling of agricultural capacity. The initiative has overseen important infrastructure and water-management projects, and attracted key external funding of \$25 million for its development initiatives in 2012. However, the pace of implementation has

been lethargic. Low rates of intra-African trade continue to be exacerbated by poor infrastructure, high tariffs, unwieldy customs procedures, and a lack of diversity in production. Furthermore, agreement on a comprehensive international aid mechanism for NEPAD has not been reached, interim donor funding remains unpredictable, and international promises to forgive the large external debts of African countries of about \$290 billion have frequently been broken. NEPAD has also been stymied by the uneven development of Africa's RECs and their overlapping memberships which have often resulted in duplication of efforts.

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) were both established in 2003 in support of NEPAD's work. By October 2012, 31 countries had joined the APRM, which sets and investigates standards of governance. The voluntary mechanism has sought to address democratic deficits and to oversee important tax and electoral reforms – 16 countries have been through its review process. However, compliance with the mechanism has been hampered by the non-binding nature of its findings and capacity constraints at the national level. The CAADP seeks to provide a policy framework for the agricultural sector which generates 35-40 percent of Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employs about 70 percent of its population. Thirty African countries had joined the programme by October 2012, but a mere eight are allocating 10 percent of their national budgets to agriculture as pledged in 2003, and only 24 have established appropriate plans and monitoring.

“ The AU Constitutive Act of 2000 established 17 key institutions, some of which have overlapping mandates, while others represented aspirations for future integration rather than serving present needs ”



THE NEW HEADQUARTERS OF THE AFRICAN UNION IN ADDIS ABABA WERE INAUGURATED IN JANUARY 2012.

Image source - ChinaAfrica
http://www.chinafrica.cn/english/Cover_Story/txt/2012-01/30/content_422262.htm

4. More than Rhetoric? The Balance Sheet after a Decade of Democratisation

Between 1989 and 1995, the number of multi-party political systems in Africa increased from five to 35. After 2002, ruling parties were voted out of power in Benin, the Central African Republic (CAR), Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali, Mauritius, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Zambia. However, the quality of democracy in many countries has been declining since 2005, in particular with the curtailing of political rights during elections. Furthermore, although the number of civil wars has decreased since the creation of the AU from eight in 2002 to four in 2012, the number of localised crises that turn violent has risen. The AU Peace and Security Council is increasingly focusing on these conflicts. Between 2003 and 2012, 11 *coups d'état*, took place in Africa. As a result, the AU suspended Mauritania, Guinea, Niger, and Madagascar from its membership between 2008 and 2010. However, the continental body's responses to unconstitutional changes of government has been criticised for only sanctioning military coups and not extensions to presidential term limits.

The AU Constitutive Act of 2000 established 17 key institutions, some of which have overlapping mandates, while others represented aspirations for future integration rather than serving present needs. For example, the planned birth of the African Court of Justice (ACJ) did not take place and was

overtaken by a 2008 agreement to merge it with the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (AfCHPR), which had been created in 2006. Only three countries had ratified the founding protocol for the new merged court by October 2012, far short of the 15 required. Indeed, Africa's governance framework relies on voluntary compliance. If the cooperation of member states is withheld, the system is undermined. The African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance of 2007 only reached its threshold of 15 signatories in January 2012.

To foster the role of civil society in its work, the AU established the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) in 2004, and the Economic, Social, and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) a year later. However, the PAP has yet to be granted legislative powers, while ECOSOCC has been largely ineffective in fulfilling its mandate of mobilising grassroots participation in the AU's bodies.

5. Strengthening Africa's Voice in Global Politics

Africa continues to have limited influence over the strategic direction of key multilateral bodies such as the UN Security Council, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), all of which continue to be dominated by powerful countries. For example, the invitation of African leaders to the Group of Eight leading industrialised nations (G8) has represented, for many Africans, a form of participation without voice. Influential Western states have resisted the AU's push for greater recognition of its interests under international instruments such as Chapter VIII of the UN Charter; and the AU was sidelined in multilateral decision-making during the Libyan conflict in 2011.

The exclusion of Africa's voice in international diplomacy can be reversed through increased coordination among its diplomats, greater professionalism in its representation, and the joint development of more innovative foreign policy strategies. Acceptance of the principle of subsidiarity, under which Africa's RECs act as the AU's implementing organs, could improve the coherence of African responses to crises. African governments should not be diverted from their duty to represent the continent's interests by squabbles about permanent seats on the UN Security Council that are currently not on offer.

NEPAD's mission to develop Africa and the continent's continued marginalisation represent major causes around which continental leaders can campaign, with the AU, the African Development Bank (AfDB), and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) acting as key advocates. African national governments must be serious about financing continental institutions – external actors will provide over 55 percent of the AU's core budget in 2013 – to avoid dependence on outside aid and its conditionalities. Implementation of the UN Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs) efforts to halve poverty by 2015 must also be prioritised.

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US PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA (CENTRE) HOSTS A WORKING LUNCH WITH AFRICAN LEADERS AND OTHER G8 LEADERS DURING THE 2012 G8 SUMMIT AT CAMP DAVID, UNITED STATES, IN MAY 2012.

Image source - Metro
Photo - Luke Sharrett/ The New York Times-Pool/Getty Images
<http://pictures.metro.co.uk/g8-summit-continues-at-camp-david-may-2012/1487817/Leaders-Commence-G8-Summit-At-Camp-David>

Policy Recommendations

The following 10 key policy recommendations emerged from the Berlin colloquium:

1. The administration, capacity, funding, human resources, and planning challenges faced by the AU should be addressed by implementing the recommendations of the *Audit of the African Union* of 2007, and the 2010 assessment study, *Moving Africa Forward: African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)*. The issue of institutional duplication within the continental organisation needs to be urgently addressed, and some of the AU's bodies should be streamlined;
2. The AU Peace and Security Council must improve its accountability to African civil society organisations in order to enlist their support in enhancing the continent's early-warning reporting. The AU also needs to strengthen its mediation capacity by providing greater administrative support to the Panel of the Wise and through developing an improved database of expert African mediators;
3. African governments should prioritise the establishment of infrastructure to create free movement of people, goods, and services and must mobilise resources – such as through taxation – to create more inclusive employment opportunities, and enhanced capacity to domesticate regional norms;
4. The AU's decision to recognise only eight RECs should be implemented as a priority, and continental and sub-regional bodies need to be strengthened simultaneously;
5. Africans should foster cross-fertilisation among think-tanks, institutes of higher education, and policymakers, and use their own centres of knowledge-production to promote policy development and implementation in support of the continent's integration efforts;
6. The AU and its member states must raise awareness of the organisation's role among African publics to enhance popular ownership of its programmes. Africa's regional mechanisms should seek broader participation from the private sector and civil society to enhance the accountability of national governments, which can also be improved by quantifying the extent to which they are meeting APRM targets;
7. Capable African presidents could be appointed as continental spokespersons on critical global issues, and the AU should seek to appoint a foreign policy tsar on a bi-annual basis;

“The African Union and its member states must raise awareness of the organisation's role among African publics to enhance popular ownership of its programmes”



SOUTH AFRICAN MINISTER NKOSAZANA DLAMINI-ZUMA IS APPOINTED AS CHAIR OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION IN ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, IN JULY 2012.

Image source - Eye Witness News
<http://ewn.co.za/2012/07/17/AU-Commission-chair-Nkosazana-Dlamini-Zuma>

“ African policymakers need to define the respective roles of the Regional Economic Communities, the African Union, and the United Nations in relation to peacekeeping and peacebuilding ”



UGANDAN SOLDIERS SERVING IN SOMALIA UNDER THE AU MISSION IN SOMALIA (AMISOM) IN MOGADISHU IN NOVEMBER 2009.

Image source - Global Post
Photo - Yasuyoshi Chiba AFP/Getty Images
<http://www.globalpost.com/photo/5681637>

8. African diplomats in multilateral fora in Addis Ababa, New York, Geneva, and Vienna, must coordinate their positions more effectively. Consideration should also be given to creating a mechanism to formalise how the AU selects African non-permanent representatives to the UN Security Council. For example, one of the three non-permanent seats could be rotated between Africa's major powers; another between the continent's middle powers; and the third between smaller African states;
9. African policymakers need to define the respective roles of the RECs, the AU, and the UN in relation to peacekeeping and peacebuilding, with the AU also crafting new approaches that address the root causes of conflicts on the continent. AU-led peacekeeping missions should be funded by the UN for six months and then taken over by the world body, in line with the recommendations of the UN's 2009 Romano Prodi report on peacekeeping. The AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) should thus be transformed into a UN force; and
10. The AU and the RECs should develop clear, coordinated positions on their political and economic goals and the strategies for achieving them in relation to external economic actors, particularly in relation to China in the context of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), the BRICS economic bloc (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), and contentious negotiations on the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the EU.