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## African integration governance challenges in the 21st century: An overview

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This issue of **Synopsis** continues to explore key issues on African integration and governance, featuring four presentations made at a CPS international seminar on 'African integration: governance challenges in the 21st century' in November 2008. This seminar formed part of a series of conferences falling under the project on 'Africa's emerging progressive governance architecture' which charts a new path in the discourse on African governance, and places the continent's challenges in this regard within the context of continental and regional integration. The discourse seeks to expand the focus beyond the conventional treatment of the nation-state as a stand-alone entity isolated from its wider regional and continental context.

The assumption underlying this departure is that Africa, at this current historical juncture in an era of globalisation, must move beyond a narrow conceptualisation of the nation-state and begin exploring more systematically the transnational dimensions of governance. The emergence of the African Union (AU) and affiliated organs reflects an evolution towards a continental governance architecture that addresses not only the post-colonial nation-state, but the longer-term trend towards regional and continental political as well as economic integration.

While the AU remains a point of reference in this issue, the articles contained examine some of the issues that have received insufficient attention in the previous issue of **Synopsis**. These include three areas that are becoming central to the continent's governance discourse:

- the implications of the AU High Level Panel Audit Report on prospects for the AU's evolution toward a Union Government
- the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)
- the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.

In addition to the challenges facing continental integration, the last two articles converge on the participatory role of African civil society and the

establishment of shared norms and standards for the continent and its regions. The articles also raise the issue of the efficacy of the AU's Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) as an effective continental and regional vehicle for civil society, as well as bringing onto the agenda the prospects of integrating the African Diaspora as a 'Sixth Region' of the AU.

The democratisation of African regionalism emerges as an important dimension of these concerns. Here, the discussions looked at different aspects of the regionalism and its democratic potential in southern Africa (within the Southern African Development Committee (SADC) framework) and in West Africa (within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) framework). In the case of SADC, an important element of the discourse is consideration of the status and potential of the SADC Parliamentary Forum and the region's slow pace of implementing the SADC mandate to establish and/or activate the SADC National Committees (SNCs). These aim to generate national constituencies for SADC. The ECOWAS case provided a basis for comparison with SADC in terms of the broader issues of civil society participation. The presentations and discussion on the two subjects were not very sanguine on the prospects for regional democratisation within the framework of the AU's regional economic communities.

As things stand, there is no African consensus on the role of regional parliamentary bodies, especially concerning their relationship to the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) on the one hand and to the national parliaments on the other. Added to this is the fact that legislative institutions in Africa generally remain relatively marginalised in relation to the all-powerful African executive (although the balance of power between executive and legislative branches may reflect, as in the current South African situation, shifting political dynamics within the ruling party where one-party hegemonic systems are concerned). As the discourse on integration moves ever more in the direction of the political as well as the economic, the parliamentary dimension, along with the civil society role of the ECOSOCC, should become increasingly important as an issue for debate and inquiry on regional democratisation.

The economic dimension, however, remains the dominant preoccupation in the governance discourse on regional and continental integration. Thus, the conference discussions on aspects of regional co-operation and integration in southern Africa, and in the Maghreb, helped focus attention on the possibilities of rationalising the RECs, as considered by the SADC-COMESA-EAC summit, and the challenges of economic co-operation and integration in the Maghreb region occupied by the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA). Accompanying the economic agenda in many parts of the continent is the security dimension, especially where conflict resolution and post-conflict recovery is concerned. The role of African RECs in conflict management therefore came under discussion, along with a comparative exploration of the different African and European approaches to regional and continental co-operation and integration. This issue of **Synopsis** starts with a comparative critique of African and European approaches to integration, focusing on the European Union (EU) as well as the AU and its affiliated RECs. Lorenzo Fioramonti's article sheds light on the potentialities and limitations of the EU-African partnership. Apart from reviewing the controversies surrounding the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between the EU and different African regional groupings, Fioramonti ventures the telling observation in the realm of governance that there is evidence that African leaders are not willing to concede any significant degree of national sovereignty. This observation is expanded upon by



Francis Ikome, who explores the implications for the AU Audit Report (of the High Level Panel). Ikome comes to pessimistic conclusions about the likelihood of AU member states conceding sovereignty to support the rhetoric of many of the African leaders who envision a 'US of Africa.' Ikome's critique was complemented by the presentation by Patrick Matlou, whose focus on the African diaspora dimension of the AU highlighted the civil society role of the ECOSOCC. This focus was further expanded upon by Ogochukwu Nzewi in her critique of the regional parliament of ECOWAS and the ECOSOCC forum.

Nzewi's comparative references to differences between EU institutions and those of the AU system at continental and regional level complements the observations of Fioramonti and Ikome. For example, she notes the absence of the 'compulsory consultation' principle governing EU inter-institutional arrangements defining 'co-decision powers,' and the absence of such governance mechanisms in the ECOWAS Treaty, which duplicates their absence at the AU continental level as well. Furthermore, like the PAP, the ECOWAS Parliament remains advisory, while the regional ECOSOCC forum for encouraging civil society participation is yet to be established. This is against a backdrop of limited impact by civil society in West Africa, especially on ECOWAS policies, hence the perception of a democratic deficit at the ECOWAS regional level that was also found to be the case in the Southern African regional community of SADC. These are critical observations given the important role that RECs are playing in conflict resolution and post-conflict recovery, which could benefit from greater participatory engagements from members of regional parliaments, civil society, and other non-governmental structures.

## African integration and the European Union: View and perspectives

*By Lorenzo Fioramonti*

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### Introduction

In recent years, the relationship between European and African countries has experienced significant changes in terms of policies and the main actors involved. At the trade and development level, the Cotonou regime, which came into power in 2000, has put an end to the 25-year preferential agreement sealed through the Lomé Conventions, and paved the way to market liberalisation under the auspices of the WTO. Moreover, the creation of the African Union in 2002, and the series of European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) missions in Africa from 2003 onwards have marked a turning point for Europe-Africa relations from a more political and military point of view. These events pushed in the direction of more institutionalised inter-regional relations, liberalisation of trade relations and the securitisation of the European Union (EU's) policies towards Africa.

Importantly, the creation of the African Union (AU) as a collective interlocutor of the EU provides a common platform for African governments to share their views, appreciation and

criticisms of the EU policies. In fact, representatives of AU institutions often make explicit reference to the EU in their declarations, which further confirms that the AU can be seen as an important locus to collect African views of the EU.

Undoubtedly, the EU also interests African policymakers in so far as it can be regarded as a key model for regional integration. This has been made even more evident by the 'grand debate' on the government of the AU, which characterised the Accra meeting in July 2007. On that occasion, the various proposals tabled by African policymakers used the EU as an important reference point to support a similar direction for Africa, or suggest an African way to further integration.

Despite these recent events, the way AU leaders view the EU reveals a certain degree of continuity, with traditional patterns of interaction between Africa and Europe. The colonial history binding the two continents still affects the image AU leaders have of the EU. The memory of a colonial past contributes to building expectations of compensation and disappointment when EU actions do not fulfil this need. Moreover, macro-structural factors, such as the asymmetric North-South distribution of power outliving colonisation, tend to influence the way AU leaders view the EU.

## Europe versus Africa: Key issues of concern

### The impact of trade reforms on relations between EU and AU

Reacting to WTO pressures and to the common perception that the Lomé Convention (1975-2000) had failed to respond to the development needs of ACP countries (African, Caribbean and Pacific Groups of States), the new Cotonou agreement signed in 2000 marked the beginning of a liberalisation philosophy with respect to trade relations between Europe and the ACP, the two parties committed to building the foundations for free trade areas within the ACP region and with EU counterparts. Between 2000 and 2007, the EU promoted the creation of sub-regional organisations within the ACP group in order to conclude separate EPAs with each regional grouping. In the case of African countries, sub-regional groupings only partially overlapped with pre-existing regional economic communities and customs unions.

Although it directly involved only sub-Saharan countries, EPAs became a contentious issue between the EU and the whole of Africa during the course of 2007. EU positions in the EPA negotiations have raised critical remarks by African negotiators. The first key criticism concerns the volume of liberalisation the EU expects from ACP countries. According to the WTO, liberalisation should cover 'substantially all trade'. While the EU proposed to define this clause as 90 per cent of trade volumes, the AU rejected this proposal, criticising the EU's "rather restrictive interpretation" of the WTO requirements.

A second criticism concerns the more developmental part of the deal. According to African leaders, EU pressures for liberalisation do not appear to be equally supported by development assistance projects. In this respect, in 2006 the trade ministers of the AU expressed their "profound disappointment at the stance taken by negotiators of the European Commission in so far as it does not adequately address the development concerns that must be the basis of relations with Africa". More generally, African critics point to a loss of importance of African development for the European counterparts.



The way in which the European Commission has been operating to secure the various EPAs has also affected the way in which the EU promotes regional integration in Africa. While some African leaders consider EU pressures for intra-Africa integration as a positive step towards further economic and political integration in Africa, others argue that the EU's plan to split Africa into different sub-regional groupings for the execution of the EPAs was a heavy blow to pan-African integration. According to the Department of Trade and Industry at the EU, "European imports will displace intra-regional exports. Such reduction of intra-Africa trade does not promote and strengthen economic integration in Africa; rather, it enhances the lopsided colonial-oriented trade structures." Others, less subtly, hint at the fact that the EU continues adopting 'divide-and-rule' strategies in Africa, a notorious legacy of European colonialism.

Given this inconsistency between EU economic strategies and its political support to pan-African integration, trade ministers of the AU concluded by declaring their expectation that "the African regions will be allowed to pursue their regional integration processes at a pace that is commensurate with their political, economical and social capacities".

### Political and military co-operation

The EU started to be involved in peace operations and democracy support in Africa in the 1980s. Yet its involvement has radically increased over time, especially since 2000. On the one hand, the AU acknowledges the European contribution to peace and stability in Africa and the model of peace-through-integration that the EU promotes with its example. On the other hand, it expresses some concerns for the actual limits of the EU as a security actor in Africa, which is at times perceived as imposing double standards on African member states.

Since the 1960s, the EU has developed programmes of support for human rights and democratisation. During the 1980s, it started imposing the first timid sanctions on South Africa's apartheid regime. In the 1990s, after the establishment of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the EU sponsored the first European interventions abroad, sealed by the election-monitoring mission to South Africa in 1994. Since 2002, the EU has been imposing diplomatic sanctions against Zimbabwe and, more recently, has threatened to impose sanctions against the Sudanese government. In the past decade, it has also introduced conditionality measures to promote human rights in Africa. On a military level, since the establishment of ESDP in 2003, the EU has carried out a number of conflict prevention and peace-keeping missions in sub-Saharan Africa, from the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2003 to Chad in 2008. The EU has actively funded AU-led conflict management/prevention initiatives through the so-called African Peace Facility (APF). APF has been used to provide financial resources to African initiatives in Darfur and Somalia.

Against the backdrop of American unilateralism and military interventionism, the EU's focus for civilian operations and long term peace-building strategies based on conflict prevention has raised broad consensus within the AU. The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership adopted at the Lisbon Summit underlines that "Africa and Europe understand the importance of peace and security as preconditions for political, economic and social development." AU leaders tend to depict the EU as a model to achieve and maintain peace, as in 2002, when Ambassador Said Djinnit (at that time Assistant Secretary General of the OAU, Political Affairs) considered the EU to be a model of integration.

In a document titled *Building an effective African Union* he argued, “I strongly believe that an effective African Union should be built on a solid ground and on a set of shared values in the areas of security, stability, development and co-operation. The EU construction has been possible only when the European countries agreed on common values to sustain their common endeavour.” More recently, Maxwell Mkwenzalamba, Commissioner for Economic Affairs at the AU Commission, stated that the EU should be a model for Africa: “In view of the significant progress made by the EU in similar endeavours, the AU stands to draw valuable lessons from the European experience.” That said, the willingness of AU leaders to learn from the EU model has its limits. In fact, AU leaders do not share with the Europeans the need to pool sovereignty. Yet, according to the Commission, while the OAU was based on a purely inter-governmental approach, the creation of the AU has made the “community and inter-governmental approach possible”, although probably very unlikely in the foreseeable future.

Besides the “respect for national authority”, the AU has introduced the “right to intervene” in a member state's domestic politics. At the same time though, the Commission stresses that the AU's right to intervene is only “in grave circumstances.” In a way, it is fair to argue that AU member states do not hold similar views when it comes to the possibility of sharing sovereignty. There is actually growing evidence that African leaders are not willing to give up any significant component of their national sovereignty.

EU initiatives in the field of democracy and human rights promotion have enjoyed a good degree of consensus among African leaders, at least publicly. Some concerns have been raised by some analysts and civil society representatives, particularly concerning the need to have African countries be 'co-definers' of conditionality, so as to build mutual accountability between the EU and Africa. As the Zimbabwean case has revealed, the EU's stance with respect to good governance and democracy has provoked diverging reactions within the AU. The EU initial opposition to President Mugabe participating in the AU-EU Lisbon Summit in December 2007 triggered harsh reactions by a number of African leaders, who accused their European counterparts of patronising a meeting that was widely heralded as the first opportunity for Europeans and Africans to meet “as equals”. As remarked by the President of the AU Commission, Alpha Ouman Konare, “there are problems of governance, but Africans themselves have to sort these out, to tackle them head on.”

## Concluding remarks

The issues reviewed in this short paper are key challenges for the future of EU-AU relations. These challenges further increase if one takes into account that other international players are interested in establishing political relations with the AU. China, India and Russia, among others, are becoming more and more attractive for the AU as partners for development and peace. While these partners do not have the same colonial baggage as the EU, they also seem to be more lax when it comes to conditionality measures.

If the EU is seriously interested in supporting a bottom-up process of regional integration in Africa (beyond co-operation, as it is at the moment), then it will definitely need to retrieve the so-called Africa-EU strategic partnership in order to give it fresh energy. This initiative was initially developed as a European strategy for Africa, which immediately revealed its patronising approach. It will now need to be 're-launched' by taking the principles of



bottom-up integration seriously. Only if it can support Africa's move up along the integration ladder according to its own gradual strategy and timing, will the EU demonstrate that it is genuinely interested in facilitating regional integration processes outside its borders. Otherwise, the accusation of using the vocabulary of regional integration as a smokescreen for advancing self-interested agendas will gain more support among African policymakers, opinion leaders and civil society to the detriment of the EU's credibility in Africa.

## Reviewing the AU audit: Implications for a union government

*By Francis Ikome, Director of the Multilateral Programme,  
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### Introduction and background

Although Africa won political independence as a fragmented continent, and notwithstanding the fact that various African states inherited different colonial legacies, they have consistently pursued the twin objectives of political unity on the one hand and collective self-reliance in the field of economic and social development on the other (AU, Brainstorming Session Issue Paper, 2007: 2). This has provided the impetus for various regional and continental integration initiatives that have been crafted by Africans over the years, beginning with the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, through the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) and the Full Plan of Action (FAL) in 1980; the Abuja Treaty in 1991; the signing of the Sirte Declaration in 1999, and the adoption of the Constitutive Act establishing the African Union in 2000; and the launching of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in 2001; to the most recent project for the establishment of a Union Government (see Audit Report, December 2007: 10). Each of these initiatives represented a collective response to the challenges the continent faced at different moments in its history. However, the record of achievement of these initiatives has been very disappointing, partly explaining the failure of the continent to achieve any meaningful political and economic integration.

The pioneer continental organisation, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) for example, was designed to advance the course of African unity. However, it was the product of consensus between independent African states that favoured political unity (Casablanca Group) and those that preferred a loose organisation (Monrovia Group). As a result, the unity and solidarity it professed was diluted by the imperatives of the strict respect for colonial boundaries and non-interference in the internal affairs of member states. It therefore, remained an essentially inter-governmental framework for co-operation. As a liberation organisation, it performed wonderfully by contributing to the elimination of the last vestiges of colonialism and racial rule in the continent. However, with the independence of Namibia in 1990 and the end of apartheid in South Africa in 1994, consensus emerged that the OAU had served its time and that it needed to be replaced by a more progressive

organisation that could better respond to the new challenges that Africa faced in an era of globalisation. It was against this background that discussions that subsequently culminated in the establishment of the AU in 2000 began. Less than 10 years after its establishment, African leaders have felt the strong urge to further accelerate the continent's integration agenda, hence the AU government project, which itself necessitated an audit of the Union.

This brief appraises the implications of the audit of the AU on the AU government project. It argues that African governments' inability to agree on the appropriate pace towards the establishment of a Union Government (being split rather between gradualist and accelerates, akin to the Monrovia-Casablanca divide that preceded the establishment of the OAU) informed the setting up of a High-Level Panel to audit the Union. As a result, the findings of the Panel, contained in the Audit Report, have far-reaching implications on the pace and direction of the Union Government project.

## The Union government project: genesis and evolution

During a greater part of his tenure as chairperson of the AU Commission, Alpha Omar Konare struggled, albeit unsuccessfully, to have African leaders agree to strengthening the Commission – that was expected to do so much with so little in terms of requisite legal institutional authority and the financial and human capital wherewithal. In some real sense, therefore, the Union government project can be traced back to Konare's Report as chairman of the Commission, to the 10th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council on 'Strengthening the African Union Commission and the Specialized Technical Committees: towards a Union Government' (see Council Decision EX.CL/328(X)).

At the Sirte Extraordinary Summit in 1999, African leaders agreed that the OAU had fulfilled its mandate and that it was increasingly becoming out of sync with, and ill-equipped to, address the new political, social and economic challenges facing the continent in a rapidly globalising world. There was also recognition that in spite of the historic signing of the Abuja Treaty in 1990, continental integration was moving at a very slow pace. Consensus emerged among African leaders that a bolder response was needed in the form of a re-energised continental organisation with a broader mandate and a new institutional framework capable of meeting the continent's new challenges. The outcome was the Sirte Declaration (1999) that paved the way for the Constitutive Act (2000) and the launching of the AU in Durban, South Africa in 2002. The new organisation was assigned the dual mandate of accelerating the political and socio-economic integration of the continent, while continuing the pursuit of the core principles of the predecessor OAU and also the agenda set out in the Abuja Treaty (See AU, Brainstorming, p 4).

The transformation of the OAU to the AU has been rushed. This has resulted in inadequate thinking through of the AU's institutional framework. Although a wide range of new organs and programmes were established under the Constitutive Act, insufficient attention was paid to the nature, mandate, powers and operational modalities of these new organs and the broader AU. More significantly, there was little or no discussion of the implications of the transformation from the OAU to the AU on member states, particularly with regard to sensitive political and constitutional issues (ibid, p 4). The Constitutive Act established a link between the AU and the prescriptions of the Abuja Treaty. However, African leaders have





done little serious stock-taking of the record of implementation of the Abuja Treaty and its implications for the successor organisation. Against this background, African leaders began discussions to further strengthen the organisation and to move the integration agenda.

These discussions produced several concurring declarations on the imperative of an accelerated programme of unity and integration of the continent that would culminate in a Union Government or a United States of Africa. The motion was set at the Fourth Ordinary Session of the Assembly held in Abuja, Nigeria in January 2005, during which African leaders examined a proposal by the Libyan leader, Muammar Ghaddafi, for a rapid acceleration of political integration. They adopted Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.69(IV), setting up a seven-member Committee of Heads of State and Government (Committee of Seven) to further reflect on the proposal (ibid, p 4). The committee of seven submitted its report at the Fifth Ordinary Session of the Assembly held in Sirte, Libya, in July 2005, with a reaffirmation by the Committee that “the ultimate goal of the African Union is full political and economic integration leading to the creation of the United States of Africa.” (AU, Brainstorming Session, p 4)

## The Union government (G) project and the imperatives of an audit of the Union

The Executive Council considered the report on the Study on an African Union Government during its Ninth Extraordinary Session held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 17-18 November 2006 and concluded that:

- (i) all Member States accept the United States of Africa as a common and desirable goal (but) differences exist over the modalities and timeframe for achieving this goal, and the appropriate pace of integration
- (ii) there is a common agreement on the need for an audit review of the state of the union in order to know where are the areas in which significant improvements have to be made in order to accelerate the integration process...” (Ext/EX.CL/RPT(IX) cited in Brainstorming Session, p 5).

In line with AU policy-making procedure, the Executive Council Decision was submitted to the Assembly at its Eighth Ordinary Session held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in January 2007. Because of the far-reaching implications of the proposals contained in the report, the Assembly, in Decision Assembly/AU/Dec. 156 (VIII), resolved to “devote the 9th Session of the Assembly in Accra, Ghana in July 2007, to the Union Government on the theme Grand Debate on the Union Government. It also endorsed the Council's proposal for “a retreat of Ministers of Foreign Affairs to reflect on the State of the Union.”

The stewardship of the AU, during its five years of existence, came under scrutiny during the 10th Session of the Assembly of the AU that was held in Accra, Ghana, in July 2007.

The focus was on two critical issues, namely: African leaders' assessment of the work of the High-Level Panel set up to audit the African Union, and the conclusions of the Ministerial Committee on Union Government. Then chairperson of the Commission, Alpha Omar

Konare, aptly summed up the significance of these two processes in the following words: “These two platforms brought together the continent's eminent personalities who endeavoured to reconcile the possible with the desirable, and thus propel us to create better conditions to enable us to make significant progress on our journey to African integration, a dream long nurtured by all the great Pan-Africanists of the last century...” (Report of the Chairperson of the AUC to the Assembly, 2008, introduction). So what did the Panel and the Committee reveal about the state of the Union and what implications have these got on the pace and direction of the Union Government Project?

## The AU audit: Implications for the pace and direction of a Union government

The chairperson of the Panel described the terms of reference of the Panel as “wide and comprehensive and as reflecting a psychological paradigm shift with regard to achieving the political and socio-economic unification of Africa (AU, Audit Report, Foreword, Paragraph 1). His assessment of the mandate given to his team by African leaders is summed up as consisting of “a systematic examination and self-assessment of the performance of the AU, informed by the desire to accelerate and fast-track the process of continental integration (Audit Report, Foreword, Para. 1).

Leaning on the fact that the Accra Declaration states that there is consensus among African leaders to the effect that the ultimate AU objectives is the establishment of a Union government, the Audit Panel's recommendations are, in the main, structured to ensure the revamping of the organs and institutions of the Union so as to foster unity and the fast-tracking of political and economic process. The Audit Report revealed serious malfunctions of many organs and institutions of the AU and calls for the urgent acceleration of the transformation process, beginning with ridding the entire continent and the organisation of dependency, followed by political, structural and economic transformation. It urges a deconstruction of inherited political and economic architecture, and its replacement with a new indigenous socio-economic order, based on the 3 pillars of: the democratisation of the political and development process; national and continental collective self-reliance; and the restitution of an African indigenous social democratic order (Audit Rpt, Foreword, Par 6). It also strongly argues that if the envisaged union is to become a reality, it must be a union of peoples, and not just of governments (ibid).

## Concluding observations

Africa's economic integration and political unity has been a constant in the history of the continent. However, the balance sheet of this project has been mixed. While, on the one hand, African leaders have been consistent in their belief that the integration of the continent is the only real path to the continent's development on the other hand, the various integration and unity platforms they have evolved over the years have achieved very little. While the OAU, for example, contributed to the liberation of the continent, it did not generate the requisite momentum for genuine integration. The advent of the AU, accompanied by a relative watering-down of the sacrosanct character of sovereignty, heralded hopes for an accelerated process of continental integration.



However, almost 10 years after the adoption of the Constitutive Act in 2000, the pace of integration has not advanced in any significant sense. Moreover, hopes of a better-performing AU have not been realised. This has been the justification for discussions by African leaders of strengthening the AU and to accelerate the integration project. The outcome has been the AU government project. Sadly, while African leaders are agreed on the imperatives of a Union government and also that the establishment of such a government is in line with the prescriptions of the Constitutive Act, they have been unable to agree on how to proceed with the project. As in the 1960s, African leaders have diverged into two camps – those who would want the immediate unification of the continent, and those urging a more gradual and pragmatic approach to the integration of the continent.

While 'accelerates' have argued that the establishment of a 'United States of Africa' is long overdue, and that delaying it would only continue to impede and derail Africa's progress and development, 'gradualists' have argued that the AU was only established a few years ago, and that it is necessary to allow it time to find its feet and consolidate itself – including the effective establishment of a number of the new institutions envisioned in the Constitutive Act – before contemplating moving a step further. As far as they are concerned, establishing a Union government is a momentous decision, with far-reaching implications, and therefore, requires more time, consultation and proper planning than has been done so far.

The Audit was borne out of the failure of African leaders to agree on the pace and shape of a Union government. The findings of the Audit Panel reveals serious malfunctions with virtually all AU organs, including contradictions and lapses in the Constitutive Act. Its 159 recommendations, including the roadmap proposed by the panel, hold a lot of promise for the integration agenda. Yet, it is doubtful if African leaders will buy into it, particularly with regard to the sharing of sovereignty between member states and the Union. Crucially also, the Audit was indeed a scrutiny of the functioning of the Union, particularly its various organs. In light of the multiple dysfunctions of the AU's various organs, the pace and direction toward a Union government project now hinges on revamping various AU organs, especially the Commission. In the final analysis, it would seem that the gradualists have been vindicated. This is notwithstanding the Audit's call for expedient action on its proposals and the threat by Presidents Ghaddafi and Wade to proceed with the formation of a United entity should there be any further prevarication on the UG project on the part of their peers.

## Institutionalising participation in ECOWAS policy making

*By Ogochukwu Nzewi, CPS Senior Researcher*

### Introduction

This article explores the shift in West African regional governance through regional institutions, particularly the parliament of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the regional Economic Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), which

serves as the civil society representative forum of the ECOWAS region. These institutions are focused on creating accountable and transparent leadership based on the broad participation of citizens and civil society. The ECOWAS parliament and the ECOSOCC regional forum are thus conceptualised as platforms for building constituencies in African regional governance as they present opportunities for the participation by citizens of member states (national constituents) in regional policy making and development. This suggests that constituents make demands and that their voices are heard through country representatives in the regional parliaments or the civil society representative forums.

## Regional parliaments and civil society representative forums platforms for public participation

The journey of ECOWAS towards reform presents some similarities with that of the African Union (AU). The ECOWAS reform came in the form of a Treaty in 1993,<sup>1</sup> while structural reform in the OAU began in the form of the Abuja Treaty of 1991. These two treaties signal a commitment to participatory and democratic governance through the institution of a parliament and a civil society representative forum. As noted by Breslin and Hook,<sup>2</sup> the point of departure of the new regionalism of the 1990s is that there is a balance in the importance of inter-state actors and institutions and non-state actors such as civil society. Also included are national and international non-governmental organisations. The Committee of Eminent Persons (CEP) in 1992 recommended the reform of the ECOWAS<sup>3</sup> and introduced inclusive governance through the introduction of supranational institutions like the ECOWAS parliament and ECOSOCC. The following discussion will focus on the ECOWAS parliament, ECOSOC, and their institutional arrangements as representative platforms of the African people in West Africa.

### The ECOWAS Parliament

The ECOWAS-P protocol states that Members of Parliament (MPs) are deemed to represent all citizens of West Africa.<sup>4</sup> The view of the ECOWAS regional Parliament as a representative body is, however, debatable. It is argued here that the lack of universal elections to the ECOWAS Parliament and limits placed on it as a mere consultative body undermines its role as a putative representative body.

Firstly, although the principles in the founding protocols of the ECOWAS Parliament are anchored on elections by universal adult suffrage,<sup>5</sup> there are constraints to its powers, the likely effect of which will be to undermine its effectiveness as a representative institution.<sup>6</sup> Although the ECOWAS Parliament's allocation of seats in proportion to population size reflects democratic commitment to equal and fair democratic representation, without actual elections the legitimacy of the ECOWAS parliament, its processes and outputs will remain questionable. The danger is that its processes will become merely symbolic gestures rather than being based on a genuine representation of a popular mandate.

Secondly, the Parliament operates in an advisory and consultative capacity. It also has limited areas of competence and jurisdiction. Debates and recommendations are confined to a limited set of policy areas, such as human rights, energy, communication, health, citizenship and social integration.<sup>7</sup> While the Parliament "will transform into a co-decision-making body with the Council of Ministers and subsequently, adopt a law-making role in



defined areas”,<sup>8</sup> as an advisory body it does not have such powers. It cannot amend, approve, reject or even veto proposals. Additionally, there is no provision for compulsory consultation. Neither is there a detailed articulation of how other ECOWAS organs like the Council of Ministers should relate to the ECOWAS parliament. Limiting consultation to certain policy areas is not unique to the ECOWAS experience as EU institutions like the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee are also limited to certain policy issues. Nevertheless, there is a critical difference. Consultation with the ECOWAS parliament and the ECOSOCC by the Council of Ministers or any other organ is optional, and the ECOWAS Parliament does not possess decision-making powers. For the EU, the EC treaty provides for *compulsory consultation* on a wide range of policy matters, and details the co-decision making powers of the European Parliament.<sup>9</sup> If members of Parliament are not elected directly through universal adult suffrage, and policy making is based on optional consultation, then the nature of representation through the ECOWAS Parliament is indirect and therefore ineffective in terms of conveying the interests of citizens in West Africa.

## The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOCC)

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of ECOWAS, although provided for in the ECOWAS revised treaty of 1993, is yet to be established. Nevertheless, ECOWAS has adopted regulations relating to the participation of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in its decision-making processes.<sup>10</sup> In the regulations, approved regional NGOs termed category “A” NGOs, like the African Business Round Table (ECOWAS: Decision A/DEC.9/12/00)<sup>11</sup> may be granted observer status and invited to make oral and written presentations to the Council of Ministers or any organ of ECOWAS except the Authority of Heads of State and Government (AHSG). Category “B” NGOs also enjoy observer status but do not have access to the Council or the AHSG. There are also interactions between regional NGO forums and ECOWAS in the development of policy. The meetings of regional experts/NGOs on the draft Regional Response Action Plan against Drug Trafficking and Related Organized Crime in West Africa and the ECOWAS Common Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) framework are examples.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, the observer status of certain NGOs in the meetings of various ECOWAS organs,<sup>13</sup> and the regional expert meetings aimed at bringing specialised inputs and relevant constituency-based information into regional policy processes, have produced little discernible impact. Apart from the work of Henry Fajemirokun on the role of West African Chambers of Commerce in the founding of the ECOWAS treaty,<sup>14</sup> there is little evidence to show that civil society has had any meaningful impact on ECOWAS policies. There is still a need to institutionalise civil society participation and inclusion in the processes of ECOWAS, through ECOSOCC once the latter has been established. This will help provide a platform for genuine civil society participation in ECOWAS decision-making processes, and thus enhance deliberative democracy in this body.

## Policy making and institutional constraints

Studies of parliaments like the British House of Commons and even the European Parliament<sup>15</sup> reveal that the role of parliament in the initiation and formulation of policy, although crucial, is heavily constrained. Policy initiation and formulation still remains the exclusive preserve of executive political and administrative leadership. Thus parliaments tend to find themselves as marginal participants and mere policy legitimisers. Further, civil

society interest groups, even in vibrant democracies, sometimes find themselves outside the policy process as bystanders, mere information sources, and in some cases policy legitimisers. However as Kirby notes, "it is not only that the state helps constitute civil society but also that civil society helps constitute the sort of state that exists."<sup>16</sup> Given this common institutional constraint on certain parliamentary institutions, to what extent is the ECOWAS parliament subject to similar constraints, and how can it overcome them to ensure that it contributes towards the building of national constituencies and bringing people into decision-making processes within West African regional governance structures?

There are institutional risks posed by the limitations placed on the functions of the ECOWAS Parliament and platforms for the participation of civil society. These risks are better understood if viewed from the structure of ECOWAS decision making. For instance, the Authority of Heads of State and Government in ECOWAS is an inter-governmental and highly centralised decision-making organ. Institutional features such as these play a role in the nature of the emergent regional institutions. Historical institutionalists are of the view that past institutional legacies tend to shape future decisions. In fact, Hall and Taylor argue that "institutions are resistant to redesign ultimately because they structure the very choices about reform the individual is likely to make."<sup>17</sup> Historical and cultural factors, therefore, sway choices to the familiarity of the existing structure. It is not surprising then that while recognising the need for reforming regional governance, the long standing inter-governmental bargaining culture of ECOWAS seems to dominate decision-making processes. As such, the objective of bottom-up participatory decision making in ECOWAS is restrained.

## Conclusion

Whichever way one decides to look at the role of parliaments or civil society forums, their introduction into West African regional governance unearths a central problem: the limited role of supranational institutions in the affairs of the region. This is so because, despite the introduction of important reforms intended to enhance the quality of people participation in institutions such as the ECOWAS Parliament and the ECOSOC, in practice these institutions still face constraints whose ultimate effect is to undermine these very same reforms. Also, the way in which the ECOWAS parliament is constituted, through nominations rather than through direct popular elections, further undermines the ability of this institution and others similar to it, to serve as platforms for representing and conveying the needs of their intended constituencies.

### Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> ECOWAS revised treaty of 1993 available at <http://www.ecowas.int> accessed 9th November 2008.  
OAU 1991) Organization of African Unity, 1991, Treaty establishing the African Economic Community. OAU, African Union, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, viewed 9th Nov 2008, [http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/Documents/Treaties/Text/AEC\\_Treaty\\_1991.pdf](http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/Documents/Treaties/Text/AEC_Treaty_1991.pdf)
- <sup>2</sup> Breslin, S and Hook, G.D. 2002. 'Microregionalism and World Order: Concepts, approaches and implications', in S. Breslin and G.D. Hook (eds.). Microregionalism and World Order. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke; New York
- <sup>3</sup> Kufour 2006 op cit, pp 136, 149, 150.
- <sup>4</sup> ECOWAS-P; See ECOWAS-P website . <http://www.parl.ecowas.int/>
- <sup>5</sup> The Pan African Parliament protocol states that: its ultimate aim shall be to "evolve into an institution with full legislative powers, whose members are elected by universal adult suffrage." (OAU 2001a: 2-4). ECOWAS-P founding protocol states that "representatives and their alternates are to be elected by direct universal suffrage by citizens of Member States" <http://www.sec.ecowas.int/>
- <sup>6</sup> PAP Article 2(3) of its protocol: "However, until such a time as the Member states decide otherwise by and amendment of this Protocol: the Pan African Parliament shall have consultative and advisory powers only; and the members of the Pan African Parliament shall be appointed as provided for in Article 4 of this Protocol."



ECOWAS-P has limitations which echo the same theme: "...pending when Members of Parliament are thus elected, the National Assemblies of Member States or their equivalent institutions or organs are empowered to elect members from among themselves. The duration of the transitional period is subject to the approval of the Authority of Heads of State and Government." <http://www.sec.ecowas.int/>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid <http://www.sec.ecowas.int/>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> For instance, the ESC provision state that "The Committee must be consulted by the Council or Commission where this treaty so provides..." Consolidated version of the Treaty Establishing the European Community [http://www.dpt.gov.tr/abigm/abib/Antlasmalar/Consolidated%20Version%20of%20the%20EC%20Treaty%20\(En\).pdf](http://www.dpt.gov.tr/abigm/abib/Antlasmalar/Consolidated%20Version%20of%20the%20EC%20Treaty%20(En).pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Decisions establishing regulations for the granting to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) the status of Observer within the Institutions of the Economic Community of West African States 1994, cited in Kofi, Oteng Kufuor 2006; The institutional transformation of the Economic community of West African States USA: Ashgate publishing

<sup>11</sup> ECOWAS website <http://www.sec.ecowas.int/>

<sup>12</sup> See press briefings from the ECOWAS website:

ECOWAS press release: 'ECOWAS experts unite against illicit drug trafficking,' 25 October 2008 No: 105/2008

ECOWAS press release: 'ECOWAS Chairman joins Ministers to task selves on new anti-drug strategies.' 28h October 2008 No. 108/2008; <http://news.ecowas.int/presseshow.php?nb=105&lang=en&annee=2008>

ECOWAS press release: 'ECOWAS experts set to revitalize poultry sector in West Africa, 26 September 2008. No 097/2008 <http://www.ecowas.int/>.

These press briefings provide insights into the process taken in drafting approving this policy document.

<sup>13</sup> Decisions establishing regulations for the granting to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) the status of observer within the Institutions of the Economic Community of West African States 1994, cited in Kofi, Oteng Kufuor 2006, The institutional transformation of the Economic community of West African States USA: Ashgate publishing

<sup>14</sup> Henry Fajemirokun, 1984. The role of the West African Chambers of Commerce in the formation of the ECOWAS' In A.B Akinyemi, SB Falegan and IA Aluk (eds) Readings and Documents on ECOWAS, Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Lagos, Nigeria. Pp 76-90, cited in Kofi, Oteng Kufuor 2006, The institutional transformation of the Economic community of West African States USA: Ashgate publishing

<sup>15</sup> Norton, P. 1993. Does Parliament matter? Contemporary Political Studies. Harvester Wheatsheaf: New York pp 50-55.

Jacobs, F, and Corbett, R, Shackleton M, 1990, The European Parliament. Longman group UK limited, UK.

<sup>16</sup> Kirby, P. 2008. Different state-civil society relationships: lessons from Ireland paper delivered at the CPS/University of Limerick workshop on Social Partnerships in Sustainable development 3-5 November 2008, Johannesburg, South Africa.

<sup>17</sup> Hall, P.A. and Taylor, R.C.R. 1996. Political science and the three new institutionalisms, p. 940 in Political Studies, 44(5), pp 936-957.

## Regional economic communities and conflict resolution

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### Introduction

The Africa of today is not the Africa of 1950, 1960, 1990 or 2000. Colonial Africa, post-independence Africa, post-Cold-War Africa and Millennium Africa have all given way to Global Africa. The place of Africa in the global context is accepted and expected. The end of the Cold War, the liberation of minority-ruled southern Africa, the emergence of the World Trade Organization, and the Africa Growth and Opportunities Act, the establishment of the New Partnership for African Development, the focus on and assistance for HIV/AIDS and related public health issues by the international community, as well as the growth of civil society and pressures for democratic change throughout the continent, have all resulted in

an Africa that is markedly changed and full of potential. Not only is colonialism in the distant past, and the independence era of 'big men' fast receding, but Africa no longer provides the surrogates to superpowers as they wrangle for world ideological, military or moral domination. Africa's massive natural resource base, agricultural potential, human capital, market opportunities and cost-effective manufacturing sectors, combined with a unique tourism and lifestyle appeal, lead the way for an emerging unprecedented world leadership role for Africa.

Many international observers would scoff at that last statement, but Africa is a continent blessed with huge, often unrecognised, potential. Africa is huge. It is so large that the continental USA would fit inside it three times over. Africa is larger than Russia and China put together. More important than mere size is the fact that Africa has open spaces. Its population density is 62 persons per square mile, compared to 197 persons in Asia and 133 in Europe. Of course, there are deserts and mountains, like in any continent. And Africa has a huge 8 per cent of its land mass in protected zones (more than 30 per cent in Tanzania, Zambia and Botswana). Those protected areas are under strain, as well as the Congo basin; the world's second largest rain forest is largely intact but pressured by farms advancing southeast of Bangui and loggers, miners and hunters pushing in from the north and the west coast. Urbanisation rates are huge and Africa's cities are growing faster than those on any other continent.

But, at this time, Africa is comparatively under-populated. It has an ecosystem under strain but is still more than 50 per cent undisturbed by human encroachment. It contains 20 per cent of the world's remaining tropical rainforests, with biodiversity personified in huge grasslands and savanna wildlife, and flora and fauna known nowhere else on earth. At the same time it has 25 per cent of the world's gold reserves, 84 per cent of platinum minerals, 54 per cent of cobalt stocks, 52 per cent of manganese, 81 per cent of chromium, 32 per cent of bauxite, and 9 per cent of the world's proven oil reserves. Although cultivation amounts to only 6 per cent of the African land surface, farming acreage has grown by 75 per cent since colonial days, and the potential is unlimited. Africa boasted three of the top 10 fastest-growing economies in the world in 2007, with more than 20 countries between 5 and 16.3 per cent growth, and a continental average of more than 5 per cent (the United States grew at 2.2 per cent, The EU 3 per cent, the UK 2.9 per cent and Japan 1.9 per cent). Private capital and net investment flows have been pouring in since 1990, institutional investor ratings are high (20.4 average compared to worldwide 38.9), and stock exchanges in South Africa, Kenya, Ghana, Dakar, and elsewhere are showing phenomenal growth.

## Conflict undercuts economic growth

So, if the news is so good and the potential so compelling, why does Africa still lag so far behind the rest of the world both in reality and perception? Life expectancy remains 20 years below the developed world. Infant mortality rates are shockingly high. HIV/AIDS prevalence is the highest on earth. Eighty million children still have no access to formal education. Over half the continent does not have access to clean water. External debt remains terribly high in ratio to GDP, often more than 100 percent. And, as we know all too well, the bright spots of Africa and the social and economic progress that have been made in many regions, are offset by ongoing tragedies of open warfare and human rights violations





in Somalia, Darfur and the Eastern Congo; incipient conflicts brewing in the Ivory Coast, northern Uganda and parts of northern Ghana; fragile post-conflict situations in Burundi, Sierra Leone, or Liberia; democracy processes seriously flawed with violence in Zimbabwe, Kenya and Togo; or xenophobic tensions in South Africa and border instability between Ethiopia and Eritrea. At one level or another, the continent of Africa remains fraught with conflict. According to COMESA's Secretary General, Erastus Mwencha, speaking at a conference sponsored by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, in April 2008, on 'Regional economic integration and conflict mitigation', conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa were estimated in 2000 to be reducing Africa's economic growth by approximately 2 percent annually. Africa, he said, has been losing about US\$15 billion every year due to conflicts. Some of the factors Secretary General Mwencha listed were direct military expenditures, loss of productivity, damage to infrastructure, loss of government revenues, degradation of health and education, and human costs, including losses to the economy due to premature death and unexpected medical expenses, reduction in agricultural productivity, which is critical for the agro-based African economies, capital flight, and others.

When looking at the positive side – at that balance discussed above that is perceptively tipping toward peace, progress and stability – it is obvious to the observer that nothing has contributed more to this positive trend than the coming-of-age of the regional structures of Africa, primarily focused on economic integration, export and trade promotion, and development. They start with the retooled and reborn Africa Union (AU), but include the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA); the East African Community (ECA); Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS); the Southern African Development Community (SADC); the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD); the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD); Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). Other regional organisations not formally recognised by the AU are the Economic Community of Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL); the Southern African Customs Union (SACU); the Mano River Union (MRU); the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA); the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC). The importance of regional structures is undeniable. Beyond a small number of countries, whose size, population and natural resources give them an independent viability, most of Africa is divided into small geographic entities that cut across ethnicities, natural physical attributes, transportation and communication linkages, and resource sources that make no economic or common sense. They need each other, and only through these regional organisations can they hope to reach their full potential.

## Regional Economic Commissions' role in conflict resolution

Given the economic imperatives that gave birth to these regional entities, it is only recently that we have begun to understand the role they can play, and logically should play, in conflict resolution and mitigation in Africa. After all, if Africa's social and economic progress is primarily limited by conflict, then it is incumbent upon its Regional Economic Commissions (RECs) to make the addressing of this problem a part of their mandate. In fact, increasingly, over the last decade, these regional bodies have begun to understand and to

take on a prominent role in conflict resolution with their neighbours, both formally and informally.

African regional approaches to conflict resolution go back at least a decade or more and have been a focus since the replacement of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) with the AU in July 2002. The major change under the AU has been a renewed emphasis on building a continental security regime that is capable of managing and resolving African conflicts. The AU has laid out provisions for intervention in the internal conflicts of member states, thus overriding the principle of sovereignty and non-interference that guided the OAU and limited its effectiveness. There is a conflict resolution and prevention architecture in place, to include the Peace and Security Council (PSC), supported by the AU Commission through its chairperson, with four pillars that include the Panel of the Wise, the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), the African Standby Force (ASF), and the Special Fund. Each of the eight recognised RECs have peace and security mechanisms of their own design to meet the specific needs of each region. Again, as Secretary General Mwencha put it in the April conference in Washington, DC, these REC security bodies were “established because of the recognition that conflict adversely affects the RECs’ primary objective, namely, regional economic integration. The critical link between sustainable development and violent conflict is thus fully recognised by regional African bodies.”

The record of the AU and RECs has been significant in putting this mandate for conflict resolution into practice. Just a brief review of recent history is revealing, and this is by no means intended to be a comprehensive list:

- In Burundi, the Arusha Peace Accords and the subsequent successful transition, beginning in 2000, through constitutional reformation, elections in 2005 and the first majority government to be sustained in Burundi’s history, are due to the EAC states and South Africa, who have served as the mediation and facilitation powers, and the AU in the first instance, which supplied protection and peacekeeping forces, until they relinquished that duty to the UN in 2005.
- The creation by ECOWAS of a military arm, ECOMOG, and its notable intervention in the Liberian civil war when it was airlifted into Liberia in August 2003 to prevent rebels from over running the capital city and committing further atrocities, which allowed ECOWAS and international players to push through the Transitional Peace Agreement that established a transitional government from 2003-2005 and led to the election of the current government.
- Mediation efforts in Côte d’Ivoire and Guinea Bissau were also supported by ECOMOG.
- In Sudan, African mediation, led by Kenya under the auspices of IGAD, resulted in the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005 and the setting up of a national referendum in 2010 on North/South unity.
- In the troubled DRC, both the Sun City and Lusaka Accords, which put in place the transitional government that led to the peaceful 2006 elections, the first in the DRC in 40 years, were the results of efforts by a number of African leaders, supported by SADC. Great Lakes regional bodies are intimately involved in trying to bring a close to the current hostilities in the East of DRC.
- In Kenya, after the widespread violence spurred by the December 2007 national elections, a group of prominent persons, led by Kofi Annan as the principal



mediator and supported by the AU, helped to facilitate a Grand Coalition government that brought the violence to an end.

- Beyond these interventions with quantifiable impact, regional conflict resolution efforts have included less successful and ongoing interventions where outcomes have yet to be realised, such as AU forces in Darfur; mediation efforts in Northern Uganda, led by the former President of Mozambique, Joaquim Chissano, SADC efforts on Zimbabwe's 2008 election, and AU forces in Somalia.

## Conflict mitigation and transformation

RECs also have involved themselves in a number of other aspects of conflict mitigation which, while they are not direct resolution, peacemaking or peacekeeping, are just as important, if not more so, to conflict resolution and transformation that is sustainable.

First is the recognition that early warning is essential to tracking and preventing conflict in the first place. This is a principle universally agreed upon but seldom put into effect as well as it is being done in certain regions of Africa. Two RECs, IGAD and ECOWAS, have created early warning systems (CEWARN and ECOWARN, respectively) that have been instrumental in preventing conflicts. ECOWARN, which is a partnership between ECOWAS and the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), has a functioning system throughout West Africa, tracking incidents daily, publishing indicators to governments and international bodies, and deploying prior to open conflict to mediate tense situations. This has been successfully used in Guinea, Togo, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone, among others.

A second mitigation effort is done through observing elections. While many laudable international bodies, such as the Carter Center, European Parliament, and others, provide this service to help ensure free, fair and violence-free elections with results that are acceptable to voting populations, the role of African observers on the continent is massively important for credibility in the eyes of the electorate. Both the AU and the RECs are now actively involved in election observation, a function that has been undertaken by the Pan African Parliament, the SADC Parliamentary Forum, the ECOWAS Council of Elders, and by COMESA ambassadors in recent years.

## Building sustainable peace

The Africa Program of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars has been uniquely involved over the last seven years in projects in Burundi, the DRC and Liberia, which seek to rebuild post-conflict societies by transforming the leadership of these countries through a capacity-building programme that re-establishes the trust broken by the conflict, recreates relationships among protagonists that recognise collaboration and independence as in their own best interests, imparts communication and negotiation skills, and provides an agreement on the ways in which power should be shared and implemented. The success of this programme has been a validation and recognition of the fact that conflict is inherent to society, but it is how that conflict is managed and constructively transformed, without violence, that matters. Once beyond the warfare and open conflict stages, the task of recovery, reconciliation, addressing core causes of the conflict in the first place, development and poverty reduction await any society. Countries too often return to conflict after the signing of peace accords just for this reason.

# Synopsis

This is an aspect of conflict resolution – how to sustain peace – of which RECs are increasingly aware, and in which they are beginning to invest time and resources. COMESA's Trading for Peace initiative is the best example to date. It recognises that effective development work in unstable countries, or those just emerging from conflict, needs to be done differently from development work in countries that exist in relative peace and stability, and that there is a direct link between conflict and poverty.

## Conclusion

Economic progress is not possible in conflict situations. For those whose mandate is economic progress, attention must be paid to conflict resolution in a sustainable way, to include prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and post-conflict reconciliation, recovery and transformation. In Africa, this has been recognised by the AU and the continent's RECs and they are now taking a strong lead in this arena, with identifiable success.



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