

## **The African Union and the Challenges of Regional Integration in Africa**

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### **Abstract**

Formation of regional blocs and groupings has increasingly become a prominent feature of world politics especially since 1945. This is because regional integration, which they aim at achieving has increasingly also become a framework for development of continents all over the world. Thus, the Asian region has Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), America has North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) while Europe has the European Union (EU). Africa, so as not to be left behind in the race for development via regional integration established the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. While it lasted, the OAU failed to successfully integrate African economies, solve conflicts within and among African states, bring development, and improve the standard of living of Africans. And because the two main issue, which it directed its energies at – colonialism and apartheid in South Africa – are no longer present in Africa, it needed to be restructured in a way that would make it relevant to the challenges of a globalised and unipolar world. Hence, its metamorphosis into the African Union (AU) in 2001. It was officially flagged off on 9 July 2002. The question however remains: Will the AU succeed where the OAU failed? In other words, will the AU succeed in integrating African economies? This paper attempts to provide answers to these and other questions. It appraises the challenges before the AU in its bid to integrate Africa and concludes by proffering solutions.

*Integration is no longer a simple question of propriety, it is an inevitable strategy of survival and development. The rhythm of globalisation sustained by the tidal wave of economic liberalization and disparities in the share of projects, have made it an emergency for African countries to hold each other's hands if they wish to expand, strengthen, and integrate their economic area. - Salim Ahmed Salim, former OAU Secretary General.*

### **Introduction**

Economic cooperation, according to John Rourke, is “a process whereby sovereign states cooperate with one another bilaterally or multi-laterally through IGOs (such as the IMF)

or processes (such as the G-7 meetings)".<sup>1</sup> Whereas economic integration "means such a close degree of economic intertwining that, by formal agreement or informal circumstances, the countries involved begin to surrender some degree of sovereignty and act as an economic unit".<sup>2</sup> It should be noted, however, that there is no precise point when economic cooperation becomes economic integration. This is because the process involves more of moving along a continuum ranging from economic isolation, through mercantile policy, then to economic cooperation, and finally to economic integration.<sup>3</sup> The EU as well as NAFTA countries have moved along this continuum towards integration. It should be noted also that the process of economic integration, rather than be a single strand of activity, is a very complex phenomenon, which result from the interaction and mutual strengthening of transnational trade and finance, intergovernmental and non-governmental international organisations, transnational values, and other aspect of regime building.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the inseparable nexus between economics and politics extends to regional integration. This perhaps explains why Hassan Sunmonu, General Secretary of the Organisation of Africa Trade Union Unity (OATUU) said: "By integration, we don't mean just economic integration, but economic and political integration, infrastructure, linking energy, linking roads, transport and so on."<sup>5</sup>

By and large, however, regional economic institutions have been established both by independent states within a geo-political region and the United Nations. The latter established five regional economic commissions all over the world. Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), Economic Commission for West Asia (ECWA), Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). On the other hand, the independently established regional institutions in the world regions include the European Union (EU) in Europe, North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) in North America, Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Asia, The Arab League in the Middle East, and the nascent African Union (AU) in Africa. A detailed analysis of the factor, which led to the formation of the foregoing regional associations by states in the region concerned, is outside the scope of this study. But if Walter Kennes, European Commission economist's assertion is anything to go by, the reason cannot be separated from the obvious benefits, which a successful integration will provide for the integrating states. According to Kennes:

*Regional integration is only one aspect of a wider strategy to promote equitable growth. Successful regional integration improves competition, reduces transaction costs, allows economies of scale, attracts foreign direct investment and makes macro-economic coordination easier.*<sup>6</sup>

Although the end of World War II witnessed the proliferation of regional associations striving to integrate member states, the collapse of the cold war rekindled the desire to pragmatically achieve integration. Suffice it to say that the post-cold war era has witnessed as intense and growing global trend towards the development of regional economic and political blocs. Thus, integration of states suddenly became the received wisdom and indeed a fascinating path to tread, in order to accelerate socio-economic development. It is worthy to mention that during the cold war years, regionalism and integration had lesser attention paid to them unlike what obtains in contemporary times.

This is particularly true of Africa, which enjoyed financial and economic assistance/patronage by the East and West blocs in their inordinate ambition to “contain” each other and spread their spheres of influence. However, the “retreat from Africa”, occasioned by the coming to end of the East-West ideological conflict and the consequent economic crisis experienced in the continent, made African leaders, including those who have initially ignored the call for integration to realise that unless Africa speaks and acts in accord, underdevelopment and poverty will continue to ravage the continent.

This paper looks at the subject of integration in the African context. The focus is on the African Union and the challenges of integration in the continent. The paper is divided into five sections. In the introduction, the meaning as well as global perspective on integration is given. The second section traces the genesis of integration in Africa from 1963, when the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was formed up to 2002 when it officially metamorphosed into the African Union (AU). The third section examines the challenges and problems the nascent AU will have to contend with in its efforts to promote regional integration in Africa. Suggestions on how to solve the identified problems are the focus of the fourth section. The last and concluding section encapsulates the entire work and highlights the benefits that will accrue to African states and peoples if integration succeeds in the continent.

### **Regional Integration in Africa**

Although African states have been making attempts to achieve unity, these were largely unsuccessful until 1963 when the charter of the OAU was signed in Addis Ababa. The OAU emerged as a culmination of efforts by Africans and peoples of African descent to salvage the continent from the yokes of colonialism, racial prejudice and discrimination and bring the African peoples much closer together.<sup>7</sup> It is important to stress here that an assessment of events, which culminated in the formation of the OAU is obligatory, so as to give an insight into why the OAU failed in its bid to integrate Africa and achieve the much desired development and improved living standard for Africans.

Even though African statesmen believed in continental unity, they were divided on how to achieve it. This lack of agreement soon assumed institutional form when “the radicals” held their conference in Casablanca in January 1961 and became known as the “Casablanca Powers” while “the moderates” held theirs in Monrovia and consequently became known as the “Monrovia Group”. Although both groups accepted and agreed on the principle of unity and the need for African states to federate as confederates, they disagreed in their approaches to the issue. For instance, while the Casablanca group proposed and created an African Consultative Assembly with a representative of every African state, the Monrovia group preferred a unity of aspirations and of actions considered from the point of view of African social solidarity and political identity. Thus, African states towed two different paths towards continental unity. This, among other factors, stagnated the organisation and, as Zdenek Cervenka pointed out “because of these deep divisions, the OAU represents a largely negative agreement”.<sup>8</sup>

At the first Summit of African Heads of states in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 1963, which

had resulted in the establishment of the OAU, the question of economic cooperation and integration was one of the principal concerns of the African leaders and statesmen present and was, therefore, a prominent agenda. At subsequent Summits, African leaders emphasised regional cooperation and integration. This however, met with little success until the 1979 summit in Monrovia where the decision to establish an African Common Market was extensively discussed and eventually reached.

This was sketched out in greater detail in Lagos, in 1980, during an extraordinary Summit and eventually led to what became known as the “Lagos Plan of Action”. In the document, major directions to follow in order to achieve the economic integration of the continent were outlined, with Africa’s heads of states and governments committing to promote economic and social development and the integration of African economies in order to increase self-sufficiency and favour the endogenous and self-sustained development of the continent.

At the Abuja, Nigeria, Summit, in June 1991, the constituent instrument of the African Economic Community (AEC) was finalised. With the Treaty of Abuja, an era of functional reform was inaugurated in the life of the OAU. It should be noted, however, that the Treaty of Abuja is merely a “revised and corrected” version of the Lagos Plan of Action signed eleven years earlier. Thus, one can safely conclude that the first functional reform that aimed at making a significant change of direction in the OAU’s effort to promote economic integration of African states was the Treaty of Abuja which itself was the end of a long process starting in Monrovia in 1979 via Lagos in 1980. The AEC displayed a commitment on the part of African heads of state and government to create over a specific period of time an African economic community to ensure economic, social and cultural integration in Africa.

Since its entry into force in May 1994, the AEC had undertaken to inform existing regional economic communities (RECs) and groups in Africa of pragmatic ways of achieving its lofty objectives. Hence, it had communicated with RECs such as Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Economic Community of Central African States and Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) to mention a few. The RECS later started out on the path that had been traced for them and had initiated actions in the following areas: harmonisation of taxes and tariff, non tariff and customs barriers; liberalisation of intra-African trade; definition of a common position vis-à-vis foreign partners; greater coherence between sectoral economic policies trade, agriculture, currency, transport and communications, industries and energy.

In view of the lack-luster performance and dismal achievements of the OAU, especially its failure to solve the problems of integration in Africa, there arose series of demand for it’s restructuring. Besides, it has achieved the two main pre-occupation of its founding fathers i.e decolonisation and collapse of apartheid in South Africa. The restructuring eventually came on 9 July, 2002 at Durban, South Africa, when the OAU officially metamorphosed into the African Union.<sup>9</sup> In the words of Mammo Muchie; “The move from the OAU to the AU is perhaps one of the most relevant and historic acts that African Leaders as collective body have done to date”.<sup>10</sup>

## **AU and the Challenges of Regional Integration in Africa**

The need for unity, cooperation and integration of Africa has long been on the lips of African visionaries and pan-Africanists like George Padmore, W.E.B Dubois, Marcus and Garvey. The call was further re-echoed by African nationalists and leaders like Obafemi Awolowo, Julius Nyerere, Sekou Toure, Haile Salassie and Kwame Nkrumah. In fact, Nkrumah in his popular book titled *Africa Must Unite* said,

*Salvation for Africa lies in unity... for in unity lies strength and as I see it, African states must unite or sell themselves out to imperialist and colonialist exploiters for a mess of pottage or disintegrate individually.*<sup>11</sup>

Hence, the clamour for integration is not a thing of the twenty first century. Indeed, the challenges of globalisation and marginalisation of Africa merely rekindled the call and need for integration. As the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, stressed in his message to the 9<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) in Kampala, 8 June 2004:

*The continent continues to face numerous daunting developmental challenges. Economic growth is still far below what is needed to meet the millennium development goal of reducing poverty by half by the year 2015. Adult literacy for the majority of sub-Saharan Africa stands well below the developing-country average. And the rising incidence of AIDS is dramatically reducing life expectancy. Effective regional integration has a major role to play in helping African countries address these and other common concerns*<sup>12.</sup>

In like manner, President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria said,

*In all these years, regional economic cooperation and integration has remained a central pillar of Africa's development strategy. It has rightly been considered as a necessity rather than a choice. It has been seen as an essential instrument for faster collective growth and prosperity for the countries and peoples of this continent. It is our hope, and indeed our shared aspiration, to create a larger economic entity and market place that would facilitate viable production capacities in industry and agriculture, through a collective exploitation of our enormous human and natural resources.*<sup>13</sup>

President Obasanjo further said,

*Regional economic cooperation and integration can also make it possible for us to collectively build integrative infrastructures in transport, communications and energy which would otherwise be too costly for individual, small and fragmented African countries to undertake. Above all, in the ruthlessly competitive world of globalisation and liberalisation,*

*cooperation and integration offers us the only chance to be relevant and to speak with one voice in international negotiations.*<sup>14</sup>

What the foregoing suggests is that regional integration is indispensable for Africa to achieve meaningful economic growth and development. This is the crux of the challenge before the nascent AU. In fact, according to *New African*, the aim of the AU is to “bring the deepest possible integration of the continent socially, economically, militarily, culturally and politically”.<sup>15</sup> Specifically, the objective of the AU, as contained in Article 3 (c) of the Constitutive Act is to “accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent”.

In achieving the foregoing objective, the AU has series of challenges and problems to contend with. What are these? The facts provided in this study are not meant to mock Africa. Rather, they are to attract attention to the worrisome conditions in the continent.

The first and perhaps the most important challenge before the AU is how to promote inter and intra African trade. A number of factors have contributed to the low volume of trade, usually recorded by African states in their trade with one another. One, is the fact that “most (African) countries produce only raw materials for which there is virtually no demand elsewhere in Africa”.<sup>16</sup> Two, for many countries in Africa, “few commodities often make up the bulk of exports to the rest of the continent”.<sup>17</sup> For instance, in Angola petroleum and petroleum products account for more than 90 per cent of its export to other Africa countries whereas in the Seychelles fresh fish constitutes nearly 98 per cent of such exports.<sup>18</sup> Three, African countries are still “grappling to undo a legacy dominated by trade with their former colonial rulers rather than with each other”.<sup>19</sup> For instance, despite the fact that Senegal surrounds Gambia, trade between the two neighbours is negligible. Senegal’s biggest trading partner is France, while Gambia trades extensively with the UK.<sup>20</sup> Gumisai Mutume notes that due to “hindrances to trade within Africa, exports from Tunisia and Cameroon often find their way to French warehouses before being redirected to each other’s market shelves”.<sup>21</sup>

Another challenge the AU has to contend with in its effort to promote regional integration in Africa is the low level or inadequate/inefficient infrastructures, especially transport and communications, in Africa. In the area of communications: “Africa has the lowest telephone density in the world yet the highest telephone charges, and three times the rate of faults per line as in other developing regions”.<sup>22</sup> According to a World Bank report: “For every 100 people in Africa, there are 1.2 telephone lines – the lowest rate in the world”.<sup>23</sup> The report further adds that: “Telephone calls between African countries can be 50 – 100 times more expensive than they are within North America”.<sup>24</sup>

On transportation, the World Bank report notes that “freight costs for imports to landlocked African countries are more than twice as high as in Asia”.<sup>25</sup> The report is right, albeit worrisome, when one considers the fact that “to ship a car from Tokyo, Japan, to Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire costs \$1,500, while shipping the same car from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to Abidjan costs up to \$5,000”.<sup>26</sup> Travelling from one African country to another “usually meant first via Geneva or Paris”.<sup>27</sup> As Ernest Harsch points out: “African businessmen frequently need to wait 6 – 8 weeks to get visas to visit other

African countries while citizens of the UK or France can travel to many African countries and obtain visa on arrival”.<sup>28</sup>

Prof. Adebayo Adedeji, a leading voice on regional integration in Africa and former Executive Secretary, UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in an interview with *Africa Recovery* said “the environment for regional integration... has been absent in Africa”<sup>29</sup> He laments the “stagnant, declining economies” of African states and asked rhetorically: “If you can’t provide enough transport facilities at home, how can you be thinking of West African or pan-African transport facilities?”<sup>30</sup>. The foregoing is indeed a challenge before the AU.

Regional integration efforts have also not been successful in Africa because “gains and drawbacks unavoidably are unequally distributed between member countries, and no satisfactory mechanism for compensation has as yet been devised”.<sup>31</sup> According to Ernest Harsch,

*A major stumbling block to successful regional integration has been the great diversity in African countries sizes, national resources, level of development and connections to global markets. Tiny Benin does not have the same economic interests as its giant oil-rich neighbour, Nigeria. South Africa and Malawi do not experience the costs and benefits of regional trade arrangements in the same way.*<sup>32</sup>

Besides, the benefits from integration are only somewhat accruable in the long run whereas its cost has to be met in the short term by members who obviously have more than enough social, political and economic problems to cope with at home. According to Prof. Adedeji: “There are states that can’t even pay the salaries of their civil servants. How can you expect them to take out of their non-available resources to pay contributions to (regional organisations)?”<sup>33</sup>

Another challenge before the AU is how to make African governments incorporate regional agreements into national policies. The policies of liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation as well as unsound package of macro-economic policies imposed through structural adjustment conditionality/programme by the IMF and World Bank, which have now been institutionalised within the WTO through rules, agreements and procedures, are biased against African countries on one hand and regional integration efforts on the other hand.<sup>34</sup> The programmes, focusing heavily on liberalisation and market mechanisms, are almost exclusively national in scope as they obliged each African government to negotiate separately with its external financing institutions, without regard to regional considerations.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, the external financing institutions i.e donors, prefer to fund national programmes rather than regional cooperative projects.<sup>36</sup> Prof. Muna Ndulo, Director, Institute for African Development (IAD) concurs on this:

*There is the problem of low priority accorded to the implementation of integration programs vis-à-vis national ones which are very often supported and financed by influential international institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. For example under the structural adjustment programs in place in most African countries, domestic considerations take*

*precedence over sub-regional integration preoccupations.*<sup>37</sup>

Besides, the liberalisation imposed by structural adjustment opened the African market to goods coming from the highly industrialised countries, which no African country can compete with. That has led to the de-industrialisation of Africa as manufacturing industry now account for less than 5 per cent of GDP compared to 10 – 15 percent in 1960 – 1975.<sup>38</sup> Hence, “how to launch a new process of industrialization is”, according to Prof. Adedeji, “one of the problems the African Union will have to face”.<sup>39</sup>

In Africa, “overlapping membership of the regional economic communities has worked against the overall objective”<sup>40</sup> of regional integration. The RECs were created as stepping stones to regional integration and now there are 13 RECs covering a range of functions and intentions: almost all African countries belong to more than one of these RECs, 27 countries belong to two, 18 belong to three and one country belong to four.<sup>41</sup> In addition to the sub-regional RECs, there are well over 100 other multinational or bilateral groups devoted to fostering cooperation around specific activities, such as telecommunications, aviation, maritime transport, banking, river management, agriculture, energy and others.<sup>42</sup> Two prominent examples in these regard are the Arab League and the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). According to P.O.M. Njemanze,

*The membership of the Arab League is working against the economic integration of Africa. This is because the Arab world, which includes African countries north of the Sahara desert, is united in the promotion of the interests of the Arabs worldwide. The interests of the Arab League do not always agree with that of African countries south of the Sahara.*<sup>43</sup>

On OPEC, Njemanze notes further that:

*The existence of OPEC as a commodity cartel is working against economic integration of Africa. This is because its membership, which includes non-African nations has polarised the continent into OPEC and non-OPEC members. As the allocation of production quotas by OPEC affects the price of crude oil in the world market and the high price of crude oil adversely affects the economies of non-OPEC African countries, the boat of economic integration of Africa is moving against the tide since the prices of crude oil will remain a source of disharmony in relationship between the OPEC and the non-OPEC African countries.*<sup>44</sup>

Another major challenge the AU has to contend with in its effort to integrate African economies is the existence of civil strifes and conflicts in Africa. In an editorial comment, the *African Journal of international Affairs and Development* once notes that “virtually every country in Africa has either a festering or full blown conflict to deal with”.<sup>45</sup> Since no war leaves the neighbouring countries untouched, what ordinarily begins as “minor” dispute over power and resources can quickly engulf an entire region. The result is displacement of people (refugees), reduction in the flow of aid and investments, suspension of development projects etc. All these definitely hinder regional

integration.

The lack of sustained political commitment to put in place agreed policies and plans has been one of Africa's major shortcoming, and in the context of the African Union, this is an issue that needs to be addressed.<sup>46</sup> In the words of Tom Nevin, the "real challenge facing the AU is to get 53 nations all reading from the same page"<sup>47</sup>. Buttressing Amoako and Nevin, Prof. Ndulo said,

*The traditional explanation of the failure of integration schemes in Africa is that there is a lack of political will in the member countries that is necessary to see integration succeed, expressed in the chronic non-observance of commitments undertaken within the respective agreements and in the insufficient use of the instruments set up by these agreements.*<sup>48</sup>

What the foregoing suggests is that African leaders lacked the will to make integration work. Related to this is the fact that for integration to succeed, some element of national sovereignty must be sacrificed. But, according to Mair and Peters-Berries,

*hardly an African state ruler is really prepared to do that. For the transfer of resources and power of decisions to a supranational institution means a dissolving of the mass of patronage with which they can buy loyalty. Hence the well-known pattern: in rhetorical speeches, regional integration is conjured up and sometimes a monetary union is quickly decided upon as the goal. But in practice business is got down to in a much more restrained way.*<sup>49</sup>

The last, but by no way the least, challenge before the AU is how to incorporate the generality of Africans into integration schemes in the continent. There is enough evidence to support the fact that, apart from all else, regional efforts have failed in Africa because such efforts sidetracked the people. In this wise, the AU itself seems to have fallen into the same pit, as did the OAU, which it replaced. Its Act seems more an instrument for "building a coalition of states" rather than "uniting of people" as obvious in the provisions for the Union's structure and decision-making process (Article 5 to 22). It is only in the case of Economic, Social and Cultural Council that members are to be drawn from outside Governments and bureaucracies of members states. Even then, Articles 22 sub-section 2 emphasise that the "functions, powers, composition and organisation of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council shall be determined by the Assembly". It should be noted that the Assembly consists of Heads of State and Governments. K.Y. Amoako said;

*It is self-evident, that national policies have sustainability, if there is appropriately widespread participation in their formulation and execution. But we have only began to understand, how this dynamics works at the supra-national level. What is safe to say at this stage is that the process of integration has so far largely been*

*in the hands of governments alone.*<sup>50</sup>

## **Recommendations**

Having identified the problems militating against economic integration of Africa, which the AU must contend with, the following strategies for promoting regional integration are recommended. In the first instance, African leaders must not be carried away by the success of regional blocs elsewhere, especially Europe. Suffice it to say that African integration must necessarily be different from that in Europe, America or Asia. In Africa, it is an integration of countries with few products (mostly raw materials) accounting for the largest percentage of their export and weak industrial bases as well as infrastructures. For Africa to move away from its uncelebrated position of a negligible participant to an active player in the world economy, the process of integration must focus on integrating markets through trade liberalisation, harmonising monetary policies, promoting private sector investment first at the national and later, the sub-regional level.

Related to the above is the need to ensure that there are no losers in African integration. In this regard, there is the need to put in place well designed and adequately funded compensatory machinery for countries with small and vulnerable economies. This also requires establishing and publicising the fact that there are gains to be made from cooperation in investment, in infrastructure and market integration and also indicating in clear terms the opportunity costs of not cooperating. As Amoako rightly pointed out;

*we need a new way of conceptualising and financing regional integration which calculates not only what it will cost to integrate, but what it will cost us if we do not move to effective political and economic integration.*<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, since it has been identified that the underdeveloped nature of African economies is a barrier to regional integration, there is the need to develop at the local, national and regional levels, development policies which must aim at promoting agriculture, industry, services including health and public education etc. These must be protected and supported through appropriate trade, investment and macro-economic policy measures, which involves reallocation of expenditure away from white elephant projects and excessive procurement of arms and ammunition, mismanagement and corruption, creative use of remittances of Africans living abroad, corporate taxation, retention and re-investment of foreign profits, prevention of tax evasion by foreign investors and local elites and prevention of capital flight. Also, foreign investment must be pragmatically selected to suit first national and second regional objectives.

To achieve regional integration and unhindered intra-African trade, “investment in physical infrastructure - roads, railways, power line, air services and telecommunications is necessary”.<sup>52</sup> Commitments to build inter-African transport and communications network should not be sacrificed on the alter of personal interests of leaders.<sup>53</sup>

Regional heavy weights in Africa such as Nigeria (West Africa), Egypt (North Africa) and South Africa (Southern Africa) by dint of their sheer market size, natural endowment

and relative industrial bases, should be accorded special roles in African integration. The identified countries, in addition to acting as poles of growth, can lead the way through what has been described as “variable geometry”, which makes it “possible for certain states to proceed on an accelerated track of regional integration”.<sup>54</sup>

If there is any overarching lesson to be learned from failure of past attempts at integration, it is that regional cooperation cannot proceed far without a strong political foundation.<sup>55</sup> Sustained political commitment is, therefore, a necessary first step towards regional integration. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, concurs:

*our experience of a number of decades makes the clear statement that we have to think and work in a new way. We have to make every effort to understand in a real way the challenging work ahead of us.*<sup>56</sup>

UN, Secretary, General, Kofi Annan at the launching of the AU in Lusaka, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2001 also adds that,

*.. this promise will not be realized easily, unless it is pursued with singular determination by you, Africa’s leaders... This historic effort will require leadership, courage and a willingness to depart, from the ways of the past, if it is to do for Africa what the European Union has done for Europe.*<sup>57</sup>

A strong political foundation mentioned above necessarily involves putting in place (where it is yet to exist) and strengthening (where it is existing) democratic mechanisms. The examples of successful economic integration drawn from other parts of the world clearly indicate that they have been facilitated by the democratic system of government in place in those regions. It is heartening to know that the wind of democratisation and political reform currently blowing across regions of the world has not excluded Africa. A period of transition from authoritarian regimes to popular democracies is now being witnessed in many African countries. The mutual respect and truth expected to be fully restored by the nascent democratic leaders will in fundamental ways facilitates regional cooperation and by extension economic integration.<sup>58</sup>

To further promote integration, the RECs in the various sub-regions of Africa, which obviously were created when it became clear that carrying out the larger vision of regional integration was lagging,<sup>59</sup> should be well funded and made to work hand in hand with the AU.

Lastly, for the AU to achieve its objectives, especially facilitating economic integration of Africa, it should involve the African peoples in its programmes. History has shown that if the objectives of the AU are left solely in the hands of African heads of states, then it is doomed to fail. The ethic rests on the firm believe that development cannot, and should not, be undertaken on behalf of a people, rather it should be an organic outcome of the cohesiveness of states and society. This demands the continuous involvement of interest groups and African masses directly in the integration process so that the AU will be a “Union of African Peoples” rather than a “Union of African heads of states”.<sup>60</sup> The

rights of women also must be respected. According to Bekerie,

*if our notion of union does not take into consideration the centrality of African women and their rights to fully participate in all the processes and mechanisms of the state formation, then the declaration is pretentious at best, and deceptive at worst.*<sup>61</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In the foregoing presentation, we have traced the genesis and reasons for the emergence of regional blocs, especially in Africa. The main reason being that Africa wanted to be an active player in the global economy. The discussion also notes that because the OAU failed to facilitate meaningful growth and development in Africa, aside other factors, it metamorphosed into the AU. The study examines the problems the AU will contend with in its efforts to integrate African economies and proffers solutions.

By and large, if the suggestions are carefully examined and pragmatically implemented, it will lead to a successful integration of African economies, and this will bring immeasurable benefits to the continent. Among other benefits, it will lead to a bigger market for Africa's primary and finished products, enable the continent to meet international competition more effectively, (particularly now that there is a re-orientation of capital flows and global commerce to the eastern European countries), generally accelerate growth and development. More jobs will be created and this will bring about an improvement in the standard of living of the people.

## **Notes and References**

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19. *Ibid.*, p.20.
20. Gumisai Mutume, "How to boost trade...", p.20.
21. *Ibid.*, p.12.
22. Dayo Kawonishe, "Is Globalisation Exacerbating or Alleviating Poverty and Underdevelopment in Africa?" *African Journal of International Affairs and Development* Vol. 6 (2), 2001, p.6.
23. See Gumisai Mutume, "How to boost trade...", p.22.
24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*
26. “Press Conference on Regional Integration in Africa”. *File: //A:/PRESS CONFERENCE ON REGIONAL INTERNATION IN AFRICA. htm*
27. “Press Conference on Regional...”, p.2.
28. Ernest Harsch, “Making African Integration a Reality” *African Recovery* September 2002, p.11.
29. “You must first set your house in order” *African Recovery*, September 2002, p.16.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Pieter Esterhuysen *et al*, *Africa A-Z...*, p.62.
32. Ernest Harsch, “Making African Integration...”, p.13.
33. “You must first...”, p.16.
34. This was evident at Libreville, Gabon on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2000 when the Bretton Woods Agents recognised the failure of Structural Adjustment Programmes in Africa and asked for Africa’s forgiveness. See Mwalimu George Ngwane, *Why We Need An African Union Now* (Buea: Kalak Book, 2000), p.6.
35. “A better environment for integration?” *African Recovery*, September 2002, p.12.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Muna Ndulo, “African Economic Community and the Promotion of Intra-African Trade” *African Notes*, May 1992.
38. *African Recovery*\_September 2002, p.17.
39. *Ibid.*
40. “Accelerating the Pace of Regional Integration in Africa: The Challenges Ahead”. Opening address by K.Y. Amoako, Executive Secretary, ECA, to the Third African Development Forum held 4 March 2002 at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
41. *Ibid.*
42. Ernest Harsch, “Making African Integration...”, p.24.
43. Paul O. M. Njemanze, “Economic Integration of Africa: An Anatomy of Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces” *Nigerian Forum*, Vol. 22, Nos.7-8, July – August, 2004, p.150.
44. *Ibid.*
45. “From the Editorial Suite” *African Journal of International Affairs and Development* Vol. 7(1) 2002, p.III.

46. K.Y Amoako, quoted in Dayo Kawonishe, “*Metamorphosis of the OAU...*”, p.99.
47. Tom Nevin, “Exit OAU, enter AU. Will the African Union succeed where the OAU failed?” *African Business*, September 2001, p.10.
48. Muna Ndulo, “African Economic Community...”
49. “Regional integration in Africa: mainly a good idea so far”.
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50. K.Y. Amoako, “Accelerating the Pace...”, p.4.
51. *Ibid.*
52. Gumisai Mutume, “How to boost trade...”, p.22.
53. For instance Mobutu Sese Seko refused to build the trans-African highway linking Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo) to Uganda for fear that insurgents might over-throw him through the route. See *African Recovery* interview with Prof. Adebayo Adedeji. *Africa Recovery* September 2002, p.17.
54. K.Y. Amoako, “Towards the African Union...”, p.3.
55. *Ibid.*, p.2
56. See address of the President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, at the opening of the 38<sup>th</sup> Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU, Durban, South Africa, 8 July 2002.
57. “Secretary General evokes promise inherent in Launch of African Union”. SG/SM/7884/AFR 331,9 July, 2001, <http://www..orgNews/Docs/2001/sgsm7884.doc.htm>
58. Muna Ndulo, “African Economic Community...”
59. “Accelerating the pace...”, p. 3.
60. Ayele Bekerie, “A General Essay on a Pan-African Perspective on the Transition from the Organisation of African Unity to the African Union”, *Journal of Comparative Education and International Relations in Africa*, Vol. 4, Nos. 1 and 2, December 2001, p.65.
61. *Ibid.*