



The AU@20: Progress, Problems and Prospects Towards Agenda 2063

Concept Note and Call for Papers

Symposium

Co-organised by the Institute for Pan-African Thought and Conversation (IPATC) at the University of Johannesburg (UJ), South Africa and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), Dakar, Senegal.

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1.0. Introduction

The Institute for Pan-African Thought and Conversation (IPATC), based at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) are jointly organising a continental symposium on the theme: “The African Union at 20: Progress, Problems and Prospects” to be convened in October 2022. The symposium is part and parcel of the commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of the African Union (AU). The AU was officially founded and launched on 9 July 2002 in Durban, South Africa. The Union took over the mantle for the pursuit of continental unity and integration from the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) which had existed since 1963. Both the OAU and AU are key institutional architectures and historical landmarks for the advancement of Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance, especially from the perspective of state-driven continental integration.

Like the OAU, the AU is an intergovernmental organization whose primary mandate is continental unity and integration. As the Union commemorates 20 years of its existence, it is important to make a critical assessment of the milestones that it has registered thus far, the challenges it is encountering, and where it may be headed in the foreseeable future. This exercise is timely and pertinent particularly in relation to Agenda 2063 – The Africa We Want. This is a continental development blueprint of the AU aimed at the socio-cultural and politico-economic transformation for the betterment of the lives and livelihoods of African peoples. For the AU to make a meaningful impact on unity and integration in Africa, it must concretely change the lives of African peoples in a positive way.

This document serves as both a concept note and a call for papers. It is organized along various sections. The second section below provides a contextual background to this project. The third section outlines the justification for the project. The fourth section highlights the overall goal of the symposium. The fifth section proposes the key themes and topics for the symposium. The sixth section sums up the expected deliverables from the project. The seventh section outlines modalities for the submission of abstracts and papers. The eighth section clarifies participation, format, and languages to be used during

the symposium. Section nine sums up the planned management and coordination arrangements for the project. Sections ten and eleven introduce the IPATC and CODESRIA, respectively, as the key institutions in partnership on this project commemorating the two decades of the existence and official launch of the AU.

2.0. Contextual Background

It is not possible to have a full appreciation of the AU outside OAU as part of its historical context. Established on 25 May 1963, the OAU pursued five main goals namely to: (a) promote the unity and solidarity of African States; (b) coordinate and intensify their cooperation and efforts to achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa; (c) defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity and independence; (d) eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa; and (e) promote international cooperation, having due regard to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights¹. Despite numerous challenges that it faced during the period 1963 and 2001, the OAU pursued the above objectives and registered major achievements especially in ensuring the completion of the continent's decolonization with last bastions of colonial domination in Namibia (1990) and South Africa (1994) liberated. The OAU kept the spirit of Pan-Africanism alive through solidarity among Africans in Africa and the Diaspora. It protected Africa's interests globally within the difficult environment marked by Cold War which divided the world into two ideological camps, led respectively by the United States of America (USA) and the United Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR). The OAU was the first-ever continental organization to begin a deliberate process of Africa's regional and continental integration.

The collapse of the Cold War globally in 1989 and the demise of apartheid in Southern Africa in 1994 brought about a sea change to the African context. African leaders were compelled to rethink continental unity and integration. It is no wonder that during their meeting in Libya in 1999, they agreed to transform the OAU into the AU. While building on the milestones of the OAU, the mandate of the AU was much more expansive.

¹ The OAU Charter, 1963: p.3.

The objectives of the AU are to: (a) Achieve greater unity and solidarity between the African countries and the peoples of Africa; (b) Defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of its Member States; (c) Accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent; (d) Encourage international cooperation, taking due account of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; (e) Promote peace, security and stability on the continent; (f) Promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance; (g) Promote and protect human and people's rights in accordance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other relevant human rights instruments; (h) Establish the necessary conditions which enable the continent to play its rightful role in the global economy and in international negotiations; (i) Promote sustainable development at the economic, social and cultural levels as well as the integration of African economies; (j) Promote cooperation in all fields of human activity to raise the living standards of African peoples; (k) Coordinate and harmonise the policies between the existing and future Regional Economic Communities for the gradual attainment of the objectives of the Union; (l) Advance the development of the continent by promoting research in all fields, in particular in science and technology; and (m) Work with relevant international partners in the eradication of preventable diseases and the promotion of good health on the continent².

In 2013, African leaders celebrated the Golden Jubilee of the OAU/AU under the theme: Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance. At the end of the celebration, they adopted the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration thereby renewing their commitment to continental unity and integration³. This declaration represents a perfect bridge between the ideals espoused by the OAU which were predicated fundamentally upon the old doctrine of non-interference in internal affairs of member states to the new paradigm of non-indifference to human rights abuses within member states. Even more importantly, the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration created a firm platform for the development of Agenda

² The Constitutive Act of the African Union, 2000: p. 6-7.

³ 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration.

2063-The Africa We Want. Today, it is essentially Agenda 2063 that defines what the AU is and what it is not. This Agenda has seven aspirations as follows:

Aspiration 1: A Prosperous Africa, based on Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development;

Aspiration 2: An Integrated Continent Politically united and based on the ideals of Pan Africanism and the vision of African Renaissance;

Aspiration 3: An Africa of Good Governance, Democracy, Respect for Human Rights, Justice and the Rule of Law;

Aspiration 4: A Peaceful and Secure Africa;

Aspiration 5: Africa with a Strong Cultural Identity, Values and Ethics;

Aspiration 6: An Africa Whose Development is people driven, especially relying on the potential offered by its Youth and Women; and

Aspiration 7: An Africa as A Strong and Influential Global Player and Partner⁴.

This agenda is being implemented through ten-year action plans. The first of these started in 2014 and will end in 2023.

Currently, the AU is undergoing institutional reforms. As part of this reform exercise, the African leaders have decided to streamline the AU's programming along four main continental priority areas namely (a) democracy and governance, (b) peace and security, (c) socio-economic development, and (d) repositioning Africa globally. So far, the record on this reform process remains a mixed bag at present. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic considerably derailed efforts on the institutional reform front as the AU devoted more attention to containing the pandemic over and above all else. The reform agenda is a contested terrain between and among key players. The leadership of the reform process seems paralysed. The external interests are overwhelmingly dominant and have clouded the Pan-African agenda. This is compounded by AU's dependence on external

⁴ Agenda 2063-Popular Version, 2015: p.2.

resources from powerful global players such as the European Union, United States of America, China, France, United Kingdom, Germany etc.

3.0. Justification

The justification and rationale for this initiative of IPATC and CODESRIA is premised on six (6) main factors. First, the transition from OAU to the AU in the late 1990s was an epoch-making development and there is therefore a need to review the result of the transition to date. Second, there is need to discover through evidence-based research the real difference and similarities between OAU and AU.

Third, this initiative will breathe life into the almost defunct Agenda 2063 as the long-term development blueprint of the AU. For instance, with the exception of the much-vaunted African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the other thirteen flagship projects of Agenda 2063 remain dormant including Free Movement of Persons and the African Passport. African leaders made a modest effort towards achieving the ideal of silencing the guns and ending wars in Africa (another flagship project of Agenda 2963), including by declaring 2020 as the year of silencing the guns. Even during 2020 itself, not much was achieved in terms of silencing the guns, given that much effort was invested into containing the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, not much progress has been made in containing violent conflicts, including terrorism in Africa today. Hence, during its extra-ordinary summit held on 16 December 2020, the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government resolved to extend the deadline for silencing the guns from 2020 to 2030. Will the AU really achieve this noble ideal? Time will tell.

Fourthly, this project will also reignite intellectual imagination towards collective and Pan-Africanist efforts towards integration following years of unilateralism and bilateralism reinforced by the onset of COVID-19 pandemic. Fifth, this initiative will contribute to the decolonization of Africa's international relations, so the continent is able to occupy its rightful place in the global community of nations within and outside the United Nations system. Sixth and finally, the AU is currently undergoing institutional reforms and it is imperative that we review this process so far. Is this reform process making headway? Is

there concrete and demonstrable progress? What challenges have confronted this reform process? Does the AU require mere reform which amounts to simply tinkering with the system on the surface? Or does the AU require a comprehensive institutional transformation; a systemic and behavioural overhaul of doing business?

4.0. Overall Goal

The overall goal of the symposium is to create a platform for scholars, practitioners and civil society actors to critically reflect on the progress that the AU has registered, problems it has encountered and its prospects in the short-term, medium term and long-term horizon.

5.0. Key themes and topics for the symposium

The themes and topics for the symposium will include the following, among others:

Themes	Topics
Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance	Unity, Integration, Coordination, Cooperation, Regional Economic Communities, cultural renaissance, African Continental Free Trade Area, borders, sovereignty, neo-colonialism, decolonization, etc
AU Organs and Institutions	African Governance Architecture, African Peace and Security Architecture, African Peer Review Mechanism, African Union Development Agency/New Partnership for Development etc., AU Reforms, Leadership
Governance, Democracy, and Elections	AU norms, AU programmes and their impact, unconstitutional elongation of

	tenure, popular protests, and electoral violence.
Africa's Peace and Security Architecture	Security regionalism, AU Standby Force, Panel of the Wise, and Early Warning System, peacemaking and peacekeeping operations, electoral violence, terrorism, peace agreements, infrastructures for peace (I4Ps), mismanagement of diversity etc.
Socio-economic development and service delivery	Education, Health, urbanization and human settlements, public service delivery, local governance, community development, corruption, state capture, global health pandemics (HIV/AIDS, COVID-19 etc), agriculture, industrialisation, infrastructure development, natural resource governance, illicit financial outflows etc
Structural Transformation	Agenda 2063-the Africa We Want
Humanitarian Assistance	Conflict-related and Natural Disaster-based forced displacement of people
People-to-People Integration	Citizenship, Migration and Mobility, Free Movement of Persons and the African Passport, Racism, Xenophobia and Afrophobia, citizen engagement
Climate Change	Environmental degradation
Information Communication and Technology	Traditional media, social media, fourth industrial revolution, artificial intelligence,

	fake news, deep fakes, disinformation and misinformation
Africa's International Relations	Africa and the UN, Africa and Europe, Africa and Asia, Africa and the Americas, Africa and the Middle East, etc, Common African Positions, implications of the Russia-Ukraine war on Africa, etc
Research and Development	State of Higher Education and Research, State of Africa's think tanks, evidence-based policy formulation, Relations between AU and Universities and Think Tanks etc
Key cross-cutting issues	Gender equality, youth empowerment, empowerment of other marginalized and vulnerable social groups such as children, people with disabilities, refugees, internally displaced persons, minorities etc
Any other relevant themes as proposed by authors	Any other relevant topics as proposed by the authors

6.0. Expected Deliverables

Three sets of outputs are expected from this project:

First, the project will generate public debate through various types of media, including Radio, TV, Newspapers, and social media.

Second, the project will culminate in the publication of a special issue of a journal on the AU@20.

Third, the project will lead to a publication of an edited book volume on the AU@20.

7.0. Submission modalities

Two types of submissions are permissible. First, submission for a single-authored or co-authored paper. Second, a submission for a panel discussion with more than one paper. In both cases, abstracts of papers to be delivered will be required. The length of each abstract is 300 words. **All abstracts should be submitted to the project coordinator at, AU20conference@gmail.com.** Upon receipt, all submissions will be reviewed, and feedback provided to only authors of those abstracts that would have met the requisite standard for the symposium.

The procedure will be such that the first submission will be an abstract (300 words). This will be followed by the full paper (8 000 words). Abstracts and papers will undergo internal and external peer review for quality control purposes. Only those abstracts and papers cleared by the peer review will be accepted. These are the papers that will form part of the symposium and considered for publication in the special issue of a journal and the edited book volume.

Authors should follow the APA reference and citation style (i.e author, date, page etc). They should use Tahoma font size 12 and 1.5 line spacing. The whole text should be justified. Quotations beyond three lines should be indented. Where currencies are used, they should be converted into US dollars in parenthesis. Tables and figures should be numbered sequentially.

Abstracts should be submitted by 31 May 2022. Feedback on abstracts will be sent to successful authors by 15 June 2022. Full papers should be submitted by 31 August 2022. Feedback to successful authors will be sent out on 15 September 2022.

8.0. Participation, format and language

The symposium will involve about 250 participants drawn from governments, policy practitioners, academia, civil society, private sector, the African diaspora etc. It will be convened in a hybrid format involving both a physical meeting and a virtual platform. The format of the symposium will include, inter alia, plenary and break-away sessions.

One or more keynote speakers will be invited to set the tone for the deliberations throughout the duration of the symposium.

English and French will be used for abstracts and papers. The symposium will also be conducted in both English and French. All publications emanating from this initiative will be in both English and French.

9.0. Venue and Dates

The proposed venue for the Symposium is Pretoria, South Africa, between 24-28 October 2022.

10. Management and Coordination Arrangements

The management of the project will be the responsibility of IPATC. The overall coordinator of the project is Dr. Khabele Matlosa, Visiting Professor at the Centre for African Diplomacy and Leadership (CADL), University of Johannesburg and Senior Research Fellow at IPATC, University of Johannesburg. His email contact details are: khabelematlosa@rocketmail.com and matlosak@gmail.com. He can also be reached on mobile and WhatsApp at +26657984471. The team of coordinators at IPATC and CODESRIA are as follows (a) Dr. Adeoye O. Akinola, Head, Research and Teaching, IPATC, email: aoakinola@uj.ac.za; Mobile phone and WhatsApp +27738217453; and (b) Dr. Godwin Murunga, Executive Secretary of CODESRIA, email: godwin.murunga@codesria.org; WhatsApp +254713957347.

11.0. About the IPATC

Currently headed by Prof. Siphamandla Zondi, the Institute of Pan-African Thought and Conversation (IPATC) was established at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) in 2016 as one of the University's flagship centres of excellence to conduct research and contribute to UJ's decolonization efforts.

It provides a forum for scholars, practitioners and civil society actors in Africa and its diaspora to dialogue and contribute to the rigorous production and dissemination of Pan-African knowledge and culture.

The Institute seeks to promote original and innovative Pan-African ideas and critical dialogue in pursuit of global excellence in research and teaching, and to contribute actively to building an international profile for UJ on Pan-African issues.

IPATC's prioritises five key mandates: 1) Research; 2) Strategic Engagement with Policy Makers; 3) Public Engagement; 4) Teaching; and 5) Capacity Building.

12.0. About CODESRIA

Currently headed by Dr. Godwin Rapando Murunga, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) is headquartered in Dakar, Senegal. It was established in 1975 as an independent pan-African research organization primarily focusing on social sciences research in Africa. It is recognised not only as the pioneer African social research organization but also as the apex non-governmental centre of excellence of social knowledge production on the continent.

Its objectives are to:

- Promote and facilitate research and knowledge production in Africa using a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach. The Council is committed to combating the fragmentation of knowledge production, and the African community of scholars along various disciplinary and linguistic/geographical lines;
- Promote and defend the principle of independent thought and academic freedom of researchers in the production and dissemination of knowledge;
- Encourage and support the development of African comparative research with a continental perspective and a sensitivity to the specificity of the development process in Africa;
- Promote the publication and dissemination of research results undertaken by African scholars;

- Strengthen the institutional basis of knowledge production in Africa by proactively engaging and supporting other research institutions and their networks of scholars within the its programmes of activities. As part of this goal, the Council also actively encourages cooperation and collaboration among African universities, research organisations and other training institutions;
- Encourage inter-generational and gender-sensitive dialogues in the African academy as a further investment of effort in the promotion of awareness and capacity for the use of different perspectives for knowledge production; and
- Promote contacts and dialogue between African researchers and researchers on Africa elsewhere in the world, as well as interaction between the Council and similar international organisations.

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