

Background/ Contexte

During the last decade, Africa as a continent witnessed strong economic and social gains due mainly to improved macroeconomic management at country level and favorable conditions in the global market. The smooth continuation of these economic and social gains has been seriously threatened by the global financial crisis that hit the world in 2008, indirectly impacting African economies through such channels as the decline in global demand and in financing inflows. Many African economies have struggled to withstand the impacts of the crisis and avoid further decline in their economies. The challenge now lies in designing policies that will not only ensure that African economies are less vulnerable to external shocks but that will also bring about future strong, sustainable , growth and improve social conditions on the continent.

Arguably, in addition to country reforms, economic integration is one of the best options available to guarantee strong growth. In addition to gains relating to trade, traditional gains from economic integration include increased returns and competition as well as increased investment. Economic integration will cause the demand for third-party goods to decrease –that is if goods are sufficiently strong substitutes- cause firms to exploit economies of scales and compete for customers, and attract investors both local and foreign.

Since its inception, the African Union (AU) has been working to consolidate the orientations defined by the Abuja Treaty to gradually achieve integration and promote socio- economic development. The building of the African Economic Community (AEC) is one of the major goals of the AU, and has set a number of initiatives in motion, including:

- The harmonization of sectoral development policies;
- The rationalization and consolidation of Regional Economic Communities (RECs); and
- The acceleration of the establishment of financial institutions provided for in the AU Constitutive Act (the African Central Bank, the African Monetary Fund, and the African Investment Bank).

These initiatives are geared towards an irreversible integration momentum with the support of development partners.

It is against this backdrop that the Executive Council of the AU took DECISION doc.EX.CL/514 (XV).4.i), institutionalizing the Congress of African Economists to come up with concrete solutions to integration and development challenges facing Africa. Specifically, the Congress aims at considering, discussing and analyzing contemporary development issues, and proposing appropriate and extensive solutions to the socio-economic problems.

To date, four editions of the African Economists Congress were organized.

- The first was held from 2 to 5 March 2009 in Nairobi under the theme: ***“Towards the creation of the African single currency”.***
- The second was held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire from 24 to 26 November 2011 under the theme: ***" How to achieve strong and sustainable economic growth in Africa, in order to reduce unemployment and support the dynamics of integration regional and continental? “.***
- The third was held in Dakar, Senegal from 6 to 8 March 2013 under the theme: ***"Industrialization and economic emergence in Africa."***
- The fourth was held from 16 to 18 November 2015 in Accra, Ghana under the theme:

“Industrial Policy and Economic Performance in Africa”.

Preparations are now underway to organize the fifth Congress of African Economists in 2017. A Call for Paper was published on the AU Website as well as in the prominent Jeune Afrique magazine and Financial Afrik Website (numerous articles were received and are will be under review by the organizers and the bureau of the Congress.

