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**TOWARDS THE AFRICAN INTEGRATED HIGH SPEED
RAILWAY NETWORK (AIHSRN) DEVELOPMENT**

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PART A. OVERVIEW OF AFRICAN UNION RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME UNDER PIDA

I. CONTEXT

1. Railways have, for more than 100 years, been the most significant mode of transport which contributed to the development of African countries. Its history in many parts of Africa is closely linked to that of colonisation.
2. Railway transport appeared in Africa at the end of the 19th century and 50 years since its introduction saw a period of strong expansion. Past objectives of moving primary commodities (minerals, wood, tropical products) from the interior to ports, bound for the European metropolises influenced the general design of the networks, in particular, starting from the seaports in order to facilitate penetration of the hinterland.
3. To-date, the entire African railway network estimated at about 75,000 km on a surface of 30.2 million km², translates into a density of approximately 2.5 km for 1000 km², which is far below that of other regions and the world average of 23 for 1000 km².

Table 1: Comparative Railway Densities

Region	Total Network (Route Km)	Density (km/1000 km ²)
North Africa	16,012	2.3
Eastern Africa	9,341	2.2
Southern Africa	33,291	5.6
Central Africa	6,414	1.2
Western Africa	9,715	1.9
Africa Total	74,775	2.5
South Asia	-	18.8
World Average	-	23.1
High Income Countries	-	46.2

Source: World Bank

4. African railways consist mostly of single lines penetrating inland from the coastal seaports with little interconnections, with the exception of Southern Africa and some parts of North Africa. The average technical speeds of African railways are about 30 to 35 km/hr. and the commercial speeds are even lower.
5. Sixteen countries do not have railway lines or sections of international lines. The national railway networks in sub-Saharan Africa are mostly independent of each other except some parts in the Eastern and Southern African rail systems, which are interconnected. Other African interconnected railways systems are those of Burkina Faso-Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal-Mali, and Ethiopia–Djibouti.

3. Technical Characteristics

6. African railway networks are characterised by different gauges (metric and standard) as well as by a host of other divergent technical standards and specifications. This has resulted in the inability of Africa to develop interconnected and interoperable railway systems for most of the continent.

- a. **Gauges:** There are nine different gauges in use in Africa, out of which the three commonly used ones are: 1.067 m (Cape) gauge (61.3 %); 1.000 m (Metric) gauge (19.2 %); and 1.435m (Standard) gauge (14.5%).
- b. **Brake Systems:** Two brake systems are predominant in Africa: the vacuum brake and the compressed air systems. The vacuum brake system is commonly used on railways of the West, Central and Easter Africa. The compressed air brake system is used on North Africa networks and some Southern African railways.
- c. **Traction:** Only about 6,500 km of African rail are electrified. The electrified systems are found in the railways of Egypt, Algeria and Morocco in North Africa, and South Africa and Zimbabwe in the south. The rest of the railways in the continent use diesel-electric traction. Steam traction is being progressively abandoned but it is still in use occasionally in some countries i.e. the Kenya section of Rift Valley Railways, for tourist attraction purposes.
- d. **Permanent Way:** Slopes and gradients exceeding 10 per cent and geometric curvature with low carrying radii of less than 400 meters, which limit both train speed and capacity characterize most railways. Most rails in use are old and light, mostly between 25 and 36 kg per meter and are generally laid unwelded. The signalling and telecommunications equipment are known to be obsolete and generally unreliable.

7. All these infrastructure characteristics constitute major constraints to the performance reliability, and integration of the networks. They also restrict the introduction and use of modern and high-performance equipment in the various railway systems.

4. Private Sector involvement

8. Since the 1970s African railways have generally been managed as state enterprises with cumbersome and bureaucratic administration. By the mid-1980s the situation started changing gradually with a view to enhancing the sustainability and viability of the railways. Programmes for railway restructuring and commercialisation were later followed by privatisation.

9. Most African railways revised their legal status within the framework of liberalization and commercialisation thus paving the way for private sector participation, and concessions have been concluded in a number of countries, albeit with mixed outcomes.

10. In most cases, privatisation has not achieved positive results in the continent as envisaged. Railway traffic has continued to decline due to poor management, old and dilapidated infrastructure and equipment and imbalanced competition with flexible and privately owned road transport companies most of whom have no responsibility for the road infrastructure they use.

11. The First Conference of African Ministers responsible for Railway Transport System was held 13 to 14 April 2006 in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo with the theme “For an Effective Railway Transport System, at the Service of Development and African Integration”. The Conference adopted the Brazzaville Declaration and Plan of Action on African Railways. This was followed by the Railway Professional Conference on Interconnection, Interoperability and Complementarity of African Railway Networks held in Johannesburg in November 2007 which considered the strategies for harmonizing standards for infrastructure, equipment and operational procedures for African railways.

12. Recently, the African Ministers responsible for transport have adopted the Vision 2040 for railway development in Africa during their conference held in April 2014 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.

II. RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT IN THE WORLD

13. All regions of the world heavily depend on railway transport for their socio-economic development. Accelerated growth of industrialisation and trade especially in the Europe, North America and Asia has always been well facilitated by railway networks. Railway transport is the most suited mode for the conveyance of bulky freight over long distances. Furthermore, railway transport has a great potential to help minimise the extensive and costly deterioration of road infrastructure in the continent.

14. For over three (3) decades, railway transport has experienced spectacular development in most parts of the world particularly in the use of the modern technology and high-speed trains as well as in the growth of international traffic and multimodal transport. Only in large parts of Africa (with the exception of Northern and Southern Africa), the tendency has been to neglect even the few existing railway networks due to unfavourable conditions negotiated for financial support from donors and international financial institutions.

15. China has emerged as the leading country in railway development. As of 2013, the country had 103,144 km of railways, the third longest network in the world, including 11,028 kilometres of high-speed rail (HSR), and the longest HSR network in the world. All provinces and regions except one are connected to the rail network. Almost all rail operations are handled by the China Railway Corporation, a state-owned company created in March 2013 when the Ministry of Railways dissolved.

16. China's railways are among the busiest in the world. In 2006, they carried a quarter of the world's rail traffic volume on only 6 per cent of the world's tracks. In 2013, railways in China delivered 2.106 billion passenger trips, generating 1,059.56 billion passenger-kilometres and carried 3.967 billion tons of freight, generating 2,917.4 billion cargo tons-kilometres.

17. The railway network has been expanding rapidly in recent years. Driven by need to increase freight capacity, the country budgeted \$105.9 billion for railway investment in 2013, and has a long term plan to expand the network to 272,000 km by 2050.

III. RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT FOR THE INTEGRATION OF AFRICA: PIDA CONTEXT

18. The African Union Commission, in collaboration with the RECs, AfDB, UNECA and specialised institutions, is working on promoting and facilitating development of railway transport under its Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) focuses on promoting the development of an integrated transport network for the continent which capitalises on the suitability of each mode of transport. In this context, railways have always been considered as the backbone of the transport networks at all levels.

19. In the framework of PIDA, railway network development is part of the development of the **African Regional Transport Infrastructure Network (ARTIN)**. The ARTIN consists of the 9 Trans-African Highways (TAH) plus 40 key corridors carrying 40% of Africa's

international trade, 19 ports handling 70% of the continent's international trade, and 53 airports handling 90% of the continent's air traffic.

20. The ARTIN are core networks whose aim is to link large African centres of consumption and production (large cities, mining centres, large agriculture production projects, etc.) with the rest of the world via modern and efficient regional transport infrastructure networks and gateways. In that context, they are primarily for facilitating regional integration in accordance with the vision of the **Abuja Treaty** of a growing, self-sustained, competitive and regionally-integrated continent.

21. Under PIDA, 11 ARTIN corridors have been determined to require modernization of existing railway lines and construction of new, modern rail lines as soon as possible as traffic demand is expected to exceed 10 million tons annually by 2040. In this regard, it is estimated that about 12,000 km of new railway lines would be built under the PIDA programme at a cost of about US\$ 36 billion and 17,200 Km of existing railway lines modernized at a cost of about US\$ 7 billion.

Table 2: PIDA Railway Construction and Modernization Programme for ARTIN

Region	Construction of railway lines (km)	Modernisation of Railways (km)	Estimated Cost (US\$ billion)	
			Construction	Modernisation
North Africa	500	8,100	1.0	4.1
West Africa	3,000	2,400	9.0	0.6
Central Africa	3,000	800	5.2	0.2
East Africa	2,500	1,800	9.0	0.4
Southern Africa	4,000	4,100	12.0	1.5
Total	12,000	17,200	36.2	6.8

Source: PIDA Transport Sector Report

22. Furthermore, under the EU-Africa Infrastructure Partnership and also with the support of the NEPAD Project Preparation Facility (NEPAD-IPPF), the AUC conducted pre-feasibility studies on some ARTIN transport corridors which identified the road and railway missing links that need to be constructed/reconstructed or upgraded to create seamless and cost-effective transport services across the continent. These are as follows:

Dakar-N'djamena-Djibouti Corridor Trans-African Highway (TAH) Nos. 6 and 7

- a. 1,527.km of road to be constructed for 2.205 billion \$US
- b. The railway estimate is 5,139km for 14.050 billion \$US

Djibouti–Libreville Corridor

- a. 2,143 km of road to be constructed for 2.094 billion \$US
- b. The railway estimate is 2,366 km for 5.277 billion \$US

Cotonou-Niamey-Ouagadougou-Abidjan Railway

- 2,891 km (1,234m to build and 1,657 to rehabilitate) for 5.022 billion \$US plus 866 million \$US for equipment.

23. Studies on other corridors were planned but could not be undertaken due to lack of budgetary resources. This work will now continue under PIDA.

24. It should also be noted that efforts to develop railway networks began decades ago. In the late 1970s, the Union of African Railways prepared a Master Plan which indicated the

railway missing links as sections which are feasible for railway network interconnections, but whose construction had not yet been started or completed. The map of the master plan and the list of projects are attached to this note. In the same spirit the RECs have also elaborated their own railway master plans. All these are currently being reviewed and aligned to the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) and its ARTIN Corridors.

IV. SOME NOTABLE RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES AT NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS

25. Despite the difficulties in mobilising the massive financial resources and investments for railway construction and modernisation, some African countries are making progress either individually or collectively in developing their networks. In Northern and Southern Africa, significant developments have been done in the railway sub-sector by the concerned countries. The railway networks in those regions are in a comparatively better shape.

26. It would also be noted that there are some ongoing and completed projects for railway construction and upgrading to accommodate high speed trains in the countries of Angola, Ethiopia and Morocco. In East Africa, Kenya has launched a new high speed railway from Mombasa which is to extend to South Sudan, DR Congo and Burundi. The cost of the railway will be US\$5.2bn and will be mostly funded by China.

27. An impressive collaboration in railway project implementation has been achieved in the countries of the West African railway loop across Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger and Cote d'Ivoire (Cotonou-Niamey-Ouagadougou-Abidjan Railway). Following the AUC study on that railway, the concerned countries formed a Ministerial committee to oversee implementation of the identified links in need of reconstruction and upgrading. The countries also mobilised resources for rehabilitating one badly damaged section of the railway and have now prepared a comprehensive financing package for all the identified missing/worn-out sections. This is an example that the AUC intends to promote to all the Member States.

PART B. TOWARDS THE AFRICAN INTEGRATED HIGH SPEED RAILWAY NETWORK (AIHSRN) DEVELOPMENT

I. BACKGROUND

1. The African Integrated High Speed Railway Network (AIHSRN) project is a flagship project of the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063. It basically aims at facilitating the achievement of the AU Vision of integrating Africa physically and economically. The AIHSRN will complement and coherent with the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) – as a rolling continental infrastructure initiative – in all its tenets: Vision, scale, space and time. It will also act as an “enabler” to realization of the continental frameworks such as the Boosting of Intra-African Trade (BIAT), the Continental Free Trade Area, (CFTA), as well as fast-track the implementation of the current Continental frameworks and initiatives including: the Comprehensive Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), the Accelerated Industrial Development for Africa, (AIDA), the African Mining Vision (AMV, Pharmaceuticals Manufacturing Action Plan, (PMPA), as well as be a key catalyst for bringing the very much needed Peace and Security on the continent.

2. The conception of the AU Agenda 2063 came up in May 2013 as the Assembly of the AU Heads of State and Government came together to commemorate fifty years since the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The Assembly, while acknowledging past successes and challenges, rededicated themselves to building **“an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena.”**

3. Through the 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration, the Assembly also pledged to make progress on the following eight priority areas:

- a) African identity and renaissance;
- b) Continue the struggle against colonialism and the right to self-determination;
- c) The integration agenda;
- d) Agenda for social and economic development;
- e) Peace and security agenda;
- f) Democratic governance;
- g) Determining Africa’s Destiny;
- h) Africa’s place in the world.

4. The AU Agenda 2063 is a strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of the continent over the next 50 years. It builds on, and seeks to accelerate the implementation of past and existing continental initiatives for growth and sustainable development. It is a continuation of the pan-African drive for self determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity. It is also a call to action based on the principle of solidarity and an appreciation of what binds Africans.

5. Most importantly, it accords Africans an opportunity to dream big, think creatively, and sometimes crazy¹, and begin to leapfrog beyond the immediate challenges thereby beginning to converge with the rest of the world. Thus it represents people’s aspirations for

¹ Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma ”AUC Chairperson’s E-mail from the Future”, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, January 24, 2014

a better future that is inclusive, anchored in achievements, objective assessment of obstacles and lessons learned over the past 50 years.

6. The AU Agenda 2063 has been elaborated through a lengthy consultative process led by the AU Commission and, hence, defines converging voices of Africans of different backgrounds and interests, gathered spelt out the following future they want for Africa in 2063:

1. A Prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development;
2. An Integrated Continent, Politically United, based on the ideals of Pan Africanism;
3. An Africa of Good Governance, Respect for Human Rights, Justice and the Rule of Law;
4. A Peaceful and Secure Africa;
5. An Africa with a strong Cultural Identity, Values and Ethics;
6. An Africa whose development is people-driven, especially relying on the potential offered by its youth and women; and
7. Africa as a Strong, Resilient and Influential Global Player and Partner.

7. Africa realizes that past and current achievements provide the foundation for a concerted and broad based effort to assert itself with a comprehensive program to meet the people's aspirations above. These aspirations have rekindled both hope for a better life and the desire to make it happen. Indeed "It always seems impossible until it's done."²

8. It is against this background, and in fulfilment of the African aspirations as well as the AU Vision of integrating Africa, that the AU Commission intends to facilitate the putting into place of an Agenda 2063 flagship project on world class infrastructure that criss-crosses the continent, connects all major cities and supports Africa's growth, trade, development and structural transformation.

9. This AU Agenda 2063 flagship project comprises high speed African train services connecting all the major cities/capitals of the continent. The African express railway network will have adjacent highways and pipelines for gas, oil, water, as well as ICT Broad Band Cables.

10. The proposed high-speed train is part of an Africa which is 20% of the Earth's surface, covering 30.2 million km² with a population of about one billion in 2010 and whose growth is expected to double in 2050, far more than China in 2025 and India in 2030. This population is also younger (12%), just after Asia (60%), well ahead of America (12%) and Europe (8%) (UN 2011).

11. Urbanization will also increase from 40% in 2010 to nearly 60% in 2040 (PIDA 2012) and Africa has more than one hundred cities with over one million and seven with more than ten million inhabitants.

12. Furthermore, Africa has one of the highest population growth rates which it is expected to sustain.

² Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela

Table: Projected population and GDP in Africa, 2010-2040

	2010	2020	2030	2040
Population (millions)	1,033	1,276	1,524	1,770
Urban population (millions)	413	569	761	986
GDP (2005 PPP \$ billions)	3,300	6,010	11,639	20,334
GDP/per capita (\$)	3,190	4,709	7,636	11,490

Source: PIDA 2012

II. VISION AND OBJECTIVES

13. The high speed railway project subscribes to the spirit of the 1991 Abuja Treaty which envisages acceleration of continental integration and which inspired the Vision of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa of: ***An integrated Africa where transport infrastructure and services serve free movement of goods and passengers by providing options for safe, reliable and seamless transport; with reduced costs in support of sustainable regional economic development and protection of the environment.***

14. In this context, the Vision of the African Integrated High Speed Railway Network project is to provide.

Africa transport network with a modern high speed railway component harmoniously articulated around the main modernized conventional railway network, able to develop fast connections, smart and effective around the various development centres supported by various economic and social policies.

15. To achieve this Vision, the main objectives for Africa Integrated High Speed Railway project are:

1. Support a healthy and competitive African economy;
2. Facilitate access to a rapid transit system, efficient, healthy and modern capable to support regional integration and answer the most effective way of transportation demand
3. Promote improved logistic platforms for a better modal transfer of different involved traffic;
4. Ensure comfort and excellent service to various users;
5. Ensure a clean and sustainable environment;
6. Support synergy with other infrastructures and economic investments.

III. PRINCIPLES

16. The AIHSRN flagship project will be anchored on key principles, in order to achieve the desired outcome, of a “borderless”, interconnected and prosperous Africa.

- **Pooled sovereignty:** aspiration to build a common African economic space as envisaged in the 1991 Treaty establishing the African Economic Community (Abuja Treaty). In this regard, the AU Commission through its Chairperson and governing

structures will champion, the pooling of inalienable sovereign assets into a pool of commonly owned infrastructure.

- **Innovative resource mobilisation:** giving opportunity to all Africans in the continent and the diaspora as well as partners to invest in the AIHSRN project.
- **Infrastructure Integration:** PIDA will form the cornerstone of Agenda 2063 Infrastructure strategy for integrating the AIHSRN with other transport modes, energy, water and ICT sectors.
- **Education and Technological advancement:** Education and innovation in high-speed railway technologies and other related fields through training, research and development especially for the African youth are expected to be the main spin-off of this project. Trades such as tourism services, high-skilled welding, engineering, etc. are expected to receive substantial boost from the project

17. The AU Commission will therefore lead the effort to promote and facilitate implementation of the AIHSRN project. Necessary educational and communication messaging will be established through all forms of media, especially, Social media to reach out to African wherever they are, the youth in particular.

IV. ACTIONS TAKEN AND ONGOING

18. The AIHSRN project was formally initiated by the Executive Council Decision: **EX.CL/Dec.821 (XXV)** taken at the African Union Summit held in June 2014 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. The Decision requested the AU Commission to: "*continue to explore and prepare concrete actions in the implementation of priority programmes and projects identified in Agenda 2063, notably, **the Integrated High Speed Train Network**, hastening the process for the creation of a Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA), the African Passport and free movement of people, capitalization of opportunities in the aviation sector within the framework of the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision on the Unification of African Air Space; implementation of the Grand Inga Dam Project; the Pan-African E-Network, the creation of an Annual Consultative Platform for policy dialogue involving a wide range of stakeholders, and any other integrative initiatives that are in line with the spirit of Agenda 2063.*"

19. Since then, the African Union Commission developed a comprehensive concept note of the project outlining its vision, objectives, principles and strategy in line with the overall vision of the Agenda 2063 of "**the Africa we want**" in the next fifty years. Furthermore, the AUC undertook a number of actions aiming at moving forward the African Integrated High Speed Railway Network project towards implementation phase.

20. In this regard, a notable development coincided with the conception of the AIHSRN project. In May 2014, the Premier of the People's Republic of China, H.E. Mr. Li Keqiang visited Africa including the AUC and put forward "cooperation between Africa and China in High Speed Railway, Aviation, Highways and Industrialization Infrastructure", expressing the willingness of China to help African friends achieve their "Century Dream".

21. In order to accelerate the implementation of above mentioned Chinese and African leaders' proposals, in January 2015, a "**Memorandum of Understanding on Promotion of Cooperation in Railway, Road, Regional Aviation networks and Industrialization fields**

between China and Africa” was signed between the National Development and Reform Commission of China.

22. Hence, the MOU provided the grounds for China to become a strategic partner in the AIHSRN project. In the spirit of the said MOU, the two sides (AUC and NDRC) agreed to prepare a joint **Vision 2063 of the African Integrated High Speed Railway Network** as well as a **Five Year Action Plan for cooperation in the AIHSRN** and overall railway development in Africa.

23. In order to ensure effective implementation of the AIHSRN project as directed by the Executive Council Decision **EX.CL/Dec.821 (XXV)**, and taking into the account the AUC-NDRC MOU, the AUC facilitated a number of actions which can be summed up as following:

- a) Formed an African Core Team of Experts from RECs, Academia, Civil Society, AUC, NPCA to work on all technical aspects of the project including the vision, strategy and implementation arrangements. So far, only COMESA and EAC have respectively appointed a railway expert each to be members of the project team. The invitation is open for other RECs to nominate experts to join the team;
- b) Convened various African-side working meetings to review the vision and road map and prepare Terms of Reference for a comprehensive pre-feasibility study of the project;
- c) Organized two joint consultative meetings with the Chinese side in China and Africa (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia) respectively to work on the joint Vision and implementation arrangements of the project;
- d) High-level mission of the AUC Chairperson to China in October/November 2015 for consultations on the vision and implementation strategy of the project.

24. Currently, the following deliverables are in various stage of completion:

No.	Deliverable	Status
1.	Draft Joint Africa-China Vision 2063 of African Integrated High-speed Railway Network	<i>Still under consultation by the two sides</i>
2.	Joint Africa-China Five Year's Action Plan (2016-2020)	<i>finalized and signed by the AUC Chairperson, H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma and the Minister of China NDRC, H.E. Mr. XU Shaoshi at the AU Headquarters on 5th October 2016</i>
3.	Drawing up the preliminary route structure of the AIHSRN	<i>Finalized by the African side</i>
4.	Setting up of the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) and its Terms of Reference (TOR)	<i>TOR finalized but the setting up of the PIU is ongoing by the African side:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Preliminary Structure is finalized</i> ▪ <i>Job Profiles have been done</i> ▪ <i>PIU interim office and interim coordinator (on secondment) have</i>

		<i>been provided at the NPCA in Johannesburg.</i>
5.	Conducting comprehensive pre-feasibility study of the AIHSRN project	<i>TOR finalized. Study awaiting availability of funds</i>
6.	Preparation of Industrialization, Human Resources Development and Communication strategies	<i>Ongoing</i>

V. THE WAY FORWARD

25. It is quite obvious that substantial time has been spend on developing the concept and strategies for the AIHSRN. It is now essential for the high-speed train project to move to the implementation phase as soon as possible. In this regard, the proposed next steps are as follows:

- a) Setting up, operationalization and strengthening of the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) and Project management Team (PMT);
- b) Resource mobilization for the comprehensive pre-feasibility study including involving African and international development financial institutions such as ADB, DBSA, IsDB, etc.
- c) Consultation with the Ministry of Commerce of China and China Railway Construction Corporation (CRCC) regarding the implementation agreement.
- d) Sensitization of AU Member States and all stakeholders;
- e) Involvement of Africa Diaspora Experts.