



**African  
Economic  
Platform**

MAURITIUS, 20-22 MARCH 2017

# **INAUGURAL AFRICAN ECONOMIC PLATFORM**

## **CONCEPT NOTE**

**20-22 MARCH 2017 PORT LOUIS, MAURITIUS**

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## **1. Background**

The idea of the establishment of the African Economic Platform originated from a Retreat of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the AU Commission on Agenda 2063 that took place in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia in January 2014 followed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Follow-up Committee on Agenda 2063, held in Johannesburg, South Africa in December 2014. It was felt that since African leaders meet every year at the World Economic Forum to discuss global issues, it was high time for Africa to have its own platform whereby the political leadership, business leaders, intellectuals, civil society and the private sector could reflect together on how to accelerate Africa's economic transformation through the implementation of Agenda 2063. This idea was institutionalized through Decision EX.CL/Dec.807 (XXIV) adopted during the 24<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Executive Council in January 2014, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The African Economic Platform (AEP) will institutionalize a new annual platform/space for African leaders and create an avenue for dialogue amongst those sectors, which are so critical to the economic transformation agenda: the private sector because of its role in investment, industrialisation and intra-African trade; the higher education sector for its role in skills development, research and innovation; and governments to ensure the implementation of fiscal and macro-economic policies for economic transformation.

The Platform is an initiative driven by Africans to provide the policy space for Africans, across sectors, to set their own agenda and explore realistic continental and global opportunities and options for implementing this agenda.

The Forum will take place in any Member State of the African Union. It will operate within the framework of the implementation of the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 and other progressive decisions and programs designed to promote African integration and development. Each Forum will set measurable short to medium term milestones and establish a clear road map for achieving them.

The Forum will also act as a lobby and advocacy platform to influence the agenda of the AU Summit and other world summits for the fast tracking of African integration and development. Accordingly, each session will make public commitments to achieve agreed goals that all participating countries and entities, members and associates will commit to.

## **2. Rationale**

One of the lessons learnt after the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the OAU/ AU was that Africa has to take charge of its development if it is to meet the expectation of ever becoming *“an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena.”*

Africa needs to set its agenda and take responsibility for its development, to find African solutions to our challenges and mobilise domestic and other resources for its priorities, based on a set of ideals and priorities that reflect the values and aspirations of our peoples.

It is a paradox that Africa with a population of over 1 billion people, with one sixth of the world’s arable land and arguably one of the richest and most endowed continents on earth is fragmented into 54 weak and small markets with different systems and conflicting policies on matters of common interest to the continent and is thus marginalized in global affairs.

Within this context, continental integration is embraced by many pan Africanists as the most rational response to the irony of Africa being one of the richest continents in the world and at the same time its people being the poorest.

Part of the problem lies in the fact that most governments propagate policies that focus mainly on development potentials within their borders and linear market integration relationships with third parties. A deeper integration agenda and greater collaboration on matters of common interest including services, investment, trade, ICT, infrastructure, competition policy, security and other cross border concerns amongst African countries can address most of the national-level constraints far more effectively than an agenda which focuses almost exclusively on closed border macro-economic considerations. On

their own, most African countries lack the capacity for a diversified and vibrant industrial sector capable of competing on the world market.

Although Africa is one of the fastest growing regions in the world at present, the growth appears to be fragile, jobless, and based on distorted factors rather than sound economic fundamentals. Growth rates of less than GDP increases below 7% are not yet high enough to bring about a substantial reduction in the widespread poverty.

Whilst Africa continues to remain largely fragmented, global development trends indicate strong integration processes in Asia, Europe and the Americas and as developing countries, AU Member States really have no choice but to integrate into the world economy. In order to do so successfully, Africa has no alternative but to also integrate continentally and in order to do that, Africa has no option but to take charge of its development and integration agenda. African governments and public sector entities cannot do this alone. Nor can the private sector be the only driver of economic growth. All sectors of African economies need to work together to achieve the transformation we so urgently require and deserve.

This visionary objective can certainly not be achieved successfully given the current situation where most of the influential gatherings of world leaders on African issues happen outside Africa, where the debates are carried on according to agendas set by non-Africans. The situation where Africa is treated as a spectator on discussions about its future cannot continue if Africa is to realize the dream of the African Renaissance. As the continent moves to assert itself, this reality needs to be reversed and it is time for the continent to take charge of its own destiny.

The proposed African Economic Platform (AEP) will be the envisioned platform for reversing this situation and putting Africans in charge of their destiny, a platform for African leaders and a cross-section of African and global stakeholders to drive the continental integration and structural transformation agenda from African perspectives.

### **3. Launch of the African Economic Platform, 20-22 March 2017, Mauritius**

The African Economic Platform is one of the priority projects / initiatives approved by Decision EX.CL/Dec. 821 (XXV) adopted during the 25<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Executive Council, in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in June 2014. Its immediate implementation will provide quick wins, impact on socio-economic development and enhance the confidence and the commitment of the African citizenry to be the owners and drivers of Agenda 2063. The adoption of the 1<sup>st</sup> 10-Year Implementation Plan for Agenda 2063 in June 2015 makes this an opportune moment for the start of this engagement. It is in this context that the Inaugural African Economic Platform will be launched from 20-22 March 2017 in Mauritius as per Decision EX.CL/Dec.924 (XXIX) adopted during the 29<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Executive Council in Kigali, Rwanda, in July 2016.

### **3.1 Objectives of the Platform**

- I. Undertake constructive multi-stakeholder dialogues around common themes for Africa led by Africans and influence continental policy by engaging directly with African leaders on matters of mutual interest;
- II. Establish multi-country, multi-sector priorities and plans for common action with clear mechanisms for follow up;
- III. Work with African leaders to remove policy obstacles for doing business in Africa, increasing the investment attractiveness of the continent, the implementation of strategies for economic diversification and industrialization, and domestic and other resource mobilization;
- IV. Advocate for the removal of barriers that hamper communication and the flow of goods, people and services across the continent; create common platforms for articulating common African positions on global affairs and increase global awareness of Africa's emerging role in world affairs
- V. Leverage the potential of the African Diaspora to participate in and advocate for Africa's integration and development;

- VI. Drive efforts to mobilize domestic resources to support the priority actions as defined by the AEP under the auspices of Agenda 2063;
- VII. Drive the implementation of policies for inclusive growth.

### **3.2 Structure**

The African Economic Forum is inspired by best practices from similar events such as the World Economic Forum and the Clinton Global Initiative. However, it will be unique as the first truly continental platform that is an African-owned and driven initiative bringing together African state and non-state actors, leading pan African institutions, corporate leaders, investors, African financial institutions, civil society activists and international development agencies. It will be distinct from other approved platforms such as the African Business Council, which are convened by specific sectors. Also, it will be organised differently from the AU Summits, which are statutory meetings of the African Union held in accordance with their Rules of Procedure.

Participation will be limited to AU Heads of State and Government and their delegations and to members or to invited African Stakeholders, with due consideration given to the principle of geographically-even representation and an appropriate balance between public and non-public sector representation. There will be different categories of memberships for different stakeholders. Only African entities will be eligible for full membership, and they retain the exclusive right to place items on the agenda.

The African Union Commission will work closely with other continental partner organizations such as the UNECA, the AfDB, and the AU Foundation. During the formative years, the forum will be co-organised by the AU Commission and the AU Foundation.

### **3.3 Outcome**

The Platform will take place in a retreat setting, with informal discussions which are strictly aligned to Chatham House Rules, and the outcome will be a joint Communique outlining agreed actions. The outcome of the AEP shall be endorsed through an AU Summit decision.

### **3.4 Financing of the AEP**

The budget for the AEP will be included in the Annual Commission Budget approved by the relevant structures. The sources of funding will be from AEP membership contributions, registration fees, Member States' voluntary contributions as well as from the assessed contributions of AU Member States.

### **4 Coordination**

The AEP is being coordinated by H.E. the Deputy Chairperson of the AUC, and a logistics committee is chaired by H.E. the Commissioner for Trade and Industry, with the participation of an inter-departmental organising committee. The implementation of AEP outcomes will be in line with the approved monitoring and evaluation structures for Agenda 2063 flagship projects.