

AFRICAN UNION

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Department of Economic Development, Trade, Industry, and Mining

Concept Note on Fridays of the Commission

Theme:

***Key Requirements for Generating Developmental and Transformational
Leadership Across Africa.***

29 October 2021, 12 noon Greenwich Mean Time (GMT)

I. Introduction

The notion of leadership is critical in societies, particularly in managing material and non-material resources to modify the social, political, economic, and cultural environment to better the nation's living conditions. The African continent is endowed with natural resources, people, beautiful weather and has great potential for growth, yet extreme poverty is the common trait and a cross-cutting challenge across the continent. Africa doesn't have a plague; it can overcome this predicament by doing the right thing. The extreme poverty in which half of its population is living is not due to the lack of resources or means but to what can be cursorily described as a "leadership or management problem". If the impediment is addressed seriously, a major turnaround will occur in a very short term in Africa. While other regions look at the dynamism of African population as an opportunity, political leaders and intellectuals see this as a growing burden and a challenge for social and political stability and security. African countries should be more cognizant of the situation they are in and exert greater ownership and control over their lives and destiny (Jong-Dae Park, 2019). It is critical to develop leaders that believe in Africa's self-sufficiency and self-control over its own destiny and finding African solutions to African problems.

II. Background

Several scholars have defined the term leadership in various forms. From a narrow perception, Ekene & Ugwunwanyi (2016) described leadership as the action of leading a group of people or an organization or the ability to do this. On the other hand, Hughes (2009), in simpler terms, defined the term as the ability to influence others to achieve goals, and Legacee (2016) provided a more comprehensive definition, as the ability of a superior to influence the behavior of subordinate or group and persuade them to follow a particular course of action. Leadership has become an urgent and essential component for the development and transformation of the African continent.

In the same vein, most evidence suggests that leaders significantly influence economic growth and transformation. They have the most impact in autocracies, which significantly impact economic development and political institution evolution. These findings, among other things, necessitate that national economic policy and leadership selection procedures be given more consideration.

Political leaders are the primary holders, controllers, and distributors of power and resources in a particular institution and/or territory. In that regard, their political leadership and guidance are pertinent in steering the continent toward implementing decisions, fostering innovation and creativity, and living by their principles to govern the continent to achieve sustainable development. History has pointed out several great leaders that managed to influence economic development in their countries and transition from developing nations to the middle-income, and in some instances to even high-income countries.

The continent faces various complex challenges from peace and security, climate change and natural disasters, inadequate infrastructure, diseases, and the current COVID-19 pandemic. The resultant global economic and financial crisis disrupts the continent from achieving developmental objectives. Economic recovery and reconstruction are premised on great leadership aimed at rejuvenating the continent and supporting good governance. Further, the continent has subscribed to several initiatives to support achieving Agenda 2063, including the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the Program of Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), which aimed to construct resilient and autonomous economies. Attainment of these initiatives should be accompanied by strong and effective leadership supporting and influencing people to achieve these developmental goals. Africa needs leaders who dare to make changes. Leaders who understand international dynamic and important strategic issues that are confronting the continent such as climate change, energy, etc.; passionate about exploiting natural resources and using education as powerful tools for well-being of the African people. Leaders should also foresee opportunities such as Fourth Industrial Revolution, and predictive analytics that should be leveraged to leapfrog and fast-track economic growth and ensure resilient economies. Nation-building, well-functioning institutions, good governance and accountability and the welfare of people must be the chief pride of all African leaders. In light of this, Fridays of the Commission is being held under the theme: ***Key Requirements for Generating Developmental and Transformational Leadership Across Africa.***

III. Objectives

The Conference aims to provide a platform for a public debate on how to develop passionate and visionary leaders within the continent, who understand global dynamics and environment and can drive developmental changes for to attainment of people centered and sustainable economic development and, overall, the realization of the aspirations of Agenda 2063:” the Africa We Want””. Other objectives include:

- Explore and learn lessons and experiences from within and outside the continent on leadership that facilitated inclusive economic growth and Africa’s transformation; and
- Identify current leadership challenges within the continent and determine ways to strengthen them and propose policy recommendations for capacity building.

IV. Expected outcomes

The expected outcomes are:

- Deduce vital lessons from various stakeholders that will lead to formation and bolstering leaders in Africa to achieve national and continental goals;
- Policy recommendations to develop leaders that are able to utilize nation's resources and people in achieve socioeconomic development, nation-building which is to lay the core foundations of statehood, well-functioning institutions, civic

values, effective governance and ensure accountability and transparency to guard against misuse of power and ensure authorities are answerable for their actions

V. Participants

The Fridays of the Commission will be held virtually and is expected to bring together key policy and decision-makers, delegates working in African institutions, multilateral organizations, civil society organizations, independent experts, academia, and journalist.

VI. Working languages

The working languages of the meeting will be English and French.

VII. Contact Information

For further information, please contact:

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Reference

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