



MEDIA ADVISORY

Sixth Conference of African Ministers in charge of Integration (COMAI VI)

INVITATION TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MEDIA

- WHEN:** 15-19 April 2013
- 15-16 April: Experts' Meeting
 - 17 April: Consultation meeting on the second bloc of RECs
 - 18-19 April: Ministers' Meeting
- WHERE:** Inter-Continental Hotel Conference Centre, Port Louis, Mauritius
- WHO:** Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), the African Union Commission
- WHAT** The Conference of African Ministers in charge of Integration (COMAI) is an annual statutory meeting, institutionalized by Assembly Decision Assembly/AU/Dec. 113 (VII) of the Seventh Ordinary Session of the Union, held in Banjul, The Gambia, from the 1st to 2nd July 2006. Since its institutionalization, five (5) Conferences have been held to date. The First and Second Conferences took place in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, from March 30-31, 2006, and Kigali, Rwanda, from July 26-27, 2007. The Third and Fourth Conferences were held in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, from May 19-23, 2008, and Yaoundé, Cameroon, from May 4-8, 2009, respectively. The Fifth Conference was held on 5-9 September, 2012, in Nairobi, Kenya. The theme of each Conference has ranged from how to successfully integrate Africa; partnerships and integration; and sovereignty and integration.
- THEME:** **Governance of Integration: How Africans can better own their Integration?**
- OBJECTIVE:** The purpose of the conference is to inter alia assess progress on the status of the integration at the regional and continental levels and within key enabling sectors; and address bottlenecks and recommended solutions to overcome constraints. In ensuring the implementation of recommendations from the various COMAI, a number of achievements can be cited to accelerate integration process, in line also with the provisions of the Sirte Declaration of 9.9.99. These include, among others:
- i) A moratorium on the recognition of Regional Economic Communities (RECs);
 - ii) Completion of a study on the rationalisation of the RECs;

- iii) Signing of Protocol on relations between the AU and RECs during the 10th Ordinary Session of the African Union held on 27 January 2008, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia;
- iv) Completion of a study on the quantification scenarios for the rationalisation process;
- v) Within the context of rationalisation Decision Assembly/AU/Dec. 392 (XVIII) on the formation of a second bloc of combined RECs in emulation of the EAC-COMESA-SADEC Tripartite Arrangement as well as the landmark decision calling for one of its ordinary sessions of the AU Summit to regularly consider development and integration issues;
- vi) A study on the Minimum Integration Programme (MIP) as well as the development of an Action Plan for the First Phase, which has been costed and financing is currently being sought, and
- vii) A study on creation of a continental integration fund for financing of MIP and other integration activities.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

In addition to discussing the theme of COMAI IV, the Conference will:

- Reflect on the theme of the OAU Fiftieth Summit, namely: “Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance”, and
- Prepare the First Summit on Development and Integration as per Assembly /AU/Dec.392 (XVIII).

COMAI IV will also

- Afford the opportunity for Ministers of Integration to provide their own perspectives on the creation of the second Bloc of combined RECs and how the continental free trade area can be better mainstreamed and integrated into national development plans.
- Ignite debate and action orientated recommendations to address some of the most debilitating challenges constraining the effective acceleration and realization of Africa’s economic integration agenda.
- Agree on more decisive action to turn the potential for regional integration which is recognised as a means of fostering common and broad based development, sharing of opportunities, managing of risks, reducing poverty as well as production and wealth creation, into tangible gains for African citizens and African economies.
- Elaborate on the key constraints with a view to inspiring lasting solutions to the challenges faced.

OUTCOMES

One of the major outcomes of COMAI are recommendations from Ministers to key integration players, namely, Member States themselves, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the African Union Commission (AUC), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Development Bank (AfDB). The overall aim of the recommendations is to advance progress towards integration objectives set out in the Abuja Treaty and the ultimate goal of the African Economic Community (AEC), by addressing key

bottlenecks and constraints to the integration process and proposing measures to accelerate action.

PARTICIPANTS: Participants will include: Ministers and Experts from AU Member States, representatives of Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Other International and National Agencies, and AU Organs.

BACKGROUND: Regional economic integration has been regarded as a rational response by the continent to address and overcome the challenges imposed by globalization with regard to competitiveness, production and supply capacities, trade, investment, finance, technology transfer, knowledge development and innovation as well as skilled human resource capacity. It has also been considered as one of the best means for the continent to stem the adverse effects of Africa's balkanization in the aftermath of colonialism.

It is also viewed with positive potentialities to compensate for the disadvantages of being landlocked and the fragmentation that limits market size and denies economies of scale to many countries.

Further, by pooling capacities and resources, it has the potential to enhance the abilities of the continent to better respond to vulnerabilities and shocks.

African integration has therefore, remained over the decades a major development strategy for the continent and key to overcoming economic fragmentation, promote economic diversification, build cross-border linkages among productive entities, enhance welfare gains, reduce poverty and raise living standards.

As a result of the forgoing, many governments have concluded a number of regional integration agreements, with varying degrees of overlap.

While the African Economic Community (AEC), as set out in the Abuja Treaty, constitutes the ultimate goal and target of the integration agenda of the AU and its eight officially recognized REC and while many of the regional integration agreements and the Abuja Treaty itself are characterized by ambitious targets, progress has been patchy and varies, not only across the eight RECs, but also the Member States who constitute the primary enablers of integration.

The Abuja Treaty itself is characterized by six (6) stages divided between two levels (region and continental) and is at stage three (3) of the process (establishment of Free Trade Areas (FTAs) and Customs Unions at the regional level by 2017).

Yet despite COMESA, ECCAS, SADC and ECOWAS all having reached FTA status, the level of implementation and consolidation varies.

Moreover, while all have Customs Union programmes in place for the realisation of this objective before 2017, these have suffered from numerous sets backs, delays and a recasting of the launch date.

The only REC to stand out as having launched and consolidated its Customs Union and launched a Common Market is EAC, in January 1, 2005 and June 2010, respectively.

While the only REC to have in place an operational and functioning self-financing system is ECOWAS, in the form of its Community Levy.

Progress made

It should be underscored, that some tangible progress has been made by African countries towards regional integration, through greater promotion of trade related infrastructure such as customs single windows (one stop border posts), the utilization of computerized customs networks across Member States as a means of integrating, modernizing, digitizing and accelerating customs clearance procedures and to coordinate the collation and exchange of customs information particularly import and export data between national customs administrations.

The development of transport infrastructure and power interconnection projects, tariff reductions (which have fallen from 16.7 per cent to 7.1 per cent from 2000-2009) and growing levels of intra-regional trade within some Communities

Free movement is also promoted by some of the Communities, with regional passports and other travel and insurance documents in place, such as the ECOWAS and EAC Passport and the yellow and brown card schemes in operation in COMESA and ECOWAS, respectively.

Some RECs are also working towards the harmonisation of investment policies and are monitoring compliance with monetary convergence programme criteria.

Further, efforts to bring a degree of order, simplification and coherence to the Africa's integration arrangement and address overlap have recently culminated in the EAC-COMESA-SADC Tripartite Arrangement, whose apparent success has sparked calls by AU Heads of State for its emulation amongst other RECs

Gaps

Gaps remain between promise and performance, with critical bottlenecks in the following areas:

- Financing constraints exhibited by weak self-financing mechanisms and over reliance on donor funding;
- Slow pace of free movement across some Communities and the continent as a whole;
- Insufficient citizen ownership and enabling environment for a people centred approach to integration; and
- Despite the numerous protocols, that have been signed and ratified, implementation remains poor with legal texts insufficiently transposed into national legislation for implementation in Member States.

Challenges

Despite the noble progress, African integration remains largely fragmented, beset with problems of inadequate human and financial resources at all levels (not only for implementation but research and analysis as well as monitoring and evaluation of impact), poor coordination and information exchange at the various institutional levels (which can decelerate the pace of transpositioning and domestication at the national level), poor implementation of decisions, political reticence on some issues, over emphasis on national priorities rather than regional considerations, persistent cross border trade challenges such as NTBs and low level of infrastructure and energy development.

Further, security concerns and misconceptions by national governments and citizens alike continue to hinder the wide spread application of free movement decisions.

Moreover, the process suffers from a general lack of sufficient citizen involvement and an enabling environment for all actors in society (parliaments, private sector, civil society, research institutions) to participate and make a meaningful contribution in policy formulation and decision-making processes. An inclusive approach to integration and economic growth must ensure the mobilisation and utilisation of all available resources within a region for economic and social development.

As the benefits of integration begin to be felt in certain sectors, the expectations of Africans is increasing, keen to see tangible benefits in the form of employment, rising incomes and better infrastructure.

For Africa to keep pace with these reasonable expectations, governments and regional and continental institutions alike must step up to the mantle by hastening the pace, depth and delivery of integration agreements, while engaging in continuous dialogue with the African citizenry who in themselves breath practical reality into the functionality of integration, constitute the main drivers of the process and on whom its impact will be felt the most – whether negative or positive.

Journalists are invited to cover the opening session of the Experts and Ministerial session on the 15 and the 18 April 2013.

Working documents will be regularly updated on the African Union website(<http://au.int/en/content/sixth-conference-african-ministers-charge-integration-15-19-april-2013-port-louis-mauritius>) and the Mauritius Ministry of Foreign Affairs website (<http://foreign.gov.mu/English/COMAI%20VI/Pages/default.aspx>). Final versions will be provided upon registration at the Conference venue.

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The draft programmes and Information Note are attached.



SIXTH CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF INTEGRATION
15-16 April 2013
Port Louis, Mauritius

DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME
EXPERTS MEETING
Rev. 1

Day 1: 15 April 2013

08:00-09:00	- Registration
09:00-09:45	- Opening Ceremony - Introductory Remarks by the Commissioner for Economic Affairs
	- Welcome address by the representative of the host Country
09:45-10:00	- Election of the Bureau and Adoption of the Agenda
10:00-10:15	Coffee break
10:15-10:45	- Presentation on the theme of the Conference
10:45-13:00	- Discussion
13:00-15:00	Lunch break
15:00-15:15	- Report on the Status of Integration in Africa
15:15-15:45	- Discussion
15:45-16:00	- Report on the Follow-Up Report on the Implementation of Recommendations from the Fifth Conferences of African Ministers in Charge of Integration (COMAI V);
16:00-16:30	- Discussion
16:30-16:45	Coffee break
16:45-17:00	- Presentation on the draft proposal for Summit on Integration and Development issues
17:00-17:45	- Discussion
17:45-18:15	- Information Sharing: Update on the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) and Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade (BIAT);
18:15 – 18:30	Any Other Business

Day 2: 16 April 2013

09:00- 13:00	-Preparation of the Report
13:00- 15:00	Lunch break
15:00- 17:00	- Consideration and Adoption of the Report
17:00- 17:15	Coffee break
17:15-18:20	- Consideration of the Draft Ministerial Declaration
18:20- 19:00	- Closing Ceremony



SIXTH CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF INTEGRATION
18-19 April 2013
Port Louis, Mauritius

DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME

MINISTERS MEETING

Day 1: 18 April 2013

09:00-10:00	- Registration
10:00-10:45	- Opening Ceremony - Speech of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission -Speech of the Executive Secretary of UNECA
	-Welcome address by the representative of the host Country
10:45-10:50	Group Photo
10:50-11:00	Coffee Break
11:00-11:15	Activity Report of the Chairperson of COMAI V
11:15-11:45	Overviews on the status of Integration in Africa and implementation of the COMAI V recommendations
11:45-13:15	Consideration and adoption of the recommendations of the Experts Meeting
13:15-15:00	Lunch Break

Panel Discussion on the theme of the Conference

15:00-15:45	Sub-theme 1: How to deepen the interest of African leaders in the integration process?
15:45-16:30	Sub-theme 2: Impact of Globalization on the Governance of Integration in Africa
16:30-16:45	Coffee Break
16:45-17:30	Sub-theme 3: Pan Africanism and Integration
17:30-17:45	Presentation on the conclusions of the Panel discussions
17:45-18:00	Any Other Business

Day 2: 19 April 2013

09:00- 13:00	- Preparation of the Report
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13:00- 15:00

Lunch Break

15:00- 16:30

- Adoption of the Ministerial Report

16:30- 16:45.

Coffee Break

16:45-17:15


- Consideration and Adoption of the Draft Ministerial Declaration

17:15-17:30

- Date and Venue of the Next Conference

17:30- 18:00

- Closing Ceremony

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**SIXTH CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF INTEGRATION
(COMAI VI)**

**15-19 April 2013
Port Louis, Mauritius**

INFORMATION NOTE FOR PARTICIPANTS

Dear participants,

Welcome to Mauritius and to the Sixth Conference of African Ministers in Charge of Integration (COMAI VI). Please find below some general information on meeting arrangements which you may find useful.

1. DATE AND VENUE

The Conference will be held at the Inter-Continental Hotel Conference Centre, in Mauritius on 15-19 April 2013. The experts meeting will be on 15-16 April 2013 and the Ministerial Conference on 18-19 April 2013. A Consultation meeting on the second bloc of RECs will take place on 17 April 2013.

2. REGISTRATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

The registration desk will be located in the main entrance hall the Inter-Continental Conference Center and will open starting from 14 April 2013, at 06 pm and during the Conference daily from 8.30 am. All delegates and participants are encouraged to register as soon as possible upon arrival in Mauritius. Each delegate or participant will be given a badge for the purpose of identification during the period of the Conference.

3. VISA AND IMMIGRATION REQUIREMENTS

In order to enter Mauritius, every participant/ traveler must obtain an entry visa from a Mauritius diplomatic mission and have a full valid passport with at least six months to expiry on entry. Participants coming from countries where there is no Mauritius diplomatic mission may obtain an entry visa at the Airport upon arrival, upon presentation of their official letter of invitation to the Conference. In such cases, participants should inform the conference coordinators well in advance, before their arrival in Mauritius, providing their full passport details.

4. HEALTH AND HEALTHCARE REQUIREMENTS

In addition to visa and passport requirements, an international health certificate showing current yellow fever immunization is required for entry into Mauritius. Without it, the traveler may be required to submit to vaccination at entry before clearing immigration at a fee. Contact numbers of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life are the following: *Tel: +230 2012739 and Fax: +230 2013185*

5. MEDICAL SERVICE

Medical services will be available during the Conference period at the Inter- Continental Hotel.

6. INFORMATION AND PROTOCOL DESK

The host country, in collaboration with the AUC Conference Coordination Team, will provide any information required by the participants. A protocol desk will be available at Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport to facilitate entry and departure formalities for delegates. On arrival, delegates are required to contact the protocol desk for transport facilitation.

7. LOCAL TRANSPORT

The Government of Mauritius will provide transport for delegates from the airport to the hotels and between the hotels and the conference venue.

8. HOTEL ACCOMMODATION

All participants are advised to stay in Inter-Continental Hotel. Participants must pay for their hotel accommodation, and will be responsible for making their own booking with the hotel of their choice. You may also make an online booking with the hotel concerned through its website, or by directly contacting the hotel. Payment can be made in rupee, the Mauritius currency and preferably in cash, even though some hotels accept Visa credit cards. A list of preferential rates obtained by the Organizing Committee in all selected hotels, room types and rates appears below. Participants staying far from Inter-Continental hotel may take in charge their transportation arrangements.

Sponsored participants by the African Union Commission should stay in Inter-Continental Hotel. The names of sponsored participants and copies of their passports should be sent to the African Union Commission as soon as possible. Please be informed that sponsored participants not staying in Inter-Continental Hotel will not be refunded since block booking was made there.

9. FLIGHTS AVAILABLE TO AND FROM MAURITIUS

The international airlines operating in Mauritius and currently flying to and from Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport are as follows: Air Mauritius, Emirates, South African Airlines, Air France, British Airways and Kenya Airlines. Please be informed that Air Mauritius has accepted to provide a promotional rate for participants travelling to Mauritius in the framework of the Conference.

10. ELECTRIC SUPPLY

Electricity supply in Mauritius is 220V or 125V 50Hz. Plugs are with two circular metal pins and/or plug with two flat blades and one flat grounding blade

11. SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETATION

Simultaneous interpretation will be provided in English, French, Arabic and Portuguese. Details of the full language regimen and the relevant channels will be made available on the day of the conference.

12. DOCUMENTS

Working documents will be regularly updated on the African Union website(<http://au.int/en/content/sixth-conference-african-ministers-charge-integration-15-19-april-2013-port-louis-mauritius>) and the Mauritius Ministry of Foreign Affairs website (<http://foreign.gov.mu/English/COMAI%20VI/Pages/default.aspx>). Final versions will be provided upon registration at the Conference venue.

13. WEATHER

Now is the summer season in Mauritius and the weather during the month of April is between 26°C to 32°C.

14. CONTACTS FOR MORE INFORMATION

To confirm your participation, and for any request for information pertaining to logistics coordination, please contact:

AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION ORGANIZING TEAM	MAURITIUS ORGANIZING COMMITTEE
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