

AFRICAN UNION

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**SIXTH CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN
MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF INTEGRATION
15-19 April 2013
Port Louis, Mauritius**

**Preparations for the Assembly of the Union on Development and
Integration**

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I. Background

1. It will be recalled that African Ministers in charge of Integration during their Fifth Session, held in Nairobi, Kenya from 8-9 September 2011, proposed in their Declaration to Heads of State and Government that one of the Ordinary Sessions of the Assembly of the Union should be devoted to development and integration issues. The 18th Assembly of the Union, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in January 2012, adopted the landmark Decision (**Assembly/AU/Dec.392(XVIII)**), “to devote, in line with conditions to be determined by the Commission, one of its ordinary sessions to considering development and integration issues”, which will now henceforth enable the Union to provide a balanced and much needed focus on development and integration matters.
2. Since the Decision was taken the Department of Economic Affairs has been working on the modalities for convening the Summit. In this regard, discussions are being undertaken with the relevant stakeholders on the preparatory process.

II. Proposed theme of the Summit

3. The main theme of the Summit will be determined in close consultation with the RECs and the Conference of African Ministers in charge of Integration, in line with the ongoing preparations on the Africa-wide Development Plan.
4. The sub-themes envisaged are the following:
 - a) **Unleashing the development potential of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Land-locked Countries (LLDCs):** The aim is to foster economic transformation and the graduation of these countries from their disadvantaged status as LDCs and LLDCs through improved regional infrastructure connectivity, market access, trade facilitation and productive capacity for diversification and value addition. While ensuring the benefits of integration are spread evenly across all countries. The theme would provide an opportunity to find ways and means of bringing LDCs, LLDCs and even island states more on board the integration process.

It will also afford Africa the opportunity to look into detail at the recent Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 and the Istanbul Declaration¹ which were both adopted at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in May 2011, in Turkey.

¹ The objective of the Programme of Action is to ensure sustained economic growth and poverty reduction with a view to enabling half the number of LDCs to graduate from the least developed country category by 2020. The Programme of Action identifies eight priority areas: productive capacity, including infrastructure, energy, science and technology and private sector development; agriculture, food security and rural development; trade; commodities; human and social development, including women's empowerment; addressing the impact of multiple crises and emerging challenges, such as climate change; mobilizing financial resources for development and capacity-building; and good governance at all levels.

- b) Free movement of People (passport and visas issues):** Free movement of people is essential for integration. Much has been said about the need for free movement of people and it remains central to accelerating the integration of our continent. The absence of free movement within and between some RECs and at a continental level remains an area of concern because of all the freedoms, the free movement of people has been the most difficult to achieve and the least desirable for some Member States to promote.

Growth in the free movement of goods, services, and capital in the global economy requires a similar growth in the free movement within the African continent so as to enhance its competitiveness and contribute to fostering an enabling environment for business by promoting labour and investor mobility. Passports and visa issues should, therefore, be discussed at the highest level of political decision-making on the matter.

- c) Post 2015 MDGs:** Reflections by Africa on the post MDGs agenda would help in the formulation of targets and indicators that are more relevant to the African context and development priorities than the current ones.

5. Infrastructure development as well as education and research issues could also be envisaged for discussion by the Summit.

III. The Stakeholders

6. The main stakeholders to be involved in organizing the Summit are the AUC, through the Department of Economic Affairs, the RECs, UNECA, AfDB and Member States through the Conference of African Ministers in charge of Integration.
7. Information regarding preparations for the Summit, including documentation such as the Draft Agenda and Programme and other working documents will be shared with the concerned stakeholders before being discussed by Ministers in charge of Integration who will then submit to Heads of State and Government.

IV. Conclusion

8. Annually holding a Summit on development and integration will help ensure that the endeavors of regional and continental integration and Africa's other development efforts benefit from the political guidance of all Heads of State and Government of the AU. This will undoubtedly raise the profile and visibility of development and integration matters at the Summit level strengthen relations, coordination and policy harmonization amongst the RECs and between the RECs and the AUC. While also deepening ownership, stewardship and leadership of the development and integration agenda among Heads of State and Government and the wider African constituency.

9. The Summit will also afford the RECs the opportunity to inform, at the highest level, all Heads of State and Government of the AU on their integration and development activities, progress, results, as well as constraints. Thereby helping to foster accountability for the integration process by the RECs to all 54 African Member States and not just their core Member States constituency.