



## **Drivers and constraints to regional integration in Africa.**

### **The roles of regional organisations**

#### **Fridays of the Commission – 13 May 2016**

Regional organisations play important roles in regional integration in Africa. Yet, there remains a major gap between the ambitious commitments or aspirations and the implementation on the ground. Hence the call to look more carefully into what drives – or constrains – regional integration on the continent and to explore feasible ways to carry the regional integration agenda forward.

The AU, RECs and other regional organisations made numerous commitments in support of regional initiatives to tackle challenges among other things that cannot be solved at the national level. Such challenges affect (poor) people's lives in areas ranging from human security, mobility, trade, public goods and a variety of infrastructure, food security, and financing of climate change adaptation and mitigation. From the perspective of the *AU Agenda 2063: the Africa We Want* regional cooperation and regional integration will be vital for its implementation.

But as the AUC Chairperson herself has emphasised, “I don't think Africa is short of policies. We have to implement, that is where the problem is.” So what is holding back implementation? And what can be learned from good practices of effective implementation of regional agreements? These were two key questions of a major first-ever study on the [political economy of regional organisations in Africa](#).<sup>1</sup>

The meeting of the Fridays of the Commission in Addis Ababa on 13 May 2016 will be dedicated to finding answers to such questions. The meeting comes at an appropriate time as the evolving global and continental agendas require adequate African regional action on issues such as climate change, economic transformation, gender equality, the fight against terror and more broadly the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals. This meeting will be able to tap into the findings of this major study and will benefit from a wide diversity of African perspectives and the vast experience of invited personalities, practitioners and experts in the field.

In order to do so, the AUC Department of Economic Affairs teams up with the Embassy of the Sweden in Addis Ababa, which funded the study, and with the independent think tank the European Centre for Development Policy Management, which carried out the study with a mix of European and African experts. The conference and debates will be structured around the following questions:

---

<sup>1</sup> The six political economy studies include the AU, ECOWAS, SADC, EAC, COMESA, and IGAD. A synthesis report summarises the key messages and conclusions ([www.ecdpm.org/peria](http://www.ecdpm.org/peria)).

1. *What are the main political and economic drivers of effective regional cooperation and regional integration in Africa? And what are the main constraints to regional dynamics?*
2. *When, how and under what conditions have the AU and RECs been most effective in cooperating?*
3. *What are examples of good practice in supporting regional organisations in carrying out their commitments?*
4. *What lessons can be learnt from the various integration initiatives in Africa in bridging the implementation gap?*

The *Fridays of the Commission* debates seek to contribute to exploring ways of taking the regional agendas forward. It attempts to stimulate a dialogue on regional solutions that are technically and economically sound, as well as politically feasible.

Renowned personalities and experts with proven knowledge of regional integration in Africa will take part in this debate to shed the necessary light on these questions.

***AU PRC Members, AUC Staff, Members of the Diplomatic Corp in Ethiopia, UN Agency staff, Senior Students at the University of Addis Ababa, Academicians, Civil Society Organisations and indeed all interested parties are cordially invited to this special event to take place on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2016 at Small Conference Hall 1 of the AUC new conference hall building.***

For your participation, please confirm to Barbara Ambela at [Ambelab@africa-union.org](mailto:Ambelab@africa-union.org)