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Fifth Conference of African Ministers in Charge of Integration (COMAI V) Opens in Nairobi

Experts from the AU Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), converged in Nairobi on 5 September 2011.



The theme of the Conference, “**Integration and Sovereignty**”, aims to find ways and means of fast-tracking the process of regional and continental integration.

The meeting was opened by Dr. Edward Sambili, CBS, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of State for Planning, National Development and Vision 2030 of the Republic of Kenya, in the presence of Dr René Kouassi N’GUETTIA, Director for Economic Affairs of the African Union Commission.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Kouassi observed that Africa’s image today is that of mark-timing Continent in comparison to the other regions of the world where integration is successfully taking root as the engine of growth and development. The reason is that in Africa the twin aspects of **independence and sovereignty** is, according to several observers, the main obstacle to the integration process. This explains why they are central to the main theme of this Conference.

Dr. Kouassi said that “sharing sovereignties today guarantees tomorrow’s success in the economic and political integration process. Rejecting or concealing this reality is accepting permanent marginalization of our countries and Continent in the community of Nations.”

The director for Economic Affairs concluded his remarks by saying that since integration is a joint and long-term effort, the Commission knows that it can count on the indispensable support of member States, RECs, development partners and other stakeholders to ensure a happy and quick outcome and to meet the aspirations of our people.

For his part, Dr.Sambili stressed on the push for deeper African integration must be premised on the understanding that integrating Africa's economies will leverage Africa's collective bargaining power in international fora, enhance its effective participation in the international economic system, and provide the continent with a platform for prudent management of trans-boundary resources.

The Conference of African Ministers in Charge of Integration, held once a year, was institutionalized by The Sirte Declaration (September 1999) of the AU Heads of State and Government.

The meeting of the experts ends on Wednesday 7th September 2011 and will be followed by the Ministerial Conference to be held from 8th to 9th September.

For more information, visit the African Union website: www.au.int