

**DIVISION OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION**

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**OPENING OF THE SECOND CONGRESS OF AFRICAN ECONOMISTS**



**Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 24 November 2011** – The African Union Commission (AUC), through its Department of Economic Affairs, together with the Ministry of State, Ministry of Planning and Development of Côte d'Ivoire, opened today the Second Congress of African Economists, in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, under the theme “Achieving Strong and Sustainable Economic Growth in Africa to Curb

Unemployment and Promote Regional and Continental Integration Dynamics”.

The main objective of the Congress of African Economists is to provide a forum for African economists, from the continent and from the Diaspora, to come up with concrete solutions to integration and development challenges facing Africa. Specifically, the Congress aims at considering, discussing and analyzing contemporary development issues, and proposing appropriate and extensive solutions to the integration and socio-economic development challenges facing the African Continent.

In his opening remarks, Prof. Seka Pierre, Director of Cabinet, Ministry of State, Ministry of Planning and Development of Côte d'Ivoire, warmly welcomed the participants and invited them to reflect on the development challenges that Africa continues to face, despite abundance of resources and intellectual capital.

The Director of the Department of Economic Affairs of the AUC, Dr. René N'Guettia Kouassi, on his part, stressed the need to devise appropriate policies and strategies geared towards the attainment of sustainable growth and development as a means of addressing the problem of high unemployment rates in Africa. He underscored the importance of involving the Diaspora in this process as well as the need to apply African solutions to African problems. He added that the Congress offers an unparalleled



opportunity for participants to suggest, recommend and craft concrete solutions to the Continent's socioeconomic development challenges.

The Deputy Chairperson of the AUC, H.E. Erastus Mwencha, in his remarks, highlighted the challenges facing Africa and emphasized the need for an integrated socio-economic landscape to accelerate economic growth and development. He recalled the various regional and continental integration initiatives and stressed the need to support these as a means of building new markets, promoting intra-African trade, and enhancing the competitiveness of Africa on the global stage. He presented an analysis of various economic theories and underscored the need to ensure an effective interaction between economic and political systems. He, furthermore, noted that as markets contract in industrialised countries, the African Continent is projected to become one of the fastest growing regions of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and therefore policies need to be put in place to translate this into prosperity, jobs and social progress.

It is in this context that the Minister of State, Minister of Planning and Development of Côte d'Ivoire, Dr. Albert Toikeusse Mabri, in his opening statement, welcomed the initiative of organising the Congress which has a great potential to serve as an effective platform for engagement between economists and policy makers. He affirmed his keenness to see the deliberations visibly bettering the lives of Africans.

More than 80 renowned economists attended the Congress. The two day deliberations are intended to conclude in concrete suggestions and recommendations on ways of curbing the current high unemployment rates in Africa, promote integration and socio-economic development in Africa.

For more information, please visit the AUC web site at <http://www.au.int> or the dedicated web site for the congress at <http://www.au.int/pages/economists>