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## “Fridays of the Commission”: Regional integration in Africa and how to make it work



**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 16 May 2016:** The Department of Economic Affairs of the African Union Commission (AUC) in collaboration with the Swedish Government and the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) organized an insightful debate on Friday 13 May 2016 at the AU

headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, under the theme: “***Regional Integration in Africa – How to make it work?***”. The debate was highly attended by members of the diplomatic corps, members from the academia, students, media and representatives from civil society. Participants all came together to explore ways on how regional integration can be done differently as well as discuss lessons that can be learnt from the various integration initiatives in Africa.

Ambassador Potgieter-Gqubule, Deputy Chief of Staff AUC highlighted the need to look into the functioning of institutions and to put more emphasis on regional organizations. The Deputy Chief of Staff also reiterated the importance for Africa to integrate on a global scale especially in the areas of trade; and hence the importance of infrastructure development and the need for industrialisation. She stated that global and continental dynamics are main drivers of integration in Africa. Regional integration covers many sectors, including health and skills development. She welcomed the ECDPM study on the [Political Economy of Regional Integration in Africa](#) as it helped identify opportunities for effective regional integration. Ambassador Potgieter-Gqubule spelled out the need for integration as it will go a long way in paving the way for free movement of people and goods, and the importance of production and financial integration to achieve regional integration in Africa.



In his opening remarks Dr. Imani Younoussa Head of Statistics, Economic Affairs of the AUC welcomed the esteemed guests and stated that this is the 18<sup>th</sup> session of the Fridays of the Commission. He underscored the urgency for Member States and AU

partners to identify those factors that impede the implementation process of regional integration in Africa. In addition he called upon delegates to share information, ask questions on the dynamics of regional integration in Africa. He concluded by emphasizing that today's debate is geared towards finding solutions which are durable and sustainable.

H.E. Jan Sadek, Ambassador of the Swedish Government to Ethiopia, thanked the AUC for providing a platform to help discuss and launch the study on the political economy of regional integration in Africa given the importance to various internal and external stakeholders of regional integration in Africa.

Mr. Geert Laporte, co-chair of this interactive Friday of the Commission and Deputy Director of the ECDPM (an independent "do and think tank" that specializes in European Union (EU) development and external relations with a particular focus on Africa) also appreciated the open spirit of the debate as it helped identify both obstacles to regional integration, as well as the opportunities for creating coalitions to tackle such blockages and engage in the arduous work in support of an integrated Africa.

HS/HE/BM

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