

**LECTURE  
ON AFRICAN UNION**

**PLACE: SOPHIA UNIVERSITY, TOKYO, JAPAN**



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## **I. OVERVIEW**

The Organization of African Unity (OAU), the precursor to the African Union (AU), was formed on 25 May 1963 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The continental union is composed of 55 countries on the African continent. AU was established on 26 May 2001 and launched on 9 July 2002 in South Africa, with the aim of, officially, replacing the Organization of African Unity.

The most important decisions of the AU are made by the Assembly of the African Union, a semi-annual meeting of the Heads of State and Government of its Member States. The AU's secretariat, the African Union Commission, is based in Addis Ababa.

The population of Africa is more than one billion 250 000 inhabitants.

## **II. STRUCTURES/ORGANIZATIONS**

The African Union has a number of official bodies:

### Pan-African Parliament (PAP)

Pan-African Parliament is the highest legislative body of the African Union. The Headquarters of the PAP is at Midrand, South Africa. The Parliament is composed of 265 elected representatives from all 55 AU states, and intended to provide popular and civil-society participation in the processes of democratic governance.

### Assembly of the African Union

Composed of Heads of State and Heads of Government of AU States, the Assembly is currently the supreme governing body of the African Union. It is gradually devolving some of its decision-making powers to the Pan African Parliament. It meets once a year and makes its decisions by consensus or by a two-thirds majority. The current Chair of the AU is the President of the Republic of Guinea, His Excellency Prof. Alpha CONDE.

### African Union Commission (or Authority)

The Secretariat of the African Union is composed of ten Commissioners and supporting staff and headquartered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In a similar fashion to its European counterpart, the European Commission, it is responsible for the administration and co-ordination of the AU's activities and meetings.

### Court of Justice of the African Union

The Constitutive Act of African Union provides for a Court of Justice to rule on disputes over interpretation of AU Treaties.

### Executive Council

The Executive Council is composed of Ministers, designated by the Governments of Member States. It decides on matters such as foreign trade, social security, food, agriculture and communications, is accountable to the Assembly, and prepares material for the Assembly to discuss and approve.

### Permanent Representatives' Committee

Consisting of nominated permanent representatives of member states, the Committee prepares the work for the Executive Council.

### Peace and Security Council (PSC)

The Peace and Security Council was adopted by the AU Assembly in July 2002. The protocol defines the PSC as a collective security and early warning arrangement to facilitate timely and effective response to conflict and crisis situations in Africa. Other responsibilities conferred to the PSC by the protocol include prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, post-conflict peace building and developing common Defence policies. The PSC has fifteen members elected on a regional basis by the Assembly. It is similar in intent and operation to the United Nations Security Council.

### Economic, Social and Cultural Council

An advisory organ composed of professional and civic representatives, similar to the European Economic and Social Committee.

### Specialized Technical Committees

Both the Abuja Treaty and the Constitutive Act provide for Specialized Technical Committees to be established made up of African ministers to advise the Assembly. The ten proposed themes are: Rural Economy and Agricultural Matters; Monetary and Financial Affairs; Trade, Customs, and Immigration; Industry, Science and Technology; Energy, Natural Resources, and Environment; Transport, Communications, and Tourism; Health; Labor, and Social Affairs; Education, Culture, and Human Resources.

## Financial institutions

- African Central Bank – Abuja, Nigeria
- African Investment Bank – Tripoli, Libya
- African Monetary Fund – Yaoundé, Cameroon

These institutions have not yet been established, however, the Steering Committees working on their founding have been constituted. Eventually, the AU aims to have a single currency (the Afro).

## Human rights

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights exists since 1986, is established under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (the African Charter). It is the premier African human rights body, with responsibility for monitoring and promoting compliance with the African Charter. The African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights was established in 2006 to supplement the work of the Commission, following the entry into force of a protocol to the African Charter providing for its creation. It is planned that the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights will be merged with the Court of Justice of the African Union (see above).

## African Energy Commission (AFREC)

African Energy Commission, launched in 2001, is a continental African structure with the responsibility to ensure, co-ordinate and harmonize the protection, preservation, development and the national exploitation, marketing and integration of the energy resources of the African continent.

## **II. AFRICA DAY**

On 25 May 1963, Africa made history with the foundation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) which brought the Continent together. Since then, the 25 May has been celebrated widely across the world particularly in Africa to signify Africa's identity and unity.

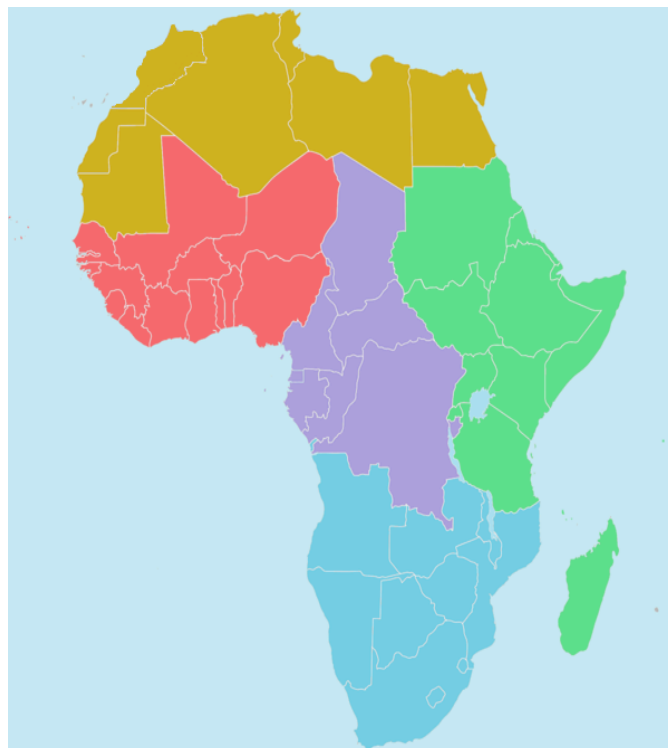
Africa is on the march towards a more prosperous future in which all its citizens, young, old, male, female, rural, urban, of all creeds and backgrounds are empowered to realize their full potential, live with satisfaction and pride about their continent. Africa needs a future with healthy and well educated people living in robust and developed economies.

The African Union is now working to realize the African people’s aspiration among others the one related to “an Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African People, especially its women, youth and caring for children”.

The theme of the Africa Day 2017 is “*Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through investments in Youth*”, represents a unique opportunity to discuss and reflect while celebrating important milestones on youth development across the continent.

This is why holding the current lecture with students at Sophia University, as well as the exhibition taking place in the hall, outside of this new building, for African Diplomatic Corps in Japan.

#### **IV. THE REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES (RECs) OF THE AFRICAN UNION**



The African Union Member States are divided into five geographic Regions: Central, Eastern, Northern, Southern and Western Africa.

The Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are regional groupings of African states. The RECs have developed individually and have differing roles and structures. Generally, the purpose of the RECs is to facilitate regional economic integration between members of the individual regions and through the wider African Economic Community (AEC), which was established under the Abuja Treaty (1991). The 1980 Lagos Plan of Action for the Development of Africa and the Abuja Treaty proposed the creation of RECs as the basis for wider African integration, with a view to regional and eventual continental integration. The RECS are increasingly involved in coordinating AU Member States' interests in wider areas such as peace and security, development and governance.

The African Union recognizes eight RECs. They are:

- The **Arab Maghreb Union (AMU/UMA)** in the North,
- The **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** in the West,
- The **East African Community (EAC)** in the East,
- The **Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)** also in the East,
- The **Southern African Development Community (SADC)** in the South,
- The **Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)** in the South-East,
- The **Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)** in the Centre, and
- The **Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CENSAD)** in the North, West Central and East.

## **V. AFRICAN UNION PARTNERSHIPS**

The African Union has external partnerships where there are formal agreements between the AU and a partner organization, region or country. There are ten partnerships among which we have the one with Japan: Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD).

Africa–Japan cooperation was formalized in 1993 by the TICAD, which established a consultative forum for development assistance to Africa. TICAD meets at Heads of State and Government level every five years until TICAD V in June 2013 in Yokohama, Japan, then every three years through a Decision taken last year. TICAD is overseen by a follow-up mechanism, which comprises a three-tier structure of secretariat, joint monitoring committee and follow-up meeting. Each TICAD meeting approves an action plan with specific actions to be undertaken within a three-year period.

The last Summit, the TICAD VI was held in Nairobi, Kenya, the first ever held in Africa. Including side events within the venue, over 11,000 people participated in TICAD VI, including the representatives of 53 African countries as well as development partner countries and Asian countries, international and regional organizations, the private sector, and civil society such as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). In addition, a business mission with leaders from 77 organizations including Japanese businesses and universities accompanied Prime Minister Abe and introduced Japanese private-sector initiatives at each session.

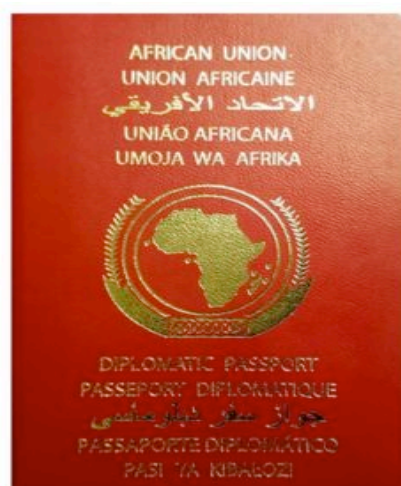
## **VI PERSPECTIVES OF AFRICAN UNION**

The move from a Secretariat to a Commission is one of the major innovations of the AU Constitutive Act, embodying the will to make a qualitative jump forward towards more integration. The AUC has been conceived as a collegial institution independent from Member States, which has the competence to represent the Union. It also plays the role of coordination and harmonization of activities and of implementation of inter-African cooperation, which was previously carried out by intergovernmental institutions (the OAU Assembly and the Council of Ministers). In certain policy areas, the Commission proved that it was in a position to offer real added value to Member States.

The African Union has introduced a common passport that will allow visa-free access to all member States, superseding existing national documents.

As the European Union, the African Union is pursuing a path of closer integration through the launch of a common passport that will grant visa-free to Africans. The first of electronic passports were unveiled at the African Union Summit in Kigali, Rwanda, where they were issued to Heads of State and Senior Officials.

The Union aims to distribute the passports to all African citizens by 2020.



Dear students and distinguished participants,

Before you follow the presentations by African Regions, I seize the opportunity to congratulate the Chancellor and the President of Sophia University for welcoming us in this beautiful new amphitheater.

Happy Africa Day 2017 to all of you.

I thank you for your kind attention.