



# African Union

a United and Strong Africa

**Establishment:** July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2002

**African Union Commission Chairperson:** Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma (October 2012-2016)

**Member States:** People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, Republic of Angola, Republic of Benin, Republic of Botswana, Burkina Faso, Republic of Burundi, Republic of Cameroon, Republic of Cape Verde, Central African Republic, the Republic of Chad, Union of the Comoros, Republic of the Congo, Republic of Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of Djibouti, Arab Republic of Egypt, Republic of Equatorial Guinea, State of Eritrea, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Gabonese Republic, Republic of the Gambia, Republic of Ghana, Republic of Guinea, Republic of Guinea-Bissau, Republic of Kenya, Kingdom of Lesotho, Republic of Liberia, Libya, Republic of Madagascar, Republic of Malawi, Republic of Mali, Republic of Mauritania, Republic of Mauritius, Republic of Mozambique, Republic of Namibia, Republic of Niger, Federal Republic of Nigeria, Republic of Rwanda, Republic Arab Saharawi Democratic, Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, Republic of Senegal, Republic of Seychelles, Republic of Sierra Leone, Somali Republic, Republic of South Africa, Republic of South Sudan, Republic of the Sudan, Kingdom of Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Togolese Republic, Tunisian Republic, Republic of Uganda, Republic of Zambia, and Republic of Zimbabwe.

**Areas of Work:** promotion of democracy and strengthening of democratic institutions and processes, conflict resolution, protection of human rights and social and economic development.

**Cooperation with OAS:** Democracy, human rights

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## BACKGROUND

The African Union (AU) was established on July 9, 2002 as a successor to the Organization of African Unity (OAU)<sup>1</sup>. This followed a Declaration by the Heads of State and Government of the OAU (the Sirte Declaration) on September 9, 1999, which called for the establishment of an African Union to accelerate the process of integration in the continent so that Africa could play

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<sup>1</sup> The Organization of African Unity (OAU) was established on May 25, 1963 with the following objectives: to rid the continent of the remaining vestiges of colonization and apartheid; to promote unity and solidarity among African States; to coordinate and intensify cooperation for development; to safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States; and to promote international cooperation within the framework of the U.N.

its due role in the global economy while addressing multifaceted social, economic and political problems compounded as they are by certain negative aspects of globalization.

African countries, in their quest for unity, economic and social development under the banner of the OAU, have taken various initiatives which paved the way for the establishment of the AU. Noteworthy among these are: Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) and the Final Act of Lagos (1980); The African Charter on Human and People's Rights (Nairobi 1981) and the Grand Bay Declaration and Plan of Action on Human rights; OAU Declaration on the Political and Socio-Economic Situation in Africa and the Fundamental Changes taking place in the World (1990); The Charter on Popular Participation adopted in 1990; The Treaty establishing the African Economic Community (AEC) (1991); The Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (1993); The 2000 Solemn Declaration on the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation; The Constitutive Act of the African Union: adopted in 2000 at the Lome Summit (Togo), entered into force in 2001; the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) : adopted as a Program of the AU at the Lusaka Summit (2001).

Morocco left the African Union's predecessor (the OAU) in 1984 due to the support given by the Member States to the Republic Arab Saharawi Democratic as a member of the Organization though being occupied by Moroccan military forces which claimed sovereignty over the territory. The African Union has suspended several of its members due to coups d'état and political crises, accepting their readmission once the democratic rule is reinstated. Currently only Madagascar<sup>2</sup> and Guinea-Bissau<sup>3</sup> have suspended memberships.

## OBJECTIVES

According to the Strategic Plan of the African Union Commission, the AU is to "build an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena".

To translate this vision into concrete action, these objectives have been defined for the new organization by the Commission of the African Union. Among them, the following are noteworthy<sup>4</sup>:

- Build the capacities of integration players in Africa, including the AU and its organs, Member States, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and Inter-governmental and civil society organizations, while taking into account their differing pace of development;
- Ensure overall coherence of the programs aimed at speeding up the integration process through actions undertaken in harmonizing and rationalizing the RECs and in integrating the various initiatives into the AU Commission<sup>5</sup>;

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<sup>2</sup> Suspended since 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Suspended since 2012.

<sup>4</sup> African Union Commission (2004), 'Volume 1: Vision and Mission of the African Union', *Strategic Plan of The African Union Commission*, Addis Ababa. Available at [http://www.africa-union.org/root/AU/AboutAU/vision\\_mission.htm](http://www.africa-union.org/root/AU/AboutAU/vision_mission.htm)

- Assume a dynamic information and advocacy role for Africa vis-à-vis the world, serving as the interface between Africa and the outside world<sup>6</sup>;
- Play a leadership role for promotion of peace, human security and good governance in the continent as a prerequisite for implementation of the development and integration agenda;
- Stimulate economic, social and cultural development in the continent so as to improve the well-being of the people of Africa.

## AUC CHAIRPERSON



**Nkosazana Clarice Dlamini-Zuma**, a South African politician and former anti-apartheid activist is the first woman to be elected Chairperson of the African Union Commission. Prior to her appointment, she served as Minister of Home Affairs in the Cabinet of President Jacob Zuma, since May 2009, Minister of Foreign Affairs from 17 June 1999 to 10 May 2009 and Minister of Health from 1994 to 1999, under President Nelson Mandela.

Her work in public policy earned her honorary Doctor of Law degrees by both the University of Natal (1995) and the University of Bristol (1996). Dr. Dlamini-Zuma was a member of the South African Students Organization and was elected as its deputy president in 1976. Later that year, she had to flee into exile and completed her medical studies at the University of Bristol in 1978.

Dr. Dlamini-Zuma, earned a Bachelor's Degree (BSc) in zoology and botany at the University of Zululand.

## GOVERNING BODIES

The AU, similar to the European Union, is made up of both political and administrative bodies.

- **Assembly:** Highest decision-making organ of the AU, composed of all the heads of state or government of AU member states (currently chaired by Yayi Boni, Benin).
- **Pan African Parliament:** Representative body of the AU, composed of five members per country including at least one woman among each national delegation, elected by the national parliaments of the AU member states.
- Other political institutions of the AU include the **Executive Council**, made up of foreign ministers, which prepares decisions for the Assembly; the **Permanent Representatives Committee**, made up of the ambassadors of member states to the

<sup>5</sup> At the July 2007 Accra summit the Assembly adopted a *Protocol on Relations between the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities*, which is intended to facilitate the harmonization of policies and ensure compliance with the Abuja Treaty and the Lagos Plan of Action.

<sup>6</sup> The African Diaspora in Europe and America is considered as a vital player in this aspect. The Constitutive Act of the AU declares that it shall "invite and encourage the full participation of the African Diaspora as an important part of our Continent, in the building of the African Union".

AU; and the **Economic, Social, and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC)**, a civil society consultative body.

- **AU Commission:** Secretariat of the AU
- **African Court of Justice:** Body that adjudicates in civil cases and is responsible for human right protections;
  - **African Court of Human and People's Rights:** Body with jurisdiction over all disputes and requests submitted to it in respect of interpretation and implementation of African Charter on Human and People's Rights.
- **Peace and Security Council:** Body with mandate to impose sanctions in case of an unconstitutional change of government of an AU member state and to "take initiatives and action it deems appropriate" in response to potential or actual conflicts in a same manner as the UN Security Council. In fact, it plays an increasingly high-profile role in peacekeeping, since it has several interventions in Burundi (2003), the Darfur region of Sudan (2004), Somalia (2007) and Comoros (2008). It also provides for establishment of a **Standby Force** as a permanent African peacekeeping force.
- **Financial Institutions:** African Central Bank (Abuja, Nigeria); African Monetary Fund (Yaounde, Cameroon); and African Investment Bank (Tripoli, Libya).

## COOPERATION WITH OAS

The OAS and the AU have had an ongoing collaborative relationship since 2007, when a "Declaration of Intent to Cooperate" was signed by both organizations. Two years after this Declaration, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was finalized between the OAS General Secretariat and the Commission of the African Union (2009).

### Memorandum of Understanding

The OAS-AU MOU establishes the framework for a deeper level of cooperation between the two organizations, specifically on issues relating to the promotion of democracy and strengthening of democratic institutions and processes, conflict resolution, protection of human rights and social and economic development. The MOU represents an historic step in the building of a strategic alliance and partnership between the two regional organizations. Based on the activities underlined in the MOU, a Work Plan (January 2010 to July 2011) was drafted and approved by both sides.

### Democracy

Since the Democracy Bridge initiative launched in 2006, the OAS Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO) of the Secretariat of Political Affairs has co-operated closely with the AU on various undertakings, in particular, to refine and observe the methodology for electoral observation.

In September 2008 DECO sent four specialists to coordinate efforts with the electoral mission of the AU to observe the parliamentary elections in Angola. DECO also sent an Inter-regional

Technical Cooperation Mission consisting of four specialists, who were integrated into the observation mission of the AU for the presidential election in the Republic of Togo in March 2010. In both cases, the DECO specialists accompanied the AU observers the opening and closing of the polls as well as during the preliminary count.

In a similar manner, AU officials were integrated into the OAS electoral observation team for the elections in Colombia in 2007 and also participated actively in the Inter-American Electoral Conferences and meetings of the Association of Caribbean Electoral Organizations (ACEO) during past two years. From September 28 through October 3, 2009, AU officials from the Democracy and Electoral Assistance Unit within the Political Affairs Department participated in the second Inter-American Training for members of the Electoral Management Bodies of the region, organized by DECO in collaboration with the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) of Mexico, the Latin American School of Social Sciences (FLACSO) and International IDEA.

In February 2010, the Ministry of External Affairs and Regional Integration of the Republic of Togo invited the Organization of American States to observe the presidential elections on March 4. The Government of Togo invited a number of international organizations to observe this electoral process, among them the African Union, which deployed 40 observers throughout the country. As part of the ongoing collaboration and exchange with the African Union Elections Assistance Unit, three specialists and the Chief of the Electoral Observation Section from the OAS Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO) joined in the observation of the elections in Togo.

In order to further expand upon the exchange of experiences with the African Union in electoral observation, the OAS DECO invited a representative from the African Union to participate as an observer in the OAS-CARICOM Joint Electoral Observation Mission (JEOM) for the Haitian presidential elections. A Senior Political Officer in the Department of Political Affairs of the AU participated in this JEOM which began its activities in August 2010, nearly four months before the first round of elections on November 28, 2010.

The Head of the AU Elections Assistance Unit participated in the Third Inter-American Electoral Training Seminar, an initiative of the OAS DECO in collaboration with the Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico (IFE), the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), and the Latin American School of Social Sciences (FLACSO). This seminar took place in Mexico City on September 6-10, 2010 and focused on the topics of strategic planning for electoral management bodies and electoral mapping. These Seminars seek to improve the installed capacity of the hemisphere's electoral authorities.

## Human Rights

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHR) have exchanged information through contacts and visits in a limited and sporadic manner during the last fifteen years. These contacts have generated a strong interest within bodies of both human rights systems for a better understanding of the processes, working methodology and the human rights standards developed in each region.

To strengthen collaboration between the systems and to increase the promotion and protection of human rights in both regions, IACHR has offered information on areas such as case law,



thematic rapporteurships, on-site visits, country reports, and measures to implement regional human rights norms and decisions. The OAS also has been present at several meetings on human and people's rights in Africa, where issues discussed have included urgent protection mechanisms, case system management and the relationship between the human rights system and the courts.

In June 2010, a delegation from the African Commission on Human and People's Rights came to the OAS for a two-week long series of meetings and exchanges, with the purpose of sharing information and strategies and consulting on the ongoing cooperation project between the two organizations. This project is focused primarily on how to address procedural challenges in the area of human rights complaints and how to improve the effectiveness of the respective commissions in promoting and protecting human rights in each region. On June 17th 2010 a dialogue session with the ACHPR representatives and several OAS Ambassadors took place at OAS headquarters.

The Forum on "Challenges and Opportunities in the Strengthening of Democracy and the Promotion of Human Rights in Africa and the Americas" that took place in October 2011 encompassed human rights issues as a major part of its agenda. The discussion on human rights centered on the existing mechanisms for the defense of human rights in the two regions through the management of the case load, the exchange of best practices and relevant jurisprudence.

### Institutional Cooperation

Representatives of the African Union have participated in several events involving institutional collaboration, coordinated by the OAS Department of International Affairs. These are summarized below.

- i) Participation of African Union in Inter-Regional Dialogue on Democracy hosted by the OAS (April 2011)

A delegation from the African Union, headed by Mr. Jean Ping, Chairperson of the AU Commission, was present at OAS headquarters on 14-15 April 2011, to participate in the launching of the first meeting of the Inter-Regional Dialogue on Democracy, an initiative of International IDEA. The meeting was hosted by the OAS and included the Heads and/or high-level representatives of the following Regional Organizations; African Union, Pacific Island Forum, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, European Union, League of Arab States, The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, International IDEA and the OAS. The High-level Inter-Regional Dialogue on Democracy will provide a multi-year platform for engagement among regional organizations on democracy and related issues.

- ii) Presentation by Mr. Jean Ping, Chairperson of the AU Commission, in the XXIV Lecture of the Americas (April 2011)

Mr. Jean Ping, Chairperson of the African Union, was the keynote speaker in the XLIV Lecture of the Americas that took place on April 15, 2011 on the topic "Regional Perspectives on Democracy: Celebrating Ten Years of the Inter-American Democratic Charter". Mr. Ping highlighted the outcome of the recent 16<sup>th</sup> African Union Summit on the theme "Towards

Greater Unity and Integration through Shared Values” where a consensus had emerged that Africa’s destiny will be shaped by how much it is able to construct a sense of common identity and dedication to Democracy and Governance and a sense of unity that is not based on the narrow lenses of state, race or religion.

iii) Working Meeting between the African Union and the OAS (April 2011)

A Working Meeting was held on 19 April 2011 between a delegation from the African Union and OAS officials, facilitated by the Department of International Affairs. The purpose of the meeting was to review the state of institutional cooperation between the OAS and the African Union in the context of the signed MOU and the agreed-upon subsequent Work Plan and to discuss two pending activities, namely the draft program and date for the Second Forum on “Democracy and Human Rights” and a proposed OAS-AU Seminar Program on “Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa and the Americas”. The meeting came to several conclusions, with concrete follow-up steps to ensure the timely organization of the Second Forum in October 2011. The AU delegation was headed by Ambassador John Shinkaiye, Chief of Staff of AU Chairperson Jean Ping and included six other high-level representatives. The OAS delegation was headed by the Director of the Department of International Affairs and counted with the participation of representatives from the OAS Secretariat for Political Affairs and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights were present at the meeting.

iv) Forum on “Challenges and Opportunities in the Promotion and Defense of Democracy and Human Rights in Africa and the Americas” (October 2011)

A major collaborative Forum is being organized by the OAS and the African Union Commission, with the support of International IDEA, and will take place at the headquarters of the African Union in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on October 12 and 13, 2011. The purpose of this Forum is to share views on challenges to the strengthening of democracy and the promotion and defense of human rights, and to develop concrete ways in which collaboration can be undertaken between both organizations to confront these challenges. The Forum will present updates on the state of democracy in the two regions and discuss challenges to the maintenance of democratic processes. It will also highlight efforts for regional collaboration in this area, such as in electoral observation missions, training of electoral bodies, conflict prevention and management, initiatives for the sustainability of democratic systems, processing of human rights complaints and sharing of expertise in the adjudication of human rights cases by the respective Courts in each region, and discuss how these can be deepened and strengthened to be made more effective.

This second Forum is a follow-up to the first OAS-AU Forum: “Democracy Bridge” Multilateral and Regional Efforts for the Promotion and Defense of Democracy in Africa and the Americas” held at the headquarters of the OAS in Washington DC in July 2007. The event responds to the mandate set out in OAS Resolutions AS/RES.2419 (XXXVIII-O/08), AG/RES. 2489 (XXXIX-O/09), AG/RES. 2550 (XL-O/10) and AG/RES. 2693 (XLI-O/11) to enhance interregional cooperation with the African Union.

v) Meeting to discuss possible cooperation to support the African Union (November 2012)

On November 14, 2012, the Director of the Department of International Affairs (DIA), from the OAS, met, in the General Secretariat Building, with the Senior Public Sector Management Specialist for Africa from the World Bank to discuss joint activities to support the African Union Commission (AUC). The issues addressed were related to African Diaspora and civil society engagement to enhance the AU's institutional capacity.

## SOURCES

<http://www.au.int/>

Report on the Second AU-OAS Forum

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