

# African Union and the Developmental Transformation of Africa: Challenges, Achievement and Prospects

By:

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## **Abstract:**

Over the past decades we have witnessed developmental growth across Asia and the rise of emerging economies like China, India, Singapore, and Malaysia thus giving birth to the epithet; the “Asian Tigers”, but Africa has suffered from relative economic stagnation and poor development. This paper evaluates the activities of AU with respect to these specificities in tackling past and present challenges facing the continent in the wave of Afro-pessimists’ argument that Africa cannot claim its place in the 21st century. The paper identified the challenges facing the AU in coordinating African developmental transformation but recognised the fact that Africa of the end of the first decade of the 21st century is not exactly the same as the Africa of the early sixties in term of developmental improvement. The study recommended that AU focus on issues such as the high mobility of African people, and its consequences in terms of citizenship rights; the issue of natural resource management and food security; the recurrent problem of African integration with a focus on the issue of common borders and most importantly, the issue of competing regionalism especially on the polarisation of the continent along Anglo-francophone delineation. The paper adopted qualitative methodology.

*Keywords:* Colonialism, Good Governance, Economic Growth, Decolonisation, Slavery, Conflict Management

## **1. Introduction: African Underdevelopment in Perspective**

Fifty years ago, after the demise of colonialism, Africa was expected to grow faster than Asia. Much hope was pinned on the continent as a result of the inherent potentials. Expectations were rife that the dawn of the 21st century would usher Africa into its age of growth, progress, and new lease on life for its people along with the rest of the world; in consequent to the age of tremendous progress in every facet of human life,

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as evident in technological advancements, the volume of international trade and commerce, global travel and communications, increased opportunities for vast populations in the world as ushered by the end of the Cold War (Olowu, 2004:1).

In recognition of this, African leaders met to kick-start the developmental cause and formed Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. The African super-national organisation later metamorphosed to African Union (AU) in July 2002 following the adoption of 53 African leaders (i.e. all African nations except Morocco) on the ground that the former had been marked by a largely unsatisfactory record. The newly formed AU was modelled after the European archetype (Klingebiel, 2005:2), the European Union, with a more promising prospect of transforming Africa to a more developed continent that can rival with other developed continent most especially the arch rival Asia that is developing day in-day out.

Yet, over the past decades, we have witnessed economic growth and increasing wealth across Asia to the extent that countries such as Japan, China, South Korea, Taiwan, India, Singapore, and Malaysia transformed in a jiffy. Thus, pave way to the birth of a new epithet “Asian Tigers”, while much of Sub-Saharan Africa has suffered from relative economic stagnation and poor development characterised by our diversity and historical trajectories. The questions thus arise: *When should we expect to hear the emergence of our own epithetical adjective of African Lions? Why does economic development not translate into human development and reduction of poverty? Is the current African growth- as espouse in this paper-sustainable?* These among others are the fundamental questions needed to be answered.

Despite the endowed rich diverse renewable and non-renewable natural resources, Africans remain ‘poor’. This led to the unmistakable consensus among scholars, inter-governmental organizations and international institutions that Africa had become a matter of emergency that demanded urgent attention, if the Afro-pessimists’ argument that ‘Africa cannot claim its place in the 21st century’ should be discountenance.

According to Glantz (1991), pinning the obstacle to African development to one factor would probably be erroneous but the problems hindering the continent’s developmental efforts can be categorised under: Coups, Corruption, Conflict and Climate. On a general note, Africa’s underdevelopment is said to be a product of the interplay of external and domestic factors including slavery and colonialism, economic mismanagement, ill-conceived structural adjustment policies, inter-state and intra-state conflicts, failed regionalism, unfair trade terms, foreign debt, aid dependence, poor governance, weak states, and institutional decay (Mills and Jean-Pierre, 2011: 97). Thomson (2000:7) earlier argued that the external and domestic factors are also consequence of the legacies of history impacting on the present. He argued that there are lines of continuity that run from the pre-colonial period, through the colonial era, right into the modern age.

Be it as it may, the developmental challenges facing the continent include but not limited to: Possible spread of Arab Spring uprisings to Sub-Sahara Africa, diversification and integration into the global economy, income inequalities, hunger and poverty, restricted movement of people, goods and services, troika of African institutions, contingency plan for malaise in the West (Akukwe, 2012), systemic corruption, dearth of infrastructural facilities, leadership and followership problems, increasingly complex neoliberal globalization, changes in intercultural relations at the global level, the ICT’s revolution, the evolution of gender and intergenerational relations, the evolution of spirituality and

of the status and the role of religion in modern societies, the emergence of a multi-polar world and the phenomenon of emerging Asian powers and the issue of competing regionalism.

One of the most daunting problems hindering the effort of African Union in integrating the continent towards developmental transformation in line with its motto: “*a United and Strong Africa*” (see AU website: <http://www.ea.au.int>) is the issue of ethnic divisions which was caused chiefly by Slavery. Nunn (2007:1) attested to this fact when he asserted that ‘the largest numbers of slaves were taken from areas that were the most underdeveloped politically at the end of the 19th century and are the most ethnically fragmented today’. The emergence of colonialism added salt to injury through the imposition of arbitrary boundaries on Africa by colonial powers at the Berlin Conference of 1885 where Africa was partitioned with complete disregard for existing societal and geographic boundaries. Consequently, this disadvantaged many countries by disrupting established indigenous communication and trade linkages, creating an abnormally large number of landlocked states, and leaving various countries (such as Niger) without natural resources (Sachs, 2005). Throughout the colonial era, Africa witnessed nothing but political subjugation, economic distortion and human and natural resources exploitation, cultural suppression, ideological domination, and technological stagnation; which led to the underdevelopment of the continent.

During the decolonisation period, the colonialists handed over power to their cronies who ruled in their (European powers’) interest to ensure Africa remain a dumping ground for their finished goods and source of raw materials and cheap labour. It is arguable that the consciousness of some leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere among others to deviate from the laid down path of the colonial powers through the pursuit of Afrocentric development strategies also undermine African development (an argument which I personally do not subscribe to). Luiz (2006) opined that the pursuit by most post-independence African ruling elites of Afrocentric development strategies, based on Marxist principles and rejection of Western capitalism, was very costly. He argued that Africa turned inward and isolationist at a time when much of the world embraced open and outward-oriented economic policies, which eventually led to some dubious policy decisions that, together with a lack of institutional capabilities, undermined growth and created an unattractive business environment. Luiz’s argument was corroborated by earlier observation that Ghana and South Korea had an almost equal per capita income of US\$490 and US\$491 respectively in 1957. However, by 1980, Ghana’s per capita income had fallen to US\$400 while South Korea’s had increased to over US\$2000 (Werlin, 1994).

On a contrary argument, the underdevelopment of the continent came about as a result of Africa’s experience of the establishment of a whole range of regional schemes for political and economic cooperation by the colonialists. This wave of regionalisation occurred for several reasons, some practical, others ideological (Benedikt, 2007:2). Notably, the independence and the concomitant break-up of the colonial federations such as the *Afrique Occidentale Française* (AOF), the *Afrique Equatoriale Française* (AEF), and the Central African Federation had suddenly highlighted the negative consequences of the extreme segmentation and the intrinsically problematic viability of the political divisions and economic circuits inherited from the colonial period (Bach, 1999:3).

Without the binding structures of the colonial administrations, Africa's newly independent states were quickly confronted by economic and political disunity as the colonial powers had concentrated on forging vertical links between their metropolises and their dependent colonies rather than horizontal links (Adedeji, 1984: 231).

The outcome of the misguided economic policies implemented by post-colonial African governments was that African countries were left without a sound industrial base and necessary capital, with an insignificant share of the world market, a heavy dependency on the developed countries, and mounting foreign debts (Ayittey, 2005). Furthermore, numerous decades after African countries gained independence, the terms of their economies' incorporation into the global economy remained largely unchanged: they continued to be locked into the role of traditional commodity exporter and importer of capital goods and technologies, with most economies undiversified and their commodity exports concentrated in a narrow range of products (Mills and Jean-Pierre, 2011: 97). In fact, they had not only consistently discouraged the former colonies (unless it served an imperial purpose), but also amplified the resultant difficulties through what Nkrumah called "by far the greatest wrong which the departing colonialists had ever inflicted on Africa, namely, to leave us divided into economically unviable states which bear no possibility of real development" (Nkrumah, 1973: 282-4). This was simply expressed by the following wordings in Arusha Declaration in the analysis of the truths of the colonial experience in Africa: "We have been oppressed a great deal, we have been exploited a great deal, and we have been disregarded a great deal" (cited in Rodney, 1972: 227)

It is worthy to note that this exploitation still continues till date under the context of neo-colonialism. The desire to mitigate this wrong, to combat the ongoing exploitation of the continent's resources and to achieve some sort of economic and political viability was one of the main motivations for the African states to begin regional cooperation. This necessitated the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. However, it should be noted that not all governments (and resistant movements) of the continent subscribed to the underlying idea of African oneness. It is premised on this that it is hardly surprising that Africa's decolonisation was accompanied by a proliferation of intergovernmental organisations, federations, unions, and communities some of which were virtually moribund from the beginning while others quickly gained membership and political influence (Benedikt, 2007:2) which subsequently bring about the problem of conflicting and competing regionalism in Africa thereby undermining the continent's integration. This led to the uneasy relationship between the African Union (AU) and the continent's sub-regional organisations, as well as the ongoing rivalry between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its various francophone shadows such as the *Communauté Economique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* (CEAO) or the *Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine* (UEMOA).

Under the disguise of lending helping hands to a continent grasping from the claw of underdevelopment, ravaged by disintegration and proliferation of regional organisations, a continent lacking private fund to finance infrastructural development, in which the little available are being mismanaged and diverted to Swiss foreign bank account; the international community decided to adopt Aid and Cooperation as a game of keeping Africa under perpetual underdevelopment. The Western powers deliberately introduced Aid, Loan and Cooperation during the decolonisation period as a game of influence

played by the powerful States with an asymmetrical relationship. Hugon (2010: 109-10) opined that these Donors provide official development assistance (ODA) for varying reasons: *solidarity* (struggle against poverty, urgent aid), *utilitarianism* (access to natural resources, presence in protected markets), *geostrategic interests* (security, conflict prevention, fight against terrorism, management of migratory or epidemiological risks, seeking a voice in international decisions), *cultural expansion* (defence of language and culture), *bad conscience* (post-colonial guilt, the white man's burden) or even *developmentalism* (reduction of international asymmetry and divergence of trajectories).

Be it as it may, extant studies have proven that Aid-giving and Loans to the continent under whatever reason and event is compounding the continent's predicament which consequently led to the fiscal trap, a consequence of debt overhang, which made important stimulatory expenditure on health care, roads, power grids and ports no longer possible (Sachs, 2005; Mills and Jean-Pierre, 2011; Hugon, 2010; Mbeki, 2009). Much of these Aid and Loans were more often than not diverted, misappropriated and embezzled by African leaders which led Africa to the continent of debt-ridden nations. The Aid game enables the international communities and financial institutions notably World Bank and IMF to determine how African economy is being run through the introduction of several economic reforms aimed at subjugating the continent economically. These includes: currency devaluation, Structural Adjustment Programmes, among others which after their introduction and implementation more often than not left African economy worse-off. For instance, the resultant effect of the failed structural adjustment policies foisted on the debt-ridden African nations by the international financial institutions, are evident in the adverse economic and social consequences, including falling economic output, balance of payments difficulties, as well as rising poverty, foreign debts, falling world prices of primary export products, inequality and unemployment which contributed immensely to Africa's underdevelopment (Guest, 2004; Stiglitz, 2007; Mbeki, 2009; Moyo, 2009; Chabal, 2002).

Another factor responsible for Africa's underdevelopment is the devastating violent conflicts ravaging the continent which have exacted devastating economic and social tolls: destruction of physical and human capital, capital flight, disruption of economic transactions, dependence on commodities, and diversion of state funds from the provision of public services to military expenditure (Luiz, 2006). Almost all countries of the continent are engulfed in conflict. While few such as South Africa, Ghana, Togo, and Republic of Benin among others are presently witnessing relative peace, others like Somalia, Mali, and Nigeria among others are wallowing in the crises of internal insurgencies and Northern Africans are grappling with the escalation of the Arab spring crises. This made people (mostly from the West) see the continent as synonymous to war and violent region of the world. Collier (2007) described the continent as 'conflict trap'.

For more than five decade of independence, politicians and international organizations have failed to reduce poverty. Nor have they been able to help Africa generate growth or build basic infrastructure that can help ease the devastating effect of poverty and hunger. Africans are seen as people suffering in the land of plenty. The level of poverty is not only disturbing the continent but seen as a threat to the world at large as the British Prime Minister in 2001 declared that African poverty is "a scar on the conscience of the world".

It is sad to note that the level of poverty in the continent is been exaggerated and the continent is painted as “death hole” full of nothing but poverty, hunger and death which is not true. It may surprise you to know that Africa is not the poorest continent on earth as some people generally put it. Asia is far poorer than Africa. For example, India, a country in Asia contains more poor people than the entire continent of Africa combined. According to statistics, Asia contains about 60-65% of the world’s poor population while Africa on the other hand contains just about 25% (Africaw, 2012). This notwithstanding does not exonerate the continent from the damaging effect of poverty and hunger on the underdevelopment of the continent. The fact that Poverty and hunger in Africa is so endemic can be seen from the statistical analysis of the world poverty level. In 2008, 47% of the population of sub-Saharan Africa lived on \$1.25 a day or less (United Nations, 2012). The UN Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that 239 million people in sub-Saharan Africa were hungry or undernourished in 2010 (its most recent estimate). 925 million people were hungry worldwide. Africa was the continent with the second largest number of hungry people, as Asia and the Pacific had 578 million, principally due to the much larger population of Asia when compared to sub-Saharan Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa actually had the largest proportion of its population undernourished an estimated 30% in 2010, compared to 16% in Asia and the Pacific (Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], 2010). Thus almost one in three people who live in sub-Saharan Africa were hungry, far higher than any other region of the world, with the exception of South Asia.

Premised on the foregoing background analysis of the context of African underdevelopment, this paper aims to evaluate the activities of AU with respect to these specificities in tackling past and present challenges facing the continent in the wave of argument of Afro-pessimists that Africa cannot claim its place in the 21st century. It is on this note that this paper intend to provides a summary overview of a significant recent series of African Union’s developmental and economic transformation policy changes that have the potential to further promote, achieve, and consolidate collective (i.e., multilateral) African responsibilities and objectives. The paper shall raise a number of critical issues (way out) to the above discussed challenges and the available prospects regarding the processes to achieve these developmental changes. The paper does not claim to capture the complexity of development issues in Africa since this is not possible but provides a few snapshots based on the prevailing trajectories and shed light on the challenges ahead, for AU’s consideration in the evaluation of its 50th anniversary score card.

## 2. African Union’s Efforts at Developing the Continent: a Review

After independence, the need to create a super-national institution in Africa was borne out of two main reasons. *First*, African leaders were concerned about various facets of the continent’s governance challenges most especially the focus of eliminating the last vestiges of colonialism in order to promote the principle of self-determination and foster the establishment of truly sovereign states, free from all forms of external interference both continentally and globally (Shinkaiye, 2006:3). *Second*, the need to bring about unity among the diversified independence states to foster Afrocentric-driven

development. In the search for the super-national institution that will ensure these objectives, several organizations were created. The first been the Conference of Independent African States (CIAS) in 1958 (Walraven, 1999:95). As more African states achieved independence, further interpretations of Pan-Africanism emerged, including the Pan-African Freedom Movement of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa in 1958, the *Conseil de l'Entente* in 1959, the Union of African States in 1960, the African States of the Casablanca Charter in 1961, the African and Malagasy Union in 1961, and the Organization of Inter-African and Malagasy States in 1962 (Benedikt, 2007:3). Sequence to superiority rivalry that erupted among these organizations on the question of why unity should be sought in the first place, which objectives and interests inter-African-cooperation should serve, and how it should be institutionalised (Walraven, 1999:112), premised on individual states trying to exalt national independence and continental unity at the same time; the Organization of African Unity was later established on May 25, 1963 to serve as the much needed African super-national organization.

The major achievement of OAU was the fact that it celebrated the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in the domestic affairs of its member states (Shinkaiye, 2006:3) in line with its key objective as stated in the Charter. However, it was later criticized for doing nothing to protect the rights and liberties of Africans from their leaders and Critics dubbed it the “Dictators’ Club” (BBC, 2002). Seeing OAU to have outlived its objectives in wake of several critics and challenges, the idea of creating the African Union (AU) was revived in the mid-1990s under the leadership of Libyan Head of State, Muammar al-Gaddafi. The Sirte Declaration (named after Sirte, in Libya) was subsequently issued by the heads of state and government of the OAU on September 9, 1999 calling for the establishment of an African Union. The Declaration was followed by the Lome summit in 2000 where the Constitutive Act of the African Union was adopted and Lusaka summit in 2001, when the plan for the implementation of the AU was adopted. Consequently, the AU was established in 2002 with the mandate of fostering good governance, democracy promotion, human right protection; conflict prevention, management and resolution.

While the OAU Charter was preoccupied on sovereignty and non-interference, the AU’s Constitutive Act upheld the principle of diminished sovereignty for all its members by acknowledging the right of the Union to intervene in a member state, pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances and the determination to foster continental development (see Article 4 of the AU Constitutive Act). These provisions emphasized that the AU would be bound by common values of democracy, liberty and human freedom, and the continental integration and development shared by the wide spectrum of the international society. It is on this note that we intend to explore the efforts of AU on developmental transformation of the continent in the area of governance, conflict management, health, economic development among others in order to evaluate how viable the Union is to compete with the achievement of its European archetype, the European Union (EU).

### **3. AU and Conflict Management in Africa**

It is settled matter in literature that a nation ravaged by violent conflict will never witness any form of development (see Ikejiaku, 2009; Burton, 1997; Irobi, 2005; Nathan, 2003; Onyeiwu, 2004; World Bank, 2004). The countries of Africa, particularly those in Sub-Saharan Africa are a volatile mix of insecurity and conflict. The problem of conflict and insecurity is destabilising the continent's peace process. It is right to totally admit the argument of Ikejiaku (2009:16) that no continent that is bedevilled with the problem of peace and stability in its societal milieu could progress. In relation to Africa, Gurr and Marshall (2003) argue that most African conflicts are caused by the combination of poverty and weak states and institutions, and these have had a devastating impact on Africa's development. Thus, the dire need for peace in the African countries prompted the AU which was established at a time when the continent was ridden by wave of conflicts in the Mano River Union (embracing Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia), Cote d'Ivoire, Sudan, Somalia, Zimbabwe and the Central Africa Republic; to adopt a number of strategies to achieve security and stability of the continent as set out in various legal documents, interpreted and implemented by a set of interrelated institutions that constitute the African peace and security architecture. It establishes a long list of tasks related to the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict across Africa. These include:

- i. The Peace and Security Council (PSC)
- ii. Unconstitutional changes of government
- iii. Humanitarian intervention
- iv. The African Peace and Security Architecture
- v. AU Commission
- vi. Continental Early-Warning System
- vii. The African Standby Force
- viii. Peace Fund
- ix. Panel of the Wise; and
- x. Military Staff Committee

At its first Assembly session, the AU established a Peace and Security Council (PSC) in May 2004 as a standing decision-making organ including "a collective security and early-warning arrangement to facilitate timely and efficient response to conflict and crisis situation in Africa" (AU, 2002). The Union explicitly recognized that the persistence of the conflicts would undermine its broad agenda of democracy and development thus, adopted a proactive approach to resolving these conflicts at a developing stages and a process of active mediation on a day-to-day basis with the instrument of special envoys and representatives to stress comprehensive coverage so that conflicts are not isolated or treated with indifference (Shinkaiye, 2006:7). The Union prepared the ground for effective and optimal performance of the conflict management mechanism by restricting the definition of sovereignty in the conditional terms of a state's capacity and willingness to protect its citizens. Premised on this, the AU's Constitutive Act became the first international treaty to recognise the right of an organization to militarily intervene in its member states' affairs (Powell, 2005:1). The ICISS's report of the AU (2001) states that a member state will continue to enjoy the privileges of sovereignty such as non-interference of its fellow member states in its internal affairs only as long as it fulfils its responsibility to protect its citizens. This not only takes the idea of collective security to a



new level, but also provides the AU with a powerful foundation on which to anchor its emerging conflict management mechanism (Benedikt, 2011:7).

The PSC of the AU composed of a fifteen-member elected forum, that manages strategic and operational decisions about where, when and how to manage conflict; since the AU's Assembly which is the supreme organ only convenes twice a year making it unsuited to oversee day-to-day conflict management (Williams, 2011:3). The PSC's objectives are promoting peace, security, and stability; anticipating and preventing conflicts; promoting and implementing peace-building activities; coordinating and harmonizing efforts to prevent and combat international terrorism; developing a common AU defence policy; and encouraging democratic practices, good governance, and the rule of law, as well as protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. To achieve this daunting list of objectives, the PSC was given eighteen "powers," ranging from assisting in the provision of humanitarian assistance to military intervention (see Article 7 of the PSC protocol).

Most of the conflicts in Africa are more often than not connected with the issue of whom—or which tribe, religious denomination/sect- emerged as head of government. In view of this, the AU in the late 1990s adopts the strategy of illegitimacy of unconstitutional changes of government as an approach of conflict management. This evolved as a major break-through from the tradition of OAU which for the first thirty years of existence was not concerned on how African regimes assumed power (Williams, 2011:4). In view of this, the AU Assembly adopted a broad definition of "unconstitutional changes of government" to include the overthrow of a democratically elected government by its military, mercenaries, or armed rebels as well as the refusal of an incumbent government to relinquish power after losing a free and fair election and the use of illegal means to maintain power (AU-PSC, 2010).

These events helped to create a new African norm delegitimizing military coups as a means of assuming power. Since 2003, the AU has consistently condemned every successful coup on the continent, namely those in the Central African Republic (2003), Guinea-Bissau (2003), São Tomé and Príncipe (2003), Togo (2005), Mauritania (2005 and 2008), Guinea (2008), Madagascar (2009), and Niger (2010). It is also now commonplace for the AU to make public statements in favour of democratic governance, and against "authoritarian" governance structures. A case in point was the briefing of the ministerial meeting of the Peace and Security Council that "the persistence of crises and conflicts in different parts of Africa is partly due to lack of decisive improvements in political and economic governance on the continent, conditions that inevitably generate frustration and discontent in the population; culminating in revolts and revolutions in some situations" (AU-PSC, 2011).

The African Standby Force is another instrument put in place by the AU to respond to armed conflict. In May 2003, the AU developed a framework for the ASF based on five regional brigades, each with approximately 4,300 troops and some 500 light vehicles (Williams, 2011:10). The ASF functions on three interconnected levels: the continental level (the AU Commission's planning element), the sub-regional level (the five brigades), and the state level (the contributing countries). With sub-regional organizations playing a crucial intermediary role, harmonizing overlapping memberships and sub-regional decision-making structures presents a particular challenge (Cilliers, 2008:17).

On the Humanitarian Intervention approach to conflict management in the continent, Article 4(h) grant the AU Assembly (on recommendation by the PSC) the right to intervene in a member state “in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.” This implies that the AU Assembly could authorize military force for humanitarian protection purposes without the host government’s consent or prior to a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution. This is hinged on the concept of Responsibility to Protect.

The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) is designed to combine a complex set of interrelated institutions and mechanisms that can function at the continental, regional, and national level to prevent and manage conflict. At the continental level, a variety of institutions coordinated by the AU’s Peace and Security Council comprise the APSA. While at the National level, there are AU member states, which house the majority of capabilities relevant to conflict management. Regionally, the APSA relies on the continent’s eight regional economic communities (RECs)- ECOWAS, EAC, SADC, IGAD, ECCAS, AMU, COMESA, CEN-SAD, NARC and EASF- as well as two mechanisms for coordinating the African Standby Force: the East Africa Standby Force coordination mechanism and the North African Regional Capability (Williams, 2011:6).

The AU Commission intends to facilitate, coordinate, and monitor the union’s progress toward its overarching vision of peace and security. It has two strategic objectives: reducing conflicts and achieving security and stability as a prerequisite for development and integration (AU Commission, 2009:22). It is tasked with planning, launching, sustaining, and drawing down all AU operations—as well as with developing the ASF at the continental level and assisting in the formation of the regional brigades. In its strategic plan for 2009–2012, the AU Commission allocated \$144 million for peace and security issues out of its expected overall expenditure of \$784 million-the biggest slice, \$430 million, went to development, regional integration, and cooperation- excluding cost estimates for peacekeeping operations (AU Commission, 2009:7). The commission’s core personnel totals less than seven hundred but this number increases to 1,465 if extra-budgetary resources are included that exceed the ceiling placed on hiring through the regular budget under the 2003 AU guidelines agreed to during a high level meeting in Maputo (UN, 2010) and is currently headed by Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma of South Africa.

#### **4. AU: Good Governance and Development Promotion in Africa**

The first challenges that faced the continent after independence was the issue of adopting the most appropriate governance method that best suit the socio-cultural diversity of the member states. The problems of the continent today are traceable to the failure of the inappropriate governance institutions and practices that were bequeathed to a majority of African states at independence which were, for the most part, ill-adapted to the African realities and the continent’s development challenges (Shinkaiye, 2006:2-3). Therefore, one of the major challenges that have faced African states since the advent of political independence has been that of establishing and sustaining appropriate governance institutions and practices that would engender democratic practices and promote sustainable development on the continent. In consequence, African

governments, both individually and collectively, have over the years, evolved various strategies and responses to the ever-present challenge of governance.

In recognition of this, the AU has been concerned about various facets of the continent's governance challenges and has successfully been promoting good governance in the continent. It has successfully changed the governance orientation from the respect for absolute sovereignty, a state system veered often towards dictatorship which was aligned with the principle of inviolability of borders inherited from colonial rulers to a restricted sovereignty that allow for the consolidation of democratic governance through the introduction of the principle of Responsibility to Protect. This promote democratic values such as the separation of power, free and fair elections, freedom of expression, independent bureaucracies and other concomitant checks and balances in Africa.

The Continent is enjoying an economic growth surge that is widespread across countries and sectors. More than half of the countries in Africa have enhanced overall governance quality, with a majority of countries improving in areas of economic and human development (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2012). This is chiefly attributed to the following mechanisms adopted by the AU:

- i. Internal AU Governance Agenda
- ii. The Pan African Parliament (PAP) and ECOSOCC
- iii. The African Court of Justice and Human Rights (ACJHR)
- iv. Health Care Policy
- v. NEPAD and APRM

The AU provides for the creation of institutional structures to support the process of developmental transformation. The mission and vision of the AU recognizes the fact that distrust for constituted authority, corruption and impunity, coupled with human rights abuses have kept Africa in a situation of conflicts, thereby undermining all initiatives towards sustainable development. The vision of the AU's internal governance agenda is to build an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and that is capable of standing as a dynamic force in the global arena (Shinkaiye, 2006:9). To translate this vision into concrete action a number of missions have been assigned to the African Union that include amongst others: ensuring overall coherence of the programmes aimed at speeding up the integration process; assuming a dynamic information and advocacy role for Africa vis-à-vis the world; and to play a leadership role for the promotion of peace, human security and good governance in the continent. The African Union has prioritised the realization of human and peoples' social, economic, civil, cultural and political rights. This includes human and peoples' rights to peace, security, development and the right to participate in processes affecting their lives, through democratic channels and smooth elections.

Although the Pan African Parliament, located in South Africa, is still only an essentially advisory body, it is expected to eventually take on a legislative role, with the prospects of playing an oversight role in the actions and activities of African executives. This, it is imagined, will promote checks and balances, and accountability that were glaringly lacking in the OAU dispensation. Moreover, alongside the ECOSOCC, the PAP is intended as the African peoples' window into the African Union, with a mandate to fully participate and contribute to the development and integration of the continent. The

mainstreaming of African peoples into AU affairs will give them the opportunity, not only to contribute in the policymaking processes of the organization, but also to scrutinize the actions of their leaders. In other words, both PAP and ECOSOCC have a huge potential to bring about accountability in the continent.

The envisaged African Court of Justice and Human Rights is expected to play a role in checking against the impunity that has been characteristic of African politics. In the Court, African political elite would have an endogenous institution that will compel them to answer for their acts of omission or commission as opposed to the current practice where former African leaders are whisked away to European inspired courts to answer for their acts. To avoid this scenario, efforts are ongoing for the AFCJHR to adopt a legislation allowing it to try cases of crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide (Menya, 2013). The ACJHR Protocol was adopted at an AU Summit in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, on 1 July 2008 (Schulman, nd: 12). Only five states, namely Libya, Mali, Burkina Faso, Congo and Benin, have ratified the ACJHR Protocol (see <http://www.africancourt.org/en/images/documents/Court/Statute%20ACJHR/Statuts%20of%20the%20Ratification%20Process%20of%20the%20Protocol%20Establishing%20the%20African%20Court.pdf>). No other states have ratified the Protocol since. Nevertheless, the development of the ACJHR is worth contemplating for its potential future impact in the human rights arena on the African continent. The establishment of the ACJHR is evidence of a broader process involving the intensified judicial enforcement of international law at a global level which (Viljoen and Baimu, 2004: 243).

On health issue, a healthy continent is a wealthy continent. In essence, no development can take place in Africa if the health challenges are not tackled. African Union leadership has consistently considered AIDS, tuberculosis (TB) and malaria and other infectious diseases as an emergency on the continent and made several commitments to address the challenge in 2001 (Abuja Declaration), 2006 (Abuja Call) and 2010 (Kampala Declaration). In light of these trends and exigencies, in January 2012, the African Union (AU) Assembly Decision No: Assembly/AU/Dec.413 (XVIII), requested the African Union Commission (AUC) “to work out a roadmap of shared responsibility to draw on African efforts for a viable health funding with support of traditional and emerging partners to address AIDS dependency response”, which was subsequently done in the same year (AU, 2012).

As a result of strong continental and national leadership, significant progress has been recorded in Africa on AIDS, TB and malaria. In 22 African countries the number of annual new HIV infections declined by more than 25% between 2001 and 2009. In 2010, more than 5 million people in Africa were receiving antiretroviral treatment – up from only 50,000 people in 2002. Despite such progress, Africa remains the most heavily affected region in the world. The Continent is home to two out of three people living with HIV but only 10% of the world’s population. Today, only half of Africans living with HIV who are eligible for HIV treatment are able to access it. The region also accounts for 26% of all TB cases and 82% of TB cases among people living with HIV. In 2010, 15 countries (33%) in the Region reached the target of 70% case detection rate and 20 countries (43%) achieved the treatment success rate target of 85%. The proportion of TB patients screened for HIV rose from 56% in 2009 to 59% in 2010. Of

those co-infected, 76% were able to access Co-trimoxazole preventive treatment and 42% were on ART (AU, 2012).

The 2011 WHO World Malaria Report indicates that the African Region accounts for 81% of the malaria cases that occurred worldwide. Over 90% of the deaths due to the disease occur in the Region and 86% of these deaths are among children below five years of age. Pregnant women, people living with HIV and AIDS and victims of disasters are also particularly vulnerable to malaria. By the end of 2010, 12 countries in the region (Algeria, Cape Verde, Botswana, Madagascar, Namibia, So Tome and Principe, South Africa, Swaziland, Eritrea, Rwanda, Zambia and Zanzibar in the United Republic of Tanzania) had recorded over 50% reduction in the malaria burden by the 2010 Abuja Call and MDGs Milestone. A regional SADC malaria initiative which involves four “frontline” countries (Angola, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe) and four low transmission countries (Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland) was established to promote sustained control and capacity strengthening for transition to pre-elimination (AU, 2012).

## 5. AU and the Challenges of African Development

It has been 19 years since French President Francois Mitterrand vigorously called for Africans “to resolve their conflicts themselves and organise their own security” (The Washington Post, Nov. 10, 1994); yet it took another French President Francois Hollande’s intervention before northern Mali could be recaptured from the Tuareg rebel fighters. This gave credence to the criticism of AU’s conflict management capabilities that “no existing [African] regional organisation has the necessary capacity or experience” to commit meaningfully to conflict prevention and resolution through military means without outside assistance (Dorn, 1998: 2; Juma and Mengistu, 2002; Benedikt, 2011:8). It is also observed that the continent’s regional and sub-regional organisations suffer from enormous resource and capacity constraints in the areas of training, interoperability, sustained readiness, transportation and logistics as well as funding which will continue to thwart effective action for the foreseeable future (Benedikt, 2011:4). Corruption is also compounding the AU’s inability to restore confidence in its leadership role through financial means. For example, despite the fact that almost half of AU’s 2005 budget was spent on peace and security initiatives (US\$62million out of a total US\$158million), member states felt very little direct impact (Aboagye, 2006:175).

It is unfortunate that the PSC which is a core forum of the AU in the effort to prevent and manage conflict; in practice, only devotes relatively little attention to either conflict prevention or structural issues that encourage “bad governance.” Instead it has been preoccupied with trying to extinguish crises (usually armed conflicts or coups) after they erupt. Nor has the PSC devoted much attention to the non-military dimensions of security, such as environmental degradation, organized crime, and disease. This limited focus is the result of analytical and operational capacity deficiencies, as well as the regularity of hot crises, which makes it difficult for the PSC to tackle the upstream and structural aspects of conflict mitigation (Williams, 2011:7).

Four challenges facing AU in this context can be identified: *First*, AU peace operations depend on the participation of a small handful of main troop-contributing countries which reflects the hugely uneven levels of support for peacekeeping across the continent. Several African states—notably Ghana, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Ethiopia, South Africa, Egypt, and Benin—remain stalwarts of UN peacekeeping even as the AU tries to develop its own capacities (Williams, 2011:15). *Second*, AU operations rely upon external (non-African) assistance. Between mid-2008 and mid-2012, for example, African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) have received nearly \$800 million from the UN—in addition to the nearly \$40 million pledged to the UN's AMISOM Trust Fund between 2009 and 2011 (UN Advisory Committee, 2012). This dependence undermines a core rhetorical tenet of the AU's approach to conflict management, namely African solutions first. *Third*, the AU has difficulty agreeing on mandates for peace operations, especially when the host state is a member of the PSC or has friends on the council willing to support its position. This proved particularly important in two cases where primary conflict parties exercised significant influence over the terms of the mission mandate: Sudan in the case of AMIS (2004), and Ethiopia in the case of AMISOM (2006–2007). In both instances, negotiations on mandate terms became a delicate and overtly politicized process (Williams, 2011:17). *Fourth*, the AU designs peace operations as interim measures until the peacekeeping baton can pass to the UN. Indeed, this questions the AU's conflict management capability to respond rapidly to crises on the continent.

Another challenge facing the AU in its developmental transformation of the continent is the issue of excessive human right abuse. It should be noted that the AU's aim to achieve greater solidarity among African countries and its peoples by promoting peace, security and stability in Africa and promoting and protecting human and people's rights in accordance with the African Charter and other human rights instruments (Odinkalu, 2002), led to the creation of the 'African Court of Justice and Human Rights' (ACJHR). However, it has been criticised with a variety of derogatory expressions and descriptions such as 'toothless, timid and inept', 'a toothless Doberman', 'a toothless bulldog', and 'whistling in the wind', amongst others (Sceats, 2009:6; Schulman, n.d: 1).

The accusations of incompetence which have been levelled against the African Union (AU) and the newly formed African Court of Justice and Human Rights (ACJHR) is also predicated on the fledgling establishment, especially in light of the fact that it is yet to physically commence operation. A plethora of reasons were proffered for the Court's future failure, ranging from logistical issues to legal and operational difficulties in addition to the troubles surrounding resources and protocols. The most controversial feature and the one which has stirred up the most debate is the question of access to the ACJHR. The main issue here is that individuals and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can only bring cases in their own right if the state against which they are complaining has signed a special declaration accepting the competence of the Court to hear cases brought via this route (Sceats, 2009). The ACJHR Protocol thus preserves the 1998 ACHPR Protocol requirement that member states expressly declare that they accept the competence of the Court to receive cases brought by individuals and accredited NGOs (OAU, 1998). This raises serious questions about the viability of the court.

Other challenges facing AU in its bid to promote and protect human and people's rights in accordance with the African charter and other human rights instruments which will need to be addressed in this context are tensions, political discord and conflicts which are found throughout the African continent and which further reduce the possibility of a thriving AU and African justice system (Parker and Rukare, 2002). It is abundantly clear that Africans need and deserve well functioning judicial institutions to ensure one of their most basic and fundamental needs as human being which is access to justice. Plessis and Stone (2007) and Sceats (2009) unanimously agree that 'the time has come to accede to the demands of Africans who feel it indispensable that the victims of human rights violations, or their representatives, be afforded recourse to judicial process on demand'. The challenges facing the AU despite its achievement in the health sector is similar to the peace, security and conflict sector which is the overreliance on foreign funding. The AU (2012:7) admitted that AIDS programmes around the world have benefitted from unprecedented global solidarity in terms of resource mobilisation; that, in 27 African countries, 84% of expenditures for antiretroviral treatment originated from international sources. The implication was witnessed in 2011 when the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (the Global Fund) took the unprecedented step of cancelling a funding round (Round 11) due to financial constraints arising largely from the failure of donors to meet their financial commitments, reduced projected contributions and decreased investment income. This resulted in 2012 funding gap in which the International funding for malaria peaked at US\$ 2 billion in 2011, well short of the US\$ 5 to 6 billion per year that are required (AU, 2012:7). Another area of headache is the need to take into account some unpredictable situation that can hamper progress made by countries such as socio-political conflicts stirring displaced populations, refugees, and destruction of health facilities.

## **6. Achievements and Prospects for Africa's Development:**

These challenges notwithstanding, should not deter the AU from harnessing and actualising the prospects inherent in the continent towards its developmental stride. Although Africa is still bedevilled by poverty, with half of its people living on less than \$2 per day, its economic growth over the past decade has been remarkable. Africa's trade with the rest of the world has increased by more than 200 percent, annual inflation has averaged 8 percent, foreign debt has decreased by 25 percent, and foreign direct investment grew by 27 percent in 2011 alone (Sayegh, 2012). The Economist, which in 2000 had pronounced Africa the "hopeless continent" (The Economist, May 13, 2000) acknowledged in 2011 that:

Over the ten years to 2010, six of the world's ten fastest-growing economies were in sub-Saharan Africa. The IMF forecasts that Africa will grab seven of the top ten places over the next five years.... Over the past decade the simple unweighted average of countries' growth rates was virtually identical in Africa and Asia. Over the next five years Africa is likely to take the lead. In other words, the average African economy will outpace its Asian counterpart.

The confession and a growing number of success stories across Africa indicate that broader social and economic progress is realistically attainable for most Africans.

Akukwe (2013) posits that the strong economic growth will likely extend beyond 2013 as Africa benefits from natural resources boom, strong internal demand by rapidly growing middle class, increased spending on basic infrastructure, robust foreign direct investments and sizeable Diaspora remittances. However, the need to ensure that the continent's economic growth also creates jobs and helps rescue millions from poverty is of utmost importance for the AU's attention to be predicated on the adoption and implementation of pro-poor policies and correct strategies for economic development. It is high time the AU take the bull by the horn. The continuous upward growing trend in African economy have vindicated the continent from the argument of the Afro-pessimists that Africa cannot claim its place in the 21st century and give credence to the Report of the research carried out by the African Development Bank, African Economic Research Consortium, Global Coalition for Africa, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, and World Bank in 2000 titled "Can Africa Claim the 21st century?" where their central message that: "Yes, Africa can claim the new century" was proven beyond reasonable doubt.

This economic upward trend and prospects was earlier reported by World Economic Forum (2009) that:

Growing political stability and economic reforms have induced conditions for high growth. Between 2001 and 2008, growth in gross domestic product in Africa averaged 5.9 per cent yearly, the strongest consistent performance since the early 1970s. African exports as a share of world trade grew from 2 per cent in the late 1990s to 3 per cent in 2007, while foreign investment stocks grew from 202 billion USD in 2003 to 393 billion USD in 2007. Driven mainly by Chinese and Indian demand, African commodity revenues grew from 363 billion USD in 2007 to 460 billion USD in 2008.

Predicated on this, Kato (2009) argued that these developments augur well for future economic growth, even though much of Africa's economic progress has since been thwarted by the impact of the global economic recession that originated in the United States in 2008. The prospect in Africa's developmental hope was also awakened by the position of Mahajan (2009), corroborated by Mills and Jean-Pierre (2011:99) that "as markets in other regions have become saturated, foreign investors have turned to Africa. Africa offers businesses and industries that are still immature. In addition, the continent provides opportunities in terms of diversification and counter-cyclical investments", not to mention its enormous wealth in natural resources. Furthermore, Guest (2004) proffered that Africa offers returns that are among the highest in the world: the return on investment in Africa is higher than in any other region, namely four times that of the G8 countries and twice that of Asia. In view of the foregoing, Investors have begun to see Africa as a vast untapped market, and there is immense potential for firms to make profit by marketing and selling to the so-called bottom of the pyramid. The continent is one of the youngest regions in the world, with more than half of its population under the age of 24. With its fast growing birth rates, the continent is growing younger and larger every day (Mahajan, 2009).

In another context, though, since independence Africa's place in the international division of labour has changed little. The continent largely remains an exporter of non-processed raw materials, whose unstable prices have a tendency to depreciate, and an importer of manufactured products and services and even food products. However, with



the advent of globalisation and the emergence of new powers, an inversion in the terms of this exchange was apparent at the turn of the 21st century, favouring African growth and an increasing appetite of emerging countries for natural mining and oil resources and even for African arable land. Africa is now coveted by emerging powers and also by industrial powers for its resources (biodiversity, forests, hydrocarbons, mines, arable lands) and for a market that, from 900 million people in 2010, should reach two billion people in 2050 (Hugon, 2010:3). He premised his projection on the fact that the continent of Africa represents 12% of worldwide oil production and 10% of proven worldwide reserves and submitted that the United States (US) imports 60% of African oil (this constitutes more than 90% of African exports to the US), compared with 20% for China (more than 60% of exports to China) and the European Union (EU) each (Hugon, 2010:4).

## Conclusion

This paper evaluates the activities of AU in the quest for African transformation agenda. It identified the challenges crippling the continent's developmental potentials from been actualised to include: Possible spread of Arab Spring uprisings to Sub-Sahara Africa, diversification and integration into the global economy, income inequalities, hunger and poverty, restricted movement of people, goods and services, troika of African institutions, contingency plan for malaise in the West, systemic corruption, dearth of infrastructural facilities, leadership and followership problems, increasingly complex neoliberal globalization, changes in intercultural relations at the global level, the ICTs revolution, the evolution of gender and intergenerational relations, the evolution of spirituality and of the status and the role of religion in modern societies, the emergence of a multi-polar world and the phenomenon of emerging Asian powers and the issue of competing regionalism among others. It was argued that these challenges are product of the interplay of both external and domestic factors as earlier noted by Mills and Jean-Pierre (2011: 97) and Thomson (2000:7).

Our argument is that the fundamental root cause of African underdevelopment is the failure of various developmental policy paradigms adopted from the western policy options by African leaders and the inability of Africans (as followers) to ask questions and make their leaders responsible for their actions or inactions. This is further compounded by the imposition of unfair trade terms and western economic policies - such as SAP- by the international community as condition for granting aid which have over the years contributed to the worsening of our problems than solve such problems. It is our view that Africa is indeed improving economically and politically as Africa of the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is incomparable with Africa of the early sixties in term of the developmental improvement. The question of whether the current growth is sustainable remains the daunting task which the African Union must ensure.

It should be noted that we unconditionally subscribe to the fact that the AU is indeed working assiduously through its Constitutive Act and various actions, governance instruments and declarations to realise the mission and vision of creating a strong and unified Africa; but recommend that the Organisation should fashion out means of gaining the political will and commitment of all African leaders and the support of

African people, together with the partnership of the international community to fulfil its mandate more proficiently. In addition, it is also recommended that the AU should reflect and focus on issues such as the high mobility of African people both within and outside of the continent and its consequences in terms of citizenship rights and its impact on gender relations. The issue of natural resources management, food security, the recurrent problem of African integration with a focus on the issue of the common currency and common borders must be addressed. Attention should also be given to the governance of African cities since a number of prospective studies have identified urbanization as a major trend in the evolution of the continent. And above all, the issue of competing regionalism should be discouraged especially on the polarization of the continent along Anglo-Francophone delineation.

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