



AFRICAN UNION'S AGENDA 2063: A BLUEPRINT FOR RISING AFRICA

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The formation of African Union (AU) signifies the willingness on the part of each and every nation on the African continent to collectively perform their responsibilities towards an ultimate vision of a prosperous continent. In this regard, AU's Agenda 2063 is an approach to how can the continent learn from its experience and effectively now build on the progress underway and strategically exploit all opportunities so as to ensure desired socio-economic transformation.

The AU guiding vision for Agenda 2063 is of, "An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in international arena".¹

However, the path to Agenda 2063 will not be an easy one, especially given the challenges faced by Africa. Most importantly including, political fractures, bad governance, lack of institutions, socio-economic disparity, security issues, lack of resources and funds required are some of the stumbling blocks to Agenda 2063. Hon. Moussa Faki Mahamat, former AU Chairperson has pointed that since 2001, some 1800 decisions have been taken by AU and many of them are still lagging behind in implementation.² Despite all, Agenda 2063 under the AU framework is aimed in the right direction and only with collective dedication and targeted approach, Africa can live up to its realization.

¹ <https://au.int/agenda2063/about>

² <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/jan/30/chad-foreign-minister-moussa-faki-mahamat-african-union-head>

The Agenda 2063 has been described as an African vision for a prosperous continent that is confident and resilient; self sufficient enough to feed its people, use technology and value its resources, empower its women and provide equal opportunity of participation in a shared destiny. Some of the key themes that are addressed under Agenda 2063 include issues of peace and security, economic governance, African integration, issues of youth and women, institutional reform, climate change, migration and most importantly the place of Africa in the world. Agenda 2063 is an action plan to African independence and freedom to navigate their own future. As youth constitute 70% of the African population, harnessing the demographic dividend through investment in youth is paramount to Agenda 2063.³

What differentiates AU's Agenda 2063 from previous vision documents and other universal charters on growth and prosperity is the ownership of African citizenry of this specific guiding vision. The formative process for Agenda 2063 was based on an inclusive-participatory bottoms-up approach with consultations among all stakeholders, especially the citizenry and the youth envisioning what kind of Africa they want. These aspirations were then structured into a result-oriented, pragmatic, time-bound, coherent policy which involved continuous monitoring, evaluation and accountability.⁴ Hence, Agenda 2063 is a visionary document that does not shy away from reality and is pragmatically structured with technical merits, making it more systematic in approach.

The Extraordinary Summit on the African Continental Free TRADE (AfCFTA) held from March 17-21, 2018 in Kigali , Rwanda, served as a platform for the African Union to sign into existence another flagship project that will boost intra-Africa trade: The Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community relating to Free Movement of Persons, Rights of Residence and Right of Establishment.⁵ Along with the adoption of Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM), Africa is focusing on connectivity, building networks of synergies and integrating them under the umbrella of AU.

These groundbreaking flagship projects under Agenda 2063 will provide a level playing field to all African nations. For the first time, Africa is looking inwards, and working towards reducing their dependence on external players and sources. However, there have been some reservations expressed by small and bigger nations, as Nigeria opted out of AfCFTA.⁶ Still, the Agenda 2063 is in motion for the better, and whatever differences arise shall be resolved through consultations. For this, the role of AU is pivotal, as it not only seeks unification of Africa, but also emphasizes "African

³ <https://au.int/en/summit/28>

⁴ <https://au.int/agenda2063/about>

⁵ <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20180319/note-editors-african-union-will-enhance-free-movement-and-single-air>

⁶ <https://www.iol.co.za/news/africa/blow-to-free-trade-deal-as-nigeria-skips-african-summit-13890170>

solutions for African problems", thereby signifying internal processes for conflict resolution, and seeking less external interference.

What is required more is a generation of champions of Agenda 2063, an indigenous, aspiring African leadership with strong political will backed by public support. There is also a need for the transformation of mindset - ones filled with hope, activism and optimism, a more self-confident Africa. There is a need for strong coordinated partnerships that prioritizes investments in knowledge, technical and institutional support towards development of critical skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Domestic resource mobilization remains critical as funds will be required for these actions and external resources should supplement these efforts. Africa will have to drive innovation, empower women and youth, enrich and retain human resource with good incentives and tap into African diasporas and friendly nations for support.

With rising foreign direct investment in Africa, the new African leadership is tasked with the socio-economic uplift of its populaces and restoring their competitive edge in the world economy. Moreover, the leadership will carry out the important task of institutional reform and match policy frameworks with infrastructural amenities. Africa needs a cultural renaissance, championed by its aspiring youth. AU and Agenda 2063 will spearhead this transformation.