



## Removing Boundaries Critical to Successful African Integration *By Jeggan Grey-Johnson*

The Secretary General of the East African Community, Nuwe Amanyu Mushega, delivered a speech Tuesday morning that will be best remembered for its simplicity in presenting and explaining some of the complex issues impinging on the possibilities of African integration.

Mushega broke his argument down to the commonest of analogies—a parable about how fish move freely in the water without borders. Pointing to a map of Lake Victoria which rests between three East African countries he said, “Look at this. There are no boundaries, so the fish can swim where they want,” he continued adding, “Who is more important? Us, or the fish?”

Mushega was one of the main speakers at the morning ADFIII plenary session entitled “The History and Prospects for Regional Integration,” which reviewed past efforts towards African integration and unification in the context of present day proposals and debates.

Other panel contributors were Prof. Abdoulaye Bathily, vice president, National Assembly of Senegal, who served as panel chair, and Prof. Adebayo Adedeji, executive director of African Centre for Development and Strategic Studies in Nigeria.

The discussions during this session reflected some of the recurring questions surrounding the issue of African regional integration such as questions about freedom of movement and sovereignty that have surfaced and resurfaced at every deliberation as well as discussion.

Professor Adebayo Adedeji, former head of the Economic Commission for Africa, amplified the issue by stating that there was an over emphasis on economic integration, and in reality political integration precedes the latter issue.

“How can you trade with someone you do not get on with?,” he asked. “The political fragmentation in Africa is a reality and we must address that.”

And there are those who would maintain that if a balance sheet of Africa’s efforts to harmonise and demonstrate its will to integrate were to be pitched up against the conflicts it has unleashed upon itself, then the hope of integration would have disintegrated long before the idea had started.

Indeed, the issues of political dis-

cord on the continent are evident in the fact that at present there are about 15 African nations that are involved in some kind of internal or external conflict – or both.

Still others maintain that the issue of integration must be looked at from all angles, and conclude that even after an exhaustive search for mechanisms to integrate, African states must shed their borders in order to compete with the rest of the world.

“In the absence of integration, there is instability, and because of this we’ve marginalized ourselves,” Mushega says.

Other participants at the meeting noted that these efforts at attempting continent-wide integration are not new. They noted that it was 40 years ago that the founding members of the Organization of African Unity tackled this very question – without achieving a conclusion.

But Mushega doesn’t believe in



*Prof. Adebayo Adedeji, executive director of African Centre for Development and Strategic Studies in Nigeria*



*Nuwe Amanyu Mushega, Secretary-General of the East African Community*

Photos: UNECA/Antonio Florento

history repeating itself. “That is not true,” he said. “People fail to learn from their mistakes and blame history.” In fact, he said, “the past is best

forgotten” in light of the efforts being made now to reassert the ideals of Pan Africanism.

## Participants Discuss the Challenges of Integrating Africa’s Economies

*By Bernard Otabil*

Participants attending the Tuesday plenary said more concrete steps must be taken if this concept is to become a reality.

The plenary was chaired by Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, executive secretary, Global Coalition for Africa with contributions from Yousif Suliman, director of the ECA’s Regional Co-operation and Integration Division (RCID) and Alan Gelb, Chief Economist, Africa Region, The World Bank.

Ould-Abdallah urged African stakeholders to do a lot more to achieve regional economic integration, stressing that accountability at both the national and regional level could play a decisive part in achieving economic integration.

Contributor Yousif Suliman warned about the complex nature of regional integration, but very optimistic that with a thorough, authoritative and relevant course of action economic integration should be possible.

During this session the Economic Commission for Africa discussed the findings of its two-year research project

on integration in Africa in its “First Annual Report on Integration in Africa (ARIA).” Many of the participants said they found this information very helpful for the discussion about future economic African integration and also in providing information on the efforts and progress currently made in this effort.

“The thing is, of course, that at this stage we have many initiatives and what is needed is to have co-ordination. I think a very important thing has happened today, and that is on the discussion of the overview of the First Annual Report on Integration in Africa”, Dr. Luk Van Langenhove- Director of Comparative Regional Integration Studies (CRIS) of the United Nations University, who was interviewed following the session.

Contributing to the debate on the subject, Lucy Kwakye of the African Federation of Women Entrepreneurs pointed out the frustration faced by some women entrepreneurs at some ports of entry to some countries in Africa. According to her, having a pass-

port alone seem not to be enough and some immigration and custom officials demand “something extra” in order to allow entry.

In an interview following the session, the World Bank’s Alan Gelb stressed the timely release of the report on integration “because there is an increased enthusiasm for regional integration and also for the NEPAD process which has regional co-operation and integration as one of the key areas”.

“It seems to be that this kind of report will be a very useful feature for NEPAD’s monitoring exercise. I think it comes together quite nicely”, he stressed with optimism.

“Integration is absolutely good for Africa. I think it is a major step to bring Africa to an important level in world trade and the global economic scene. The thing is that today we have three major trade blocs that have emerged and it will be in the best interest of Africa to forge economic integration”, said Dr Langenhove.

## INTERVIEW

# Interview with Christiane Bitougat: “We have to make regional integration work”

By Marie-Noelle Guichi

**Christiane Botougat is President of the Trade Union for civil servants and parastatal and private workers in Gabon.**

**ADFIII News: What is the connection between the activities of your trade union and ADF’s theme of regional integration priorities in Africa?**

**Christiane Bitougat:** This is the first time I am taking part in the African development Forum. I have been invited as a representative of civil society, which comprises associations, NGOs, trade unions, universities and the like. This shows that African leaders have already acknowledged that we have an important role to play in solving the problems in Africa. This type of Forum helps to bring the different development actors in Africa together.

**ADFIII News: What position is your union contributing to the deliberations at this Forum?**

**Christiane Bitougat:** The concerns of the organization that I represent here are the same as those of other civil society organizations. An issue that we want to stress is that the role of civil society should be institutionalized in the future, so that we stop working only at the level of the informal sector, and that the States and Governments stop considering us enemies, instead recognizing us as true partners for the development of our continent.

**ADFIII News: What exactly is the**

**role that civil society can play in the process of regional integration in Africa?**

**Christiane Bitougat:** Civil society can give great support to establishment and achievement of the ideal of the African Union. Decisions are made at the level of the authorities. Because civil society is of the people, it is better able to appreciate what is useful to the people. Measures taken without consulting civil society often fail because the people do not support them. We are no longer in a time when authorities make all the decisions. The people can and must also make inputs into the decisions; they have to say what it is they need. This approach is very necessary. Our officials have not yet accepted this fully. Agreement is needed to get better results.

**ADFIII News: What are your aims for after the Forum?**

**Christiane Bitougat:** I hope that when we participants return to our respective countries we will get together and organize meetings to plot the way forward. This involves appraisal, from time to time, of the status of implementation of the recommendations of this Forum. This will help us to reorganize to overcome the obstacles to progress. Furthermore, regular meetings of different countries allow those that are more advanced to share their experiences with those who are lag-

ging behind. The problem with forums in Africa is the lack of follow-up

**ADFIII News: What specific role can African women play in achieving one united Africa?**

**Christiane Bitougat:** Woman in general, and the African woman in particular, plays a very important role in society. She is a real teacher. She manages the household. If she can do this so well, why shouldn’t she be able to manage the country? Women have demonstrated that they are very industrious. Unfortunately, the full extent of their contribution is not taken into account. Women are almost dehumanized, especially in Africa. They do almost all the work without receiving the same remuneration as men. If society gives them the status they deserve, through positions of real responsibility, they are capable of working wonders. Men have not managed affairs nearly well enough. It is becoming a joke. Now is the time, with the new regional integration on hand, to include women effectively in the administration of public affairs. It will give them more confidence to see that they are capable in this area. Perhaps, it is they who will bring about the African Union that we have searched for over many years. We have a duty to make this work because Africa’s children of tomorrow should live under more favourable conditions. We cannot take what we are doing today lightly. We must



Photo: UNECA/Antonio Fiorente

*Christiane Botougat, President of the Trade Union for civil servants and parastatal and private workers in Gabon*

do the work with heart, as if we are managing the problems of our own households within our own families.

**ADFIII News: In your opinion, is a strong, competitive African Union possible within the current context?**

**Christiane Bitougat:** This Union will not happen as quickly as anticipated. I think we do not have the interest to speed it up. We have to move step by step. The first step is information. ADF III is helping us to discover many things we did not know. National authorities do not always pass on to us the information they receive at the many conferences outside that they attend. Information on the challenges and tasks of regional integration in Africa encourages popular ownership of the Union. Furthermore, information will break down barriers since all the solutions have been identified in such documents as those of this Forum. They only need to be put into practice.

## Internet Users participate in ADF III

By Marie- Noelle Guichi

The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) launched an online discussion on 19 February, which opens up participation to a far greater number of people and which gives an opportunity to voices that might not otherwise be heard.

The discussion, which will end Friday with the closure of the African Development Forum III meeting, centres on five principal themes: the history and perspectives of regional integration, physical integration through infrastructural development; economic policies for accelerating regional integration, establishment of an effective union, and architecture for peace and security.

To date, more than 150 contributions coming from the four corners of the world, have been received.

For Essonge Clermont-Ferand of France, “there will never be an African Union as long as African countries will not get out of the rut in which they are stuck - war, debt, economic crisis, abuse of human rights, corruption, etc.

The online discussion, organized in conjunction with AllAfrica.com and Bellanet, is the most recent in the series of Internet-enabled opportunities offered by ECA in the last four years, exchange ideas within the framework of forums or other major policy meetings.

For ECA Executive Secretary, K.Y. Amoako, the objective is to enlarge participation and provide space for dialogue to as many of Africa’s development partners as possible. He stressed that the ideas expressed during the online discussion would be taken into account during the Forum’s plenary sessions as well in ECA work programmes.

One participant, Franck Alain of London, thinks that successful African economic integration will depend on sound democratic governance in African States.

“The African people should not tolerate such leaders as Eyadema of Togo who, currently, wants to change the law in order to secure a third term in office,

when the law clearly states that a President only has the right to serve two terms”, he writes. Along the same lines, Esther Greensboro of the USA believes that “African Heads of State should work for their peoples and not for their own pockets”.

Dr. Saidi Asenge, President of a NGO in Kigali, Rwanda, believes that we can achieve a united and consolidated Africa on condition that there is a realistic architectural plan. “We have to have the patience of a sick old man”, he declared. He advised African leaders to first try to build strong economies, lay down the infrastructure for opening up Africa and fostering trade, create an economic foundation to face globalization of markets, speak with one voice for organized civil society, private sector, and government on major positions taken, and establish a Central Bank before setting up a Parliament and an Executive Committee.

Even more alarmist is Dramane Doumbia of New York who suggests that, “we love grand ideas, but when we

have to take action, we become like the big babies of the West. ... The idea of an African Union is not supported by the West, which will do all it can to make this good idea fail.”, he predicted.

Mickiry Mansare from Manhattan also expressed great pessimism when he declared, “I am convinced that imperialism continues to kill the embryo in the egg. He urges conscientious Africans to take the necessary measures to claim a rightful place for Africa.

And participant Ben N’diaye Bafoussam of Cameroon criticizes the excessive talking about Africa’s situation.

“There are too many conferences and too many initiatives, all increasingly ridiculous and hypocritical,” he writes in his online message.

“The problems of Africa are recognizable without so much academic debate and costly conferences. Mali is going to organize the Cup of Nations successfully; Libya has successfully tapped the waters of the Mediterranean to irrigate the desert. There is no need for many conferences to accomplish such achievements”, he concluded.


**EDITORIAL**
**Now the real work of ADF III has begun**

One could tell this during the day, while wandering around UNCC and sitting in on various programme sessions. People were clearly engaged in the topics being discussed.

One could also tell at the end of the day, as people seemed to move with just a little less energy after a full day of discussing, debating and sorting through all the information on offer. During the meetings, the exchanges were lively and often quite frank.

The programme schedule was full, and as is always the problem with conferences of this nature, it is simply impossible to be in all the places one would like to be. This was especially frustrating for several participants during the afternoon breakout sessions because they had to choose a single session – while there were several that were of equal interest and importance to them.

A number of others said they wished that some of the breakout sessions had been set aside as full plenary sessions, particularly on issues relating to various aspects of civil society, so as to attract a much larger and diverse audience to discuss these issues.

The consensus was, that while a great deal of work still remains to be done, it was a good beginning.

# Private sector urges improvement of business environment

By Doua Gouly

“Harassment from the police and from customs officials on the roads”, “very high costs for factors of production”, “poor government administration” – the list of complaints from private sector representatives is long. On Tuesday, they made their comments in one of several break out session convened as a part of ADF III, criticizing the reasons for the lack of a strong private sector in Africa. The session theme highlighted the role of the private sector in a united Africa. The participants did not just offer complaints, however. They also proposed many measures that they felt would further African regional integration.

Mr. Bamaga Toko, Chairman of the break out session on doing business in East Africa, indicated that the resolutions would be incorporated into ADF III recommendations. Participants noted many criticisms that must be addressed if Africa is to achieve integration, participation and cooperation.

The representative of the West African Monetary Union (UEMOA), which is formed by 8 countries of West Africa, opened the floor. He said that the private sector needs a stable political and economic environment. “There can be no strong private sector without a strong State,”

he said, emphasizing that business affairs require legal guarantees.

Asrat Beguala of the East African business network suggested that African leaders should consider carrying out extensive studies to boost the future of the private sector. “The classical examples of Asian countries, which our leaders constantly cite,” he explained, “are not adapted to our situation. They cannot transform our societies”.

Thomas Kamwendo of the Zimbabwe Chamber of Commerce and Industry denounced the difficulties that business people face when they travel on the road linking his country to Zambia. “It is not normal that one should lose up to four days at the border of

two countries in an Africa where one is talking about integration. Governments have to respect the resolutions of the World Trade Organization (WTO) with regard to protection of business people, he urged.

Mr. Belkacem Boutayeb of Morocco’s Magreb in Communication for Development focused on ports in Africa. “Consequently,” he said, “our governments should solve visa problems rapidly as they are now of the past,” adding that our continent is endowed with great natural wealth, both human and economic. Governments have to fulfil various bilateral cooperation agreements that they have signed, and which cannot be implemented only by the will of the leaders.

## HIV/AIDS still a Challenge for Africa

By Jamilah Mwangisi

Despite increased political commitment to combating the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa, the epidemic still remains the biggest challenge on the continent, needing more integrated collaboration.

Addressing a focus group on HIV/AIDS, Dr. Meskerem Grunitzky-Bekele, UNAIDS Associate Director for Africa, said the problem now is how to translate this political commitment into effective efforts which will curb the spread of HIV/AIDS. “We have seen a lot of changes in Africa in the last two years. There is a lot of political commitment and we cannot ask for more,” said Dr. Grunitzky-Bekele.

She cited as examples the Abuja Declaration, which commits government to spend at least 15 per cent of their annual expenditures on health, and the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS) which approved the Declaration of Commitment.

Among other things, the Declaration of Commitment plans, by 2003, to ensure the development and implementation of multisectoral national strategies for combating HIV/AIDS. Such strategies must openly address the epidemic and confront stigma, silence and denial of the existence of HIV/AIDS.

Dr. Grunitzky-Bekele’s presentation was based on an assessment conducted by the International Partnership Against AIDS in Africa (IPAA), a framework which represents a common vision shared by African governments, their people, the UN and other development partners. Out of the 46 countries surveyed, 40 have already established na-

tional policies and strategies. However, out of those, only 25 have plans for implementation.

The focus group discussion, which attracted various stakeholders in the fight against HIV/AIDS, aimed at making recommendations to ensure that HIV/AIDS remains at the forefront of the development and integration agenda.

The UNAIDS country advisor in Nigeria, Dr. B.T Costantinos, said the main challenge for the group is to get the African Union (AU) and other regional bodies to accelerate these commitments and make them actions. “How can we make these bodies deal with HIV/AIDS, not only as a development issue but also as a threat that wipes out our population?” asked Dr. Costantinos.

Dr. Grace Kaliangogo, a representative from the OAU, echoed the need for regional organizations in Africa to support each other in the fight against HIV/AIDS. She said sharing of information and research is vital in the prevention and control of the spread of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases associated with poverty, such as TB and malaria.

“AIDS respects no borders, sex or age,” she said. “No country can conquer HIV/AIDS on its own without the support of others. All efforts should be integrated.” Dr. Kaliangogo said that although the OAU had recognized that the epidemic would have a heavy toll in Africa, its effects are far worse than anticipated. That is why the Abuja Declaration is important to Africa and the OAU plans to monitor its implementation closely.

## African Union Cannot Become a Reality without the Civil Sector

By Jérémie Sindayirwanya

The participation of civil society in the activities of ECA and OAU/AU is evident but the first report on regional integration does not show how the contribution of civil society will be institutionalized in the organs of the Union. For the 80 participants in the workshop on civil society, this even poses a problem of identity.

It is doubtful that this issue has the interest of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs who are going to discuss legal instruments for the structure that will succeed OAU in the future. Furthermore, there are very few organizations focusing on this integration theme. This unfortunate state of affairs is seen when talking about the list of countries that have already ratified the Treaty.

The workshop on the role of civil society will find it difficult to prepare a consensus statement to present to ADF III. Three challenges remain to be addressed:

- Relations between government and civil society,

- The contribution of civil society organizations to the process of regional integration, and
- Setting up a network of non-governmental actors to ensure follow-up to the Forum.

One issue for self-criticism is that the working group is male dominated. There are only 20 women among the group of 80, at a time when civil society is lobbying governments to respect gender. According to the chairman of the group, this is a minor oversight because civil society is called upon to participate fully in the New Partnership for Development of Africa (NEPAD) and the African Union (AU).

Participants noted regretfully, the lack of information on these two initiatives. To make it easier to follow the debate, the workshop suggested that the different topics be grouped under two main categories:

- The policy environment and institu-

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# Leaders urged to tackle obstacles to integration

by Gumisai Mutume

This is at least the fourth time that African leaders have set out ambitious plans for economic integration. So far, they have met with little success. At this week's Africa Development Forum there are growing calls for the continent's leaders to effectively tackle the difficult challenges that have hindered integration over the decades.

"We must be candid about what usually are unspoken fears – the possible loss of sovereignty, development opportunities and revenues," says ECA executive secretary KY Amoako. The issues involved are among "the most complex that leaders will have to face, requiring outstanding thinking and political courage."

African leaders officially launched plans for a united Africa in 1963 with the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). In 1980, the vision was broadened through the Lagos Plan of Action, which laid the foundation of an African Economic Community (AEC). The treaty to establish the AEC was signed more than a decade later.

The latest step towards integration is expected to culminate in the formation of the African Union later this year, replacing the OAU.

"Without doubt, the integration process has suffered from many deficiencies which account for the lack-lustre performance," notes Professor Adebayo Adedeji, former Executive Secretary of the ECA who has championed efforts at African integration. He says perhaps the greatest of these deficiencies has been a lack of political will. Too often in the past, national sovereignty has been placed ahead of long-term regional integration goals he says.

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**Civil Sector**

tional structure of the Union, and

- The various stages and the pace of achieving integration.

In the absence of an integrated infrastructure, the first priority for civil society is support for free movement of people, as has been accomplished by ECOWAS. We have to make our continent into one village and not 53 States mutually ignoring each other. The group also made recommendations for preparing for the next Heads of

African governments have also been unwilling to place sanctions on non-performers and regional and inter-governmental institutions have suffered as a result. The OAU reports that member countries are \$53 million dollars in arrears.

A new report by ECA shows that African governments have not backed their pledges with money at the regional level as well. Within the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa the collection of dues was 100 percent in 1993 but this had dropped to about 50 percent in 1998.

Increasingly there are growing calls on African leaders to streamline the plethora of Regional Economic Communities (RECs). There are currently 14 RECs on the continent, many of which duplicate functions and operate with little co-ordination or information sharing.

In a recent study on regional integration, the African Development Bank notes that due to reluctance to surrender national sovereignty, there has been a tendency to "create intergovernmental institutions with multiple and overlapping protocols and mandates and little enforceable mechanisms." Most countries belong to two or more of these organizations, with only seven belonging to one.

The list of challenges facing African leaders on the road to political, economic and social integration is long. One of them is to diversify exports. Nearly all African countries depend on a narrow range of primary products.

Mr Amara Essy, Secretary General of the OAU says another challenge is to involve civil society and the private sector. This, he says, is "indispensable

State Summit in July 2002.

Civil society was invited to this Forum because it is seen as increasingly proactive at the national level, in influencing policy. Some leaders still resist the Union. The youth, women, trade unions, researchers and business people need more documents distributed to them to make information more accessible to the public. Access to documents would improve the national debates and the online discussions.

# The Forum Awaits the Heads of State

By Norbert N. Ouendji

ADF III is anticipating the Heads of State participation on Thursday. They will also participate on Friday in a plenary session chaired by ECA Executive Secretary, K.Y. Amoako. They have been invited by ECA and OAU due to their expertise on regional integration issues, the main agenda item.

Nevertheless, there are fears about the success of such dialogue, in which civil society and other population groups hope to have their voices heard on this crucial issue. Participants are waiting hopefully and impatiently for the arrival of the invited Heads of State in Addis Ababa, so they can show their support for building the African Union, following the example of Ethiopian Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi. "This Forum has raised a great deal of hope. Heads of State should seize the opportunity to further the process of regional integration".

The African people are in need, asserted Also Idrissa, Director of Meteorology in Niger, who was invited as an observer to ADF III and who praises the Malian Head of State and former President of CEDAO, Alpha Oumar

for the realization of the African Union." To date, the AU process has almost exclusively been driven by African governments.

With conflicts often flaring, new ways of preventing wars and maintaining peace will also have to be found. To mediate and implement peace accords the continent has often depended on the international community - either bilaterally or through the UN system.

Koumare, for his commitment to regional integration. Koumare attended ADF I in 1999.

"This means moving from talking to action... Heads of State must place Africa's interests above national egos. This is a hard thing to do, observed Idrissa, adding that "it is inexcusable that an African should need a visa to go to another country in Africa, where in certain cases, it is issued by a European country.

At the moment, the South African President, who is supposed to arrive in Addis on 6<sup>th</sup> March, is still the only Head of State to have confirmed his participation. Confirmation is awaited regarding the arrival of Laurent Bagbo of Cote d'Ivoire, who, on Tuesday, refused to receive magistrates claiming a substantial increase in their salaries.

We have no news of the response to invitations sent to Bouteflika of Algeria and Kagame of Rwanda. Kagame participated in ADF II alongside his colleagues from Botswana and Uganda and the Prime Ministers of Chad and Senegal.

But the toughest hurdle of all will be to bring together countries with growing poverty, low levels of economic growth, dependence on overseas development assistance and very little domestic savings, notes the non-governmental Inter Africa Group (IAG).

"In history, there have been a few successful cases of economic co-operation between countries that are poor and economically dependent," notes IAG.

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