



'AFRICAN INTEGRATION PROCESS MUST INVOLVE ALL STAKEHOLDERS'

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The African Integration process-which is being discussed at the on going third African Development Forum (ADF III) has mostly been monopolized by African governments and must begin to accommodate people of the continent, former Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, Adebayo Adedeji said.

Professor Adedeji told ADF Participants yesterday that African integration process, having not done so far, must begin to manage to bring on board and mobilize all stakeholders.

"Currently, to what extent are the people being mobilized in support of the Constitutive Act of the African Union? Like the NEPAD initiative, it is little known in the continent. Both emerged from the highest political level without any serious and sustained effort to consult with stakeholders and key actors. Neither is a subject for public discourse in the continent. There is no evidence of any ongoing serious debate on them even in the national parliaments."

Professor Adedeji stressed that full benefits of the regional integration could only be attained if the people of Africa were given "ownership" of the vision and that African governments shouldered the responsibilities of making that possible.

"This means that all stakeholders must fully be engaged in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring. Governments must perforce learn to yield space-adequate and ample space-to the private sector and organized labour. And in order to maximize their effectiveness, this requires that they must also play similar proactive roles at their respective national level," Adedeji said.

He underscored that the pursuit of economic integration must go hand in hand with the pursuit of political stability at the national level and, at least dynamic political cooperation at sub regional and regional levels.

Adedeji added, "one of the problems of economic integration in Africa is then dearth of the entrepreneurial class in the member states. This is a class of innovators who in their search for profit maximization seek markets beyond their national borders. As this class grows in number, quality and effectiveness, regional integration will grow and become diversified."

Various questions related to the integration process in Africa were raised and discussed among the participants.

Some participants said during the discussions that there remained lack of sustainable trade relations among African themselves and freedom of movement in their own region in order to make African Union a reality.

In the afternoon session yesterday, Mr. Yousif Suliman, Director of ECA's Regional Cooperation and Integration Division (RCID) also presented the first Annual Report on Integration in Africa (ARIA).

Today various reports on Economic Policies for Accelerating Regional integration in Africa and other three documents related to development in Africa are expected be presented and discussed. (ADF3)