



AFRICAN UNION MODEL SUMMIT

Concept paper

In most African countries, the opportunity for thorough understanding and analysis of international and diplomatic relations is often inadequate and sketchy. This often hampers effective participation and limits the countries' contribution/participation in important fora. AU Advocacy is foremost in the mandate of the **AU-Southern Africa Regional Office (AU-SARO)**. Thus, the Office in its mandate to popularize the Organization in the region and also play an advocacy role, has started a program on capacity building with some universities on **African Union Model Summit**. This is the first of its kind in Southern Africa and indeed the whole of the continent.

Model Structure

The **African Union Model Summit** is essentially a simulation exercise of the proceedings of the African union. As students based activity, it involves students assigning themselves to the African countries in groups of 4 or 5 representing delegations of the 53 countries in disparate disciplines in order to draw reflections on various issues and challenges confronting Africa, in an interdisciplinary manner. Each group studies the country they represent i.e. the economy, the infrastructures, the history, the governance, the electoral system, the education, peace and security issues etc. of the country. The students become experts on the country they represent. At the end of the study, students hold a Model African Union Summit on a given issue and challenges affecting Africa (Infrastructure, Agriculture and Food Security, Climate Change, Peace and Security, Democracy and Good Governance etc). Each group will present its argument according to its study of the country it represents. Senior staff and Heads of faculties were assigned to guide the students in the whole exercise and the learning materials and funds were sourced from African Union-Southern Africa Regional Office (AU-SARO) in Lilongwe.

Objectives

The renewed emphasis on regional integration and cooperation to accelerate economic development and strengthen good governance in member countries has recently attracted much attention and focus. In this context, the African Union has made significant strides in strengthening its institutional base and mandate, as well as its vision and prospects for the continent. As the OAU transformed into AU, NEPAD and APRM have emerged as major initiatives of the AU towards this broad goal for member nations to meaningfully participate and there is need for those actively involved in these processes to have a comprehensive grasp of wide ranging issues as well as a thorough understanding of the legal and procedural aspects of the organizations.

These perceptions are now changing with the advent of the internet, satellite TV and other manifestations of globalization and it is therefore imperative to sensitize the people of all African countries on the necessity of developing solidarity and common fronts.

Expected Output

The lack of information and awareness of the African Union and the significance of regional integration underpins the incontestable significance of this project which provides a unique opportunity to explore areas that were, until now, deemed too distant, vague or irrelevant to merit much attention by most African people.

Therefore, programmes such as the Model AU, would help intraining numerous graduate students on the principles and practices of AU as well as exposing them to a wide range of global and continental issues that would be pertinent in their future assignments.

This is a pilot project where the AU-SARO is the parent body. The successful conduct of this program in one University in Malawi, Catholic University (CUNIMA), called for the AU-SARO to plan to undertake similar events in other universities (Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia etc.) in the SADC region for the next years. It is one way in which the African Union can have an impact on the ground, in particular for the youth, by bridging the gap between the continental body and the African people.

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