

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

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**EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
Thirteenth Ordinary Session
24 – 28 June 2008
Sharm-El-Sheikh, Egypt**

EX.CL/436(XIII)

**REPORT OF THE THIRD CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN
MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF INTEGRATION
(COMAI III), ABIDJAN, COTE D'IVOIRE**

REPORT OF THE THIRD CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS OF INTEGRATION (COMAI III)

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The African Ministers of Integration held their Third Conference, institutionalised by Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.113 (VII) of the Seventh Session of the Assembly of the African Union, in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from 22 to 23 May 2008.

The Conference considered all essential issues relating to the integration of the Continent, reviewed the present status and deliberated on the ways and means of fast-tracking the integration process and ensuring its success.

The Conference thus addressed institutional issues and issues relating to good governance and sovereignty, external debt, financing community infrastructure, the role of the private sector in the regional integration process, trade and investment, as well as Economic Partnership Agreements. It also took stock of the integration process, essentially considering issues connected with the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital, as well as the implementation of decisions taken in the area of integration.

The Conference made recommendations contained in the Report and the Declaration attached hereto, for the endorsement of the Assembly of the Union.

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**Third Conference of African Ministers
In Charge of Integration (COMAI III)
Ministerial Conference
May 22-23, 2008
Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire**

COMAI/MIN/RPT.(III)

REPORT

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Third Conference of African Ministers in Charge of Integration took place from 22 to 23 May 2008, at Hotel Ivoire in Abidjan at the invitation of the Government of Cote d'Ivoire.

II. ATTENDANCE

2. The Conference was attended by the following countries: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Equatorial, Kenya, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Republic of Sahrawi, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

3. The following RECs were present: the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Community of Sahelo Saharan States (CEN-SAD), and the East African Community (EAC).

4. Also represented at the Conference were the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Development Bank (AfDB), NEPAD Business Group of West Africa, European Union, Economic and Monetary Union of West Africa (UEMOA), World Bank, Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and the Economic Community for the Great Lakes States (CEPGL).

III. OPENING CEREMONY

5. During the opening ceremony, Dr. Maxwell Mkwezalamba, Commissioner for Economic Affairs, delivered a statement on behalf of the African Union. In his opening remarks, the Commissioner thanked H.E. Mr. Laureant Gbagbo, President of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire, the Government and People of Cote d'Ivoire for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to all the delegations and for hosting the Third Conference of African Ministers in Charge of Integration. He pointed out that the Government of Cote d'Ivoire has hosted the Conference at a time when the country was in the process of transition from an era of conflict and this was a clear manifestation of the commitment of the Government towards Africa's integration efforts.

6. He further thanked the Member States and partners of the African Union, including the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), for their participation, which clearly indicated their commitment and willingness to work in collaboration with the African Union in forging ahead Africa's integration agenda.

7. On the issue of globalisation, the Commissioner emphasized the role that regional integration could play in transforming African countries into industrial and knowledge-based economies, which are currently heavily reliant on the primary sector. In this respect, he called upon the Conference to address ever growing challenges of Africa in promoting regional integration by providing the necessary means and resources for the implementation of recommendations relating to the integration agenda made in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, and Kigali, Rwanda, in March 2006 and July 2007, respectively, by the Ministers in Charge of Integration. He informed the Conference that integration was one of the items to be considered by the June/July 2008 African Union Assembly in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt.

8 Finally, the Commissioner urged the Ministers to come up with a Declaration that would highlight the importance of strong political will and the need for all African stakeholders and development partners to work together with a view to enhancing the integration agenda.

9. Addressing the Conference after the Commissioner was Mr. Aboudlie Janneh, the United Nations Under Secretary General and Executive Secretary of the ECA. In his opening remarks, he thanked the Government of Cote d'Ivoire for being exemplary in promoting regional integration. He further saluted the President of Cote d'Ivoire for his efforts in pushing forward the development agenda as well as in safeguarding the peace and security of the nation. He further commended the efforts of the African Union Commission (AUC) in promoting regional integration in Africa. In this respect, he reported that the 12 Heads of State, mandated by the 10th African Union Assembly were meeting in Arusha to reflect on a framework for building the Union Government of Africa.

10. The Executive Secretary pointed out that many African countries were pursuing policies, which were geared towards sustainable economic growth and poverty alleviation in line with the priorities of NEPAD. The policies had contributed to the overall economic performance of the continent with the continent's economy growing at about 5.8 per cent in 2007 up from 5.7 per cent in 2006. He outlined some of the factors attributing to Africa's high growth rate, including increased global demand for commodities, such as crude oil, metals and minerals; improved macroeconomic management; increased private capital flows; as well as better governance in many parts of the continent. He pointed out that despite improving economic circumstances in Africa, challenges still remained, including the management of current high oil and food prices.

11. The Executive Secretary commended the efforts by African countries in promoting regional integration. To this effect, he cited the harmonization of policies in the areas of trade, infrastructure, and information communication technology (ICTs) as some of the major achievements. In this regard, he also applauded efforts by the RECs towards the acceleration of sub-regional integration. To support the process of regional integration, he called upon the Conference to focus on removing key constraints to

regional integration and to identify readily implementable measures to accelerate the process.

12. Also addressing the Conference was the Chairman of the NEPAD Business Group, Dr. Bamanga Tukur. He commended the African Union for an invitation extended to the African private sector to attend the important Conference in recognition of the important role played by the private sector in promoting Africa's regional integration efforts.

13. He reaffirmed the support of the private sector in integrating economies of Africa as outlined in the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community. He further reiterated the issues raised at previous African Union Conferences by the private sector, which needed strong involvement of all stake holders in developing integration policies for the Continent.

14. The Minister of African Integration of Cote d'Ivoire, H.E. Mr. Amadou Kone expressed gratitude to the President, the Prime Minister and the Government of Cote d'Ivoire for accepting to host the Third Conference of African Ministers in Charge of Integration. He thanked the African private sector and the RECs for participating in the Conference. He further thanked development partners for their involvement, in particular the European Union for their constant support to Africa's development. He requested the Conference to deliberate on issues that would lead to the integration of African people and not only that of States.

15. The Conference was officially opened by His Excellency Mr. Guillaume Soro, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire. In his opening address, the Prime Minister thanked the President of Cote d'Ivoire for accepting to host the Conference. He indicated that the Conference came at an opportune time when the country and the sub-region were going through a process of reconciliation and unity.

16. Commenting on some of the achievements by the ECOWAS region on regional integration, the Prime Minister recalled the provision in the Constitution of Cote d'Ivoire, to be part of the regional integration process within and across the West African region. In this respect, he pointed out some of the decisions taken by Cote d'Ivoire in this area, which included, the abolition of residence permits for ECOWAS members residing in Cote d'Ivoire and the issuing of the ECOWAS passport to Ivorian citizens.

17. On regional integration, he outlined some of the major challenges currently affecting the attainment of integration of the continent. These included high oil and basic food prices; insufficient energy supply; and climate change. However, he pointed out that Africa should take advantage of high food prices to increase food production and promote intra Africa trade. He finally reaffirmed Cote d'Ivoire's commitment in supporting regional integration efforts in close collaboration with the African Union.

IV. ELECTION OF THE BUREAU

18. The Conference elected the Bureau as follows:

- i. Chair: Cote d'Ivoire
- ii. First Vice-Chair: Libya
- iii. Second Vice-Chair: Republic of Congo
- iv. Third Vice-Chair: Zimbabwe
- v. Rapporteur : Uganda

V. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

19. The Conference adopted the following Agenda:

- i. Opening Ceremony
- ii. Election of the Bureau
- iii. Adoption of the Agenda and Organisation of Work
- iv. Communications by Ministers
 - a. Advocacy for Regional and Continental Integration
 - b. Governance, Sovereignty and Regional Integration
 - c. External Debt and Integration
- v. Consideration of the Experts' Report
- vi. Adoption of the Conference Report
- vii. Consideration and Adoption of the Draft Declaration
- viii. Adoption of the Theme of the Fourth Conference
- ix. Date and Venue of the Next Conference
- x. Closing Ceremony

VI. PROCEEDINGS

COMMUNICATIONS

a). Advocacy for Regional and Continental Integration

20. This item was the subject of communication by H.E. Mr. Amadou Kone, Minister in Charge of Integration of Cote D'Ivoire. In his communication, the Minister recalled the integration vision of the OAU Founding Fathers in the 1963 Charter as well as the decisive turning point that took place in 1991 with the advent of the African Economic Community (AEC) and the impetus given to it by the Sirte Declaration of 09/9/1999 on the speeding up of the integration process.

21. The Minister recommended that the current integration approach needed to be refocused if Africa were to rise up to the challenges it faced. To this end, there was need for the stakeholders, more particularly the intellectuals, to reflect on integration related problems. He proposed scenarios likely to generate synergy between regional integration organizations and the competent organs of the African Union.

22. Consequently, he recommended:

- i. The institutionalization of a Conference of Chairpersons of the RECs and the Chairperson of the African Union;
- ii. The establishment of ministerial structures in all Members State that do not yet have such structures as well as National Committees in Charge of Integration;
- iii. The need to open up the Executive Council session to the participation Ministers in Charge of Integration;
- iv. Strengthen dialogue between regional institutions and civil society;
- v. Need to strengthen the capacities of institutions which are currently implementing regional integration; and
- vi. Need to foster private sector development to assist in moving the regional integration agenda forward.

Discussion

23. The Conference underscored the need to strengthen ministries of integration to ensure that continental decisions are applied, as well as supporting the proposal to create such ministries in countries that have not done so. It was further noted that for regional integration to move forward, there was need to strengthen solidarity at national, regional and continental level. Participants also expressed concern regarding the slow progress made on the free movement of people, goods, capital and services in the Continent and stressed that this is a major obstacle to attaining regional integration. The Conference further noted that free movement has not made much progress, despite being a central component of the integration agenda as set out in the Abuja Treaty. The Conference also agreed that there is a need to integrate infrastructure projects as contained in the NEPAD infrastructure programme.

24. The Conference observed that the results in terms of regional integration were below the expectations of the people. It went on to question whether the current level of integration was suitable to countries' needs, aspirations and the challenges they face. It was further concluded that the EPA negotiations and the recent food crisis had adversely contributed to the poor performance in a number of integration activities and programmes. The Conference stressed the need to involve research institutions to brainstorm on the objectives, methods and basis of economic integration as well as shed light on the weaknesses and limitation of the regional integration process. The Conference also emphasized the need to promote ownership of the integration process amongst African people.

Recommendations

25. At the end of the discussion the following recommendations were made:

- i. Call upon Member States that have not yet done so, to establish Ministries of Integration and National Commissions;
- ii. Diplomatic passports should be exempt from visa requirements
- iii. Urge Member States to include in their delegations to the AU Executive Council Ministers in Charge of Integration;
- iv. Stronger solidarity and sharing of ideas should be encouraged amongst the Member States of the Union;
- v. AU Member States should take necessary measures and actions to make free movement of persons, goods, capital and services a reality; and
- vi. Establish a regular meeting between the Chairpersons of RECs and the Chairperson of the African Union

b) Governance, Sovereignty and Regional Integration

26. The communication on this theme was made by H. E. Mr. Nelson Gagawala Wambuzi, Minister of State for Trade of Uganda. In his communication, he gave a brief overview of progress made in governance and sovereignty issues on the Continent, including the establishment of the AU and its related Organs, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and the move towards democracy, good political and economic governance.

27. He went on to highlight some of the existing shortfalls including lack of transparency of governance, socio-political legitimacy, the rule of law and lack of widespread popular empowerment in some regions, the manner in which elections are conducted, and other malpractices. He also highlighted the slow progress of the APRM and the need for stronger linkages between the APRM, the RECs and other regional bodies and institutions.

28. The African experience was compared with the European integration model, in which it was acknowledged that some functions were best executed collectively and that the institutions charged with these responsibilities were empowered to discharge their mandate effectively. On the way forward, the Minister emphasized the need to vest in AU institutions greater powers of decision-making, enforcement and oversight in order to address these challenges taking into consideration the European model.

29. In conclusion, he made the following suggestions:

- i. Member States should make stronger efforts to pool their sovereignty and cede greater powers to AU institutions to enable them to undertake continental objectives as set out in the AU Constitutive Act;
- ii. The AU Commission should be upgraded beyond that of a Secretariat and given powers and adequate means to implement and monitor AU decisions;
- iii. Regional governance mechanisms should be harmonized and aligned with that of the APRM; and
- iv. RECs should become actively involved in the APRM activities, supporting the review process where possible and using it as a tool to drive the

implementation of the integration agenda forward; this will enable the ARPM to become a more credible continental framework.

Discussion

30. The Conference noted that the communication raised pertinent issues regarding governance, sovereignty and regional integration. In this respect, it was observed that without good political, economic and corporate governance the attainment of regional integration would not be possible. It was observed that a number of African countries were not effectively focusing on their governance systems which are key to the integration process. The Conference also discussed the need for strong linkages between the AU and the RECs in dealing with issues of governance and sovereignty.

31. The discussion also focused on the relationship between political and economic governance. Specifically it was noted that peace and security is a prerequisite for economic development and regional integration. In this respect, the Conference proposed that ceding part of the sovereignty of Member States to regional and Continental institutions would further strengthen peace and security in the Continent.

32. The Conference also discussed the importance of the APRM in promoting good governance, which is key for regional integration. It was observed that not all Member States had acceded to the APRM process and they be encouraged to do so. Effective implementation of the APRM process would go a long way in improving the management of domestic resources.

Recommendations

33. The following recommendations were made:

- i. Member States should consider to gradually transfer part of their sovereignty to the regional and continental institutions along the principles of subsidiarity for the realization of regional integration; and
- ii. Call upon Member States to use existing mechanisms, like the APRM, in promoting good governance.

c) External Debt and Integration

34. The communication on this theme was made by H.E. Dr. Maxwell Mkwezalamba, Commissioner for Economic Affairs. He started by pointing out the need to mobilise both domestic and foreign resources in order to accelerate Africa's integration efforts. Regarding foreign resources, the Commissioner called upon the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the African Development Bank (AfDB), among others, to fully implement their commitments on debt cancellation, which could create fiscal space. He further noted that debt relief resources had not done enough to support projects and programmes that could accelerate Africa's integration.

35. He outlined some of the challenges facing many African countries in accessing debt relief initiatives. These included non-completion of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) by many African countries; macroeconomic instability; maintenance of long-term debt sustainability; and non-inclusion of non-HIPC countries in the debt relief initiative. He further highlighted several factors that had undermined Africa's ability to service its debt, including persistence of a narrow productive base, non-complementary economic structures, high interest rates and the frequent rescheduling of debt at non-concessional terms.

36. The Commissioner concluded by suggesting the following:

- i. The need to increase domestic resource mobilization through implementing tax reforms, liberalization of financial markets and prudent public debt management;
- ii. Diversification of product and export base;
- iii. Enhanced debt management capacity to ensure the efficient use of resources to avoid unsustainable debt levels;
- iv. More reliance on concessional loans and grants;
- v. Pursuance of prudent macroeconomic and fiscal policies;
- vi. Official Development Assistance (ODA) to target the financing of integration projects; and
- vii. Address supply side constraints to stimulate investment and overall factor productivity.

Discussion

37. The Conference pointed out that there was a link between governance and debt management. In this respect, they agreed that the debt problem could not be tackled without addressing governance issues. The Conference observed that regional integration could promote better use of public resources and improve the management of debt. It was stressed that there was a need to simplify the institutional architecture in the regions to ensure rationalization and better utilization of limited resources.

38. The Conference agreed on the need for development partners to fully implement their commitment regarding the cancellation of debt, which could go a long way in promoting regional integration.

Recommendations

39. The following recommendations were made:

- i. Governance issues should be addressed in parallel with issues of debt sustainability;
- ii. Capacities of Member States in debt management issues should be strengthened; and

- iii. Call upon Member States to diversify their products and export bases to increase the revenue bases.

VIII. CONSIDERATION OF THE EXPERT'S REPORT

40. The Conference, after taking note of the report and considering the recommendations contained therein, recommended the following:

a) **Financing Community Infrastructure and Regional Integration**

- i. **Financing regional infrastructure:** Each country should allocate more resources for infrastructure development and the Commission may conduct the necessary steps to determine the resources that should be allocated. Further, countries should look at developing effective ways of mobilising local funding for infrastructure projects as well as better support regional funds for infrastructure development
- ii. **Co-financing mechanism:** The need to build partnerships between bilateral and multilateral development agencies and the private sector to increase financial resources, expertise and institutional capacity.

b) **The Role of the Private Sector in the Regional Integration Process**

- i. Urge the AUC, the RECs and development partners such as UNECA and AfDB to develop a comprehensive investment code for Africa with a view to promoting private sector participation;
- ii. Request the AUC, in collaboration with UNECA and AfDB to harmonise payments and financial systems in Africa;
- iii. Urge Member States to have quality control structures, if they do not yet have them, and harmonise the standards relating thereto;
- iv. Urge Member States to remove tariff and non-tariff barriers in order to facilitate intra-African trade;
- v. Also invite Member States to revisit their industrial policies in order to facilitate regional integration; and
- vi. Organize meetings between the public and the private sector at the level of the RECs and the AU.

c) **Investment, Trade and Integration**

- i. Pursue and complete the process of monetary convergence with a view to promoting a stable macro economic environment and enhancement of foreign and African direct investment as well as investment from the African Diaspora; and
- ii. Promote intra-African trade through banks and trade support structures.

d) Economic Partnership Agreements, the Rationalization of RECs and Integration in Africa

- i. Encourage Member States, the AUC, RECs and partner institutions to pursue the full implementation of decisions taken by the AU Assembly regarding EPAs;
- ii. Accelerate the establishment, as soon as possible, where they do not exist, of free trade areas (FTA);
- iii. Put in place compensation mechanisms for countries that would lose tariff revenues due to the implementation of integration programmes;
- iv. Guidelines for the convergence of macroeconomic variables should be established at the continental level;
- v. Strengthen and expand Africa's financial markets and institutions which assist in the mobilization of financial resources for financing integration projects such as infrastructure; and
- vi. Call upon the AUC to speed up the conclusion of its study on the quantification of scenarios for the rationalisation of RECs.

e) Status of Implementation of the Regional Integration Agenda in Africa: Achievements and Challenges

- i. The mandate of Ministers in Charge of Integration should be reinforced so as to have a stronger impact on the monitoring of recommendations already undertaken;
- ii. The AUC, in collaboration with RECs, should complete development of the Minimum Integration Programme (MIP) in the priority sectors with clear timeframes and benchmarks to be used by the RECs in attaining convergence of RECs programmes. Upon its adoption, the AUC should develop a harmonized framework for follow-up on implementation of the MIP;
- iii. Invite Member States to set up integration focal points so as to enable the AUC to establish a contacts database;
- iv. Measures should be taken to implement the Protocol on Relations between the AU and the RECs;
- v. Put in place a Peer Review Mechanism (PRM) among the RECs;
- vi. Help Member States that have emerged from conflict and are experiencing difficulties to reach an adequate level in order to minimise disparity amongst Member States and facilitate their integration;
- vii. The status report should include and highlight progress made in key areas of cooperation and integration; and
- viii. There should be collaboration between Member States, the RECs and other relevant stakeholders in data collection and the sharing of good practices and experiences.

f) Recommendations from the First and Second Conferences of African Ministers in-Charge of Integration (COMAI) – Follow-up Report

- i. An evaluation framework should be developed to assess the actions taken by Member States, the RECs and the AUC to implement recommendations from the Conferences of African Ministers in Charge of Integration (COMAI). The evaluation should include prioritised recommendations and appropriate timeframes;
- ii. The AUC consolidated report should be prepared on the basis of the annual reports of the RECs and responses to questionnaires;
- iii. Request Member States, the RECs and AUC to take the necessary measures for the implementation of the recommendations falling within their areas of competence;
- iv. Integration projects, which are yet not operational, should be identified in order to analyse the causes of this situation and find solutions for their implementation.

g) Free Movement of Persons, Goods, Capital and Services

- i. Urge Member States and the RECs to fast-track the implementation of the legal instruments on free movement;
- ii. Technical issues such as customs, trade and immigration should be studied in depth;
- iii. Request the AUC and the RECs to identify all the obstacles to free movement and analyse the causes thereof; and
- iv. Request the AUC and the RECs to mount sensitisation campaigns about integration and its advantages;

h) Towards an African Common Market for Agricultural Products

- i. The Conference took note of the report on the subject and agreed to submit it to the Conference of African Ministers of Agriculture.

IX. CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT DECLARATION

41. The Conference considered and adopted a Declaration

X. ADOPTION OF THE THEME OF THE NEXT CONFERENCE

42. Under this agenda item Uganda proposed that the theme for COMAI IV should be 'Accelerating Free Movement in Africa'. Following the proposal, the Conference suggested that further consultations be undertaken on the theme in collaboration with the AUC.

XI. DATE AND VENUE OF THE FOURTH CONFERENCE

43. The Assistant Ministers to the Minister of Economy, Planning and Regional Development of Cameroon H.E. Yaouba Abdoulaye informed the Conference of the offer by his Government to host the fourth Conference of African Ministers in Charge of Integration (COMAI). The Conference favourably welcomed this offer and expressed its gratitude to the Government of Cameroon. The date of the next Conference will be determined through consultations and communicated to Member States by the AUC.

XII. CLOSING

44. Dr. Maxwell Mkwezalamba, AU Commissioner for Economic Affairs, also delivered his closing remarks during this session. In his statement, the Commissioner conveyed thanks to the Government and people of Cote d'Ivoire for the excellent hospitality extended to all the delegations. He also thanked the participants for having attended the Conference despite their busy schedules and for the commitment they showed throughout the deliberations.

45. The Commissioner further pointed out that African Ministers in Charge of Integration have a key role to play in the promotion of the continental integration agenda. In this respect, he called upon the Ministers to give the AUC full support for the effective implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the Conference. He further informed the Conference that the AUC will continue playing its active role in accelerating the implementation of Africa's integration agenda, and would continue to work very closely with the Member States, the RECs, UNECA, AfDB, the Private sector as well as civil society.

46. Finally, H.E Mr. Amadou Kone, chairperson of the session, on behalf of the President, the Prime Minister and the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, thanked the delegations for accepting to hold the Conference in Abidjan and expressed his gratitude for their solidarity with the Ivorian people in their efforts towards peace, in accordance with the Ouagadougou agreement. Before declaring the third Conference of African Ministers in Charge of Integration closed and wishing a safe return to all delegations, he urged all Member States, the RECs and the Commission to effectively implement the recommendations.

XIII. VOTE OF THANKS

47. During the closing session, a vote of thanks was delivered by Honourable Ahmed Ali Silay, Delegate Minister in Charge of International Cooperation, Djibouti. He expressed gratitude to the Government and people of Cote d'Ivoire for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to all the delegation since their arrival in Abidjan, as well as the excellent facilities put at their disposal throughout the Conference. He

concluded by inviting all the Member States and all the stakeholders to effectively implement the recommendations of the Conference and ensure through determination and solidarity that the integration of the Continent is a success.

EX.CL/436(XIII)
Annex

DECLARATION

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**Third Conference of African Ministers
In Charge of Integration (COMAI III)
Experts' Meeting
May 22-23, 2008
Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire**

COMAI/MIN/DECL.(III)

DECLARATION

DECLARATION

We, African Ministers in-Charge of Integration, meeting in our Third Ordinary Conference in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from 22 to 23 May, 2008,

Considering the Assembly Decisions Assembly/AU/Dec/112 (VII) and Assembly/AU/Dec/113 (VII) of the Seventh Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, relating respectively to the Moratorium on the recognition of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the institutionalization of our Conference,

Recalling the determination of the Assembly of the Union to speed up the economic and political integration of the African Continent, rationalize and strengthen the Regional Economic Communities, as enshrined in the Accra Declaration, adopted by its Ninth Ordinary Session,

Recalling the important role of the Regional Economic Communities as pillars of the African Economic Community as well as the need to harmonise their policies and programmes with a view to fast-tracking the economic integration of the Continent,

Expressing satisfaction at the cooperation in the field of integration with the African Development Bank (AfDB), the agencies of the United Nations System, notably the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the World Bank, the European Union as well as other development partners,

Determined to speed up the integration process in conformity with the pertinent decisions of our Heads of State and Government and the aspirations of our peoples,

Having considered and **taken note** of the recommendations of the Meeting of the Experts,

Agree as follows:

Implementation of the Recommendations of COMAI I and II

- i. **REQUEST** Member States, the RECs and the Commission to take all necessary measures for the speedy implementation of the recommendations of our previous conferences;
- ii. **ALSO REQUEST** the Commission to draw up, in consultation with the RECs, a roadmap and a time table for the implementation of the minimum integration programme; and
- ii. **FINALLY REQUEST** the Commission, RECs and partners to support Member States in coordinating and implementing the activities related to integration.

Institutional Issues:

- i. **INVITE** the Heads of State and Government of the African Union to devote exclusively, where necessary, one of the sessions of their Assembly to issues pertaining to integration and development.
- ii. **INVITE** Member States that have not yet done so, to establish a structure dealing with integration issues.
- iii. **CALL** for the holding of periodic meetings between the Chairpersons of the RECs and of the Union.

Good Governance

ENCOURAGE the Regional Economic Communities to initiate among themselves a Peer Review Process with a view to drawing mutual advantage of their experiences and best practices.

Free movement of persons, goods and capital

- i. **REQUEST** Member States of the RECs that have not yet done so, to fast-track the implementation of the legal instruments adopted on free movement on the one hand, and on the other, those that have already implemented their free movement programme, to take all necessary measures in order to remove any impediment to the success of this programme;
- ii. **REQUEST** all Member States to exempt all government officials and all African nationals, holders of diplomatic passports from visas;
- iii. **URGE** Member States to remove tariff and non tariff barriers to facilitate intra-African trade; and
- iv. **REQUEST** the Commission to convene, in keeping with Decision EX.CL/Dec 354 (XI) of the Union's Executive Council, a forum on free movement, which will bring together all stakeholders.

Financing of regional infrastructure

REQUEST each Member State to allocate more resources for regional infrastructure development, and the Commission to conduct the necessary studies to this effect.

Food Security

URGE Member States to take as a matter of urgency, all necessary steps for the implementation of all decisions relating to agriculture development and food security.

Support to under- privileged countries

REQUEST, Member States, the AU as well as development partners to take all necessary measures to initiate adequate programmes likely to provide lasting solutions to difficulties facing vulnerable countries or those that have experienced war to reduce the development disparity among states .

Acknowledgements

EXPRESS to His Excellency Mr. Laurent Gbagbo, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, the Government and the people of Côte d'Ivoire, our thanks and gratitude for having generously hosted our Third Conference and for the traditional hospitality accorded to all the delegations.

Done in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, this day of 23rd May 2008

2008

Report of the PRC advisory sub-committee on administrative, budgetary and financial matters

African Union

African Union

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