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**INTEGRATION INTO AU STRUCTURES THE AFRICAN  
ORGANISATION FOR STANDARDISATION (ARSO)**

*(Item Proposed by the Republic of Kenya)*

**INTEGRATION INTO AU STRUCTURES THE AFRICAN  
ORGANISATION FOR STANDARDISATION (ARSO)  
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**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The African Organization for Standardisation (ARSO) was created under the auspices of OAU and UNECA in 1977 with the sole objective of promoting standardization for trade in the continent. Since then, the global scenario in trade and the parameters of sustainable development have shifted considerably making the African economy insignificant globally and the attainment of African societal goals impossible. The catalytic effect in the utility of standards (both normative and physical) in infrastructure, agriculture, reorientation of economies, transfer of knowledge and technology, governance and social order, management of processes and systems cannot be overemphasized. Africa is a player in the global trade providing more than a market of 950 million people and but contributes only 1.8 per cent of the global trade. The global trade is referenced to standards and measurements. All conformity assessment regimes (Testing, certification, Inspection, Accreditation and Personnel competence) across the globe are hinged on standards and measurements. On the other hand, attempts to industrialize Africa will always be terminated by lack of viable standardization criteria and systems among other management ills. There is an urgent need to incorporate an operable industrialization system in Africa buttressed by standards to manage Africa's affairs in all fields.

**II. BACKGROUND WORK DONE SO FAR**

2. ARSO has for the last Two (2) laid the foundation for integration through various consultative forums including intensive negotiations with AUC top management, Economic affairs and the legal directorate among others and integration of AUC officials from Directorate of Trade & Industry (February 2007), moved the ARSO General Assembly and the ARSO council to deliberate and make resolutions to that effect (integration).

**III. RATIONALE FOR INCORPORATING ARSO IN AU**

3. The integrating of ARSO as an AU office with autonomy in operations but within the procedures and system of AU is a logical progression of the intents of founders of ARSO in 1977. The Abuja Treaty of 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1991 titled "Establishing the African Economic Community" states the following in Chapter XI:

*Chapter XI - Standardization and Measurement Systems*

*Article 67*

*Common Policy on Standardization and Measurement Systems*

1. *Member States agree to:*
  - (a) *Adopt a common policy on standardization and quality assurance of goods and services among Member States;*
  - (b) *Undertake such other related activities in standardization and measurement systems that are likely to promote trade, economic development and integration within the Community; and*
  - (c) *Strengthen African national, regional and continental organizations operating in this field.*
2. *For the purposes of this Chapter, Member States agree to cooperate in accordance with the provisions of the Protocol concerning Standardization, Measurement Systems and Conformity Assessment.*

#### **IV. BENEFITS OF INTEGRATION OF ARSO INTO AU**

4. The current AU management recognizes the important role of ARSO in enhancing standardisation and conformity assessment as tools to promote market access .and industrialisation in Africa.
5. The advantages of integrating ARSO as an AU office/institution include the following:
  - (a) Common Quality Policy, Quality Infrastructure and implementation mechanisms at a continental level;
  - (b) Reduced costs of integration of standardisation (standards and measurements) and conformity assessment policies in the AU;
  - (c) Enabling participation of all member states in standardization activities and exchange of knowledge in the fields of interest as AU through ARSO creates Conformity Assessment mechanisms for inter and intra-African trade and industrialization platforms for Africa;
  - (d) Africa shall have a common regulatory objective and therefore a common reference system and voice in determining trends that affect African economies and interests globally;
  - (e) Harmonization of Regional Economic Community standards and conformity assessment procedures using African Standards Harmonisation Model (ASHAM) to enhance market access and global trade around the WTO procedures in a more unified way and to support the NEPAD programmes;

- (f) Capacity Development of National Standards Bodies (NSBs) in Standardisation, Measurement and conformity assessment in a more unified way;
- (g) Speeding the adoption of common policies on standardization and quality assurance of goods and services among Member States to promote industrialisation and trade in Africa
- (h) Common quality policy on imports and common initiatives on research and development of vital elements and systems for production platforms' development for sustainable enterprises and protection of economies and industrial bases;
- (i) AU at the helm of consumer protection and enhancement of living standards of the citizens of Africa by direct intervention in the economic affairs of the member states;
- (j) AU policy and coordination in the standardization endeavour will create immediate and tangible results in the trade elements of the RECs, member states and the ability of African firms to venture into globalized trading.

## **V. WAY FORWARD**

6. In consideration of the foregoing ARSO request, in the interest of the Member States that the Executive Council of the AU passes a resolution integrating ARSO as an AU Office or a Specialized Agency of the AU and provide a mechanism for a quick and immediate integration of the said body into AU system in order to realize the said goals.

**ANNEX 1 - ABBREVIATIONS AND MEANINGS**

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| AFREC | - African Energy Commission   |
| AFSEC | - African Standards Electro-technical Commission  |
| AMU   | - Arab Maghreb Union  |
| ARSO  | - African Organisation for Standardisation  |
| ASHAM | - African Standards Harmonisation Model   |
| AU    | - African Union   |
| AUC   | - African Union Commission  |
| ISO   | - International Organisation for Standardisation  |
| NEPAD | - New Partnership African Development   |
| NSBs  | - National Standards Bodies   |
| OAU   | - Organisation of African Unity   |
| RECs  | - Regional Economic Communities (Arab Maghreb Union, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, Southern African Development Community, East African Community, Economic Community of Central African States, Economic Community of West African States, Community of Sahel-Saharan States) |
| UNECA | - United Nations Economic Commission for Africa   |
| UN    | - United Nations  |
| WTO   | - World Trade Organisation  |

*“We are determined to deal once and for all with the scourge of conflicts and violence on our continent, acknowledging our shortcomings and errors, committing our resources and our best people, and missing no opportunity to push forward the agenda of conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction. We, as leaders, simply cannot bequeath the burden of conflicts to the next generation of Africans.”* (Paragraph 9 of the Tripoli Declaration of 31 August 2009).

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