

AFRICAN UNION

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UNION AFRICAINE

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REPORT ON THE DEFINITION OF
THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

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1. The 1st Extra-Ordinary Summit of the Assembly of Heads of State and Governments held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 3 February 2003, adopted amendment 3(q) of the Constitutive Act as follows: “invite and encourage the full participation of the African Diaspora as an important part of our continent, in the building of the African Union.” Subsequently, the 5th Extra Ordinary Session of the Executive Council meeting in Sun City, South Africa, from 21 to 25 May 2003 deliberated on the development of the Diaspora Initiative within the framework of the OAU/AU and expressed support for the Initiative of the Commission to convene a Technical Workshop, as soon as possible, to develop a concept paper and generate proposals on the relationship between the AU and the Diaspora (Ext/EX/CL/Dec.6 (III) and for a definition of the concept of the Diaspora.

2. The Executive Council directed that the proposed workshop should also address the following issues:

- a. Definition of the Diaspora;
- b. Role of the Diaspora in reversing the African brain drain in line with NEPAD recommendations;
- c. Modalities for the creation of a Diaspora Fund for investment and development in Africa;
- d. Modalities for the development of scientific and technical networks to channel the repatriation of scientific knowledge from the Diaspora to Africa, and the establishment of co-operation between those abroad and those at home;
- e. Establishment of a Diaspora database to promote and facilitate networking and collaboration between experts in their respective countries of origin and those in the Diaspora.

3. The issue of definition was paramount among the various concerns because it would provide the context for Diaspora participation in AU activities in general, and representation in the Economic, Social and Cultural Council, in particular.

4. In accordance with the Executive Council Decision, the Commission of the African Union convened a Technical Workshop of experts from the continent and Diaspora in Trinidad and Tobago, from 2 to 4 June 2004. The Workshop recommended the following definition of the African Diaspora among others.

We recommend that the definition of African Diaspora refer to the geographic dispersal of peoples whose ancestors, within historical memory, originally came from Africa, but who are currently domiciled, or claim residence or citizenship, outside the continent. This definition recognizes both dispersal and subsequent reconstitution of African Diaspora identities in new locations as equally important elements. Therefore such peoples are committed to the advancement of continental Africans and Diaspora communities worldwide.

5. This definition is inclusive and well attuned to the letter and spirit of the Constitutive Act of the African Union and its aspiration to establish a framework of common consciousness and platform for action among Africans at home and abroad. It does not preclude additional obligations for representation or participation in policy-making organs or representation on legislative bodies, as in the case of citizens within states seeking higher political office.

6. The definition has been favourably reviewed and received by the Commission. It has also received endorsement from regional Diaspora forums in the Caribbean, the US and Europe, etc, at various meetings between July and December 2004. It has been widely circulated among Diaspora groups in the various regions. All comments received in this regard were favourable.

7. Accordingly, the Commission recommends this definition for adoption and for use in the implementation of the ECOSOCC Statute adopted by the Assembly of the Union at its Third Extra-Ordinary Session in Addis Ababa for two main reasons as follows:

- a) It is a good definition that is acceptable to Africans at home and abroad as a basis for a productive family relationship based on reciprocal interest and common values;

- b) Preparations are underway to launch the ECOSOCC General Assembly in the first quarter of 2005. The Diaspora has twenty representatives on this organ and the approval of this definition is essential to secure Diaspora participation in ECOSOCC. Article 3(3) on composition in the ECOSOCC Statute specifically provides that “ECOSOCC shall also include social and professional groups in African Diaspora organizations in accordance with the definition approved by the Executive Council.”

- c) It is essential to expedite action in this regard to ensure that the African Diaspora would contribute actively to the building of the Union as envisaged in the amendment to the Constitutive Act that encourages and invites Diaspora participation in the building of the African Union.

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