

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA

P. O. Box 3243

Telephone: 517 700

Fax: 5130 36

website: www.africa-union.org

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THE DIASPORA AS AFRICA'S SIXTH REGION
(Item proposed by the Republic of Senegal)

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1. The OAU/AU has, for long, regarded the Diaspora as a key element in the continent's development and integration process. It was in this respect that the Third Extraordinary Session of the Executive Council of AU held in South Africa in 2003, adopted Decision Ext/EX/CL/Dec.6(III) on Development of the Diaspora Initiative in the African Union.
2. That Decision bolstered the Commission's initiative in convening a technical workshop to develop a framework document and make recommendations on the relations between the African Union and the Diaspora. It also requested the Commission to determine the modalities of mutual cooperation between the African Union and CARICOM, as well as with other existing groups such as the Western Hemisphere Diaspora. CARICOM, which means the Caribbean Community, is an umbrella organization for several English-speaking states in the Caribbean, in addition to Dutch-speaking Suriname, and Haiti which is both French- and Creole-speaking.
3. In pursuance of the abovementioned decision, the Executive Council meeting in its 7th Ordinary Session in Sirte in June/July 2005, by Decision EX.CL/Dec.221(VII), adopted the following definition of the Diaspora: **"The African Diaspora consists of peoples of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union"**.
4. The African Diaspora may be divided into two categories: (i) people of African heritage who "involuntarily" migrated to North America, Europe, the Caribbean, Brazil and Latin America, Oceania, etc.; and, (ii) persons who recently left Africa "voluntarily". African Union strategy and programme regard both categories as target groups.
5. South Africa and the African Union Commission were mandated by the Union to coordinate the process of mobilizing the African Diaspora residing outside the Continent. It was within this context that the First African Union Diaspora Ministerial Conference was organized in Midrand, South Africa, from 16 to 18 November 2007. In the lead up to that meeting, five regional consultative conferences were held in Brazil, the United States, England, The Bahamas and France.
6. Pursuant to the Plan of Action arising from this conference, the Assembly of the African Union meeting in its 11th Ordinary Session in July 2008, by Decision **Assembly/AU/Dec.203 (XI)**, welcomed the efforts deployed to organize the African Diaspora Summit which was scheduled to be held in Johannesburg from 7 to 11 October 2008, but was later postponed. It is now expected to take place in South Africa on 25 May 2012.
7. However, discussions on the role of the Diaspora in the Union took a different turn and acquired a new lease on life with the organization of the First Conference of Intellectuals from Africa and the Diaspora held in Dakar from 6 to 9 October 2004.

After that meeting which brought together eminent personalities from the world of culture and science, the participants, taking into account the enduring participation of intellectuals of the Diaspora, their crucial contributions and unwavering commitment to African Renaissance, subscribed to the idea of making the Diaspora the sixth region of the African Union.

8. To that end, the Assembly requested the African Union Commission to prepare a policy paper or a framework document on how to implement the sixth region initiative, which would be presented as an agenda item, for consideration and adoption by African leaders at their July Session. The African Union Commission was also tasked to seek the support of Member States and civil society organizations to facilitate approval of this proposal.

9. This position was reaffirmed by the Second Conference of Intellectuals from Africa and the Diaspora held in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil, from 12 to 14 July 2006 which, in its Declaration, reiterated the call to African leaders to make the Diaspora the sixth region of the continent.

10. On the strength of this desire expressed by intellectuals from Africa and the Diaspora, Senegal, at the 12th Ordinary Session in January 2008, proposed in a draft Decision the "Representation of the African Diaspora at Assemblies of the African Union". In that connection, the Executive Council, on the basis of Article 3 (q) of the Constitutive Act of the African Union which "invites and encourages the full participation of the African Diaspora as an important part of our Continent, in the building of the African Union", adopted Decision EX.CL/Dec.406(XII) which takes on board the proposal presented by Senegal.

11. This Decision reaffirms African Union's commitment to seek appropriate means of implementing this objective. To this end, the Executive Council requested the Commission, as part of this process, to conduct an in-depth feasibility study on the idea of having the Diaspora as the sixth region of the Continent as well as develop modalities for Diaspora participation in the organs and activities of the Union.

12. At the moment, even if the relevance of making the Diaspora the sixth region of the Continent has been widely recognized, the need still remains to make this recognition operational through effective participation of the Diaspora in the building of African integration.

13. To this end, the World Bank's Africa Department, as far back as September 2007, launched the African Diaspora Program (ADP) with the following objectives: (1) developing and implementing Diaspora related policies, (2) financing and encouraging remittances for development purposes, and (3) using human capital development as part of programmes to counter brain drain. All of these are now priority areas for the African Union.

14. In sum, the next Diaspora Summit scheduled to take place in South Africa in May 2012, will afford the opportunity for the Union to meaningfully embark upon the process of involving the Diaspora in building the Union. This should lead to the establishment of mechanisms to facilitate Diaspora participation in the continent's development endeavours, and thus demonstrate African Union's commitment and

will to move resiliently towards building an Africa and a Diaspora unified and integrated.

15. In this regard, Senegal believes that the 18th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union due to take place in less than five (5) months from the historic meeting between Africa and its Diaspora, should be an opportunity to mark, albeit symbolically, the return of all peoples of African origin to the family fold and thus to re-enact the great African family.

16. It is for this reason that Senegal proposes this draft Resolution which will certainly be perceived by all components of the African Diaspora as a strong signal from Africa, and propel them to greater involvement in the process initiated by the African Union, the next Summit of which will mark the highpoint

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