Reflections on the African Union after Decade One

Looking Back in Order to Look Forward

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This special edition of *Africa Insight* focuses on the African Union (AU) after a decade since its inception. The idea is to cast a critical eye over the past 10 years of the AU, successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), who will itself in 2013 commemorate 50 years since its establishment in 1963. Writing in May 2012, one of the chief architects of the AU and of Africa's post-Cold War Continental Order, former South African president Thabo Mbeki remarked in the form of two probing questions:[1]

As we celebrate the first decade of both the AU and NEPAD, and prepare to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the OAU next year we must answer these questions honestly:

- What progress have we made towards the achievement of the objectives of the OAU, the AU and NEPAD? And,
- What shall we do in this regard?

This special edition will respond to these questions, and critically gauge the continent's peace and security, governance, development and cooperation architecture which have emerged over the past decade. To help unravel these questions, we were able to solicit articles from prominent analysts, not in the least

one of the chief architects of the new continental order, former South African President Thabo Mbeki, whose article in *The Thinker* of September 2012 is reprinted here with permission from the editor. Siphamandla Zondi does an analysis of the 2007 AU Audit Report and lessons to be learnt from it, while Tim Murithi gauges the continent's emerging peace and security architecture. Deon Geldenhuys zooms in on the vexing sovereignty as responsibility debate in contemporary Africa, as he locates the debate in historical context. Francis Ikome interprets for us the implications of the so-called 'Arab Spring', in particular the fall of Muammar Gaddafi and the anti-Mubarak interventions in Egypt, and implications for AU agency and leadership. Hesphina Rukato asks probing questions about the past, present and future of the AU's development programme, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), while Chris Landsberg does a critical appraisal of NEPAD's governance promotion programme, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). The last contribution is by Gerrit Olivier, who probes the issue of partnership and cooperation between Africa and external powers, with specific reference to European Union (EU)-Africa relations.

The collection of articles aims to explain the origins and nature of some of the continent's key interstate institutions and relations, and their implications for continental peace and security, development and cooperation.

This scene-setting article deals essentially with what could be dubbed the 'new' wave of pan-Africanism underway in Africa – otherwise described here as the new 'continentalism'.[2] There has been a policy revolution in Africa over the past decade. The continent boasts new norms, principles, values, mechanisms and structures that are fundamentally different from the ones which prevailed during the era

of liberation and the struggle against white minority domination and apartheid in Africa. The continent's state actors negotiated a new and progressive pan-Africanism, one that makes a fundamental break with the past as characterised by the period of the OAU.

The OAU placed a huge emphasis on unity, a struggle for political liberation and non-interference in the domestic affairs of African states. In contrast, the 'new' wave of inter-African cooperation puts the issues of development, governance, democratisation, economic growth, and peace and security firmly on the continental agenda. It therefore espouses a progressive agenda that seeks to build consensus on African development, governance, and peace and security through articulating new norms, values, principles and policies, and designing institutional mechanisms for implementing the new paradigm. The 2007 African Union High-level Panel Audit Report of 2007 argued that

> … although inconsistent in some respects, the Constitutive Act allows Africa to move towards continental unity … Core values as set out in Article three of the Constitutive Act should be promoted, internalised and domesticated in all African countries and AU organs.[3]

Key leaders drove these African values, rules and processes and the 'new African agenda' was geared towards breaking away from the decade-old regime of 'non-interference', 'non-intervention' and an obsession with 'national sovereignty',[4] so it articulates a new interventionism in defence of democratisation, accountable governance and human rights. According to former Mozambican President Joaquim Alberto Chissano, African leaders 'are busy developing and strengthening, enabling a political, economic, legal and institutional environment for their own citizens …'.[5]

The 'New' Africans: A Background

The 'new' pan-Africanism puts interventionism firmly on the agenda. African leaders such as South Africa's Thabo Mbeki, Nigeria's Olusegun Obasanjo, Algeria's Abdulaziz Bouteflika, Mozambique's Joachim Chissano, Ghana's John Kuofor, Ethiopia's Meles Zenawi, Tanzania's Benjamin Mkapa, Senegal's Abdulaye Wade, and others have all helped shape this new agenda. In particular, Thabo Mbeki and his Nigerian counterpart, Olusegun Obasanjo, emerged as central actors seeking to put in place punitive measures against unconstitutional changes of government in Africa; this move against *coups d'état* was a bid to entrench democratic norms of governance. These two AU leaders and their allies borrowed soccer terminology in invoking a 'yellow' and 'red' card threat analogy which said that in the event of a coup the putschists would first be warned and urged to return to democratic rule – the yellow card. In the event of a failure to comply, such regimes would then be expelled from the OAU and face other punitive sanctions – the red card. The OAU subsequently barred the military regimes of Côte d'Ivoire and Comoros from attending its summit in Lomé in 2000 as the idea of 'sovereignty as responsibility' increasingly took root in African diplomacy.[6]

During the period 2000–2001, the process of restructuring Africa's governance architecture crystallised when four leading African states – South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal and Algeria – and their continental partners undertook eight initiatives filled with new, and at times radical, policy directives:[7]

- The Africa renaissance
- The Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa and its formal incorporation into the OAU's conflict prevention, management and resolution machinery (established in 1930)
- The decision taken in Lomé in 1999 by the OAU to transform itself into the AU
- The acceleration of the OAU-mandated drafting of the Millennium Africa Recovery Plan (MAP) under the leadership of Mbeki, Obasanjo and Bouteflika
- The merger of the MAP and the Omega Plan (the initiative spearheaded by Senegalese president Abdoulaye Wade) to create the New Africa Initiative
- The launch of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)
- The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)
- Africa's quest for a partnership with the industrialised world through seeking strategic relations with the G8 and other actors

The design and construction of these eight policy initiatives have formed the crux of the 'new' African architecture. All these policy ordinances propose a major restructuring of Africa's development, governance, and peace and security ethos; they come out in defence of intervention in the domestic affairs of states in four particular instances:[8]

1. Genocide
2. Gross violations of human rights
3. Instability in one country which threatens broader regional stability
4. Unconstitutional changes of government

There has thus been a proposed break with the past; however, it is clear 10 years later that successfully implementing this new interventionism will require political commitment from states – a coalition of the willing, so to speak. It will require member states to form a consortium to act in defence of the new regime. Indeed, the continent is bound to experience a major implementation crisis over the next few decades, so while the policy designs and scope have been sorted out, there is little guarantee

that the continent will be successful at operationalising and implementing these new policy programmes and plans. The current crop of African leaders is thus tasked with placing the emphasis on operationalisation of the execution of policy.

Key actors have openly stated that they favour 'an Africa' that can be 'critical' about 'its own weaknesses'.[9] The new architecture will depend heavily on political will; human and financial resources; respect for new norms, values and principles; the strengthening of new institutions; intra-African cooperation; and the forging of new strategic partnerships between Africa and the outside world (notably the industrialised powers and the continent), among other things. In the words of the former chairperson of the AU Commission, Professor Alpha Konare,

> [t]he resources that we need for the integrated Africa to become a force to be reckoned with, a force that we can all rely upon, include among other things, the political will to achieve integration, the leadership and commitment of the Commission, the accession of the people to the integration endeavour, the optimal use of all our assets (namely our population, culture, languages, dialogue, economies, and human and financial resources).[10]

The problem is that, 10 years since the AU's inception, many of these fundamentals are in short supply on the continent, and this inadequacy will negatively impact on the chances of successful implementation.

A Radically Altered African Policy Landscape

The policy landscape inherited by the new pan-Africanism is characterised by poverty, underdevelopment and massive socioeconomic challenges. This landscape is further complicated by wars and deadly conflicts in some parts of the continent. Africa has experienced more wars and violent conflicts than any other region or continent.[11] Poor people are typically marginalised and excluded from the policy, decision-making and governance process in Africa.[12] By the time of the AU's creation, the economies of the continent had seriously underperformed, and therefore failed to produce the necessary growth and resources needed for development.[13]

Given this policy context, great emphasis has been placed on integration processes, especially at sub-regional levels. Integration bodies such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA), the AU, and programmes like NEPAD have all crucial roles to play in this regard,[14] yet there appears to be little interest on the part of African leaders to re-establish and restore the credibility and importance of these institutions and programmes.

Put simply, regional integration is the impulse toward creating a common approach, replete with institutions, by states in a region around economic, political or social issues. It is about liberation and self-determination, peace and security, and development. Integration is transformatory, and calls for a radical approach to bringing together disparate states.[15] This transformation depends heavily on regional cohesion in securing societal integration within a region – it builds regional awareness and identity. It requires interstate cooperation and coordination in a region. Regional cooperation, however, should not be confused with regional integration and unification as it is merely part of the process that leads to this. The question

could legitimately be asked as to whether the continent's leaders are committed to integration or whether they prefer piecemeal efforts of cooperation.

Regional integration seeks to move beyond nation-state identities in order to develop new and common regional identities and citizenships. It leads to the emergence of cohesive and consolidated regional units.[16] Its ultimate goal is the creation of a single regional entity, such as one southern African bloc, out of many disparate groups. Real integration does not just mean the amalgamation of the various economies in the region; its longer-term goals must of necessity include a common citizenship, such as a southern African citizenship, and thus the free movement of both goods and people. Political integration, as witnessed in the EU, is an even longer-term goal of this process and is perhaps the most difficult aspect to achieve.

Regional integration is about states agreeing to live by common norms and values, the deepening of cooperation, the creation of common markets, the free movement of people in a region, and ultimately the creation of a shared governance architecture, replete with legislative and other governance competencies for the region. There is need for greater urgency to be demonstrated by African leaders to take integration far more seriously.

One of the threats to successful regional integration on the African continent, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, is the HIV/AIDS pandemic, added to which is the continued economic difficulty. The region is confronted with a plethora of enormous developmental challenges. While in recent years economic growth rates in the region have reached levels of between 2 and 8 per cent, the promise of great economic growth in the region was originally overstated, and of late there has been a serious race for access to

Africa's resources under the banner of Africa as the 'new gateway'.

Many states have been compelled to become part of the cycle of 'donor democracy' in which most of their national budgets are supplied by donors, thus leaving them wide open to pressure, persuasion and the dictates of the donors at whose mercy their fragile economies lie. Many are forced to pursue economic policies dictated by these donors and termed by many analysts as 'neo-liberal'. This has, more often than not, not resulted in sustainable growth paths in these countries. Even in countries where economic growth rates have been high, such growth typically has been off a low base. From a governance perspective, poor economic performance exacerbates poverty and compounds the daunting development challenges. Both these factors impact negatively on prospects for regional integration.

HIV/AIDS threatens the populace of states in the region – impacting even on the military and governance machinery in potential member states, and threatening to spill over into neighbouring states with the free movement of goods and people that regional integration brings. Similarly, economic meltdown in one or more states in a region may be viewed as a threat by prospective member states that are more economically balanced, as they may fear being flooded by economic refugees from these countries moving freely across borders in such a regional community. Xenophobia and other interstate tensions that could result from this may well threaten the prospect of regional integration. Ironically, however, regional integration may well be the cure for both of these 'threats' to regional integration. A coordinated regional approach to combating HIV/AIDS may be the most effective way to fight the pandemic, while an integrated economic bloc *à la* the EU may well be the best way to create economic

growth, not just in one state, but in an entire economic community.

A New Institutional Architecture

In some quarters, the AU has been made out to be little more than the 'OAU without the O', suggesting that it was going to be business as usual. There are however real and fundamental differences between the two organisations. Whereas the OAU enjoyed a single source of authority – the Assembly of Heads of State and Government – the AU enjoys multiple ones. In reality, the OAU was little more than a collaboration of governments of sovereign states, and placed a huge emphasis on 'national sovereignty' as being paramount.[17] It did not take kindly to interference in the internal affairs of states, and did not even question in public the actions of other governments. It did not show seriousness to the pooling of sovereignty, and its prime objective was a collective struggle for national liberation from colonialism and the defence of national sovereignty. As the OAU subscribed to an 'intergovernmental approach', the secretary-general was tasked with carrying out the decisions of heads of state.

While the OAU had one single source of authority, the AU opted for a more democratised approach. It enjoys multiple sources of authority, including the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, a judicial court, and a democratic institution in the form of the Pan-African Parliament (PAP). While the AU subscribes to the doctrine of respect for internal authority and sovereignty, it also endorses a 'right to intervene in grave circumstances', including making provisions to suspend governments that come to power unconstitutionally, as well as those governments who commit gross violations of human rights, such as mass murder

and genocide.[18] In a bold and innovative move, the AU came up with an innovative governance promotion mechanism – the African Peer Review Mechanism (ARPM) – to encourage African states to live by common governance standards.[19] The overall decision-making ethos as subscribed to by the AU, as well as promoted in mechanisms like the APRM, was that of collegiality and quiet diplomacy. The AU agreed to establish a number of political, legal and democratic organs.[20]

- **The Assembly of the Union**, the supreme organ of the AU, is composed of heads of state and government or their duly accredited representatives. This organ meets at least once annually in an extraordinary session.

- **The Commission of the African Union** is the secretariat of the AU. It is composed of the chairperson, his or her deputy, and commissioners. It represents the AU, and defends its interests under the direction of the Assembly and the Executive Council. It can initiate proposals for submission to the other organs of the AU, and executes decisions taken by it. It assists member states in executing the policies and programmes of the AU, particularly the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA) and NEPAD. It formulates common positions of the AU, and coordinates the work of member states during international negotiations.

- **The Executive Council**, composed of foreign ministers or other such ministers or representatives as are designated by the governments of member states, is responsible for coordinating and taking decisions on policies in areas of common interest to member states.

- **The Permanent Representatives' Committee**, composed of permanent representatives

or other plenipotentiaries of member states, is responsible for preparing the work of the Executive Council and acting on its instructions.

- **The Peace and Security Council** is composed of 15 member states, and is responsible for the promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa, preventive diplomacy and the restoration of peace. It is also responsible for disaster management and humanitarian activities. It is expected to replace the Central Organ of the Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution Mechanism established in 1993 by the heads of state at the Tunis Summit. To enable it to discharge its responsibilities with respect to deployment of peace support missions and interventions in the event of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, the Peace and Security Council may consult a Panel of the Wise composed of five African personalities, and mobilise a standby force.

- **The Pan-African Parliament** will be unicameral but representative of all parliaments of the countries of Africa. It will adopt legislation agreed to by a two-thirds majority of its members, and will be composed of five members per country, at least one of which is a woman.

- **The African Court of Justice**, which will adjudicate in civil cases, will be responsible for the protection of human rights and the monitoring of human rights violations. It will also constitute itself into a real criminal court in the long term.

- **The Economic, Social and Cultural Council** is an advisory organ composed of different social and professional groups from member states of the AU, particularly youth and women's associations.

- **The African Court of Human and People's Rights** adopted at the Ouagadougou Summit in 1998, has jurisdiction in cases of human rights violation by any state party, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, and African intergovernmental organisations. The court can hear cases filed by individuals and non-governmental organisations with observer status in the AU when the state party concerned makes a declaration to this effect. It is composed of 11 judges elected by the Assembly for a mandate of six years renewable once only.

- **The Three Financial Institutions** are the African Central Bank, the African Monetary Fund and the Investment Bank.

- **Specialised Technical Committees** are composed of ministers or senior officials responsible for the sectors falling within their respective areas of competence. Seven Technical Committees, the number and composition of which are not limited, are provided for in the Constitutive Act of the AU:
  - The Committee on Rural Economy and Agriculture
  - The Committee on Monetary and Financial Matters
  - The Committee on Trade, Customs and Immigration Matters
  - The Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, Energy, Natural Resources and Environment
  - The Committee on Transport, Communications and Tourism
  - The Committee on Health, Labour and Social Affairs
  - The Committee on Education, Culture and Human Resources

The above confirms that there has been a policy, norms and institutions revolution in Africa. The challenge now and into the future is to place the emphasis on implementation and operationalization.

Major Challenges

There is no gainsaid that the AU has faced many institutional changes during the course of its first decade of existence, so while there has been an unprecedented policy revolution in Africa, spearheaded by the AU and key states, the AU has also been beset with major institutional and organisational crises. The former commissioner for political affairs at the AU Commission in Addis Ababa, Julia Dolly Joiner, said in this regard that 'the challenges … are essentially at two levels. The first relates to institutional capacity and the second to strategic orientation'.[21] 'At the overall strategic orientation', she continued, 'it goes without saying that there is always tension between the application of shared values and the particularities and specificities of each member state.'[22] These challenges ranged from human resource issues, clinging to old-style sovereignty, relations with civil society, and weak regional economic communities (RECs) and other institutions.

Personnel and Financial Challenges

Notwithstanding the fundamental overhaul of the policy landscape in Africa over the past decade, the transition from the OAU to the AU remains a complex and challenging process, especially with regard to human and financial resources, and in terms of setting policy priorities. The AU continues to face the challenge of increasing, professionalising and equipping its staff with the necessary skills while simultaneously making its structures effective and efficient. Moreover, there were major tensions between the AU and NEPAD over integrating the latter into the former.[23] Because of these tensions, NEPAD, like the AU, also has staffing and human resources problems because NEPAD has put all such policy and procedural matters, such as appointing staff and creating necessary structures, on hold because of uncertainty deriving from the NEPAD/AU tensions.

Limited financial resources, especially for the AU and sub-regional organisations, remains a major problem impacting on all facets of these institutions' operations. The AU, for example, has inherited huge financial shortfalls. Many member states do not pay their dues in full and/or on time, and this creates huge financial problems for the AU. While some cash-strapped states are incapable of paying, many others, who continue to contribute their dues to the UN and other international organisations, lack the political will or interest to pay their AU dues. Consequently, the institutions remain heavily dependent on donor funding, and this allows foreigners to dictate policy in ways that suit their interests instead of those of the continent. Such dependency, especially if it becomes entrenched, can be detrimental to the interests of an African-inspired and -owned agenda.

A challenge for the AU and sub-regional organisations is to make it worth the while of member states to pay their dues. They must be seen to be getting value for their money, which means that the AU will have to begin seriously to operationalise its lofty protocols, agendas and ideals – moving them from the realm of promises and vision to that of reality on the ground. It will have to accomplish this if it is to finally break with the image associated with its predecessor, the OAU, and it remains one of the continental body's most challenging tasks.

The RECs are regarded as the implementing agents of the new continental architecture and have been dubbed the building blocks of the AU, yet all of them, without fail, face serious financial constraints, and struggle to execute their ambitious policy mandates. Many RECs are also jealous of their status as older, and

more experienced than the AU, and are reluctant to cede leadership to it. This has resulted in something of a power struggle between RECs and the AU.

Challenges of Implementation

In addition to the challenge of acquiring the necessary human and financial resources, and building new institutions, Africa continues to grapple, among other things, with problems of peace building, democratic governance and development. One of the most serious challenges facing the AU Commission is that of closing the gap between the formulation of policy and treaty commitments and their actual implementation and operationalisation.[24] Indeed, the OAU had long faced a crisis of implementation, and a serious risk still exists that, over the next four years, the AU Commission could find itself bogged down by a backlog of unimplemented decisions.

Challenges of Unity and Sovereignty

There is clearly a major contradiction here. On the one hand, greater development and a developmental paradigm require the continent to foster unity among its divergent states. Another gap that must be closed is the challenge of the continent in marshalling its disparate institutional voices so that it can begin to speak with a common and unified voice on key development challenges. However, many governments remain reluctant to empower the Commission with such powers and responsibilities, and a majority of African governments still cling to old-style sovereignty.[25] The Commission should therefore brace itself for a continuation of tensions between itself and some governments in this regard, as it will continue to face a struggle

to convince governments to cede sovereignty for the common good.

Many African states remain jealous of their sovereignty and are not keen to surrender or even pool some of it. So, although member states have ratified the Constitutive Act, the risk remains that many governments would prefer the status quo to remain even at the risk of creating a weak AU. Some misunderstanding also seems to exist in the general public over the status of the AU and its constitutive bodies. Is the AU a supranational body or an intergovernmental organisation?

Relations with RECs

The relationship between the AU and Africa's regional economic organisations remains somewhat ambiguous, and at times contentious, in spite of a protocol signed by the OAU and five of the existing RECs. A joint Centre for Conflict Resolution-African Centre for Development and Strategic Studies (ACDESS) report of 2010 argues that, 'each of Africa's regional economic communities (RECs) has its own interests and agendas, which can obstruct effective co-operation within and between these bodies'.[26] There is, first of all, a proliferation of regional bodies, many with overlapping and sometimes contradictory mandates, roles and memberships. Presently, there are at least 40 different regional bodies in Africa, all with their own economic integration and security arrangements. This state of affairs often creates confusion, so the need for a harmonisation of efforts cannot be overemphasised. However, the possibility cannot be ruled out that some of the better-resourced RECs – such as SADC and ECOWAS – will fiercely protect their autonomy, and many, including the weaker and less well-organised RECs, may resist the Commission's involvement

in decision-making and operational matters in their region.

The AU's protocol relating to the Peace and Security Council calls for defining relations and rationalising the organisation's links with the RECs. However, this may be a difficult task, not least because the existing regional security arrangements have been set up and mandated by a decision of their heads of state and government. Furthermore, the protocol relating to the PSC was signed much later than earlier regional pacts and agreements on peace and security, such as the ECOWAS security mechanism of 1999 and the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation of 2001. Harmonisation is therefore a *sine qua non*, but competition and a certain amount of rivalry should be expected.

Relations with Civil Society

The 2010 joint CCR-ACDESS report observed that '…relations between states and their societies should be urgently addressed, and in particular, the gap between elites and their masses narrowed'.[27] This report implored that 'viable social contracts between leaders and citizens should also be developed. The economic transformation of Africa depends on the establishment of effective local governance at the grassroots level. Citizens should be empowered, and political processes to enable the full participation of all sectors of society should be strengthened'.[28]

While many of the AU's as well as NEPAD's and the APRM's provisions makes lofty commitments to the idea of popular and civil society participation, the commitments of member states and the institutions that have been set up for such participation have remained weak. Certainly, many new opportunities for civil society engagement have been created by the new architecture, and NGOs and CSOs have often been poorly organised to take up these challenges. But this does not detract from the fact that the real strength and success of the AU, NEPAD and other continental initiatives will be determined by the extent to which they empower people and create opportunities for them to improve their lives. In future, the AU, NEPAD, APRM, PAP and other structures, institutions and programmes will continue to be tested on the basis of the impact they have on the lives of ordinary African citizens. Indeed, if they wish to build their credibility in the eyes of the African populace at large, they will have to begin to show that they can be sources for the betterment of their lives – not just economically, although this is very important – but also in the human rights, peace-making, peacekeeping and democratic governance realms.

The establishment of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) as a unit of the CSSDCA tasked with civil society issues within the AU Commission was not sufficiently staffed and equipped to perform its catalytic role more effectively. The Commission was also ill-prepared to help overcome the apprehension illustrated by several African governments towards civil society actors. NEPAD's civil society structures remained decidedly weak, and its operatives seem more interested in inviting civil society participation during implementation processes, and not in actual policymaking, design and construction processes. Deliberative policy-making opportunities in the AU were thus poorly constructed, protestations to the contrary notwithstanding. It is needless to point out that it is imperative for the AU to appreciate that stakeholder participation is required during all stages of the policymaking and governance processes if buy-in and ownership are to be ensured, and if the AU is to become a more people-centred continental body.

But there is also a responsibility that rests on the shoulders of African CSOs to become more engaging if democratic governance processes are to take firm root in Africa. These non-state actors should not expect governments to invite them in, as it is not in the nature of African governments to share power with such actors. NGOs will have to become more proactive in engaging the AU, NEPAD, the APRM, RECs and other AU organs.

The AU Commission and the recently elected chairperson, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, should now make it a strategic imperative to re-engage African non-state actors to assist with capacity building for the engagement of the continental architecture.

Conclusion

The AU has no doubt been in the forefront of spearheading a policy and norms revolution on the continent, but it has been embroiled in an institutional crisis of implementation and operationalisation. Translating policy into action, and getting the member states to take AU provisions seriously and to live by newly articulated values and principles, has been an uphill battle. Even RECs and other organs and programmes have faced serious institution-building challenges. These bodies had been tasked with taking the lead in establishing new institutions and organs, and overhauling weak structures, while simultaneously establishing their own structures and building up their own financial and human resource bases and communications strategies. However, due to a combination of factors, ranging from weak leadership to weak financial and human resource bases, as well as being torn between internal institutional reform and external demands by member states, they have not been able to live up to expectations. In short, a major part of the narrative of the AU has been a gap between policy and implementation, and in the decade to follow the AU will have to demonstrate the necessary agency and leadership to tackle this problem head on. As newly elected chairperson of the AU, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma,[29] stated:

I believe that more can be done to make the AU fulfil the mandate given to it by our forebears. We need to continue to build the commission into a formidable, pan-African institution that is at the selfless service of the continent.

One way forward for the new chairperson is to inculcate into the AU Commission a political culture that would move from rhetoric to action.

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