

# OECD Observer Roundtable on regional integration in Africa

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**What policy initiatives would you prioritise to promote regional integration in Africa and what international co-operation initiatives would you encourage most?**

## **Raise the global value of African knowledge**

### **OECD Observer Roundtable on regional integration in Africa 1 (Mburu)**



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Yvonne Mburu, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Nexakili

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I see three main areas for action. First, set a common framework for educational policy, knowledge exchange and scientific diplomacy. Success in building knowledge-driven economies will depend largely on Africa's ability to produce scientific knowledge. The most optimistic reports today estimate the African contribution to the global scientific production at 2%. African countries must embark on a deliberate mission of converging their educational curricula and leveraging technology to accelerate knowledge production and circulation within the continent. The implementation of core curricula, for instance, would allow students from one country to continue graduate or post-graduate work in another country in a seamless way, and faculty to participate in joint teaching programmes and fellowships. These exchanges would not only strengthen social and cultural ties, but also help build a pool of highly qualified personnel within the region. Streamlining educational standards, quality and competencies fosters an increase in overall productivity and raises the global value of African knowledge.

Second, strengthen local supply chains and build regional markets for manufactured produce.

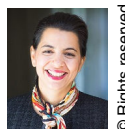
Africa must move away from being primarily a supplier of raw materials to which others add value, towards boosting local manufacturing capacity, transforming raw materials, and developing efficient supply chains. Scaling the existing small, fragmented markets into common markets governed by regional alliances is paramount. This convergence will deliver cost savings and efficiency, allow countries to source local produce for regional and international markets, and deliver economic and social benefits across the continent.

Finally, defining a pan-African identity and sharing a common language is indispensable to regional integration. Swahili, the most widely spoken African language, unites approximately 150 million people across seven countries. Heavy preference should be given to the widespread expansion and adoption of Swahili as the African lingua franca. Persistent barriers to the free movement of people—a colonial vestige—must be eliminated to pave way for the social, cultural and economic ascendance of the continent.

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### Promoting results-driven education

#### OECD Observer Roundtable on regional integration in Africa 2 (Karboul)



Amel Karboul, CEO, Education Outcomes Fund for Africa and the Middle East

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The learning crisis is a time bomb that could undermine the achievement of all of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, and demands urgent global action. By 2035, without purposeful work, over 1 billion young Africans could be wandering cities looking for jobs.

In response, the Education Commission and the Global Steering Group for Impact Investment have come together to create the Education Outcomes Fund for Africa and the Middle East (EOF). EOF aims to pool \$1 billion in aid and philanthropic funds. It will partner with governments across the MEA region to strengthen education systems, harnessing the capacity and capability of non-state actors to improve the effectiveness of expenditure and help deliver on the promise of quality education for all.

The fund will seek to ensure that every child has an equal opportunity to learn and thrive, with a special focus on underserved populations, including the hardest-to-reach rural populations, girls, children with disabilities, and refugees. It will measure (and pay for) what matters—both core skills like literacy and numeracy, but also critical 21st century skills, such as socio-emotional skills, IT

skills, and other broader fundamentals of a quality education. It will help close the persistent skills gap.

EOF will pay almost entirely on the basis of the results achieved, ensuring that taxpayer-funded domestic resources, aid, and philanthropic funds are only used to pay for what works. Knowledge-sharing among African governments about what works, at what price and the implementation of those best practices in new results-focused policies is a powerful driver of regional integration and development.

This is a game-changing way to finance results in education, as it aligns the whole system around a common set of outcomes, both on a country and a regional level. EOF empowers and supports NGOs to innovate, adapt, and find context-specific solutions. And rather than being funded for emotional appeals about their impact, providers will be rewarded based on independently verified results. This radical transparency will ensure that EOF, policymakers and the donor community can systematically shift funds towards scaling programmes that demonstrate the best results and value for money.

Visit [www.educationoutcomesfund.org/](http://www.educationoutcomesfund.org/)

### Supporting a key aspiration of African countries

#### OECD Observer Roundtable on regional integration in Africa 3 (Gigaba)



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Malusi Gigaba, Minister of Home Affairs, South Africa

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Regional integration (free movement of goods, services, people and capital between countries) has been a key aspiration of African countries since the achievement of independence. African countries have embraced regional integration as an important component of their development strategies, primarily

driven by the economic rationale of overcoming the constraint of small and fractioned economies.

The realisation of the regional integration aspirations is demonstrated by the recent adoption of three regional integration instruments by the member states of the African Union (AU): the AU Agenda 2063; the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA); and the AU Protocol on Free Movement of Persons.

South Africa (SA) supports the vision of an Africa where its citizens can move freely across national borders, and where intra-African trade is facilitated to benefit its citizens. The regional integration and international co-operation agenda are promoted through the following policy initiatives in SA:

First, SA has adopted a new white paper on international migration which is Afrocentric and focused on enabling economic development. The new policy is geared towards the promotion of trade, investment and tourism.

Second, SA has removed visa requirements for nationals from countries of the South African Development Community (SADC).

Third, SA is in the process of introducing special work and informal trader's visas for SADC nationals.

Fourth, we support the UNIVISA for visitors from countries outside the region in order to promote regional tourism.

We are also implementing a long-term multiple entry visa (3-10 years) for business persons, academics and frequent travellers in visa-requiring countries in Africa and BRICS member states.\*

SA continues to support the work of the UN Agencies such as the UNHCR, UNODC, IOM and in pursuit of a just and peaceful world. And our membership of the BRICS enhances our market access and investment opportunities in emerging economies.

Meanwhile, as part of its digitalisation strategy, SA is deploying digital technologies in its border areas in order to facilitate ease of movement for travellers. The country has made great strides in making its national identity system secure using biometric-enabled digital platforms.

Finally, SA values its partnership with the OECD as it enhances its trade and investment opportunities.

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### **Liberalisation's limits**

## OECD Observer Roundtable on regional integration in Africa 4 (Diallo)



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Mamadou Diallo, Deputy General Secretary, International Trade Union Confederation

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Data show that due to previous instances of liberalisation, the share of manufacturing in Africa's GDP fell from 15% in 1990 to 10.6% in 2015. For decades, Africa has been losing opportunities to industrialise, diversify its economy and eliminate poverty through decent work.

For instance, all regions in Africa are facing a food deficit, except that of the East Africa Community, which kept protection of its agro-food sectors in place, with high tariffs and other measures that have enabled the market to grow.

Currently, trade and industrial policy of African countries are driven by national goals. African leaders should correct this by launching regional industrial policy initiatives that promote linkages with regional economic sectors. To this end, African governments should reject the Economic Partnership Agreements with the EU, as the unions are asking, in order to preserve policy space. Unions also advise them to establish ambitious screening and performance requirements for all investment, including Chinese investment.

The negotiations for a Continental Free Trade Agreement (CFTA) are a precursor to a Continental Customs Union (CCU) by 2022 and the creation of an African Economic Community by 2028. We encourage these initiatives, but we also warn that there has not been proper impact assessments on different aspects of development, such as on workers' incomes, the environment and industrialisation. African governments have not consulted with trade unions, women rights' defenders, environmental conservationists or other civil society actors on these initiatives. And there is a danger that the CFTA would create a border-free area for non-African goods to circulate.

African countries should be launching a far-reaching initiative to electrify, build internet and other digital infrastructure, and keep African personal data in Africa

in order to give an advantage to local start-ups and enterprises. Connections with the rest of the world should be agreed only after careful thinking.

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### A partner in all areas

#### OECD Observer Roundtable on regional integration in Africa 5 (Manservisi)



Stefano Manservisi, European Commission, Director-General for International Co-operation and Development

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In the years to come, Africa intends to go through three main structural changes: increase the added-value of what is produced, reduce dependency on fossil fuels and join the digital revolution.

African countries, united in the African Union (AU), have set out collectively their strategic benchmarks. The AU Agenda 2063, the Program for the Infrastructural Development of Africa (PIDA), the Action Plan for the Accelerated Industrial Development for Africa (AIDA), the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI) and the Policy and Regulation Initiative for Digital Africa (PRIDA) are all clear examples of Africa's dynamism and a strong political momentum.

The EU is a partner for Africa in all of these areas.

The ambition to accelerate Africa's regional integration is captured in the recent launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). It will boost intra-African trade, contribute to sustainable economic development and structural transformation, facilitate industrialisation through diversification, regional value chains and boost agricultural production.

Ongoing regional economic integration, driven by the Regional Economic Communities, is an important building block in this process. The EU has been supporting this for some time and will continue to do so.

The EU does a lot to support progress on the AfCFTA, and we bring our own single market experience with us. We already bring financial support to the table and we support the negotiations themselves via the African Union Commission (AUC). Along with the AUC, we also work with international partners such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the International Trade Centre (ITC) to facilitate African efforts towards the ratification, implementation and monitoring of the AfCFTA. More precisely, the upcoming EU-supported actions will also contribute to developing national AfCFTA implementation strategies. The EU's various beneficial trade regimes provide building blocks towards Africa's continental integration. The ultimate long-term goal would be to achieve a continent-to-continent free trade agreement.

The Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs, presented by European Commission President Juncker in his State of the Union address, will take our economic partnership to the next level, by focusing on four interconnected strands: supporting investment through de-risking, improving the business environment, supporting skills and education, and boosting trade and economic integration within Africa and between the EU and Africa.

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