



**Florida High Schools Model United Nations**

**GULF COAST 10**

**AFRICAN UNION (AU)**

**ECONOMIC INTEGRATION FOR REGIONAL STABILITY**

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## Introduction

Recent innovations and developments in technologies have brought about the advent of modern globalization and a new way of conducting trade. Globalization describes the growing interdependence of the world's economies, cultures, and populations, brought about by cross-border trade in goods and services, technology, and flows of investment, people, and information<sup>1</sup>. It should be mentioned that globalization is hardly a new concept and has existed in the past with the examples of the Silk Road<sup>2</sup> or the Roman Roads. Nowadays, this has reshaped economic landscapes worldwide, and while controversial, it has increased the standard of living on a global scale. Despite that increase, there are still some states that face economic disadvantages that make it difficult for progress to occur.

The continent of Africa is often regarded as the most culturally diverse in the world, thanks to the various tribes, peoples, and languages that call it home. Rich culture aside, there is much to be said about the abundance of natural resources that belong to the land. Gold, diamonds, cobalt, platinum, oil, uranium, and lumber comprise some of the continent's largest exports. This became very attractive to foreign powers during colonization, starting in the 1880s. It became known as The Scramble for Africa and has continued to entice overseas investors and states even after the continent began to seek independence from its previous colonizers. While having such bountiful resources, states face some challenges regarding development: corruption, regional and geopolitical instability, and the lack of a stable private sector are some of the few issues that stand in the way.

With the United Nations's (UN) seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) coming to a close in 2030, most nations feel apprehensive. According to the 2023 SDG Report, only 15% of the targets are on track, with 48% being moderately or severely off track, and an alarming 37% of targets were either stagnated or regressed in their progress. It seems like the pattern has carried on to the current time<sup>3</sup>. The 2024 SDG Reports supports the statistics listed above, stating that the current assessment of the 169 targets is severely off track. This stems from the Covid-19 pandemic and the global recession that came as a result. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the world needs more time to catch up. Agenda 2063 (2015), proposed by the African Union (AU), aims to mitigate this by establishing its initiatives. Alongside Agenda 2063 are initiatives and frameworks designed to lift member states up, like the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the African Continental Free Trade Area. Economic integration is essential for achieving regional stability in Africa.

By working together, African nations can overcome challenges and capitalize on opportunities for growth and development. Economic integration is essential for achieving regional stability on the continent. Delegates must collaborate to examine the obstacles and determine the best solutions to promote a stable and more prosperous Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> Kolb, Melina. 2018. "What Is Globalization?" Peterson Institute for International Economics. October 29, 2018. <https://www.piie.com/microsites/globalization/what-is-globalization>

<sup>2</sup> National Geographic Society. 2024. "Effects of Economic Globalization." Education.nationalgeographic.org. National Geographic. February 20, 2024. <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/effects-economic-globalization/>

<sup>3</sup> Nations, United. 2024. "Progress Chart — SDG Indicators." Un.org. 2024. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/progress-chart/#>

## The Before and After of Colonization

### *The Scramble for Africa*

Between the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, Africa went through what is known as the “Scramble for Africa”. European countries took advantage of Africa’s trade opportunities firsthand, hoping to revive its overseas markets. By the end of 1860, European countries took control of about 10% of the African continent.<sup>4</sup> In West Africa, on the Gulf of Guinea, the French and British dominated, while Portugal took over Mozambique in East Africa, and France and Britain again colonized Algeria in southern Africa.<sup>5</sup> Africa had lost much of its independence and control, now being infiltrated by different European countries and losing its hold on its trade system, economics, education, government, and culture.

Although European colonization of Africa was a success, the next step was establishing a system to maintain equal rights and power among the European colonizers. At what is known as the Berlin Africa Conference (or Congo Conference), fourteen countries, beyond just European regions, came together to develop territorial boundaries for equal control of power, to get rid of the slave trade, to establish a trading system, and to recognize what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo as a free state. By the beginning of the twentieth century, much of Africa was fully colonized by European powers, and many African societies failed to fend off European colonizers.

Africa was seen only for what she could give, losing her independence. Since the division of regions decided on during the Berlin Conference, they have become borders that still exist today, even after Africa gained independence.<sup>6</sup> The Scramble for Africa forever changed the economy and culture of Africa, maintaining its division long through the end of colonialism.

### *“Divide and Rule” in Nigeria*

In the late 18th century, British traders began to settle in and colonize Nigeria. They first completely abolished Nigeria’s slave trade, naming this as when Britain truly “intervened in the region.”<sup>7</sup> For Britain to maintain total control of Nigeria, the “divide and rule” policy came into play. The goal was to maintain division among all Nigerian groups, separating the people with both politics and religion. Nigerians, in response, formed their political party, but not all agreed

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<sup>4</sup> Edu, World History. 2022. “Scramble for Africa: History, Berlin Conference, Outcome, & Facts.” World History Edu. April 19, 2022. <https://worldhistoryedu.com/scramble-for-africa-history-berlin-conference-outcome-facts/>

<sup>5</sup> Edu, World History. 2022. “Scramble for Africa: History, Berlin Conference, Outcome, & Facts.” World History Edu. April 19, 2022. <https://worldhistoryedu.com/scramble-for-africa-history-berlin-conference-outcome-facts/>

<sup>6</sup> Michalopoulos, Stelios. 2021. “European Colonialism in Africa Is Alive | by Stelios Michalopoulos & Elias Papaioannou.” Project Syndicate. July 30, 2021.

<https://www.project-syndicate.org/onpoint/europe-africa-colonial-era-lasting-effects-by-stelios-michalopoulos-and-elias-papaioannou-2021-07>

<sup>7</sup> “Niger Delta Black Gold Blues: Colonial History of Nigeria: Slave Trade, Resource Extraction, and the Invention of a National Territory.” 2016. Niger Delta Black Gold Blues: Can Writers Bring about Environmental Justice Where Slow Violence Has Proven so Devastating? Or a Cautionary Tale for Environmental Sacrifice Zones Worldwide. 2016.

<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/niger-delta-black-gold-blues/12-colonial-subjugation-of-people-land-and-nature-slave-trade-resource-extraction-palm-oil-and-the-invention-of-a-national-territory-kaitlyn#:~:text=Falola%20also%20writes%20that%20in>

with this course of action. Many Nigerians became fearful of gaining independence, creating disagreement between the British and the natives and among the natives themselves.

Nigeria's attraction initially relied on its slave-trade system. When the British abolished this system, the focus turned towards converting the Nigerian people to Christianity and building up Britain's trade systems. This situation in Nigeria represents the effects of colonization that still last today. The idea of "divide and rule" brought much division among the Nigerian people themselves, leading to troubles with ethnic groups, government formation, and control of power.

### *The Situation in Africa Now*

After much of Africa suffered from direct European colonialism during the early 20th century, Africa still struggled to find a balance after losing power. Still today, certain regions of Africa struggle over an assertion of power due to the divisions made during the Scramble for Africa. Areas such as Senegal, Togo, the Gambia, the Congo, Angola, and Mali have all experienced dilemmas with an assertion of power due to the effects of European colonialism.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, much of Europe's investments made into Africa during colonization benefited European regions only. In present-day Africa, power is still indirect and inconsistent throughout the continent. During colonialism, Europeans built railroads to connect Africa to Europe and the Americas to transfer riches and products. Only a few inner railroads within areas such as Ghana and Mozambique were developed by Europeans, allowing for limited transportation of supplies throughout the continent. Evidently, European colonization continues to harm Africa's present education, economy, infrastructure, culture, and government, continuing the issue with the assertion of power among many African regions.

### **Geopolitical Issues**

Various forms and causes of conflict and geopolitical instability exist in African regions. As of 2019, there are currently at least 15 countries with armed conflict, and the number is expected to increase, with 7 of them deemed severe and high intensity.<sup>9</sup> This instability, as stated, is caused by several factors, including, but not limited to, the aftermath of colonialism, religious conflict, terrorism, weak economic and governmental institutions, international involvement, and more. After the previously established colonialist form of governance was withdrawn, different regions were left to their resources. They were influenced into forming governments and economies, all heavily based on international involvement and trade. "Africa comes second in the number of armed conflicts per region with more than 35 non-international armed conflicts (NIACs) taking place in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), the

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<sup>8</sup>Michalopoulos, Stelios. 2021. "European Colonialism in Africa Is Alive | by Stelios Michalopoulos & Elias Papaioannou." Project Syndicate. July 30, 2021.

<https://www.project-syndicate.org/onpoint/europe-africa-colonial-era-lasting-effects-by-stelios-michalopoulos-and-elias-papaioannou-2021-07>

<sup>9</sup> "Sub-Saharan Africa Trade." WITS. Accessed September 20, 2024. <https://wits.worldbank.org/countrysnapshot/en/ssf/textview> .

Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan.”<sup>10</sup>

Africa’s geopolitical instability stems from persistent conflicts, political tensions, and governance issues across various regions. The Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and parts of Central and West Africa are particularly affected by armed insurgencies, civil wars, and terrorist activities, which have severely disrupted local economies and governments. In the Sahel, countries like Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger are struggling with Islamist insurgencies backed by extremist groups such as ISIS and al-Qaeda. Meanwhile, in the Horn of Africa, long-standing tensions in Somalia and South Sudan, along with Ethiopia’s internal conflict in the Tigray region, continue to threaten regional peace. Ethiopia and Sudan also face diplomatic strains and occasional physical clashes over issues like the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and the Al-Fashaga border region, though full-scale war has been avoided.

“In 2019, there were active armed conflicts in at least 15 sub-Saharan African countries, including Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan.<sup>11</sup>” In North Africa, Libya is one of the most unstable countries, with multiple groups fighting for power since Muammar Gaddafi's overthrow in 2011. The nation is currently a hub for the trafficking of weapons and a migration route that impacts nearby nations. In East Africa, Sudan is negotiating a delicate political transition after Omar al-Bashir was overthrown. At the same time, Somalia has struggled for decades to build a stable government due to its conflict with al-Shabaab terrorists. Nigeria's battle with Boko Haram and other extremist organizations remains a source of security concerns across West Africa, particularly in its northeastern regions.

A significant underlying cause of Africa's geopolitical instability is the legacy of colonization.<sup>12</sup> During the late 19th century, European colonizers drew arbitrary borders that split ethnic groups and forced rival communities into single nations, creating discord and conflict that persist today. The centralized, extractive political systems established by colonial powers left newly independent African nations with fragile institutions that were ill-suited to govern diverse populations or build cohesive states. European exploitation of Africa's natural resources further deepened economic disparities, enriching the colonizers while impoverishing local economies, which now fuel many contemporary conflicts.

In addition to internal strife, many African countries are caught in proxy conflicts involving global powers. Countries like Libya and the Central African Republic have become

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<sup>10</sup> The implications of geopolitical tensions for African countries. Accessed September 20, 2024. <https://www.tralac.org/documents/events/tralac/4819-tralac-annual-conference-2023-implications-of-global-geo-political-tensions-for-african-countries/file.html> .

<sup>11</sup> the Africa Center for Strategic Studies. “African Conflicts Displace over 40 Million People.” Africa Center for Strategic Studies, September 6, 2024. <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/african-conflicts-displace-over-40-million-people/> .

<sup>12</sup> “Non-Tariff Barriers :: Trade Barriers in Africa.” Non-Tariff Barriers :: Trade barriers in Africa. Accessed September 20, 2024. <https://www.tradebarriers.africa/> .

arenas for international influence, with external actors such as Russia, China, and Western nations supporting different factions to advance their geopolitical interests. These foreign interventions often exacerbate local hostilities and prolong conflicts. Moreover, resource scarcity, particularly over water and arable land, combined with the impacts of climate change, has intensified intercommunal competition in countries like Sudan and Nigeria, further contributing to instability.

## **International Affairs in Africa**

For centuries, Africa has been a focal point for strong international powers attempting to extend their political and economic influence. From colonial exploitation to modern-day investments, the continent remains a site of complex foreign involvement and unstable grounds from constant tinkering from global superpowers. In recent years, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), introduced by China, has become one of the most significant external projects targeted towards Africa, focusing primarily on strengthening economic ties and enhancing infrastructure<sup>13</sup>. However, the BRI also raises questions on its implications of foreign influence, as countries across the African continent must weigh their benefits of development against their ability to forge stable economic independence and sovereignty. The project's criticisms form a conversation on Africa's role in global affairs, where initiatives and projects such as the BRI, the U.S. Prosper Africa initiative, and the EU Global Gateway Initiative compete to shape Africa's future. The overall challenge for African nations is deciphering these competing initiatives while pursuing regional integration and long-term stability.

The BRI is a global development strategy launched in 2013 by China and aimed to improve connectivity, trade, and communication across Eurasia, Latin America, and Africa<sup>14</sup>. Africa is heavily involved with the BRI, with billions of dollars invested into infrastructure projects such as railways, ports, and highways across multiple countries. BRI projects, specifically transportation networks, facilitate trade between African countries, improving their ability to integrate economically targeted transports and establishments. The infrastructure being provided through the BRI reduces logistical barriers, making both external and intra-African trade extremely more efficient<sup>15</sup>. China is detrimental to the role of financing, building, and maintaining this BRI-established infrastructure, boosting regional economics while directly confronting the challenges of transportation that Africa once faced. Moreover, job creation and economic growth can be heavily credited to BRI projects contributed by China that are linked to the regional stability that Africa has started to embrace.

Looking further into the BRI, there are serious doubts and concerns about the sustainability of African nations from these BRI projects. African countries potentially face debt burdens imposed by China's BRI-established projects, leading critics to argue that the initiative

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<sup>13</sup> "China's Massive Belt and Road Initiative." 2024. *Council on Foreign Relations*. Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed September 19. <https://www.cfr.org/backgroundunder/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative>

<sup>14</sup> Tsuji, C.. "Belt and Road Initiative." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, July 28, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Belt-and-Road-Initiative>

<sup>15</sup> Paul. 2023. "China's BRI and Africa's Infrastructure Development Ambitions - Africa-China Centre." *Africa*. October 23. <https://africachinacentre.org/chinas-bri-and-africas-infrastructure-development-ambitions/>

serves more Chinese interests than African countries<sup>16</sup>. Another point of criticism centers on the geopolitical risks, where increased dependence on China could slowly undermine the economic sovereignty of African nations<sup>17</sup>. The African Union (AU) plays a crucial role in ensuring the BRI projects align with the continent's goals for regional integration and elevate the possibility of sustainable economic development. The AU mediates terms between foreign economic deals such as the BRI, the U.S. Prosper Africa Initiative, and the EU Global Gateway Initiative to protect the region's interests<sup>18</sup>.

Beyond the BRI, other economic deals and partnerships have attempted to reach Africa and combat the influence of China with the BRI. In 2019, the United States government introduced the U.S. Prosper Africa initiative, which focuses on two-way trade and investment-driven deals. Unlike the BRI, it pushes for private-sector partnerships rather than large state-driven infrastructure projects. Prosper Africa seeks to foster private-sector economies in Africa by leveraging their overall capital and expertise in fields such as energy, healthcare, and the digital economy<sup>19</sup>. Another deal introduced in 2021 was the EU Global Gateway, which emphasizes sustainable infrastructure development. The initiative favors digital infrastructure and green energy to align with the UN's SDGs. The EU focuses on human rights, active African project stakeholders, and climate action<sup>20</sup>. Seeking to avoid the debt traps associated with large-scale infrastructure investments, the Global Gateway initiative offers African countries alternatives to China's financing models.

### **The Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063**

The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a series of seventeen goals comprising 169 targets that aim to eradicate poverty and improve the quality of life globally. Initially drafted and proposed in 2015, it was considered a successor to the Millennium Development Goals. It had some successes but ultimately fell flat in achieving most of its intended targets. It was with new hope that the 2030 Agenda was accepted, and by 2016, the first report was published. Goals such as quality education, gender equality, decent work, economic growth, industry and infrastructure, etc., appeared highly promising and could be vital in lifting some economically disadvantaged African states.

However, the trajectory of some of these goals has veered off track. Multiple crises threatened the global economy, be it the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020 or geopolitical issues. Global GDP per capita ultimately slowed in 2023. As a result, more people turned to the informal sector for better profit. The informal sector refers to economic activity not formally

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<sup>16</sup> Chambers, Isabel. 2024. "Development, Deposits, And Debts: A Decade of BRI in Africa." *International Relations Review*. International Relations Review. <https://www.irreview.org/articles/development-deposits-and-debts-a-decade-of-bri-in-africa>

<sup>17</sup> Paul. 2023. "A Decade of China's BRI: Assessing Its Impact & Implications for Africa's Agenda 2063. - Africa-China Centre." *Africa*. November 12. <https://africachinacentre.org/a-decade-of-chinas-bri-assessing-its-impact-implications-for-africas-agenda-2063/>

<sup>18</sup> Kodjo, Tchioffo. 2024. "Mediation in Africa - African Union - Peace and Security Department." African Union, Peace and Security Department. Accessed September 22. <https://peaceau.org/en/page/119-mediation-in-africa>.

<sup>19</sup> "About Prosper Africa." 2024. *Prosper Africa*. <https://www.prosperafrica.gov/about/>.

<sup>20</sup> Leyen, Ursula von der. 2024. "Global Gateway." *European Commission*. Accessed September 22. [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world/global-gateway\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world/global-gateway_en).



registered or regulated by legal frameworks<sup>21</sup>. In Africa, 85% of the population is involved in the informal sector, and in Sub-Saharan Africa alone accounts for 90% of the labor force. Additionally, informal cross-border trade makes up 30-40% of all trade in the region. Thanks to the pandemic, more visibility of the informal sector shed light on the vulnerability of the position of the workers and their contributions to the national GDP, income, and employment. Policy dialogues with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Labor Organization (ILO) are working diligently towards bridging gaps through direct interaction with informal economy actors based on their needs.<sup>22</sup> They intend that newly drafted policies will bring together informal actors, governments, and development partners to foster pathways toward formality within the continent. Reducing the informal sector through formalizing it, would spur economic growth by improving access to financing, trade infrastructure, and better working conditions.

Though Africa's growth and economic performance have seen exponential growth over the past decade, it has not resulted in a decline in poverty levels, nor has it been rich in jobs<sup>23</sup>. This largely has to do with the lack of inclusivity within the workforce and in education. In 2020, the female labor report participation rate was only 47.6%, indicating that less than half of eligible women were involved in the workforce<sup>24</sup>. While some nations have worked hard to rectify this-making large strides to do so- some have not. Regardless, empowering women through increased work opportunities can improve economic growth, enhance productivity, and reduce poverty. On a global scale, women and girls represent half the population, yet they still earn 23% less than their male colleagues. Bringing about more inclusion and reducing inequalities may assist in lifting individual economies within the continent.

Looking back on what has been accomplished for Africa, the UN has wondered if the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were a failure for Africa. It is believed that the UN must recognize that the progress made in certain parts of Africa under the MDGs and how the process was monitored was unjust.<sup>25</sup> The UN determined that the MDG monitoring process mislabeled many countries incorrectly, including those within Africa, putting them as "on track" to reach the MDG goals, while in reality, they were not even halfway there. This huge miscommunication by the MDGs' tracking process revealed that it did not take into account the economic state the country or region was in at that time.<sup>26</sup> However, the SDGs are developed off of the MDGs and what they failed to do. Specifically, the SDGs focus on developing

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<sup>21</sup> Formalizing Africa's Informal Sector through the AfCFTA: An Opportunity for Economic Transformation." n.d. Journal of Public and International Affairs.

<https://ipia.princeton.edu/news/formalizing-africas-informal-sector-through-afcfta-opportunity-economic-transformation#:~:text=The%20informal%20sector%20involves%20economic>

<sup>22</sup> "Informal Economy in Africa: Which Way Forward? | United Nations Development Programme." n.d. UNDP. <https://www.undp.org/africa/events/informal-economy-africa-which-way-forward>.

<sup>23</sup> "Economic Integration | African Union." n.d. Au.int. <https://au.int/en/au/priorities/economic-integration>

<sup>24</sup> "Women Employment Stats for Africa: Insights & Trends." 2024. Matsh People Development. March 11, 2024.

<https://www.matsh.co/en/women-employment-statistics-for-africa/#:~:text=%E2%80%99CIn%202020%2C%20the%20female%20labor>

<sup>25</sup> "MDGs: An assessment of Africa's progress". United Nations General Assembly. December 2015.

<https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2015/mdgs-assessment-africa%E2%80%99s-progress>

<sup>26</sup> "MDGs: An assessment of Africa's progress". United Nations General Assembly. December 2015.

<https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2015/mdgs-assessment-africa%E2%80%99s-progress>



sustainability within economic, social, and environmental needs.<sup>27</sup> With a new focus on economic needs and emphasizing the differences among a region's status, Africa may find a new path to economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

### *Agenda 2063*

While the SDGs are meant to better the world, some say they're too ambitious to accomplish within fifteen years. In 2013, a new hope for Africa became Agenda 2063- a project that would be the blueprint for its transformation over the next fifty years. It aims to foster sustainable development, preserve culture, establish unity and peace, and bring about prosperity to the continent<sup>28</sup>. By then, African nations had already found their independence but struggled with issues with poverty, poor infrastructure, and dependency on foreign aid. The AU and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) understood the long-term strategic vision and launched a plan comprising twenty different goals, focusing on seven key aspirations.

Focusing on a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development was the first and foremost priority. It involves ensuring steady incomes and job protection, solving issues like inequality and poverty, and ensuring that it is sustainable. It emphasizes a need for education in STEAM-related skills. Second is an integrated continent with politically united and based on the ideals of pan-Africanism and the vision of an African renaissance. This includes establishing a united front of African nations and the movement of goods and capital, and movement, which is supported by intra-African Trade. This leads to an Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice, and the rule of law. This means that priorities must remain transparent, and Africa must work towards promoting civility and justice. A peaceful and secure Africa calls for stability, ending warfare, and maintaining peace. Followed by an Africa with a strong cultural heritage strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values, and ethics that seek to promote the continent's rich cultural diversity. Being people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children is of the utmost importance. This emphasizes a need to protect marginalized groups of people while also unlocking the potential for development. And lastly, a strong, united Africa, and a player on the global stage. Africa aims to enter the world stage by having a competitive economy and contributing to peace, security, and governance.

With the success of its implementation, some progress has been made. However, with regional instability and the hiccup that was the pandemic, it's a little slow going. Agenda 2063 has taken the time to reemphasize the importance of strong leadership and active citizen involvement in achieving this new hope.

### **Regional Economic Communities**

In 1991, the African Union met at the Abuja Treaty and discussed a plan of action that would be the basis for wider African integration. The Regional Economic Communities (RECs)

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<sup>27</sup> "The IMF and the Sustainable Development Goals." International Monetary Fund. March 2023. <https://www.imf.org/en/About/Factsheets/Sheets/2023/IMF-Sustainable-development-goals-SDGs>

<sup>28</sup> African Union. 2019. "Flagship Projects of Agenda 2063 | African Union." Au.int. 2019. <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/flagship-projects>

aim to facilitate regional economic integration between members of the regions and the wider African Economic Community (AEC)<sup>29</sup>. The RECs are comprised of eight formally recognized communities that work in collaboration to focus on promoting economic cooperation, political stability, and regional integration. These communities also happen to vary depending on membership, successes, and aspirations- regardless- they still make up the backbone of Africa's regional integration agenda.

The communities are split up into separate regions of the continents- and individually and collaboratively work together to advance the African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA), which is a landmark initiative that works towards establishing a single market for goods and services across Africa. One of the biggest successes of the RECs is the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). They are the most active and accomplished REC. Not only do they focus on economic integration and inclusivity, but they have also taken a stand in playing a crucial role in peacekeeping and conflict resolution. Since their establishment in 1975 in the Treaty of Lagos, they have been consistent in making strides towards development. Hence their an uptick in their regional GDP from 1990 190 billion USD to 633 billion as of 2019<sup>30</sup>. One of the aspirations that they have managed to achieve, which is listed in Agenda 2063, is enabling easier movement. Some even call the region 'borderless' to facilitate trade. Most citizens of the region can enjoy free movement with their ECOWAS identity card without having to obtain a visa (though that is subject to where the person resides). This has positively impacted the overall economy there, sporting a steady incline that only faltered 1% in 2020 and has since recovered.

Another REC that has shown promise is the East African Community (EAC) with its ambitious goals. It aims to form a common market, a monetary union, and a political federation. In 2005, the EAC implemented a protocol for a Customs Union which would allow member states to trade without tariffs and adopt a common external tariff<sup>31</sup>. It was signed on January 1, 2010,<sup>32</sup> and was brought into full effect. Since then, The EAC has been working on infrastructure projects including the Northern Corridor, which connects landlocked countries from Mombassa, Kenya, to Lagos, Nigeria from the ports<sup>33</sup>. While also making steady improvements with the freedom of movement, which will hopefully allow for trade to occur more expeditiously.

While some challenges exist within the realm of integration- namely conflicts in interests or conflicts between nations- there is much that has been done. Progress is being made, and the fruits of their labor have been sweet.

## What now?

The African regions still have a long way ago to truly fix what began long before the 18th century. However, much is being done to turn around the state of current-day Africa. In 1964, the

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<sup>29</sup> na. n.d. Review of *Regional Economic Communities (RECs)*. Edited by na. European Commission. European Commission- Joint Research Centre. Accessed August 26, 2024.

[https://africa-knowledge-platform.ec.europa.eu/dataset/regional-economic-communities-recs#:~:text=The%20Regional%20Economic%20Communities%20\(RECs,basis%20for%20wider%20African%20integration..](https://africa-knowledge-platform.ec.europa.eu/dataset/regional-economic-communities-recs#:~:text=The%20Regional%20Economic%20Communities%20(RECs,basis%20for%20wider%20African%20integration..)

<sup>30</sup> "ECOWAS - ISS African Futures." n.d. Futures.issafrica.org. <https://futures.issafrica.org/geographic/recs/ecowas/>

<sup>31</sup> "Customs Union." n.d. Www.eac.int. <https://www.eac.int/customs-union>

<sup>32</sup> "EAC History." 2016. Eac.int. 2016. <https://www.eac.int/eac-history#:~:text=1%20January%202005:%20EAC%20Customs>

<sup>33</sup> "Road Transport Sub-Sector." n.d. Wwww.eac.int. <https://www.eac.int/infrastructure/road-transport-sub-sector>

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) developed a project titled the General History of Africa. This project is meant to raise awareness of the situation in Africa and recognize the racial injustice Africa experienced due to European colonialism. Recently, three new volumes have been prepared to add to the already eight-volume document, updating the work based on recent developments, recognizing the progress Africa has reached, and highlighting the current challenges Africa is still facing.<sup>34</sup> This push towards a recognition of Africa is vital to the development of Africa's economy and infrastructure.

Furthermore, the New Agenda for Peace raises the African Union's continued fight for a more united, recognized, and sustainable Africa. In 2005, the Ezulwini Consensus was adopted, which is an African position on reforming the United Nations Security Council. Africa is pushing for more representation, asking for two permanent seats and three more non-permanent seats in the Security Council.<sup>35</sup> Although this has not been fulfilled, the New Agenda for Peace recognizes the imbalance among the United Nations and questions the succession of power within the United Nations. This emphasis on a need for equality and imbalance within the UN could mean a potential movement in the right direction for Africa and its development towards a power-balanced continent.

### **Guided Questions for Position Paper**

1. How has colonialism affected your country? Are the lasting impacts holding your nation back from prioritizing development?
2. If there are challenges that your nation faces in terms of economic development; does it stem from civil rights conflicts, corruption, violence, security risks, or gender-based disparity?
3. Is your nation receiving foreign aid? How has that affected the nation's economy and what are the specific trade-offs? Has that made a negative or positive impact?
4. Is your nation in alignment with Agenda 2063? What has been done to ensure that progress has been made?

### **Guided Questions for Debate**

1. What specific SDGs or Agenda 2063 goals does your nation need to prioritize?
2. What stance does your nation have on the Project 2063 goals?
3. How can economic integration contribute to political stability and peace in conflict-prone regions of Africa?
4. How can intra-African trade reduce the continent's dependence on foreign markets and stabilize African economies?
5. What steps can the AU take to foster better collaboration with the various RECs?

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<sup>34</sup>“General History of Africa.” 2023. Unesco.org. 2023. <https://www.unesco.org/en/general-history-africa>

<sup>35</sup>“Advancing the African Position on the Reform of the Security Council – Amani Africa.” n.d. <https://amaniafrica-et.org/advancing-the-african-position-on-the-reform-of-the-security-council/#:~:text=The%20Ezulwini%20Consensus%20is%20a>