

Constitutive Act of the African Union 2000

The African Union is a regional organization made up of 55 African nations, founded on July 11, 2000, in Lomé, and officially launched on July 26, 2002, in Durban, South Africa. Its primary purpose is to foster unity and collaboration among African countries while tackling the various socio-economic and political issues that confront the continent. The AU provides a forum for member states to work together on matters such as peace and security, economic growth, human rights, and governance. This organization was established to succeed the Charter of the Organization of African Unity, which was adopted in 1963. The Constitutive Act, as outlined in this document, aims to create the necessary institutions to expedite the implementation of the Abuja Treaty and to enhance and solidify the Regional Economic Communities as the fundamental supports for realizing the goals of the African Economic Community and the long-desired dream of African unity.

Question for consideration: What reasons do African leaders cite to justify the establishment of the African Union and the adoption of the Constitutive Act? Why is it essential for the OAU Heads of State and Government to form the AU fifty years after the OAU's inception? What key objectives does the African Union aim to accomplish? When African leaders express the intention to strengthen and consolidate Regional Economic Communities as foundational elements for achieving the goals of the African Economic Community and realizing the envisioned Union, what do they mean? If African leaders fail in creating the union two decades after the AU's formation, what implications will that have for their reputation globally, for Sub-Saharan Africans, and for future generations? Given that the masses of African peoples and nationalist leaders unified for political freedom, yet the post-independence institutions were primarily developed by elites, denying widespread public participation in political processes, do these resulting institutions possess legitimacy or not, and why? Why is it now crucial to facilitate the voices of the people through a referendum on their long-standing aspiration for unity?

In Lomé, Togo, 2000

Inspired by the noble ideals which guided the founding fathers of our Continental Organization and generations of Pan-Africanists in their determination to promote unity, solidarity, cohesion, and cooperation among the peoples of Africa and African States;

Considering the principles and objectives stated in the Charter of the Organization of African Unity and the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community;

Recalling the heroic struggles waged by our peoples and our countries for political independence, human dignity, and economic emancipation;

Considering that since its inception, the Organization of African Unity has played a determining and invaluable role in the liberation of the continent, the affirmation of a common identity and the process of attainment of the unity of our Continent and has provided a unique framework for our collective action in Africa and in our relations with the rest of the world;

Determined to take up the multifaceted challenges that confront our continent and peoples in the light of the social, economic and political changes taking place in the world;

Convinced of the need to accelerate the process of implementing the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community in order to promote the socio-economic development of Africa and to face more effectively the challenges posed by globalization;

Guided **by** our common vision of a united and strong Africa and by the need to build a partnership between governments and all segments of civil society, in particular women, youth and the private sector in order to strengthen solidarity and cohesion among our peoples;

Conscious of the fact that the scourge of conflicts in Africa constitutes a major impediment to the socio-economic development of the continent and of the need to promote peace, security and stability as a prerequisite for the implementation of our development and integration agenda;

Determined to promote and protect human and peoples' rights, consolidate democratic institutions and culture, and to ensure good governance and the rule of law;

Further Determined to take all necessary measures to strengthen our common institutions and provide them with the necessary powers and resources to enable them to discharge their respective mandates effectively;

Recalling the Declaration which we adopted at the Fourth Extraordinary Session of our Assembly in Sirte, the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, on 9.9. 99, in which we decided to establish an African Union, in conformity with the ultimate objectives of the Charter of our Continental Organization and the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community;

Have agreed as follows:

Article 1

Definitions

In this Constitutive Act:

"Act" means the present Constitutive Act;

"AEC" means the African Economic Community;

"Assembly" means the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Union;

"Charter" means the Charter of the OAU;

"Committee" means a Specialized Technical Committee of the Union;

"Council" means the Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the Union;

"Court " means the Court of Justice of the Union;

"Executive Council" means the Executive Council of Ministers of the Union;

"Member State" means a Member State of the Union;

"OAU" means the Organization of African Unity;

"Parliament" means the Pan-African Parliament of the Union;

'Union" means the African Union established by the present Constitutive Act.

Article 2

Establishment

The African Union is hereby established in accordance with the provisions of this Act.

Article 3

Objectives

The objectives of the Union shall be to:

- a. Achieve greater unity and solidarity between the African countries and the peoples of Africa;
- b. Defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of its Member States;
- c. Accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent;
- d. Promote and defend African common positions on issues of interest to the continent and its peoples;
- e. Encourage international cooperation, taking due account of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

- f. Promote peace, security, and stability on the continent;
- g. Promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation, and good governance;
- h. Promote and protect human and peoples' rights in accordance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other relevant human rights instruments;
- i. Establish the necessary conditions which enable the continent to play its rightful role in the global economy and in international negotiations;
- j. Promote sustainable development at the economic, social, and cultural levels as well as the integration of African economies;
- k. Promote cooperation in all fields of human activity to raise the living standards of African peoples;
- l. Coordinate and harmonize policies between existing and future Regional Economic Communities for the gradual attainment of the objectives of the Union;
- m. Advance the development of the continent by promoting research in all fields, in particular in science and technology;
- n. Work with relevant international partners in the eradication of preventable diseases and the promotion of good health on the continent.

Article 4

Principles

The Union shall function in accordance with the following principles:

- a. Sovereign equality and interdependence among Member States of the Union;
- b. Respect of borders existing on achievement of independence;
- c. Participation of the African peoples in the activities of the Union;
- d. Establishment of a common defense policy for the African Continent;
- e. Peaceful resolution of conflicts among Member States of the Union through such appropriate means as may be decided upon by the Assembly;
- f. Prohibition of the use of force or threat to use force among Member States of the Union;
- g. Non-interference by any Member State in the internal affairs of another;
- h. The right of the Union to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity;
- i. Peaceful co-existence of Member States and their right to live in peace and security;
- j. The right of Member States to request intervention from the Union in order to restore peace and security;
- k. Promotion of self-reliance within the framework of the Union;
- l. Promotion of gender equality;
- m. Respect for democratic principles, human rights, the rule of law and good governance;
- n. Promotion of social justice to ensure balanced economic development;
- o. Respect for the sanctity of human life, condemnation and rejection of impunity and political assassination, acts of terrorism and subversive activities;
- p. Condemnation and rejection of unconstitutional changes of governments.

Article 5

Organs of the Union

1. The organs of the Union shall be:

- a. The Assembly of the Union;
- b. The Executive Council;
- c. The Pan-African Parliament;
- d. The Court of Justice;

- e. The Commission;
 - f. The Permanent Representatives Committee;
 - g. The Specialized Technical Committees;
 - h. The Economic, Social and Cultural Council;
 - i. The Financial Institutions;
2. Other organs that the Assembly may decide to establish.

Article 6

The Assembly

1. The Assembly shall be composed of Heads of States and Government or their duly accredited representatives.
2. The Assembly shall be the supreme organ of the Union.
3. The Assembly shall meet at least once a year in ordinary session. At the request of any Member State and on approval by a two-thirds majority of the Member States, the Assembly shall meet in extraordinary session.
4. The Office of the Chairman of the Assembly shall be held for a period of one year by a Head of State or Government elected after consultations among the Member States.

Article 7

Decisions of the Assembly

1. The Assembly shall take its decisions by consensus or, failing which, by a two-thirds majority of the Member States of the Union. However, procedural matters, including the question of whether a matter is one of procedure or not, shall be decided by a simple majority.
2. Two-thirds of the total membership of the Union shall form a quorum at any meeting of the Assembly.

Article 8

Rules of Procedure of the Assembly

The Assembly shall adopt its own Rules of Procedure.

Article 9

Powers and Functions of the Assembly

1. The functions of the Assembly shall be to:
 - a. Determine the common policies of the Union;
 - b. Receive, consider, and take decisions on reports and recommendations from the other organs of the Union;
 - c. Consider requests for Membership of the Union;
 - d. Establish any organ of the Union;
 - e. Monitor the implementation of policies and decisions of the Union as well as ensure compliance by all Member States;
 - f. Adopt the budget of the Union;
 - g. Give directives to the Executive Council on the management of conflicts, war and other emergency situations and the restoration of peace;
 - h. Appoint and terminate the appointment of the judges of the Court of Justice;
 - i. Appoint the Chairman of the Commission and his or her deputy or deputies and Commissioners of the Commission and determine their functions and terms of office.
2. The Assembly may delegate any of its powers and functions to any organ of the Union.

Article 10

The Executive Council

1. The Executive Council shall be composed of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs or such other Ministers or Authorities as are designated by the Governments of Member States.
2. Council shall meet at least twice a year in ordinary session. It shall also meet in an extra-ordinary session at the request of any Member State and upon approval by two-thirds of all Member States.

Article 11

Decisions of the Executive Council

1. The Executive Council shall take its decisions by consensus or, failing which, by a two-thirds majority of the Member States. However, procedural matters, including the question of whether a matter is one of procedure or not, shall be decided by a simple majority.
2. Two-thirds of the total membership of the Union shall form a quorum at any meeting of the Executive Council.

Article 12

Rules of Procedure of the Executive Council

The Executive Council shall adopt its own Rules of Procedure.

Article 13

Functions of the Executive Council

1. The Executive Council shall co-ordinate and take decisions on policies in areas of common interest to the Member States, including the following:
 - a. Foreign trade;
 - b. Energy, industry and mineral resources;
 - c. Food, agricultural and animal resources, livestock production and forestry;
 - d. Water resources and irrigation;
 - e. Environmental protection, humanitarian action and disaster response and relief;
 - f. Transport and communications;
 - g. Insurance;
 - h. Education, culture, health and human resources development;
 - i. Science and technology;
 - j. Nationality, residency and immigration matters;
 - k. Social security, including the formulation of mother and childcare policies, as well as policies relating to the disabled and the handicapped;
 - l. Establishment of a system of African awards, medals, and prizes.
2. The Executive Council shall be responsible to the Assembly. It shall consider issues referred to it and monitor the implementation of policies formulated by the Assembly.
3. The Executive Council may delegate any of its powers and functions mentioned in paragraph 1 of this Article to the Specialized Technical Committees established under Article 14 of this Act.

Article 14

The Specialized Technical Committees Establishment and Composition

1. There is hereby established the following Specialized Technical Committees, which shall be responsible to the Executive Council:
 - a. The Committee on Rural Economy and Agricultural Matters;
 - b. The Committee on Monetary and Financial Affairs;

- c. The Committee on Trade, Customs and Immigration Matters;
 - d. The Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, Energy, Natural Resources and Environment;
 - e. The Committee on Transport, Communications and Tourism;
 - f. The Committee on Health, Labour and Social Affairs; and
 - g. The Committee on Education, Culture and Human Resources.
2. The Assembly shall, whenever it deems appropriate, restructure the existing Committees or establish other Committees.
3. The Specialized Technical Committees shall be composed of Ministers or senior officials responsible for sectors falling within their respective areas of competence.

Article 15

Functions of the Specialized Technical Committees

Each Committee shall within its field of competence:

- a. Prepare projects and programmes of the Union and submit into the Executive Council;
- b. Ensure the supervision, follow-up, and the evaluation of the implementation of decisions taken by the organs of the Union;
- c. Ensure the coordination and harmonization of projects and programmes of the Union;
- d. Submit to the Executive Council either on its own initiative or at the request of the Executive Council, reports and recommendations on the implementation of the provision of this Act; and
- e. Carry out any other functions assigned to it for the purpose of ensuring the implementation of the provisions of this Act.

Article 16

Meetings

Subject to any directives given by the Executive Council, each Committee shall meet as often as necessary and shall prepare its rules of procedure and submit them to the Executive Council for approval.

Article 17

The Pan-African Parliament

- 1. In order to ensure the full participation of African peoples in the development and economic integration of the continent, a Pan-African Parliament shall be established.
- 2. The composition, powers, functions and organization of the Pan-African Parliament shall be defined in a protocol relating thereto.

Article 18

The Court of Justice

- 1. A Court of Justice of the Union shall be established;
- 2. The statute, composition and functions of the Court of Justice shall be defined in a protocol relating thereto.

Article 19

The Financial Institutions

The Union shall have the following financial institutions, whose rules and regulations shall be defined in protocols relating thereto:

- a. The African Central Bank;
- b. The African Monetary Fund;

- c. The African Investment Bank.

Article 20

The Commission

1. There shall be established a Commission of the Union, which shall be the Secretariat of the Union.
2. The Commission shall be composed of the Chairman, his or her deputy or deputies and the Commissioners. They shall be assisted by the necessary staff for the smooth functioning of the Commission.
3. The structure, functions and regulations of the Commission shall be determined by the Assembly.

Article 21

The Permanent Representatives Committee

1. There shall be established a Permanent Representatives Committee. It shall be composed of Permanent Representatives to the Union and other Plenipotentiaries of Member States.
2. The Permanent Representatives Committee shall be charged with the responsibility of preparing the work of the Executive Council and acting on the Executive Council's instructions. It may set up such sub-committees or working groups as it may deem necessary.

Article 22

The Economic, Social and Cultural Council

1. The Economic, Social and Cultural Council shall be an advisory organ composed of different social and professional groups of the Member States of the Union.
2. The functions, powers, composition and organization of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council shall be determined by the Assembly.

Article 23

Imposition of Sanctions

1. The Assembly shall determine the appropriate sanctions to be imposed on any Member State that defaults in the payment of its contributions to the budget of the Union in the following manner: denial of the right to speak at meetings, to vote, to present candidates for any position or post within the Union or to benefit from any activity or commitments therefrom.
2. Furthermore, any Member State that fails to comply with the decisions and policies of the Union may be subjected to other sanctions, such as the denial of transport and communications links with other Member States, and other measures of a political and economic nature to be determined by the Assembly.

Article 24

The Headquarters of the Union

1. The Headquarters of the Union shall be in Addis Ababa in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.
2. There may be established such other offices of the Union as the Assembly may, on the recommendation of the Executive Council, determine.

Article 25

Working Languages

The working languages of the Union and all its institutions shall be, if possible, African languages, Arabic, English, French and Portuguese.

Article 26

Interpretation

The Court shall be seized with matters of interpretation arising from the application or implementation of this Act. Pending its establishment, such matters shall be submitted to the Assembly of the Union, which shall decide by a two-thirds majority.

Article 27

Signature, Ratification and Accession

1. This Act shall be open to signature, ratification, and accession by the Member States of the OAU in accordance with their respective constitutional procedures.
2. The instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the OAU.
3. Any Member State of the OAU acceding to this Act after its entry into force shall deposit the instrument of accession with the Chairman of the Commission.

Article 28

Entry into Force

This Act shall enter into force thirty (30) days after the deposit of the instruments of ratification by two-thirds of the Member States of the OAU.

Article 29

Admission to Membership

1. Any African State may, at any time after the entry into force of this Act, notify the Chairman of the Commission of its intention to accede to this Act and to be admitted as a member of the Union.
2. The Chairman of the Commission shall, upon receipt of such notification, transmit copies thereof to all Member States. Admission shall be decided by a simple majority of the Member States. The decision of each Member State shall be transmitted to the Chairman of the Commission who shall, upon receipt of the required number of votes, communicate the decision to the State concerned.

Article 30

Suspension

Governments which shall come to power through unconstitutional means shall not be allowed to participate in the activities of the Union.

Article 31

Cessation of Membership

1. Any State which desires to renounce its membership shall forward a written notification to the Chairman of the Commission, who shall inform Member States thereof. At the end of one year from the date of such notification, if not withdrawn, the Act shall cease to apply with respect to the renouncing State, which shall thereby cease to belong to the Union.
2. During the period of one year referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article, any Member State wishing to withdraw from the Union shall comply with the provisions of this Act and shall be bound to discharge its obligations under this Act up to the date of its withdrawal.

Article 32

Amendment and Revision

1. Any Member State may submit proposals for the amendment or revision of this Act.
2. Proposals for amendment or revision shall be submitted to the Chairman of the Commission who shall transmit same to Member States within thirty (30) days of receipt thereof.
3. The Assembly, upon the advice of the Executive Council, shall examine these proposals within a period of one year following notification of Member States, in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 2 of this Article.
4. Amendments or revisions shall be adopted by the Assembly by consensus or, failing which, by a two-thirds majority and submitted for ratification by all Member States in accordance with their respective constitutional procedures. They shall enter into force thirty (30) days after the deposit of the instruments of ratification with the Chairman of the Commission by a two-thirds majority of the Member States.

Article 33

Transitional Arrangements and Final Provisions

1. This Act shall replace the Charter of the Organization of African Unity. However, the Charter shall remain operative for a transitional period of one year or such further period as may be determined by the Assembly, following the entry into force of the Act, for the purpose of enabling the OAU/AEC to undertake the necessary measures regarding the devolution of its assets and liabilities to the Union and all matters relating thereto.
2. The provisions of this Act shall take precedence over and supersede any inconsistent or contrary provisions of the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community.
3. Upon the entry into force of this Act, all necessary measures shall be undertaken to implement its provisions and to ensure the establishment of the organs provided for under the Act in accordance with any directives or decisions which may be adopted in this regard by the Parties thereto within the transitional period stipulated above.
4. Pending the establishment of the Commission, the OAU General Secretariat shall be the interim Secretariat of the Union.
5. This Act, drawn up in four (4) original texts in the Arabic, English, French and Portuguese languages, all four (4) being equally authentic, shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the OAU and, after its entry into force, with the Chairman of the Commission who shall transmit a certified true copy of the Act to the Government of each signatory State. The Secretary-General of the OAU and the Chairman of the Commission shall notify all signatory States of the dates of the deposit of the instruments of ratification or accession and shall upon entry into force of this Act register the same with the Secretariat of the United Nations.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, WE have adopted this Act.

Done at Lomé, Togo, this 11th day of July 2000.