

Regional Integration: Challenges and Prospects for Africa

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Abstract

Regional integration refers to the removal of barriers to international commerce by states that are in same geographical area and interest, through regional integration agreements (RIAs).To foster trade, expansion of the economy, increase coherence, and major macroeconomic benefits across boundaries. In 1850-1890, regional integration was conceived in Europe. Africa is a precursor in the process as far back as 1910 and after the World War II more economic communities surged. Although, Africa's share of global population is 14%, annual share of global GDP is less than 3%. Experts have blamed Africa marginalization on the absence of effective regional integration mechanism to boost the continent's external trade. The AU should immediately assess the level of performance at every stage of continental development (national, regional and continental levels), while taking into account the latest realities globally. Continental goals should be prioritized while member-states to show dedication to set objectives.

Keywords: Regional Integration, Economic Community, Africa, Europe

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Regional Integration: A Conceptual Framework

An agreement involving states to enhance political and economic alignment guided by institutions and rules is termed regional integration. In other words regional integration can be said be the removal of set barriers to international trade or commerce by states within a certain geographical area, via regional integration accord (RIA). The main focus of such accord may range from political to economic to environmental, though it has oftentimes taken a political economic plan, using commercial interests to achieve broader socio-political and security objectives according to dictates of concerned national governments. Regional integration can be structured either through multinational institutional structures or high level decision making and sometimes a combination of both. An integration of this manner is called a "security community." 'Amalgamation', was used by Deutsch and his collaborators to refer to "the formal merger of two or more previously independent units into a single larger unit, with some type of common government" (Deutsch et al., 1957).

Ginkel (2009), opined that regional integration is a process whereby states in the same region interact with regards to economic, security, political, and also socio-cultural norms. Hill (2009), also defined regional economic integration as that "agreements among countries, in geographic region to reduce, and ultimately remove tariffs, and nontariff barriers to the free flow of goods, services, and factors of production between each other" . Regional integration first came up in Europe in middle 19th century (1850-1890) immediately after the World War II (WWII). After this came the establishment of economic communities in North America; North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), then the in 1949 the establishment of security organization, by 1951, the Economic Organization of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was established. About a century later after the initial thought (1960), the interest in regionalism increased greatly which was encouraged by deepening of existing regional organizations. In Africa however, the term regional integration is not new, since the continent had been a precursor in economic ideas as far back as early 20th century, with formation of South Africa Custom Union (SACU), the oldest custom union in the world. By 1970's, the about eleven regional communities had risen in Africa.

In the West, the European Union (EU) was formed in 1992 and that of Northern America between the USA, Canada and Mexico leading to North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) also followed in quick succession. Regional communities in Asia include but not limited to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967 and the creation of regional economic arrangement in East Asia, such as ASEAN plus Three (APT);China, Japan and South Korea inclusive. Consequently, it has been found out that the first step the creation of a large regional market for trade and investment is a close integration with neighboring economies. This is due to the fact that greater efficiency, competitiveness and increased productivity not only within the border barriers, a reduced cost or risks will be witnessed in trade and investment. Various economic tools such bilateral and sub-regional trade structures are usually sponsored by governments, with the focus economic deregulation promotion. The agreements when put into law will reduce the risk of reversion toward protectionism, enforcing the reforms made and encouraging further structural adjustment.

Regional economic integration can therefore exist in numerous levels. Firstly a Free trade zone, whereby no barriers exist for trade of goods and services among member states. Secondly a Custom union, in which is a free trade zone involving common external policy. A common market will allow production to move between members the third level. In another vain, a common market can also have same currency, tax rate plus uniform monetary and fiscal policies, which is fourth level of integration. Finally, a political union, in which a central political unit coordinates the economic, social and foreign policy of the member states (Hill, 2009).

1.2 The Theory of Regional Integration

Majorly the theories of regional integration can be viewed from the field of International Relations (IR) although it saw integration as a process. A sharp disparity therefore occurred between Comparative Politics (CP) and the European idea of integration. Comparative Politics described integration from the governance point of view, while the European described it using two theories; neo-functionalism and inter-governmentalism. Neo-functionalist theory composed of individuals and various interest groups, therefore such integration must satisfy all stand the test of time. In other words, spillover effect cannot be taken away from the idea, because there is need to permeate other sectors of the economy, making the integration to get rooted from the economic sense to the political reasoning and result into an integrated union of states with the status and characteristics of 'domestic political systems' (Rosamond (2001); Lindberg (1963); Haas and Schmitter (1964). The theory also have the opinion that, there exist an authority with the power to guide member states wrongly, hence such element was seen to lead to the failure of unions (Moravcisk, 1998).

The inter-governmentalists claimed that government cannot become successful without been promoted by the state or its citizens. An active role of the state is therefore advocated, if the possibility of a regional integration is envisaged. The main shortcoming of the above theories is basically that they encompass only the regional and national levels while excluding the international system which unfortunately covers them.

However, there exist some other international relations theories that emphasize the nexus between the international system and states such as the realism and liberalism. The realist perspective opines that regional stability and security are the key determinants of the establishment of regional organizations. The liberalist view holds that the prevalent factor in the establishment of regional organization is increased economic interdependence. The former is hence of the view of security policies and strategies while the latter believe in economic interdependence.

However, neo-functionalism as a theory of integration can only be based on technocratic ideas, hence it is not ideologically based but simply a pragmatic satisfaction of interests and technocratic expertise. The founding father of the theory, Edmund Haas pointed out in the initial thesis that loyalty plays an important role for theory to achieve its purpose. Therefore, political spillover can only be achieved through a process of loyalty transference from the citizen or state to the high authority (Haas, 2001). Several sharp criticisms exist after the neo-functionalism theory. Prominent among them is that of Hoffman in 2003. He showed the independence that existed between economic and politics. He opined that levels of authority vary from low to high. Low authority exist when less sovereignty is required to trash more technocratic issues hence the possibility of integration. Inter-governmentalism appeared as a reaction to neo-functionalism and was rooted in two currents. Neo-realism and neo- liberalism, the former core ideas were that the distribution of capabilities between member states induces differences of power and the latter which is focused on the interaction of states' interests.

2.0 EUROPEAN UNION & REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

2.1 The Emergence of European Economic Integration

The pioneer of regional integration is Europe in the early 1950's with formation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1952. The can best be explained by a simple triangular analysis, because of the need to For explicit reasons, a triangle like approach will be employ for analysis. This is due to the need to illustrate the relationship between political, economic and monetary integration in Europe. A relationship that can be linked the state, the market and the currency. Europe Union (EU) as a model was a project driven by political gladiators, but suddenly turned to economic and finally to currency focus project. After World War II, the 'lead' was taken by economic integration and over time, economic integration; which became a goal in itself, has succeeded in bringing European countries closer together and hence achieving its former purpose of wider political strength. Thus as economic interdependence grew was justified by the emergence of monetary integration on two grounds; to defend the possible achievements of economic integration; to improve on the initial goal of political synergy. The Economic Monetary Union (EMU) which had been in operation for some time now as brought back the political integration agenda. Therefore, a need arises to identify some focal points to the realization of the dream of political strength.

Earlier in the first century AD, the Pax Romania Union existed in the larger part of Europe. The simple features are common legal and administrative custom and single currency as the monetary style. Any merchant travelling from Paris to Amsterdam need not worry about bill payment, which was due to the fact that same currency in whole voyage. This continued for some centuries (political, economic and monetary system), unfortunately the geographical and prosperity status varied greatly It was believed then that, the right mix of political, economic and monetary union had been found plus a flourishing culture, supported by a common language was found during the period. Due both internal and external pressure the union collapsed(Issing, 2001).

Winston Churchill by September 1946 while giving his memorable Zurich speech, advocated for the re-creation of the European family with a structure of living in peace, safety and absolute freedom. In his own opinion, Germany and France should be in the fore-front of a United States of Europe while Great Britain remains the leader of Commonwealth of Nations. This period was seen as an era of political reconciliation. The first step of which was the setting up of European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1952, with high authority and universal power. The period was marked with the Europeanisation of Coal and Steel production, a major cause of war and destruction. The inability of the French assembly in 1954 to endorse the contract, stopped the initial plan for the establishment 'European Political Community', hence the idea of creating a European Union, which was mainly as a political entity (Issing, 2001).

The custom union which started in 1957, as witness varied stages of economic integration. After the implementation of the "Single market programme" in 1992, through the Single European Act of 1986 and the Single Market Directive of 1992, this process is now largely complete. The removal of tariff and non tariff barriers among member states had been perfected among countries in Europe. Thus a freedom already existed in term of free flow of goods, individuals (labour), services and capital goods across the continent. The expected single market becomes a reality and economic integration side of the triangle progressive. All EU members are now interdependent than in the past, with each one having a stake in the well being and evolution of its partners.

Generally, economic and monetary union is an improved stage in the process of economic integration. The levels of economic integration can be divided into six phases:

i. Preferential trading area (with reduced customs tariffs between particular countries)

ii. Free trade area (with no internal tariffs on some / all goods among the participating countries)

iii. Customs union (with same external customs tariffs for third countries plus common trade policy)

iv. Single market (with common product regulations and free movement of factors of production & tangible or intangible goods)

v. Economic and monetary union (a single market with a common currency and monetary policy)

vi. Complete economic integration (all the above with synchronized fiscal and other economic policies).

It is pertinent to note therefore that the main reason behind the formation of European Economic Community is a common market for agricultural sector and products that can from the sector. This was however achieved by 1993 with the inclusion of production of goods and services for a single market. Also important is the fact that the creation of the Euro which did not start with progressive economic integration is a major achievement for the EU and part its history.

2.2 Regional Integration in other Regions of the World

2.2.1 Economic Integration in Asia

Although the economies witnessed in Asia is the most dynamic and the fastest developing in the world. The economic integration within the continent is quite slow; hence Asia stands at the lowest ebb in the world. Although, economies of Asian countries was really faster than that of the Europe and North America after World War II (WWII). This can be seen through the enlarged economic scale of Asia, leading to its proportion in the world economy increasing greatly (i.e. during 1953 to 2008, Asian economies share of the global GDP improved from 5% to 19%). The period referred to a sequential economic growth in Asia by development of each country within the region including Japan, China, South Korea, India, and some countries in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Due to the fact that the foreign trade policy of Asian countries is export oriented, a steady growth was witnessed from 6% to 28%, which is quiet an increase, given the significance of Asian countries in world economy (Kang, 2010).

Another strength of Asian countries is the growth witnessed in the foreign exchange reserve. China and Japan top of the list of countries with huge foreign reserves in 2006, which was closely followed by Taiwan, South Korea, India, Singapore Hong Kong and Malaysia, all Asian Countries. Unfortunately the economic integration in this part of the world is low, which is caused by three major reasons;

i. The economic growth in Asian countries are unbalanced; this is caused majorly by variation in income of the countries, such as high income countries (Japan , Singapore, South Korea), medium-high income countries (Malaysia, Lebanon), medium low-income countries (China, Indonesia, Thailand) andlow income countries (India, Pakistan, Cambodia). The variation leads to a worrisome state which hinders integration to an economic community.
ii. Diversity that occur in form of customs, believes, culture and religion is enormous.
iii. The volatile level of security cannot be written off while discussing the continent of Asia.

The recent global financial crisis in 2008 provided a chance to promote Asia's economic integration. Thus a stronger tie is needed in the area of finance, investment and trade to promote Asia's economic integration (Kang, 2010).

ASEAN after Cold War had witness a speedy increase with inclusion of ten Southeast countries. The association had greatly promoted cooperation and integration among member states through the building of ASEAN Free Trade Area and Investment Area. It upgraded multilayered dialogues within Asia as well as globally and even went ahead to fund some cooperation regimes like the ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum), the 10+3, the 10+1, and ASEM (ASEAN-Europe Meeting). It is right to say that ASEAN had played a crucial role for the integration of Asia, working out the basic fundamentals.

2.2.2 Economic Integration in North America

The negotiation for the formation North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) started the economic integration in North America, which was further deepened significantly when the trade pack took effect on January 1, 1994. Although NAFTA and Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (CUSFTA), its predecessor, have been quite successful commercially, the aggregate gains mask adjustment problems besetting some workers and companies in each of the three countries. NAFTA whose members are consist of three world's largest economies at GDP current prices; United States of America (1^{st}), Canada (10^{th}) and Mexico (13^{th}), had been able to improve the economic life of member states. The two way trade between US & Canada in 2002 was \$372billon, the largest bilateral trade relation in the world (CSIS, 2003). In same year, the export of US to Canada was more than that of EU all together (15 countries). Canada is the lead export of US from 1946 – 2003 on a yearly basis, Mexico became second trading partner in 2002 displacing Japan. Since 1993, US trade with North America neighbors had grown rapidly than trade with the rest of the world (31.5% going either way to the Canada or Mexico and still on a gradual increase). Mexico and Canada represent 6% world GDP and 2% world population, but they collectively absorb two fifth of exports from US.

NAFTA is irreplaceable among US trade agreements. This is majorly because two America's trading partner, which share long borders with US are involved. The accord shared among member states is quite enormous with a challenge of closer ties with members. The economic agreement had been very successful in many dimensions, which is beyond expectation initially predicted by economic models. A deeper financial relationship is expected in NAFTA, but less worry exist for a common currency. This is due to the dominance of the US economy in the region, accounting for about 90% of total GDP, hence the reluctant attitude posed by US policymakers to share control with the North America neighbors. Owing to the relative size of the three economies, currency integration would have little economic effect on the US (Truman, 2003). Canada and Mexico will need to cede monetary control to the USA in any monetary union, even with favorable effects created in the duo.

2.2.3 Economic Integration in South America

The Treaty of Asunción of March 1991 marked the beginning of evolution of a trade bloc in Southern America called Mercado Común del Sur (MERCUSOR). The member states Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay are quite ambitious to achieve economic integration. In Southern cone of America, the integration was pertinent due two specific reasons. Firstly, the collapse of regionalism collapse and need for its revival (reciprocal and discriminatory trade liberalization), which in the 1990 was another approach to multilateral trade liberalization (i.e. reciprocal and non-discriminatory). Secondly, to shift focus from import substitution to opening of the Southern cone economies to trade. The creation of the agreement setting up MERCUSOR was an instrument needed to facilitate, drive and jointly determine the integration process of the member-state economies, due to the new stage of globalization. The Brazilian economy was the most favorable, as it opened up a unilaterally and more fundamentally during the late 1980s through early 1990s. The integration accord is intended to aid and merge the unilateral strategy of liberalization which all economies in the region were embarking upon, even though at different speeds (Valiant, 2005).

MERCUSOR brought with a substantial growth in the trade activities as expected in the region. This is noticed in the intra-export share among member state rise from 9%-25% (Inter- America Development Bank, 1999). The largest economies in the region Brazil and Argentina saw the establishment of stabilization programmes. Due to diverse macroeconomic stabilization policies practiced in the two countries, the existence of the economic community was threatened. Obviously MERCUSOR had its own imperfections, leading to a sharp reduction in external protection as seen in the average tariff for the trade bloc declining from 41% in 1986 to 12% in 1990s. A significant expansion was seen in trade within the region. The export strength also grew at a steady rate of 26% in 1990-1997, an increase from US$4billion to US$21billion. A substantial growth was witnessed in regional trade interdependence, as intra-regional trade in MERCUSOR total exports rose from 9% in 1990 to 25% by 1998. Thus, Brazil accounted for one third of Argentina's exports by the end of the 1990s, 40% of Paraguay's exports and 35% of Uruguay's exports. In the automotive sector, Brazil accounted for 90% of Argentina's exports in 1997(Baer et al, 2002).

Although the harmonization of macroeconomic policy is important, it is not sufficient to establish a common market and to consolidate the integration process. In addition, the December 2000 meeting of Ministers of economic affairs and Presidents of Central Banks of the full and associate member countries of MERCOSUR established concrete common macroeconomic targets for the near future. Politically MERCUSOR has been successful in its drive towards consolidation of democracy among members, by an agreeing to democracy as a precondition to partake in the proceeds of the integration, during the 1998 Ushuaia Protocol.

2.2.4 Economic Integration in Africa

African governments readily support regional integration. This is not farfetched, because a lot of regional integration accords (RIAs) had been incorporated for developmental process since independence. The success story of such RIAs are numerous, though their exist some structural overlap in some quarters. African RIAs are known to be neigbourhood accords, sometimes with unrealistic time frames but mainly to improve integration which mostly politically oriented.

African integration had made significant progress across sectors, regional economic communities and lastly member states. Giant strides had been witnessed in trade, communications, macroeconomic policy and infrastructural growth. The West African Economic and Monetary Union, or UEMOA, and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, or COMESA had made meaningful progress in trade liberalization and facilitation, while the Economic Community of West African States or ECOWAS made high impact in free movements of people among member states. In the area of infrastructure saw the Southern African Development Community, or SADC, and the East African Community, or EAC not to forget the area of peace and security which is highly influenced by ECOWAS and SADC. Although the goals and achievement of regional economic communities may differ, most especially in greater internal trade, macroeconomic convergence, production, and physical connectivity the African RIAs had been a huge success, (ECA Report, 2004).

The proportion of Africa economic bloc occupies when compared in global sense of view is minimal. This is because the African population is just 14% of global population, with a production level of less than 3% of global GDP and receives about 3% FDI. Trade wise, the continent accounts for only 1.8% of import and 3.6% of export, which is lower at the service sector where 1.7% and 1.8% are to export and import respectively. Comparatively with other regions or continents, Africa intra-trade is around 12% of total trade whilst Europe is 60%, 40% and 30% for North America and ASEAN respectively. With other regions of the world, the cross border trade cannot be up to 20% of the total trade (ECA, AU Report, 2013). This can only be due to variation in tactics used in the implementation of non tariff barriers.

Africa integration in terms of macroeconomic policies is fair. This is due to the monetary cooperation programme implemented, though RECs are in different stages of integration. A multilateral fiscal scrutiny was developed and implemented by COMESA to enhance financial system development and stability. COMESA in 2011 established a Monetary Institute in Nairobi, Kenya, with main task of preparing the scheduled operation of monetary cooperation programme. It also operated a regional payment and settlement system just in readiness for the smooth transition to an EAC monetary union, presently at an advanced stage. According to a road map adopted by the ECOWAS, it is planned to launch a second monetary zone by end of 2015 and merge it with the CFA (Communauté Financière d'Afrique) zone to creating a single larger monetary zone by the year 2020.

According to the ECA, AU Report March, 2013, at its eighteenth ordinary session, held in January 2012 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on the theme of "Boosting intra-African trade", the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union agreed on a decision and declared a strong political commitment of African leaders towards the acceleration and deepen of continent's market integration. It was therefore agreed that a road map for the formation of a continent-wide FTA by the indicative date of 2017. At its nineteenth ordinary session, the Assembly adopted a decision highlighting the major achievements made in implementing the FTA and boosting intra-African trade. Progress was made particularly on how active the high level African trade committee and the outcomes of the consultations of the committee of seven heads of State and government on the challenges posed by low levels of intra-African trade, poor infrastructure and inadequate productive capacities to the fast-tracking of the continental FTA and the boosting of Intra-African trade.

3.0 ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND LESSONS FOR AFRICA

3.1 The Imperatives of economic integration in Africa

The benefits of regional integration are numerous as it drives towards economic, political and peaceful society. But for the African countries to gain from these benefits there is need by them to understand the importance of the regional integration itself. Regional integration is quite important especially to the Africa continent due to the state of economies, the size of domestic markets, level of production in terms of the structures in place, widespread conflict and political instability, and slow pace of reform implementation just to mention a few.

State of Economies: African countries are mostly small with low level of income. This is due to the fact that the level of the production structures in place is weak filled with lots of inadequacies. Most African countries are involved in conflict, which of course comes with its own human and economic cost (e.g. the Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria & political unrest in Egypt). The reforms that are meant to cushion its effects are sometimes slow in implementation or totally abandoned; hence never see the light of the day.

Small Domestic Market: Even though a growth is experienced in some countries in recent years, unfortunately the income level had quiet low. This is due to fewer people in the domestic market in Africa which is occasioned by disparity in population within the continent. About 39 countries have less than 15million population while another 21 countries is less than 5million, thus the small population and little income reduces the size of the domestic markets. The per capita income of 32 countries when compared showed that 10% had below $500 yearly while the world average is about $5, 000. Though Africa has a population of 12% of total world population, it produces just 2% of total output worldwide, which is quite low given the economic global space it occupies in the world over.

Widespread Conflict and Political Instability: The low performing economy is further affected by political instability and conflicts, eroding institutional capacity, hence a vicious cycle of poverty. The tragic reality put in place by cross border and civil conflicts is actually a treat in Africa, thus a weak democratic institution and lack of political and civil rights becomes the bane of the society in which such exist. However conflict can weaken the economy because public spending will be allocated to less productive activities just to combat the conflict, increased cost of business due to social disorder, destruction of physical & human resources, misallocation of human and financial resources to war activities rather making it more productive and definitely investors will prefer to establish assets at places that are secured thus an increase cost of insurance.

Weak Production Structures: As already explained low incomes exist in African countries, which are to due inadequate infrastructure, capital stock or human resources are low, diversification effort in production & trade is limited. Despite advances in recent decades, Africa's stock of human capital is also the lowest in the world. In 2000 the average African had 3.8 years of schooling; a little more than half the world average and about 40% of that in advanced economies. More than 40% of Africans over age 25 have had no schooling, with the highest rate of no schooling in Mali (86%) and the lowest in Mauritius (14%). Only 19% of Africans over age 25 have completed secondary school, with the lowest rate in Niger (2%) and the highest in South Africa (48%). That compares with a worldwide average of 39% in advanced economies. Only 3% of Africans over age 25 have attained higher education, compared with 12% in East Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean (ECA Report, 2004).

Slow Pace of Reform Implementation: Although African countries in early 1990s show a pace in implementing reforms, such pace had been slow. Markets had been liberalized and Political competition institutionalized where participation in social and economic affairs has been increased. This days Africans leaders are held responsible for their deeds, thus a shift in focus to better economic governance and faster poverty reduction strategies. In all, there is need to sustain the drive because all the programmes are quite good and can lead to enhanced credibility.

3.2 Challenges and Prospects of Africa's Economic Integration

The African Union since inception had been performing reasonably, but there is need to improve on the activities such the goal for which it is set will achieved. For these to be achieved there is need to look into some challenges that may be encountered in the process of integration.

Rationalization of Regional Economic Communities

The need to make efforts to reduce the pluralization of RECs functions, through the participation of member states in more community. These will only the optimization between the risks and benefits of integration. Also the enormous task place on governments to understand the scope of varied agenda and requirements will be reduced. The effect of which is limited resources becoming thin due to the spread needed, thus complicating the overall continental integration process,

Private Public Partnership (PPP)

The role of the private sector is very essential in the implementation, identification and formulation of integration programmes, unfortunately in Africa this is not the case. The role of the private sector is pertinent for RECs treaties to be achieved. This can be seen majorly in the areas of provision of finance, human resources to support regional projects. The sector can also influence policymaking through governments ratifying and implementing protocols, stabilizing macroeconomic conditions, establishing high institutional quality, and maintenance of an efficient and reliable bureaucracy (rule of law). Thus, firms operating across borders can then stand to benefit from the rationalization of rules of operations across countries.

Ambitions and Resources Nexus

These are two important drivers to the achievement of objectives of the union. This is due to the need to align the duo such that the limited capabilities and resources will be harnessed such that what is written in the treaties is same with what happens on ground or reality. Hence there is need to equip secretariats of RECs with adequate staffing and financial resources plus the authority needed to act for member states. RECs also need to set the priorities such that the most important needs are well satisfied.

Protocol Ratification Process

In other to enforce treaties, protocols are pertinent unfortunately many members are slow in the ratification process (i.e. signing to RECs protocols), which many a times are inconsistent. The approach to the ratification process must be made more efficient, which can of course be replaced by “acts”, “directions” or “decisions” that will be effected immediately. The protocols across RECs should be rationalized the AU, such that the continental objectives are achieved, hence the nations will converge in long run.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

4.1 Recommendations

The strategies of new generation regional organizations offers one of the most solutions to Africa's development problems, due to the weak level of resources and some salient issues faced economically by countries in the African continent. These paper therefore recommend for RECs to pay particular attention to one or all of the following;

i. Regional integration should be used to address issues that are most needed to achieve. This is because it is not just an instrument for efficiency; it is needed to be incorporated into the development strategy of member States. When this is done, the implementation will build domestic institutions target at promoting growth, macroeconomic stability and poverty reduction.
ii. Priority should be given to mainstream agreed regional integration programmes and projects at the national level and implementing them. The private sector should be more evolving in the integration process, which will in turn strengthen the integration process.
iii. The best approaches in the continent are numerous, thus a central point must be strike by States and RECs in order to achieve the continental goal.
iv. The major goal, type of members needed in a regional community, type of policies to be adopted (common or uncommon), the type of integration arrangement needed must be address before forming a REC. The benefits at the end and the level of constituency with desired objectives will be determined easily.

v. Alternative financing mechanism by African Union should be strengthen and brought to reality by RECs and member States. This will enable a finance integration method, hence reality status of the objective. Also the member States that has not implemented it should try and do so fast.

vi. The level of dedication to goals and benefits of the integration should be well harnessed. A leader should then view the arrangement as more than good economic and political declaration, but dedicating the required effort to make them work.

vii. The monitoring and evaluation of the integration process must be rigorous and strengthen. This will enable the stage of the integration process is and plan ahead events that will fulfill the goal and objectives of the regional economic community.

4.2 Conclusion

The RECs and their member States are moving at different speeds in the integration process. There has been notable progress on various fronts. But to fully regenerate the regional integration process there is need to understand that regional integration is important to solving Africa's developmental challenges. This is because of the numerous weaknesses that engulf the scarce resources of each country in the continent. To achieve these, there is immediate need to assess the level of performance at every stage of continental development (national, regional and continental levels), while taking into account the latest realities globally. Such evaluation should gauge the performance and capacity of national regional and continental integration while not neglecting the progress made at these levels, hence the policies in place.

Regional integration should be looked into as to if it has actually fulfilled its goal (i.e. overcoming the immediate and remote problem) in the African continent. A key objective must be to expand opportunities for investment that increase African incomes and tap unexploited resources through the reduction of dependence on the outside world and creating conditions for self-sustained, autonomous development, which can be achieved through the transformation of Africa's production structure. The role of cooperation and integration in the meeting the challenges of African development goes beyond just objectives to be covered by regional economic communities. Peace and security, environmental issues, and Africa's global commitments cannot be divorced from the concerns of regional integration. In some parts of Africa conflicts and instability have stalled regional integration. HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other infectious diseases threaten to thwart integration in much of the continent. Thus in dealing with regional integration all these issues must be well harnessed and evaluated.

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