

Report of a Roundtable Workshop

Strategies for the Implementation of a Union Government of Africa



Compiled by Debay Tadesse
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Background

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Prior to the 9th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Accra, Ghana, from 1 to 3 July 2007, Direct Conflict Prevention (DCP) commissioned and undertook thematic studies on issues pertaining to the ‘grand debate on a union government’. Eight policy-oriented research papers were produced to influence policy debates and consultations on a union government for Africa. On 27 July 2007 the DCP presented these papers at a seminar entitled ‘Towards a United States of Africa?’ held in Accra, Ghana. At the conclusion of the 9th Ordinary Session, the AU Assembly issued the Accra Declaration and the DCP subsequently commissioned additional papers to examine the issues outlined in this declaration. These papers were presented at a two-day seminar entitled ‘Towards a Union Government of Africa: Challenges and Opportunities’, which was held in Addis Ababa on 11 and 12 October 2007. Following the deliberations at the seminar, the papers were published in monograph format by the ISS.

A direct consequence of the Accra Declaration was a consensus on the rationale for integration. The heads of state and government accordingly agreed to accelerate the economic and political integration of the continent, including the formation of a union government in Africa. However, a clear vision of the future of a union government was needed, which led to the decision to conduct an audit of the Executive Council and Commission as well as the other organs of the AU, and to establish a Ministerial Committee to examine the union government concept. Aspects that came under the spotlight were what its relation to national governments would be and drawing up of a roadmap as well as time frames for the establishment of such a union government. The outcome of the audit and the work of the Ministerial Committee were to be submitted to the Executive Council, who would make appropriate recommendations to the Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the AU.

THE AUDIT REPORT

The report outlined benchmarks which were crucial to the realisation of a union government for Africa:

- Revamping the institutions of the present AU

- Popularising and internalising Africa’s core values
- Mobilising and engaging the people of Africa for such a project
- Facilitating the free movement of people across the African continent
- Rationalising the regional economic communities (RECs)
- Fast-tracking the move towards an African common market and an African economic community
- Establishing continental financial and monetary institutions
- Developing an African entrepreneurial elite to deal with regional and continental investment projects that would advance unity
- Political integration

Consensus has been reached on the recommendations relating to the participation of the people of Africa in a union government, popularisation of the union government concept, the role of the organs of the AU, and shared values. However, recommendations on the institutions and structures of such a union government, the domains of competence, the role of the RECs and the impact of a union government on the sovereignty of member states, as well as the roadmap and time frames for achieving it, have sparked intense debate among some of the member states.

THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

The Executive Council held its 11th Extraordinary Session in Arusha, Tanzania, on 6 and 7 May 2008 to consider the audit report on the AU and the comments of the Commission as well as those of the other organs of the Union. In view of the close relationship between the proposals by the panel in chapters 13 and 14 of the report of the audit that it was imperative that the integration and transformation process be accelerated, and proposals on the benchmarks for African unity and integration as well as the on-going discussions on the union government, the Executive Council recommended that these issues be examined by the Committee of Twelve Heads of State and Government when it convened in Arusha, Tanzania, on 22 and 23 May 2008.

THE COMMITTEE OF TWELVE

When the committee met in Arusha, it based its discussions on the Accra Declaration, taking into account the report of the Ministerial Committee as well as the report of the 12th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council which had met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 27 to 29 January 2008.

The committee adopted the documents prepared by the Ministerial Committee as well as the report of the Executive Council regarding the rationalisation and strengthening of the RECs and harmonisation of their activities, in the knowledge that this would lead to the creation of an African common market, and possibly political integration.

From the deliberations of the Committee of Twelve, and its concurrence with the Accra Declaration, it is quite clear that the issue of a union government is not whether one should be put in place, but how and when it should happen and what is necessary to clarify the concept and content of such a government.

With regard to how and when it should happen, the Committee of Twelve recommended that the union government should be in the form of a union of independent and sovereign states and that the process should be gradual. The accelerators and benchmarks referred to in the audit report were generally acceptable and its

implementation agreed upon. In addition, the matter of the free movement of people across borders, as set out in Abuja Treaty and the Constitutive Act, the development of transcontinental and inter-regional infrastructure and the creation of multinational African firms are considered steps that would contribute to the acceleration of Africa's integration. The early establishment of the continental financial institutions (the African Central Bank, African Monetary Fund and African Investment Bank) identified in Article 19 of the Constitutive Act were also considered to be accelerators toward the establishment of a union government.

THE 11TH ASSEMBLY OF THE AFRICAN UNION, SHARM EL-SHEIKH, EGYPT, 30 JUNE – 1 JULY 2008

The Assembly requested that the Commission work out the modalities for implementing the recommendations of the Committee of Twelve, including a roadmap and the issues that require clarity and submit the proposals to the next ordinary session of the Assembly scheduled for January 2009.

The Assembly further decided to devote a full day of its January 2009 session to consider the report of the Commission on this matter with a view to bringing the debate to a final conclusion.

Objectives and purpose of the workshop

From the above agreements and recommendations it is clear that African leaders have recognised the need for continental integration. The objective of this roundtable discussion was to contribute to policy options for the implementation of a union government that will be discussed further at the 12th African Union Summit of Heads of State and Government. Specifically, the aim of the roundtable workshop was to:

- Review the current status of the integration processes
- Identify the institutional and political challenges facing the implementation of a union government for Africa
- Assess a suitable harmonised framework for a union government that meets the above recommendations
- Make recommendations on the way forward

Opening remarks

The workshop opened with a note of welcome from Ms Doris Murimi, Deputy Director of the ISS, Pretoria, South Africa. Ms Murimi outlined the objectives of the workshop and drew attention to the challenges and opportunities for the effective implementation of a union government in Africa. She stated the objectives of the roundtable discussion was to contribute to policy options for the implementation of the union government that would be discussed further at the 12th African Union Summit of Heads of State and Government in January 2009 and repeated the aims of the workshop as set out above.

The speaker discussed the developments regarding the formation of a union government, which has been a priority item on the agenda of the AU since 2006. She noted that it was indeed significant that this historic and momentous topic was being discussed at present, particularly in the light of global developments such as the formation of political and economic groupings on other continents. However, in spite of some economic and political progress, Africa seemed to be running out of time in its efforts at integration. She highlighted the achievements towards attaining a union government from

the 8th African Union Summit to the present one and pointed out that, unfortunately, African heads of state and government have agreed to form a union government but failed to agree on a timeline.

To date, member states have never agreed on the pace and modalities for the implementation of this project. There are two major conflicting conceptions of the institutional future of the African continent, namely the maximalists and the gradualists. The maximalists advocate the immediate creation of a union government, while the gradualists favour a stage-by-stage process, with the first stage being the integration of RECs.

In conclusion Ms Murimi said that in view of the complexities and practical difficulties in the path of attaining this union government in one form or the other, the highest priority facing the citizens of Africa was to achieve mutual respect and trust among the whole African population. She declared that this is the reason why as a leading African human security research institution, the ISS was working towards a stable and peaceful Africa characterised by sustainable development, human rights, the rule of law, democracy and collaborative security.

Session I

A review of the current status of integration processes in Africa

CONTEXT AND STATUS OF THE UNION GOVERNMENT DEBATE

MR KENNETH MPYISI

Director, Institute for Security Studies, Addis Ababa

In his opening remarks Mr Mpyisi expressed appreciation and thanks to all participants and provided the context for what the roundtable discussion aimed to achieve. He was hopeful that the outcome of the workshop would be fruitful recommendations that would lead towards the gradual achievement of a union government of Africa and that it would be relevant to the needs of the AU and the continent. He stated that any engagement with the AU should be premised on a critical understanding of the AU itself, and should also be informed by the current integration debate. He stressed that the union government debate was of critical importance to Africa. He stated that the discussion at the roundtable should take as its point of departure the Accra Declaration, as this set out the consensus on the rationale for integration.

Mr Mpyisi pointed out that the heads of state and government had agreed to accelerate the economic and political integration of the continent, including the formation of a union government in Africa. Accordingly the aim of this meeting should be to move forward and not to start the debate all over again. With reference to the recent decisions taken at Sharm el-Sheikh, Mr Mpyisi reminded the participants that the heads of state reaffirmed both the decision to accelerate the economic and political integration of the continent and the recommendations contained in the report of the Committee of Twelve, namely that the RECs should be rationalised and strengthened and that harmonisation of their activities was a critical factor for achievement of a union government.

Mr Mpyisi commended all member states for their tireless efforts in moving the debate forward in spite of the differences of opinion by African heads of state and government with regard to a timeline. He also noted that member states may need to review their memberships to multiple RECs with a view to maximising their inputs to continental integration. He also stressed that Africa should learn lessons from other integration processes, for weak states only produce weak integration. Strong integration requires solid preparation by each member state to ensure a concrete functionality and an accountable structure. Furthermore, to be successful, integration requires common legislative commitments and clear implementation procedures. Successful regional integration also requires solid preparation by each member state participating in such a regional grouping.

Mr Mpyisi pointed out that the fact that Africa needs to move towards the formation of a union government is a settled argument. Therefore, what remains to be decided are the modality and approaches to be followed to attain this dream. In this regard, he noted the following possible dynamics that might affect the discussion on the union government during the upcoming AU summit in January 2009:

- Increasing mobilisation of those countries in favour of immediate union government (estimated to be between 18 and 22 states)
- The recent COMESA–EAC–SADC tripartite agreement, which would see these RECs merging into a single regional community
- Dynamics such as a change in some key actors such as the resignation of Thabo Mbeki as head of state
- Conflicts on the continent and their impact on the alignments and focus on the debate and decisions

- The possible intrusion of other, more urgent issues that might take attention away from the debate on the union government, such as the current world economic crisis

In his concluding remarks, Mr Mpyisi asked which direction the roadmap will take and what will be different in the future. When one looked at the worst-case scenario, the question that came to mind was whether this would be the end of African unity. Would Africa have a divided continent with greater and more robust regional organisations, or would consensus on the status quo prevail so that decisions are postponed indefinitely?

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL CHALLENGES FACING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNION GOVERNMENT

MR IBRAHIMA KANE

Advisory Director, Open Society Institute

Mr Kane stated that in order to have a clear idea of where the AU member states want to lead Africa with in the framework of a union government, one needed to return to the documents prepared by the AU. From these documents a number of important points emerge that impact on the realisation of a union government:

- The AU is in a process of transformation into a United States of Africa
- If a union government is to be established, the AU Commission must have executive powers on subjects and debates delegated to it by member states
- The union government must be based on common values, interests and strategies

From the above it is clear that to promote a union government, the AU Constitutive Act will have to be revised.

The basic reason is that the integration of the continent in legal terms means that there must be a community law, and in fact a composite community law with political, economic, social and cultural dimensions. Such a community law must be based on an integration law, which entails that power be transferred from states to the union institutions. Such a community law will be supreme and will need to be implemented immediately in the legal systems of member states. However, if supremacy and national implementation are requirements for putting in place such a community law, the Constitutive Act of the AU does not qualify to be a community law, since it is only an inter-governmental treaty. This is why AU member states at present largely retain full national sovereignty in legal terms. In other words, community law is stronger than national law.

Another reason why the AU Constitutive Act would have to be revised in order to create an entity which will move towards a union government would be to give the AU organs the means and resources to enable it to fully play its role in the process. From the principles on which the AU is based and the powers of the different organs within the Commission (apart from the Peace and Security Council) it is clear that no power has been transferred to these organs.

The speaker concluded by saying that it is possible to facilitate the integration process, but only if a community law is put in place. Such a law should first be understood by the organs of the AU, the member states and the RECs, and second will require states' implementation from a legal point of view. However, so far states have done nothing to ensure that their national statutes will be compatible with such a community law. This stumbling block will only be overcome if member states show and exercise the necessary political will.

Implementation of strategies for a union government for Africa

THE PROPOSED UNION GOVERNMENT OF AFRICA AND THE ROLE OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES

MR CHRYSANTUS AYANGAFAC

Senior Researcher, Institute for Security Studies, Addis Ababa

Mr Ayangafac wanted to provoke a discussion on the potential role that RECs can play in forging a more effective continental body in the form of a union government. He challenged the basic view that RECs should be rationalised, harmonised and strengthened because they are the foundation or building blocks of the union government, stating that in his view that was an attempt to shy away from the main problem facing African integration. He argued that the primary building blocks of African integration should be the African states themselves, since the nature and dynamics of these states are at the heart of the integration process.

From the point of understanding and appreciating the role of RECs in the realisation of a union government, the presenter noted that it is important to highlight that regional institutions are first and foremost an initiative, an embodiment of a political ideology rather than mere structures. However, this does not mean that economics play no part in regionalisation. According to

Mr Ayangafac, integration is the function of domestic political necessity. Therefore the question should be how to present the integration debate in such a way that African politicians are not *pushed* to be integrated but rather that they *beg* for integration.

Mr Ayangafac reminded the participants that the academics and researchers have not yet done justice to the current debate on a union government, so there is a need to articulate the rationale in a format that the politicians would welcome and understand. He further argued that the grassroots of African society and the private sector need to be included and should be partners in the formation of a union government.

Finally, he pointed out that the view held by some commentators that it is premature to speak of creating a union government without first strengthening the RECs, as the supposed building blocks to an integrated union, can be challenged. It is entirely possible for both the RECs and the union government to develop in tandem and complement each other in a symbiotic process. In fact, their simultaneous evolution could be mutually reinforcing, in the sense that progressively more integrated and unified RECs will essentially consolidate and pave the way for a union government.

Political challenges and scenarios for the union government

POLITICAL CHALLENGES FACING THE OPTION OF ESTABLISHING A UNION GOVERNMENT IN AFRICA

MS DELPHINE LECOUTRE

Independent researcher, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

In making her presentation on the political challenges facing the option of establishing a union government in Africa, Ms Lecoutre insisted that the obstacles to the establishment of a union government are mainly political in nature. Indeed, there are other obstacles relating to legal and economic issues, but which can only be effectively addressed once the political issues have been settled.

These political obstacles are related to the will of member states to protect their national sovereignty, their fear to become part of a gathering within which their influence would diminish, and the extra-continental links that many of them have.

Ms Lecoutre identified the following political obstacles:

- There is a lack of clarity in the methodology. In debates since 2005, many member states have demonstrated serious reservations regarding the idea of establishing a union government. These reservations led to a lack of interest in the preparation of documents and an unwillingness to face the real issues at stake. As a result, the Commission has mainly been in charge of the documents' elaboration, the responsibility to organise debates, and the interpretation of the reports of various committees. In fact, the division of roles between the member states and the Commission regarding this process has not been clearly defined. Member states are aware that neither summits nor the Council of Ministers present the proper avenue for the debate about such politically sensitive issues.
- The lack of conceptualisation and high-level expertise on issues pertaining to the union government and United States of Africa has given rise to confusion in the debates and has led to political and diplomatic instrumentalisation of the process by member states according to their respective interests. Neither member states nor the AU Commission have defined what they mean by 'union government' and 'United States of Africa'. Only the idea that the union government is a step towards the United States of Africa is clear. This lack of conceptualisation enables both member states and the commission to use concepts with a political margin of manoeuvre and to interpret the debates in their own way – according to their national and regional interests, in the case of the former, and in the sense of the reinforcement of its powers in the latter.
- There are still a substantial divergence of views on the way forward. Despite their constant reaffirmation of the final objective of the United States of Africa since the Sirte (Libya) Summit (9 September 1999), member states have not yet agreed on the modalities of the union government, which would be the first step in the establishment of the United States of Africa. Roughly speaking, there is a lack of consensus between those who advocate the immediate creation of a union government (the 'maximalists-immediatists') and those who opt for a stage-by-stage process towards setting up a union government, with the first stage being the integration of regional economic communities (the 'gradualists').
- There is a lack of will on the part of many member states which is clearly translated in their strategies. The notion of a continental government frightens many African states who are still extremely jealous of their national sovereignty. The process of establishing a union government or a reinforced commission has

to be guided by clear values, principles and steps that member states have to agree upon and implement, but this has not happened yet. Action has to be taken in this regard. There is also a lot of inertia in the debates and a lack of criticism among leaders with opposing views, which result in non-substantial decisions. What is important is clearly not the results of the debates, but that the debates are taking place. The issues are not decided, but postponed *sine die*.

- The unfinished process of setting up the African Union institutional architecture. At the Accra Summit in July 2007, the Pan-African Parliament made a recommendation to the conference for the creation of continental institutions such as the African Court of Justice and financial institutions like the African Central Bank, the African Monetary Fund and the African Bank for Investment, and for the reinforcement of existing organs to ensure that they function optimally. For example, Africa cannot establish a single African defence force as long as it does not have a functional military staff committee, a common African diplomacy and an operational peace and security architecture.
- There are strong regional disparities in terms of integration on which the 'gradualists' would want to work before moving on to a continental project.
- Indeed, disparities in the integration process is the main argument of the 'gradualists', who claim for the reinforcement of RECs as a prerequisite for continental integration. There are still marked regional and continental disparities as far as governance, the free movement of people and goods, economic performance, infrastructure, education and development are concerned.
- The AU is still focusing on cooperation and coordination rather than integration. In this regard, the AU Commission remains a secretariat (Article 20 of the Constitutive Act) without executive power. The Commission needs to revise its functions to enable it to have executive powers.
- Most African leaders are keen on staying in power as long as possible. Besides, there are still rivalries and misunderstandings among some African leaders. How can they be convinced to give full power to the *primus inter pares* among them? The establishment of a union government would mean that African heads of state would lose benefits such as their political position, their absolute control over a territory, and their economic facilities.

In the second part of her presentation, Ms Lecoutre proposed some ways of dealing with the above obstacles:

- There should be a differentiation in the process of integration along the lines of moving forwards to a union

government with a limited number of member states. This is the solution proposed by the 'maximalists-immediatists'. But such a path was never taken, despite various attempts by 'maximalists-immediatists' since the Accra Grand Debate in July 2007. None of the two successive chairmen of the AU – the president of Tanzania, Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, at the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit (July 2008), nor the president of Ghana, John Kufuor, at the Accra Grand Debate in July 2007 – took the risk of accepting a decision that would have led to the division of the continent.

- The technique of finding a compromise between intergovernmental and supranational approaches. The challenge lies in reconciling the attachment of member states to their sovereignty and their will to be associated with the implementation of common policies. In other words, you have to find a flexible approach, taking into account the diversity of expectations and capacities of member states, while responding to their respective requests.
- Do you have to change the AU voting procedures when establishing a union government? The constant concern to look for consensus in the decision-making process led to declarations and decisions which, being the result of a compromise, reflect the smallest common denominator. The search for a compromise curtails the ambitions of the 'maximalists-immediatists' and enables the 'gradualists' to slow down the process. Would a decision-making process based on a majority vote facilitate the integration process and the establishment of a union government?
- The strengthening of the commission and the deepening of regional integration are more likely to be implemented in the short run, and this according to the views of the 'gradualists'.

In the view of the 'gradualists', efforts have to be made to harmonise the policies of member states policies in each REC and to improve cooperation between RECs in the framework of joint programmes. For example, certain specialists on integration processes argue that because the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) share membership and these two RECs have developed a close cooperation framework in various strategic areas, SADC – which has been relatively slow in the area of trade liberalisation – should be encouraged to emulate COMESA's relatively successful experience and move towards forming a customs union and monetary union.

In any event, the strategic plan of the Commission of the AU (2004–2007) has proposed the need to formulate a minimum integration programme (MIP) in order to

achieve greater coherence in the movement towards regional integration at continental level. This MIP comprises common programmes to be adopted by RECs, such as the free movement of persons and production, a common currency, and common sectoral policies (such as peace and security, infrastructure and power pool, energy, agriculture, environment, food and food security, political and humanitarian affairs, education, and science and culture).

African people have to come on board and be involved in debates. Meetings of civil society at the fringe of AU summits since Accra have produced discussions between civil society organisations (CSOs) that were broadcast on radio and TV. Africa is endowed with CSOs that can fully participate in the ‘popularisation’ of the AU, as well as debates relating to integration and the when and how of establishing a union government.

Research centres in universities and think-tanks specialising in integration processes should be established all over the continent.

Member states should take the initiative to engage in frank debate with experts. The opinion of experts in constitutional law and in the integration process – whether at continental, regional or national level – can add value to the current debate.

POSSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR A STRATEGY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A UNION GOVERNMENT

DR ADMORE KAMBUDZI

Secretary, African Union Peace and Security Council

Based on the intensive debates that had taken place in Accra and Sharm el-Sheikh on the notion of a union government, Dr Kambudzi projected some scenarios for converting the notion into practice.

- **Scenario 1:** *One or more regional blocs will insist on full regional integration as a stepping stone towards building a union government.* However, such a scenario raises some risks for the future of the union government project:
 - A regional bloc may become politically and economically successful to the extent that it would rival the strength of a union government
 - A successful regional bloc would become a trend setter to the extent of prescribing its own model for the rest of the continent
 - Economic arrangements would represent a model that could rival expectations about a union government. Member units of the successful regional bloc could refuse to give up their hard-won gains and benefits

- A successful regional bloc would naturally produce a push effect for other regions to pursue their own interests and establish their own, possibly competing, arrangements
- Non-African politico-economic actors might be more willing to support an active and progressive regional bloc, possibly preferring to provide support and mutual interaction to such a bloc rather than to an inert union government project. This will divert significant attention away from a union government project
- **Scenario 2:** *A group of like-minded countries take a lead in an initiative to form the nucleus of a union government.* However, Dr Kambudzi noted that the inherent inertia among political, social and economic actors, as well as institutions and processes, would make the implementation of this kind of scenario unlikely and riddled with obstacles.
- **Scenario 3:** *A groundbreaking compromise is attained.* This scenario would naturally spring from the force of consensus that has characterised the approach to and management of common African issues and affairs. In this scenario one or two major steps could be envisaged or actually be taken in the decision-making process. This would probably take the form of a fresh directive to add momentum and accelerate the implementation of the union and consolidation of its various components/programmes within the framework of an agreed roadmap for establishing a union government. Alternatively, it could entail reaching consensus on the establishment of a new structure, such as a council of Africa.
- **Scenario 4:** *Persistence of divergent views resulting in no concrete steps towards a union government and the project being shelved.* Dr Kambudzi noted that if this happens, it will take years to reactivate the concept, with one working group after another being mandated to look into different aspects with a view to bringing sufficient premises for reaching consensus.

Dr Kambudzi concluded that although these scenarios hold out various short- and long-term prospects for building a single government for Africa, analysts and observers may find that more scenarios develop around some possibilities. Dr Kambudzi outlined two possibilities, the first being that of a groundbreaking consensus scenario and the second the possibility of one or two regional blocs opting outright for implementation and consolidation of the Abuja Treaty roadmap on regional integration. A problem to bear in mind is that the notion of a single government for Africa should be juxtaposed and reconciled with the realities on the continent. The distance between the idea and the reality is at this stage quite striking.

Discussions on the future of a union government of Africa

The workshop agreed that the union government project will require close coordination, collaboration and harmonisation of the RECs. During the roundtable discussion several points were raised and discussed by the participants, and participants noted that most of the points that were raised had also arisen at the time of European integration. Obviously, therefore, Africa must learn from the European experience, taking useful lessons for the African integration. A question that was raised was whether the issue of a union government for Africa should be addressed at this time in view of the numerous other pressing issues that Africa needed to address. These include poverty, environmental concerns, development and conflicts.

A concomitant issue was whether integration would add value, and participants argued that African integration should not only benefit the elites but also lead to the resolution of problems of the African people at grassroots level. However, unless a timetable was introduced, the matter of African integration would not move forward. Participants agreed that it is imperative to focus on issues that would get the process going, such as peace and security, harmonisation of policies, rationalisation of RECs, and the free movement of people and goods.

In addition, it was necessary to determine and reach consensus on the type, form and model that the union government should take. Participants suggested that not only the European model but also the Asian model of integration, which was based on a consolidation of political and economic aspects, be considered. One of the biggest obstacles to integration was the multiple engagements with different issues and participation in various treaties. As a result, the debate on the integration does not receive sufficient priority. The AU should serve as a framework for planning integration developments, prioritising the multiple tasks it has to perform with regard to specific requests from member states. The workshop suggested that the process for collaboration between member states and the AU be streamlined to bring about and ensure as much commonality and interoperability across the RECs as possible.

The workshop noted that using the double-track approach for integration should be explored. Africa could

enhance sector by sector integration through RECs and at the same time move towards continental unification by strengthening structures such as the Panel of the Wise, the Peace and Security Architecture and the African Court of Justice. On the other hand, some participants suggested that if RECs are to be used to speed up the process of continental integration, Africa must consider reducing the number of RECs or merging those that have commonalities and also consider implementing a division of labour among RECs that would avoid overlaps. Participants agreed that such integration is a viable way towards achieving a union government. This should be complemented by a step-by-step approach towards overcoming the challenges and constraints of the AU and its institutions.

Workshop participants returned to the matter of introducing and implementing a community law. The appropriate legal instrument to provide sufficient guidance on the issues of environment, trade and defence among African countries was essential. Member states should respond rapidly to this challenge and not wait until continental integration became a reality. A second challenge that needed to be addressed urgently, regardless of the scenario chosen for a union government, was a decision on the kind of executive power that was going to be established and how it would gain legitimacy. There were concerns on how the executive power would be organised and controlled.

Participants further argued that the African heads of state should handle the issue of union government sensibly, by outlining a roadmap that was specific, precise and directed. By precise was meant that it should be aimed specifically at popularising integration at the grassroots level and providing guidelines for the establishment of ministries to take charge of different functions. There is also a need to focus on the concretisation of efforts and putting mechanisms in place to deal with every obstacle.

The final part of the discussion dealt with summarising some of the above points and compiling and commenting on the recommendations to enhance and speed up the process of continental integration.

Conclusion, recommendations and the way forward

Today, there is a growing recognition among African countries of the need to provide the African Union with stronger continental instruments to work on agreed strategic areas of focus. However, the necessity for an eventual union government is not in doubt. The workshop participants agree that the union government must be a union of the African people and not merely a union of states and governments. It must furthermore be based on shared values drawn from both African culture and African societies, and from articulated commitments of African countries to meet the challenge of coping with historical legacies and current realities. Finally, it is important that African countries be guided by adherence to the rule of law, popular participation in governance, respect for human rights, and fundamental freedoms and transparency in public policy-making.

The workshop provided a platform for strategies for the implementation of a union government in Africa and proposed the steps and key recommendations outlined below.

PARTICIPATION OWNERSHIP

- The move towards integration needs to have grassroots support by the people
- There is a need for introduction and implementation of a community law
- The gradual approach entails a sector by sector integration before reaching the final stage on the union
- Integration should move forwards by focusing on sectors, and dealing with the issues of the environment, trade, development and defence
- Simple but concrete cooperative activities (in for example sport and commerce) among various member states and the relationship between their citizens should receive attention
- Ministries should be created in each member state that are in charge of activities on integration
- A roadmap should be developed that addresses the different perceptions and perspectives round the integration issue. The roadmap should be specific and precise and contain directions on how to proceed with the popularisation of the integration idea and also concretisation of member state decisions

- The African heads of state should compromise on their positions so that the integration process can move forward
- A research centre should be established to collate debates and opinions on the integration process and publish and disseminate information on it

STRENGTHENING THE RECS

- The RECs can make an important contribution in the dialogue towards integration. However, RECs must be rationalised and harmonised
- Free movement between states is a priority to contribute and strengthen the capacity of African countries and this will also enable RECs to play a bigger role in the integration and consolidation process
- The RECs must be strengthened financially, so as to encourage the political and financial convergence that will lead to integration
- REC institutions and mechanisms must also be strengthened, as these can form the basis for bringing all blocs together and so facilitate the integration process
- The RECs must play an active role in democratising member states, for this will facilitate the integration process
- The possibility that regional blocs could become so strong politically and so successful economically that they could rival the idea of a union government, and also persistence of divergent views, should not be condemned or feared
- There is room for a dual approach, namely to continue strengthening of RECs on the one hand while working for the establishment of the African union government on the other

THE CHALLENGES OF PEACE AND SECURITY

The existing peace and security problems in Africa must be addressed and resolved before moving forward with the integration process.

STRENGTHENING THE AU INSTITUTIONAL PROCESS

- The capacity of the AU, in particular those organs in charge of implementing the integration process, must be improved to enable them tackle the institutional constraints
- Capacity-building must be promoted in the AU, its Peace and Security Architecture, the Pan-African Parliament, the African Court of Justice, and other institutions

- More institutions must engage with the AU on the issue of African integration

This report on the main issues discussed at the workshop will be published and widely disseminated among all interested parties. It will also be made available to the African Union Commission, AU member states, the diplomatic community and international organisations so as to provide impetus for the idea of an integrated union government for Africa and drive the process forward.

Programme

Day 1: Tuesday, 4 November 2008

	Arrival
08:00	Dinner

Day 2: Wednesday, 5 November 2008

09:00–09:15	Registration
09:15–10:30	Opening session: Welcome and introduction <i>Chair: His Excellency Ambassador Nseke Guillaume, Permanent Representative to the AU and UNECA</i>
09:15–09:30	Welcome and introduction <i>Mr Kenneth Mpyisi, Director, Institute for Security Studies, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia</i>
09:30–09:45	Keynote address <i>Ms Doris Murimi, Deputy Director, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, South Africa</i>
09:45–10:15	Coffee break and workshop photograph
10:15–11:15	Session I: A review of the current status of integrations processes in Africa <i>Chair: Dr Paul-Simon Handy, Programme Head, African Security Analysis Programme, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, South Africa</i>
10:15–10:45	Context to and status of union government debate <i>Mr Kenneth Mpyisi, Director, Institute for Security Studies, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia</i>
10:45–11:15	Institutional and legal challenges facing implementation of the union government <i>Mr Ibrahima Kane, Advisory Director, Open Society Institute</i>
11:15–12:30	Roundtable discussion
12:30–14:00	Lunch
14:00–16:30	Session II: Implementation of strategies for a union government for Africa <i>Chair: Mr Desire Assogbavi, Pan-Africa Senior Policy Analyst, Oxfam African Union Liaison Office, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia</i>
14:15–14:45	The proposed Union Government of Africa and the role of regional economic communities <i>Mr Chrysantus Ayangafac, Senior Researcher, Institute for Security Studies, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia</i>
14:45–15:00	Coffee break
15:00–16:45	Roundtable discussions
19:00	Reception
20:00	Dinner

Day 3: Thursday, 6 November 2008

08:30 – 09:00	Breakfast
09:00–12:30	Session III: Political challenges and scenarios for the union government <i>Chair: Dr Debay Tadesse, Senior Researcher, Direct Conflict Prevention Programme, Institute for Security Studies, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia</i>

09:00–09:30	Political challenges facing the implementation of a union government <i>Ms Delphine Lecoutre, Independent consultant, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia</i>
09:30–10:00	Possible scenarios for a strategy for the implementation of a union government <i>Dr Admore Kambudzi, Secretary, AU Peace and Security Council, African Union Commission</i>
10:00–10:30	Discussions
10:30–10:45	Coffee break
10:45–12:30	Discussions
12:30–14:00	Lunch
14:00–17:00	Summary of outcomes and recommendations on the way forward <i>Chair: Dr Paul-Simon Handy, Programme Head, African Security Analysis Programme, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, South Africa</i>
19:00	Dinner

List of participants

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