

AFRICAN UNION
الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE
UNIÃO AFRICANA

**FIRST CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS
OF INTEGRATION (COMAI)
30-31 MARCH 2006,
OUAGADOUGOU, BURKINA FASO**

COMAI/Decl.(I)

DECLARATION

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WE, African Ministers responsible for Integration, meeting in Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso on 30 and 31 March 2006 on the Rationalization of Regional Economic Communities (RECs);

RECALLING the commitments of the African Heads of State and Government on the development and integration of our Continent as well as on the African Union contained in the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community and the Constitutive Act

REAFFIRMING the resolve and commitments of the Heads of State and Government to the Abuja Treaty and the Sirte Declaration of 9.9.99 to, among others, accelerate the implementation of the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community;

RECOGNIZING the important role of the Regional Economic Communities as building blocs of the African Union and the need to rationalize and harmonize them with the view to accelerating economic integration of the continent;

FURTHER RECALLING the decisions of the Heads of State and Government on the need to strengthen the institutional framework of the African Union, and in particular to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the regional economic communities in the integration process;

COMMENDING, in that regard, the efforts being made by the African Union Commission (AUC), including the regional consultations organized in Accra, Ghana, in October 2005 and Lusaka, Zambia, in March 2006, respectively, with the assistance of Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the African Development Bank (ADB), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Global Coalition for Africa (GCA);

HAVING DELIBERATED on the rationalization process in Africa;

HEREBY AGREE TO:

- i. Request the Assembly of the African Union (AU) to halt the recognition of new RECs. Accordingly, only the following eight RECs should remain recognized:
 - Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS);
 - Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA);
 - Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS);
 - Southern African Development Community (SADC);
 - Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD);
 - the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA);
 - Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) ; and
 - East African Community (EAC).

- ii. Recognize, beside the eight RECs listed above, the past and ongoing cooperation and integration efforts by existing Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs) on the continent;
- iii. Revisit the Abuja Treaty to rearrange the timetable of its implementation taking into account the provisions of the Sirte Declaration of 9.9.99, and finalize the new Protocol on Relations between the AU and the RECs for signature in the shortest time possible;
- iv. Request the AUC and the RECs to:
 - Harmonize and coordinate policies and programmes of RECs as important strategies for rationalization;
 - Put in place mechanisms to facilitate the process of harmonization and coordination within and among the RECs;
 - Carry out an institutional audit of the RECs to assess the challenges and efficiency constraints in implementing the Abuja Treaty. The AUC should, in consultation with the RECs and in collaboration with ECA, provide a clear timetable and benchmarks for the implementation of the Treaty taking into account the Sirte Declaration of 9.9.99;
- v. Encourage the RECs to promote free movement of persons, goods, capital and services in order to enhance continental integration;
- vi. Urge Member States to honour their financial and other obligations to RECs to enable them carry out their mandates with particular reference to the integration process;
- vii. Invite the African Union to institutionalise the meeting of African Ministers responsible for Integration to follow up on the continental integration process.

Done in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, on 31 March 2006