

The Challenges of Regional Integration for Development in Africa: Problems and Prospects

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KEYWORDS Regional integration; development; NEPAD

ABSTRACT Greater African integration has long been a cherished but elusive Greater African integration has long been a cherished but elusive goal. Political leaders at official conferences and formal summits have long promoted the idea, although with only limited results on the ground. There is a renewed impetus to establish closer economic and political ties among the continent's numerous countries, based on a heightened appreciation of the need for regional integration and a clearer understanding of the past failures. Political liberation and de-colonisation was the rallying ideology upon which economic integration and unity, found eloquent articulation in the 1960's. With the independence of several African States and the subsequent establishment of a plethora of integrative mechanisms, all the Pan-African conferences were particularly unequivocal in their advocacy of freeing Africa in an all-round sense with an urge for economic cooperation as the basis of economic and political transformation. These efforts culminated to the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. Nevertheless, Africa has no positive integrative story to tell after several years of the OAU especially as the continent become threatened increasingly by its failure to cope with the challenges of development and globalisation. Thus, the current integrative reforms in the continental body constitute a response to the emerging global order. A conscious effort to expand economic and political space as well as the needed instrument to strengthen integration in Africa. This paper therefore, examines the current African integration efforts in the age of globalisation in a bid to show the current development and future challenges.