

# African Union: Economic and Travel Integration

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## CLARKMUN XIV

*Clark University Model United Nations*



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## Chair Letter

Dear Delegates,

I am excited to chair this African Union Committee with the whole Clark Model UN Team. The African Union committee is a unique committee diving into the topic of Economic Integration and Free Visa. Before you embark on your research and position paper writing journey, I wanted to share a little about the committee and myself with you.

I am a first-year student at Clark University studying Sociology and Political Science. I started Model UN as a freshman in High school and I have been involved with Model UN ever since. Having been on the Clark Model UN Team for only a semester, I have had the opportunity to compete and award at MCMUN in the OAS Committee, my first collegiate conference. OAS is the organization of American States, a similar idea to the African Union, but for the Americas. For Clark MUN XIV, I am excited to serve as the Chair of the African Union GA Committee because of its unique position in the world. As African Nations, you can use your skills in diplomacy, debate, and policy work to create a unique solution pushing all African Nations towards a more united future!

I am excited to see all the amazing and creative solutions you all will make during the conferences. If you have any concerns or questions about the committee or the background guide, I can be reached at [Jacchen@clarku.edu](mailto:Jacchen@clarku.edu)

Thanks,

Jacob Chen

## Introduction

Although the political body of this committee will be from the African Union, it will function with the committee procedure mechanics of a General Assembly Committee. The procedures will be brushed up upon briefly in the next section, although I do recommend looking over the Parli Pro portion of the Clark MUN Website:

<https://www.clarkmun.org/resources>.

Economic Integration is a key issue of the African Union to promote "economic integration as well as private sector development. The goal of the AU is to create a common market between nations where people, services, capital, and goods can move freely. There have been past and current actions like the Abuja Treaty, and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCTA).

The overall goal is Integration amongst African nations, delegates should be prepared to explore economic integration in combination with the African Union's agenda for removing visa restrictions to create "integrated politically united" Africa which would allow movement of trade and people. The AU hopes to achieve a similar model to that of the European Union (EU).

## Committee Expectations

As representatives of African Nations at Clark MUN, you should do your own preparation and research for the committee. You will be asked in committee to work with your other fellow delegates to write, debate, and vote on working paper, resolutions, and amendments within the topics of Economics and/or Visa Free Africa.

As you are researching for this committee and preparing to attend Clark MUN, please remember and be mindful and respectful of different culture, traditions, and or religions. Please be mindful and respectful of the committee topic, with accents, and props not being allowed. The dress code will be Western Business Attire, and when in committee please treat all your fellow delegates with the upmost respect.

All aspects and procedures during this committee will follow a traditional GA format. Resolutions should be formatted in a GA style, and we will be following Parliamentary procedures. We can and will clarify procedures during committee, but please feel free to use this resource if you need a brief review before committee. <https://www.un.org/en/model-united-nations/getting-ready> and <https://www.clarkmun.org/resources>

This Committee has two similar ideas, Economic Integration, and Visa Free Africa, the goal for the delegates should be to find solutions for both issues that would allow for a more integrated African continent. We will not be voting on the issues, rather the Chairs would encourage the delegates to find compromises and solutions that would work for both issues.

## Historical Background

The African Union (AU) is an intergovernmental agency that is comprised of 55 African nations. The African Union was launched on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2002, in South Africa. The African Union is different from the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which was established in 1963. The original OAU was established as an organization assisting African States fight from colonial power with the goal of increased cooperation between African states on the idea of African Unity and embracing African culture. The OAU functioned as an effective forum for African nation leaders to work together, but even so, throughout the 1990's, leaders argued for the amendment of the OAU's structure to reflect the modern world. In 1999, the OAU Heads of State and Government issued the Sirte Declaration calling a new African Union. The goal and vision for the African Union was for it to build from the OAU, establishing a body that would accelerate the integration of Africa, increase support to African states, and create forums for the work of various social, political, and economic issues.

The vision of the African Union is one of "An Integrated, Prosperous and Peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena." The AU is formed with multiple organs for decision. The nine principal organs were formed from the AU Constitutive Act and Protocols are the Assembly of the Union, the Executive Council, the Pan-African Parliament, the Court of Justice, the Commission, the Permanent Representatives Committee, the economic social and Culture council, the Specialized Technical Committee, and the Financial Institution.

The aim of the AU is to encourage international cooperation, promoting peace security and stability, fostering sustainable development, and promoting democratic principles and institutions. The African Union has added additional programs like Education and Healthcare and is continuously working to contribute towards the collective progress of the continent.

## **Past Actions of Economic Integration from the AU**

Economic Integration has been one of the top priorities for the African Union and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) since its founding back in 1963. The main objectives of the OAU were to accelerate the economic integration in the continent through a sustainable development method creating free trade, a central bank, single market, and common currency. Essentially, the OAU aimed to mimic the European Union. The United Nations Economic Commission has encouraged the OAU member states to begin with smaller subregional economies eventually coming together to form the continental economy. The UNEC proposal was the Abuja Treaty which has been in operation since 1994. The treaty's goal is to create an African common market using the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) as their building blocks. RECs were formed before the African Union and are regional grouping of African States. Like that of the European Union's formation, member states were encouraged to create RECs with the end goal of integrating the regions all together. There are currently 8 RECs recognized today: Arab Maghreb Union, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, Community of Sahel-Saharan States, East African Community, Economic Community of Central African States, Economic Community of West African States, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and Southern African Development Community.

## **Past Action of Visa Free Integration**

The African Union has taken many recent steps to encourage visa-free travel on the African Continent. The goal is to have a system similar to that of the European Union.

In 2016, the AU began with the launch of an African Passport for diplomats and top officials.

In 2018, the AU planned for the African government of member states to roll out a new Pan-Africa Passport to their citizens.

In 2021, the African Union codified plans to create a single continental passport in the AU protocol on Free Movement of persons.

In 2023, visaopenness.org found that 28% of travel within the African Continent do not require a Visa.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a RECs program, has already been offering 90-day visa free entry to the citizen of member states since 1970. The goal for the AU is to one day reach a visa free continent.

## Topic of Committee

### Current Actions of the AU

Recently, since the implementation of the African Union replacing the OAU, the economy of Africa has been in a decline due to Political Corruption, currency inflation and lack of strong relationships between neighboring states. The AU had an original 6 stage developmental plan for economic integration, and even with step backs, the AU has come back and completed the first stage which was creating a regional bloc in different areas of Africa. The second stage is the integration of RECs. The third stage is to create a continent-wide free trade area in RECS. With Stage 4 being the African Continental Free Trade agreement (ACFTA). Stage 4 is where the AU is currently at. "The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (ACFTA) initiated continental free trade for the entirety of the African Union. 22 ratifications from AU member states made the treaty operational, and in 2021, 34 member states have signed."

The final goal of the AU is to establish a central bank and a common currency, similar to that of the AU. ECOWAS has already begun to make an effort towards a common currency within the East African States.

In terms of visa free Africa, treaties have been passed by the African Union to enable the free travel of citizens in member states. In Article 14 of the Treaty Establishing Free Movement of Persons, the free movement of workers is brought up, which allows constituents of any member state to find employment in other member states. These steps towards stronger bonds between member states will help facilitate a growing economy and eventually a shared economy.

## Current Situation

Although the African Union has taken strides for a more integrated Africa, there are still problems within the modern day that are hindering the success of the 6-step plan. The first and largest issue is an economic one with the current Sub-Saharan currencies being weakened by the US Dollar. The weakened currency inhibits economic growth which causes an economic slowdown in these areas. A second major influence on economic decline in Africa is the HIV/AIDS crisis. Because how easily these diseases spread, it has a major impact on the population of working people, and when a large portion of workers get ill, the economy of the nation slows down/ Reduction in production of goods results in reducing the number of exports a country has. This can and does result in an increase in Import which means more money being spent pushing the country into further economic decline. If a member state is unable to control its economy, then the country will struggle within the RECs, and this has a chain effect that slows down and prevents the progress of the African Union and the end goal of full economic integration.

The largest issue hindering economic integration from becoming a success is infrastructure on the continent. Lack of infrastructure can result in higher trade cost. With many African nations being landlocked nations, lack of infrastructure can result in 40 percent more on transportation cost for coastal areas and 60 percent for landlocked areas.

Secondly, the AU also faces institutional weakness with some countries emphasizing national sovereignty. This with the lack of infrastructure creates a tricky situation where integration isn't on the forefront.

Other issues faced by the AU's economic integration include resource deficiency, corruption, political instability, and underdevelopment.

The final issue is the economic development framework proposed by the African Union and the inability to implement it. This is because of the issues mentioned above as well as economic polarization with the benefits being given to larger economies with the smaller ones facing the consequences, an example would be the distribution of welfare.

## Questions to Consider

1. What are some weak areas within the structure of the African Union? Are there solutions?
2. How could corruption and conflict impact continental Integration?
3. How could other RECs follow ECOWAS footsteps in creating regional integration?
4. How can the AU create economic and travel integration while also maintaining national sovereignty?
5. How could the African union accomplish its 6 step plans?
6. What are the benefits of ACFTA? Are there downsides?
7. How can the African Union strengthen its position on the world stage?
8. How can nations work together to fight the effects of the US Dollar?
9. How can a Visa Free Africa be beneficial to member states?
10. What qualities of the EU can the AU augment and implement?

## Suggestions for Further Research

- [A visa-free Africa still facing hurdles](#)
- [Visa Openness 2016-2023](#)
- [Visa Free Africa AU](#)
- [Economic Integration AU](#)
- [Economic Integration & Private Sector AU](#)
- All delegates should also look at the AU's website as a resource: <https://au.int/>
- AU with UN can also be a resource: <https://www.africanunion-un.org/>
- And for additional research, look below in References.

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