West Africa Institute

ZEI Center for European Integration Studies

REGIONAL INTEGRATION
OBSERVER

Contents

Regional Integration Observer (RIO)

The RIO takes a comparative look at West African and European integration and deals with the relations between the two regions. It is a new platform for exchange.

EU military operation EUNAVFOR Med aims at neutralising established refugee smuggling routes in the Mediterranean © EUNAVFOR Med

Migration in Africa: Factor of Development or Poverty?
by René N'Guettia Kouassi*

Against the backdrop of the current migration crisis affecting the world in general and Europe in particular, the issue of migration has become the subject of controversial debates. In Europe, one summit after the other is organized, trying to give answers to the most pressing challenges.

In this context, Africa does not remain on the sidelines. For decades, many Africans left their countries of origin, hoping to find a better life in developed countries. However, according to data from the World Bank, more than half of the migratory movements are happening inside the African continent. Therefore, understanding migratory flows inevitably requires a thorough analysis of its root causes.

Apart from the European debate, the following article will shed light on the impact that migratory movements have on African countries, both on their economies and their societies. Furthermore, the policies of the African Union Commission (AUC) will be introduced.

Impacts of migration on the economic level

Even though econometric approaches at the macro-economic level are practically nonexistent, existing studies agree that with regard to the impacts of migration, the economic development of the countries of origin is expected to be influenced in three ways:

- By migrant remittances;

- By brain drain;

- With regard to a possible return of the migrants.

In the international development finance landscape, remittances are of increasing importance. According to the World Bank (2006) total remittances exceeded USD 160 billion in 2004 only for developing countries. This is more than private debt and own capital. In West Africa migration is

often considered a coordinated family action. By sending remittances, migrants give real "lifebuoys" to millions of households in developing countries. Often the money is invested in real estate. But remittances also help to increase resistance towards shocks like famines, droughts, epidemics, etc. Furthermore, they directly stimulate domestic consumption. Remittances therefore serve as a source of diversification of the population's income. For example, using econometric modeling panel data, Gupte, Patillo and Wagh (2007) show that an increase of 10% of remittances equals a decrease of 1% of the poverty level per inhabitant in sub-Saharan Africa.

Apart from the micro-economic effects, remittances also help to increase the rate of banking, as they often come via bank transfer. In the economy of a developing country, remittances are a relatively stable source of financing as they are able to ease the effects of recession or crisis and do not generate expenses later on, like dividend payments, refunds, etc.

On the other hand, remittances can also lead to inflation, influence the exchange rate and may generate financial dependence of the recipients.

Impacts of migration on the social level

Almost every African society is impacted by migratory movements. People who legally leave, are often those with a high education level or who are leaving to study abroad. In this case, migrants rarely return to their countries of origin, which constitutes a serious loss for African societies, in terms of brain-drain. This type of migration could nevertheless have some positive effects on African societies. As educated individuals have good perspectives abroad, this may lead to a higher education rate and generate a higher number of skilled workers in African countries. Furthermore qualified migrants are paid higher wages which allows them to send back even more remittances, which eventually helps the economic growth of the country. Moreover, migrants can establish commercial relations to their home countries, thus stimulating investments from abroad.

Apart from legal migration, nearly a quarter of migrants leaving Africa do so illegally. Fully aware of the dangerous routes and regardless of the still rising number of deaths in the Mediterranean, they flee from injustice, exclusion, persecution or unemployment. This constitutes a great loss for African countries in terms of human capital.

Another societal effect of migration is the possible degradation of social cohesion. Although borders in Africa are artificial, they still create a division between peoples. Peoples that have been living together for centuries are now neighbors. If there are strong migratory flows from one country to another, problems of nationality and property appear, which can lead to crisis and even war, e.g. between Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire. In countries with a high unemployment rate, people are afraid that immigrants may "steal their jobs". Sometimes societies are assigning certain jobs to immigrants but as the population becomes more qualified and the government fails to create new job opportunities, this perception may change, as witnessed in the

violent outrages in South Africa in 2014, where violence against foreigners culminated in several deaths.

Synthesis of the impacts of migration

- Illegal migration is a type of migration which is costly for Africa in terms of deaths and the difficulties for migrants in finding a job, housing and decent living conditions.

- Remittances represent a major profit for the country's development. The payments by migrants are more than four times the amount of development support.

- On a cultural level, migration results also in exchange, which can be very fruitful for African countries. On the other hand, migration also bears the risk of abandonment of African culture, as migrants "copy" the occidental lifestyle, spirit and fashion. Intra-African migration furthermore promotes the continent's unity, but can also lead to conflicts and even war.

- Migration also provokes brain-drain, which is a great loss for Africa. Students who are studying abroad have difficulties returning to their home countries for reasons of security and life quality.

The different policies of the AU Commission in the field of migration

AU Migration Framework for Africa

The driving forces of migration in Africa are very diverse and depend on the conditions in the different regions. Dynamics and patterns of migration vary from region to region, depending on internal and external factors.

Against this background the strategies developed under the AU Migration Framework for Africa are to be implemented by the AU member states and REC's, depending on the specific requirements in the regions. UN agencies, international organizations, NGO's and civil society organizations will hereby act as collaborating organizations.

With regard to labor migration it is of utmost importance to build up structures, policies and legislations. To this end, regional cooperation strategies were formulated and the harmonization of labor migration policies is promoted. Furthermore, strategies for border management, illegal migration and human trafficking will have to be developed.

As to forced migration, the implemented strategies so far have focused on crisis management in the affected countries. For this, a framework for dialogue and conflict-solving is to be developed.

Since migrants have been prone to exploitation, mass expulsion and persecution, respect for human rights has to be a priority in all migratory policies.

Another matter concerns the lack of reliable data on migration throughout Africa. Therefore it is of utmost importance to collect and exchange data and to develop an information system for the entire continent. For this, extensive investments in technology are needed.

Joint Labor Migration Program (JLMP)

Labor migration is a great political challenge and features the following characteristics:

- Prevalence of intraregional mobility (between the different REC's)

- Growing percentage of women among labor migrants

- Vulnerability of migrants (and their families), facing for example exploitation and hostility

- Low willingness to integrate labor migration into regional agreements on free movements of persons

- Lack of legislation, institutions and labor market data

- Qualifications/skills are not or only partly acknowledged

- Brain-drain

- Limited or no access at all to social protection and non-portability of benefits

- Remittances contribute more and more to the economies of many countries

- Trafficking and clandestine voyage

The aim of the Joint Labor Migration Program is therefore to establish a system of labor mobility and create the necessary governance instruments for its implementation in order to promote the integration and development of the continent. The JLMP also facilitates the implementation of the AU Agenda 2063 and the strategic plan 2014-2017 of the AU Commission.

Recommendations

In order to obtain less porous borders, it is important that the international community solves the crises in Syria and Libya as soon as possible. Furthermore, given the humanitarian crises, development assistance by occidental countries needs to be expanded. As for African countries, intra-regional migration has to be approached more seriously. Especially with regard to the numerous risks of terrorism, it is important for African countries to develop solid methods of border surveillance and to consider reporting of migration an important issue. Regarding the question of remittances, financial authorities should encourage people to approach institutions in order to better canalize remittances. Also research centers should multiply their research on the issue to offer solutions to all stakeholders. To produce several studies require that national and national organizations make the issue of production data on migration a necessity. In light of the current situation, it is evident that cooperation between Northern and Southern countries like it happened during the Valletta Summit on Migration in November 2015, has to be multiplied.

* René N'Guettia Kouassi is the Director of the Department of Economic Affairs of the African Union Commission

The Sustainable Development Goals – Implementation Challenges and Opportunities for Africa
by Alessandra Casazza*

The recently adopted universal 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that includes the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), provide an unprecedented opportunity for countries in Africa to free people from all forms of poverty, promote shared prosperity while respecting the natural boundaries of our planet, and promote peaceful and inclusive societies.

However, the continent faces several challenges to achieving sustainable development. Africa is home to almost half (43 percent) of the world's poor,[1] and suffers the lowest human development in the world, with deprivations in several aspects of people's lives, such as health and education.[2]

Plunging commodity prices and the weakening of the world's economy are posing challenges to sustained growth, while high inequality[3], the highest after Latin America[4], has deepened poverty in a number of countries. Climate change is having devastating impacts on the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable, and violent extremism is threatening to stunt prospects of development for decades to come.

There are also great opportunities to realise sustainable development, building on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) achievements. Making regional integration work for human development, investing in capable and responsive developmental states, and supporting risk-informed and resilient development can unlock Africa's potential and accelerate progress towards its commitment to make a better life for all.

[1] 388 million people in the continent are living on less than USD 1.90/day (WB Global Monitoring Report 2015/16).

[2] Africa's human development index was 0.518 in 2014, versus 0.711 for the world (UNDP HDR 2015).

[3] In Southern Africa the Gini coefficient is as high as 48.5 (UN-ECA, AU, AfDB, UNDP, Assessing progress in Africa toward the Millennium Development Goals, 2014).

[4] AUC, UNECA, UNDP, AfDB (2015), Africa MDG Report 2015.

Capable and responsive developmental states

The universal 2030 agenda is broader, more ambitious and far more complex than the MDGs. Its implementation and the difficult trade-offs that policy makers will need to manage call for investing in capable and responsive developmental states. Capable states are essential for promoting broad-based development and for fulfilling countries' commitment 'to leave no one behind'.

Today, more than ever before, Africa needs states that can simultaneously promote inclusive growth and distribution, protect the environment and adapt to climate change, close the vast gender gap, administer fair justice and deliver quality social services to their people. These states also need to generate domestic resources and harness private sector resources in support of the sustainable development agenda.

Capable and responsive development states require committed political leadership that can promote broad-based participation in policy making processes and mobilize support for clear but difficult policy choices. They also call for investing in state institutions (i.e. bureaucracies), both at the apex and at local levels, to develop their capacity to transform policies choices into real development outcomes.

Making regional integration work for human development

By advancing regional integration, which is at the core of the African Union's 'Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want', Africa has the opportunity to further propel growth, accelerate structural transformation[5] and diversify its economy. Deeper regional integration can generate more jobs and help countries reap the benefits of Africa's demographic dividend.[6]

Regional integration, however, does not automatically translate into development outcomes; the quality of the process is critical. Well-designed and effective industrial policies can make regional integration the engine of inclusive growth that can generate employment for all. Regional integration applying a human development lens puts safeguards in place to ensure the process generates decent employment, particularly for the most vulnerable. These include social security and social protection policies, investments in education, strong labour market institutions and pro-poor labour market policies.

Reaping the benefits of Africa's demographic dividend and harnessing the creative energy of Africa's young men and women also demands integrated labour markets and the ratification of African Union protocols on free movement of persons, the right to work and the right of residence for migrants.

5 Intra-African trade is more diversified and industrialized - has more value added - than exports to the rest of the world.

6 Africa has more than 200 million people between 15 and 24, and its young population is on the rise.

Risk-informed development

With more frequent disasters and crises – natural, economic, health-related – having devastating impacts on the lives of people, systems and infrastructure, adapting to a changing climate and building resilience is critical to Africa's ambition to realise sustainable development.

By supporting risk-informed and resilient development, African countries can protect decades of hard-won development gains, including the MDGs, and lay the foundation for sustainable development for all. Going forward, Africa's development choices and actions shall be guided by an understanding of climate impact and support a zero-carbon sustainable agenda; most importantly, they shall be supported by strong partnerships between governments, civil society and the private sector.

With countries already integrating both Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 into national development plans, and civil society engaged in their implementation, there is momentum on the continent for the realization of their ambitious goals to leave no one behind.

* Alessandra Casazza is a Programme Advisor for the SDGs at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

The EU: What Kind of Global Power?

by Thomas Panayotopoulos & Robert Stüwe*

The European Union (EU) is increasingly present as a real actor on the world stage. However, its concrete role has not yet clearly taken shape. What kind of power does the EU represent? With common external action policies in the making, the EU has launched various military and civilian missions to prevent wars in conflict zones as well as to promote stability in these regions.

As one tier of action, 16 Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions have been launched on the African continent over the course of the last decade, either through United Nations mandates and / or at the request of host countries.

- Seven military missions: ARTEMIS, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); EU Forces (EUFOR) RD Congo; EUFOR Chad/CAR; EU Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) ATALANTA; EU Training Mission Somalia (EUTM) Somalia; EUTM Mali; EUFOR Central African Republic (CAR) and the EU's military advisory mission in the CAR (EUMAM CAR)

- Nine civilian missions: EU Police Mission (EUPOL) in Kinshasa DRC; EU Security Mission (EUSEC) DRC; Support to African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS II), Sudan/Darfur; EUPOL DRC; EU Security Sector Reform (SSR), Guinea-Bissau; EU Aviation Security Mission (EUAVSEC) South Sudan; EU Regional Maritime Capacity Building Mission in the Horn of Africa and the Western Indian Ocean (EUCAP NESTOR); EUCAP Sahel Niger; EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) Libya, EUCAP Sahel Mali[1]

In parallel, the EU also engages in bilateral cooperation with the African Union (AU). As the cornerstone of this cooperation, the African Peace Facility (APF) was set up in 2004 following a demand by African leaders at the AU Summit in Maputo in 2003. The APF's chief goal is to enhance peace and security in Africa through tailored support at the continental and regional level in the field of conflict prevention, management, resolution and peace building measures. The idea behind this facility is to enable ownership, partnership and solidarity, pre-empting the principles of the joint Africa-EU-Strategy adopted in 2007.[2]

Since 2004 the EU has provided €1.3 billion through the APF, allowing a number of African-led peace operations to take place, such as the AU Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), the International African-led Support Mission to the CAR and six accomplished missions in Sudan, the Comoros, the CAR and Mali.[3]

1 Africa-EU Strategic Partnership, retrieved from http://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/en/about-us/about-us/key-figures-and-achievements.

2 EU External Action Service, retrieved from http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/african_union/eu_african_union/peace_and_security/index_en.htm.

3 Africa-EU Strategic Partnership, retrieved from http://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/en/about-us/about-us/key-figures-and-achievements.

Both the CSDP missions and direct collaboration with the AU reflect the goals of the 2003 European Security Strategy, which can be seen as a guidebook for EU global action setting out terrorism, regional conflicts and state failure as the main threats to EU security.[4] However a closer look on whether these threats are tackled in a common way, reveals a wide disparity in involvement by EU member states in the joint missions. This holds true for both naval and land operations. In the mission "European Union Naval Force Mediterranean" (EUNAVFOR Med) with the objective of fighting refugee smuggling routes and the EUFOR mission in CAR, for example, only a fraction of member states have subscribed to participate. This lack of commitment by member states to the so-called common actions indicates that individual contributions are interest-driven and also dependent on volatile national voter support. Few member states muster up the will to establish a real European hard power.

Furthermore, EU "heavyweights" in many cases consider unilateral action to be most appropriate in order to pursue their interests. France, for example, rushed to deploy troops to Mali and Ivory Coast, demonstrating that it would not wait for a consensus within the EU to be reached. Other EU members hes-

4 Renard, Thomas: Partnering for Global Security: The EU, Its Strategic Partners and Transnational Security Challenges, European Foreign Affairs Review, Vol. 21, No. 1 (2016), pp 9-34, 10f.

itantly followed suit, transforming common EU action into joint EU reaction. This lack of strategic vision once again proves that the EU falls short on a common ambition to become a hard power. Building hard power capacities would require a mandatory participation for all member states in the common missions and prohibition of unilateral deployments. Without concessions like that, the goal of the EU to be a hard power becomes utopian.

From the perspective of the EU, a possible way to effectively pursue EU interests without sacrificing values is to sustain its credibility as a soft power. According to Joseph Nye, soft power refers to the ability to get other actors to do what you want and that requires understanding how they are hearing your messages.[5] And indeed: The EU intends to influence matters by its democratic appeal, promoting accountable governance, rule of law and economic welfare. For this, a vast array of state-building instruments is employed: anti-corruption measures, administrative support (EU-AU deal

to further expand administrative cooperation and staff exchanges[6]) and research and innovation initiatives (Horizon 2020[7]).

Unfortunately, the EU's credibility as the beacon of democracy is currently undermined in two ways: First, the EU has to deal regularly with internal frictions that weaken its ability to bring about change elsewhere. While nationalist movements are on the rise and growing numbers of illiberal governments in office, Europe's leverage as a role model is in decline. Second, the already-mentioned lack of common military capability is the reason why no genuine deterrence power exists to back up soft power claims. This implies that the EU struggles to adopt the role of a credible and powerful mediator. On top of that, the Union fails to provide security guarantees to actors in conflict zones if requested. Consequently, the EU is only taken seriously when backed by the United States. This has been the case in

the negotiations to the Iran nuclear deal framework as well as in the case of Ukraine.

So, what kind of power does the EU present then? Looking at the current condition, the EU resembles a "sleeping power", which possesses the potential but is overly cautious to make use of it. Pushed from one crisis to another, the EU is wasting too many resources on domestic affairs. Home-cooked crises (Grexit, Brexit and EU disenchantment) have accompanied the EU for too long. Once these struggles are mastered, the EU will emerge as a strengthened Strategic Power.

* Thomas Panayotopoulos is Junior Fellow and Coordinator of the "Future of Europe" project at ZEI

* Robert Stüwe is Junior Fellow and Coordinator of the "Future of Europe" project at ZEI

6 Delegation of the EU to the AU, retrieved from http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/african_union/press_corner/all_news/news/2016/20160201_en.htm.

7 Ibd., retrieved from http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/african_union/documents/press_corner/eari-news-17-august-2015_en.pdf.

5 Nye, Joseph S.: Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics, New York 2004, p. 111.

Africa-EU Migration: More Talk, Less Action

by Ignatius Oli*

The November 2015 Valletta Summit on Migration sought to strengthen regional cooperation between Europe and African countries with not just the present day challenges but the benefits of migration between both continents. Leaders of the two continents affirmed that migration is a 'shared responsibility' of countries of 'origin, transit and destination', hence, the European Union and Africa needs to work together in a 'spirit of partnership' to find common solutions to challenges of mutual interest.

The summit further reiterated - through the adoption of a political declaration and action plan - the need to improve cooperation on return, readmission and reintegration, prevention and fighting irregular migration, migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, as well as enhancing cooperation on legal migration and mobility – all of these are frontline issues of the migration puzzle of today. Sweet and lovely speeches are made and captured for the moment on the pages of print and electronic media, then everybody returns to their various continents leaving the responsibility of addressing these problems where it was before the Summit - mostly cosmetic policies with no visible implementation after all political instruments have been signed. This has been the trend for decades and this is why we are now where we are.

From the analysis of various authors and scholars who have elucidated on this discussion, the most recent literatures points to the fact that Africa-EU migration stems from a re-awakened consciousness amongst the youth of the continent. Let me speak from my experience as a young professional on electoral issues, there is a revolution of expectation currently occurring in Africa primarily from the youth in terms of what they expect from their leaders. The youth of today watch CNN, BBC, YouTube, Facebook among others and they begin to ask themselves why their lives cannot be the same as that of an average European or an American given the enormous natural resources of the continent. Constant failures by the leaders of today to deliver on lifelong socio-economic and political gains for the continent have simply resulted in a mass outflow of the future of the continent to Europe both illegally and legally.

Again, by taking another closer look at the African continent in respect to the formation of the African Economic Community (AEC) in June 1991 and formally ratified in 1994[1], one would have expected a more coherent and easily implementable policy agenda as set out in the Treaty with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the AEC comprising the entire continent, especially with regards to labour

and capital mobility. But, this is not the case as policies regarding migration seem to cluster within the Regional Economic Communities of the AEC or on country by country basis as they measure labour and capital mobility with the Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) coming into the respective region or country against remittances from abroad. For instance, Niger or Senegal in the West African region will encourage more legal migration or close their eyes to illegal migration if statistically the remittances accruing to the nation outweigh the development financial assistance it gets[2]. This is one of the front line arguments in the African continent today when the issue of Africa-EU migration is raised for discussion. This kind of trend could impede some aspects of migrant return to the country of origin with readmission agreements between both regions.

Let us quickly take one example from the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime[3], a Geneva based lobby organization which documents the routes, origins, means of transport and also describes the role played by traffickers, terrorist and corrupt government officials. The town of Agadez, a 'smuggling entrepot' in northern Niger according to the report shows that at least half of

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[1] Treaty on the Founding of the African Economic Community, 1994.

[2] Financing for Development, UNDP Regional Cluster Meeting Ethiopia 2015.

[3] Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (2014): Smuggled Future: the dangerous part of the migrant from Africa to EuropeReport.

all West African migrants who reach the island of Lampedusa first come through this 'warren of adobe houses'.[4]

The ethnic Tabu tribe, who dominate the trade, charge migrants between $200 and $300 for passage into southern Libya or ask them to carry drugs in lieu of payment. Smuggling is the primary business of this town, government officials are clearly aware of this but they do little or nothing perhaps because of the weekly average revenue generated from this place is estimated at about $1m plus. The report also shows Turkey in the Middle East and Thailand in Asia migratory routes engage in similar activities. One would then ask, is it really a sine quo nom

that government officials from these countries or regions do not know about this or they are simply turning a blind eye due to the economic benefits to the region and country?

Be this as it may, the African Union in recent times have made efforts especially with the adoption of Agenda 2063, a global strategy to optimize the use of Africa's resources for the benefit of all Africans with special emphasis on the socioeconomic transformation within the next 50 years in the continent[5], a step in the right direction, however mobilizing domestic funding for its implementation remains a puzzle to unravel. The European Union on the other hand need not only continually pledge fi-

nancial support but should endeavour to collectively harmonize all its migration policies to ensure proper coherent access or channels are given to those who may still wish to migrate to Europe. The financial and technical support given should help the African continent foster and harness funds through leakages, strengthen weak institutions, address systemic corruption and should be tied to financing for development, rather than just giving financial assistance to the region.

* Ignatius Oli is a Fellow of the ZEI Master of European Studies Class of 2015/2016 and WAI-ZEI scholar

4 Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (2014): Smuggled Future: the dangerous part of the migrant from Africa to Europe, Research Report. p10.

5 African Union Agenda 2063: Strategic plan of action for the African Continent 2015.

Introducing the Master in African Regional Integration (MARI)
by * Sara Spínola

Higher Education, Science and Innovation Dr. Correia e Silva, assured its support for MARI.

The Master program in African Regional Integration (MARI) is the result of collaboration between the West Africa Institute (WAI) and the University of Cabo Verde (Uni-CV). A collaboration protocol signed in July 2014 established the key points of this specific program.

The master has been validated by the University Council of the University of Cabo Verde and accredited by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation in 2015. As the master program is considered a key element in the internationalization strategy of Cabo Verde, the Minister of

Through combining their facilities, staff and expertise a truly unique Master program in African Regional Integration will build capacity in this field of research and study, which is lacking especially training with a focus on the unique challenges and opportunities of African Regional integration. With the main goal of ensuring that political decision-making in Africa is underpinned with

scientific research, the target audience of MARI is:

- Practitioners needing to update their knowledge in Regional Integration or regional citizens holding undergraduate degrees and wishing to know more about Regional Integration Governance, and their rights and duties in the regional integration process;

- Students holding an undergraduate degree in subjects including political science, economics, law, international relations or similar fields to ensure that they already possess background understanding;

Most of the students that will attend MARI are already employees. The academic training will allow students to increase their knowledge about Reginal Integration in order to initiate and implement new policies in their own job and country.

UNI-CV and WAI are working on partnerships with African Regional Institutions to ensure that during their studies, students will form contacts with the regional Institutions. ZEI will accompany the initiating process of MARI until the end of the WAI-ZEI project on Comparative Regional Integration, funded by the BMBF.

The aim of MARI is to provide students with diverse career opportunities in regional organizations in their home country or another African country.

The program is interdisciplinary and international in nature, ensuring that students gain an insightful and scientifically grounded understanding of the complexities of regional integration. In order to produce highly qualified and employable graduates, the program combines academically challenging course work, with the development of professional skills and experiences. To ensure high academic standards students will receive extensive guidance in research methodology and compre-

Minister Dr. Correia e Silva with the Directors of Uni-CV, WAI and ZEI

hensive and innovative training in understanding theoretical and practical legal, political and economic complexities of integration. MARI provides graduates with expertise which offers diverse career opportunities including worldwide academic institutions, public institutions and regional integration institutions, national administrations, private sector actors faced with regulations, NGO's and policy consulting. The selection criteria for the Master Program are:

- Educational background (graduation);

- Relevant knowledge of the subject including political science, economics, law, international relations or similar fields

to ensure that students already possess a sufficient level of background understanding. This will be subject to an overall individual assessment in order to establish if the academic areas are covered to a sufficient extent;

- Proven academic excellence – above average undergraduate degree;

- Very good ICT knowledge;

- Proof of excellent knowledge of English (TOFEL) and knowledge of at least one other official ECOWAS language

The selection procedure will be realized in following way:

- 15 candidates from the ECOWAS and UEMOA member states;

- 10 candidates from the host country (Cabo Verde);

- Call for candidacy to recruit 10 candidates worldwide

The first group of students will start in the 2016-17 academic year at Uni-CV.

All necessary information can be found on the MARI website at:

Uni-CV: www.unicv.edu.cv/ index.php/pt/mira

WAI: www.westafricainsti tute.org/index.php/pt/

* Sara Spínola is the MARI-Coordinator

The African Union's Year on Women's Empowerment and What Has Been Achieved in 2015

by * Rose Mensah-Kutin

Policy commitment at the regional level is critical for any meaningful change at the national level which can impact concretely on the unequal social, economic and political relationships of women and men within the context of Africa. The African Union (AU), the main vehicle through which such commitments are made in Africa has not been found wanting in this regard.

The African Union (AU) held its 24th Ordinary Session at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 30-31 January 2015 under the theme, "Year of Women's Empowerment and Development towards Africa's Agenda 2063". Earlier in 2013 African governments had launched a 50-year development plan referred to as 'Agenda 2063'. This has been seen as the vision that will move Africa forward as a united, prosperous and peaceful continent, where African citizens themselves become the main drivers of their destiny in the competitive and rapidly changing global context.

A cursory glance at these developments might lead one to assume that a true renaissance in Africa is occurring and that women are directly at the center of this new drive to move the continent forward. While it is laudable for the AU to re-commit to its Pan-African agenda and ensure that the women's agenda is not treated as an 'add-ed-on' issue, it is important to assess the extent to which such a declaration can translate into concrete action across the continent which brings real change to the lives of women.

African governments have been active participants in global conferences on women's rights and gender equality since 1975 when the first World Conference on Women was held and International Women's Day (IWD) which is celebrated every year on 8th March, was declared. Since then, African governments have committed themselves to the principle of gender equality as enshrined in Article 4 (1) of the Constitutive Act of the AU as well as other existing commitments contained in regional, continental and international instruments on human and women's rights. These include the Dakar Platform for Action 1994; the Beijing Platform for Action (1995); the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the African Plan of Action to Accelerate the Implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action for the Advancement of Women (1999); the Outcome Document of the Twenty-third Special Session of the United nations General Assembly Special Session on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (2000); UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000); and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003). The landmark Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa was also signed onto in 2004.

The above agreements, conventions and declarations contain clear commitments on women's rights and gender equality promotion. Yet the situation on the ground with regard to women's livelihoods, socio-economic well-being, political participation and legal rights, still leaves a lot to be desired. Thus even though African women are making important strides towards their own empowerment and the realization of their rights as equal citizens in their various countries and communities, progress remains slow as regional commitments have not been sufficiently translated and backed with the needed resources to fundamentally transform women's lives.

In the area of education, many more girls are in school today than three decades ago. At the same time however, girls are more likely to drop out of school than boys due to socio-cultural, economic and the patriarchal nature of social relationships that disadvantage girls in relation to boys. Women's access to land in African societies is problematic even in situations where the law protects women's rights to land. This means that even as the role of women in food production is increasingly being

acknowledged, they continue to face major challenges of access and control clearly displayed through their smaller land holdings and less fertile plots of land. In the area of health, the World Health Organization (WHO) has said that Africa accounts for 50 per cent maternal deaths, although just 11 per cent of the world's population. The chances that a woman would die from complications related to maternal health is 1 in 31 in sub-Saharan Africa compared with 1 in 4300 in the developed regions of the world[1].

With reference to household relationships, some changes are occurring with men taking on more household maintenance responsibility. This is the result of awareness creation efforts about the importance of shared responsibility in the home as a way of ameliorating women's household burdens. However the absence of critical resources such as access to modern energy services for cooking, water heating and lighting means, that in many contexts, women and girls continue to bear the brunt of energy and water provision in their households. The situation is worse in contexts where governments have moved outside the purview of social services provision, a case which is very common in many African countries.

On political participation, Africa seems to have made appreciable strides in using quotas especially through constitutional reform to increase the numbers of women in politics and decision-making. On a world classification of countries ranked by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in relation to women's representation in Parliaments (2016), Rwanda ranks 1st with Senegal ranking 6th and South Africa ranking 8th on a list of 191 countries. While this is laudable and points to the importance of how laws and policies can actually promote women's equal participation in decision-making, several other African countries continue to lag behind with Swaziland ranking 170th and Nigeria ranking 175th[2].

What this points to is that promoting women's rights and gender equality within the context of Africa is urgent. But clearly much more needs to be done beyond AU declarations. Women's groups that have been at the forefront of organizing and building social movements must continue to work collectively and inclusively. They must track the extent to which such regional commitments are realized on the ground. The need for resources is critical and donor funds are dwindling.

The time has therefore come for local resource mobilization within the continent to become a major priority. This can be done given the abundance of undervalued human and natural resources at the continent's disposal. The transformation of unequal social, economic and political relationships, for the realization of rights that African women are demanding is possible, but only when we hold our institutions and governments accountable.
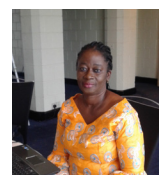
* Rose Mensah-Kutin is the Director of the West Africa Regional Office of ABANTU for Development, a women's rights organization

1 World Health Organization (2010): Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2008. Estimates developed by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and the World Bank.

2 Inter-Parliamentary Union (2016): Women in national parliaments, retrieved from http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm.