

African Union (AU)

The African Union (AU) is a continental political union consisting of all 55 countries on the continent of Africa, except for territories of European countries located in Africa. It was established on 26 May 2001 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and launched on 9 July 2002 in South Africa, with the aim of replacing the Organization of African Unity (OAU) which was established on 25 May 1963. The most important decisions of the AU are made by the Assembly of the African Union, a semi-annual meeting of the heads of state and government of its member states. The AU's secretariat, the African Union Commission, is based in Addis Ababa.

The stated objectives of the African Union are as follows:

1. To achieve greater unity and solidarity between the African countries and Africans
2. To defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of its Member States.
3. To accelerate the political and social-economic integration of the continent.
4. To promote and defend African common positions on issues of interest to the continent and its peoples.
5. To encourage international cooperation, taking due account of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
6. To promote peace, security, and stability on the continent.
7. To promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance.
8. To promote and protect human and peoples' rights in accordance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other relevant human rights instruments.
9. To establish the necessary conditions which enable the continent to play its rightful role in the global economy and in international negotiations.
10. To promote sustainable development at the economic, social and cultural levels as well as the integration of African economies.
11. To promote cooperation in all fields of human activity to raise the living standards of African peoples.
12. To coordinate and harmonize the policies between the existing and future Regional Economic Communities for the gradual attainment of the objectives of the Union.
13. To advance the development of the continent by promoting research in all fields, in particular science and technology.
14. To work with relevant international partners in the eradication of preventable diseases and the promotion of good health on the continent. African Union website: <https://au.int/>

Topic 1: Economic Development and International Trade

Since the end of the Second World War, the nations of Africa have undergone decolonization and economic reform, and especially since the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, the nations and people of Africa are ever more connected to each other and the global economy as technology and globalization connect more and more economies together. In March 2013, Africa the world's poorest inhabited continent: Africa's entire

combined GDP is barely a third of the United States'; however, the World Bank expects that most African countries will reach "middle income" status (defined as at least US\$1,000 per person a year) by 2025 if current growth rates continue. In 2013, Africa was the world's fastest-growing continent with GDP growth at 5.6% a year, and GDP is expected to rise by an average of over 6% a year between 2013 and 2023. In 2017, the African Development Bank reported Africa to be the world's second-fastest continental growing economy, and estimates that average growth was 3.4% in 2017, while growth is expected to increase to 4.3% through 2018.

What is at question is: How will the nations of Africa continue their economic development into the future, and what is the African Union's role in that Process?

Questions to consider:

1. Who are your country's main trading partners?
2. What regional trading blocs is your country a member of?
3. What sector(s) of your nation's economy is well developed? What has potential?
4. What foreign nation's supply the largest source of domestic and foreign investment? (The United States, Europe, China, the International Monetary Fund, etc.)
5. What factors inhibit development and trade (Think corruption, geography, debt, technology, etc.)
6. What level of involvement should the African Union have in economic development and international trade for your nation?

Places to begin research:

UN Center for Trade and Development: <http://unctad.org/en/Pages/Home.aspx>

World Bank, Africa: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/afr>

Topic 2: Protection of Africa's Endangered Species

The continent of Africa is blessed with natural beauty and a wide diversity of plant and animal life. However, many of the environmental issues in Africa are caused by human effects on the African ecosystem, and have major impacts on humans and natural life. Major issues facing the continent include desertification, air, soil, and water pollution, and what the focus will be on: the decline of African species.

Africa's environmental problems are geographically distinct across the continent, and most of the concerns are human induced. However, it is important to consider that some of the issues facing Africa's endangered species are not necessarily created by Africans themselves.

What must the African Union accomplish to protect its natural wildlife as the 21st Century progresses?

Questions to consider:

1. What efforts have already been taken by African and Global organizations to protect endangered species in Africa?

2. What efforts undermine those agreements to protect endangered species? (ex. Poaching)
3. What species are vital to the ecosystem of your nations? Regions? Africa?
4. Does the protection of a species inhibit economic development in your country?
5. Does the extinction of a species threaten the way of life of groups of peoples?
6. Is it worth the African Union's efforts to save all endangered species in Africa, or should only specific species be saved? And if so, which ones?

Places to begin research:

World Wildlife Fund life of Endangered Species, Africa:

https://www.worldwildlife.org/species/directory?direction=desc&sort=extinction_status

African Convention of the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (1968, rev. 2013)

https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7763-treaty-0003_-_african_convention_on_the_conservation_of_nature_and_natural_resources_e.pdf

Topic 3: Promoting Sustainable Development Practices

Africa is poised for large social and environmental upheavals in the 21st Century.

Urbanization, manufacturing, mining, tourism, and energy use are accelerating, while environmental health has declined as forests are cleared, desert areas expand, rain patterns shift due to the changing climate, and more and more pollution is released into the environment. Water is also a rising need; Africa is a dry continent, second only to Australia. Around 340 million Africans have no access to safe drinking water, about 40 percent of the world's total. Furthermore, agriculture employs 60 percent of Africa's labor force, while three-fifths of farmers work at a subsistence level. Efforts in many African countries to increase agricultural production have not guaranteed food security. Africa still relies on rain-fed agriculture, making it vulnerable to harsh weather conditions, including climate change. Africa's food insecurity has been further worsened by the threat of rising food prices caused by increased incomes in countries such as China, India and Brazil, the growing use of land for biofuels and the subsidies rich countries offer their own farmers.

Questions to consider:

1. How has your nation worked towards implementing and accomplishing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Agreement?
2. What are the main forms of environmental degradation in your nation?
3. How will climate change affect your nation?
4. What sustainable practices are currently used in your nation (renewable energy, recycling, etc.)
5. How and to what extent should the African Union support its members in implementing sustainable environmental and developmental practices?