

# Foreword

In early 2022, the leadership of the Institute for Pan-African Thought and Conversation (IPATC) at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa and TrustAfrica in Dakar, Senegal met to discuss how we could respond to Africa's development and security challenges. The discussion extended to the need to reinvigorate the Pan-African agenda on the continent and strengthen the African Union (AU)'s capacity towards delivering on Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. We decided to host a continental symposium titled, "The AU@20: Progress, Problems and Prospects Towards Agenda 2063", held in Pretoria, South Africa from 2-4 November 2022. The symposium provided a thoughtful evaluation of the achievements made by the AU and the challenges it has faced while navigating its strategic direction for the future. One hundred and sixty-eight (168) participants attended physically in Pretoria, and over 250 additional participants attended online via Zoom.

The symposium featured three keynote addresses by highly esteemed dignitaries: Professor Kwesi Kwaa Prah, a professor emeritus of sociology at the University of the Western Cape; HE Bineta Diop (PhD), the African Union Special Envoy for Women, Peace, and Security; and HE Erastus JO Mwencha (PhD), former deputy chairperson for the Africa Union Commission (AUC), Addis Ababa. Other prominent speakers included Professor Eddy Maloka, then the chief executive officer (CEO) of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), and Professor Horace Campbell of Syracuse University in the United States of America. The three-day event replicated the Pan-African intellectual engagements and political movement that gave birth to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

The hosting of the symposium coincided with the establishment of the African Union Studies programme at the IPATC. The unit aims to become a centre of excellence in knowledge generation and dissemination and to build a robust community of practice (CoP) on African affairs, specifically focusing on the AU. Its vision is to become the research, teaching, and training

centre of the AU and its regional economic communities (RECs). This is predicated upon the firm belief that Africa's academic and think tank community can independently conduct research, generate context-specific knowledge, and design its curriculum to positively impact the African transformation and development agenda. On its terms, the African community can effectively engage policymakers and stakeholders in development and peace-building initiatives across the continent. Furthermore, it is well positioned to develop innovative strategies to enhance the AU and RECs' capacity to address continental challenges, including economic transformation, violent conflicts, democratic reversals, climate change, rising debt, and exclusive governance.

Ours is a continent with a median age of 19, making it one of the youngest (from a demographic viewpoint). In a few decades, the number of its young people will be larger than Europe's total population. This demographic reality must be reflected in the governance of African countries in ways that put the continent's youth and women at the centre of governance. Reimagining and reinventing governance in Africa is an urgent need. Economic transformation, including industrialisation and changes in the modes of engagement of African economies in the global economy, is another urgent need for our continent.

Thus, as we commemorate the AU's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, this 30-chapter book, *African Union at 20: Towards Agenda 2063*, edited by Adeoye O Akinola and Matlosa Khabele, provides a timely reflection on the institution's journey, its accomplishments, and the challenges ahead. The AU, established in 2002 as successor to the OAU, marked a pivotal shift in Africa's approach to unity, peace, and development. Over the past two decades, the AU has evolved from a largely political organisation focused on decolonisation and anti-apartheid efforts into a dynamic platform championing sustainable development, economic integration, and shared prosperity for all Africans.

This volume is dedicated to exploring how the AU has laid the groundwork for Agenda 2063, Africa's blueprint for transforming the continent into a global powerhouse. Agenda 2063, adopted in 2013, articulates an ambitious vision of

an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa driven by its citizens and representing a dynamic force on the world stage. Twenty years since its inception, the AU has made significant strides in achieving this vision through initiatives to foster economic growth, build a robust continental infrastructure, promote governance reforms, and strengthen peace and security frameworks. However, many of these accomplishments remain in progress, and the continent continues to grapple with complex issues such as poverty, inequality, the loss of our precious natural, financial, and other resources through various extractive processes, political instability, and the impacts of climate change.

This book brings together a wealth of perspectives from scholars, policymakers, civil society actors, and practitioners across Africa, highlighting the AU's performance across the board, critically interrogating its shortcomings, and indicating areas where progress is still needed. Through critical analysis, case studies, and firsthand accounts, it examines the AU's role in promoting the Pan-African agenda, ensuring peace and security, advancing economic development and continental integration, upholding human rights, and shaping Africa's global partnerships. Furthermore, it probes the challenges that must be addressed to keep the dream of Agenda 2063 alive, particularly for Africa's youth, who stand to inherit the fruits of the AU's efforts and will be at the forefront of realising this vision. The book also includes contributions that show how the AU itself needs to take a hard look at how it is organised, how it works, its relationships with ordinary Africans on the continent and in the diaspora, and its international relations and interventions. Our premier and leading Pan-African institution is thus being invited to engage in some re-envisioning. Becoming an AU of the peoples of the continent and its diaspora is a condition for making the continental integration and transformation agenda people-centred.

As we look forward to 2063, the need for collective commitment and visionary leadership is more urgent than ever. This book serves as a call to action, reminding us of one of Nelson Mandela's sayings: "the future is in [our] hands". The future of the African Union is a shared responsibility that requires enduring solidarity, resilience, and a steadfast commitment to

Africa's emancipation and development. I am sure that readers will find this book inspiring and thought-provoking as we work together to build The Africa We Want. TrustAfrica is committed to the Pan-African project, which is why we are very proud of our collaboration with IPATC in this great initiative.

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