# Regional Economic Integration and Good Governance in Africa

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**Abstract:** *The issue of good governance has been a sources of concern and serious debate in Africa as it is in short supply in the continent. This work took a study of the various sub-regional protocols and strategies geared towards peer-reviewed good governance in various states that constitute each sub-region. The study found that despite all regional efforts toward engendering both regional economic integration through good governance, not much success has been recorded as a plethora of factors (such as lack of self-financing mechanism for regional parliamentary, inequitable distribution of the benefits of regional economic integration, lack of political will to implement several protocols bordering on regional parliamentary integration due to the absence of sanctions, etc.) constitute challenges to good governance and regional economic integration in Africa and made appropriate recommendations.*

**Keywords:** *Governance, Economic, Africa*

## INTRODUCTION

According to the Economic Commission of Africa (ECA) (2012), Parliaments are crucial to the achievement of good governance in Africa. This is because they are one of the key state institutions of democracy, playing an important role in terms of legislation, oversight and representation. Their representational role include ensuring that citizens and other stakeholders have a voice at the national and regional levels and are therefore involved in governance issues. However, effective performance of this role requires a proper understanding of the concept of good governance. Thus, its clarification is considered imperative here.

The concept of good governance has attracted a wide range of interests pitching academics, researchers, policy makers and analysts on different sides of the divide. First is the controversy of whether it is an emerging or old concept in the social science literature. On the one hand, Chowdhury and Skarstedt (2005) see the concept of good governance as an emerging principle in international law. On the other, Bhattarai (2006:2) has argued that the concept had been dealt with by Max Weber, who in the early twentieth century, without necessarily using the term "outlined the functions of a bureaucracy that would facilitate development and called for strict observance of the rule of law and legal rationality – and also advised against a mixture of private interests with the public responsibilities of the bureaucrat". Also, the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation (2010) has argued that although good governance is a relatively new term that is often used to describe the desired

objective of a nation-state's political development, its principles of anti-corruption, accountability, governmental effectiveness and efficiency are however, not new.

The second controversy is the disciplinary origin of the concept of good governance; is it of Political Science origin or Economics? Chigbu (2010) in an attempt to provide an answer asserted that the concept of good governance evolved from the search by economics and political scientists for an all-embracing concept capable of conveying diverse meanings not covered by the traditional term of governance. Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that the concept was initially articulated in a 1989 World Bank Report; *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth. A Long-Term Perspective,* which identified good governance as a structural necessity for market reform. According to the Report, the major cause of poor economic performance in Africa was "the failure of public institutions". It noted that, "private sector initiative and market mechanisms are important, but must go hand-in-hand with good governance…" (p. xii).

In a study, the ECA (2012:13) has noted that a survey of different notions of good governance reveals that there are many different understandings of the concept. Institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), for example and due to partly its limited political mandate, stress on the conditions of market economy and sound financial management as the main attributes of good governance. Other institutions like United Nations and the German Development Cooperation Agency (GTZ) have a much more inclusive approach in terms of political and social aspects. The two institutions stress their focus on key attributes such as participation, rule of law, responsiveness, transparency, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness, and equity and inclusion.

The differences in conceptualization notwithstanding, ECA (2012) has defined good governance as an indeterminate term used in development literature to describe how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources in order to guarantee the realization of human rights; noting that it is the exercise of power and decision-making for a group of people bearing in mind the principles of accountability, effectiveness and efficiency, participatory, transparency, responsiveness, consensus-oriented, and equitable.

Thus, it can be inferred from the foregoing arguments that the concept of good governance borders on governance and institutional issues. For instance, Section (V) of the ECOWAS Protocol on Good Governance, Articles 25, 26, 27 and 28 made provision on poverty alleviation and the promotion of social dialogue within the West African Community. Specifically, Article 27 provides that, all member states should fight poverty from within and from without the community,…especially by creating an environment conducive to private investments and the development of a dynamic and competitive private sector; providing instruments necessary for the enhancement of job creation and for the development of the social sector as a matter of priority; ensuring equitable distribution of resources and income in order to consolidate national development unity and solidarity; enhancing the integration of economic, financial and banking activities through harmonization of commercial and financial laws and establishment of community multi-national corporations.

These statutory provisions as shown above are not peculiar to the West African sub-region, as African sovereign states have always subscribed to the principles of good governance, continental cooperation and integration including parliamentary integration. In fact, since the 1990s, the African continent has witnessed a revival of regionalisation. This revitalisation of old and creation of new economic regional communities and their agenda's broadening towards political issues have led to the creation of community parliamentary assemblies and forums in almost all the sub-regions (Meyer, 2008). This is evident by the establishment of the West African Parliament for ECOWAS member states, East African Legislative Assembly for the EAC member states, the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum for SADC member states, Inter-Parliamentary Union of IGAD Member States (IPU-IGAD), and of course the Pan-African Parliament for the African Union (AU) member states. In the Central African sub-region, both the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) are preparing for the establishment of similar parliamentary bodies.

In all cases, the fundamental objective and cardinal function of the regional parliamentary assemblies is to create through enabling legislations;

- A conducive and enabling environment for the enhancement of job creation and for the development of national and regional economies;
- Ensuring equitable distribution of resources and income in order to consolidate national development, unity and solidarity;
- Enhancing the integration of economic and financial activities through harmonization of commercial and financial laws and
- Enhancement of socio-political development and establishment of community multi-national corporations within their sub-regions

Against this background, this paper examines the place or role of regional parliamentary forums in the enhancement of good governance in Africa.

## Overview of African Good Governance Framework

Good governance is imperative in maintaining a sustainable society. This explains why the developed countries of the world are almost synonymous with civil and good governance. The United States, UK, Canada, Germany, etc. have remained a destination for many Africans in their search for greener pastures due to entrenched good governance culture in these countries. In the quest to ensure a culture of good governance in Africa, the African Union has made several efforts aimed at bringing member states to accede to peer-review mechanism. One proactive way the AU has done this is through the African Governance Architecture (AGA). The African Governance Architecture (AGA) entails the inclusive institutional and political framework for the promotion of democracy, governance and human rights in Africa. The AGA is a developing mechanism comprising of three principal pillars: a vision/agenda; Organs and Institutions; mechanism/processes of interactions amongst AU organs/institutions with a formal mandate in governance, democracy and human rights.

It imperative to trace the genesis of good governance framework in Africa to the AU Act. Avers to the charter of the OAU, the preamble of the AU Act stresses the important place accorded to democracy when it affirms the determination of member states to "promote and protect human and peoples' rights, consolidate democratic institutions and culture and to ensure good governance and the rule of law." The fundamental democratic tenets of the AU Act are prudently expanded in the objectives and principles, which are far more detailed and more radical than those that were contained in the OAU charter.

The African Governance Architecture was established by the 16th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union held in January 2011 under the theme "Towards Greater Unity and Integration through Shared Values". The Assembly of Heads of State and Government adopted the AGA and its Platform earlier espoused in March 2010 at the Technical Meeting on the African Governance Architecture (15th to 17th March 2010), as the overall political and institutional framework for the promotion of governance in Africa. This technical meeting introduced the three (3) specific and indispensable components/pillars of African Good Governance Framework as follows:

- ❖ **Governance vision/Agenda: shared values space and normative framework**
  The AGA seeks to projects the governance dreams for the continent which are embodied in the governance norms, standards, principles and practices both at the regional and continental levels which Member States of the AU are collectively and individually committed to. These principles, practices and standards permeate the various policy pronouncements of the AU and include, amongst others:
  - i. Constitutive Act of the African Union;
  - ii. African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance;

    iii.  The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights;
    iv.  Algiers Declaration on Unconstitutional Changes of Government;
    v.  Lomé Declaration for an OAU Response to Unconstitutional Changes of Government;
    vi.  The OAU/AU Declaration on Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa;
    vii.  Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union;
    viii.  African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption;
    ix.  African Union Post Conflict and Reconstruction Policy Framework;
    x.  African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa;
    xi.  Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa; and
    xii.  African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (African Governance, 2011).

❖ **Institutions and gladiators: diverse establishments with governance mandate**

The African Good Governance Architecture may be seen as a well-ordered and neatly assembled structure, institution and mechanism to give operational expression to the Africa Governance vision. AU institutions, organs and initiatives with a formal mandate in democracy, governance and human rights strive to consolidate democratic governance in Africa by enabling and facilitating the internalization of AU instruments on governance in Member States of the AU; ensure overall coherence and convergence of the governance programmes at the regional and continental levels. The following are the main institutions that comprise the AGA:

    i.  AU Commission; African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights
    ii.  African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
    iii.  Pan-African Parliament
    iv.  African Peer Review Mechanism
    v.  The Economic, Social and Cultural Council
    vi.  The AU Advisory Board on Corruption
    vii.  NEPAC Planning and Coordinating Agency (NEPAD Agency)
    viii.  Regional Economic Communities (African Governance, 2011).

❖ **Three-processes and interactions/ the governance platform**

The third axis of the African Governance Framework/Architecture as constituting the process and mechanism of interactions (AGGN, 2011). The African Governance Platform is the major institutional mechanism for the expression of the AGA. During the consultations, it was agreed that establishing the Platform is imperative in strengthening the AGA by enhancing coordination, harmonization and implementation. To consolidate and enhance implementation of the governance agenda, AU organs and institutions with a formal mandate in governance agreed to establish a governance platform. The role of the Platform is to facilitate information flow, exchanges, dialogue, synergies and joint action amongst the various AU governance institutions and actors, and monitor compliance and implementation of the major governance instruments and commitments. The Platform is not to duplicate the mandate or work of existing organs/institutions and initiatives; and would not act as a decision making body. The Platform is simply a platform for coordination, harmonization and coherence on governance in Africa.
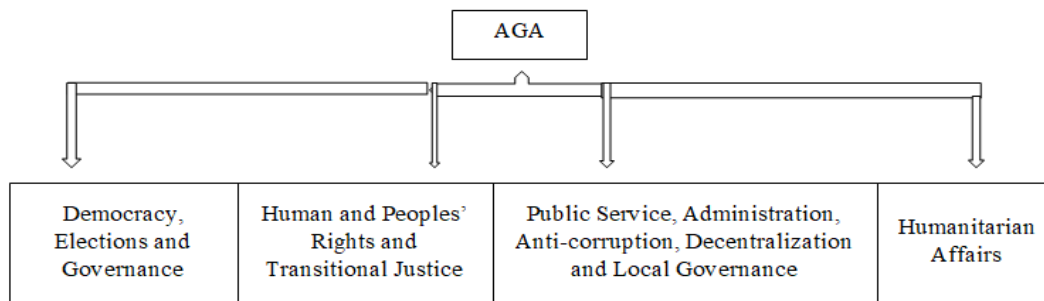
**Figure 1:** African Governance Architecture Implementation Circle

**Source:** Author's Compilation from African Governance Newsletter Vol.1 Issue 01 January-March 2011 & other materials.

Under democracy, election and governance guided by the AU Constitutive Act, and the African Charter on Democracy, Election and Governance, AGA seeks to:

i.   Monitor the implementation of democratic electoral processes and standards in Member States.
ii.  Monitor the changes leading for good governance at the national level.
iii. Develop a Reporting and an Implementation Framework for the domestication of the Charter.
iv.  Develop a Framework to accelerate the ratification and domestication of Shared Values Instruments.
v.   Create synergies between the African Governance Architecture (AGA) and the Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).
vi.  Issue an annual report on the state of democracy and governance in Africa titled "the African Union Governance Report" including an index on Election.

By the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other relevant instruments, the AGA strives to ensure:

i.   Coordinate with the concerned organs to monitor the promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights on the continent.
ii.  Monitoring the implementation of the Human Rights Strategy for Africa and its Action Plan.
iii. Develop a framework to speed the ratification and domestication of continental and global Human Rights Instruments.
iv.  Coordinate the efforts to develop the Transitional Justice Policy Framework for Africa.
v.   Issue a "Human and Peoples' Rights Index" as part of the "the African Union Governance Report".

Guided by the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration, AGA also strives to promote:

i.   Facilitate experience sharing on State modernization and transformation as well as public service delivery efforts in AU Member States;
ii.  Monitor and evaluate the relevant instruments and the implementation of its Long Term Strategy by Member States;
iii. Develop a 'Member State Reporting Framework' on the implementation of relevant instruments;
iv.  Issue an annual index on the "State of Service Delivery" and an index on "Assets Recovery" an index on "the State of Decentralization and Local Governance" as part of the African Union Governance Report".

Guided by the Convention Governing the Specific Aspect of Refugee Problem in Africa and the AU Convention for the Protection & Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, AGA also wants to:

i. Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the provisions of the treaties, through the development of an appropriate mechanism;

ii. Develop coherent mechanism for the implementation of durable solutions to situations of forced displacement;

iii. Ensure that the root causes of forced displacement are addressed by bringing to the attention of Member States  the findings of governance reports on the causes of such situations;

iv. Promote the signature, ratification and ascension of the two treaties on forced displacement.

v. Encourage the development of a common and convergence policy framework for free movement of persons;

vi. Develop an appropriate continental guideline to facilitate interregional movement of persons.

vii. Issue an annual index on the "State of Humanitarian Affairs in Africa" as part of the African Union Governance Report".

In the recommendations that followed from the Yaoundé Working Session, the idea of the African Governance Architecture (AGA) being developed as the framework for "facilitating coordination and complementarity, and information exchange on governance work in Africa." was endorsed. The Yaoundé meeting further concluded that it was "essential for a governance framework or platform to be established for further and on-going dialogue on Governance" (Joiner, 2010:2). Aside the African Union, sub-regional integrative bodies work assiduously to promote good governance in the various regions through institutional frameworks such as, ECOWAS, SADC, EAC, etc.

Although AU's framework on governance could be in line with moving the continent forward, it has not been found to be in tandem with the framework of good governance as established in the advanced democracies. Good governance framework/architecture is crucial for Africa as the continent is certainly in dire need of effective and efficient governance structure. Instead of AU seeking good governance in all sincerity, what appeared to be more appreciated by African nations is the notion of effective governance –a notion AU believes catches more realistically the imperatives of nation-building, stability and peace-building in Africa. The inference from this is clear –even though the economically advanced countries are working hard at preaching good governance to African countries, indeed there is still a genuine question about what the good in good governance entails to Africa.

Nevertheless, Africa has undertaken a number of initiatives and established various institutions to foster and accelerate economic and political integrations. First in the list of such initiative took the form of the Organization of African Unity (later African Union – AU), formed in 1963 (Gruzd, 2009). And since then there has been a growing acknowledgement of the significance of governance to the society– it covers what happens internally and how governments rule, regulate and relate to their citizens. It also posits that good governance is vital for peace, development, growth and prosperity in the continent. Gruzd (2009) stated that this momentum spawned many new institutions, including the African Union (AU), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). The APRM, the continent's home-grown governance, self-monitoring and peer learning process, is coming of age. While there has been remarkable progress towards integration in some aspects, there is need for renewed impetus to transform the continent into a unified political region and a fully integrated economic bloc (Gruzd, 2009).

## Cross Regional Analysis of Parliamentary Integration and Good Governance in Africa

According to Karuuombe (2008), there has been increasing interests by researchers and practitioners in the institution of parliament and its potential value and contribution to democracy, development and the need for good governance and greater accountability among national governments, especially in Africa. This has been occasioned by the fact that since the 1990s, the African continent has witnessed a revival of regionalisation.

This has resulted in the revitalisation of old and creation of new economic regional communities and their agenda's broadening towards political issues have led to the creation of regional parliamentary assemblies and forums in almost all the regions (Meyer, 2008).

In West Africa, Article 13 of the ECOWAS Revised Treaty of 24 July 1993 established the ECOWAS Parliament. The Revised Treaty refers to a protocol which provides for the modalities for election of members of Parliament, its composition, functions, competences as well as its organisation. Though, the Protocol (Protocol A/P.2/8/94) relating to the Community Parliament was signed on 6 August 1994, it only entered into force on 14 March 2000. The role of the Parliament as stated in the Protocol is "a representative assembly of the people of the Community serving as a forum for dialogue, consultation and consensus" (Terlinden, 2004; Ehigiamusoe & Udefuna, 2012). It draws its membership from the National Assemblies of Member States. The Parliament is composed of one hundred and fifteen (115) seats. Each member state has a minimum of five (5) seats. The remaining seats are allocated to Member States on the basis of population.

The vision of the ECOWAS Parliament aligns with the vision of ECOWAS, which provides as follows;

> *"Creation of a borderless, prosperous, peaceful and cohesive region,* **built on good governance***, where the people have the capacity to access and harness its enormous resources through creation of opportunities for sustainable development and environmental conservation".*

Consequently, the Parliament's 2011-2015 Strategic Plan focuses principally on all matters relating to regional integration through promotion of democracy, human rights, solidarity, equity, peace, justice and good governance. Thus, the Parliament's Third Legislative agenda (which the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan covers), specifically focuses on the following Community programmes;

- Free movement of persons, especially the impediments at the borders;
- State of insecurity in the sub-region especially arms proliferation, cross border crimes, armed piracy and terrorism;
- Food security, especially the proper implementation of the ECOWAS Agricultural policy and the problems encountered; and
- Democracy, good governance and human rights (ECOWAS Parliament, 2010: 18).

This, according to the Strategic Plan will be achieved through the sensitization of the populace on Community programmes, prevention and resolution of conflicts, semi-oversight functions to ensure judicious utilization of the Community's budget and proper implementation of projects; ensuring democracy and respect for human rights.

However, one of the challenges of effective performance by the Parliament in its efforts to ensure good governance is that it is currently a non-legislative assembly, which only issues advisory opinion to the Authority of Heads of State and Government and the Council of Ministers of the Community. According to Ehigiamusoe and Udefuna (2012), this runs counter to what obtains in similar bodies across the world.

The East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) is one of the organs of the East African Community (EAC), established under Article 9 of the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community. It was inaugurated in November 2001. The Treaty was signed on 30th November 1999 and entered into force on 7th July 2000 by the Partner States of the Republic of Uganda, the Republic of Kenya; and the United Republic of Tanzania. The Republic of Burundi and the Republic of Rwanda acceded to the Treaty on 18th June 2007 and became full members on 1st July 2007, thus expanding the number of the Community Partner States to five. According to Terlinden (2004), EALA is the second attempt to set up a regional

parliament in Eastern Africa. The earlier regional parliament had collapsed with the first East African Community in 1977. EALA has 52 members, 45 of whom are elected to their position (9 from each of the five Partner States) and 7 ex-officio members.

The functions of the Assembly in furtherance of the objectives of the EAC, as clearly provided for in Article 49 of the Treaty include legislation, representation and oversight. Specifically, Article 49 of the Treaty stipulates that the Assembly shall:

- Be the legislative organ of the Community;
- Liaise with the National Assemblies of the Partner States on matters relating to the Community;
- Debate and approve the budget of the Community;
- Consider annual reports on the activities of the Community, annual audit reports of the Audit Commission and any other reports referred to it by the Council;
- Discuss all matters pertaining to the Community and make recommendations to the Council as it may deem necessary for the implementation of the Treaty;
- May for purposes of carrying out its functions, establish any committee or committees for such purposes as it deems necessary;
- Recommend to the Council the appointment of the Clerk and other officers of the Assembly; and
- Make its rules of procedure and those of its committees.
- The Assembly may also perform any other functions as are conferred upon it by the Treaty.

Pursuant to its functions and in particular the oversight function, EALA in 2012 mandated the Legal Rules and Privileges Committee, to undertake an assessment on good governance. This assessment was necessitated by the fact that the EAC since 2011 has been working on a Good Governance Protocol which has seven (7) key pillars namely Constitutionalism, Rule of Law and Access to Justice; Protection of Human Rights and Promotion of Equal Opportunities; Democracy and Democratization process; Combating Corruption and enhancing Ethics and Integrity; Separation of Powers; Economic Governance; and Private Sector Development and Corporate Governance. Good governance is one of the Fundamental and Operational principles of the Community as stipulated in Article 6 (d). Additionally, Articles 3(b) requires adherence to good governance as a condition precedent to joining the EAC and 7 (2) of the Treaty obliges Partner States to abide by the operational principles of the Community which include the adherence to the principles of democracy, the rule of law, social justice and the maintenance of universally accepted standards of human rights (EALA, 2012:2). Thus, EALA's assessment of the implementation of good governance programmes and projects was in line with its statutory mandate.

The **Southern African Development Community (SADC) Parliamentary Forum** is a regional inter-parliamentary body composed of Members of Parliament from SADC Member State national parliaments, representing over 3,500 parliamentarians in the SADC Region. Established by the SADC Summit on September 8, 1997, the Forum consists of Presiding Officers, and a maximum of five representatives elected by the National Parliament of each Member State. The aim of this Forum is to provide a platform to support and improve regional integration through parliamentary involvement, and promote best practices in the role of parliaments in regional integration and cooperation.

The specific objectives of the Parliamentary Forum address a wide range of issues, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Promotion of human rights, gender equality, good governance, democracy and transparency;
- Promotion of peace, security and stability;
- Hastening the pace of economic cooperation, development and integration on the basis of equity and mutual benefits.

- Facilitating networking with other inter-parliamentary organisations;
- Promoting the participation of non-governmental organisations, business and intellectual communities in SADC activities;
- Familiarising the peoples of SADC with the aims and objectives of SADC; and
- Informing SADC of the popular views on development and issues affecting the region.

The Forum has in various ways and through some of its institutions contributed to good governance in the Southern African region. For instance, through its election observation programme the Forum has monitored, and often criticised, more than 10 elections since 1999 and its Norms and Standards for Elections from 2001 is widely considered a very important and comprehensive policy instrument for promoting good governance in the region.

Secondly, the Forum's Standing Committee on Democratisation, Governance and Gender Equality has contributed to the deepening and evolution of sustainable democracy and regional norms that advance peace, stability, gender equity, and human rights and good governance for development by:
- Lobbying for the review and the development of inclusive and participative electoral systems, practices and processes to advance peace, mitigate conflict, and deepen democracy and good governance;
- Strengthening constitutional institutions of democracy such as electoral management bodies, gender, media and anti-corruption missions; and
- Engaging with civil society, business and intellectual communities in promoting popular participation and deepening democratic practice;

However, one of the challenges facing the Forum in its efforts to ensure good governance in the region is that its mandate is fairly restricted due to its status as a parliamentary forum, though efforts are being made to transform it into a regional parliament.

The Pan-African Parliament (PAP) was established in March 2004, by Article 17 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, as one of the nine Organs provided for in the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community signed in Abuja in 1991. The establishment of the Parliament is informed by a vision to provide a common platform for African peoples and their grass-roots organizations to be more involved in discussions and decision-making on the problems and challenges facing the continent.

The Pan-African Parliamentarians represent all the peoples of Africa. The ultimate aim of the Pan-African Parliament is to evolve into an institution with full legislative powers, whose members are elected by universal adult suffrage. The Parliament has 265 representatives that are elected by the legislatures of 47 of the 54 AU states, rather than being directly elected in their own capacity. Additionally, Ten Permanent Committees were created dealing with different sectors of life in Africa.

Among other things, some of the fundamental objectives of the Pan-African Parliament are to promote the principles of human rights and democracy in Africa and encourage good governance, transparency and accountability in Member States. Others include;
- Facilitate the effective implementation of the policies and objectives of the OAU/AEC and, ultimately, of the African Union;
- Familiarize the peoples of Africa with the objectives and policies aimed at integrating the African continent within the framework of the establishment of the African Union;
- Promote peace, security and stability;

- Contribute to a more prosperous future for the people of Africa by promoting collective self-reliance and economic recovery;
- Facilitate cooperation and development in Africa
- Strengthen Continental solidarity and build a sense of common destiny among the peoples of Africa;
- Facilitate cooperation among Regional Economic Communities and their Parliamentary fora.

The foregoing points to a continent-wide efforts by regional parliamentary assemblies in contributing to and enhancing good governance. This is informed by the belief among regional parliaments that good governance, economic growth and development are inextricably linked. However, making statements about good governance is easy but putting them into practice may not. For instance, the Constitutive Act of the African Union (Article 3, g) provides an attempt to define good governance as one of the objectives of the organization; to "promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance." However, the Act does not provide a concrete definition of the term. This is where regional parliamentary bodies are considered quite imperative. This is because, by the nature of the fundamental objectives of their establishment, regional parliaments are to provide guide through legislation and oversight to regional economic groups that will ensure strict adherence to the principles of good governance in the implementation of their programmes and policies. Thus, regional parliaments are essential to Africa's future. They are the keys to regional and continental stability, the well-being and prosperity of African people.

## Challenges of Regional Parliamentary Integration and Good Governance in Africa

Parliamentary integration process faces many challenges, which emanate from the absence of self-financing mechanisms for regional parliaments and the inadequacy of mechanisms to ensure that the benefits of integration are equitably distributed among the member states. Firstly, parliamentary integration is weakened by overlapping membership between Regional Organizations as reflected in the growing number of Regional Economic Communities (REC) on the continent. As such, many African States are members of several REC arrangements. The eventual lack of identification with one specific REC raises the problems of multiple costs for membership contributions and negotiation rounds, and technical problems such as the application of different external tariffs in respect of each member country. In addition, the heterogeneity of African countries is not only reflected by socio-economic disparity among members such as surface area, population figures, the size of domestic markets, per capita income, the natural resource endowment, but also by the variety of legal systems applied. For example a country belonging to a particular REC might classify parliamentary integration as concurrent with its National laws while another country from the same REC may differ in this respect thus affecting regional parliamentary integration.

Furthermore, many protocols for regional parliamentary integration have been signed but remain unimplemented, due to absence of effective sanctions against defaulting member states and weak enforcement and implementation capacity (Sako, 2006). For example, twelve years after its establishment and despite a desire expressed by the Authority of Heads of State and Government in 2006, to have an ECOWAS Parliament with directly elected members and exercising full legislative powers, the original mandate has remained unchanged (ECOWAS Parliament, 2010). The Protocol still gives the Parliament consultative and advisory powers meaning that the ECOWAS Parliament has no specific decision-making (law-making) powers. The fact that Members of ECOWAS parliaments are still not elected by direct suffrage but indirectly from their respective national parliaments means that they have dual status, first being members of the National Parliaments and members of the ECOWAS parliament. This means that their national functions outweigh their functions at the ECOWAS Parliament thus hindering regional integration efforts (ECOWAS Parliament, 2010).

Ehigiamusoe & Udefuna (2012) discovered that unlike other parliaments in the globe, the ECOWAS parliament is only a consultative and advisory body and lacks legislative powers. Consequently, trade between member states is still far from what it ought to be, while the movement of persons within the West African Sub-region is yet to be fully realized. Other issues such as single currency and a common position in trade with other regional blocks such as the European Union are still huge challenges. According to Sako (2006), effectiveness of regional integration process is being limited by the multiplicity of schemes, which imposes a huge burden on the limited administrative and financial capacities of the countries concerned and leads to conflicting obligations. This explains why most member states find it difficult to adequately meet financial obligations to parliamentary integration schemes and the failure of such schemes to effectively implement their programs and policies. It is therefore felt that some regional strategic frameworks are not well built within national frameworks nor are country strategies developed within regional frameworks. This often limits the ability of regional parliaments to play a lead role in successful regional cooperation and integration.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The significance of good governance and greater transparency has resuscitated and rekindled African Governments' interest in parliamentary integration and its inherent values and contribution to democracy and development. Regional Parliamentary Integration in Africa that has been at the forefront of AU activities is expected to attract adequate financial transfers and the technology necessary to enhance economic development. In order to further inculcate integration and unity among African states, good governance at the national, regional and continental levels is one of the shared values which form part of the strategic plan of the AU Commission for the years 2009-2012. However, despite commitment from member states, parliamentary integration efforts are being hindered by the capacity of each REC to achieve its mandate which largely depends on the level of resources and power to make legislative decisions.

It is therefore important for Regional parliamentary bodies to support the African Peer Review Mechanism (ARPM) process in general and in particular, the implementation of national plans of actions of APRM participating countries. Of similar importance is support for the continuous internalization of the principles and strategies of NEPAD at all levels on the continent in the policy design and implementation, and the engagement of the citizenry in the process. Another area of increasing significance will be the harmonisation of the law. This can be achieved by the implementation and transformation of legally binding instruments aiming to reduce or eliminate the differences among national legal systems by inducing them to adopt common legal principles. In this regard, amending laws to achieve interregional legal conformity is central to reducing normative barriers within RECs, as unified law promotes greater legal predictability as well as legal certainty both essential for the investment climate and economic development in general.

Sector policy harmonization is critical to the success of regional integration at the parliamentary level. Differences in legal, procurement and financial frameworks across countries often render the implementation of projects more cumbersome. This is particularly important in regional infrastructure projects, where differences in water, energy or telecommunication policies can lead to delays in the implementation or even significantly hamper the benefits derived from the projects.

There is the need to integrate regional parliaments into the Community Mechanism on conflict prevention, management, resolution, peacekeeping, and security. To achieve this, the Supplementary Act making proposal in Article 47 should be implemented. There is the need to involve regional Parliaments in election monitoring as this would go a long way in promoting democracy in the African region. Parliaments of each

member state should be required to make inputs to strengthen the laws which would largely be model laws based on internationally accepted rules, conventions and protocols on trade, investments and in the area of the movement of persons, goods and services. Achieving a common monetary policy (common currency) is central to the attainment of proper economic integration. Having a common unifying currency like the European Union's Euro cannot be ignored in Africa's quest for the successful economic integration of her people and economies.

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