African diplomacy and diplomacy in Africa

How can diplomacy accompany the dynamics of integration and strengthen the strategic positioning of Africa in the entente among nations?

Pan African Forum

CONCEPT PAPER

23-25 February 2015
Rabat (Morocco)
I. Justification:

The early years of independence of African countries were marked with a kind of general euphoria of the people and young political class. It was also naturally and legitimately an era of great dreams and high hopes: a time when the African unity projects were confronted with much less ambitious aspirations based, in particular, on the control of some geographical areas inherited from colonial masters in the form of States. Some leaders of these delimited areas rejoiced as they replaced colonial administrators who were coming to the end of their stay on what appeared to be a terra nullius without stories, and to which we had to give one, by the benevolent favors of colonization.

It was also a period of several projects. Throughout Africa there was concern about the arrival of new players on the international scene. The question was raised as to the role they would play in this universe the contours of which become increasingly complex.

Since the revolution which commenced by the end of the Second World War, the adoption of the San Francisco Charter establishing the United-Nations Organization (UNO) and the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) associated with liberation movements which particularly ushered in the principle of self-determination or the principle of peoples right to self-determination, Africa began to play a different role in international relations.

These periods and instruments have restructured the international community. In particular, they created more and diversified entities that are able to cope with and to stand together within the global international institutions. These groupings have thus served as symbolic tools that can significantly influence their weight on the relations between States and international and intergovernmental institutions.

All over Africa and even in Asia, in particular, visionary and determined players settled down to establish new alliances and more unifying projects and even more ambitious ones than the other to deal with political and strategic structures or gatherings deemed to be more effective. Thus sprang up the concepts of "African integration", "African unity", "Africanism", "African renaissance" and more recently "African emergence".

But the observation that one can make following these earlier developments, is that all these theoretical and ideological constructions remain mostly to be revitalized given the problems they confront and the real challenges they raise for which they still cry out today. Thus, over 50 years later, the substitution of the defunct Organization of African Unity with the African Union has not necessarily and fundamentally changed the position of our continent on the international stage.

Even globalization has neither made Africa globalizing, nor has it made Africa globalized. In other words, Africa has not been an issue unless a player in international relations than it had been before. Pessimistic minds would moreover say that if Africa is increasingly known, it has been hardly illustrated with its strong positions in decisions that affect the world. This could be explained, among others, by the fact of its underdevelopment,
the difficulties in the establishment of its strong political unity as earlier expected, despite the seeming awakening of recent years particularly in the economic and political spheres. If it has been notably illustrated thanks to sports and culture through some of its valued talents, we observe, however, that the diversification of summits and meetings between Africa and other parts of the world reflect the importance of Africa elsewhere and some interest in it without being able to benefit itself from it.

More so, the increased threats to State security as evidenced in the proliferation of the various forms of radicalization, plus the effects derived from the strategic and political rivalries and other forms of insecurity, unfortunately leave less and less space to the imperative of building a truly African integrated strategy necessary for a stronger positioning in the entente between nations.

Hence the question as to how to restructure the approaches thitherto in place and how to emerge a strategy that could give Africa a different place in the 21st century. Could we legitimately consider the current situation of Africa as simply a lack of strategy or failure in the will of States to fulfill this requirement yet claimed for decades by some leaders and the vast majority of peoples often so close in history, geography and culture? What role can diplomacy play at a time when the unifying speeches paradoxically also intersect the increasing number of aspirations for an Africa already highly fragmented? How do we build or rebuild the African integration through diplomacy to better meet its challenges today in order to better ensure lasting peace and stability of States, the safety of life and property as well as promotion of the development of democratic values of rules of law and sustainable economic and social development.

It is with these crucial questions in mind that CAFRAD and its partners have decided to organize a high-level Pan African forum for Ministries, diplomats and leaders of inter-African cooperation agencies, institutes of studies in international affairs, diplomatic academies, institutes of strategic studies and other institutions charged with the responsibility of promoting cooperation in Africa.

This forum aims first to put the issue of African integration in the heart of the project of emergence and the rebirth of the African continent. It also aims to rebuild and reactivate an intra-African cultural dialogue on issues that concern the African States.

For three days, the delegates assembled at this meeting will reflect on possible avenues of discussion in the direction of strengthening African ties and strategies for modernizing their cooperation tools and processes in terms of integration. Finally, this meeting aims at establishing an African Day of integration that could eventually be adopted by the highest continental bodies and enable all Africans to better know one another.
Objectives:

- The seminar is also intended to allow the principal actors of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs to consider new strategies to build an African diplomacy open on itself and propose mechanisms for a better political, economic and cultural integration of African countries;

- The meeting will enable an exchange of experiences and strategies amongst the participants to overcome the barriers associated with the various forms of representation of the other so as to promote a diplomacy based on tolerance and mutual respect in order to strengthen the political, economic and cultural cooperation avenues amongst the States;

- Finally, this meeting aims at putting in place an action plan in order to encourage positive initiatives geared towards the various forms of African integration as a whole.

II. Target audience:

This forum is primarily intended for the top personnel of Ministries of Foreign Affairs/External Relations, Ministries in charge of Internal and External Security, Agencies responsible for Economic and Cultural Cooperation of African countries, Embassies, Institutes of Diplomatic Studies, Institutes for Strategic Studies...

III. Expected results:

The main result expected here is the beginning of an extensive dialogue amongst African countries on the problems of African integration, particularly through new questions based on Africa's diversity and the valuation mechanisms of this diversity by strengthening various continental exchanges. It is also about exploring ways and means to promote the exchange of good practices amongst African countries and the development of an action plan for strengthening more elaborate and realistic policies at the different levels of the Inter African integration.

IV. Key discussion topics:

1. Current events and figures of the African integration concept: The major historical markers and political boundaries of the African integration;

2. Economic issues and challenges of the African integration diplomacy: What role can the embassies and other international institutions play in order to promote a more dynamic and effective African integration?

3. African integration and the challenge of insecurity (national and transnational terrorism, insurrection, cybercrimes etc.): How can diplomacy empower Africa to cope with its various security challenges?

V. Methodology:

The proceedings will be in plenary session. They will be facilitated by highly experienced resource persons. These resource persons will make presentations on sub-themes to be assigned to them and lead discussions that will ensue on the topics. These will give rise to proposals that will be subject to a report to be presented with recommendations and action plan. The presentations and the report will be published later.

Duration: 3 days
Date: 23 - 25 February 2015
Venue: Rabat (Morocco)
Working languages: French and English only

For more information about the forum or CAFRAD, please do not hesitate to contact us at the following address:

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