Houston Area Model United Nations
Standard Committee

African Union



Chair | Anaamika Munnungi
Topic A: Addressing the Stunted Progress Towards the "Silencing the Guns in Africa" Project & Facilitating Its Accelerated Growth
Houston Area Model United Nations 52
February 4 & 5, 2027

Atilgan Ozdil/Anadolu Ag

Chair Letter

Greetings Delegates,

Welcome to the 52nd edition of HAMUN, and its African Union Committee! My name is Anaamika Munnungi, and it is my honour to serve as your chair for this year's conference.

Although I may be relatively new to Texas, having been born and raised in the Golden State, I feel as though the 4 years I have spent here have done their job and fully immersed me in Texan culture. I began my Model UN journey somewhere in the interim, and currently I'm a freshman studying Astrophysics at Texas A&M University. I've been participating in Model United Nations for as long as I can remember; that is, since the 7th grade, and could not think of a program that has been more rewarding. I've participated across conferences as a delegate, staff member, and secretariat member, and can promise the experience only gets better the more you put yourself into it.

I chose to staff the AU largely due to its internal workings and the way it functions as a specialized committee. The heavy involvement of the Union in intra-continental affairs and their various branches related to peacekeeping has led me to become incredibly excited to see how you work through committee diplomatically to accomplish your goals. I believe there is so much to work with in this committee, and trust all of you as more than capable of making the most of this experience.

I am so excited to see all of you and how you'll contribute to this debate and I'm so grateful to be able to experience this committee with you. Whether this is your first specialized committee, or you're a seasoned veteran, I want you to know I am always available if you have any questions or concerns. Cheers to fruitful debate, and a successful committee!



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Background Information

The main institution that represents Africa as a continent politically, socially, economically, and defensively is the African Union (AU). In terms of the organizational history of the AU, it traces back to the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), founded in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 25 May 1963 by the signing of the OAU Charter by 32 independent African nations. The OAU was conceived at the peak of the decolonization process within the African continent and Pan-African ideologies, with a key role played by ensuring the maintenance of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the new independent states and facilitating the liberation struggle of colonies governed by colonial regimes or minority rule governments.

According to OAU principles, it was believed that the attainment of political freedom could best be achieved if cooperation among African nations were promoted. The organization thus extended its support to liberation struggles in countries including Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa, always opposing any form of apartheid or colonial domination.

As a result of this realization on the part of the majority of the African government leaders in the late 1990s and beginning of the millennium, the African continent saw the promulgation of the constitutive act of the African union in 2000, leading to the official inauguration of the AU in 2002 as the successor to the OAU. Compared to the latter's prioritization on questions concerning sovereignty and decolonization, the mandate of the AU included economic integration, sustainable development, peace and security, good governance and protection of human rights, democracy as well as increased continental representation on the international stage. With 55 member countries, the AU remains the primary continental political institution in Africa.

HAMUN

In terms of relevance towards the topic of study, the contemporary significance of the African Union lies in the examination of colonial legacies on African economies as well as susceptibility to future economic dependence. Unlike the purposeful diplomatic engagement with heads of state within the framework of the organization, it serves as an umbrella body responsible for coordinating initiatives related to economic cooperation such as trade, infrastructure development and industrialization projects, agricultural production, peace and security, governance issues, healthcare services, education, science and technology, and financial integration.

One of the most essential applications of the AU to be taken into account while analyzing the implications of colonialism on Africa's economic situation is the risk of continued economic dependency. The activities carried out by the AU transcend diplomatic sessions among member states' leaders, including the planning and implementation of continental programs concerning trade, infrastructure, industrialization, agriculture, peace and security, good governance, healthcare, education, innovation, and finance.

An example of one such initiative includes Agenda 2063, wherein the vision of an interconnected, economically empowered, harmonious, and independent Africa is prioritized, emphasizing economic growth in the process. Further, the AU facilitated the creation of the AfCFTA, with an aim towards enhancing intra-African trade, thereby fostering a bigger continental market environment for industrialization.

In light of this, regional integration championed by the AU becomes instrumental to transforming the dynamics within which African economies operate. The approach seeks to foster increased intra-African trade, enhance value addition both locally and regionally, as well as minimize the undue reliance on the exportation of unprocessed commodities to external markets. Modern continental integration has thus become linked to the ancient Pan-African agenda that led to the establishment of the OAU: ensuring enough political and economic muscle for Africans to define their development agendas.

TOPIC A HISTORY:

Many African territories' economic systems are a direct result of European imperialism in the continent. In the last days of colonialism, it became apparent that colonial economic policies paid greater attention to export-oriented industries, especially cash crops and mineral extraction, and paid very little heed to diversification in manufacturing industries. As per historian Ellen Hillbom, the economic history of Africa during the period 1945–1960 revealed that colonial economic approaches concentrated largely on export-oriented industries dominated by cash crop and mineral extraction industries.

It is also worth considering how colonial administrations actively integrated African workers, farming activities, taxation mechanisms, and land ownership within the framework of economies oriented towards exports. According to historian Moses Ochonu, African farmers were transformed by colonial administrations to participate within export economies.

Moreover, colonial administrations restructured agricultural production, labor recruitment, and land ownership in order to suit their economic interests. While different colonies utilized distinct methods to achieve these ends, the common theme was the presence of economies oriented toward exporting commodities.

The repercussions of this kind of economic structure did not cease after the attainment of freedom. In research done on six different African nations and published in The Economic History Review, colonial economic systems exhibited characteristics like an outward-looking process of commercialization, minimal levels of industrialization, and a focus on the creation of tropical products. It was noted that there existed substantial proportions of non-African interests profiting off exports within these economies. Historical insights on these issues are important for understanding current trends related to commodity production and exports.

The term "neo-colonialism" gained popularity through Kwame Nkrumah, a nationalist movement activist who fought for Ghana's political freedom during the mid-twentieth century. His 1965 book Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism examines various forms of colonial domination through foreign investment, the exploitation of natural resources, financial institutions, foreign industries, monetary systems, and economies of primary producers. The chapters titled "Africa's Resources," "Imperialist Finance," "Primary Resources and Foreign Interests," "Monetary Zones and Foreign Banks," and "The Mechanisms of Neo-colonialism" reveal how Kwame Nkrumah defined neo-colonialism primarily as an economic issue alongside political domination rather than territorial occupation by colonizing forces.

This is evidenced by the Smithsonian Libraries and Archives record on the 1965 publication Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism. The content description mentions the topics discussed in this book, including foreign investments, industries, and African foreign economic affairs.

TOPIC A CASE EXAMPLES

Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire: Cocoa and Value Addition:

An illustrative case of this phenomenon is evident when considering the production of cocoa in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Although both nations are large producers of cocoa, the act of producing the raw material marks merely the commencement of the worldwide cocoa value chain. Raw cocoa can then be refined into cocoa butter, cocoa powder, and other similar items, while extra value is added by branding, packing, advertising, logistics, and selling in retail markets.

From archival evidence, the role of cocoa within the economies of colonial times can also be seen in relation to Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Investigations conducted on colonial African economies have highlighted that Côte d'Ivoire was a leading exporter of cocoa and coffee, whereas Ghana exported huge amounts of cocoa, thereby making it a specialized economy for agricultural commodities.

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Critical Minerals

A current example that is relevant and noteworthy of analysis regarding the economic diversification potential is the Democratic Republic of Congo owing to the presence of substantial amounts of minerals. While having mineral deposits does not ensure economic development for the country, it does present significant prospects towards engaging in the global energy revolution through participating in relevant value chains.

In the World Bank's report on the Country Economic Memorandum of the Democratic Republic of Congo, economic diversification and regional trade integration were mentioned as means to attain rapid economic growth and job creation, subsequently helping in alleviating poverty in the region. Case studies of both the mining and cassava value chains were analyzed along with the potential of mining-related and energy transition value chains.

Among the fundamental questions posed by this situation is whether the African countries will continue exporting the minerals extracted to foreign economies where the refinement, processing, and manufacturing take place. Alternatively, they may consider building up their capacity towards undertaking more activities related to the refining, processing, and manufacturing processes. Such an alternative would certainly result in higher employment rates, taxes collected, technological know-how acquired, and industrial development within the continent. However, such an option demands considerable investments in power generation and transmission systems, logistics systems, technological infrastructure, as well as human resources.

TOPIC A: QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How does the twenty-first-century concept of economic sovereignty relate to African states? Is it a move towards self-reliance away from foreign influence, or is it possible for African countries to be economically linked to the international community and retain autonomy within their economic policy-making?

- How might African countries invite foreign investments without allowing corporations to take control of key sectors? Could there be continent-wide regulations by the AU for foreign investments in strategic industries such as mining, energy, telecommunications, and infrastructure?

- Despite an abundance of natural resources within many of its member states, what makes Africa incapable of harnessing economic growth in line with its resources? Why can't the resource-endowed countries of Africa take advantage of the value of their own resources?

- Are there any benefits in limiting the exportation of unrefined primary commodities? Will this initiative drive economic development, or would it instead harm its competitiveness within global markets?

UN PAST ACTIONS

1. UN Decolonization Efforts — 1945–1970s
    - The institution that played an important role in supporting decolonization is the United Nations, which marks one of the first major interventions made by the body since its inception. The self-determination doctrine was outlined within the UN Charter and culminated in General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV), the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples on December 14, 1960. Through this resolution, it was decided to bring colonialism to an end as well as recognize the right of peoples to self-determination, whereby the people are entitled to freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development. During the 1960s decade, several dozen African countries achieved political sovereignty. This move towards independence became an essential step towards controlling economic decisions made by the various African countries.One significant shortcoming highlighted by this intervention was that decolonization could occur politically without challenging the economy's structural inequalities.

2. UNCTAD — Created in 1964 to Address Unequal Trade and Development

    - One of the most crucial interventions made by the United Nations included the establishment of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 1964. This intervention turned out to be vital since the developing nations who had recently acquired political sovereignty claimed that mere political independence was inadequate without modifying the international trading regime in favor of those nations that exported primary commodities.

UN PAST ACTIONS

- Commodity dependency was the challenge which UNCTAD sought to investigate; a challenge with immense relevance to neo-colonial history.. Historically, Africa's export basket included agricultural produce like cocoa, coffee, cotton, minerals like copper and crude petroleum while manufacturing goods that had been processed to a higher extent made up their import baskets. The research outputs by UNCTAD consistently emphasized the risks associated with commodity dependency and its susceptibility to international prices. According to UNCTAD, 45 African countries were commodity-dependent based on a threshold where primary commodities exceeded 60% of the total merchandise export.
- Earlier UNCTAD analysis also found that African producers frequently remained at the lower-value stages of international supply chains while traders, processors, and retailers captured a larger portion of the final value.

TOPIC A APPENDIX & SOURCES

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