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*Twenty-eighth meeting of the Committee of Experts*



AFRICAN UNION  
COMMISSION

*Fourth meeting of the Committee of Experts*

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**Meeting of the Committee of Experts of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Joint Annual Meetings of the AU Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and ECA Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development**

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**Note by the secretariat on the Coalition for Dialogue on Africa (CoDA)**



## 1. Background

The Coalition for Dialogue on Africa (CoDA) is a new initiative which has been established as a joint venture of the African Union Commission (AUC), African Development Bank (AfDB), and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). It is an independent forum for free discussion among State and non-State actors. While CoDA is not an intergovernmental programme of the three institutions it aims to leverage their convening power and access to African leaders and policymakers.

The decision to establish CoDA was taken after the close of the Global Coalition for Africa (GCA)<sup>1</sup>, following a study commissioned by ECA and following wide-ranging consultations with stakeholders. It is the successor forum to the GCA and the *Big Table*<sup>2</sup> (another high-level policy forum organized annually by the AfDB and ECA), which will also now cease to exist. In that regard, CoDA aims to combine the best elements of the GCA and those of the *Big Table*. It is distinct from the GCA in that it is completely African-owned and based in Africa.

CoDA places a premium on convening informal and inclusive dialogue on key African development issues between diverse and influential groups of stakeholders (including government leaders, policy makers, civil society, the private sector and media) and advocating their recommendations effectively to influence policy.

Additionally, the initiative seeks to play the role of a think-tank and change agent, which takes a proactive stand, and helps define new perspectives on a wide range of issues, including the most sensitive and controversial.

CoDA also aims to build strong partnerships and synergies with leading African think-tanks and research institutions with the objective of grounding its work on solid empirical findings. It aims to place particular attention on bridging the gap between the research and policy making communities in Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> The establishment of a Global Coalition for Africa was recommended in the 1989 World Bank study, Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth. This recommendation was endorsed by the Ministerial Conference on African Development held in July 1990 in Maastricht, Netherlands, and by the Organization of African Unity later in the same month. The GCA was established as a discussion forum to bring together representatives of African governments and their development partners, in order to expand opportunities for dialogue among these parties and, hopefully, thereby to prevent an erosion of donor support for Africa. The GCA organized informal meetings in which frank, open, unofficial and non-negotiating discussions could take place between African countries and development partners. The structure of the GCA was kept deliberately “light” with an original Board of three Co-Chairs and a small Secretariat. Overall guidance for the Secretariat is provided by the Board, and administrated by the World Bank. The GCA was based in Washington DC from 1991 until its operations ended in 2007.

<sup>2</sup> The Big Table was an initiative designed by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in 2000 to promote frank and constructive dialogue between African finance ministers and their OECD counterparts. The Big Table was organized by ECA in collaboration with the African Union and the African Development Bank.

## **2. Governance Structures**

CoDA's work is guided by an independent high-level Advisory Board with a former Head of State as Chairman and a highly respected African as its Convener.

CoDA Advisory Board Members serve in their personal capacity and are selected from among the most eminent, distinguished and high-level African and international personalities noted for their professional qualities, their national and international leadership experience, their commitment, and an open approach to African issues. The premier/first Chairperson of CoDA is H.E. Festus Mogae, former President of the Republic of Botswana. The interim Convener is Prof. Abdoulaye Bathily (Senegal).

The work of the board is supported by a Secretariat, currently housed at ECA headquarters in Addis Ababa, with support of the African Development Bank (AfDB).

## **3. Official Launch of CoDA**

The Coalition for Dialogue on Africa (CoDA) was formally launched in Addis Ababa on 6 March 2009. The inauguration ceremony, which was chaired by the CoDA Chairperson, H.E. Festus Mogae, featured welcoming remarks by the CoDA Convener, Prof. Abdoulaye Bathily, as well as statements of support for the new initiative from the African Union Commission (AUC) Chairperson, the President of the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

H.E. Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, delivered the opening address and officially inaugurated the CoDA process. In his remarks, Prime Minister Meles expressed confidence that CoDA would be "more effective" than the Global Coalition for Africa (GCA) due to its distinguished Advisory Board and the qualities of its Chairperson. He also noted that CoDA would be more effective because it was placing an emphasis on taking over the best features of the GCA while working at the same time to avoid duplication with other platforms and initiatives for dialogue on Africa. Additionally, Mr. Meles thanked ECA and AfDB for financing the studies that led to the establishment of CoDA and bearing the initial costs. He ended his remarks by pledging Ethiopia's support to CoDA.

## **3. CoDA initial priorities**

The inaugural CoDA Advisory Board Meeting started immediately following the launching ceremony under the Chairmanship of President Mogae. Participants included the Convener, four members of the board, two *ex-officio* members, the African Union Commission (AUC) Chairperson and the Executive Secretary of ECA as well as four invited guests. The session discussions focused on the overall rationale, mission and operations of CoDA, the structure and terms of reference (TOR) of the Advisory Board, priority areas of focus, and financing and fundraising issues.