

African Union

Background Guide

GWCIA XXXI

Topic A: Interconnected Transportation Networks
Topic B: Interconnected International Trade

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While GWCIA recognizes that the core value of participating in any Model UN committee is education in international affairs and the development of related skills such as productive collaboration, public speaking, and critical thinking, we also recognize the value of rewarding delegates who are exceptionally prepared and proficient in these skills. At GWCIA, we value delegates who can leverage creativity, diplomacy, substantive knowledge, and critical thinking skills to debate effectively, lead negotiations and blocs, and write comprehensive clauses. We especially look favorably towards delegates who individually develop meaningful solutions to the committee's main issues while keeping in mind the realistic diplomatic dynamics of our world, as well as those delegates who are able to advocate for their solutions and ideas to be adopted. The dais encourages delegates to lead in a manner that uplifts and respects their competitors while also introducing strong, unique solutions that consistently anchor their group's directive or working paper. On the other hand, attempts to undermine the goals of the committee without reason or acting without detailed thought of consequences are discouraged. Any rude, disrespectful, or demeaning conduct towards other delegates' ideas will not be tolerated.

Letter from the Chair

Dear Delegates,

My name is Camden Hairabedian, and I'm excited to serve as your chair for the African Union committee at GWCIA XXXI. Currently, I am a freshman at The George Washington University majoring in political science. This is my 5th year competing in Model UN and I am thrilled to be sharing my passion with all of you. Outside of staffing, I travel with The George Washington Model UN team and compete with the BJJ club. You might find me running on the monuments, playing board games, with friends, or hiking.

In this committee, you will be discussing important topics related to transportation and trade as members of the African Union. While addressing topics, you should consider how infrastructure provides stability to a region and promotes development, as well as how free trade facilitates cooperation and economic opportunities. As delegates, you will be asked to consider sovereignty, monetary policy, and institutional reform. These topics are serious and complex, which is why it is so important that you all think and debate critically. Both Topic A and Topic B are regularly debated around the world. I expect that all delegates explore these topics with respect and grace, as this committee will not tolerate hateful rhetoric of any kind in either speeches or in resolutions. You will be representing real countries with diverse interests, cultures, and histories, and your time in committee should reflect this diversity of values.

I look forward to working with all of you as you navigate these complex topics. Your work will reflect your dedication and willingness to engage with new and challenging ideas. Remember that those who stand out in committee are strong speakers and writers, but also demonstrate leadership by uplifting and cooperating with other delegates. I look forward to meeting you all. Please feel free to reach out with any questions.

P.S: Scroll all the way to the end to see my research tips for this committee!

Sincerely,

Camden Hairabedian
camden.h@gwu.edu
Chair, The African Union

Reminder: Delegates must CC their advisor on any email sent to the Chair.

Introduction to the Committee

The African Union Commission has convened to debate the future direction of this organisation. The Commission, referred to as “The Commission” or “AUC” throughout this background guide, is a crucial body of the African Union. [1]Although in practice, the African Union’s bodies, such as The African Union Assembly or The Executive Council, often share power and roles, for the purposes of this committee, the African Union Commission is to be imagined as an all-encompassing committee. It is to be regarded as capable of taking meaningful decisions and having resolutions respected by all member states, if passed. While it is normally composed of Heads of States, for the purpose of this committee, delegates will instead receive country-based delegations. In addition, while the Commission is usually composed of Chairpeople and Commissioners, in the interest of equality, all delegates will be equal in terms of committee powers.

2026 is set to be a challenging year for the African Union. From ongoing wars to the breakdown of diplomatic ties with the outside world, this will be a challenging year for the whole continent. With geopolitical crises sweeping the globe, elections upcoming and the suspension of aid from the United States, this year is a key time to rethink the ties that bond the African continent. The power of the African Union is often ignored by the international community, despite its legislative, executive and judiciary comprehensiveness. As this committee, it will be imperative for delegates to reflect upon the future of not only internal affairs on the continent, but also its place in the shifting global landscape.

[1] African Union, "The AU Commission," African Union, African Union Commission, https://au.int/en/commission.

This committee will operate within the normal parameters of a General Assembly-style committee. It will follow standard procedures in regards to resolution-writing, debate, and voting procedures.

Historical Background

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was founded in the capital of Ethiopia, Addis-Ababa, on the 25th of May, 1963. It came at a time where many new nations had just gained independence and was originally composed of just 32 African countries.[2]

Although limited in its power, it was a major step forward for the African Continent. One of the prerequisites for participation in this organisation was independence, and one of the key articles of the OAU's Charter, Article II (1)d explicitly states the organisation's intention "to eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa".[3] It was also known for participating in liberation efforts for colonised countries. The branch responsible for this support was the African Liberation Committee, and intervened across the continent, from Guinea-Bissau to Mozambique.[4]

Furthermore, the OAU was not purely a military organisation. Instead, it established key economic institutions such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).[5] This Community, founded in 1975, covers almost 4 million square miles, 20% of Africa's landmass and still functions to this day.[6] Additionally, the OAU also had its hand in social affairs, by creating in 1969 the African Convention on Refugees and in 1981 adopting the African Charter on Human and People's Rights.[7]

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[2] South African History Online. "Organisation of African Unity (OAU)." South African History Online. April 3, 2011. https://sahistory.org.za/ref/A-0063379.
[3] "Organisation of African," South African History Online.
[4] Hilmi S. Yousuf, "THE OAU AND THE AFRICAN LIBERATION MOVEMENT," *Pakistan Horizon* 38, no. 4 (1985), https://www.jstor.org/stable/41394216.

[5] "Organisation of African," South African History Online.
[6] Nikki Nordberg, "ECOWAS's Continued Effort to Advance Its Member's Standard of Living," globalEDGE, Michigan State University, last modified March 17, 2017, https://globaledge.msu.edu/blog/post/50375/ecowas%27s-continued-effort-to-advance-its-member%27s-standard-of-living.
[7] "Organisation of African," South African History Online.

The successor of the OAU, the African Union was founded in 1999.[8] It has evolved into a complex sociopolitical entity. With both expansive coverage and limited enforcement power, this continental union is one of the most interesting bodies in the world. As of 2026, it is up to 55 members! Throughout this weekend, delegates will have to navigate the challenges of one of the most ignored but potentially powerful unions in the world.

[8] "Organisation of African," South African History Online.

Current Issue

The key issues that delegates will face this weekend are the African Union's plans for Agenda 2063. The AU's 2063 Agenda consists of 7 key points, with notable aspirations being a prosperous Africa, ensuring good governance, and establishing Africa as a global player. Reaching these goals will require delegates to collaborate extensively while keeping in mind their own country's goals. In achieving Agenda 2063, the Union's goal is to ensure respect from a historically underprivileged continent and shift the other continents' entire perception of Africa.

Topic A: Interconnected Transport Network

While at first it may seem as if this topic might be a little limited, the potential for this topic is huge. The African Union has ambitious plans for growing the success of the African Union, and one of the key ones is several projects directed at facilitating transport throughout the continent. The new networks proposed, as well as an "African Passport" are key pillars of the greater interconnectedness sought out by the AU.

AIRPLANE

The possibility of a Pan-African airline might seem farfetched, but was actually a reality in the not so distant past. *Air Africa* was a Pan-African airline headquartered in the Ivory Coast and served 22 destinations across the continent. However, it ceased operation in 2002 due to economic crises and mismanagement. Reviving this failed enterprise will therefore be a demanding task for delegates, calling for logistical know-how, diplomatic cooperation, and new geopolitical and economic considerations.

Moreover, African airlines have already actively sought out advantageous mergers and alliances, both pre- and post- Covid.[9] Thus, a united airline that would cover the entirety of the continent is not out of the realm of possibility.

RAILROAD

While air travel is a distinct possibility, another, ground-based, option also presents itself to the AU. One of the "Flagship Projects" of the African Union is an integrated high-speed rail

[9] . Kenneth Button and Flavio Porta, "The Role of Strategic Airline Alliances in Africa," *Journal of Transport Economics and Policy* 56, no. 2 (2022), https://www.jstor.org/stable/27360400.

that would connect "African capitals and commercial centers through a High-Speed Train Network; facilitating the movement of goods, factor services and people as well as reducing transport costs and relieving congestion of current and future systems through increased rail connectivity."[10] Creating this rail network will require delegates to create an entire, inter-continental, railway system from what is, essentially, scratch.

A key question for delegates tasked with this would be to consider which countries the delegate's is closest with, to establish international railways, with stops in major cities in friendly countries. Another key aspect would be to think about who should own the railways: the AU? The countries? A private company?

[10] African Union, "Integrated High Speed Train Network," African Union, African Union Commission, https://au.int/en/flagships/integrated-high-speed-train-network.



RailRoad Coverage of Africa (map by Open Railway Map)

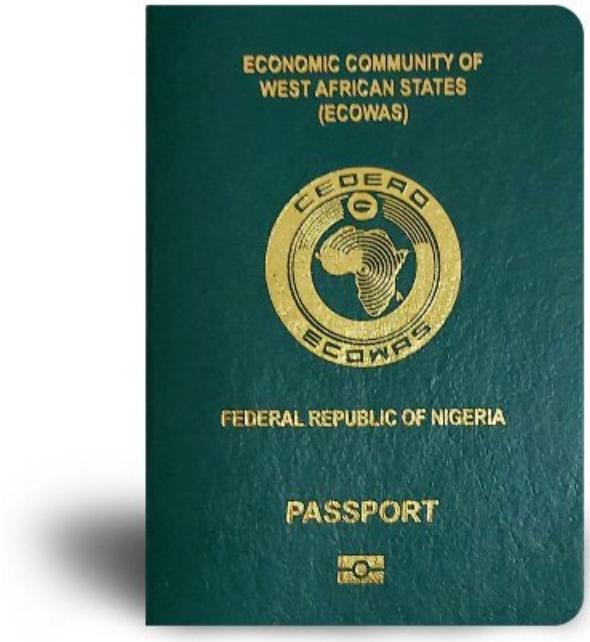
AFRICAN PASSPORT

Another key aspect of transport is the issue of facility, and the clearest and most obvious way to facilitate transport is to ensure that passport-holders of one nation can enter another country visa-free. Indeed, there is once again already African precedent for this to happen. The member-states of ECOWAS, since December 2000, have had the right to enter other ECOWAS nations visa-free.[11] That means that for almost three decades, Nigerian/ECOWAS

[11] Global Forum on Migration & Development, "Free Movement in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)," Global Forum on Migration and Development, last modified July 2014, https://www.gfmd.org/pfp/ppd/1901.

passport-holders have had the right to enter the Ivory Coast visa-free, for example.[12] However, this is yet to be expanded to the entire continent. Delegates should consider this as a possibility for increased ease of transport, that would be beneficial to all African nations.

A Nigerian/ECOWAS passport (photo via the Embassy of Nigeria Madrid)



[12] Global Forum on Migration & Development, "Free Movement," Global Forum on Migration and Development.

Topic B: Interconnected Free Trade

This is another key part of the African Union's future plans. Ensuring African nations occupy a crucial place in the global economy, after having been exploited during colonisation and neo-colonisation, is a herculean task that will require delegates to work together as well as defend their own national interests.

Free Markets

As a part of Agenda 2063, market integration and trade expansion play a vital role in ensuring Africa's place in the global economy. While the broad strokes of this plan have been established by the AU, delegates are able to incorporate their own creative solutions and processes in order to meet these objectives.

The African Continental Free Trade Area

The AU's proposed *African Continental Free Trade Area* "aims at accelerating intra-African trade and boosting Africa's trading position in the global market by strengthening Africa's common voice and policy space in global trade negotiations."[13] How to achieve this lies in a lack of tariffs, online tools, and a payment system.[14] However, within these ideas, the goal of this committee will be to concretise, how exactly these systems will operate. Who will run them? Where would they be based? What enforcement power will they have?

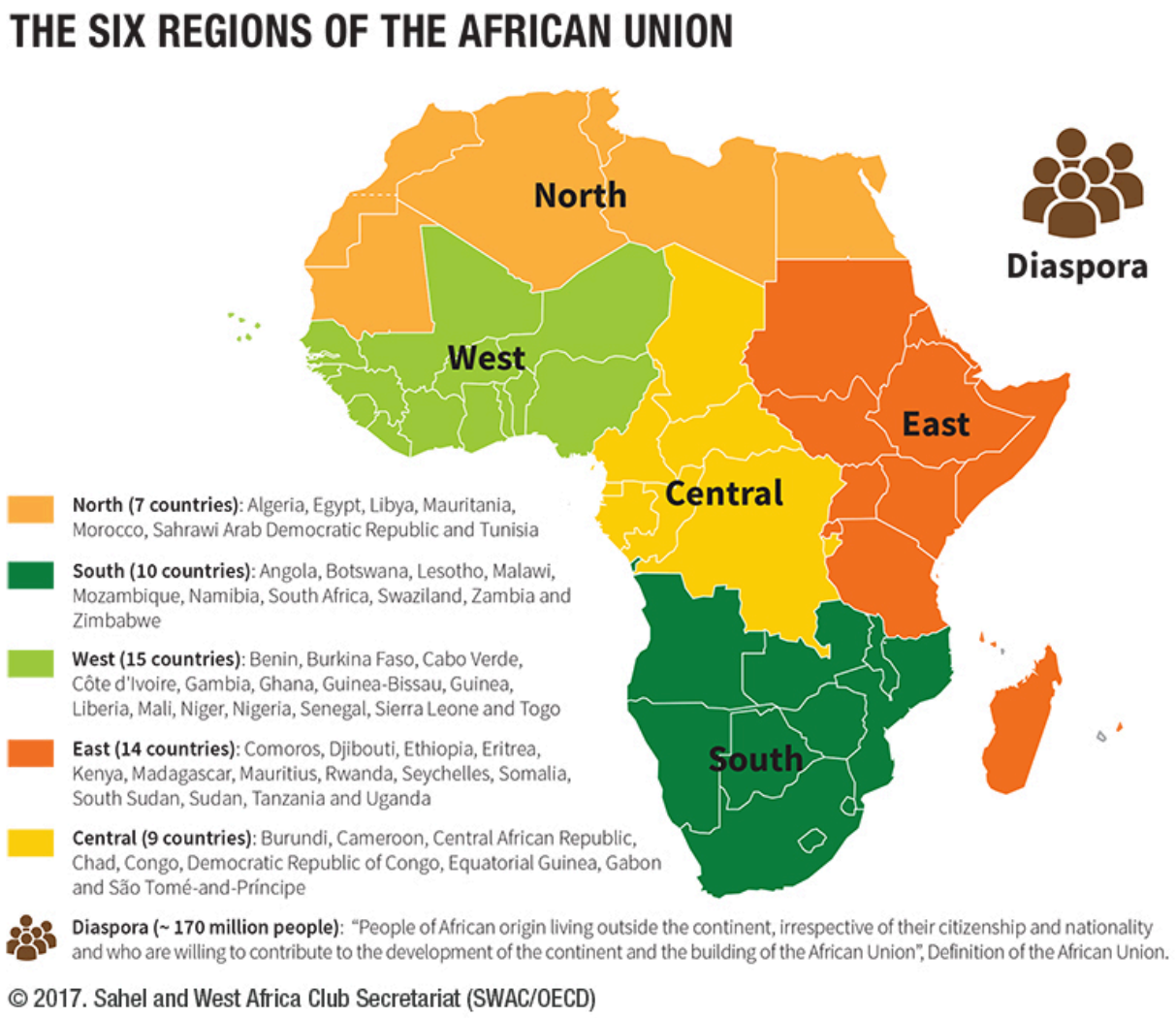
Institutional Reform

[13] African Union, "The African Continental Free Trade Area," African Union, African Union Commission, https://au.int/en/african-continental-free-trade-area.
[14] African Union, "The African," African Union.

The African Union's financial wing is composed primarily of the African Central Bank (ACB), the African Monetary Fund (AMF) and the African Investment Bank (AIB).[15] The ACB is responsible for the creation and running of a joint currency.[16] Then, the AMF is set to stockpile national currencies and has objectives of "providing financial assistance to AU Member States" and "encouraging capital movements between Member States". [17] The AIB, finally, ensures both international and private/public collaboration.[18] These institutions need to function harmoniously together in order to achieve the economic integration required by the AU. Delegates are not expected to understand the intricacies of each institution, but rather familiarise themselves with these institutions in order to use them in comprehensive resolutions. It is also to ensure that delegates are not being duplicative by creating new institutions, while said institutions might already exist.

[15] African Union, "Financial Institutions," African Union, African Union Commission, https://au.int/en/financial-institutions.
[16] African Union, "Financial Institutions," African Union.
[17] African Union, "Financial Institutions," African Union.
[18]African Union, "Financial Institutions," African Union.

Regional Profiles



The Regional Divisions of Africa (photo via Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat)

Northern Africa

Northern Africa has almost an 1 trillion USD GDP, making it the richest region in Africa.[19] Spearheaded by Morocco and Egypt, this region is generally seen as the most distant,

[19] Enoch Randy Aikins, "North Africa Development Futures," ISS African Futures, African Futures & Innovation Programme, last modified 2026, https://futures.issafrica.org/geographic/regions/north-africa/

as it is separated from the rest of the continent by the Sahara Desert. It is also generally seen as the closest to Europe, as many countries are a member of the European Neighbourhood Policy.[20]

Western Africa

Generally a resource rich region, Western Africa's GDP has steadily been rising since Covid-19.[21] Spearheaded by Nigeria, Ghana and the Ivory Coast, the region is known for a mix of resource-rich and non-resource-intensive economies.[22] An example of this would be Burkina Faso: although a producer of cotton, its growth is mainly derived from monetary and fiscal policy as well as management of key economic sectors.[23] In general, the region is also known for its rich cultural history, with landmarks such as the Stones Circles in Senegal and Northern Gambia, Koutammakou in Togo or Elmina Castle in Ghana.[24]

Central Africa

Central Africa may be the region with which delegates are the least familiar. It boasts an equatorial rainforest of over 400 000 square miles, as well as being the birthplace of humanity.[25]

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[20] European Movement International, "The EU And The Southern Neighbourhood: More Than Crisis-Management," European Movement International, last modified December 2017, https://europeanmovement.eu/policy/the-eu-and-the-southern-neighbourhood-more-than-crisis-management/.
[21] West Africa Regional Overview, West Africa Regional Overview, African Development Bank Group, African Development Bank, last modified April 24, 2024, https://www.afdb.org/en/countries/west-africa/west-africa-overview.
[22] West Africa Regional Overview, West Africa Regional Overview, African Development Bank Group.
[23] International Monetary Fund. African Dept., "Drivers of Growth in Nonresource-Rich Sub-Saharan African Countries," in *Regional Economic Outlook, October 2013, Sub-Saharan Africa* (USA: International Monetary Fund. African Dept., 2013), https://doi.org/10.5089/9781475553413.086.
[24] Derek Dias, "The 15 Most Interesting Historical Sites in West Africa," AFK Travel, last modified June 27, 2016, https://afktravel.com/66487/15-interesting-historical-sites-west-africa/.
[25] David Birmingham, "Central Africa," Britannica, last modified October 22, 2026, https://www.britannica.com/place/central-Africa.

Historically, copper, textiles and salt have been important items of trade and prestige across diverse communities on both sides of the equator.[26] Marked by the Congo-Bassin, this region is known for beautiful landscapes, such as the Boali Falls in the CAR.[27] From Chad to the Central African Republic, this region has experienced a great deal of conflict, especially in decolonisation processes and civil wars. However, this has not stopped its GDP from growing, notably with the Democratic Republic of the Congo at the head of this growth.[28] The growth of this region is heavily resource-dependent: from cobalt in the DRC to gas in Equatorial Guinea.[29] This growth is however limited by the high rates of debt repayments in the countries of Central Africa, such as Gabon or the Republic of Congo, are subjected to.[30] Delegates of these countries should thus keep this in mind while they focus on which policies to defend: in order to invest in infrastructure, it may be wise to research ways to mitigate the effect of debt to keep investing in major projects.

Eastern Africa

Major countries in this region include Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Rwanda. While also marred by conflict, notably with the Sudanese Civil War or the violence in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, it managed to avoid the brunt of the post-pandemic economic slump.[31] The previously

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[26] Birmingham, "Central Africa," Britannica.
[27] Central African Republic Travel and Tours, "The Most Beautiful Destinations and Best Activities When Traveling in Central African Republic," Central African Republic Travel and Tours, https://www.centralafricanrepublictours.com/the-most-beautiful-destinations-and-best-activities-when-traveling-in-central-african-republic/.
[28] African Development Bank Group, "Central Africa Regional Overview," African Development Bank Group, African Development Bank, last modified October 28, 2025, https://www.afdb.org/en/countries/central-africa/central-africa-overview.
[29] Africa Center, "Central Africa," Africa Center, last modified April 28, 2026, https://africacenter.net/regions/central-africa.
[30] African Union Commission and OECD, "Africa's Development Dynamics 2025: Infrastructure, Growth and Transformation," *Africa's Development Dynamics*, November 27, 2025, https://doi.org/10.1787/c2b40285-en
[31] African Development Bank Group, "East Africa Regional Overview," African Development Bank Group, African Development Bank, last modified July 21, 2021, https://www.afdb.org/en/countries/east-africa/east-africa-overview.

stated key nations contain models for economic diversification as well as conservation efforts. Still, the economy of the region as a whole is weighted down by a lack of economic interconnectivity, over-reliance on tourism, and political instability.[32] Delegates should thus reflect on how best to achieve their goals: should their countries spear-head collaborative and cooperative measures that will affect the whole region and maybe the whole continent or rather focus on internal solutions that are specific to their country's unique issues?

Southern Africa

A region dominated at times by South Africa and often overlooked, South African nations have been the most heavily hit by conflicts in the Middle East, as most are major exporters of precious metals.[33] Containing both smaller countries, such as Eswatini, Lesotho or Malawi, and larger ones, such as Zambia and Angola, this region is a mix of landscapes, languages, cultures and people. Politically, there has been a lot of unrest, mainly caused by dissatisfaction with the traditional ruling parties, especially among the youth.[34]

[32]African Development Bank Group, "East Africa," African Development Bank Group.
[33]African Development Bank Group, "Southern Africa," African Development Bank Group, African Development Bank, last modified June 23, 2026, https://www.afdb.org/en/countries/southern-africa.
[34] Nicole Beardsworth, "Democratic Shockwaves in Southern Africa," European Democracy Hub, last modified December 16, 2025, https://europeandemocracyhub.epd.eu/democratic-shockwaves-in-southern-africa/.

Questions to Consider

1. How does your country benefit from the AU's proposed changes?
2. How will delegates ensure that advancements are spread out across the continent, and not limited to the most powerful countries?
3. How will delegates make sure that they are bringing creativity and innovation to their countries and not recreating previous solutions?
4. How will international institutions exist as entities and enforce measures decided on by the AUC?
5. Why have some institutions failed to expand or continue operations, and what can be done to avoid the same fate this time?
6. What are the major implications of the AU's proposed plans?
7. How will national interests intersect or contradict with objectives set by the African Union?

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