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THE RECENT ELECTION OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION: IMPORTANCE, CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES

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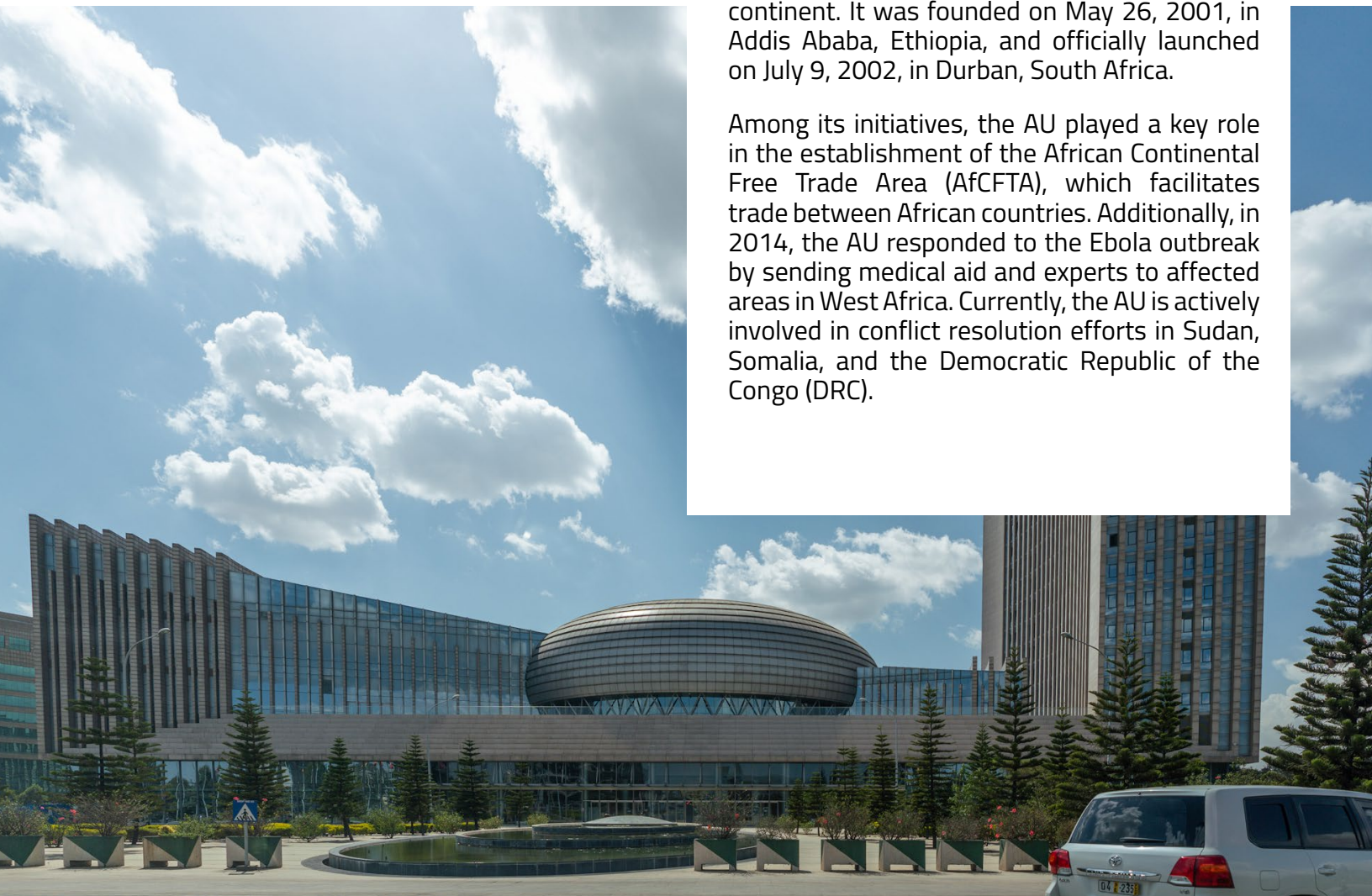
SECOND SECRETARY JOHAN RÍOS RIVAS
OCTAVIA MARIE BURKE

The recent election of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC) represents a pivotal moment for the continent's future. This position is key to leading the implementation of strategies that foster stability, economic growth and unity among African countries. Amid persistent conflicts, economic crises, and governance challenges, the election of the new AUC Chairperson could shape the course of African integration in the coming years.

What is the African Union?

The African Union (AU) is an organization composed of 55 African states, aimed at promoting unity and solidarity among African nations, advancing political and economic integration within the region, and fostering peace, security, and stability across the continent. It was founded on May 26, 2001, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and officially launched on July 9, 2002, in Durban, South Africa.

Among its initiatives, the AU played a key role in the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which facilitates trade between African countries. Additionally, in 2014, the AU responded to the Ebola outbreak by sending medical aid and experts to affected areas in West Africa. Currently, the AU is actively involved in conflict resolution efforts in Sudan, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).



Structure of the African Union

The AU is governed by several main bodies, including:

- The AU Assembly: Composed of the Heads of State and Government of the member states, it is the supreme decision-making body.
- The Executive Board: Made up of Foreign Ministers or designated representatives of the member states, it is responsible for coordinating and making policy decisions on areas of common interest.
- The AU Commission: Acts as the secretariat of the AU and is responsible for implementing the decisions of the Assembly and the Executive Council.
- The Pan-African Parliament: A legislative body that seeks to ensure the participation of African peoples in governance and development processes across the continent.



CONCLUDES THE 8TH WEEK PIDA

Source: <https://au-pida.org>

The role of the African Union Commission (AUC)

The African Union Commission (AUC) is one of the AU bodies that establishes a balance of powers within the organisation. It is headed by a Chairperson, a Deputy Chairperson, and eight Commissioners, each overseeing specific thematic areas. Each Commissioner is responsible for ensuring that member states adhere to the organization's policies and standards across various key sectors for Africa's integration and development. These include peace and security, peacekeeping missions and counterterrorism, trade and industry, science, technology, and innovation, health and social development, food security, agricultural development, and climate change adaptation, among others.

Election of the new Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC)

At the 38th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly, held from 15 to 16 February 2025 in Addis Ababa, African leaders elected Djibouti's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, as the new AUC Chairman. Minister Youssouf won the 33 votes needed to succeed Chadian Moussa Faki Mahamat, who had led the AUC for two consecutive terms since 2017. At the same session, Algerian Selma Malika Haddadi was elected vice-president of the AUC, strengthening North Africa's representation in the body.



MAHMOUD ALI YOUSSEUF - PRESIDENT OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

Source: <https://au.int/>

AUC Challenges and Priorities

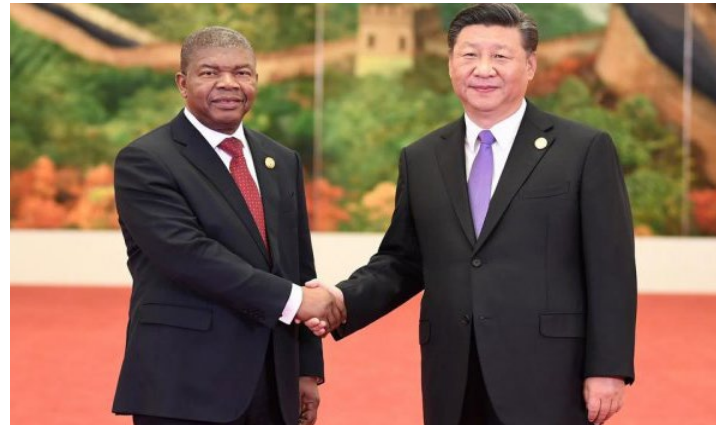
The new President of the AUC faces multiple challenges and opportunities in his mandate:

- Peace and Security: Despite progress, several regions of Africa continue to face armed conflict and security threats, including situations in Sudan, the Sahel, and the DRC. The AUC should strengthen mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution, as well as promote political stability in affected countries.
- Promotion of Democracy and Governance: The AU has suspended countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Guinea, Gabon, and Sudan due to coups and unconstitutional changes of government. A key challenge will be balancing the upholding of democratic principles with constructive engagement to facilitate these nations' return to constitutional order.



AFRICA AND EUROPE

Source: <https://www.southworld.net>



PRESIDENTS JOAO LOURENÇO AND XI JINPING

Source: <https://www.freepik.es>

- **Economic Integration:** Effective implementation of the AfCFTA is crucial. This agreement, which seeks to create a single market for goods and services in Africa, has the potential to transform African economies by increasing intra-African trade and attracting investment. Although progress has been made, challenges such as lack of adequate infrastructure, currency diversity, and mistrust among member states.

- **Sustainable Development:** The AU's Agenda 2063 sets out a vision for the socio-economic development of the continent. The new leadership will need to drive initiatives that address poverty, youth unemployment and poor infrastructure, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

- **Climate Change Response:** Africa is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The AUC will need to coordinate efforts to mitigate these impacts and promote sustainable practices in key sectors such as agriculture and energy.

- **Institutional Strengthening:** Improving the efficiency and transparency of AU institutions is essential to ensure effective governance and African citizens' trust in the body.

- **International Relations and Strategic Partnerships:** Africa remains a key focus for global powers such as China, the United States and the European Union. China, in particular, has strengthened its ties with the continent through investments and cooperation across various sectors. The AU will need to manage these relationships to ensure that partnerships equitably benefit African nations and promote sustainable development.

In conclusion, we believe that Mahmoud Ali Youssof's election as President of the AUC marks the beginning of a new era, offering opportunities to tackle both persistent and emerging challenges across Africa. His leadership will be pivotal in enhancing regional security, advancing economic integration, upholding democratic principles, and positioning Africa at the forefront of the global stage.

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SHARED ECHOES: A LIVING CONNECTION BETWEEN PERU AND AFRICA

PATRICIA CARRASCO MEJÍA



WORLD DAY FOR AFRICAN CULTURE AND PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT
Source: Travelnoire.com

“Akwaba!”, a word originating from the Akan people, whose members primarily inhabit southern Ghana, eastern Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia, and parts of Togo, is more than just a greeting; it embodies a profound sense of connection, hospitality, and mutual recognition between those who arrive and those who welcome them. In many African societies, welcoming others is not merely a formality but a ritual that facilitates cultural exchange and strengthens communal bonds. The warmth expressed through “akwaba” has historically been a means for African peoples to embrace visitors and migrants, fostering networks that transcend time and geography. Similarly, in Peru, expressions such as “bienvenido” or “pasa, estás en tu casa” reflect a tradition in which hospitality is fundamental. This is especially true in Andean and Afro-Peruvian communities, where the arrival of a guest is celebrated through gestures of generosity and respect.

This same spirit of hospitality and community resonates within the African Union (AU), an organisation that has successfully integrated all

55 African states, fostering mutual benefits under the ideal of unity and cooperation. Beyond its political and economic objectives, the AU serves as a platform where cultural identities converge, enrich one another, and project themselves onto the global stage. From this perspective, “akwaba” is not only a word of welcome for individuals but also an embrace of ideas, expressions, and cultural manifestations that continue to shape Africa’s identity in the 21st century.

This article seeks to highlight just a glimpse of the rich cultural and artistic expressions found in both African and Peruvian traditions, revealing a profound heritage of rhythms and customs that, despite their geographical distance, share remarkable similarities. From music and dance to festivals and other traditional manifestations, the African influence has left a significant mark on Peru, particularly in regions with a strong Afro-descendant presence. Examining these similarities unveils deep-rooted connections between the two regions, built upon resilience, celebration, and identity.

This connection is deeply reflected in the rhythms that vibrate through their cultures, with music serving as an unbreakable bridge between both regions. For centuries, rhythm has been a vehicle of identity and resistance for Afro-descendant communities. Within this vast musical universe, the Peruvian cajón stands out with its distinctive cadence. Its origins trace back to the colonial period, when enslaved Africans, forbidden from using their traditional drums, transformed simple wooden boxes into instruments laden with history and expression. These improvised instruments became the rhythmic core of genres such as festejo and landó, allowing African descendants to preserve their identity and pass down their roots through music. Thanks to its versatility and resonance, the cajón eventually found its way onto international stages, becoming a symbol of Afro-Peruvian music.

More than 7,000 kilometres away, the djembe holds a similar role in the musical traditions of West Africa. Originating from the ancient Mandinka Empire in countries such as Mali, Guinea, and Senegal, this conical drum with a goatskin membrane has, for centuries, been the central element of ceremonies, celebrations, and oral storytelling. Its deep, resonant sound symbolises a connection to the earth and the collective spirit, creating musical dialogues that transcend borders. Much like the Peruvian cajón, the djembe is not merely an instrument but a living symbol of heritage and cultural resilience, whose rhythm continues to shape the identity of those who play and listen to it.



AFRICAN DJEMBE DRUMMER

Source: www.uibk.ac.at

This continuity of rhythms and traditions is also reflected in visual expressions. In both Peru and Africa, masks and dance have served as vehicles of storytelling, resistance, and spirituality, connecting communities to their ancestors and the sacred through vibrant, symbolic representations. In Burkina Faso, the International Festival of Masks and Arts of Dédougou (FESTIMA) is a celebration where intricately carved wooden masks, adorned with bright colours and geometric designs, take centre stage, showcasing their deep spiritual significance. During the festival, masked figures emerge in processions, moving to the rhythms of drums and chants, while dancers embody the presence of ancestors and protective spirits. These performances symbolise the battle between good and evil, the fertility of the land, and the connection to the divine.

On the Peruvian coast, Son de los Diablos exhibits a similar theatricality. Of Afro-Peruvian origin and

rooted in colonial festivities, this masked dance symbolises the duality between order and chaos through demonic figures that, with energetic leaps and acrobatic steps, take over the streets to the rhythm of the cajón and the quijada. Their masks, with exaggerated expressions and vivid colours, evoke the legacy of African dances preserved by Afro-descendants after slavery and later adapted to Lima's festivities. Traditionally performed in Lima's historic centre during Corpus Christi and Christmas celebrations, it gradually spread to regions such as Chincha and Cañete, where Afro-Peruvian heritage remains vibrant. Much like FESTIMA, Son de los Diablos is a living embodiment of cultural legacy, where dance and costume transcend aesthetics to become a powerful channel of history, identity, and resistance.

Just as masks and percussion have served as vehicles of memory and identity, dance has played a fundamental role in historical and cultural transmission, embodying both resistance and celebration across both regions. In Africa, gumbé is a musical genre deeply rooted in the African diaspora, with a strong presence in countries such as Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone. Its origins trace back to the eighteenth century, when Maroons from Jamaica created a music style that fused African rhythms with European influences. Over time, gumbé became firmly established in West Africa as a vibrant, communal percussion genre, one that endures today as a powerful expression of resilience and cultural pride.



THE CULTURAL JEWEL OF BURKINA FASO

Source: www.ccincagarcilaso.gob.pe/actividades/por-las-esquinas-del-barrio/

Across vast distances, the festejo emerges as its rhythmic counterpart in Peru. This Afro-Peruvian genre, born on plantations during the colonial period, preserves the heartbeat of African percussion through the Peruvian cajón, rhythmic clapping, and vibrant vocal expressions. Its lyrics capture the spirit of both celebration and resistance within the Afro-Peruvian community. Over time, the festejo has reached international stages, establishing itself as a defining emblem of Afro-Peruvian heritage. Much like gumbé, it serves as an act of identity and remembrance, where each strike of the cajón and every zapateo carries the echoes of people who transformed suffering into art and resistance into rhythm.



THE SOUND OF THE DEVILS

Source: Chiclayo Que Rico

Likewise, festivals serve as scenarios of memory and cultural affirmation within Afro-descendant communities. In Ghana, the Pan-African Historical Theatre Festival (PANAFEST) is an event that, since 1992, has brought together people from across the African diaspora to celebrate their roots and reflect on their history of struggle and resistance. This festival, which takes place in cities such as Cape Coast and Elmina, includes theatrical performances, lectures, and rituals in the former slave castles, where thousands of Africans were shipped to America. More than just a festival, PANAFEST is an act of collective reconnection, allowing the diaspora to return to the

continent in search of identity and recognition.

It is worth noting that the festival would not be possible without the support of African governments and, in particular, the African Union. The organisation sponsors this cultural festival, offering logistical assistance and international visibility, ensuring that this distinctive event reaches beyond borders and reinforces the sense of identity and unity among African nations. Their involvement underscores the significance of intangible heritage and the importance of preserving inherited traditions.



WORLD DAY FOR AFRICAN CULTURE AND PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

Source: www.ohchr.org

In Peru, the Afro-Peruvian Culture Day, celebrated every 4th of June, serves a similar purpose. Established in 2006 in honour of the renowned poet Nicomedes Santa Cruz, this day provides an opportunity to recognise the contributions of the Afro-Peruvian community to the nation's identity. During the festivities, cities such as Lima, Chinchipe, and El Carmen come alive with music, dance, and poetry, featuring celebratory performances, décimas, and culinary exhibitions. Much like PANAFEST, this celebration aims to showcase the cultural richness of Afro-descendants while advocating for the rights and historical recognition of their people.

In the same vein, the Peruvian-African Friendship Day, celebrated every 19th of October, serves a similar purpose. Established in 1986 following the passing of Mozambican president and leader Samora Machel, this celebration highlights the profound connection between Peru and Africa. In this context, academic gatherings, official ceremonies, and cultural activities are organised with the participation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accredited African embassies in Peru, and representatives of the Afro-Peruvian community.

In this context, the Government of Peru reaffirms its strong commitment to the visibility, preservation, and promotion of our African heritage by ensuring the annual commemoration of this event through various activities. Consequently, in 2025, the Peruvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs will hold the sixteenth edition of the Peruvian-African Friendship Day as part of the agenda set by the Peru in Africa Platform. This initiative also includes the monthly publication of the Cumanana Cultural Bulletin, a magazine dedicated to promoting the ties between Peru and African countries, which is now in its forty-second edition.

Finally, the connection between Peru and the African region is expressed through cultural and identity manifestations that transcend distance and time, ranging from music and dance to oral traditions and festivities. Through instruments such as the Peruvian cajón and the djembe, and rhythms like festejo and gumbé, a living bond between both regions is evident, marked by resilience, identity, and memory. This reflects the Afro-descendant legacy in Peru and the richness of a cultural exchange that continues to evolve, strengthening ties between peoples united by history and creativity.



PERUVIAN-AFRICAN FRIENDSHIP DAY
Source: MRE historical archives



PERUVIAN-AFRICAN FRIENDSHIP DAY
Source: MRE historical archives

RECIPE ZIGHINÌ, THE ETHIOPIAN MEAT STEW



Ethiopian cuisine is a fusion of the culinary traditions of the country's diverse peoples and cultures. Zighinì is one of the main traditional dishes in Ethiopian cuisine. It is a meat stew served with a variety of legumes and vegetables.



INGREDIENTS:

- 800 gr beef rump
- 4 red onions
- 1 clove of garlic
- 3 tbsp berbere (spice blend)
- 100 gr. butter
- 400 gr. peeled tomatoes
- 4 cardamom pods
- Ginger powder
- Oil
- Salt



PREPARATION:

Cut the beef into 3 cm cubes. Peel the onions, finely slice them, and chop the garlic.

Open the cardamom pods and crush the seeds using a mortar and pestle until they form a fine powder.

Heat a heavy-bottomed saucepan, add the onions and garlic, and brown with 6 tablespoons of oil for 7–8 minutes, until the onions start to brown. Stir in the berbere.

Add the butter and beef cubes, then brown for 5 minutes.

Stir in the finely chopped peeled tomatoes and a glass of hot water. Mix well and season with salt. Add the cardamom powder and a pinch of ginger. Cover and simmer for about an hour, adding more hot water if needed to prevent drying. The sauce should be thick.

Serve hot with injera bread.



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR AFRICA, THE MIDDLE EAST, AND THE GULF COUNTRIES

Jr. Lampa 545, Lima, Peru

Phone: +51 1 204 2400

Email: peruenafrika@rree.gob.pe

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