1. Course Background and Rationale
The short course on the African Union (AU) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in International Relations will introduce participants to the institutions’ mechanics of conducting international relations.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU), the predecessor of the AU, was created in the 1960s to facilitate African states’ liberation through decolonization. By the 1990s the OAU had outlived its significance with the end of political colonization on the continent. The 1990s and post-Cold War era forced African states to critically revisit the foundations of pan-Africanism, which led to the transformation of the OAU to the AU in response to globalization. The Constitutive Act of the AU was adopted in 2000 by the continent’s heads of state, who professed to nurture a transformative Africa whose citizens enjoy qualitative and quantitative forms of progress and well-being. The AU is driven by the pan-African vision of “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena”\(^1\) which drives its foreign affairs agenda continentally and globally.

The AU’s conduct of international affairs is complex. As a continental body representing its member states, it takes a two-pronged approach of building and nurturing the unity of its member states on one hand, and advocating for their interests internationally on the other. The composition of 55 member states\(^2\) with varying interests and needs presents a challenge for the AU and RECs as international actors. Be it at the continental or regional level, the AU and RECs must balance promoting a united front of member states internationally with maintaining consensus in the face of varying and shifting national interests.

In light of current trends of globalization, multipolarity and increasing unilateralism, the AU and RECs are faced with several questions. How does the AU build consensus among member states and RECs who sometimes compete with each other rather than complement the efforts of the continental body? How does it balance the competing interests of its member states in the face of intense external interference and influence? What forms of leverage does the AU have, internally and externally, in the conduct of its international affairs?

In answering the questions posed above, the course will delve into pertinent themes on the conduct of international affairs including:

- The AU’s diplomatic architecture (from AUC to A3);
- AU and the RECs: challenges of coordination and harmonisation;
- Maritime security: the Yaoundé process;
- African positions on international challenges (including climate change, etc.);
- Africa in the UNGA and the UNSC, the AU/EU strategic partnership: from trade to security;
- Dealing with violent extremism and terrorism in West Africa; and
- The Nouakchott process and new emerging issues, such as Africa and new actors like the One Belt On Road (OBOR).

\(^1\) See Agenda 2063 at: https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview
\(^2\) See AU Member States composition at https://au.int/en/member_states/countryprofiles2
2. **Course Objectives**
   - Introduce and familiarize participants with the AU diplomatic architecture and other related instruments and provisions;
   - Enable participants to critically assess the tension between the pursuit of consensus building between member states and presenting a united front internationally;
   - Deepen participants’ understanding of the specific mandates, powers and functions of Africa’s regional and sub-regional organizations in peacemaking;
   - Deepen participants’ appreciation of the strengths, weaknesses and challenges of African regional and sub-regional organizations as international actors in the conduct of international affairs;
   - Strengthen participants’ knowledge and understanding of the relevant concepts and processes in the conduct of foreign relations and how to apply them to the analysis of conducting international relations;
   - Enhance participants’ capacity to reflect critically on existing frameworks, concepts, and policies in the conduct of international affairs;
   - Evaluate critically and constructively the efforts made by the AU and relevant RECs in specific processes of international cooperation, such as AU/UN cooperation in the areas of peace and security; and
   - Critically interrogate the strengths and constraints in the conduct of international affairs to reveal any subterranean interests the AU and RECs tend to promote, as well as their explanatory powers and practical limitations within the African and international contexts.

3. **Course Structure and Methodology**
   The training is structured as a five (5) day online course, designed with a participatory and self-reflection learning approach.

   The pedagogical approach will combine lectures, group discussions, and practical applications through the use of case studies. Participants admitted into the training programme should be prepared to present short technical reports on their own experiences on the course theme.

4. **Target Audience**
   The course targets experts and African professionals, for example, those working at the AU, RECs, or African civil society organizations. International applicants working for a governmental, intergovernmental or multilateral agencies with keen interest in African peace and security issues are equally encouraged to apply.

5. **Admission Requirements**
   Applicants must have:
   - At least five years of work experience in the fields of peace, security and development, democracy and governance issues, or related fields;
   - A minimum of a first degree; and
   - Good command of the English language, **which is the medium of instruction**.
6. **Date**
   19 – 23 April 2021

7. **Tuition Fee**
   500 USD

8. **Application Deadline**
   29 March 2021

9. **Contact Person**
   For any inquiries, please contact the Programme Coordinator, Mahlet Fitiwi: mahlet.f@ipss-addis.org