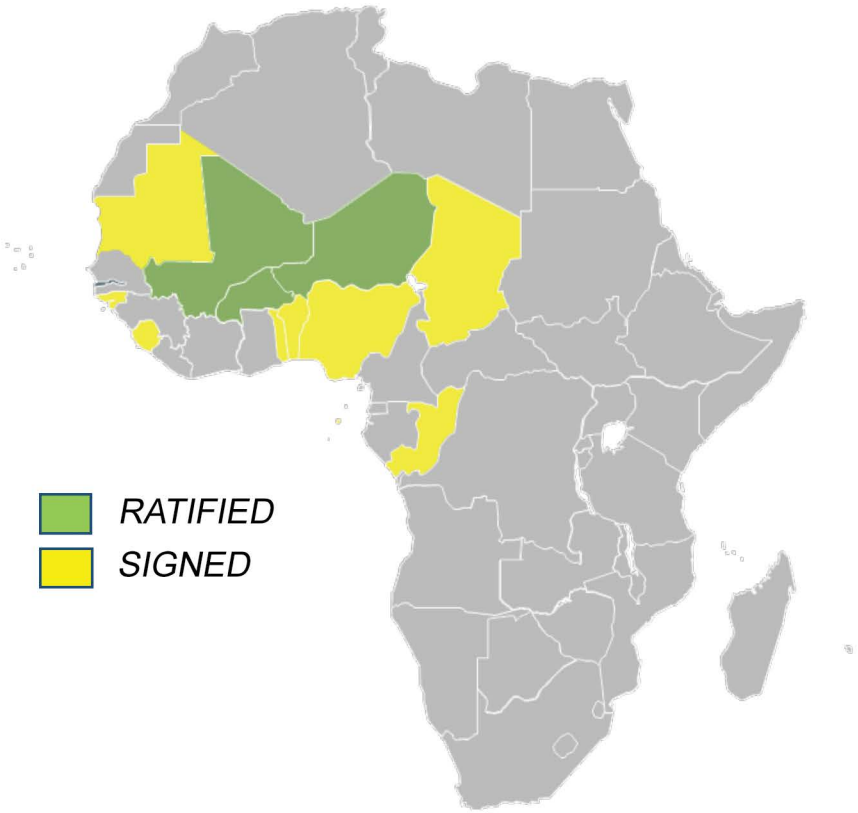

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African Union Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation
(Niamey Convention)
"Transforming borders from barriers to bridges"

The Need to Reinforce for Regional Cooperation-The Niamey Convention

The vision of an integrated Africa with **borders serving as bridges for peace, growth and development** created a pivotal stepping stone towards increased demand for cross-border cooperation. The 23rd ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, from 26th to 27th June 2014, adopted the African Union Convention on Cross- Border Cooperation, known as the Niamey Convention.

The Niamey Convention aims to promote cross-border cooperation and to ensure peaceful resolutions of border disputes. Based on joint activities between neighboring countries, it is to facilitate the development of borderlands and to ease free movements of persons and goods.
The parties agreed that the objectives pursued by the Convention were to be:

-the promotion of cross-border cooperation at local, sub regional and regional levels,

-the facilitation of delimitation, demarcation and reaffirmation of interstate boundaries, in conformity with mechanisms agreed upon by the parties concerned,

-the facilitation of the peaceful resolution of border disputes,

-the promotion of peace and stability through conflict prevention and continental integration, and finally

-the transformation of border areas into catalysts for growth, socio-economic and political integration of the continent.

Legal Framework for Cross-border Cooperation

The Niamey Convention is giving the legal framework for Member States to develop and implement cross-border cooperation initiatives. It is also a way of formalizing the cooperation between countries that other stakeholders can refer to and rely on when setting up “support mechanisms”. It gives visibility to the issue of cross-border cooperation at the political level. It is a way of institutionalizing cross-border cooperation through a continentally accepted framework, e.g. by the creation of Joint Border Commissions.

Owning Agenda 2063

The Niamey Convention is in line with the agreement that was established by the Agenda 2063 under the aspiration of a *continent of seamless borders, and management of cross-border resources through dialogue.* It complies with the actions highlighted in the road map, which consists of *implementing joint cross-border investments to exploit shared natural resources and silence the guns by 2020, through enhancement dialogue-centered conflict prevention and resolution, to make peace a reality for all people.* Signing the Convention is a way to concretely anchor the Agenda 2063 at national and local levels.

5 Reasons to Sign the Convention

By signing the Convention States will benefit from the following:

-Promoting Peace, Security and Stability: Promotions and reinforcements of peace, security and stability while insuring social and economic development, as well as supporting the effective application of community laws and regulations.

- *Contribute to the Development of Marginalized Zones:* Border regions tend to be less economically developed compared to interior regions. The Convention allows for an economic growth at the border through agreements, employment and development.

-Contribute to the Economic Developments of Regions in Terms of Trade and Cross-border Cooperation: Economic development in terms of trade and cross-border cooperation is a driver for the development of border zones and creating an environment conducive to the development of infrastructure, trade, transportation and other sectors. The adoption of economic cooperation agreements and the creation of trade perspectives contribute to improved regional policies and spatial development.

- *Finding Agreements on Sharing Resources:* Many natural resources straddle borders. This could be a cause of conflict in countries, which have not yet fully delimited and demarcated their borders. The Convention provides an inclusive approach towards shared natural resource management that will help local communities and will increase growth of the country.

- *Develop and Maintain Good Neighbourly Relations:* Reinforcement and development of good neighbourly relations among border communities and authorities from two or more Member States, as well as ratified agreements and arrangements necessary for this purpose.

We are a continent of opportunity, hospitality and good neighbourly relations. Neighbourly relations contribute to the safety of those living at the borders. The Convention promotes positive relations between neighbouring States.

The African Union Border Programme (AUBP)

When it comes to peace and security, borders are a priority. The African Union Border Programme aims for structural prevention of conflicts. The objectives of the AUBP are to promote peace and stability through tits four pillars: *demarcation of borders, cross-border cooperation, capacity building and the mobilization of resources and partnerships.*

The AUBP facilitates cross-border cooperation, in order to jointly address challenges related to common borders. There is a constant need to solve violent crises but the goal is to anticipate these conflicts as well as to prevent them. While boundaries could be a means to divide, the goal is to unite and to support one another. Cross-border cooperation is an instrument to promote development of shared border zones, with the aim to promote peace and stability.