



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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African Union

Published On: 13-09-2023

Why is in news? The G20 summit attracted attention as it started with a clear consensus to invite the African Union (AU) as its member. The action-oriented ambience saw President Azali Assoumani of Comoros, the chairperson of the AU, take his seat among the G20 members. This was a unique reordering of the global high table.

About AU:

The African Union (AU) is a continental body consisting of the 55 member states that make up the countries of the African Continent.

It was officially launched in 2002 as a **successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU, 1963-1999)**.

Primary Objective: To promote **unity, cooperation, and development among African nations** while advancing the continent's interests on the global stage.

It aims to **strengthen political, economic, and social integration** among African countries, with a vision of achieving an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa.

Headquarters: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Structure:

Assembly: It is the highest decision-making body, consisting of the heads of state and government of member countries.

Executive Council: Made up of foreign affairs ministers, handles policy matters and makes recommendations to the Assembly.

AU Commission: Headquartered in Addis Ababa, is the administrative arm responsible for implementing the decisions of the Assembly and the Executive Council.

The Peace and Security Council: Responsible for maintaining peace and security on the continent.

The AU structure promotes the participation of African citizens and civil society through the Pan-African Parliament and the Economic, Social & Cultural Council (ECOSOCC).

Some achievements of AU:

Many of the **AU's peacekeeping missions** have helped governments **tackle terrorism** across Africa, from the Sahel to northern Mozambique.

Over the years, the **organisation's interventions have prevented violence** in countries like Burundi, the Central African Republic, Comoros, Darfur, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Mali.

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AU's **diplomatic efforts** have also resulted in **resolving conflicts in Africa**.

Last year, it brokered a peace deal between the Ethiopian Government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in South Africa, almost two years after the two entities began fighting.

The **establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**, which came into force in 2021, is yet another achievement of the organisation.

With 54 member countries as signatories, AfCFTA is the **world's largest new free trade area** since the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1994.

It seeks to increase intra-African trade through deeper levels of trade liberalisation and enhanced regulatory harmonisation and coordination.

The AfCFTA will increase Africa's income by \$450 billion by 2035 and increase intra-African exports by more than 81%, according to the World Bank estimates.

Of the AU's 55 members, 54 are in the United Nations. Only one African country, South Africa, has been an original member of the G20.

Present Status of Ties between India and Africa:

The **India-Africa Forum Summit** serves as the framework for India-Africa relations under South-South Cooperation.

India announced the opening of embassies in 18 African countries, **strengthening diplomatic ties**.

Bilateral trade between India and Africa has grown significantly, with **India becoming Africa's third-largest trade partner**.

Indian investments in Africa have increased, with the country being the **seventh-largest investor in the region**.

India's **concessional Line of Credits support development projects** in Africa, with 182 projects sanctioned, amounting to US\$10.5 billion.

Collaboration includes areas such as solar energy, climate change, information technology, maritime security, counter-terrorism, and military training.

India's ITEC program offers scholarships to African students, and the Indian diaspora contributes to cultural exchange.

Significance of Africa:

Proximity to India: Africa's Horn region is critical for India's security due to emerging threats like radicalism, piracy, and organized crime.

Diversifying energy sources: Africa can help India diversify its energy sources, aligning with the Integrated Energy Policy.

Rich resources: Africa possesses valuable minerals, metals, and abundant agricultural land, addressing India's need for food security and resources.

Market and investment opportunities: Africa provides a space for Indian investments and trade expansion, fostering economic cooperation.

Support for UNSC seat: Africa's support is crucial for India's aspiration to gain a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

Projection of soft and hard power: India showcases its soft and hard power in Africa, contributing to its global influence.

Peacekeeping and capacity building: India actively participates in UN peacekeeping operations and supports capacity building in African countries, strengthening bilateral ties.