

African Leaders Call for Continent's Greater Market Integration

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- Five African leaders called for greater cooperation between nations on the continent and progress towards a common market
- Agreements are already in place for coordinated development by various countries of major infrastructural projects in Africa
- The theme of the 42nd World Economic Forum [Annual Meeting](#) is The Great Transformation: Shaping New Models. For more information, visit <http://wef.ch/Davos>

Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, 26 January 2012 – African leaders called for greater market integration on the continent, the freeing-up of border controls and more coordination in developing infrastructure, with Alpha Condé, President of Guinea, advocating the establishment of several pan-African ministries to drive this process.

“ At the next African Union meeting, we must consider establishing three or four ministers for all of Africa, ” said Condé. “ These new posts should at least cover energy, infrastructure and trade in Africa. ”

Jacob G. Zuma, President of South Africa, said much work has already been done on increasing cooperation among African states, such as the agreement among leaders last year on the need for a free trade zone. He said in-principle decisions have been taken at the African Union on coordinating infrastructure projects.

Zuma warned that developing common infrastructure would be useless unless restrictions on the movement of people and goods across borders are eased, as bottlenecks at border posts are a major problem on the continent. The South African president added that leaders also need to develop a common understanding on natural resources. Discussions are needed on the local beneficiation of resources and how resource exploitation can best benefit Africa.

“ For centuries we have not determined for ourselves how we deal with our resources. We need that discussion now, ” said Zuma.

Jakaya M. Kikwete, President of Tanzania, said a common market in Africa could be achieved through the integration and merging of current regional trade groupings. This process would be furthered by building a trans-African highway. “ Cecil Rhodes wanted to build a Cape-to-Cairo road for colonial purposes, but now we can do it for our own purposes, ” he said.

Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, backed Condé ’ s call for ministries at the Africa level.

He said the coordination of multi-country infrastructure projects is currently being handled by the African Union agency, NEPAD. “ Capacity building is already happening across Africa, with many partners involved, including India and China, ” Zenawi added.

“ We cannot wish a common African government into existence, ” continued Zenawi. “ It is a slow process of integration. ” He pointed to the example of Europe, which integrated over the course of about 50 years, yet is still encountering problems.

Raila Amolo Odinga, Prime Minister of Kenya, said great progress has been made in developing democratic

governance throughout Africa. It is now critical that ordinary African people receive the “ democracy dividend ” through greater empowerment in their lives.

The theme of this year ’ s Annual Meeting is The Great Transformation: Shaping New Models.

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