



UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA  
SOUTHERN AFRICA OFFICE



**Regional Conference on:**

***Building Democratic Developmental States for Economic Transformation in Southern Africa***

20<sup>th</sup> -23<sup>rd</sup> July 2015

**Call for Abstracts/Papers**

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Southern Africa Office in collaboration with the UNDP South Africa, Southern Africa Trust and the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) are organising a regional conference on: ***Building Democratic Developmental States for Economic Transformation in Southern Africa*** from 20<sup>th</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2015. The conference will bring together high level policy makers, scholars, development practitioners and civil society actors in promoting informed intellectual and policy debate on options and strategies of building democratic developmental states in Southern Africa.

Over decades Africa has gone through bouts of rapid economic growth, stagnation and contraction resulting in development that has been halting and patchy. In the event, other more consistent regions have overtaken and passed it. In the 1960s and 1970s the average per capita income in sub-Saharan Africa was almost twice that of East Asia and Pacific countries, but reduced to less than 70 percent of the same group of countries in the 1990s. While both Asia and Africa were recipients of vast development aid flows, the latter had the added advantage of unparalleled amount of natural resources that should have enabled Africa to be amongst the world's most developed regions by now. Instead, the continent's development has lagged all other regions: Africa is the only region unlikely to meet the MDG on halving poverty by 2015; the continent lacks the basic infrastructure; and it still relies on fortuitous events such as periodic high commodity prices, occasional good rains for its food and export needs, and whimsical aid and financial flows to meet financing gap.

What differentiates Africa and other Asia and South American nations is that the progress of the latter two has been initiated, nurtured and reinforced by developmental States whose stewardship of the development processes was anchored on a clear transformative agenda centered on economic restructuring that supported manufacturing and industrialization to absorb labor thereby ensures broad-based development.

A developmental State is defined as “a state that puts economic development as the top priority of government policy, and is able to design effective instruments to promote such a goal. The

*instruments should include forging of new formal institutions, the weaving of formal and informal networks of collaboration among citizens and officials and the utilization of new opportunities for trade and profitable production.”*<sup>1</sup> Developmental State does not mean a state dominated economy; rather an economy shepherded and actively supported by the state. In this case, Asian governments, such as Japan, had to intervene to stimulate and promote economic development. This interventionist posture enabled them to establish clear economic and social objectives and influence the direction and pace of economic development. Admittedly, the immediate post-independence Africa in a sense had a predilection towards building some form of development States.<sup>2</sup> Their objectives and interventionist agendas were however derailed by the adoption and implementation of international financial institution’s (primarily the World Bank and International Monetary Fund) structural adjustment policies in the 1980s and 1990s. The rolling back of the State’s influence on the economy at a time when the countries’ private sector was tiny, human resource development at infancy, and State’s grasp of national resources was soft, left several African countries very vulnerable to economic decline and crisis. The consequence was a prolonged period of economic crisis and stagnation, which some refer to as Africa’s wasted decades” (1970- early 1990s).

In contemporary times, some African Countries like South Africa and Ethiopia have made allusions to building democratic developmental states in their public statements, policy pronouncements and documents and policy options. However, there is little or thorough groundings on what this concept entails especially in the African experience and how African countries can begin to construct it. Little or no public debate or policy conversation has taken place on this subject matter. Yet, developmental States can neither be imported nor have wholesale formulae that can be adapted from elsewhere. For instance, relevant questions include, are there institutional and cultural peculiarities that African countries can tap into in building democratic developmental states? How can leadership be re-engineered in Africa in support of a developmentalist agenda and vision? How possible is it to build a developmentalist public service that has not only the expertise but commitment to a developmentalist project? What could be the influence of external forces either in promoting or undermining a developmentalist vision? These are some of the questions this conference will seek to address within the context of Southern Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> Bagchi, (2000:398) cited in ECA, 2011, Economic Report on Africa: Governing development in Africa – the role of the state in economic transformation, Addis Ababa (chapter 5)

<sup>2</sup> Examples include: Ghana’s Pan-Africanism centered on political and economic liberation through regional integration to promote economic development; Tanzania’s *UJamaa* seeking collectivization in agriculture to promote rural transformation

## **Sub-Themes:**

1. Concept, Theory, and Comparative Experiences in Democratic Developmental State construction
2. Governance and developmentalist leadership
3. State Capacity including the public service and bureaucracy for development
4. Actors, Institutions and Agencies for Economic and Social Transformation
5. National Planning: Content, Coordination, Implementation, and Monitoring in a Developmental Context
6. Macro-economic policy and strategies towards industrialization and Inclusive Growth
7. Research, Science and Technology for Development
8. Social Policy for accelerated development and Empowerment of Economically marginalized groups
9. Regional and international institutions, frameworks and Agreements in Southern Africa's development quest

## **Submission of Abstracts**

Abstracts for the regional conference, not more than two pages maximum, should be submitted not later than 24<sup>th</sup> March 2015 to the email addresses below. Successful authors of abstracts will be notified by the first week in April 2015.

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