

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

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This Report is an account of the work of APRI – Africa Policy Research Institute - in 2021. APRI is an independent and nonpartisan African think tank based in Berlin, Germany. It researches key policy issues affecting African countries and the African continent. APRI aims to provide insights to the German and European Union policy making process on Africa.

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IN THIS ISSUE...

Note from the Executive Director	4
APRI Advisory Board	5
Our Programme Areas	
• Championing inclusive socio-economic development	6
• Mapping Africa's Digital Agenda	7
• Africa's place in the climate crisis	8
• SPECIAL: Assessing Africa-EU relations	9
APRI in the Media	10
Our Partners	11

NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It is a pleasure to present our inaugural Annual Report for 2021. By the end of 2021, it was seven months since APRI launched, with the goal of conducting policy-actionable research on Africa from a unique perspective. As the only Africa-focused think tank in Berlin, Germany, we wanted to invigorate stagnant policy debates by bringing a diversity of voices to policy discussions. Our vision was – and still is – to become the ecosystem of choice for evidence-based policy research and engagement on Africa



Under our thematic priorities in the Economy & Society Program, Africa's Climate Agenda Program, and Africa's Digital Agenda Program, we have in these months contributed to African-oriented policy knowledge through publications such as policy briefs, commentaries, short analytical articles, and briefing notes.

The work of APRI is contributing to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, we are committed to SDG 1 of no poverty to support policies that advance the socio-economic position of Africa, SDG 9 to promote digital industry, innovation and infrastructure, and SDG 13 of climate action.

I am indebted for the generous support from academia, media, our policy fellows, and funding partners who believed in our vision and continue to rally around us. As we move into 2022, I am excited for what the year will bring. We plan to roll out our 5-year strategic plan geared towards extending our reach and impact in Africa, Europe, and the world.

Olumide Abimbola
Executive Director - APRI



Advisory Board

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Championing inclusive socio-economic development

APRI's approach in the Economy & Society Program is to first seek to gain insights into socio-economic processes on the continent as well as how African policymakers make the choices they make in the face of constraints – before proposing solutions. These constraints are sometimes local, but sometimes they come about through the actions of foreign actors.

Our [10 policy briefs and short analyses](#) in this program area during this reporting period spanned the continent. They sought to understand how the economic, political, and socio-cultural dimensions of globalization impact the continent in the short and long term in the context of the Africa Union's Agenda 2063 – which outlines potential transformational outcomes for the continent.

We began with a contribution by MEP Dr Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana, which makes a strong case for how the [EU Strategy for the Sahel must not overlook the priorities of the countries and region](#). Still in the region, we looked at the internal priorities for Chad, and the need to prioritize [interventions that reduce rural-urban inequalities](#) in a uniquely fragile situation of extreme poverty, and the COVID-19 pandemic – compounded by the death of President Idriss Deby in March.

Noting how a skewed focus on competition with China [distracts from EU-Africa investment opportunities](#), we argue that there is need for a full appreciation of the activities of other foreign actors, including entities from the European

Union. We also propose ways that the EU can make its investments on the African continent work better – both for the investors and for African countries.

Still on China-Africa relations, we looked at how African governments could use the rivalry between the United States and China to their advantage, in ways that best align with their national development priorities and essentially [avoid the zero-sum trap](#).

In exploring Africa's relationships with the rest of the world, we looked at how addressing regulatory challenges and reducing illicit financial flows can contribute to [lowering the continent's trade finance gap](#). Our [commentary on South Africa](#) outlined how Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies have the potential to revolutionize e-commerce and enhance its status as an investment-friendly country.

Overall, these publications sought to bring clarity on how Africa's economic growth and sustainability is intricately intertwined with political, cultural, organizational, and technological nuances that must also be addressed in a wholistic approach.



"...Africa's agency matters because it is a reality that has tangible effects for the continent and its chosen path(s) to development and political engagement..." **Stacey Links, APRI Non-res Fellow**

Mapping Africa's Digital Agenda

The digital economy is projected to contribute USD 180 billion to the economy of Africa by 2025. The growth, scope, speed, and complexity of the Fourth Industrial Revolution – the digital revolution - has disrupted and is defining how governments must operate their affairs. Countries, including in Africa, have put in place digital policies, strategies, and regulations to harness the digital economy for social and economic growth and innovation. Most of these complement the African Union Commission's Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa launched in 2020 geared towards transforming countries, generating inclusive growth, and creating jobs for social and economic growth.

In 2021, APRI led discussions around the impact of this digital economy to Africa. Our flagship policy brief 'What is Africa's Digital Agenda' in many ways anchored the majority of our work under this Program. In it we identify trends in the continent's digital agendas and make recommendations for the ideal digital landscape. In collaboration with the University of Johannesburg, we subsequently hosted a webinar to map the gains and the gaps in implementing digital agendas and strategies by African countries.

Our short analysis outlines the importance of Africa's voice in the debate on how to tax multinational corporations, most of whom operate digital platforms.

We explored how better representation and equal footing within the ongoing negotiation of digitalized economy taxation would enhance benefits for Africa, taking the G7 proposal as a point of departure.

Finally, we hosted a webinar 'AI in Africa: Key Concerns & Considerations' to deliberate on Africa's structural & infrastructural pre-conditions of artificial intelligence (AI) to design AI policy strategies and regulatory responses that address the continental context

Overall, our work in this thematic area aimed to generate evidence-based research that strategically positions African governments to accelerate their digital transformation, and to provide recommendations for how partners can effectively support it.



"...Africa would be better positioned as a hub of innovation with investment from the EU, enabling it to bolster its own digital single market for goods and services..." **Neema Iyer, Founder, Pollicy**

Africa's place in the climate crisis

Africa has contributed the least to greenhouse gas emissions that account for the climate emergency, and yet faces the harshest of its consequences through threats in human health and safety, food and water security and socio-economic development. APRI's climate program seeks to generate knowledge to inform African countries efforts to balance climate action with goals of economic growth and job creation for the youngest populations in the world.

The foundation of any meaningful response to the climate emergency is accurate and timely data and information. Our program aims to contribute to Africa's climate response through research and policy analysis that represents the diversity of needs and interests of decision-makers in Africa. Our approach is premised on getting the policy right so actions can be effective.

We partnered with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace to publish a policy brief on '[What the European Green Deal means for Africa](#)'. The brief recommends, among others, aligning areas of the EGD that directly affect Africa with the continent's own stated development priorities. This is along the lines of [our analysis](#) on why Nationally Determined Contributions should align with long-term national development plans.

APRI was very glad to have participated in a podcast hosted by the Centre for Global Development where we explored [what the climate crisis means for Africa](#) and in a [Brookings Africa Growth Initiative](#) co-hosted with the United

Nations University Institute for Natural Resources in Africa (UNU-INRA), that explored opportunities for green trade with Europe in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the new European Green Deal.

In the build up to the 26th Conference of Parties (COP26), we partnered with the African Climate Foundation to produce the series 'From Rio to COP26' to build [discourse on climate action priorities for Africa](#). We explored how Africa needs to approach COP26 [insisting on its right to become a producer of green technologies](#) and products and not continue to be relegated to the role of being a mere consumer of products produced elsewhere.

We also outlined the potential of using [local knowledge and community-based interventions](#) to tackle the climate crisis, and analyzed the practicalities of [using clean energy to drive industrialization](#) in Africa.

In 2021, our work on Africa's climate agenda came against the backdrop of Glasgow's COP 26 which goes down as one of the world's most important meetings on the climate agenda, with priorities of loss and damage, climate finance, and climate adaptation taking centre stage at the event in October.



"...In sub-Saharan Africa, the energy transition should not just be about decarbonization...it must be linked to addressing the energy access gap..."
Dr Theophilus Acheampong, Economist & Political Risk Analyst

SPECIAL: ASSESSING AFRICA-EU RELATIONS

The relationship between Africa and Europe is a particularly important one – and one that has undertaken a series of changes over the past centuries. In 2021, we held this relationship up to scrutiny by inviting five African thought leaders to help think through a policy fit for purpose between Africa and Europe. Topics covered include climate change, trade, digital policy, digital taxation, and migration.

On climate change, we challenged the dichotomy between adaptation (for the global south) and mitigation (for the global north). If there is anything the crisis offers, we argued, it is the chance to think of solutions that move away from an extractive model of exchange between the two continents towards one that treats addressing the climate crisis as part of a larger move towards a structural transformation of Africa's economies, and, one might add, the lifestyles and consumption patterns in Europe.

On migration, we explored four key areas that could serve as cornerstones for how both continents can address migration. These are legal pathways, centering economic development, cooperation on international protection (of refugees) and better collaboration on returns, readmission and reintegration. On reintegration in particular, this is an area in which the EU has not exactly adhered to principles of basic dignity and safety.

We showed that, when it comes to technology, promoting regulations appears to be the main way the EU interacts with Africa on this. We caution against this, however, as regulations that are suited to Europe are not necessarily suited to Africa – just as the light-touch regulatory practices of the US are not necessarily ideal for African countries. In addition, we explored what a potential cooperation between Europe and Africa around digital taxation could look like.

Finally, in the collection, we turned a critical lens at the fundamentals of the relationship between both continents – trade. We argued that the EU should abandon the paternalistic way it behaves towards Africa and instead position itself as a true commercial partner.

“Giving a place to African thinking on Africa-Europe relations is essential to the maturity of the partnership.”

APRI in the media

As a follow up to a joint policy brief '[What does the European Green Deal mean for Africa](#)' published with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, APRI's Olumide Abimbola and Carnegie's Zainab Usman spoke with the Africa Report. You can listen to the discussion on [this podcast](#).

They explain the opportunities presented by the EGD and how African countries must clearly articulate and assert their own climate transition agendas.



APRI also shared thoughts on the EGD with the BBC, speaking specifically about the potentials of the Green Deal affecting Africa's trade with Europe.



APRI spoke to DW about [Compact with Africa Conference](#) in August where the Executive Director reflected on the extent to which Germany's investment impacted the continent under Chancellor Merkel. He is also quoted by the DW on a report about the new German government.



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