

ARAB MAGHREB UNION

Founded in 1989 to promote political co-ordination, co-operation and 'complementarity' across various fields, with integration wherever and whenever possible.

Members. Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia.

By late 1996, joint policies and projects under way or under consideration included: the establishment of the Maghreb Investment and Foreign Trade Bank to fund joint agricultural and industrial projects; free movement of citizens within the region; joint transport undertakings, including railway improvements and a Maghreb highway; creation of a customs union; and establishment of a common market.

A Declaration committing members to the establishment of a free trade zone was adopted at the AMU's last summit in Tunis. In Nov. 1992, members adopted a charter on protection of the environment.

Headquarters: 27 rue Okba, Agdal, Rabat, Morocco.

Secretary-General: Mohamed Amamou (Tunisia).

ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY (OAU)

History. On 25 May 1963, the heads of state or government of 32 African countries, at a conference in Addis Ababa, signed a charter establishing an Organization of African Unity. Membership comprises 53 of the 54 African countries. The only state that is not a member is Morocco, which withdrew in 1985 following admittance of the disputed state of Western Sahara as a member in 1982. In Nov. 1995, the following countries were suspended from voice and vote for failure to pay their dues: Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Niger, São Tomé e Príncipe, Seychelles and Sierra Leone.

Aims. OAU's chief objectives are the furtherance of African unity and solidarity; the co-ordination of political, economic, cultural, health, scientific and defence policies; the elimination of colonialism in Africa; and the defence of sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence.

Activities. In June 1991, the heads of state of member countries signed a treaty to create an Africa-wide economic community by 2000, and in 1993, a mechanism was adopted for conflict prevention, management and resolution by the OAU.

Organization. The Assembly of the Heads of State and Government is the principal policy-making organ, and meets annually. The Council of Ministers meets twice a year, with each session electing its own chairperson. There is also a permanent secretariat headed by the Secretary-General elected for a 4-year term by the Assembly.

The Commission of Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration is a 21-member body (no state may have more than 1 member) elected by the Assembly for a 5-year term, to hear and settle disputes between member states by peaceful means. There are also specialized commissions for economic, social, transport and communication, education, science, culture and health, defence, human rights and labour affairs. The biennial budget for 1996-98 was US\$61.45m.

Official languages. Arabic, French, Portuguese and English.

Headquarters: POB 3243, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Secretary-General: Dr Salim Ahmed Salim (Tanzania).