

FOREIGN DESK

The next 50 years

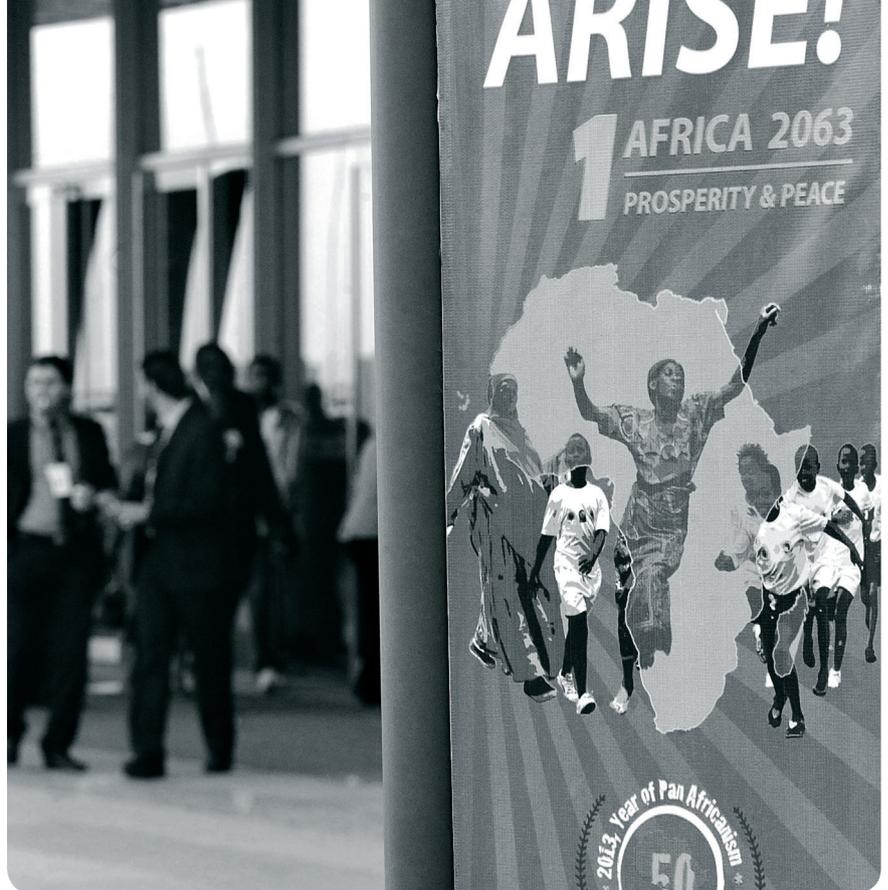
Africa has come a long way in the past few decades, but there is still work to be done.

By BHEKINKOSI MOYO



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2013 marks the 50th anniversary of the AU (which started out as the OAU). Without a doubt, much has been achieved in the past half century, but now its time to look at the 50 years ahead of us.

The Agenda 2063 sets out to do this. It is a framework of development that the AU Commission – with the support of the African Development Bank and the Economic Commission for Africa – is initiating through a series of consultations with African citizens on the kind of continent they would want to see in 2063.

The guiding principles are that by 2063, Africa should be secure, prospering and at peace with itself, taking its rightful place globally. The principles aim to be an innovative framework that builds on the experiences of the last 50 years, but also begins to be more creative around developmental and transformative issues in future, looking at various areas such as technology, industrialisation, economic transformation, resource mobilisation and governance among many others.

There are already similar initiatives and frameworks that exist, for instance the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos, the Abuja Treaty and the AU Audit. These are some initiatives that diagnosed the problems facing Africa and put forward a plan for the future. But they have not been implemented, not

because they aren't good but because there hasn't been enough political will among our leaders.

There are fears therefore that the Agenda 2063 once developed and adopted by heads of state and government will likely suffer the same fate and just gather dust. Unless civil society and other forces demand its implementation, the current consultations might go to waste.

The other related matter is that 50 years is a very long time to plan for and realistically measure performance and progress. It might be more useful to have a 50-year master plan but break it into phases of 10-year review intervals. This way the plan is revisited every time there are contextual developments and major trends impacting on the continent's trajectory.

Developing the plan through consultations first, driven by technocrats at the AU Commission, is also a concern. Because the political masters don't own it, they might not implement it. A balance needs to be struck between consultations by the technocrats, and consultations and ownership by the leaders themselves to avoid having an unaccepted plan.

The consultations are ongoing. It is expected that early this year a draft report will be submitted to the heads of state and government at the AU Summit, and hopefully a framework will be adopted at the event in July. **AD**