The modern evolution of Africa’s economic governance can be traced to the 1980 Lagos Plan of Action for the Development of Africa and the 1991 Abuja Treaty that established the African Economic Community (AEC). The treaty envisaged Regional Economic Communities (RECs) as the building blocks for the AEC. It called on member states to strengthen existing RECs and provided timeframes for creating new ones where they did not exist. Eight RECs have been designated by the African Union as the base for Africa’s economic integration.

**Arab Maghreb Union (AMU)**

The first Conference of Maghreb Economic Ministers in Tunis in 1964 established the Conseil Permanent Consultatif du Maghreb between Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia. Its aim was to coordinate and harmonize the development plans of the four countries, foster intraregional trade, and coordinate relations with the European Union. However, the plans never came to fruition. The first Maghreb Summit, held in Algeria in 1988, decided to set up the Maghreb High Commission. In 1989 in Marrakech the Treaty establishing the AMU was signed. The main objectives of AMU are to ensure regional stability and enhance policy coordination and to promote the free movement of goods and services.
The five member countries have a total population of 85 million people and a GDP of US$500 billion. The headquarters of AMU are in Rabat-Agdal, Morocco. Unlike the other RECs, AMU has no relations with the African Economic Community (AEC) and has not yet signed the Protocol on Relations with the AEC. Morocco is not a member of the AU. The AMU, however, been designated by the African Union as a pillar of the AEC.

**Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)**

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa was founded in 1993 as a successor to the Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern Africa (PTA), which was established in 1981. Its vision is to “be a fully integrated, internationally competitive regional economic community with high standards of living for all its people ready to merge into an African Economic Community.” Its mission is to “achieve sustainable economic and social progress . . . through increased co-operation and integration in all fields of development particularly in trade, customs and monetary affairs, transport, communication and information, technology, industry and energy, gender, agriculture, environment and natural resources.” COMESA formally succeeded the PTA in 1994. The establishment of COMESA fulfilled the requirements of the PTA to become a common market. COMESA has 19 member states with a population of 410 million with a total GDP of over US$360 million. It has an annual import bill of about US$152 billion and an export bill of over US$157 billion. COMESA forms a major market place for both internal and external trading. Its headquarters are in Lusaka, Zambia.

**Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD)**

The Community of Sahel-Saharan States was established in 1998 following the conference of leaders and heads of states
held in Tripoli by Libya, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Chad, and Sudan. Twenty-two more countries have joined the community since then. Its goal is to strengthen peace, security, and stability and achieve global economic and social development. CEN-SAD has signed partnership agreements with numerous regional and international organizations to collaborate on political, cultural, economic, and social issues. Two of its main areas of work are security and environmental management, which include its flagship project to create the Great Green Wall of trees across the Sahel. CEN-SAD member states have launched periodic international sporting and cultural festivals. The first CEN-SAD Games were held in Niamey, Niger, in 2009. Thirteen nations competed in Under-20 sports (athletics, basketball, judo, football, handball, table tennis, and traditional wrestling) and six fields of cultural competition (song, traditional creation and inspiration dancing, painting, sculpture, and photography). The second CEN-SAD Games are scheduled to take place in 2011 in N’Djamena, Chad.

**East African Community (EAC)**

The East African Community was created in 1967. It collapsed in 1977 due to political differences and was revived in 1996 when the Secretariat of the Permanent Tripartite Commission for East African Cooperation was set up at the EAC headquarters in Arusha, Tanzania. In 1997 the East African heads of state started the process of upgrading the agreement that set up the commission into a treaty. In 1999 they signed the treaty reestablishing the East African Community (EAC). The objectives of EAC are to develop policies and programs aimed at widening and deepening cooperation on political, economic, social, and cultural fields, research and technology, defense, security, and legal and judicial affairs. Its members are now Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi with a population of 130 million and a GDP of over US$80 billion. The EAC has an operating customs union and launched its common market in July
2010. Its roadmap includes a common currency and the creation of a single state. In addition to its secretariat, the EAC has a judiciary and a legislature made of representatives from member states.

**Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)**

At a summit meeting in December 1981, the leaders of the Central African Customs and Economic Union agreed in principle to form a wider economic community of Central African states. ECCAS was established on October 18, 1983, by the union members and the members of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes States (Burundi, Rwanda, and the then Zaire) as well as São Tomé and Principe. Angola remained an observer until 1999, when it became a full member. ECCAS aims “to promote and strengthen harmonious cooperation and balanced and self-sustained development in all fields of economic and social activity, particularly in the fields of industry, transport and communications, energy agriculture, natural resources, trade, customs, monetary and financial matters, human resources, tourism, education, further training, culture, science and technology and the movement of persons.” ECCAS began functioning in 1985 but has been inactive since 1992 because of financial difficulties (nonpayment of membership fees) and the conflict in the Great Lakes area. Its 11 member states have a total population of 125 million and a GDP of US$180 billion. Its headquarters are in Libreville, Gabon.

**Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)**

The idea for a West African community goes back to President William Tubman of Liberia, who made the call in 1964. An agreement was signed between Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone in February 1965, but this came to nothing. In April 1972 Nigerian and Togolese leaders relaunched the idea,
drew up proposals, and toured 12 countries, soliciting their plan from July to August 1973. A 1973 meeting in Lomé studied a draft treaty. A treaty setting up the Economic Community of West African States was signed in 1975 by 15 countries. Its mission is to promote economic integration in all fields of economic activity, particularly industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial questions, and social and cultural matters. ECOWAS members signed a nonaggression protocol in 1990, building on two earlier agreements of 1978 and 1981. They also signed a Protocol on Mutual Defense Assistance in 1981 that provided for the creation of an Allied Armed Force of the Community. ECOWAS has 15 members, a population of about 270 million and an estimated GDP of US$380 billion. Its head offices are in Abuja, Nigeria.

**Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD)**

The Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) was formed in 1986 with a very narrow mandate to deal with drought and desertification. IGADD later became the accepted vehicle for regional security and political dialogue among its members. In the mid-1990s IGADD decided to transform the organization into a fully-fledged regional political, economic, development, trade, and security entity. In 1996 the Agreement Establishing the Intergovernmental Authority on Development was adopted. Its transition to economic issues is reflected in its first objective, to promote “joint development strategies and gradually harmonize macroeconomic policies and programs in the social, technological and scientific fields.” More specifically, IGAD seeks to “harmonize policies with regard to trade, customs, transport, communications, agriculture, and natural resources, and promote free movement of goods, services, and people and the establishment of residence.” In recent years IGAD has been working on environmental security, given the links between conflict and natural
resources among its members. It has also continued to work on drought and desertification. IGAD has seven members with a total population of 190 million and a GDP of US$230 billion. It is headquartered in Djibouti City, Djibouti.

**Southern African Development Community (SADC)**

The Southern African Development Community started as Frontline States whose objective was political liberation of Southern Africa. SADC was preceded by the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), which was formed in Lusaka, Zambia, in 1980. The concept of a regional economic cooperation in Southern Africa was first discussed at a meeting of the Frontline States foreign ministers in 1979 in Gaborone, Botswana. The meeting led to an international conference in Arusha, Tanzania, which in turn led to the Lusaka Summit held in 1980. The SADC Treaty and Declaration signed in Windhoek, Namibia, transformed SADCC into SADC. The treaty set out to “promote sustainable and equitable economic growth and socio-economic development that will ensure poverty alleviation with the ultimate objective of its eradication, enhance the standard and quality of life of the people of Southern Africa and support the socially disadvantaged through regional integration.” One way set out to achieve this goal is to “promote the development, transfer and mastery of technology.” The organization’s 15 member states have a total population of 240 million and a GDP of US$750 billion. Its head offices are in Gaborone, Botswana.