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EDITORIAL

The Significance of the African Development Bank on the Occasion of its Recent Presidential Election

SIPHAMANDLA ZONDI , TINUADE OJO  & JOSEF KEUTCHEU 
Editors



On 29 May, marking the end of the Africa month, and at the conclusion of its meeting on “Making Africa’s Capital Work Better for Africa’s Development”, the African Development Bank elected Sidi Ould Tah of Mauritania as its president. Tah faces a mammoth task to deliver now an agenda that is old but remains elusive.

The AfDB, established in 1964, stands as one of the most significant institutions for Africa’s economic and political advancement. As it celebrates its 61st anniversary in 2025, the Bank remains not only a crucial financial mechanism for development but also a powerful symbol of pan-African unity, ambition, and self-reliance. The election of a new president in this milestone year adds heightened significance to the event, signaling both continuity and potential transformation in the Bank’s strategic vision. At a time when Africa faces a range of critical challenges—from climate change and debt vulnerability to youth unemployment and digital transformation—the leadership of the AfDB is central to shaping the continent’s response and future.

Economically, the AfDB is one of the leading sources of development finance in Africa, with a mandate to foster sustainable economic growth and reduce poverty. Its projects span energy, transport, agriculture, education, and health—often funding infrastructure and social investments that individual states cannot undertake alone. With assets valued at over \$200 billion and a strong credit rating, the Bank has become a trusted financial partner for African countries and an effective channel for multilateral aid (AfDB, 2024). The newly elected president will thus oversee the direction of this influential portfolio, determining which sectors and regions receive priority, and how the AfDB navigates evolving challenges such as debt sustainability and green financing.

Symbolically, the AfDB carries profound importance. As an institution founded by Africans for Africans, it affirms the continent’s commitment to crafting homegrown solutions and reducing dependency on institutions historically dominated by external powers. The AfDB provides an alternative development model—one that emphasizes regional ownership, tailored policy design, and inclusive growth (Taylor, 2019). The leadership transition in this 61st anniversary year is therefore not merely administrative but emblematic of Africa’s broader journey toward asserting greater agency in its development path. The identity, vision, and diplomatic posture of the new president will shape how Africa projects itself on the world stage.

Additionally, the AfDB is strategically positioned within a rapidly shifting global order. Africa’s population, projected to reach 2.5 billion by 2050, makes it a focal point for global investment, innovation, and labor. The AfDB plays a key role in coordinating regional development strategies and advocating for Africa’s interests in global financial and climate governance. As the world grapples with inequality, climate vulnerability, and digital divides, the Bank’s leadership will be critical in ensuring Africa is not just a subject of global agendas but a leader in defining them (Ade-sina, 2020). In this context, the new presidency becomes an opportunity to further elevate the Bank’s role as a continental voice and vision bearer.

Despite its many achievements, the AfDB has also faced a number of criticisms. Some observers argue that the Bank’s lending practices tend to favor large infrastructure projects at the expense of social services and grassroots development, thereby overlooking the immediate needs of vulnerable communities. Others point to bureaucratic inefficiencies and limited transparency in project implementation and evaluation. There have also been concerns about the Bank’s in-

ternal governance, particularly regarding accountability and the concentration of decision-making power among a few member states. Additionally, critics have noted that while the AfDB promotes pan-African ideals, it sometimes falls short in addressing the diverse political and economic realities across regions, resulting in uneven development impact (Bond, 2021; Cissé, 2022).

So, the AfDB's 61st anniversary in 2025 is a reminder of its long-standing mission to drive Africa's development through solidarity and strategic investment. The election of a new president in this commemorative year is both a symbolic and strategic moment—offering a chance to reinforce the Bank's legacy while adapting to new realities. The future of Africa's development hinges not only on the funds it secures but also on the principles it champions. The AfDB, under new leadership, has the opportunity to lead that transformation from within.

This edition with articles discussing a variety of concerns in Africa including infrastructural development, regional integration, expansion of education, external debt, peace and matters related to Africa's relations with others is dedicated to the pursuit of African integration. The AfDB was meant to play a critical role in this and under its new president.

I wish to thank all our authors in this edition, the reviewers who did a great job in guiding revisions to original submissions, and the editorial staff of the journal for shepherding yet another insightful edition.

Siphamandla Zondi
Editor-in-Chief

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