# Report of the Academic Forum's Activities in 2020

The Afronomicslaw Academic Forum had a very active 2020/2021. This post includes a summary of the key projects undertaken by the Academic Forum during this period. One of the flagship activities was participation in the United Nations Policy Hackathon Competition. This Hackathon was organised by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The model clause was selected for inclusion in an online toolkit for international trade negotiators. The student volunteers who worked on the Model Clause received certificates of participation from the United Nations and gained practical insights on how to draft trade clauses.

The proposed model clause responded to the challenges faced by countries in the multilateral trading system of the World Trade Organisation, (WTO), which have found it difficult to secure much needed Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) during the COVID-19 Pandemic due to restrictions in trade of PPEs invoked by Contracting Parties under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The Academic Forum proposed a model WTO GATT clause that will prevent the use of GATT provisions (Art. XI:2 (a); Art. XX (b); Art. XXI (b) (iii) and any other provision of GATT 1994 inconsistent with the proposed Clause) to justify exceptions to restrictions in trade of PPEs during a Pandemic or any future Global Public Health Emergency. The proposed model clause can be used in non-WTO treaties as well.

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## Key projects by the Academic Forum in 2020/21

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### Participation in the United Nations Policy Hackathon Competition

The Forum entered a team of volunteers into a policy hackathon competition organised by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The model clause was selected for inclusion in an online toolkit for international trade negotiators. The student volunteers who worked on the Model Clause received certificates of participation from the United Nations and gained practical insights on how to draft trade clauses. That model clause can be viewed here.

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### Formation of the East African Board

For the year 2020-2021, we have started with the East African region as a prototype of the Forum that will be responsibly replicated in other parts of the continent and the Global South. Representatives in the East African Board come from Burundi, Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.

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### Guest Lecture Series and Mentorship

One of our aims is to take our Regional Representatives through a four-month course on general and specific topics of their interest in or related to International Economic Law. We reach out to seasoned scholars and experts in the field to take us through this course. The guest lectures are followed up by mentorship of our student Representatives by established scholars from across the globe. During this period, the following scholars and/or policy experts provided guest lectures:

- Dr Ohio Omiunu - Associate Professor/Reader, De Montfort University, Leicester and Editor at Afronomicslaw.org: On 7 November 2020, the Director of the Forum, Ohio Omiunu, gave the first lecture, 'A Critical

Introduction to IEL'.

Feedback received '*...the session helped us critically understand how IEL is linked to Public International Law and international affairs. We also got to understand where Africa fits in this field and rationale behind the working of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade as well as that of the World Trade Organization*.'

- Professor Babatunde Fagbayibo - Department of Public, Constitutional and International Law, University of South Africa: On 28 November 2020, we had the great privilege to have Professor Fagbayibo, speak on *Financing Continental Integration In Africa: Practice, Problems and Prospect*.

Feedback received: '*The most interesting part of this experience was investigating the dilemma between the funding priorities of the African Union that the necessity of peace and conflict to prevail for there to progress in some of the economic policies of the Union. This session perhaps enhanced my knowledge of the Union's limitations, especially due to compliance and the bureaucracy involved in the scheme. These reflections are what I am most grateful to have learnt during my experience with the Forum thus far, and that has been incredibly instrumental*.'

- Rohini Sen - Assistant Professor, Assistant Dean (International Collaborations) and Assistant Director, Centre for Human Rights Studies at the Jindal Global Law School, O.P Jindal Global University: On 11 December 2020, Professor Rohini spoke on the place of Gender in International Law. It was a great session and helped us understand the intricate dynamics in the definition of gender and how to better embrace more feminist practices with a Third World approach to International Law. In this lecture, an important question was how International Law and states have to transcend focusing on civil and political rights and guarantee a robust security regime to any person, irrespective of their gender. A call was made to look at gender not as binary but as a spectrum.

Feedback received: '*My most profound learning experience in the Forum was the one by Professor Rohini Sen. I had read a piece on Feminist critiques to teaching international law that I found very interesting. Her training session was informative and challenging. She propounded an extensive analysis of the*

*need for the global south to create their form of identity that is distinct from Western norms and conceptualisations of feminism. This was addressing elitism which is usually the main critique of the feminist movement which can be remedied through internalisation and exploring third world experiences to feminism to form a unique identity that is distinct of African and Asian feminist experiences*.'

- Reagan Etale – International Trade Lawyer, Department for International Trade, United Kingdom: On 16 January 2021, Reagan Etale led an intellectually stimulating conversation on the divide between developed and developing countries in WTO negotiations. Through his guidance, we- the Regional Representatives- learnt how self-declaration works and the advantages of the developing country status in trade negotiations. We also delved into the misuse of self-declaration as a bargaining tool in such negotiations. A key takeaway from the session was the different criteria that can potentially be applied to create a uniform categorization of developed and developing countries.

View online: Report of the Academic Forum's Activities in 2020

Provided by Afronomicslaw