The AfIELN Biennial Conference - Diversity of Scholarship and Representation

By:

AfIELN

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As we count down to the 4th AfIELN Biennial Conference, the excitement is palpable. It is particularly exciting to see the diversity of scholarship and representation of International Economic Law scholars from within and outside the African continent. The panel selections are a reflection of this diversity. With 20 panels spread across two days, the 4th AfIELN Biennial Conference will offer exciting new scholarship and research on the continent's contributions to and involvement with International Economic Law. The quality and richness of the paper submissions are not surprising even though historically, Africa's voice has remained at the margins of International Economic Law.

However, looking beyond a successful conference, it is crucial to think about medium and the long term impact of the voices and unique perspectives that will emerge from Strathmore, Kenya. Thinking of impact is an important consideration given the current inauspicious international economic regime. As

such examining, Africa's participation in International Economic Law is even more critical because undoubtedly, the global International Economic Law scholarship will benefit from more critical views and new perspectives to International Economic Law from academic scholars based in the Global South.

More so, unlike previous AfIELN conferences, the upcoming conference coincides with significant economic and trade developments in Africa. With the landmark AfCFTA now activated, it is essential that the discussions from Strathmore, Kenya are disseminated as widely as possible. Policymakers, technocrats and Civil Society groups will benefit from the discussions and cutting edge research that will be presented at Strathmore, Kenya.

However, opportunities for disseminating International Economic Law voices from Africa remains an issue. Admittedly, there is a growing representation of scholarship representing African perspectives to International Economic Law, especially in 'African themed' journals. However, we must be careful not to segregate the voice of African international law scholars on the global stage. As Global North based journals continue to set the benchmark for quality and impact, we are challenged to focus on measures to improve the standards of International Economic Law publications emanating from Africa. International Economic Law scholars based on the African continent have limited access to networks of scholars and funds that are critical to the preparation of quality outputs demanded by high impact journals.

Hopefully, discussions that will take place at the 4th AfIELN Biennial Conference will bring to the fore these issues and set the agenda for addressing the gaps in the global International Economic Law scholarship. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the 4th AfIELN Biennial Conference will be a fantastic opportunity for networking. Early Career Researchers in the field will get an opportunity to meet and interact with senior scholars who have shaped the International Economic Law scholarship in the past two decades. These interactions more often than not form the nucleus for future fruitful working, mentoring and personal relationships.

As the AfIELN celebrates 11 years and its 4th conference, there is a good reason for optimism that the coming years will see the network play a critical

role in shaping the implementation of the AfCFTA. The AfIELN is well positioned to provide a support system for the AfCFTA and the broader African economic system. The AfIELN is in this enviable position for several reasons most notably because it has become an incubator for the growth and development of early career researchers working in the area of International Economic Law both within and outside the African continent through strategic partnerships with relevant organisations and the organisation of research and networking events.

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