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The publication of this year's *Africa Competitiveness Report* comes at a time of growing international attention on Africa as an investment destination and increasing talk of an African economic renaissance. This greater optimism is being spurred on by a decade of strong growth, with many countries relatively unscathed by the global economic crisis. However, growth remains unevenly spread across the region, and its relatively short time period has not yet led to a convergence in living standards with those observed in other rapidly growing developing regions. Indeed, Africa is at a crossroads, and decisions and actions today will have a strong bearing on whether it places itself on a path similar to that of other regions such as developing Asia, allowing it to transition from resource-driven to higher-value-added growth. Regional integration in this context can play a critical role going forward, offering a yet-untapped potential to get closer to this goal.

The aim of this *Report* is to provide a better understanding of the benefits of regional integration for higher-value-added growth and to discuss current constraints as well as the policy environment required to develop the necessary infrastructure for connecting Africa's markets in a sustainable way.

Much has been done in recent years to improve the business environment in Africa. Continued policy and institutional reforms are central to ensuring that African countries remain on a higher growth trajectory. This year's *Report* places a particular focus on connecting Africa's markets in a sustainable way by fostering trade facilitation, upgrading infrastructure in a way that strengthens backward and forward linkages from such projects, and piloting growth pole projects—multi-sector and multi-year investments with the aim of accelerating export industries and supporting infrastructure around particular natural resources or agglomeration economies.

This is the fourth *Report* on the region's business environment to leverage the knowledge and expertise within the African Development Bank, the World Bank, and the World Economic Forum. It presents a unified vision that maps out the policy challenges that must be met to boost Africa's competitiveness by connecting Africa's markets through increased regional integration.

Also included are detailed competitiveness profiles for 38 African countries, providing a comprehensive summary of their competitive strengths and weaknesses. *The Africa Competitiveness Report 2013* is an invaluable tool for policymakers, business strategists, and other key stakeholders, as well as essential reading for all those with an interest in the region.