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## LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

**J. I. Levitt, ed. *Africa: Selected Documents on Constitutive, Conflict and Security, Humanitarian, and Judicial Issues*.** Ardsley, N.Y.: Transnational Publishers, 2003. xvi + 451 pp. \$125.00. Cloth.

Recently, I was engaged in a discussion with an official of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs on developments in the African Union, in particular with regard to its institutional transformation. Since it had a policy interest in this process, the Ministry, the official told me, had cabled the Dutch embassy in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, to ask for its view on developments in the A.U. The embassy responded that not much was going on and that it was difficult to get one's hands on the organization's documents. The Ministry cabled back that the documentary sources should not pose a problem because they could easily be accessed through the A.U.'s Web site ([www.africa-union.org/](http://www.africa-union.org/))!

Although not everyone may be aware of it, the Internet has profoundly affected the study of international relations in Africa. If in the past on-the-spot-visits were no guarantee for the retrieval of even old documents from Africa's international institutions, now one just needs to surf the Web to get all official decisions voted only yesterday. This is particularly true for Africa's continental organization since its transformation into the African Union, which was accompanied by an upgrade of its—now excellent—Web site. The same can be said for the electronically provided sources of the Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS ([www.ecowas.int/](http://www.ecowas.int/)) and the Southern African Development Community, SADC ([www.sadc.int/](http://www.sadc.int/)), if not for all other institutions.

Consequently, the publication in book form of documents of African international organizations requires special justification. The reasons cited are the neglect of African issues by scholars of international law and the difficulty researchers have in obtaining the documents. The volume is meant as a research tool for decision makers, scholars, and other researchers, and hence covers a broad range of issues. The first part provides, appropriately, the constitutive treaties of the afore-mentioned organizations, as well as of the A.U.'s institutional precursor, the Organization of African Unity and, oddly, of the United Nations. Inclusion of the U.N. Charter hardly seems useful since this is readily available from many sources. The second part of the book provides documents about the conflict-related activities of both the (O).A.U. and the subregional institutions ECOWAS, IGAD, and SADC. In addition, the volume provides some key human rights treaties (part 3) and protocols of international judicial organs (part 4). Each document is preceded by a brief paragraph containing some basic treaty information.

While the volume will have its uses for researchers in the field of international relations, it is mainly useful for scholars of international law who do not intend to focus too strongly on one particular international organi-

zation. Africanists, in particular students of politics and international relations, will quickly exhaust its contents and find the number of documents provided for each organization too limited. For them, the thematic scope is too broad. A more selective approach could have yielded a volume focusing, for example, only on conflict mediation issues and providing the numerous documents in this field. Yet institutional transformations, especially in the field of conflict mediation, are rapid, which carries the risk that a book of this sort is outdated upon publication.

All in all, this volume is a useful guide for scholars of international law with little experience of Africa. For specialists in the field of African international relations, it is of marginal value. It provides some basic texts in a handsome format, however, which in the age of the Internet and its often unedited presentation of electronic sources is not entirely unwelcome.

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