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AFRICAN REGIONAL INTEGRATION AGREEMENTS: PEACE OR CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT

Over decades, Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs) have become defining features of the modern economy and a powerful force for globalisation. Trade and trade policy issues are particularly important in the analysis of the growth performance and prospects of African economies. This is because trade/Gross Domestic Product (GDP) ratio is higher in Africa than in most other regions. This paper considers the hypothesis for successful trade-focused regional integration agreements in Africa. The paper reviews the existing literature on regional integration, and attempts to sanitize the most relevant lessons about the successes and failures of the current initiatives in the region. It finds that there is little reason to expect significant economic gains from formal trade agreements at this time. Such agreements are unlikely to yield appreciable benefits unless they are preceded by decisions within member countries to follow more general open trade strategies. Indeed, it is possible that they could be detrimental to the economies involved, either because they might encourage import substitution, or simply because they absorb scarce administrative and financial resources. RTAs can also be divisive and exclusive, and their terms can bring regional tensions and power imbalances. When negotiated between countries of differing economic strength, trade agreements can exert powerful leverage on the political stability of an economically weaker partner. Poorly designed and implemented RTAs can lead to heightened tensions between countries and increase the risk of inter-state conflict. At the same time, the political and economic adjustment costs involved in pursuing regional trade integration can undermine local livelihoods and create winners and losers, spurring competition between groups and leading to intra-state conflict. This paper will examine and juxtapose ways in which the RTAs aim to create peace within the African continent and their potential to generate conflict among nations.

INTRODUCTION

At the conceptual level, words have meaning within the context in which they are used and are determined essentially by the sentiments, worldview and prejudice of the scholars. This portends that we cannot have any generally

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acceptable definition of any concept. In discussing this paper, it is however imperative to take off from the definitional angle by defining the key variable 'regional integration', in order to appreciate what the focus of this paper is, so that there is an agreed understanding of the same. There is no cornucopia of writing on this subject and thus, authors define it differently. For the purpose of this paper, we will look at two definitions. Kotecha² defines Regional Integration (RI) as the formation of economic blocks intended to bring added strength to nations in a geographic proximity. While the European Union (EU)³ gives a rather extensive definition:

Regional integration is the process of overcoming, by common accord, political, physical, economic and social barriers that divide countries from their neighbours, and of collaborating in the management of shared resources and common regional goods.

Free trade often has conflict connotations.⁴ These connotations stem from different takes on the subject. Different media, particularly newspapers, constantly refer to the positive and negative ramifications of trade; they also tend to polarise public opinion on the subject. In fact, free trade is part of an intricate web of complexities that can yield more than two sides of the proverbial coin. In other words, the outcome is never black or white. Hence studies, such as this one, which attempt to identify potential links between trade and conflict, as well as the incidence of conflict resolution in the context of increased interdependence, are important.

This paper addresses the growth of Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs), which have mushroomed since the 1990s, and considers their potential as a tool for reducing inter- and intra-state conflict. In exploring the links between trade, conflict and peace in different and varying contexts, this paper maps the existing trade agreement in the region, analyses the factors that hinder or promote integration and considers their economic and political impact on Africa with recommendations and conclusions.

2 Kotecha, P. 2009. Foreword. In Kotecha, P. *The Challenges of Regional Integration and its implications for Higher Education*. SARUA Leadership Dialogue Series, 1(2). Available at <http://www.sarua.org>, last visited on 9 August 2010.

3 EU (European Union). 2008. *Regional integration for development in ACP countries*. Available at http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/development/general_development_framework/dv0002_en.htm last visited on 10 August 2010.

4 Conflicts often stem from disagreements between two or more parties. These disagreements arise out of perceived threats to a party's interests. In the context of diplomatic relations, the tension brought forth by disagreements can give way to international armed conflict, involving two or more states. We refer to these tensions as externally driven confrontations.

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF AFRICAN REGIONAL INTEGRATION AGREEMENTS

Regional Integration Agreements have a long history. To exemplify, a customs union of the provinces of France was proposed in 1664 and Austria signed free trade agreements with five of its neighbours in the 18th and 19th Centuries.⁵ In the last century, the 1930s Great Depression engendered the concept of regional preferences (although this project begot less than a commendable fruit) and Regional Integration groupings gained momentum in the 1940s (e.g., Benelux customs union) and, finally, blossomed in the 1950s (e.g., European Coal and Steel Community [1951] and the European Economic Community [1957]).⁶ At about the same time, the first generation of African colonies got their independence which led to the formation of free trade areas and customs unions in the 1960s and early 1970s.⁷ The commitment to regionalism was part and parcel of the broader aspiration of continental integration, a vision that led to the creation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. The recent transformation of the OAU into the African Union (AU) has significantly strengthened the movement towards the goal of a Pan-African⁸ political and

5 Schiff, M. and Winters, A.L. 2003. *Regional Integration and Development*. Washington, DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank. Available at [http:// www.uneca.org/aria2/chap1.pdf](http://www.uneca.org/aria2/chap1.pdf) last visited on 21 December, 2011

6 Ibid

7 Asante, S.K.B. 1997. *Regionalism, Reality and Challenges*. London: Macmillan Press. Available at [http:// www.uneca.org/aria2/chap1.pdf](http://www.uneca.org/aria2/chap1.pdf) last visited on 21 December, 2011

8 Africans from all regions have for a long time held a vision of the continent's political and economic union. The pioneers of the modern pan-African movement were developing and promoting such a vision already in the 1930s and 1940s. While they had their priorities right in that they pushed for the liberation of Africa from colonial rule as the first order of business, bringing the liberated African states under a continent-wide umbrella was always on the radar. This vision was behind the creation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. Over the years the OAU has focused on ending colonial and minority rule. However, the OAU Charter already contained a reference to regionalism. This was specified more in detail in the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) of 1980, which called for the formation of an African common market by the year 2000. The LPA introduced the idea that regional integration initiatives would gradually converge towards a single Pan-African arrangement. In 1991 this idea became the central feature of the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community (AEC). The Abuja Treaty introduced the notion of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) as building blocks of the AEC. The Treaty did not exactly specify the membership of the RECs, but it did indicate that the regional communities would cover North, West, Central, Eastern and Southern Africa. This led to the designation of AMU, ECOWAS, ECCAS, COMESA and SADC as RECs. The Abuja Treaty sets out a number of stages that would ultimately lead to a continental economic and monetary union. The first stage is to reinforce and consolidate the RECs. The Pan-African ideal was further reaffirmed by the reconstitution of the OAU into the African Union (AU) in 2002. The Constitutive Act of the AU fully incorporates the provisions of the Abuja Treaty. The AU's responsibility has been made significantly broader, particularly in the areas of peace and security and good governance. The AU Act also foresees the creation of a stronger institutional framework, in some respects similar to the one of the EU. For example, the AU does not have a Secretariat, but rather a Commission with a Chairperson. There are ten AU Commissioners elected by the AU Assembly of Heads of State for a period of four years. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), an initiative promoted by a number of African countries, including South Africa, is now considered a programme of the AU. A related initiative, developed in the NEPAD context, is the African Peer Review Mechanism, a

economic union. Thus, the preceding developments can be termed the first wave of regionalism. The second wave occurred in the mid-1980s. Despite the disappointment of the first wave, Regional Integration was considered a panacea to problems confronting the world at the time. Thus, the second wave is multi-dimensional and, includes economic, political and cultural aspects.¹¹ This was evidenced in the postulation by De Lombaerde and Van Langenhove,¹² when quoting Hettne:¹³

the processes of regional integration that emerged after WW II, were originally mostly about trade and economics, but it has become clear that, especially since the 1980s, with the so-called 'new regionalism' wave, regional integration can be seen as a multidimensional process that implies, next to economic cooperation, also dimensions of politics, diplomacy, security, culture, etc.

It is a global phenomenon that countries, including those in Africa chose regional integration as a development strategy.¹⁴ These arrangements have become more diverse and complex while, at the same time, spanning within and across continents at the regional and sub-regional levels. But there are significant regional differences in these arrangements. In particular, it appears

voluntary mechanism for mutual monitoring of governance and accountability.

In addition to the five RECs that can be traced to the Abuja Treaty, three more have recently been given formal recognition by the AU: EAC, IGAD and CENSAD. While the EAC has a clear historical background and a solid record in terms of progress towards economic integration, IGAD and CENSAD have so far been much more active as political fora and as functional cooperation bodies. The AU's recognition of eight "official" RECs has not contributed to addressing the issue of overlapping membership. Attributing REC status to some bodies that are clearly sub-regional in their membership and that overlap with the original five is somewhat surprising, but what is also remarkable is that some other regional bodies with a track record of economic integration like UEMOA, CEMAC and SACU do not get the same status.

9 The inspiration for the first wave was related to the deliberate post-independence pursuit of integration by African policy makers, but it could also be seen to some extent as a response to the success of the European Community and its first enlargement in the 1970s when the UK, Denmark and Ireland joined. See also Asante, S.K.B. 1997. Regionalism, Reality and Challenges Ibid.

10 The second wave was more focused on revitalising and expanding the mandates of existing regional bodies rather than on creating completely new groupings. It took place around the time when the North American countries created the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the EU was consolidated with the launching of its single market and the signing of the Maastricht Treaty.

11 ibid

12 De Lombaerde & Van Langenhove. 1999. Indicators of Regional Integration: Methodological Issues. IIS Discussion Paper No. 64. Available at <http://www.tcd.ie/iis/documents/discussion/pdfs/iisd64.pdf> last visited on 15 August 2010. See also De Lombaerde, P. 2005. Regional Integration and Peace. Available at http://www.monitor.upeace.org/printer.cfm?id_article=268 last visited on 15 August 2010.

13 Hettne, B. 1999. Globalization and the New Regionalism: The Second Great Transformation. In: Hettne, B., A. Inotai and O. Sunkel (eds.), Globalism and the New Regionalism, MacMillan Press, p. 1-24.

14 The 1990s was, in this respect, a prolific decade for regional integration initiatives worldwide. During this period, regional integration schemes increased sharply in number, broadened in scope and expanded in geographical reach. Thus, as of March 2002, there were 243 regional integration schemes in force, made up of 175 free trade agreements (FTAs), 46 partial scope regional arrangements and 22 Customs unions (WTO, 2002).

that the typical regional initiatives in Africa are more ambitious when compared to the limited objectives assigned to similar regional arrangements in countries in East and South-East Asia.¹⁵

Economic integration has had an enduring appeal as the appropriate strategy to overcoming problems caused by a highly fragmented continent such as Africa. Since the early 1970s African countries have opted for regional integration¹⁶ as a key strategy for achieving their development goals. As a result, these countries have constituted themselves into a large number of regional integration institutions. In the process, the continent's current portfolio of regional integration schemes contains a bewildering array of different types and sizes which, as Yang and Gupta¹⁷ argues, represents "a dense web.....and classical example of variable geometry in integration".

AN OVERVIEW OF AFRICAN REGIONAL INTEGRATION AGREEMENTS

West

Africa

In West Africa, the most comprehensive regional initiative is the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), created in 1975. Nigeria, accounting for more than half of the region's population and an equally significant proportion of its GDP, has been one of the driving forces behind ECOWAS. Largely due to the Nigerian influence and efforts, ECOWAS has

¹⁵ United Nations Publication ISSN 1728-3256. New York and Geneva, 2006

¹⁶ It is indisputable that Africa's development will be achieved through the unity of its people. African leaders' quest for unity clearly demonstrates their commitment, which gave impetus to the formation of Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. The 1980 Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa; The African Charter on Human and People's Rights drafted in 1981; Priority Programme for Economic Recovery (APPER) in 1985, to address the emerging crisis of the 1980s; The Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community (EAC), known as the Abuja Treaty, in 1991; The Sirte Declaration of 1999; The 2000 Solemn Declaration on security, stability, development and cooperation of the African continent; The AU programme, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in 2000; The AU Constitutive Act of 2001, The African Union Commission (AUC), the Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Development Bank (AfDB), and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are among the key players of regional integration. It is convenient to classify African regional integration into several groups. One consists of the five large sub-regional FTAs which were expected to be the primary building blocks for the continental economic integration institution. These are the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) with its five North African members, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) whose membership includes all 15 countries in West Africa; the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) with its 11 members drawn from Central Africa; the Southern African Development Community (SADC) whose 14 members cover all of southern Africa; and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa with 20 members are spread over eastern and southern Africa. A second group of intra-African regional integration schemes consists of smaller regional arrangements encompassed in four of the larger institutions specified above. In particular, UEMOA and MRU contain eight and three members of ECOWAS respectively; CEMAC and CEPGL are subsets of ECCAS in terms of membership; while SACU is contained in SADC. In addition, IGAD and IOC are subsets of COMESA, while the membership of EAC is split between COMESA and SADC. The only continent-wide regional integration institution is the African Economic Community (AEC) which constitutes a third group in its own right.

¹⁷ Yang, Y. and Gupta S. (2005). Regional Trade Arrangements in Africa: Past Performance and the Way Forward, IMF, Working Paper WP/05/36. Washington D.C, IMF quoted in United Nations Publication ISSN 1728-3256. New York and Geneva, 2006.

enjoyed a high political status. This has also enabled ECOWAS to play a credible and effective role in regional peace keeping operations through the ECOWAS Monitoring Group's (ECOMOG's) operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Another area of its relative success is in relation to the cross-border movement of persons among member countries. However, ECOWAS has made limited progress in terms of trade integration: there remain significant tariff and non-tariff barriers in the region.¹⁸

Another track of the West African regional integration scene can be linked to the aftermath of French colonisation. Following their independence, most of the French colonies maintained their monetary union with France. Only Guinea and Mauritania left the CFA¹⁹ franc currency while Mali left temporarily. The West African CFA franc zone countries (except for Togo, but including Mauritania) established the Communauté Economique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (CEAO) in 1973, in place of another organisation they had set up in the early 1960s. In 1994, during the second integration wave, the monetary and economic integration functions were combined when the CEAO was replaced with the Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine (UEMOA).²⁰ (Mauritania did not join UEMOA whereas Togo did. Guinea Bisau also became a member of UEMOA in 1997). The UEMOA's Treaty was inspired by the EU's Maastricht Treaty. The Customs Union has been in force since 2000. However, since 2002, the conflict

18 ECOWAS faces persistent barriers to trade, despite having signed cross-border trading provisions. A number of state employees deliberately continue to violate such provisions. A large percentage of trade in the region is small in scale or informal and is often sustained by price variability from country to country. In the past, such activities among traders were viewed as smuggling, which prompted their unfair treatment by security agencies. The treaty's effect on the free movement of persons also presents problems, namely harassment, multiple roadblocks, illegal barriers and reduced road.

19 The establishment of the FTA should involve a mechanism for compensating revenue losses member States incur when tariffs on products derived from within the community are removed. ECOWAS' financial compensation arrangement was set at four years effective 1 January, 2004. The amount of compensation depends on the loss of customs revenue the State incurs by importing approved-origin industrial products. The following discounted rates are used: A 10 per cent decrease incurred in 2004; An 80 per cent decrease incurred in 2005; A 60 per cent decrease incurred in 2006; A 30 per cent decrease incurred in 2007; and A zero per cent decrease incurred, effective 1 January 2008. The efficiency of this mechanism is, however, minimal because the compensation budget depends on State contributions. Goods subject to the trade liberalisation scheme must comply with rules of origin, which in this case are defined as products originating from ECOWAS, including local products, products fully sourced in the member States, and goods manufactured from substances other than live animals born and raised in the country, used alone or mixed with other materials, if their ratio in quantity is higher or equal to 60 per cent of the raw materials used. However, agriculture, livestock products and handmade items are exempt. A procedure regulating litigations arising from the application of the liberalisation scheme is in place. If a disagreement among parties arises, the ECOWAS Court of Justice is authorised to make a final judgment, without appeal.

20 UEMOA established a common trade policy and the UEMOA Commission has the right to initiate negotiations with other countries or regions. There has also been progress on other integration policies and programmes such as macroeconomic surveillance and competition. By pooling 1% of the duties on imports from the rest of the world into a solidarity fund, UEMOA ensures adequate funding for its operations while also providing resources for a cohesion mechanism aimed at reducing disparities within the region. It is important to note that UEMOA's creation was accompanied by the devaluation of the CFA franc, for the first and only time, by 50%. While the CEAO had not been able to make much progress on the economic integration agenda, the creation of UEMOA speeded up the implementation of a number of significant programmes.

in Côte d'Ivoire, which represents around 40% of UEMOA's GDP, has placed a brake on further progress. While there was a good deal of institutional rivalry between CEAO and ECOWAS, it is interesting to observe that following the creation of UEMOA, the rivalry significantly diminished. In recent years there have been clear and tangible signs of movement towards closer coordination and harmonisation between ECOWAS and UEMOA. The present target for ECOWAS is to achieve a Customs Union by 2008. This close collaboration has also been observed in their coordinated approach to the EPA negotiations with the EU. In contrast to Eastern and Southern Africa, there have been only few changes in the West African integration configuration. Most of the changes involved Mauritania,²² which had been in both ECOWAS and CEAO, but did not join UEMOA.

Central Africa

In Central Africa, regional integration has also been affected by colonial legacy. In 1964 the five French ex-colonies in the region formed the Union Douanière et Economique de l'Afrique Centrale (UDEAC). Equatorial Guinea joined the CFA zone and UDEAC in 1989. Notwithstanding its ambitious name and the advantages of the common CFA currency, UDEAC has never really been a well-functioning Customs Union.²³ Central African integration is hampered by the limited cross-border infrastructure network and the lack of complementarity between the countries. Parallel to the creation of UEMOA, there has been a similar merger of monetary and economic functions by transforming UDEAC into the Communauté Economique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale (CEMAC).²⁴

While ECCAS²⁵ has been somewhat active in the political and security field, it

21 One example of this is that ECOWAS has recently adopted as a target the Common External Tariff (CET) rates set by UEMOA.

22 In 1989 Mauritania became a founding member of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) and more recently it withdrew from ECOWAS.

23 Intra-regional trade has always been very low, only slightly above 2% of total trade. In UEMOA and ECOWAS the share of intra-regional trade has been around or above 10%.

24 The countries in the Central African region have also formed a wider body--comprising all the CEMAC members as well as DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, and Sao Tomé and Príncipe--known as the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).

25 Economic Community for Central African States (ECCAS) FTA was created in July 2004 with the aim of establishing a customs union of common external tariff by 2008. The FTA is now in full force. ECCAS also has realized many of its efforts to achieve peace and security in its region. ECCAS member States adopted a plan to gradually scrap tariff fees on intra-community trade, known as the ECCAS Preferential Tariff. The timeframe for the planned reduction of tariff fees is as follows: for traditional handicraft and local products other than mineral products, a 100 percent reduction from 1 July 2004, and for mineral and manufactured products with an origin status, 50 percent from 1 July 2004. ECCAS also began to harmonize commercial policies concerning rules of origin and tariff reduction with the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC).

has not made much progress towards economic integration.²⁶ Although the resource base of several member countries indicate considerable potential, persistent conflict and instability in some of the member countries and the underdevelopment of cross-border infrastructural links continue to severely constrain progress.

Eastern and Southern Africa

Eastern and Southern Africa is undoubtedly the region with the most complex institutional structure. The two main bodies in terms of geographical coverage date back to the first integration wave. The Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) was founded in 1980 while the Preferential Trade Area (PTA) for Eastern and Southern Africa was created in 1981. SADCC was originally conceived as a body for functional cooperation with a view to reducing the dependency on South Africa²⁷ particularly in transport and energy networks. During the second integration wave,²⁸ it was transformed into a regional integration arrangement, the Southern African Development Community (SADC),²⁹ by the Windhoek Treaty of 1992. Even during the era of the predecessor institutions- the PTA and SADCC--there was the issue of overlapping membership as several states belonged to both organisations. But while in the 1980s the objectives of the two institutions were rather different, this was no longer the case from the 1990s onwards. Both organisations also campaigned for the expansion of their membership.³⁰

As regards progress towards economic integration, COMESA launched its Free Trade Area in 2000, but not all member states joined. By mid 2006 there were six

26 ECCAS was scheduled to launch its customs union by 2008, but political and financial obstacles delayed the plan, and political instability also has postponed the implementation of protocols designed to facilitate the movement of goods and services.

27 Following its first democratic elections in 2004, South Africa, the largest economy in Africa, joined SADC, which therefore instantly became the economic integration block with the largest combined GDP in Africa.

28 The second integration wave also affected the PTA, which adopted a new and much more ambitious Treaty in 1994 and changed its name to the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

29 The SADC FTA entered into force in January 2008 and was officially launched during the SADC Summit held in Sandton, South Africa, in August 2008. However, the programme is not being implemented effectively. Member States are not participating fully, because many are still completing their respective offers, and the business community and general public are not fully engaged.

30 Following its independence, Namibia joined both institutions. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Seychelles also joined both COMESA and SADC. Mauritius, a founding member of COMESA later joined SADC. In 1998 Egypt, the second largest African economy joined COMESA. Madagascar while maintaining its membership in COMESA also joined SADC. Finally, in 2006 Libya became a full member of COMESA. During 1990s there have also been a few departures: Lesotho, Mozambique and Tanzania left COMESA. More recently, the Seychelles left SADC while Namibia and Angola ended their membership in COMESA. Despite these departures, at the end of 2006, there remains a sizeable overlap between COMESA and SADC as the following seven countries are members of both: DRC, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

members that were not yet in the FTA.³¹ COMESA's original plan to create a Customs Union in 2004 was postponed until 2008. Apart from the core area of tariff liberalisation, COMESA has made sizeable progress in several trade-related areas such as: trade facilitation, regional insurance and harmonised transit charges. Preparations are under way for implementing a COMESA Fund³² which will support infrastructure investment and will assist weaker member states with the adjustment costs of trade liberalisation. SADC³³ adopted its Trade Protocol in 1996 and started actual implementation of an FTA³⁴ in 2000. Of the 13 member states two did not join the FTA. The objective is to liberalise 85 per cent of intra-SADC trade by 2008 and 100 per cent by 2012. The Trade Protocol implies more rapid liberalisation for the subset of member countries that constitute SACU (cf infra). There are a number of other important integration initiatives in Eastern and Southern Africa, which operate at the sub regional level--the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD),³⁵ the East African Community (EAC),³⁶ the

³¹ Those still outside the FTA are: Comoros, DRC, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda and Swaziland. This approach of variable speed where some member states that are ready and willing to move forward is a convenient approach for an organisation with a large number of members. If all members are obliged to move at the same time, progress is determined by the slowest member.

³² By 2025, COMESA expects to remove all tariff barriers. Consultations on a single FTA among COMESA, EAC and SADC are ongoing, and it is expected that the three RECs will coordinate their programmes to form a single customs union comprising all three.

³³ In line with its original purpose SADC has made progress on functional collaboration for example in cross-border transport infrastructure and connection of the electricity grid.

³⁴ Angola and DRC have not joined the FTA.

³⁵ IGAD, originally named the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development, was created in 1980 mainly to promote food security and to combat desertification in the Horn of Africa. The founding members were Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, the Sudan and Uganda. IGAD's main objectives are in line with those of the other RECs which include: harmonisation of policies with respect to trade, customs, transport, communications, agriculture and natural resources, and to promote the free movement of goods, services and people within the region. IGAD has promoted the COMESA programme on trade aimed at, among others, avoiding duplicating efforts and resources. IGAD still lags behind in its regional integration efforts because of regional conflicts, and unlike other RECs, it is still operating at the level of harmonising its policies.

³⁶ The East African Community (EAC), comprising Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, can trace its origins as far back as the early decades of the 20th century. Britain, as the ruler of the colonies of Kenya and Uganda and the protectorate of Tanganyika, established a customs union comprising the three countries, together with a common currency, and an organ for the management of common services for ports, railways, and air transport. Disparities with respect to perceived benefits and other differences contributed to a gradual loosening of their common bonds, and these outward pulls grew stronger following independence in the early 1960s. The three countries attempted to address these differences. The 1967 Treaty establishing the East African Community was meant to be a major step in this respect. However, the clash of ideologies between Tanzania and Kenya, and the irreconcilable political tension between Uganda's Idi Amin (who came to power via a 1971 coup) and Tanzania's Mwalimu Nyerere, created an untenable situation. These irreconcilable differences were further exacerbated by the serious disparities in the perceived economic benefits. Kenya was seen as the principal beneficiary. The momentum towards break up gathered speed starting in 1971, and the Community Treaty was formally terminated in 1977. Most of the joint organs and common services were dismantled. However, in 1993, a new process was launched by the three countries that led to the reconstitution of the Secretariat and the signing of a new Treaty establishing the East African Community, which came into force in July 2000. The Treaty provided for the formation of a Customs Union, which became operational in 2005 to be followed by a Common Market at a later date. Although the developmental gap between the three countries has narrowed, the provisions of the customs union allow for some asymmetry in that certain Kenyan exports to

Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC).

Apart from functional cooperation in the food security and environmental areas, IGAD has played a useful role as a forum for mediation in internal conflicts within member states. In the mid 1990s, an agenda oriented towards more general development cooperation was adopted (and the 'D' standing for drought was dropped). Following its separation from Ethiopia in 1993, Eritrea also joined IGAD as an independent state.

The formation of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU),³⁷ sometimes referred to as the oldest on-going customs union in the world, goes back to an agreement in 1910 between South Africa and Britain, representing at the time, the three British protectorates that would much later become the independent states of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. The SACU agreement was renegotiated in 1969 following the independence of the three countries. After World War I, South West Africa (today's Namibia) also became part of the same customs territory. At its independence in 1990, Namibia decided to remain within SACU. South Africa dominates SACU, with the other four members--Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland, sometimes referred to as the BLNS--representing only 15 per cent of the total population and less than 10 per cent of the GNP SACU.

the other two countries are subject to the payment of progressively declining tariffs for a period of five years. The deep involvement of the private sector is also expected to solidify cooperation. In June 2007, Burundi and Rwanda signed Treaties of Accession to the EAC. Overall, the Community appears to have been re-launched on a much better footing. It is also considered by some as a pace setter for COMESA--an application of variable geometry or allowing countries to move at different speeds. However the practicality of this has become questionable as Tanzania is now a member of SADC only while the other two countries are in COMESA. The main goal of the EAC, as an economic and political entity, is to improve the standard of living of the population through increased competitiveness, value-added production, trade and investment. It intends to promote sustainable development and foster a prosperous, internationally competitive, secure, stable and politically united region. Economic integration has been one of the main justifications for regional integration among African countries. In the case of East Africa however, the common history, language, culture and personal ties raise a deep-rooted and longstanding commitment among the member States to deepen cooperation in a broad range of political, economic, social and cultural programmes. According to its treaty, the EAC's vision is to be realised in an incremental progression through the stages of a Customs Union; a Common Market; a Monetary Union; and ultimately, a Political Federation. With the implementation of the EAC Customs Union, launched on 1 January 2005, all member States have reported progress, particularly in promoting investments, trade and tariff reductions. The EAC is preparing to launch its next Common Market by 2010, followed by a Monetary Union in 2012. Progress has been made in promoting investments and trade and in identifying and developing regional infrastructure projects, including roads, railways, civil aviation, post and telecommunications, energy and the Lake Victoria Development Programme. Other achievements include the previously established convertibility of East African currencies in place since 1997; preparations towards achieving a single currency by 2012; the progressive reduction of tariffs; and the revival of regional cooperation in research, human resources, and the development of science and technology.

There is significant leveraging of regional programmes in the promotion of trade and investment as well as development of regional infrastructure. The Customs Union, launched in 2005, has taken on a life of its own. Its positive influence on increased intra-EAC trade and revenue growth is experienced by all member States. Each has recorded increased revenues since the Customs Union was launched. These developments inspire confidence and comfort despite early doubts. However, the situation has reversed as the region proceeds to establish the common market.

37 SACU is a remarkable arrangement, not only because it continued throughout a long period of major political changes, but also because it incorporates some aspects of deep integration, while until recently it did not even have a separate secretariat.

After the democratic transition in South Africa, another renegotiation started which led to a new agreement in 2002 and in 2004, to the transformation of SACU into a regional integration organisation with a secretariat based in Namibia.

The deep integration aspect of SACU is partly reflected in the mechanism of pooling of all tariff and excise revenue together with a formula to share the revenue in a manner that provides compensation for the polarisation effects within SACU. The new arrangement also introduced joint decision making on customs issues, which previously had been the sole responsibility of South Africa. While the revenue sharing approach is interesting from a development point of view, it implies a high dependence of the BLNS, especially Lesotho and Swaziland, on the customs revenue. All the SACU members are also in SADC, but because SACU has a unified trade policy, this is not a problem. In other words SACU is an example of *variable geometry* within the wider SADC. Finally, in Eastern and Southern Africa, there is another sub-regional scheme, the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), comprising the island states of the Indian Ocean that are part of the African continent (Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles) as well as the French Département of Réunion. The IOC has focused on functional collaboration among countries facing similar challenges (for example in the areas of fisheries and environment). All IOC members except Réunion are in COMESA and generally, IOC has promoted the COMESA economic integration strategy.

North Africa and the Sahel

All the North African countries--except for Egypt but including Mauritania--established the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) in 1989. Due to continuing political divergences, mainly between Algeria and Morocco, the achievements and progress of AMU has been limited.

More recently another grouping, the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CENSAD),³⁹ actively promoted by Libya, has been created. It comprises a large number of countries from North Africa and the Sahel, and even parts of Central Africa, the West African coast and the Horn of Africa. In terms of the number of member states (23), CENSAD is the largest African regional body. Needless to say, CENSAD overlaps with several other regional organisations. Most

³⁸ See Kirk and Stern (2005) for an overview and assessment of the new SACU agreement

³⁹ CEN-SAD is just implementing the FTA. However, the implementation process faces many obstacles, particularly with respect to institutional harmonization and policy coordination. The CEN-SAD Secretariat currently covers 28 countries. On trade and integration, CEN-SAD launched the trade liberalization process in accordance with the Abuja Treaty of June 1991, with technical assistance and guidance UNECA and AfDB. It also began the process of facilitating the free movement of people, which has begun to bear fruit.

The free movement of people and services ranks high among CEN-SAD's major objectives.

members of AMU and ECOWAS as well as several CEMAC/(ECCAS) and COMESA countries have joined CENSAD. So far it has been mostly active as a political dialogue forum rather than an economic integration body.

CURRENT ACHIEVEMENTS OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION AGREEMENTS IN AFRICA

Physical Integration Transport

Fully functional infrastructures are essential to facilitate trade, reduce poverty and to permit the free transport of goods and the free movement of people. Africa continues to experience deficiencies in transport, communications and hydro-energetic supply, but the various Regional Economic Communities (RECs) do register progress in these areas as follows; Several projects are currently under implementation in ECOWAS. With the support of the World Bank, the region is preparing a project⁴⁰ to create a single window in the main ports of the Abidjan-Lagos corridor to facilitate transport and transit.⁴¹ Its main objective is to remove bottlenecks that currently hinder the movement of goods along the corridor. In COMESA transit facilitation instruments are being developed to improve road infrastructure. These include axle load limits, gross vehicle weights, harmonized road user charges, carrier licenses and the Regional Customs Transit Guarantee (RCTG).

COMESA's main challenge will be to fully implement these measures to ease cross border traffic.

The EAC has made progress particularly in the area of roads and corridors developments.

The East African Road Network project (Mombassa to Katuna Road/North; Dar es-Salaam to Mutukula/Central), are now in the implementation phase. The region has also made significant progress in the construction of the Arusha-Namanga-Athi River Road.

⁴⁰ Projects to rehabilitate post-conflict areas also are under way. These include a corridor to connect Liberia and Ghana, via Cote d'Ivoire. ECOWAS and UEMOA are preparing to implement five programs under a Community Plan of Action on Infrastructures and Road Transport. Among them are a road development project south along the Bamako-Dakar (PR2) corridor, with the construction of roads and bridges along the border between Mali and Senegal; and the Dori-Tera corridor between Burkina Faso and the Niger (PR3). The UEMOA Commission is in the process of eliminating illegal checkpoints by setting up an observation of illegal practices along the interstate road axis. See *The Status of Regional Integration in Africa*. <http://www.uneca.org/aria> last visited 15th November, 2010

⁴¹ This project is expected to cover five countries: Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria.

⁴² In 2007 COMESA adopted a model agreement for railways concessioning. In EAC, a project for the EAC Railways Development Master Plan is under way, which will provide guidance for developing the region's railways transport sector over the next 25 years. See UNECA Sub-regional Office for Eastern Africa (ECA/SRO-EA), 2009. "Tracking progress on implementing ICTs for development in Eastern Africa: report on economic and social conditions of the Eastern Africa sub region 2009," paper presented at the 13th Meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts Mahe, Seychelles, 27-29 April 2009. Quoted in *The Status of Regional Integration in Africa*. <http://www.uneca.org/aria> last visited 15th November, 2010

CEN-SAD has established a community plan to improve the infrastructures in its member States. It includes plans for new transit roads and corridors and the maintenance and improvement of infrastructure services. However, the process must be accelerated. To date, only three countries, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, have repaved more than 50 per cent of their roads.

IGAD⁴³ is currently undertaking studies on the implementation of the Isiolo-Moyale Corridor, which is intended to connect Kenya and Ethiopia. In terms of rail travel, in SADC a project for the Lesotho Railway is under way, linking territory to the east and west of Lesotho. Its objective is to create a major corridor from Durban to Kimberly, and onward to Botswana and Namibia. In the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), a memorandum of understanding was signed in April 2008 to modernize the Trans-North African linking Tunis, Algiers and Casablanca and to improve its services. A feasibility study also is being undertaken to consider a TGVM (High Speed North African Train) that would link Tripoli with Casablanca via Tunis and Algiers.

Energy

Africa has abundant energy resources, which unfortunately are unevenly distributed and underexploited. Africa's comparative lack of modern technology is largely to blame. According to the United Nations publication, *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa IV: Enhancing Intra African Trade*, this handicap has to a large extent resulted in the exportation of unfinished products at a very low price compared with finished goods.⁴⁴

Supplying energy to rural areas in most African countries has been a major problem, because of poor infrastructure and the high cost of energy production. Efforts are being made to improve the situation both at national and regional level.

In the case of ECOWAS, some projects in the energy program have been expanded, including the West African Gas Pipeline (WAGP),⁴⁵ the West African Power Pool (WAPP) and the ECOWAS Regional Policy on Energy Access.⁴⁶ The WAGP connects Nigeria, Benin, Togo and Ghana, and a feasibility study is current under way to examine the possibility of extending it to Cote d'Ivoire. It is

43 United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. (2004a). "Assessing Regional Integration in Africa). Policy Research Report. Addis Ababa: UNECA

44 This has been the case with products such as oil and minerals.

45 The WAPP became functional in 2006. Its main objective is to provide reliable and sustainable electricity for economic development in the member States by integrating their national systems.

46 The ECOWAS Regional Policy on Energy Access, adopted in 2006, plans to increase access to energy services for rural and peri-urban populations.

hoped that the new discovery of oil and gas in Ghana will accelerate the process. In 2008, an Emergency Power Supply Security Plan was adopted to prevent an energy crisis. By 2020, a project for implementing a regional electricity market of about 10,000 megawatts of capacity should be completed. In SADC, efforts focus on energy supply security. According to current statistics, the SADC region will continue to face power deficits until around 2012. The situation has forced the region to commence a major project to supply an additional 400 megawatts from Hidroelectrica de Cahora Bassa to restore other generators in Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The East African Power Master Plan in EAC is planning a seven-year Regional Power System Program with a Power Pool as its central feature. The discovery of oil in Albertine Graben, Uganda, will allow construction of a top-up refinery to exploit oil for local use. Tanzania has discovered gas at Songo Songo and Mnazi Bay and is already using it to generate electricity and fuel. Rwanda generates methane gas annually in Lake Kivu, Burundi explores petroleum in the Rusizi and Tanganyika basins and Kenya is developing the geothermal potential in the Great Rift Valley.

Water

Water is an essential resource. Agriculture, one of Africa's main forms of production, depends on it. According to the African Development Bank (ADB), access to water supply in 2006 in Africa was estimated at 64 per cent, which was less than world average of 87 per cent. Many African countries, including those in the RECs, have adopted some measures to conserve water.⁴⁷ There are several notable achievements. The Lake Victoria Development Programme in the EAC focuses on navigation safety; a programme of conservation of the ecosystem of Mount Elgon in Uganda, Kenya; and the development of fisheries through the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organisation. The authority also is working on a study of the Niger Basin, a project to fight the silting of the Niger River, which does not favour agricultural production.

A project also has been suggested to transfer water from Ubangui-Chari and Congo River to lake, and SADC is implementing the Ground Water Drought Management Project (GDMP), launched in 2007, which is being funded by the Global Environmental Fund.

⁴⁷ Other measures include a 10 per cent reduction in consumption through rationing, power buy-back arrangements and penalties and the adoption by South African public utility ESKOM of a Brazilian power conservation model for continuing to supply power to other SADC member States.

⁴⁸ On 30 April 2008, member States of the Niger Basin Development Authority signed a Water Charter (*Charte de l'Eau*), whose objectives are the knowledge, conservation, protection, mobilization and use of the water resources of the basin. Quoted in *The Status of Regional Integration in Africa*. <http://www.uneca.org/aria> last visited 15th November, 2010

Information and communications technologies (ICT)

ICT is vital to regional integration. A significant financial investment in this area is necessary for economic growth and sustainable development to occur. Recently we have seen a growing demand for cellular phones in lieu of land lines. In 2000, about 10 million mobile phone users were recorded.

This figure increased dramatically, to about 180 million in 2007. This explosion can be explained by market liberalisation, which permits many mobile companies to operate in a number of African countries. By contrast, internet access in many parts of Africa still lags behind the rest of the world.⁴⁹

ECCAS has prepared a strategy with UNECA's support, to develop ICT in Central Africa that includes infrastructures, wide-band networks and interconnections. SADC also has moved ahead in the ICT sector, implementing the SADC Regional Information Infrastructure (SRII), which is intended to provide the necessary telecommunications infrastructure and connectivity. The South African Telecoms Association (SATA) is undertaking a study of a long-term project for the implementation of a minimum network that would interconnect its member States with the East Africa Submarine Cable System (EASSY). IGAD is implementing a regional ICT support programme to contribute to the overall integration process with an effective and efficiently functioning ICT environment. COMESA has established the Association of Regulators of Information and Communication in Central and Eastern Africa (ARICEA).⁵⁰ COMESA, IGAD, EAC and IOC are cooperating to address several aspects of ICT development; they have initiated the Regional ICT Support Programme (RICTSP) to contribute to the Eastern and Southern African region's agenda to promote a strong ICT environment.⁵¹

In collaboration with COMESA, IGAD and SADC, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) e-Africa Commission has undertaken

⁴⁹ Ibid. According to the Networked Readiness Index (NRI), between 2007 and 2008, sub-Saharan countries were classified as the lowest in ICT use. However, North-African countries, South Africa and Mauritius have made some progress in the ICT.

⁵⁰ The ARICEA is a consultative and collaborative forum that gathers regulators and associated actors in the ICT sector in the Eastern and Southern African region. Regional cooperation among RECs in terms of ICT remains one of their major priorities.

⁵¹ Many RECs' partners are supporting the implementation of these major projects. This is true in the case of UNECA, which supports the policies of the National Information and Communication Infrastructure (NICI). Its main objective is to realize the vision of the African Information Society (AIS). The African Information Society Initiative, launched by UNECA in May 1996.

This is a framework for building an information and communication infrastructure in Africa at the national level and to create a conducive environment for the liberalization and deregulation of the telecommunications sector. Quoted in *The Status of Regional Integration in Africa*. [Http://www.uneca.org/aria](http://www.uneca.org/aria) last visited 15th November, 2010

integration and rationalisation plans to develop a fiber-optic network in Eastern and Southern Africa. The AfDB Group is leading a project to connect African capital cities with high speed dorsals by this 2012.

In 2007 UMA began to implement the Ibn Khaldun Project for a North African fiber-optic network. It also received financial support from the AfDB Group in 2009, under the aegis of NEPAD's Infrastructure Projects Preparation Fund (NEPADIPPF), to finance a technical study to promote ICT development. Some RECs have established new mobile operators and better access to internet services.

Agriculture

Agriculture is the primary economic activity in many African countries. It employs millions and forms the basis of many other industries. A large proportion of the total African labour force is engaged in agricultural activity.⁵² Several years ago SADC implemented the SADC Seed Security Network (SSSN), a regional seed market that concluded its first phase in March 2007. The community is currently working on phase two of the project with the support of Swiss government. EAC member States have established two documents⁵³ to promote agriculture development and ensure the security of the REC's food supply; COMESA also has programmes aimed at increasing agricultural productivity, including the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) of AU/NEPAD, whose objectives concern trade in agricultural production, sanitary and phytosanitary issues and the improvement of livelihood of pastoralists, among others.

ECOWAS is implementing the 2005-2010 Action Plan on Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP), whose mission is to meet the food needs of the population, ensure economic and social development and attempt to eradicate poverty in its member states. It also aims to reduce inequalities among the territories, zones and countries. It also participates in CAADP of AU/NEPAD. ECCAS has developed a regional food security programme and a common agricultural policy.⁵⁴ UMA countries are located in semi-arid zones and are subject to

⁵² Ibid. In most African countries, agriculture supports the survival and well-being of more than 70 percent of the population. About 90 per cent of the rural population depends directly or indirectly on agriculture, and 60 per cent of the total labour force is employed in agriculture.

⁵³ These are the Agriculture and Rural Development Policy and the Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy. The latter is a medium and long term project (2005-2030) whose objective is to improve the livelihood of people in rural areas over the next 25 years through increased productivity, better trade policies, and social service programs.

⁵⁴ Agricultural processing units, which will target such products as coffee, cotton, cocoa and timber, have been established in a number of ECAAS countries. These units, it is hoped, will increase their value added and improve producers' revenue.

frequent droughts. During the UMA Ministers Agriculture Conference,⁵⁵ held in Morocco in July 2008, Morocco established its own *Plan Vert* (Green Plan) whose objective is to promote national agriculture and reinforce competitiveness.

Industry

Over the past decades, Africa's efforts to promote industrialisation have failed because too much attention was placed on domestic markets. In today's economy, all countries must depend heavily on industrial sectors if they are to make a dent in the global market.

In 2007, industry in Africa increased by a rate of 8 per cent, with manufacturing dominating, at a rate of 9.6 per cent of average growth, followed by the mining sector. Eastern and Southern Africa recorded the highest growth rates, particularly in mining and building. In Western and Central Africa, the average growth of the manufacturing sector decreased compared to the last decade. In Northern Africa, growth in the manufacturing sector slowed in 2006, to 5.4 per cent of average. ECOWAS member states are planning to develop the final Common Industrial Policy report for the region and an ECOWAS protocol on industry.

Peace and Security

The AU has made peace and security key priorities. Between 2000 and 2004 African leaders took bold initiatives and established a continental peace and security architecture that contains the protocol relating to the establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union.

In ECOWAS, the political situation in Cote d'Ivoire has improved since 2008. A peace agreement has been recently signed in Libya between the rebels and the government of Niger, and some signs of stability are emerging in Northern Mali. In ECCAS, a committee⁵⁶ on security questions was established in 1992 to ensure peace operations in Central Africa. A regional peacekeeping brigade was formed under the framework of the multinational force in the Central African Republic whose headquarters are based in Libreville, Gabon.

IGAD continues to experience conflicts among its members. In 2000 IGAD established the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN)

⁵⁵ In that Conference several ideas and projects were recommended relating to the agriculture sector, including setting up a North African strategy for food security, establishing a North African observatory on cereals, designating a North African free trade area for agricultural products, conducting seed research and using non conventional waters (saline water, worn waters).

⁵⁶ See *The Status of Regional Integration in Africa*. <http://www.uneca.org/aria> last visited 15th November, 2010

The committee continues to develop and promote measures in preventive diplomacy and peace-building.

to prevent violent conflicts. The EAC has developed the peace and security strategy and is about to conclude a protocol identifying areas of cooperation among the partner states.

PROBLEMS OF AFRICAN REGIONAL INTEGRATION AGREEMENTS

Trade and Market Integration

Regionalism has proliferated in sub-Saharan Africa since decolonisation began. However, economic development in the region has not met expectations. A number of African countries are attempting to enhance their regional groupings, but figures on intra-African trade remain lower than projected. This is largely due to the slow implementation of regional integration agreements designed to eliminate tariff and non-tariff barriers, even though member states have signed a number of trade agreements. Intra-regional trade flows in Africa have been generally low compared with other regions, primarily because of poor infrastructure development,⁵⁷ maintenance and connectivity, conflicts and security issues among the regions and the presence of trade barriers.

Multiple and Overlapping Memberships

For strategic and political reasons many African countries belong to more than one regional economic community, especially in East and Southern Africa.⁵⁸ The structure of each regional economic community varies, but they all share a common objective: reducing trade barriers among member countries by creating a common, larger economic space. However, the complex patchwork resulting from the multiplicity and overlapping membership in regional economic communities raises considerable problems for policy and programme coordination and harmonization.⁵⁹

Little Complementarities across Economies

The overall low level of effective demand in the region has hindered integration. Although the number of conflicts has significantly reduced and growth has resumed across much of the continent, poverty levels remain high and purchasing power remains very low in all regions except North and Southern Africa. Unlike MERCOSUR (an economic and political agreement signed

⁵⁷ With respect to infrastructure, a number of the continent's railways and roads often lead to marine ports rather than linking countries over land. Internal waterways are insufficiently exploited and in most cases underdeveloped, making it difficult to conduct intra-continental business.

⁵⁸ UNECA (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa). 2004a. *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa. Policy Research Report*. Addis Ababa.

⁵⁹ The multiplicity of regional economic communities has several drawbacks which among others include- Fragmented economic spaces and approaches to regional integration, Increased cost of membership in regional economic communities, Unhealthy rivalry for donor funds, Contradictory obligations and loyalties for member countries, Inconsistent objectives and conflicting operational mandates, Duplicated efforts, Reduced ability for regional economic communities to pursue coherent and effective integration programmes.

between Argentina, Brazil Paraguay and Uruguay) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, there is also very little manufacturing industry in Africa, reducing the degree of complementarity among and across economies. Except in Egypt and South Africa, existing industries are largely unsophisticated, which may explain the limited degree of intrafirm trade in Africa. In addition, weak transport and communication infrastructure and lack of a skilled workforce further constrain integration.

Limited Domestic Constituency

No mature business constituency for regional integration exists in Africa, and very few private citizens are aware of the anchor institutions of regional integration. African civil society organisations have yet to show sufficient interest in regional integration as an arena for policy activism. In addition, there is very little domestic corporate pressure on African countries to provide an integrated regional or continental economic space probably because African indigenous capital remains very weak and cannot exploit regional economies of scale.⁶⁰

Constituencies for regional integration in member countries' can be successfully created only through the advocacy and engagement of all stakeholders. African countries are beginning to address this constraint by setting up government departments and ministries specifically charged with promoting regional integration in Africa.⁶¹ Among their objectives is to stoke domestic interest in regional integration.

MEASURING REGIONAL INTEGRATION AGREEMENTS WITH PEACE BUILDING OR PROMOTION OF CONFLICT

There is no rule that says regional integration is an automatic force for mitigating tensions or conflict. Without careful negotiation and implementation, regional

⁶⁰ This is beginning to change, especially in South Africa and to some extent Egypt, where businesses are beginning to pressure the government to help open African markets.

⁶¹ The Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Nigeria, and a few other countries have also set up ministries devoted solely to regional integration.

⁶² Nor does membership of a trade institution automatically create bonds of trust. Envy can result from trade imbalances and result in the creation of social networks of memberships, resulting in social unrest. Trade ties can actually provoke hostilities between states. Gains are rarely felt proportionally and large inequalities in the relative distribution of gains can shift the balance of inter-state power. There may also be tensions between members of the RTA and non-members who may find that trade diversion within the RTA results in lost markets. In a sense trade 'gives people something to fight about'. Neither are trade institutions necessarily the best mechanism to mediate disputes especially if those disputes have wider social and political dimensions. In conflict prone areas, international institutions built around trade agreements can have adverse effects on conflicts among member states by mismanaging crisis situations and worsening conflict intensity, or producing rivalry among states due to their relative social positions. See Hafner-Burton, E. and Montgomery, A. (2005). 'War, trade and envy: why trade agreements don't always keep the peace', presented at the International Studies Association Annual Conference, Honolulu, Hawaii.

integration between countries of widely differing size, wealth and influence can cement inequalities, create tensions and trigger conflict. This is perhaps particularly likely if there is a lack of transparency and accountability in the negotiation of the agreement and its subsequent implementation. Peace and security continue to challenge Africa's integration and development efforts. Achieving both is critical to creating the environment in which regional integration in all aspects can be fostered.

A number of African countries continue to experience conflicts and civil wars, including Sudan (Darfur and Southern Sudan), Ethiopia-Eritrea, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Comoros and the Central African Republic. The destructive and recurrent nature of these conflicts has had devastating and far-reaching consequences for the countries, the region and the continent as a whole and has created an environment of perpetual insecurity.

The intensity and frequently protracted nature of these conflicts have resulted in a massive loss of human life, the displacement of people, the recruitment of child soldiers and social exclusion. It has also destroyed the socio-economic infrastructure; eroded institutional capacity; aggravated poverty and human misery across the continent and made it even more difficult to achieve the continent's sustainable development and Millennium Development Goals.

RIAs as promoters of peace, RI bodies often serve as promoters of peace as next exemplified.⁶³ ECOWAS (Economic Community of Western States) has ratified a mutual defense protocol that in the main, authorises military intervention by the community in conflicts between members, or if a conflict that is instigated from outside has the potential to endanger peace in the ECOWAS region.⁶⁴

In the SADC region, there is an organ on defense, politics and security as per the SADC's Declaration and Treaty signed in Windhoek in 1992⁶⁵, hence, the formation of the organ on politics, defense and security. Thus, the security architecture addresses the following: security cooperation, conflict prevention,

⁶³ *ibid*

⁶⁴ *To this end, ECOWAS has intervened in the Liberian civil war; of course, with mixed results.*

⁶⁵ *The Declaration and Treaty called; among other things, for a framework of cooperation which provides forstrengthening regional solidarity, peace and security in order for the people of the region to live and work together in peace and harmony. See also, Malan, M. and Cilliers, J. 1997. SADC Organ on Politics, Defense and Security: future development. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies. Paragraph 1*

management and resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. So far, the organ's successes are limited to resolving conflicts in Lesotho and Swaziland.⁶⁶ However, SADC has not been able to find a lasting solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

CONCLUSION

The question of Africa's regional integration has preoccupied many African leaders since the early years of independence. Many have viewed it as a tool for promoting economic growth and sustainable development and improving the living standards of the African people. The overall strategic objective of regrouping African countries was to fight the impact of colonialism and build a united Africa. The formation of the OAU, now the African Union (AU) was the first step towards promoting continental unity. Since its inception, significant new efforts have been put in place. Nevertheless, Africa has comparatively few success stories to tell with respect to regional integration. The continent's slow pace towards this goal has been largely attributed to Africa's many extraordinary challenges, including inadequate financial resources, macro-economic instability, poor governance, conflicts and war, the prevalence of HIV and AIDS, and numerous sub-groupings. In addition, African member States' multiple memberships to different RECs have contributed significantly to the slow pace of integration.

Studies show that too much self-sufficiency and protectionism deprive populations of the benefits of free trade. British political economist David Ricardo demonstrates that the gains from free trade outweigh the losses, as free trade creates more jobs than it destroys. Indeed, it allows countries to specialise in the production of goods and services in which they have comparative advantage.

The received wisdom is that regional trade integration can be a powerful force for peace. Building interdependence between countries, creating economic incentives for peace and developing non-military means for resolving disputes are all goals of the proponents of trade integration. Using trade as the cement, RTAs help to bind countries' interests to a common future. However, in the light of recent experience, this assumption requires scrutiny. The many conflicts

⁶⁶ For instance, on 22 September 1998, the Botswana Defense Force joined the South African National Defense Force and crossed into Lesotho to assist the government to restore stability following the disputed May 98 general elections. The intervention, called Operation BOLEAS, culminated a re-training programme for the Lesotho Defense Force members. See MSP (Ministry of State President). 2008. Botswana Defence Force: peace-keeping missions. Available at <http://www.gov.bw/en/Ministries--Authorities/Ministries/State-President/Botswana-Defence-Force-BDF/Community-Relations/Duties-of-the-BDF/> last visited on 15 August 2010.

between member countries of RTAs implies that regional trade integration does not provide an automatic brake on conflict.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Member States, particularly policy-makers should consider regional integration as part of their broader strategic development package.

Africa's fragmented markets must be integrated in order to attract substantial investments, both from within Africa and the rest of the world, and to assist in building competitive and more diversified economies.

Given the importance of ICT to Africa's economic growth, member States and stakeholders should intensify their efforts to liberalize the ICT market by accelerating the privatisation of telecommunication networks to attract foreign investors, through the establishment of rural telecommunication projects, promoting ICT training centers and reducing communication costs.

RECs should establish programmes to improve agricultural production in areas beset by drought, floods and pests through sharing best practices and developing an early warning system and improving food storage. Therefore, all RECs must enhance the implementation of CAADP to address the problem of food security on the continent and under EAC, more effort must be applied to boost the region's industrial and manufacturing sector

Current studies indicate that African RTAs have been instrumental in promoting trade and foreign direct investment, but much more needs to be done. Tariff and non-tariff barriers must be removed and infrastructure developments, including strengthening the Programmes for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA). To increase regional trade and investment, it is imperative that African countries liberalise and streamline existing RTAs.

With the 2008 tripartite summit among COMESA, SADC and EAC, it is vital that IGAD review its programmes so that they coincide with those of COMESA. However, given that IGAD and COMESA agree on trade issues, they should harmonise their trade activities and thus encourage implementation of a memorandum of understanding.

CEN-SAD, like other regional economic communities, must have a coordinated regional and continent-wide approach to infrastructure financing and institutional and policy coordination. Improving the continent's transportation infrastructure is critical to enhancing trade both within and outside the region. There is need to develop linkages among African regions in order to improve the movement of goods and services.

To enhance the integration process, the existing conflict/dispute resolution mechanisms must be redesigned. They must have supra-national authority so as to ensure independent judgment. In theory, some of the existing mechanisms were designed to fulfill this criterion, but the practice reflects another reality. A serious overhaul is needed, one that is based on renewed commitments, rather than an old model that has already demonstrated its futility.

Trust is present in a relationship only when the interested parties continuously work towards its consolidation. An action taken unilaterally will easily break the trust that takes years to build. A country with such inclinations should not sign an RTA in the first place, as its actions will affect regional morale and give way to tensions between members. Moreover, trust is essential to induce transparency and ensure compliance. With this in mind, member countries should demonstrate a willingness to subject themselves to third-party verification and oversight. The more harmonised policies and cooperation are, the less the potential for regulatory interference.

Today's security concerns are often related to organised crime. No regional approach to these issues has been adopted yet. Blame games, sovereignty discourses, and well-intentioned rhetoric must be set aside in order to coordinate an effective strategy to address new security challenges.