

Methodology for preparing Assessing Regional Integration in Africa II: Rationalizing Regional Economic Communities

Preparation of the concept paper and questionnaires

Preparation of this report consisted of desk research and field missions for data collection. It started with a concept paper and two sets of questionnaires, one for regional economic communities and one for selected African countries.

The concept paper covered five topics:

- Rationalization of integration efforts in retrospect.
- Possible scenarios for rationalizing the regional economic communities.
- Ancillary issues to regional economic community rationalization.
- Structure of the report.
- Methodology.

The questionnaires were designed to cover issues pertinent to the discussions in the report, particularly those in chapters 3, 4, and 5. The questionnaire for regional economic communities covered:

- General information and legal status of regional economic communities.
- Harmonization of interlocking mandates.
- Efficiency in internal management, human and financial resources, and competitiveness.
- Effectiveness in achieving the ultimate goals of African Union and regional integration.
- Overlap of membership.
- Duplication of programmes.

- Coordination of regional economic communities operating in the same region.
- Historical efforts towards rationalization.
- Inadequacies of coordination at the continental level.
- Recommendations for rationalization.

The questionnaire for countries covered:

- Institutional setup and management.
- Translation of regional economic community goals into national plans, budgets, and national programming.
- Implementation of agreed programmes.
- Legislative process for integration matters.
- Fulfillment of financial obligations to regional economic communities.
- Costs and benefits of integration.
- Private sector relations.
- Civil society relations.

Consultations

A paramount consideration in preparing the report was the involvement of key regional integration actors in all stages of the process. Consultations included:

- Internal consultations within UNECA and the African Union.
- Consultations with African regional economic communities, their member countries, academia, private sector, and other institutions.

Internal consultations

A meeting with UNECA subregional offices was held on 14 November 2003 in Addis Ababa to discuss areas of collaboration. Representatives from subregional offices in Southern Africa, Eastern Africa, Central Africa, Western Africa, and Northern Africa attended, as well as staff from the Economic and Social Policy Division, Human Resources and Finance Division, and the Office of Policy and Programme Coordination. At the meeting the concept paper was discussed and a steering committee that included all subregional office directors was formed.

Consultations with the African Union

Two consultative meetings were held with the African Union, one on 23 April 2004 and one on 14 May 2004, both in Addis Ababa. The first meeting was convened to introduce the concept paper and questionnaires and to discuss collaboration between UNECA and AU in preparing the report. Margaret Vogt, director of the Office of the African Union Chairperson, chaired the meeting.

The African Union stressed the importance of rationalizing the regional economic communities and its determination to join forces with the UNECA to examine the issue in

detail. Participants agreed that the report would provide technical inputs to consolidate the African Union's position on rationalizing the regional economic communities. They also formed a steering committee to regularly review the report's progress and agreed that:

- The duration of the study would be short, since it is primarily to support a political decision.
- The African Union would appoint a liaison with UNECA to ensure effective collaboration between the two institutions.
- The regional economic communities must be involved in the process.
- Heads of state would make the final decision on rationalization.
- The meaning of "regional economic communities" in the African Union context must be clarified.
- The report would make use of the African Union's recommendations on rationalization.

As a follow-up action, it was agreed that the African Union staff would review the concept paper and questionnaires and form a project team on the report.

The second meeting was chaired by Mamadou Lamine-Diallo, deputy director of the Office of the African Union Chairperson. It provided a platform for the African Union to present its comments on the concept paper and questionnaires.

Discussions suggested that the report should:

- Explain the criteria for selecting the best rationalization scenario for Africa.
- Choose the best rationalization scenario for Africa and justify the choice.
- Anticipate possible challenges to the rationalization of regional economic communities and address them accordingly.
- Develop solid arguments for rationalizing the regional economic communities, given the possibility of lobbying against rationalization.
- Provide a platform to present the case for rationalization.
- Involve regional economic communities in the study.
- Examine possible implementation frameworks for rationalization.
- Illustrate how each country, big and small alike, would benefit from rationalization.
- Provide a framework for building synergy between pillars and other organizations in a region.
- Provide explanations for the proliferation of regional economic communities.
- Look at the weaknesses of regional economic communities.

Consultations with regional economic communities, their member countries, and other institutions

A consultative and advisory meeting was held on 8 April 2004 in Addis Ababa to introduce and discuss the report. Participants included staff from regional economic

communities, African Union officials, and representatives from some African countries, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, the African Economic Research Consortium, academia, and the private sector. The meeting also benefited from the participation of the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme, and the World Bank.

Field missions

Following the consultations, the report team undertook field missions to all 14 regional economic communities: the Arab Maghreb Union, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the Community of Sahel-Saharan States, the East African Community, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Economic Community of Great Lakes Countries, the Economic Community of West African States, the Indian Ocean Commission, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, the Mano River Union, the Southern African Customs Union, the Southern African Development Community, and the West African Economic and Monetary Union.

The team also visited 26 African countries: Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Libya, Mali, Mauritius, Morocco, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, and Zambia.

The purpose of the missions was to collect the views and opinions on regionalization from officials of the regional economic communities, governments, and other development partners. The mission teams also consulted on the duplication and overlap of the programmes and mandates of the regional economic communities. The missions were also used to gather information on national mechanisms for coordinating and implementing regional agreements as well as how civil society could be involved in integration and rationalization.

Use of data

After the field missions, data from the questionnaires were put into a template prepared by the UNECA Information Systems Section. Information from the template was used to prepare master tables for each chapter of the questionnaires. Summary tables and charts were then produced from the master tables and analysed and used extensively in writing the report.