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## Promoting Regional Cooperation and Integration

**R**egional cooperation and integration arrangements in Africa predate independence, and the desire to reap their benefits has occupied the better part of the forums of African heads of state and ministers at the regional and subregional levels. Advocating regionalism is not a novel idea, but experience has shown that identifying policy challenges, setting targets, and signing declarations and agendas are one thing; translating them into concrete programs on the ground is another.

### Overview

The blueprint for Africa's regional integration is the Abuja Treaty, which came into force in May 1994 and has a schedule of 34 years, extendible to 40 years, to create a full-fledged African Economic Community (AEC). The Treaty envisages six phases, starting with strengthening existing regional economic communities (RECs) and establishing others where they do not exist within the first five years. Planned follow-up phases include (within each REC): consolidation of policies, establishment of Free Trade Area and Customs Union among RECs, harmonization of policies, and establishment of an African common market and the African Economic Community. The efforts of AEC and the RECs are to be directed towards liberalization of trade and free factor mobility, development of regional infrastructures, and harmonization of macroeconomic and sector policies.

Through cooperation and integration, regional planning frameworks and trading blocks make more efficient use of the collective capital, labor, and natural resources of Member States that otherwise would have been prevented from being optimally utilized by individual states. The economies of scale in productive investments, particularly for large infrastructure and utilities projects, reduce the cost of private- and public-sector operations, including the cost to donors of aid administration. As national macroeconomic policy reforms are harmonized, efficient producers expand their market share and prices become more competitive on the world market. Investment in the region accelerates, attracted by the larger market and technological innovations. Additionally, regional frameworks reduce transaction costs on intraregional trade as a result of the removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers. They create opportunities for a stronger bargaining position

vis-à-vis the rest of the world. They facilitate peace and political stability, as the environment is conducive to non-violent forms of conflict resolution.

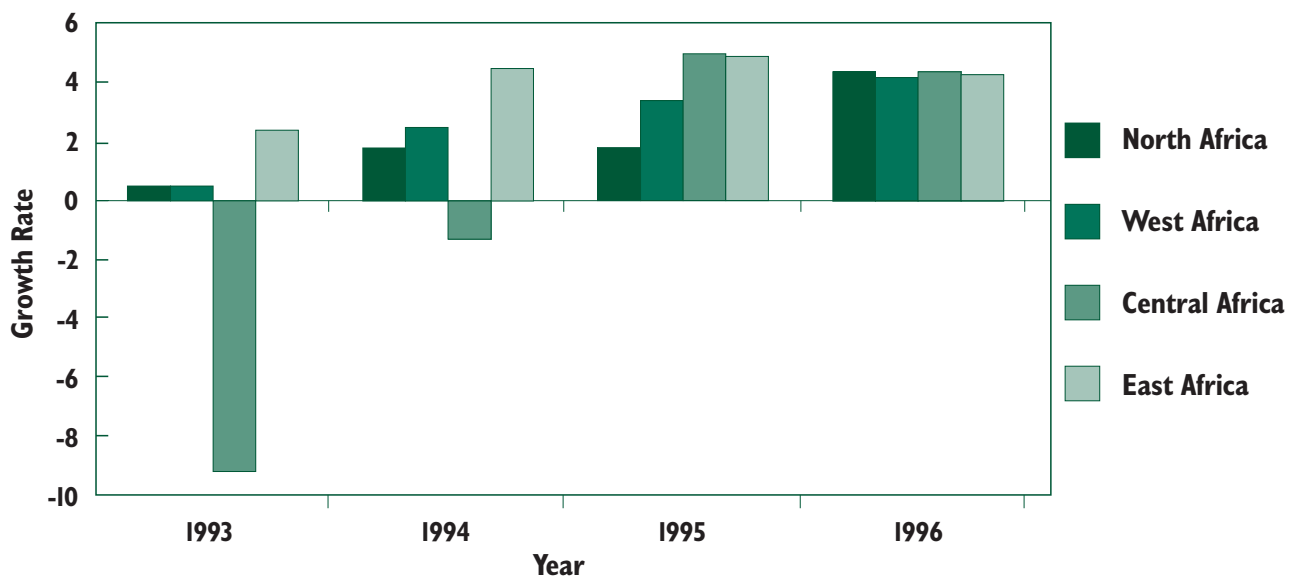
Africa is the most subdivided continent, with 165 borders demarcating the region into 51 countries—22 of which have a population of 5 million or less, and 11 of which have a population of under 1 million. With the continent's GDP equal to that of Belgium, the limitations of size are very real from the demand and supply points of view. With this in mind, regional cooperation is a *sine qua non* for competitive entry by any individual African country into world markets. Besides policy coordination, obvious areas for cooperation among African countries include regional transport, communication, and other infrastructure projects; power and other utilities projects; agriculture and food security; regional grain marketing and drought early-warning systems; and education and training institutions and programs.

The challenge of African development is compounded by the globalization and liberalization of the world economy, greater integration of financial and money markets, and a shift towards

the creation of large trading and economic blocs. These developments offer not only challenges and opportunities to Africa, but also point to the need to broaden the concept of regionalism and consequently to rethink Africa's regional integration strategy. Africa's economic recovery and development, as well as its ability to be effectively integrated in the world economy, are intrinsically linked to its capacity to become an active player in the world economy. This process of integrating Africa should be premised on three dimensions: extension and connection of Africa's physical space with its infrastructure; integrated development of production structures; and market integration, through trade liberalization, monetary harmonization, and promoting private-sector and business interests.

Whether it be among developing or developed countries, it is no longer a question of choice between intraregional integration arrangements and active participation in the international economy. It is also not a question of one complementing the other. The two imperatives are interdependent and should be pursued in parallel. The Latin American experience amply demonstrates the trade benefits from open regionalism, as it has come to

**Figure 9. Subregional Growth Rates, 1993–97 (per cent per annum)**



Source: ECA, Economic Report on Africa 1998.

be known. Growth of the region's exports to the rest of the world increased from 5.7 to 11.0 per cent between 1986–90 and 1991–95. Growth of intraregional exports rose from 11.3 to 16.0 per cent over the same period. Growth rate of imports into the region from the rest of the world almost doubled, from 9.5 to 18.0 per cent, as did that of imports from within the region, from 8.6 to 16.8 per cent, during the same period.

In short, the integration process within Africa is essential towards achieving international competitiveness for the continent. For Africa, regional integration will serve as a mechanism for diversifying risk and reducing the shocks of an uncertain global economy.

## The Challenges

The subregional pillars for the African Common Market under the Abuja Treaty are now in place. They are the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). A sixth—the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)—has subsequently been recognized as one of the RECs. But others, inside or straddling two or more of the aforementioned RECs, exist, and some of them overlap. The East African Community overlaps with COMESA, as does SADC; UEMOA overlaps with ECOWAS, as does the Mano River Union. The proliferation of overlapping regional schemes has resulted in sometimes conflicting spheres of jurisdiction, where different organizations in the same region have the same mandate, or where a country belongs to two or more organizations that are pursuing different policies at a particular time.

“Whether or not to integrate with the world economy is a false choice. . . . We must integrate, but we will reap far greater rewards from integration in the world economy if our own house is integrated first. Therefore, we should choose actions that accelerate African integration, with the political will and selectivity of actions required”.  
*K.Y. Amoako, from “Statement to the Council of Ministers, 67th Ordinary Session of the Organization of African Unity”, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 26 February 1998.*

***Inadequate Political Commitment.*** This is one of the most serious constraints to integration. Because post-independence regional cooperation has its roots in political interests, rather than economic rationale, measures agreed in regional forums are rarely incorporated in national policies and plans. Their implementation at the country level is therefore not carried out forcefully. This is clearly seen with a number of regional protocols, which are not ratified for years in several Member States due to fear of the short-term political and economic problems, a shortage of resources, inadequate expertise, or lack of interest. Successful integration must be founded on the understanding of supra-nationality.

***Serving the Common Will.*** In any cooperative arrangement, participating countries and their leaders must subscribe to the notion that individual interests at times have to be sacrificed for the good of the larger group. In the absence of a clear definition of supra-nationality, all decisions in the intergovernmental machinery are taken on the basis of unanimity, which invariably leads to delays and the scaling down of policy content to avoid

controversy. The clear vision that national interests are reinforced by regional interests and the acceptance by leaders that strengthening regional authorities does not weaken, but rather strengthens national inter-

ests, are a critical challenge and an important milestone. This is fundamental to rethinking the cooperation frameworks in Africa, intellectually reinventing, rationalizing and redirecting them, including the strengthening of institutional, legal, regulatory, and enforcement mechanisms. As a necessary step, in critical areas supra-nationality needs to be built into the protocols to ensure decision-making by less than unanimity, and enforcement mechanisms for decisions need to be put in place. Otherwise, progress will remain painfully slow.



United Nations

Regional trading blocs make more efficient use of collective capital, labor, and natural resources.

**Financial and Administrative Resources.** Inadequate budgetary support and administrative and managerial weaknesses have adversely affected the effectiveness of RECs. They need strong, adequately trained, and independent management. And with few exceptions, the RECs have not made sufficient progress in establishing self-financing mechanisms. They rely on assessed contributions from their Member States, which are paid erratically, largely due to weak national budgetary positions. This tends to undermine the development of the human and institutional capacity of the RECs. Strong technical capabilities are needed to support the myriad tasks and complex processes that have to be carried out to realize the provisions of integration treaties, including continual review (and possibly rethinking) of the treaties in light of evolving global trends. The strengthening of human and institutional capabilities at the regional, sub-

regional and country levels should be an integral part of the agenda to promote regional integration and cooperation.

**Involving the Private Sector and Civil Society.** Regional integration issues and programmes are often discussed without the active participation of the constituencies most affected—the private sector and civil society. In particular, expansion of markets, along with its challenges and opportunities for cross-border formal and informal trade, is something in which the business community takes great interest. Similarly, the possibility of labor movements across national borders is something labor unions should help to shape. The growth of regional associations of business, professional, and NGOs and networks facilitates broader and more informed participation by private-sector and civil society interests in the integration debate. RECs and national governments should facilitate the active involvement of

these organizations. For example, the knowledge of the African Enterprise Network, which appears poised to spread beyond its home region, West Africa, to other parts of the continent, should be tapped when thinking through some of the business implications of pursuing open regionalism strategies.

**The Role of Other Regional Institutions.** Rationalizing and revitalizing the many regional institutions in Africa must be viewed within a comprehensive framework for strengthening the overall institutional foundation for Africa's economic cooperation. Besides the RECs, there is a range of organizations sponsored by ECA, in collaboration with Member States and such organizations as the OAU, to build capacity in strategic areas such as science and technology, remote sensing, engineering design and manufacturing, and economic

planning and management. The ADB is Africa's premier development financing institution and is best placed to support regional projects. Clarification of mandates of regional institutions is a new regionalism paradigm, and holding those institutions to their mandate is a challenge that emerges in the framework of reinvigorating regional integration.

## The ECA Response

On 8 May 1997, taking into account the role of similar organs of African organizations that promote regional cooperation and integration, the ECA Conference of Ministers established the Committee on Regional Cooperation and Integration as a subsidiary organ of the Commission. As part of the new intergovernmental machinery of the Commission, the Committee assumed the technical tasks of the former Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Trade, Regional Cooperation and Integration and Tourism. The reform answered the request of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Meeting at its 1994 Session in Tunis, the Assembly called for the harmonization of the institutional machinery of ECA with those of sister organizations, in particular the African Economic Community. The Committee on Regional Cooperation and Integration aims to coordinate the relevant activities of the Commission with those of the other actors in the economic integration process in Africa.

The first session of the Committee, which took place from 27–29 April 1999, was combined with a forum on “The Challenges of Regional Economic Integration in Africa, with Particular Focus on Resource Mobilization to Support the Process”. OAU, ADB, all RECs, UNDP, the World Bank, the European Investment Bank, and the African Economic Research Consortium participated in the session. Among other things, the Committee/Forum reviewed progress made towards the African Economic Community (AEC), and the role of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in fostering the integration process.

ECA undertakes policy studies to support the process of economic integration as called for in

the Abuja Treaty. The studies identify and analyse factors affecting integration, including conditions that constrain or facilitate the process, so as to help Member States articulate strategies and implement policies to advance the process at the country, subregional, and regional levels. Some of the results of these studies were presented in the papers prepared for the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee/Forum on regional integration and cooperation referred to previously. The Committee forum facilitated the sharing of experiences and best practices by the RECs in specific areas, including those identified in the studies summarized below.

***Gradual Harmonization and Rationalization of Regional Integration Institutions.*** The overlap of RECs operating within the same subregional spaces in Africa is one of the key problems undermining the cohesiveness and unity of purpose and action in the integration process. Experience has shown that merging one REC with another, or closing down one in favor of another, is politically sensitive and difficult to implement in the absence of political convergence on the issue. A pragmatic approach to the issue of multiplicity of RECs operating within the same subregional space might be the gradual harmonization of their market liberalization instruments. This would be achieved by removing contradictions and incompatibilities among them. That approach underlies the study, which is designed to identify and recommend measures to enhance cohesiveness and minimize fragmentation of market and economic space, and enhance the free circulation of people, goods, and services within the same subregion.

***Convergence of Micro- and Macroeconomic Policies among Countries for Greater Harmonization.*** National structural adjustment programmes were designed to help a number of countries in Africa restore equilibrium in their economies. These tended to pay little or no attention to the regional dimension of national policies. The study demonstrated the negative consequences of policies of member countries within integration groupings that are neither coordinated

with one another, nor attuned to the agreed common objectives. It recommended promoting broad policy coordination and convergence, so as to ensure cohesiveness and unity of purpose of the African integration process.

***Feasibility Studies on the Establishment of Self-Financing Mechanisms for the RECs.***

Ensuring the African integration process entails costs. The EU would not have advanced at its pace without innovative, adequate, and sustained financing through various mechanisms, including selective taxes. African RECs today basically depend on inadequate and unreliable financial subscriptions from the over-stretched coffers of their constituent countries. The studies are designed to identify sources and mechanisms to ensure that future financing of Africa's integration process is reliable—predominantly tax-based and minimally inflationary. In addition to sustaining the secretariats of the RECs, the sources identified can contribute to funding existing and potential integration programs and projects. The study for COMESA has been completed, while that for SADC is ongoing. Eventually all RECs will be covered.

***Compensation and Equalization Mechanisms for Furthering the Economic Integration Process.***

As a result of the tariff reduction plans associated with economic liberalization, the revenue base of many of the countries, which is necessary for financing critical public expenditures, will be eroded. This in the past has contributed to the reluctance by some countries to implement trade liberalization programmes. The study addresses the problem of revenue losses and uneven gains stemming from the implementation of trade liberalization schemes by Member States. It develops options for compensation and mechanisms for revenue and loss equalization. The ultimate objective is to assess the feasibility of equalization funds for financing development projects, particularly infrastructure in the least developed countries of the RECs, in order to enhance their participation in these groupings. The study, which has been completed for COMESA, will be replicated for the rest of the RECs.

***Analytical Framework for the Assessment of the Costs and Benefits of Regional Economic Integration.***

A clear knowledge of the costs and benefits of belonging to a regional grouping is essential to strong commitment by member countries of various RECs. Transparency in the relative gains and losses of the members will facilitate rapid progress. Subregional case studies will examine measures that could be considered within the framework of national and regional policies to minimize costs and maximize equitably distributed benefits. An ECA workshop on Economic Integration Cost Benefit Analysis was held on 28–30 October 1998, to familiarize participants with the techniques for analysing related issues and their policy implications. A pilot study has commenced in the Economic and Monetary Union of West Africa (UEMOA), with Burkina Faso as the first country case. Other countries within UEMOA will be eventually covered in the first phase. Subsequent studies will cover countries in other RECs. The results of the studies will form the basis for the contemplated equalization/compensation programmes.

***Liberalization of World Trade, Globalization, and Africa's Regional Integration Process.***

Given that most African countries are members of the WTO, and all are expected to be members soon, Africa's integration process has to take account of the requirements of the global trading system, particularly as stipulated in Article (XXIV) of GATT 94 governing regional integration arrangements. The purpose of these studies is to prepare African countries for compliance with WTO provisions while continuing to pursue their regional integration objectives, and attuning the process to the WTO provisions. The studies also tie in with the assistance programs for ECA member countries, including training to better understand the WTO framework and its requirements (see chapter 4). Besides providing inputs into the training program, another output from the studies is policy briefs aimed at providing information on the world trading system that are of particular interest to Africa. Two issues of the policy briefs have been published so far: (i) *Africa's Regional Integration and the Multilateral Trading System*, and (ii)

### Box 13. Implementing the Second UN Transport and Communications Decade

The 1997 ECA Conference of African Ministers of Transport and Communications, which convened in Cairo and was attended by sector ministers, senior government officials, and sector experts from around the world, reviewed the state of transport and communications in Africa. It explored measures to accelerate implementation of the Second UN Transport and Communications Decade in Africa. The Conference also recommended measures to address the problem of inefficient, high-cost transport infrastructures and to promote regional transport planning and coordination. These included deepening ongoing reforms in the transport and communications sectors, modernizing the technological base for the development of efficient systems, and strengthening institutional and human capacities.

**Ongoing and Future Tasks.** Tasks in transport focus on:

- Regional transport and linkages facilitation, to ascertain the efficiency of utilization of transport infrastructures;
- Implementation of transit agreements in 17 transit corridors through impact surveys;
- Organizing the African Road Safety Congress as a joint activity of ECA and OECD to promote road safety and the protection of the environment;
- Developing transport data systems to promote the establishment of information systems on market demand and performance of transport enterprises, and to improve the management of transport statistical services;
- Human resources and institutional development, through training in regional transport planning and management and networking of African experts in transport and communications;
- Seminars and workshops on regulatory frameworks and evaluation of options for private-sector participation; sharing information, including “best practices” between countries; and
- Organization of the African Transport Forum—with the Conference of African Ministers of Transport and Communications, the policy organ of UNCTADA—to facilitate review by policy makers, private-sector interests, representatives of financing institutions, and high-level international experts of emerging issues in Africa’s transport.

*Globalization and Liberalization of Markets: Prospects for African Products.* Two others are forthcoming—on the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and on the Telecommunication and Financial Services sector of GATS.

**Expanding Intra-Africa Trade through Enhanced Trade Liberalization, Factor Mobility, and Convergence of Complementarities.** Using eastern and southern Africa as a case, an empirical pilot study was carried out to establish the key factors determining the pace of effective implementation of trade liberalization within the subregion. On the basis of the subregion’s natural resource endowments, measures were suggested to remove the obstacles to the greater interdependence of production and other economic activities. The ultimate objective is to improve the competitiveness of the productive sector and increase subregional trade.

**The Impact of Physical, Tariff, and Non-Tariff Barriers on Intra-Africa Trade, Factor Mobility, and Regional Development Patterns.** Building and efficiently operating national and regional transport and communications systems are key to promoting trade and investment in Africa through reductions in the prevailing high transport costs, so as to improve Africa’s competitiveness. At the April 1999 meeting of the Committee/Forum on Regional Cooperation and Integration, a paper entitled *Transport and Communications Programmes of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): Progress And Difficulties* were discussed. In it, ECOWAS, which has one of the more developed and integrated transport networks, shares its experience with other RECs. SADC shares its successful power-pooling experience (see box 13).

### Box 14. Relaunching Regional Integration and the Economic Community for Central African States (ECCAS)

In February 1998, following a decision by the Economic Community for Central African States (ECCAS) Conference of Heads of State and Government, ECA was requested to help relaunch regional integration in ECCAS, which has been dormant for most of its eight years of existence. ECA's Subregional Development Centre for Central Africa (CA-SRDC) was tasked with reviewing the ECCAS Charter, the question of arrears of Member States, and ECCAS's debt, as well as with developing a programme for relaunching and integrating the economies of the subregion.

The SRDC undertook extensive consultations on the best approach towards re-launching ECCAS as a means of energizing regional integration and subregional cooperation in Central Africa. Out of these consultations emerged a strategic plan of action, which articulated areas of common interest among countries in the subregion, detailed knowledge and experiences gained on integration and subregional cooperation, and specified the financial and organizational resources required.

The plan was circulated among a number of stakeholders, including the African Development Bank, and was proposed as a basis for discussing and addressing the regional integration issue at a June 1998 UNDP subregional cluster meeting, held in São Tomé et Príncipe.

The SRDC then led a multidisciplinary and multi-institutional consultation and preparatory mission to the 11 ECCAS countries. The mission was funded financially and materially by ECCAS, OAU, and the governments of Burundi, Gabon, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, and Chad. The mission's focus was to develop a common vision, promote the understanding of regional integration and cooperation, and sensitize principal actors and beneficiaries about their rightful roles in productive partnerships. In preparation for the mission, team members attended a preparatory two-day ad hoc experts group meeting in Yaoundé.

As a result of this mission, several reports have now been prepared towards the revitalization of ECCAS. They are: *Strategic Framework on Regional Integration and Subregional Cooperation*; *Rethinking Development in Central Africa in the 21st Century*; *Making Regional Integration the Engine for Sustained Growth*; *Sustainable Development at National Level*; and *Programme for Relaunching Regional Integration in the Central African Subregion and Renewing ECCAS—1999–2001*. The financial implications of the programme are detailed in the last of the four reports. The reports have been submitted to the ECCAS heads of state, who considered their recommendations at a meeting held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in April 1999.

***Strengthening Regional Institutions through Technical and Advisory Support.*** ECA carries out analyses of the institutional strengths and weaknesses of the secretariats of subregional economic communities, and provides technical and policy advice enhancing the capacity of the economic groupings to anticipate and manage the challenges of integration. In the last two years, ECA has provided technical support to the secretariats of three key subregional economic communities: the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); including the ECOWAS Fund; and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). ECA, through the Central Africa Subregional Development Centre, is spearheading the effort to relaunch and re-

vitalize the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) (see box 14).

**COMESA:** An ECA mission carried out a critical assessment of the Secretariat structure of COMESA, taking into account the immediate and long-term expectations of the Common Market's major stakeholders. At the end of the in-depth review of objectives, structure, and processes, the ECA mission proposed an organization structure capable of fulfilling a new strategic mission. The ECA's proposal was subsequently approved by the COMESA Council of Ministers at its meeting in November 1997.

**ECOWAS:** As in COMESA, an ECA mission responded to a request to carry out a critical and comprehensive review of the mandate, structure,

and functions of the ECOWAS Secretariat. Among the notable features of ECA's restructuring formula for the ECOWAS Secretariat and the Fund is the reconstitution of the sectoral and highly fragmented units into coherent multidisciplinary teams. The Commission also conducted job evaluation studies to generate the information needed in reclassifying professional level positions at the ECOWAS Secretariat and the ECOWAS Fund. The grading structure was rationalized and simplified. New performance

management strategies and innovative resource mobilization options were articulated.

**SADC:** ECA submitted a proposal to establish a policy analysis and coordination unit. This proposal was based on a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis of SADC institutions' roles. The proposal defined the rationale and options for establishing a policy analysis unit within the secretariat, the structure and location

### Box 15. Regional Potential and Issues for the Southern Africa Development Community

The original 12 SADC countries are Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. This regional grouping accounts for only 1 per cent of world exports and 0.005 per cent of world GDP, but it accounts for 52 per cent of Africa's exports and 43 per cent of regional GDP. It is dominated by South Africa, which has one-third of the population, 80 per cent of GDP and 65 per cent of total exports. Except for South Africa, Mauritius, and Botswana, whose economies are quite diversified and advanced—making them middle income countries—the group is made up of basically small, poor, and largely landlocked countries, which depend on a few primary exports.

After decades of war and instability, regional cooperation has the potential to promote peace and stem flows of migration. Smaller countries cite larger markets and ability to share infrastructure—including development of transport links for landlocked countries—as key reasons for integration. Examples are the Southern Africa Power Pool and the payments clearing system among the central banks. These benefits translate into lower production and marketing costs. The regional grouping enhances visibility of the smaller countries to investors who, through prospects of economies of scale, can attract industries that will locate in the smaller countries. The arrangement enables the sharing of development experience on a range of development problems and better management of transboundary resources—such as water—for economic and security benefits.

While SADC is one of the most dynamic RECs in the continent, political strains exist, and it has not been

always possible for all countries to take a common position with respect to emerging issues within or outside the group. The recent Lesotho and Congo crises amply verify this point. Also, South Africa's history, its prior exclusion from the group, and its sheer economic dominance are delicate issues that have to be managed with sensitivity. This is particularly so in areas of macroeconomic and trade reforms, where the differences that exist in the pace of liberalization and the prospective deal between South Africa and the EU have the potential to create discomfort among the other members of the Community.

SADC's continuing success in the next millennium will depend largely on its crystallizing a vision for itself and charting a road map to get to shared objectives. So far, it has adopted the "variable geometry" approach to regional integration, which encourages bilateral as well as multilateral arrangements amongst members and promotes only a minimal bureaucratic structure. More major projects along the lines of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, which provide good examples of the gains from regional projects, may be needed to strengthen the hitherto small and incremental efforts in the largely bottom-up approach that has to date characterized cooperation in the group. An important step towards a group vision of the future, which will facilitate the tackling of difficult issues and the implementation of larger, multi-country, win-win regional projects, is to build and strengthen constituencies with vested interests in cooperation within the "variable geometry" framework. Private-sector and civil society networks, for example, can have a catalytic effect towards that objective.

### Box 16. African Center of Meteorological Applications for Development (ACMAD)

Established in 1992, the objective of the African Center of Meteorological Applications for Development is to promote the developmental application of seasonal climatic projections from advanced meteorological data. Examples of the application of such information range from estimating the amount of hydroelectric supply for manufacturing plants, to application of the data for environmental and food security planning, to reducing economic losses from hazardous climatic changes through advance planning for agricultural activities.

Major achievements of ACMAD since its inception include the issuance of a continental medium-range forecast (three-to-five days), based on operational models developed by World Weather Prediction Centers; publication of daily continental forecast bulletins for the media; preparation of a monthly bulletin for the Sahel during the rainy season; continental climate watch (monthly and seasonal); on-the-job training for more than

400 African meteorologists; and scientific and technical studies and reports evaluating Africa-wide products and establishing the climatic monographs for some countries.

In its strategic plan for the year 2002, ACMAD intends to capitalize on the results already achieved and to develop a coordinated approach for resource mobilization from Member States and partners (scientific, technical, and financial). In the medium term the Center will focus on three main areas: (i) reinforcing the abilities of the Center in the fields of weather and climate watch; (ii) mastering meteorological application processes for various sectors, starting with needs assessment and ranging all the way to packaging of the technological tools for decision-making support; and (iii) to more aggressively participating in policy dialogue on environmental issues, climatic change, and socioeconomic choices compatible with sustainable development. ECA intends to work closely with ACMAD in all these areas.

of the unit, and its operational modalities (including modalities for constituting and making optimum use of teams), as well as the preconditions for the successful take-off of the unit (see box 15).

The ECA's plan for the next biennium includes following up the implementation of the restructuring and reorganization proposals, and collaborating with the secretariats of the economic communities on performance improvement and capacity-building projects. Resources will also be earmarked for completion of the job evaluation studies still outstanding at COMESA, ECOWAS Secretariat, and ECOWAS Fund.

***Rationalizing ECA-Sponsored Institutions.*** At the 5–8 May 1997 session of the ECA Conference of Ministers responsible for Economic and Social Development and Planning, ministers considered the report on *Rationalization of ECA-sponsored Institutions: Renewal for Improved Service*. The report included an assessment of the capacities of these institutions in the context of ECA's new strategic direction and their ability to enhance the Commission's impact in the selected areas of priority in which ECA has comparative advantage. Following the conference discussions and recom-

mendations, ECA is currently redefining its relationship with these institutions based on: (i) the functionality of the institutions; (ii) the relevance of their programs to ECA's new strategic orientations, and (iii) the support to these institutions from their Member States.

The ultimate objective of this exercise is to transform and strengthen the most effective institutions into regional centres of excellence. This category is likely to include the African Regional Center for Engineering Design and Manufacturing (ARCEDEM), the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP), the Regional Center for Training in Aerospace Survey (RECTAS), the African Regional Standardization Organization (ARSO), and the African Center of Meteorological Applications for Development (ACMAD). ECA works in close partnership with these centres in delivering policy and advisory services to Member States' highly technical areas. The work of ECA with ACMAD is illustrative of ECA's work in this regard (see box 16).

***Strengthening ECA's Subregional Development Centres (SRDCs).*** SRDCs play a pivotal role in rendering services more effectively to RECs.

Based in Central, East, North, Southern, and West Africa, the five Centres are an important link between the Commission and various RECs at the subregional level. The SRDCs enable ECA to keep abreast of developments on the ground, enhancing the Commission's outreach. The SRDCs also work with partners to identify priority areas of relevance to the subregion and provide technical support. The Centres facilitate networking and information sharing, aid the dissemination of ECA policy recommenda-

tions and technical publications on regional cooperation and integration issues, and engage in advocacy and capacity building through policy forums, seminars, training workshops, and advisory missions to the RECs, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The reconstitution of ECA at subregional level since the reform of the Commission's structure and programs in 1996 has improved its capacity to support regional cooperation and integration efforts at the subregional level.