

## PART IV CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this background paper has been to inform the Bank about challenges and opportunities for strengthening socio-economic integration in southern Africa and then specifically in SADC by:

- highlighting some salient political, socio-economic and geographical features of the sub-region,
- giving an overview of recent developments in regional integration in southern Africa, and
- indicating the current involvement of the sub-region's most important international development partners.

Without the benefit of 'regional' economic and sector work, the paper has provided a broad-brush and impressionistic picture of selective developments within the southern African region. Each of the issues covered requires further study, while some other important issues might not have received attention at all.

The overview of recent developments in the ESA region finds that the political, institutional and socio-economic environment in the southern Africa region is heterogeneous in the extreme, converging in policies, but not necessarily in outcome. Together with the multiple memberships of countries in regional integration arrangements, this is posing particular challenges and opportunities for regional cooperation and integration and no less to development partners' support for integration in the sub-region.

On economic grounds, these difficulties urgently call for rationalization of RIAs to strengthen the basis of regional development in southern and eastern Africa. However, given that membership of RIAs is a country's political choice, based not only on economic but also political, social and geographical considerations, collapsing these different RIAs into more rational regional groupings seem to be a matter for the longer-term, politics permitting. Various past attempts by SADC and COMESA (also their predecessors) to eliminate the overlap in membership have failed. Thus, in 2001, the two

organizations agreed to cooperate and work together, although it is acknowledged that better cooperation and working relationships would not be able to address the overlap problems of membership and mandates. Current areas for cooperation include trade analytical work, capacity building and negotiations; transport issues such as the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision and transit facilitation; and international relations such as preparations for and negotiations with the EU and in the WTO. Both the EU/ACP Cotonou Agreement and the NEPAD/AU agreements have been providing further impetus to cooperation among RIAs such as COMESA, SADC and the EAC. The unfolding intra-regional efforts towards deeper integration, notably towards forming CUs, and evolving international trade and development relationships are increasingly exposing problems of overlap and multiple membership, while the five SACU countries seems to be pulling away from the non-SACU SADC members in terms of the evolving international relationships with the EU, USA, China and Latin America. These forces could well result in different RIA configurations – whether in depth or geographical/sectoral coverage – than at present.

Currently, the ESA regional landscape thus makes for a fluid operating environment. To strengthen the basis of regional development in the ESA, for the immediate future, options for the Bank include:

- Providing support within the wider SADC/COMESA economic space by identifying potential opportunities for functional cooperation on very specific issues, such as by bringing the non-SADC COMESA countries within the folds of the SADC payments and settlement initiative, which the Bank is already supporting. Such support could be focused on approaches, which deal with the structural weaknesses on a country level, but within a 'common framework'. This option would depend on *inter alia* the SADC-COMESA and COMESA-EAC task forces identifying issues for inter-regional harmonization or

joint programs, which, in turn, would reflect their needs in the Bank's support for such issues. Furthermore, opportunities for functional cooperation within common frameworks may also arise from continental or international agreements such as the Yamoussoukro Decision on the liberalization of access to air transport markets in Africa or strengthening of the architecture of the international financial system. In contrast, the usefulness of concerted liberalization efforts for strengthening regional integration by a group of countries such as RIFF could be questioned, is that they do not embed national/unilateral action within a coherent regional framework which is enforceable (although RIFF's predominant regional framework is that of COMESA). Nevertheless they may serve as useful forums for information exchange and as a peer-pressure mechanism.

- In its Economic and Sector Work on regional integration issues in southern Africa, to identify and analyze specific areas of current and future conflict and overlap. A focus area for such research over the short-term may be to analyze the implications for active member countries of both SADC and COMESA (specifically Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and possibly Mauritius) and of SADC, COMESA and the EAC (Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda)<sup>62</sup> of rationalizing their regional and bilateral trade agreements with countries within the sub-region.
- Encouraging or supporting on regional-level (in the case of a CU) and country-level (as far as members of FTA's are concerned), the lowering of trade barriers vis-à-vis the rest of the world. This support should not only entail that for liberalization of trade in

goods, but also in services as well as for addressing institutional and structural constraints inhibiting their competitiveness and supply response within a more open economic environment. This option stems from the hypothesis that, regional trade integration, particularly among developing countries, could be regarded as second-best type policies, although it could not be stated *a priori* whether any one regional trade agreement would be detrimental to member countries without closer analysis. In general and under reasonable assumptions, analysis has indicated that regional trade integration among small countries could be trade diverting and thereby lowering member countries' welfare. In this context, a key step to minimize any costs of trade diversion would be to sufficiently lower protection against non-member countries to counter trade-diverting effects.

In addition, in its ongoing regional and country-level work: (i) country teams would have to take into account the national implications of regional commitments, while the reverse would equally apply, i.e. the regional implications of national decision-making (such as countries' trade regimes or seemingly domestic policies, which could have regional 'spill-over effects'); and (ii) the regional integration team would – for its interaction and involvement in ESA – have to gain a much deeper understanding of specific economic and sector issues through focused analysis of e.g. the implications of the myriad of international, regional and bilateral trade and investment agreements for country and the regional growth and development prospects. Other issues which seem to require further analysis and assessment are: a regional compensatory mechanism in a sub-region characterized by a collection of developing and least developing countries, none which are wealthy enough to afford large intra-regional fiscal transfers; trade and transport facilitation measures, in a region where tariffs seem not to be the most significant barrier to trade, but rather NTBs and behind-the-border constraints; competitiveness, also on a firm basis; the integration of financial markets; and regional

<sup>62</sup> Angola, the DRC and the Seychelles have neither acceded to the SADC Trade protocol nor are they trading within the COMESA FTA of October 2000. Swaziland & Namibia receive derogations in terms of the COMESA FTA as they are members of SACU. Mozambique and Tanzania are members of SADC only, although the latter is also a member of the EAC, aiming to establish a CU. Nine countries have acceded to the COMESA FTA are Djibouti, Egypt, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Sudan, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

dimensions of good governance concepts and practices.

This overview has also indicated that the sub-region is attracting huge annual amounts of grant funding from bilateral and multilateral sources such as the EU and its constituent countries and USA, and to a lesser extent from the African Development Bank, the World Bank and sub-regional institutions such as the Development Bank of Southern Africa. In its ongoing regional work in ESA there is ample opportunity for partnerships with other donors and financiers to strengthen the collective support to regional integration in the ESA region.



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