

Chapter 14

Fundraising or common foreign policy? 30 Years of SADC Consultative Conference

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1. Regional integration: the external dimension

Regional organisations as well as academics studying regional integration have so far overwhelmingly focused on intra-regional issues, such as the relationship between the member states and the regional centre or specific areas of regional cooperation (e.g. trade integration and infrastructure). However, with the move towards deeper integration and the quest for adding new links to the emerging global governance network the dimension of external relations of regional organisations has come into focus (Hänggi et al. 2006). While it can be assumed that the impact of weak regional organisations on the global system is minor, it can also be assumed that inter-regional, trans-regional, and state-to-region links potentially have a significant influence on organisations such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC). In this regard Hänggi (2003) proclaims the thesis of “regionalism through inter-regionalism”, i.e. the fostering of regionalism through the influence of external actors.

Despite its general weak actor quality, SADC has tried, especially since the 1990s, to establish a network of external relations through its Secretariat, member states' ambassadors, and bilateral forums. However, many of these initiatives were discontinued in the new millennium due to the administrative chaos following the 2001 reform or due to political reasons (Adelman 2007). The failure to consolidate bilateral inter-regional links thus draws even more attention to an institution that is unique among regional organisations (which goes back to a time when external relations were not a common topic for regional organisations): the SADC Consultative Conference (CC). As the conference in 2009, can look back to a 30-year history as SADC's main external relations forum, this article aims to shed some light on the historic development, the changing purpose and the future prospects of

the Consultative Conference. Following a chronological approach, the article explores the crucial role the CC plays in SADC's past and future regional integration.

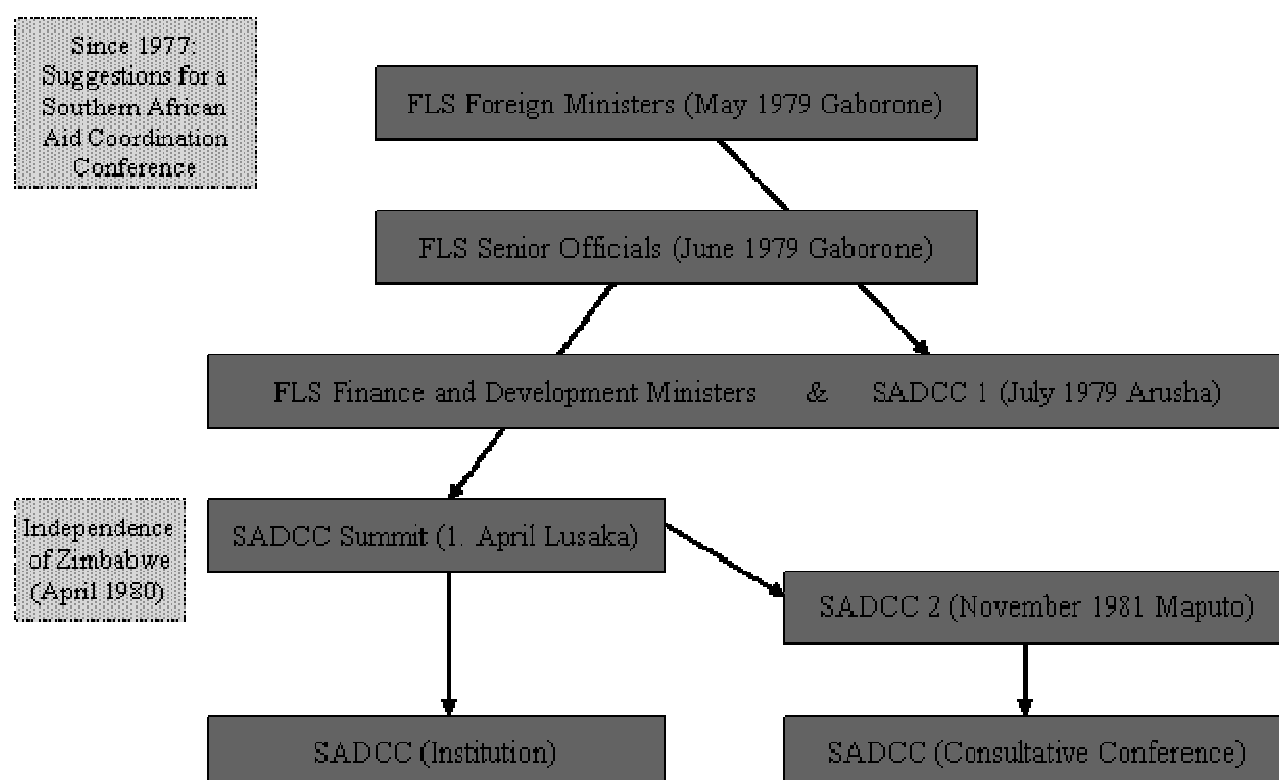
2. The rise and decline of the Consultative Conference

The history of the SADC Consultative Conference can be traced back almost 30 years, thus even preceding SADCC itself. Its founding is closely connected to the political situation at the time. At the end of the 1970s, the region was a political hotspot characterised by the fight against minority governments and civil wars. Economically, falling commodity prices and widespread poverty mirrored the bleak political picture. While the Frontline States (FLS) sought economic stabilisation and a firm stance against apartheid, the western world aimed at regional stability and maintaining its influence without compromising its political and economic ideology. Both interests were served by the idea of a Southern African Aid Coordination Conference (SAACC), which was supported among others by individuals from the European Community (EC), the Commonwealth and the Ford Foundation, and which led to some informal talks (Mandaza and Tostensen 1994: 19ff). The looming independence of Zimbabwe and the question of its future political orientation as well as a possible redistribution of donor money towards this country, prompted the FLS at the Gaborone meeting of 1979 to call for a joint conference of the FLS and the main international donors, as the late Botswana President Sir Seretse Khama (1981: xi) recalled: "in May 1979 Foreign Ministers of the FLS met in Gaborone and decided that a conference of Economic Ministers should be convened at Arusha, to which representatives of bilateral and multilateral external cooperation agencies and institutions should be invited to express their views on our proposed programme of action."

Two months later the first Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC 1) took place in Arusha. During the preparation for the Arusha conference and in a separate FLS meeting preceding it, the idea of a permanent regional institution was born and worked out. Hence, on 1 April 1980, regional leaders met in Lusaka for the founding of SADCC as a regional institution. The Lusaka meeting also decided to institutionalise the idea of a joint development coordination conference

with donors and made reference to it in the founding *Lusaka Declaration*.^[2] Thus, the idea of the joint Southern African Aid Conference (Arusha 1979), later named Consultative Conference, and the founding of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) as a permanent regional institution (Lusaka 1980), are inherently interwoven (Figure 1). The CC as well as the external actors involved in it can therefore be seen as a midwife to the regional organisation.

Figure 1: The Origins of SADC and SADCC Consultative Conference



Source: Own compilation.

After the successful start in Arusha 1979 the Maputo Conference 1981 saw a first round of major financial pledges to SADCC (Table 1). Initially, SADCC and the Consultative Conference were dependent mainly on the group of like-minded states and the EC (Table 2).

^[2] The SADCC Lusaka Declaration states in this regard: "It is envisaged that Southern African Development Coordination meetings of member Southern African States and other invited participants should be held annually."

Table 1: Pledges at SADCC 1 (Maputo 1980)

Donor	Amount (US\$ m)
Australia	1
Germany (Federal Republic)	2
Finland	6
Norway	6
Belgium	8.5
Denmark	10
Italy	15
UNDP	20
Sweden	22
Netherlands	32
US	50
EC	100
African Development Bank	384
Total Amount^[3]	656.5

Source: Braun 1984, based on SADCC: Record of the Ministerial Meeting held in Maputo, Mozambique on 26 November 1980 and reconvened on the afternoon of the 28 November 1980, Annex VI.

Table 2 Share of Foreign Contribution to SADCC by Partners 1980-87

Donor country	\$ m	%
Nordic States	405	24
Italy	199	12
EC	192	11
USA	154	9
Canada	134	8
France	127	8
African Development Bank	109	6
World Bank	56	3
Arab States	55	3
UK	48	3
Netherlands	45	3

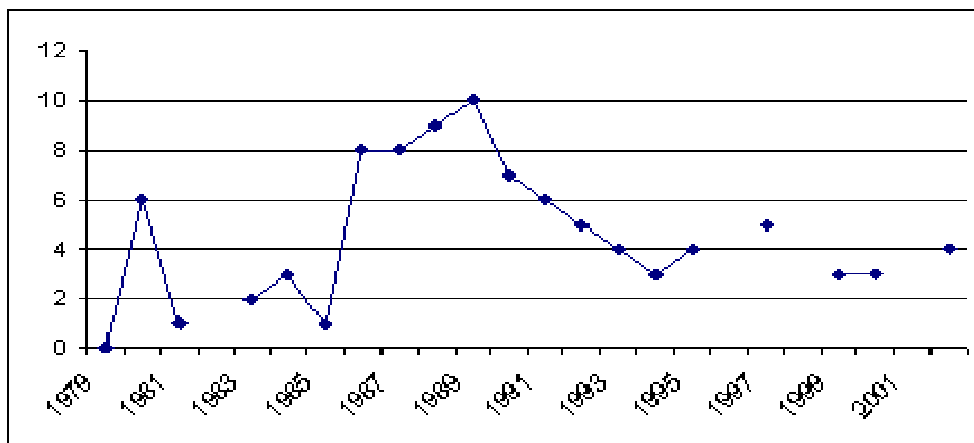
^[3] Austria, Brazil, Canada, France, the GDR, the UK, Switzerland, Venezuela, Yugoslavia, the BADEA, the Kuwait Fund, the OPEC Fund and the World Bank did not specify their support pledge.

Donor country	\$ m	%
Portugal	43	3
Japan	27	2
West Germany	22	1
China	18	1
Austria	11	1
Others	41	2
Total	1.686	100

Source: Hanlon 1989 : 40.

However, from the mid-1980s on, SADCC was able to raise its profile: the traditional supporters signed formal cooperation agreements, the main Western powers gave up their hostility towards the organisation, and the Eastern Block decided to join the Conference in order to counterbalance Western influence (Figure 2). The rising number of states as well as the number of ministers and vice-ministers participating in the CC are a clear indication of the high level profile of the Conference in the late 1980s (Figure 3).

Figure 2: Participation of the Communist Block^[4] in the SADC Consultative Conference

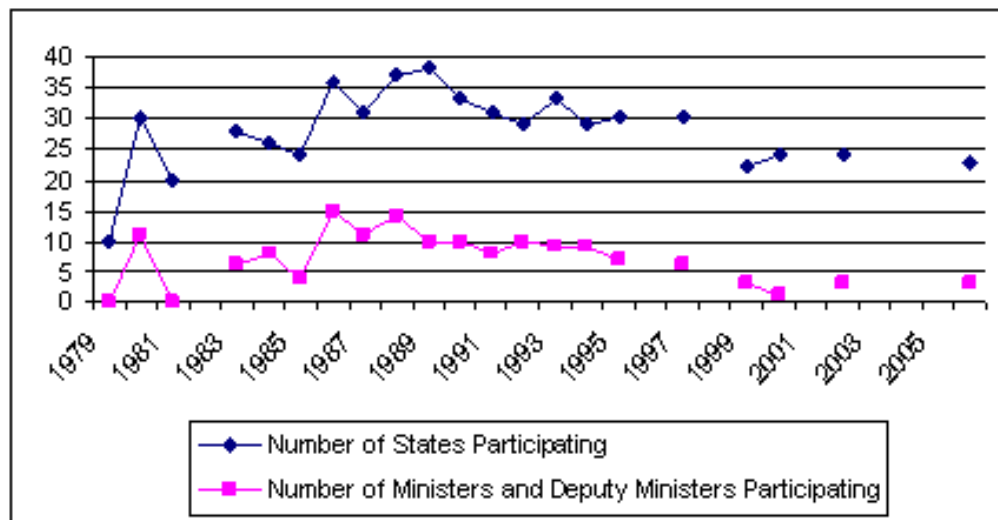


Source: Own compilation based on: SADC: Record of the Consultative Conferences. Several volumes.^[5]

^[4] Including, the Eastern European states of the CMEA and also Yugoslavia, Cuba, China, and North Korea.

^[5] No list of participants is available for the 1996 Conference. In 1982, 1998, 2001, 2003, 2004 and 2005, no conference was held.

Figure 3 Number of non-SADC states and ministers/deputy ministers participating in the Consultative Conference 1979-2006



Source: Own compilation, based on: SADC Record of the Consultative Conferences. Several volumes.

In 1989 Hanlon (1989: 42) observed that “the international community increasingly thinks SADCC” and Green (1989: A28) noted that “SADCC annual conferences have their limitations, but they do work. Co-operating partners have put them in their calendar and do come prepared to discuss and to make at least tentative commitments. The sectoral papers provide a target date and a showcase for new projects, and the lead paper and chairman’s speeches play a similar role for main policy priorities and regional political economic perceptions. SADCC’s image is publicized internationally and regionally.”

But after a successful first decade, the status of the CC declined in the 1990s. In 1993, the Secretariat warned the Council in a briefing document (SADC 1993: 459 and 461) about “the noticeable declining trend in the level of representation and in attendance over the past five conferences... Certainly, fewer ICP Ministers and directors have been coming than in the past. In some cases delegations are being headed by Senior Officials and Ambassadors, and comprise embassy staff where this used be largely Ministers and Senior Officials from the capitals of the invited ICPs... The result has been a lowering in the status of the conferences...The absence of ICP Ministers, in significant numbers should be viewed by SADC as a worrying trend that needs to be addressed”.

As SADC depends heavily on donor funds, the declining status of the Conference presented a threat to the whole organisation. The reasons for the decline are manifold and can be found within but also outside SADC:

First, and most important, are changes in the international environment, notably the end of the Cold War and of the major regional conflicts, which led to a declining interest by the international cooperation partners in the region. Now the partners neither had to outcompete a global rival nor did they have to find ways to balance their policy with regard to the apartheid state. SADC therefore lost its strategic political relevance for the International Cooperation Partners (ICPs).

Secondly, the CC suffered because SADC's relationship with the ICPs had become routine and was no longer confined to the highlight of an annual CC meeting. Development funds were allocated to SADC through ordinary bilateral bureaucratic procedures. In addition, the two most important partners, the Nordic countries and the EU, had established their own bilateral cooperation frameworks: the Nordic-SADC-Initiative (NSI) 1986 and the Berlin Initiative 1994. While these inter-regional initiatives can be seen as an offspring of the CC and occasionally held meetings concurrently with the CC, they nonetheless contributed to a downgrading of the CC, as they presented alternative platforms for high-level political dialogue. The maturity of SADC thus included a loss of functional relevance for the CC.

A third problem was the general frustration of donors with SADC's record of implementation. Only a fraction of the visions and high-flying action plans discussed at the CC translated into concrete projects. The EU's criticism in 1990 that "SADCC has performed very poorly in terms of the disbursement of the Lomé III resources" (SADC 1991:75) is valid and well documented in an independent audit study as well as in SADC documents. The problem of unspent funds continued in the 7th European Development Fund (EDF) so that in 1993 the Council noted with regard to the upcoming 8th EDF that "at this rate it would be difficult for SADC to ask for more resources from the EC" (SADC 1993:38) and that "SADC is losing credibility and risks losing the support of cooperation partners" (Ibid.:39). The SADC Secretariat even spoke of a "poisoned ... atmosphere of cooperation" and warned that "it is now very possible that negative reports on the implementation of the SADC Programme of Action by agency offices in the region back to their capitals could contribute

negatively to the attitudes towards SADC at head offices and could result in more Ministers and directors reviewing their attendance of the consultative conference” (SADC 1993: 462). This lack of performance can mostly be attributed to the decentralised SADC structure, which failed to smoothly administer and implement donor funded projects. The questioning of the developmental function of SADC by the donors was in effect a death threat to the CC.

Finally, the management of SADC-ICP relations and the management of the CC itself also posed problems. SADC failed to establish a satisfactory level of information exchange and consultation with ICPs in-between the meetings and the Conference itself did not do much to facilitate dialogue either. Most of the time at the early conferences was spent on reading out prepared speeches that focused either on past and future pledges or on general topics concerning the north-south relationship. In short, delegates spent a whole day listening to expressions of good will. The half-day working group sessions, which were meant to facilitate dialogue, often suffered from organisational problems, low attendance rate, and unprepared participants as the following note from the Secretariat reveals (SADC 1992:441):

[O]ver the years, concern by both the Secretariat and some of the cooperating partners has been raised over the management of the Sectoral Working Groups, and over the issues that are presented for discussion. The Secretariat has, on a number of times, excluded the proceedings of these consultation meetings from the overall conference Proceedings because most records, like the meetings themselves lacked substance.

Our observations from attending these Working Groups are that most Sectors simply reproduce their sectoral programmes, and then present these verbally. There is no engagement of the cooperating partners on the policy issues that underpin the programmes, no analysis of the operational constraints to efficient project implementation and management, and above all else, there is general lack of touch with issues affecting each project implementation, resulting in rather poor response to questions raised...

There is no doubt too that problems of logistics have also been a contributing factor as there has been unclarity regarding the venues for various meetings. The absence of agendas and distribution of documents late has not helped the

situation. Most participants are, therefore, ill-prepared to engage fully the issues presented for discussion.

The cooperation partners too, are not free of blame. ... some cooperating partners have tended to seek to present set-statements about the role their countries have played in SADCC's Programme of Action, instead of responding to issues on the agenda. Others have tended to limit their intervention to subjects that are more sensational or pet subjects, and thus fail to embrace the full context of the dialogue. Most simply sit through the meetings and say nothing.

Frustrating experiences resulting from mismanagement therefore led to a decline in the personal relevance of the CC for high ranking delegates and to lower incentives to attend the following year. In combination, the multiple decline in relevance led to a crisis of the CC in the 1990s that threatened the future existence of the once shining event.

4. Caught between fundraising and political dialogue

Even more fundamental than the problems discussed above, is the underlying problem of the imprecision inherent in the double function of the CC. According to the 1980 Maputo conference document, the CC aims to fulfil two basic objectives (Kgaraebe 1981:14): "to secure firm pledges from governments and funding agencies for financial and technical support for regional projects ... [and] to explain to the international community SADCC's strategy for the region as a whole and to share their thinking on matters of vital and long range importance for the future of SADCC".

While the early conferences tended to focus either more on pledging (Maputo 1980, Lusaka 1984) or on policy review (Arusha 1979, Blatyre 1981, Maseru 1983), it is clear from speeches and SADC documents that by and large the pledging aspect dominated. Success and failure of the CC were often seen in relation to the number of new pledges received. In an internal review in 2000 SADC (2000:418) stated outright: "Given SADC's dependence on donor funding for carrying out its Programme of Actions, the Consultative Conferences were designed, in particular, to highlight funding gaps for priority projects and seek financial support to fill the gaps". However, the idea of a donor conference was only initially successful; after a while pledges decreased and the ICPs lost interest in the pledging circus.

The focus of the second objective, political consultation, was always twofold. Initially the focus was on SADCC itself. The *Lusaka Declaration* envisaged the Conference as “a mechanism for surveying results, evaluation performance identifying strengths and weaknesses and agreeing all future plans”. The debate on SADC’s policies and structures also remained a topic later on, especially with regard to the structural reform and the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP). Thus, while SADCC was founded to decrease dependency (on RSA and the donors), it is clear that through their financial assistance donors always had an indirect say in SADC affairs.

But the political consultations also had an outward looking dimension, as the CC served as a platform for international diplomacy. Apartheid South Africa was, of course, the most prominent foreign policy issue discussed. With the presence of the ANC, PAC and SWAPO, the conference served as a platform for the liberation movements as well as for a show of solidarity by the independent states. For example, at the Harare Conference (1986), “the chairman issued the first major denunciation of the Reagan Administration hosting of and restoration of military aid to Jonas Savimbi’s Unita as an act of destabilization and aggression in league with SA” (Green 1987: A104). The Gaborone Conference (1987) final communiqué “condemned the continued South African aggression against the SADCC member States and the deepening repression which is taking place inside South Africa itself” and furthermore called upon the international community to redouble its efforts to secure a just and lasting solution to the problems of Southern Africa (SADCC 1987:244). Besides the regional issues, conference speeches from both SADC and ICP also referred to general North-South issues: The fight for a New International Economic Order, debt relief, the 0.7% aid promise or, more recently, aid effectiveness. While it did not play a central role, the CC still served as a mirror of the international North-South trends of the time.

While the CC served as a platform for official foreign policy statements, it also offered the possibility of high-level informal talks. Politically sensitive issues could be informally discussed and networks were built. With regard to SADC’s programme, informal talks contributed to a rationalisation of SADC-ICP relations. The relevance of these informal talks did not go unnoticed by SADC (1993: 459): “A very important aspect of the Conference is the holding of bilateral meetings sometimes in the

corridors of the Conference Centres among the ICPs themselves ... or between ICPs and Ministers and Officials of SADC member States on SADC and on bilateral issues”.

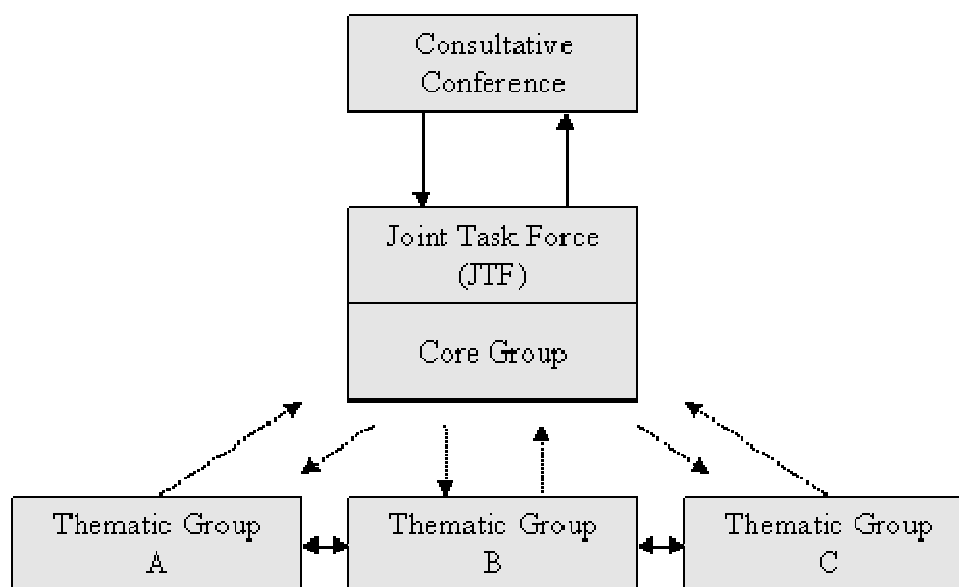
In addition to the problems discussed earlier, it is the wavering between conflicting goals that led to a crisis of the CC which peaked in 1998 when, for the first time, no conference was held. Besides some improvements in conference proceedings, SADC's answer to the crisis was to steer the conference away from unilateral pledges and speeches towards a platform where real dialogue could take place. Symbolically, the event was renamed from 'donor conference' to 'annual conference' and later 'consultative conference'. The time for plenary speeches was cut to give more room for direct interaction in working groups. Thematic background papers prepared by SADC were meant to provide the basis for discussion. To further strengthen the consultative character, the range of participants was broadened to civil society and business members. In 1996 SADC even experimented by holding the CC in the form of an investment forum, but discontinued this approach. Yet, while the reforms pointed in the right direction, many of the old habits persisted and the CC continued to decline. Thus, finally, in 2001, SADC undertook the remarkable step of formally eliminating the objective of receiving new pledges at the conference and to concentrate on bi-annual consultations in the future (SADC 2000:418-425, SADC 2001:57-58). The pledging circus had come to an end. But could the conference be sustained as a mere discussion forum?

5. A New SADC-ICP Partnership?

After SADC-ICP relations had hit rock bottom at the end of the 1990s, the 2001 SADC structural reform and the strategic plans (RISDP and SIPO) as well as the OECD debate on aid effectiveness gave donors incentives to make a fresh start. In October 2003, a Joint Task Force (JTF) was established “to improve coordination between ICPs and SADC” (SADC 2004). The day-to-day work of SADC-ICP cooperation is handled by a Core Group of major Gaborone-based donors led by the EC and the SADC Secretariat. While the JTF serves as a clearing house for information exchange and the general steering of SADC-ICP relations, a number of thematic groups have recently evolved around major cooperation areas such as

water, trade and HIV/AIDS, where donors and SADC staff discuss issues of donor support in the respective sectors.^[6]

Figure 4 Structure of SADC-ICP Cooperation



Source: SADC 2006: Thematic Coordination. Unpublished working paper.

The JTF has successfully worked out a new framework document: the *Windhoek Declaration on a New SADC-ICP Partnership* which spells out objectives and responsibilities of a future SADC-ICP partnership and which was launched at the 2006 Consultative Conference.

On the technical level of aid delivery, the new SADC-ICP structure has the potential to improve aid delivery in terms of the Paris Declaration (Tjonneland 2006 and 2008, EU/Ecodes 2005). The set-up of a donor matrix and thematic working groups will advance donor harmonisation and alignment with SADC strategies. In addition to the chance of increased aid effectiveness, a donor-harmonised approach can also take some bureaucratic weight off the Secretariat, which has hitherto had to deal with about 25 different donors each following different procedures. The ICPs promised in Windhoek to work towards better aid harmonisation (Theodorakis 2006):

^[6] Thematic Groups (Lead ICP): Trade, Industry, Finance and Investment (EU); Water (Germany); Transport (DFID); Energy (Norway); Agriculture and Food Security (DFID); Natural Resources and Environment (FAO); HIV and AIDS (Sweden); Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Affairs (to be identified); Institutional Capacity Building (Core Group).

We ICPs – as your partners – must ensure that the quality of the aid is improved, that the delivery of aid is more efficient and that its impact is more important and sustainable. This can only be achieved if there is more and better cooperation and coordination among donors. Increased coordination and harmonisation, as well as a better division of labour, will lead to better complementarity of our interventions and reduction of transaction costs. It will also reduce the burden of the SADC Secretariat.

With the new working structure in place, the question remains as to what role the CC plays in the SADC-ICP relationship. Empirically, it is too early to draw conclusions as only two CCs have been held under the new framework. The 2006 Windhoek conference had been postponed twice to allow adequate preparation for the launch of the new partnership.^[7] The results of the 2006 Conference were mixed (Adelmann 2006: 11). The aim of facilitating discussion – SADC explicitly discouraged the reading of written speeches – worked out in some working groups (e.g. trade), but there was hardly any meaningful dialogue and a lack of preparation on the part of SADC in others (e.g. politics and security). The absence of high level representatives of the major donors may have contributed to the lack of meaningful political discussion. That both the EC and the US could not refrain from publicly announcing new pledges, even though this was explicitly not part of the agenda of the meeting, illustrates how difficult it is to change the character of the Consultative Conference.

The 2008 Mauritius Conference was initially planned as an International Conference on Poverty and Development, an idea that originated at the 2005 Clinton Global Initiative meeting. In 2007, SADC decided to merge the poverty conference with the bi-annual CC under the joint theme of “Regional Economic Integration: A Strategy for Poverty Eradication towards Sustainable Development” (SADC 2007a: 8). Due to the poverty focus, a large number of participants, many from civil society and the private sector, attended the meeting. However, in terms of ministerial participation, the CC again failed to attract a significant number of high ranking ICP participants. The

^[7] The Consultative Conference was first postponed from November 2004 to April 2005 because the ICPs felt that more time was needed for adequate preparation. See: SADC: Draft Record of the SADC-ICP Core Group Meeting Held at the SADC Secretariat Boardroom 30 May 2004 (SADC 2004). The official reason for the second postponement to April 2006 was the expected low participation of high ranking ICPs and the wish of member countries to make an input to the conference documents (SADC2005: 3). As the Conference is the main platform for SADC to present itself after the reform, as well as to present the programmes RISDP and SIPO, the practical reason behind the postponement must be seen in the delay of the restructuring, including new personnel in the top positions, and the delay in the implementation of RISDP and SIPO.

confirmation of EU Commissioner Louis Michel hung in the air for so long that eventually his presence surprised even the organisers.

In disregard of its own 2001 strategy for the CC, the 2008 conference explicitly reintroduced the notion of a pledging conference. Among others, SADC stated as conference objectives: “To re-mobilize the international community in particular the developed countries to live up to their commitments in regard to increasing the levels of development aid” and “to mobilise resources both at regional and international levels to regional poverty-oriented programmes/projects” (SADC 2007b: 4). While the fundraising element was directed more to prospective multilateral and private donors than to traditional ICPs, it still left the impression that the CC has not fully overcome its fundraising mentality. As in 2006, the programme foresaw considerable time for thematic exchange in discussion groups. However, in the end, there was only time to rush through presentations by SADC, ICPs, and Civil Society, but not for substantial engagement.

As the CC took place shortly after the disputed Zimbabwe elections, at a time when the election results were still not officially released and violence was running high, the SADC Heads of State were more concerned with internal crisis diplomacy than engaging the ICPs. The ICPs, on the other hand, demanded political answers from SADC. The Zimbabwe issue was raised by leading ICP delegates such as Louis Michel (EC), Jens Stoltenberg (Norway) and Irene Freudenschuss-Reichl (Austria) but not taken up by SADC. Apparently, the failure to agree on a joint communiqué at the end of the conference was also related to the inclusion of Zimbabwe in the document (Southern Times 2008).

While the conference managed to agree to the establishment of a SADC Regional Poverty Observatory to monitor the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) progress, there was also criticism from the ICP with regard to organisation and content of the conference: “For the future, we see a need for a more co-operative process to prepare the Consultative Conference, a more focused action-oriented agenda, an earlier preparation of documents, more discussion on substance rather than procedures and, to encourage political participation, a more political approach...” (Freudenschuss-Reichl 2008). The 2008 impression that the conference lacked political substance thus echoed the 2006 demands of the international community,

which had then declared that “the ICPs would welcome a more active dialogue between SADC and the ICPs on political issues” (Theodorakis 2006).

Thus, it seems that while the new SADC-ICP partnership has improved the working relationship on a technical level in Gaborone, the CC still does not fulfil the function of a political dialogue forum.

6. Conclusion: The future of the Consultative Conference

Looking back and forward, it seems clear that apart from organisational problems the CC suffers from a lack of coherence between expectations and reality. This incoherence is rooted in the multipurpose approach of the conference, which in the end satisfies no purpose at all. In order to avoid future frustration and to restore the international standing of the conference, SADC needs to take a clear stand on three related conceptual issues:

First, the question of the level at which the conference is held must be addressed. The Windhoek Declaration foresees that the technical discussion is left to the Gaborone^[8] expert forums (JTF, thematic groups) and that the CC concentrates on high-level political discussion in order to provide policy guidance for SADC-ICP cooperation. However, the idea of holding the CC as a policy meeting on summit or ministerial level has largely been unsuccessful because the ICPs failed to participate on ministerial level and SADC was not prepared to engage in a political dialogue (see below). It therefore seems more realistic to regard the CC as a working meeting, where the JTF and the thematic groups take the opportunity to review their work and to discuss it on a broader platform. This would include donors not involved in the Gaborone-based forums as well as participants from civil society. In fact, the preparation of thematic working papers and working groups in recent conferences underlines its de facto working level character. Such a meeting would encourage a focus on current and future donor-funded programmes, something which is important for SADC. However, it is also clear that a working-level meeting will hardly draw high-level participants to the CC and the rhetoric of ministerial or summit meetings would need to be exchanged for a more realistic approach.

^[8] Some thematic groups hold meetings not in Gaborone but in Tshwane or elsewhere, depending on the diplomatic representation of the lead donor.

Secondly, SADC needs to clarify whether or not it would like the CC to remain a forum revolving solely around the aid paradigm. So far, it is the ICPs rather than SADC who are demanding political dialogue, which then results in a dialogue on Southern African regional politics. The narrowing of the international development discourse on aid effectiveness (Paris Declaration) has already led to a dominance of technical questions over principal political ones. As SADC's main objective with regard to ICPs is still the unleashing of new funds, it is more than likely that the SADC-ICP dialogue will in future focus even more on technical aid questions. While in principle a focus on aid effectiveness is not wrong, SADC needs to be aware of the opportunity costs: it may let slip an opportunity to engage with leading powers on global issues such as trade, climate change and debt—issues that in the end may have more influence on development than individual aid projects.

A third point that has led to some irritation is the grave discrepancy in the understanding of what is meant by the phrase 'political dialogue'. For SADC, political dialogue seems to be limited to a dialogue on the implementation of its strategic programmes RISDP and SIPO, which are largely donor funded. To some extent, this also includes issues of institutional set-up and the future of regional integration. What it does not seem to include is an open discussion on controversial political issues. The latter, however, is what the ICPs understand by political dialogue. In this regard, the ICPs suggested, with explicit reference to Zimbabwe, that the next CC should be devoted to political issues (Freudenschuss-Reichl 2008). Only if SADC is willing to openly discuss sensitive political issues, it can reach its goal of drawing high level ICP representatives to the meetings. Otherwise, the CC may suffer the same fate as the Berlin Initiative where, also due to political differences, ministerial dialogue was downgraded to troika and working level meetings. The communiqué of a 2002 SADC-EU meeting frankly points to the divergent concepts: "The two sides disagreed on the definition of political dialogue" (SADC 2002: 192).

Regarding the future of the CC, two trends are currently visible: On the one hand, SADC has, at the August 2008 Summit, finally decided to further on drop the high-level meeting aspiration and to opt for a more realistic working-level approach.^[9] On the other hand, the strong showing of Asian countries at recent conferences, most

^[9] At the time of writing, the written Record of Council and Summit 2008 was not yet publically available.

notably the inauguration of a SADC-India Forum at the 2006 conference, supports the idea that SADC is more than an aid recipient. The new political and economic scramble for Africa could well once more turn the CC into an arena where East (this time the Far East) and West struggle for political and economic influence. It remains to be seen, whether or not SADC can make use of this situation and restore the conference to a major political event.

As SADC in 2009 will be able to look back on 30 years of engaging the international community in 23 conferences, it is clear that despite continuous problems and shifting focus, the institution of the CC has indeed contributed to regional integration. The founding of SADC(C) and the running of its programmes would have not been the same without the support of international donors. Furthermore, the quest for continued support has been one of the key drivers behind SADC's reform leading towards deeper integration since SADC needs to present itself to the donors as a functioning construct. Finally, the (bi-)annual meetings with external players forces SADC to make up its mind, to make decisions (not always an easy task for SADC), and to jointly discuss its programme with and defend it against external players. The aforementioned thesis that regionalism is spurred through external players, is thus valid for the SADC Consultative Conference.

Table 3: SADC(C) Consultative Conferences 1979-2008

Date	Location	Theme
July 1979	Arusha, Tanzania	SADCC 1
27.11.- 28.11.1980	Maputo, Mozambique	SADCC 2
19.11.- 20.11.1981	Blantyre, Malawi	Southern African Development Co-ordination: From Dependence and Poverty Toward Economic Liberation
1982	-----	-----
27.11.- 28.01.1983	Maseru, Lesotho	Industrial Development, Food, Agriculture
02.11.- 03.02.1984	Lusaka, Zambia	Agriculture
31.01.- 01.02.1985	Mbabane, Swaziland	Food-Agriculture-Energy
30.01.- 31.01.1986	Harare, Zimbabwe	SADCC: The Next Five Years
05.02.- 06.02.1987	Gaborone, Botswana	Investment in Production
28.01.- 29.01.1988	Arusha, Tanzania	Development of Infrastructure and Enterprise
01.02.- 03.02.1989	Luanda, Angola	Productivity Sectors: Engine of Growth and Development
31.01.- 02.02.1990	Lusaka, Zambia	SADCC: The second decade: Enterprise, Skills and Productivity
31.01.- 02.02.1991	Windhoek, Namibia	Human Resources: Primary Factor in Development
29.01.- 31.01.1992	Maputo, Mozambique	Towards Economic Integration
27.01.- 29.01.1993	Harare, Zimbabwe	A framework and strategy for building the community
26.01.- 28.01.1994	Gaborone, Botswana	SADC: Management of Regional Cooperation, Regional Integration in Southern Africa, Regional Relations and Cooperation Post-Apartheid: A Strategy and Policy Framework
01.02.- 04.02.1995	Lilongwe, Malawi	SADC: Resources, Institutions and Capacity for Integration
31.01.- 02.02.1996	Johannesburg, South Africa	SADC: Consultative Conference on Trade and Investment
09.02.-10.02. 1997	Windhoek, Namibia	Productivity: Key to Sustainable Development in SADC
1998	-----	-----

Date	Location	Theme
12.02.1999	Lusaka, Zambia	SADC in the Next Millennium: The Opportunities and Challenges of Information Technology
20.02.- 22.02.2000	Mbabane, Swaziland	Peace, Progress and Prosperity in SADC in the Next Millennium
2001	-----	-----
28.10.- 30.10.2002	Gaborone, Botswana	SADC Institutional Reform for Poverty Reduction through Regional Integration
2003	-----	-----
2004	-----	-----
2005	-----	-----
26.04.- 27.04.2006	Windhoek, Namibia	Partnership for the Implementation of the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Plan and the Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security
2007	-----	-----
18.04.- 20.04.2008	Port Louis, Mauritius	Regional Economic Integration: A Strategy for Poverty Eradication towards Sustainable Development

Source: Own compilation based on: SADC: The Proceedings of the Annual Consultative Conference. SADC, Gaborone, 21 Volumes since 1979.

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