

Foreword

For many years, regional integration has been considered an important and successful tool of economic growth and development. In Southern Africa in particular, with its comparatively small economies, regional integration was meant to play a crucial role in pursuing common strategic interests for the successful economic development of the countries involved.

The negotiations by Southern African countries with the European Union on economic partnership agreements (EPAs) have, however, been widely considered as having a possibly negative impact on the dynamics of regional integration, specifically as regards the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), as well as on the economic growth of the African countries affected. In addition, the global financial crisis and the economic slowdown may impact the development of African countries far more severely than can be projected today. As a result, regional integration – as a paradigm for sustainable economic development – is significantly challenged from a number of angles.

This Yearbook 2008 and its articles therefore provide crucial and other increasingly important information on the status and development of regional integration in the Southern African subcontinent. From 2000 to date, the yearbook was intended – and has indeed served – not only as a pivotal source of well-researched information for academics and politicians alike, but also as a constructive stimulus to debate on regional integration and its potential to thrust forward the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and even the continent itself.

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation shows both a keen interest and deep involvement in regional integration. This reflects the very nature of the organisation – being named after Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany and one of the founders of the European Union; but it also bears testimony to the foundation's conviction that regional integration and its dynamics will lead to sustainable development and the eventual benefit of the people. For this reason, by way of its programmes in more than 100 countries, the foundation has been actively associated with regional integration in Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia.

In order to implement its programmes, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation relies on its qualified partners worldwide. In this instance, therefore, we are most grateful for the vital role played by the Trade Law Centre for Southern Africa (tralac) and the Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit (NEPRU) in their facilitation of this project and this associated publication.

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