

Foreword

Regional integration and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have been considered as important and successful instruments of political cooperation, economic growth, socio-economic development and general stability. Whilst globalisation with all its implications has taken its irreversible and speedy course, the dynamics of regional integration are slow – and RECs, especially in Africa, are not fully meeting their visions, not fulfilling all their promises, and not yet delivering the desired outcomes and services to the members of their communities and states.

Especially in the southern African region, with its comparatively small economies, it was hoped that regional integration would play a crucial role in pursuing common strategic interests for the successful socio-economic and political development of the countries involved. However, the latest developments surrounding the economic partnership agreements (EPAs) of some Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states with the European Union, and the current debate about the future of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), already seem to be having a negative impact on achievements as regards creating common ground among SADC member states towards the EU and to the benefit of the SADC region as a whole. Although SADC was not affected by the global financial crisis to the extent suffered by other countries and regions in the world, it could have, as a strong REC, responded more effectively to it.

Regional integration and strong RECs in general and a strong SADC in particular could pay dividends – especially in the context of challenges which go far beyond the boundaries and the resources of individual states and regions. Global challenges like climate change with its expectedly huge impact on Africa, the globalisation of economic affairs, and the financial crisis (to name but a few) cannot be overcome by individual countries, but require the united efforts of regional blocs and continents. Global and regional challenges affecting Africa should stimulate regional integration, if anything, and lead to the strengthening of its organs. For the sake of regional integration, certain national interests and unilateral efforts should be abandoned – although the opposite seems to drive many of the stakeholders. Regional integration

is still unfinished business, however, and needs fresh commitment and strong reinforcement.

The Yearbook 2009 provides 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 an essential source of well-researched information for academics and politicians alike, but it also stimulates constructive debate on regional integration and its potential to propel SADC – and even the continent itself – into the future with additional impetus.

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation shows both a keen interest and a 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 as well as being 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 for all.

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) in their facilitation not only of this associated publication.

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