

## **Responsibilities of the Regional Chairperson**

The responsibilities of the Regional Chair who holds dual roles as the Head of Council and the Chief Executive Officer of the Region.

As the Head of Council, the Regional Chair acts as the Chief Executive Officer of the Region and provides leadership to Regional Council. Regional Chair also serves as an observer at the Pan African Parliament's REC committees.

Specifically, the Regional Chair presides over Council meetings so that its business can be carried out efficiently and effectively; provides information and recommendations to the Regional Committee with respect to the role of Regional Committee; and represents the Region at official functions and Missions.

As the Chief Executive Officer, the Regional Chair upholds and promotes the purposes of the Region and fosters public interest and involvement in the Region and its activities.

The Regional Chair acts as the Region's representative within and outside the REC to AfriDU, other Regional Chairs, and Pan African Parliament and Federal governments.

The Regional Chair promotes the Region at local, national and international levels and participates in activities that enhance the economic, social and environmental well-being of the REC and its Citizens.

The Regional Chair is also a Member of the Extended Executive of the Organization and sits on the Federal Congress with full Voting powers. He/She has duty to Abide by the Regional Constitution on which is Superseded by the Federal Constitution.

Regional Chairpersons shall have reporting sessions with the Federal Chairperson conducted as per his/Her Visit.

They shall Hold Regional Meetings Twice a year as per Organization's PlenaryCalendar.

Regional Chairpersons have a responsibility to attend Regional Summit of the AU, EU or any Partners/ Stakeholders.

## **Background on the formation of REC's**

Since the early 1960s, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) has encouraged African states to combine their economies into sub-regional markets that would ultimately form one Africa-wide economic union. Within the OAU, various resolutions and declarations adopted by specifically the Summits in Algiers in September 1968, in Addis Ababa in August 1970 and May 1973, identified the need for the economic integration of the Continent as a pre-requisite for the realization of the objectives of the Organization.

In July 1977 the Summit in Libreville endorsed the Kinshasa Declaration adopted by the OAU Council of Ministers in December 1976 concerning the establishment of an African Economic Community, which was to be attained in successive stages. The "Monrovia Declaration of Commitment on the Guidelines and Measures for National and Collective Self-reliance in Economic and Social Development for the Establishment of a New International Order" called for the creation of an African Common Market as a prelude to an African Economic Community.

In 1980 the OAU Extraordinary Summit adopted the Lagos Plan of Action as a major step towards the goal of integration. The commitments in this Plan and the Final Act of Lagos were translated into concrete form in Abuja in June 1991 when the OAU Heads of State and Government signed the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community (popularly known as the Abuja Treaty) during the 27th ordinary session of the OAU. The Abuja Treaty came into force after the requisite numbers of ratification in May 1994.

The aim of the Abuja Treaty is to establish an African Economic Community to promote economic, social and cultural development, as well as African economic integration, in order to increase self-sufficiency and indigenous development and to create a framework for development, mobilization of human resources and material.

The AEC further aims to promote cooperation and development in all aspects of human activity, with a view to raising the standard of life of Africa's people, maintaining economic stability and establishing close and peaceful relationships between member states. By breaking with the market approach to integration in Africa, the Abuja Treaty marked a watershed in the history of African experience with integration. With its emphasis on the development of the continent's

productive capacity as a pre-requisite for increased intra-African trade, the Treaty shifted Africa's priorities and objectives.

The Treaty aimed to develop and diversify Africa's productive base by focusing on agriculture, mining and industry so as to increase locally-produced goods and services which will later give rise to more intra-African trade flows. To facilitate both the expansion of the productive base and increased intra-African trade, another key objective of the Treaty is the integration, rehabilitation and modernization of the continent's infrastructural network so as to build a more efficient and operational intra-African transportation and communications system.

The Treaty provides for the African Economic Community to be set up through a gradual process, in 6 stages over 34 years, i.e. by 2028, as follows:

STAGE 1: Strengthening existing RECs and creating new ones where needed (5 years);

STAGE 2: Stabilization of tariff and other barriers to regional trade and the strengthening of sectoral integration, particularly in the field of trade, agriculture, finance, transport and communication, industry and energy, as well as coordination and harmonization of the activities of the RECs (8 years);

STAGE 3: Establishment of a free trade area and a Customs Union at the level of each REC (10 years);

STAGE 4: Coordination and harmonization of tariff and non-tariff systems among RECs, with a view to establishing a Continental Customs Union (2 years);

STAGE 5: Establishment of an African Common Market and the adoption of common policies (4 years); and

STAGE 6: Integration of all sectors, establishment of an African Central Bank and a single African currency, setting up of an African Economic and Monetary Union and creating and electing the first Pan-African Parliament (5 years).

### **Relations between the AEC and the RECs**

In accordance with Article 88 of the Abuja Treaty, the foundation of the Treaty is that the African Economic Community must be established mainly through the coordination, harmonization and progressive integration of the activities of the RECs. To this end, member states are expected to promote the coordination and

harmonization of the integration activities of the RECs of which they are members with the activities of the AEC, it being understood that the establishment of the latter is the final objective towards which the activities of existing and future RECs must be geared.

**The existing RECs are:**

AMU (Arab Maghreb Union); ECCAS (Economic Community of Central African States); COMESA (Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa); SADC (Southern African Development Community); IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority for Development); and ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States); EAC (East African Community); CEN-SAD/COMESSA (Community of Sahel Sahara States).

Note: The AMU remains the only major REC that has not yet signed the Protocol on Relations between the AEC and the RECs. The other RECs in Africa, often described as sub-regional economic communities (SECs) are: CEMAC (Central African Economic and Monetary Community); UEMOA/WAEMU (West African Economic and Monetary Union); CEPGL (Great Lakes River Basin); IOC (Indian Ocean Commission); MRU (Mano River Union); and SACU (Southern African Customs Union).

A Protocol on Relations between the AEC and the RECs was signed and entered into force on 25 February 1998, and has the following objectives, to:

To strengthen the existing RECs in accordance with the provisions of the Abuja Treaty, treaties and this Protocol;

To promote the coordination and harmonization of the policies, measures, programmes and activities of RECs to ensure that the provisions of Article 6 of the Treaty are implemented in a harmonious manner to facilitate, at stage five set out in Article 6 of the Treaty, an efficient integration of the RECs into the African Common Market; To promote closer cooperation among the RECs; and To provide an institutional structure for the coordination of relations between the Community and the RECs on the implementation of stages 1 through 4 set out in Article 6 of the Treaty.

While the Protocol also serves as an instrument and framework for close cooperation, programme harmonization and coordination, as well as integration

among the RECs, it offers comparatively little direction as to how the RECs ought to relate to each other.

In some instances, duplication and overlapping of activities exist between individual RECs, e.g. between SADC and COMESA. This is further complicated by the practice of multiple memberships by African countries to many intergovernmental organizations and RECs. Such a trend makes the task of horizontal cooperation difficult, as the same country would be progressing towards economic integration at different places in the different communities to which it belongs.

In addition, cooperation at the regional level is not complicated by the fact that the RECs are not progressing towards the AEC at the same pace, nor are they following similar procedures and processes to reach that aim.

It should be appreciated that, although the RECs are recognized as the building blocks of the AEC, there appears to be no clear evidence that all existing RECs have the long-term continental integration in view, or that there is the political will within all the RECs to submit regional concerns to the overriding imperatives of the Union.

### **Relationship between the Abuja Treaty and the African Union**

The central theme of the Extraordinary Summit in Sirte on 9 September 1999 was the commitment to accelerate the process envisaged by the Abuja Treaty, in particular: Shortening the implementation periods of the Treaty; and The speedy establishment of all the institutions provided for in the Abuja Treaty, such as the African Central Bank, the African Monetary Union, the African Court of Justice, and the Pan-African Parliament. Subsequent to this, the 2000 OAU/AEC Summit in Lomé adopted the Constitutive Act of the African Union. In programmatic terms, the African Union is premised on pursuing the objectives of the OAU Charter and Abuja Treaty.

As stated in the Preamble of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, the Union is also premised on the accelerated implementation of the Abuja Treaty in order to promote the socio-economic development of Africa and to face more effectively the challenges posed by globalization.

In terms of its legal status, the Abuja Treaty and its envisaged Protocols forms an integral part of the OAU Charter. Article 33(1) of the Constitutive Act of the

African Union stipulates that the Act will replace the OAU Charter, while Article 33(2) stipulates that provisions of the Act will take precedence over and supersede any inconsistent or contrary provisions of the Abuja Treaty.

The OAU Summit in Lusaka from 9 to 11 July 2001 reaffirmed the status of the RECs as building blocs of the African Union and the need for their close involvement in the formulation and implementation of all programmes of the Union. At the Maputo Summit in 2003 the Commission was requested to accelerate the preparation of a new draft Protocol on Relations between the African Union and the RECs; to widen the consultations on the new Protocol to also involve member states and other stakeholders; and to keep member states informed of progress. The RECs were requested to cooperate with the Commission in order to ensure a speedy conclusion of the new Protocol, which must be presented to the next meeting of the Executive Council.

A number of relevant developments have taken place since the signing of the original Protocol between the AEC and the RECs. These include the creation of the African Union and its organs, in particular the Peace and Security Council (PSC) and the Pan-African Parliament (PAP). In terms of programmes of action, the African Union has adopted NEPAD as the blueprint for African development and recovery, in which the RECs are designated as implementing agencies for the programme. A second programme of action adopted in terms of the CSSDCA process is the Memorandum of Understanding on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa. These developments, seen in the context of the broader process of globalization, will impact on the relationship between the African Union and the RECs.

Relationship between the Peace and Security Council and regional security mechanisms

Article 16 of the Protocol establishing the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union recognizes the regional mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution as part of the overall security architecture of the Union, which has the primary responsibility for promoting peace, security and stability in Africa. In this respect, the PSC and the Chairperson of the Commission, must:

Harmonize and coordinate the activities of Regional Mechanisms in the field of peace, security and stability to ensure that these activities are consistent with the objectives and principles of the Union; Work closely with Regional Mechanisms, to

ensure effective partnership between them and the PSC in the promotion and maintenance of peace, security and stability. The modalities of such partnership must be determined by the comparative advantage of each and the prevailing circumstances;

The PSC must, in consultation with Regional Mechanisms, promote initiatives aimed at anticipating and preventing conflicts and, in circumstances where conflicts have occurred, peace-making and peace-building functions.

In undertaking these efforts, Regional Mechanisms concerned must, through the Chairperson of the Commission, keep the PSC fully and continuously informed of their activities and ensure that these activities are closely harmonized and coordinated with the activities of PSC. The PSC must, through the Chairperson of the Commission, also keep the Regional Mechanisms fully and continuously informed of its activities.

In order to ensure close harmonization and coordination and facilitate regular exchange of information, the Chairperson of the Commission must convene periodic meetings, but at least once a year, with the Chief Executives and/or the officials in charge of peace and security within the Regional Mechanisms.

The Chairperson of the Commission must take the necessary measures, where appropriate, to ensure the full involvement of Regional Mechanisms in the establishment and effective functioning of the Early Warning System and the African Standby Force. Regional Mechanisms must be invited to participate in the discussion of any question brought before the PSC whenever a Regional Mechanism is addressing that question is of special interest to that Organization. The Chairperson of the Commission must also be invited to participate in meetings and deliberations of Regional Mechanisms.

In order to strengthen coordination and cooperation, the Commission must establish liaison offices to the Regional Mechanisms. The Regional Mechanisms must be encouraged to establish liaison offices to the Commission. On the basis of the above provisions, a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation must be concluded between the Commission and the Regional Mechanisms.

Relationship between the Pan-African Parliament and regional parliamentary forums  
Article 18 of the Protocol to the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community relating to the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) specifies that the PAP

must work in close cooperation with the Parliaments of the RECs as well as the National Parliaments or other deliberative organs of member states. To this effect, the PAP may, in accordance with its Rules of Procedure, convene annual consultative fora with the Parliaments of the RECs and the National Parliaments or other deliberative organs to discuss matters of common interest.

### **Role of RECs in the implementation of NEPAD**

A pre-condition for sustainable development identified by NEPAD is a regional (or sub-regional) approach to development, for which purpose the five regional economic groupings of the Continent must be strengthened. NEPAD will give priority to the capacity building in order to enhance the effectiveness of existing regional structures and the rationalization of existing regional organizations.

In terms of the implementation of NEPAD programmes and projects, the RECs, as building blocks of the African Union, form the regional level for planning, coordination, and monitoring of the integration process. To this end the RECs will operate through their secretariats, commissions or technical units to coordinate and facilitate the development and implementation of programmes. The RECs will also have the primary responsibility for seeking the full participation of all regional stakeholders in the planning, development and implementation stages of their respective projects.

The NEPAD Secretariat is currently engaged in an interactive programme with the Secretariats of the RECs in order to align the REC development action plans with the overall NEPAD framework, as well as to facilitate the implementation of NEPAD programmes and projects by the respective RECs.

The NEPAD Extended Steering Committee held a workshop with representatives of the RECs and partner organizations in Addis Ababa, from 2 to 4 August 2002 and produced a clear statement of the priority actions and interventions under each NEPAD priority area for the next twelve months and beyond. At this meeting the point was made that NEPAD was not an implementing agency. It was emphasized that implementation will be carried out at the level of member states, the RECs and by continental institutions. As such the NEPAD Secretariat will not be directly involved in implementation, and will act as a catalyst, facilitator and negotiator.

At its 5th meeting held in Abuja on 3 November 2002, the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSIC) observed that, in line with the Constitutive Act of the African Union, the RECs are essential building blocks for the integration and economic development of Africa. In this connection, it recognized that RECs have a key role to play in the implementation of NEPAD programmes and projects, and called upon the RECs to play a leading role in the implementation of infrastructure projects at regional level.

#### Memorandum of Understanding on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa

One of the decisions of the Durban Summit in 2002 was the approval of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa, as part of the CSSDCA process. The MoU provides the following framework: Core values concerning security, stability, development and cooperation; Commitments to give effect to these core values; Key performance indicators to evaluate compliance with the commitments in the MoU; A framework of implementation as a means of carrying out the commitments contained in the MoU; and An agreed mechanism for measuring performance. Specifically concerning regional integration and the role expected to be played by the RECs, the following aspects of the MoU must be considered:

**Core values:** To respect and abide by the following core values as guidelines to the relationship between African states:

Cooperation and integration in Africa is key to the continent's socio-economic transformation and effective integration into the world economy.

Harmonisation and strengthening of RECs in key areas as an essential component of the integration process; through the transfer of certain responsibilities as well as effective reporting and communication structure involving the RECs in continental initiatives.

Strong political commitment including the involvement of all stakeholders, the private sector, civil society, women and youth as a fundamental principle for the achievement of regional economic integration and development.

**Commitment to give effect to core values:** To give effect to the above core values, African states undertake to: Strengthen, consolidate and sustain regional and continental conflict management mechanisms, with primary emphasis on the

African Union Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution and its early warning system.

Establish a strong cooperation framework for security between the RECs, the African Union and the UN. Provide political support for regional integration by making appropriate institutional arrangements, including legislative measures, to support integration.

Provide adequate financial support for regional integration and cooperation by incorporating member states contributions to RECs and the African Union within annual national budgets, and/or putting in place a self-financing mechanism to ensure their efficient functioning.

Involve all national stakeholders in the regional integration process including giving them an appropriate role.

Participate fully in infrastructure development programmes pertaining to regional integration process. Develop and adhere to a common industrial strategy that takes into account the need for a fair distribution of industries within the RECs.

Key performance indicators Member states agree to adopt the following key performance indicators to evaluate compliance with the commitments undertaken in MoU:

Establishment of a firm and binding commitment by all member states for all the RECs to attain full Customs Union status by 2005, and full Common Market status by 2010, in line with African Union integration objectives and the call by the CSSDCA Solemn Declaration to work towards a shortened timetable for the full realization of the AEC.

Harmonized macroeconomic policies including comprehensive convergence criteria and sectoral policy coordination to be completed by 2005 in all RECs, in order to achieve the goal of 7% GDP growth rate annually as called for in the NEPAD within the context of integration arrangement.

Conclusion and adoption by 2005 of a single investment code in each REC to provide a common enabling environment, in conformity with the projected Customs Union.

Adoption by 2005, in regions where they do not exist, of binding Agreements and

protocols on all the major physical integration projects that have been identified, includes priority access for landlocked countries and the participation of all countries in projects.

Binding agreement reached by 2005 on common industrial policy within RECs. Complete by 2005, the harmonization and rationalization of all RECs, in order to facilitate convergence into the African Union.

Strengthened framework and programme for deepening horizontal interactions among RECs starting 2002 in fulfilment of the Protocol on relations between the AEC and the RECs, and, in line with the Lusaka Summit decision on the establishment of the African Union.

#### Framework for Implementation

Within the framework of implementation as a means of carrying out the commitments contained in the MoU, all the RECs must be provided with appropriate institutional framework for the implementation of the CSSDCA Solemn Declaration and the MoU on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation.

#### Influences on South Africa's foreign policy

The actual implementation of the regional integration process lies within the ambit of member states. Article 5 of the Abuja Treaty specifies that member states must undertake to create favorable conditions for the development of the AEC and the attainment of its objectives, particularly by harmonizing their strategies and policies. They shall refrain from any unilateral action that may hinder the attainment of the said objectives.

Furthermore, each member state must, in accordance with its constitutional procedures, take all necessary measures to ensure the enactment and dissemination of such legislation as may be necessary for the implementation of the provisions of the Treaty.

As the culmination of the political and economic action of the continent, the African Union can only achieve its full potential if its regional building blocks are in place. For this reason, particular attention is given to the restructuring of SADC, a process that has in effect created a totally new organization in the Southern African region. Within the region SADC will of necessity remain the primary

vehicle for South African policy and action to achieve regional economic development.

Of particular importance in the Southern African context, is the development of SADC's 5-year Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) which will be aimed at operationalizing the restructured SADC. This plan is informed by NEPAD so as to ensure that the SADC development agenda is aligned with that of the African Union. Naturally the effective operationalization of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defense and Security will underpin the RISDP.

As a prerequisite for the successful implementation of NEPAD, in South Africa's engagement with the continent it will continue to contribute to the creation of an enabling environment for the resolution of conflicts in Africa, and promote and work towards the creation of a peaceful region and Continent. To this end, South Africa's work in the African continent will be to promote the country's regional and multilateral interests towards the realization of the African Renaissance through the promotion of the objectives of the African Union and NEPAD, in the following areas:

Within Southern Africa, South Africa will seek to maximize the potential of each SADC member state in terms of security and stability; economic and social development and civil society interaction; in support of the restructuring of SADC and the implementation of NEPAD.

For the rest of the Continent, South Africa will seek to maximize the potential of African countries in terms of security and stability; economic and social development and civil society interaction; in support of the operationalization of the African Union and its organs, in particular the Commission; the rationalization and strengthening of the RECs for the implementation of NEPAD.

South Africa will also oversee the national implementation of NEPAD in terms of the identification and implementation of projects; assist in creating a greater synergy and compatibility between national, regional and continental programmes of action, and promote efforts towards developing appropriate capacities in both RECs and individual countries.

By utilizing the appropriate mechanisms of the Continent such as the RECs, South Africa intend to work towards the actual design and implementation of social and

economic development projects, as identified within the framework of NEPAD, bilateral commissions and like-minded multilateral groupings.