

Southern Africa, regionalism and the SADC¹

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Suider-Afrika is 'n belangrike streek in Afrika waar politieke en ekonomiese samewerking tussen state reeds dekades gelede 'n aanvang geneem het. Dit was die geval selfs voor Uniewording in 1910, maar sedert die 1990's het dit dramaties toegeneem. Die veranderde realiteit met betrekking tot regionalisme in Suider-Afrika het saamgeval met die beëindiging van Apartheid in Suid-Afrika en die gepaardgaande normalisering van internasionale verhoudinge in die streek. Dit is ook die geval dat die groei van regionalisme in Suider-Afrika en die positiewe ekonomiese en veiligheidsamewerking tussen die state van die streek wat daaruit gevloei het, direk verband hou met die beëindiging van die burgeroorloë in Mosambiek (1992) en Angola (2002) en die endemiese algemene konflik wat so kenmerkend van Afrika was in die tweede helfte van die twintigste eeu. Die "wedloop om Afrika" en die eksterne buitelandse koloniale belange wat daarmee saamgeval het, het natuurlik baie bygedra tot die gebrek aan eenheid in Afrika. Die Suider-Afrikaanse Ontwikkelingsgemeenskap (SAOG) het midde-in hierdie ontstuiimige historiese omstandighede sy beslag as regionale organisasie in die sub-kontinent gekry.

Veral sedert 1994 het politieke en ekonomiese interaksie skerp gegroei en het 'n definitiewe regionale identiteit en bewussyn in Suider-Afrika begin ontwikkel. Regionalisme in Suider-Afrika word natuurlik spesifiek met die SAOG geassosieer as 'n internasionale organisasie met 'n tweeledige doel, naamlik die bevordering van ekonomiese integrasie en die versterking van regionale solidariteit, vrede en veiligheid in die streek. Die vraag is waar die SAOG in 2009 staan in die realisering van sy doelwitte en watter struikelblokke in die weg staan van sy suksesvolle funksionering.

Keywords:

Southern Africa; Regionalism; Globalization; Development; African politics; SADC.

¹ The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has been in existence since 1980 when it was formed as a loose alliance of nine states in Southern Africa with the main aim of lessening economic dependence on the then apartheid South Africa. SADC, 2009 (available at <http://www.sadc.int/index/print/page/52> as accessed on 5 Junie 2009).

Introduction

Since the 1990s a renewed international interest in regions and regionalism has been observed. This makes the theme of this article important and relevant. We are indeed spectators of a noted awareness of the possibilities of regional cooperation and institution-building.² Also, there has been a growing tendency in the world to look for additional and/or new mechanisms and instruments of cooperation in the field of politics, security, and economics. Regional forms of governance and organisation are indeed confronting conventional understandings of power and authority in world politics.³

South-East Asia, associated with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), North America with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and Southern Africa, closely identified with SADC, are relevant examples of this trend. Smith⁴ states that regions and regionalism can be used in a practical sense to analyse central issues of world politics and to understand them better. It is also argued that successful regionalism contributes to global order and stability. However, there is the perceived negative possibility that regional groupings of states can become protective in their activities and in this process isolate themselves from the world economy.⁵ This negative trend is presently not observed in the case of SADC.

In this analysis the focus is on the SADC as a regional organization representing 15 countries in Southern Africa. As part of a worldwide trend the importance of the SADC as a regional organisation has grown exponentially with the addition of South Africa as a formal member in 1992. With its "... vision of a common future for the region that will ensure economic well-being, improvement of the standards of living and quality of life, freedom and social justice, peace and security for the peoples of Southern Africa" (SADC, 2009)⁶, it has created massive expectations throughout the region and in the rest of Africa. The problem with this is that all policy decisions and policy implementations are judged by friend and foe in the light of the mentioned vision and the goals obviously flowing from that. From the start, this fact presented the SADC with a range of difficult challenges. The last part of the

2 M Smith, "Regions and regionalism", B White, R Little & R Smith (eds.), *Issues in world politics* (Hampshire, Palgrave/Macmillan, 2005), pp. 58-77.

3 P Sutch & J Elias, *International relations: the basics* (Abingdon Oxon, Routledge, 2007), pp. 88-89.

4 M Smith, "Regions and regionalism", B White, R Little & R Smith (eds.), *Issues in world politics...* p. 59.

5 B Russett, H Starr & D Kinsella, *World politics: the menu for choice*, 8th ed. (Belmont CA, Thomson & Wadsworth, 2006), p. 431.

6 SADC, 2009 (available at <http://www.sadc.int/index/print/page/52> as accessed on 5 Jun. 2009).

article elaborates further on this point in highlighting the obstacles which the SADC will have to overcome as a condition for success.

In addition, the aims of the article are to explore the extent to which regionalism has manifested itself in Southern Africa and to reflect on the institutional framework and interactions of the SADC in general. Firstly, however, as a background and introduction to the general theme the attention will now be shifted to regionalism as a dynamic theoretical concept in world politics. An attempt will be made to define it and to show its relevance with regard to Southern Africa.

Regionalism – a theoretical clarification

It is important to realize from the outset that there are many definitions of regionalism and that it is regarded as an ambiguous term.⁷ Seen from an economic perspective, regionalism as a process consists of a group of countries that implemented a set of preferential policies designed to enhance the exchange of goods among themselves.⁸ Along these lines of thought Lee⁹ defined regionalism as “...the adoption of a regional project by a formal regional economic organization designed to enhance the political, economic, social, cultural, and security integration and/or cooperation of member states”. This amounts to what Russett, Starr and Kinsella¹⁰ describe as the coordinated activities of countries which are geographically close to each other regarding their economic interactions and foreign economic policies.

It can be argued that SADC is an example of this phenomenon. Behind all of this lies the ultimate goal of economic integration which is the creation of a single market out of a number of separate markets previously defined by national boundaries. Once a number of states in close proximity join together to form a federal political and economic union, the level of regional integration has been achieved. The European Union is an example of this advanced stage of regionalism, while SADC is presently in the position of a

7 A Hurrell, “Regionalism in theoretical perspective”, L Fawcett & A Hurrell (eds.), *Regionalism in world politics: Regional organisation and international order* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 38.

8 A Wyatt-Walter, “Regionalism, globalisation and world economic order”, L Fawcett & A Hurrell (eds.) *Regionalism in world politics...*, p. 39.

9 MC Lee, *The political economy of regionalism in Southern Africa* (London, Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2003), p. 8.

10 B Russett, H Starr & D Kinsella, *World politics: the menu for choice...* p. 430.

regional organisation still in the process of trying to achieve this goal.¹¹ As such SADC is described as a regional community in the making in spite of the fact that it is the oldest regional community in Africa.¹²

To further clarify the meaning of regionalism, Smith¹³ refers to Stubbs and Underhill¹⁴ who identified three important elements of regionalism. In the first instance, in order to make it possible to refer to a region, there must be a number of countries located in a specific geographic area with a more or less common historical background and experience. Secondly, those countries are characterised by close linkages of a specific nature, which means that the region is demarcated involving distinct countries of which interactions with one another are more frequent and deeper than with those outside the region. Smith¹⁵ refers to this intensification of interactions as regionalization. Thirdly, for regionalism to become a reality, an organisation must be created which can endow the region with a legal and institutional identity.

Thus, the key elements for regionalism to exist are proximity of member states, intensity of relationships, and the existence of a legal institutional base. Conscious policy which is applicable to all the member states is important and forms part of the legal foundation of the regional organisation and its conduct. When applied to SADC it is clear that it qualifies for the status of regionalism – its members are mostly in close proximity to each other in Southern Africa, relationships among them are close with a shared awareness of a common destiny, and with the existence of a legal institutional framework.

As has already been hinted, regionalisation is a concept with a wider implied meaning and is defined by Lee¹⁶ as: "...the process by which state and non-state actors seek to enhance their economic, political, cultural, social, and security interaction with societal forces within a region through formal or informal structures." To make the difference between regionalism and regionalisation clearer, the following example will suffice: cross-border informal trade is regarded as a form of regionalisation. However, it is also a factor in enhancing the economic integration of a region. The informal nature of this, however,

11 M Griffiths & T O'Callaghan, *International relations: the key concepts* (London, Routledge, 2003), p.156.

12 G Le Pere & E Tjønneland, "Which way SADC: Advancing co-operation and integration in Southern Africa", (Occasional Paper no. 50, Institute of Global Dialogue, Johannesburg, 2005), p. 42.

13 M Smith, *Regions and regionalism...* p. 60.

14 R Stubbs & G Underhill, *Political economy and the changing global order*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 231-234.

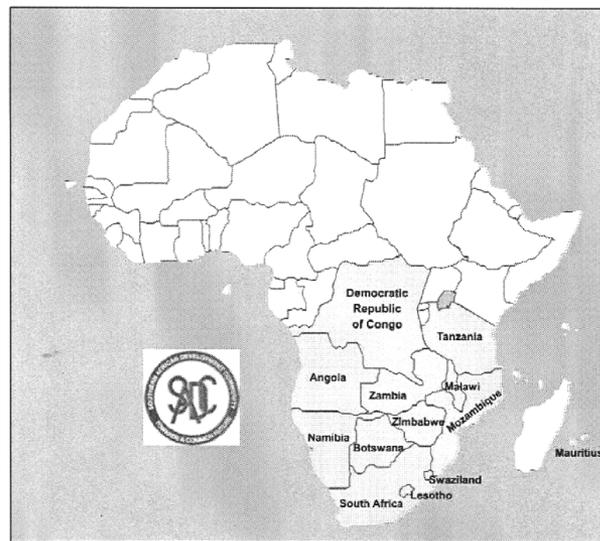
15 M Smith, *Regions and regionalism...* p. 60.

16 MC Lee, *The political economy of regionalism in Southern Africa...* p. 8.

puts it outside the activities/domain of regionalism.

Currently, it is generally acknowledged that the European Union (EU) is the best example of regionalism in the world. It consists of a highly developed set of institutions expressing not only the economic but also increasingly the political integration of the Western European region. Recently it was extended into central and Eastern Europe and now also covers the field of security and defence.¹⁷ The current (2009) example of the EU as a successful regional organisation contributed significantly to the present occurrence of regionalism worldwide, but the extent to which different regional organisations were directly influenced by the EU in terms of organization and general conduct, is not exactly clear.

The focus now shifts to Southern Africa as a separate region in the world under the banner of the SADC. This international governmental organisation (IGO) will be analysed in terms of its origin, institutional framework, and functioning. An attempt will also be made to show that the SADC is indeed a valid example of regionalism in Southern Africa. (See figure 1).



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Figure 1: A map of Africa, with SADC

¹⁷ B Russett, H Starr & D Kinsella, *World politics: The menu for choice...* p. 421.

SADC: Profile, institutional framework and interaction

Profile

SADC is a direct product of the political history of Southern Africa. It was originally formed in 1980 as a loose grouping of nine states in the region with the main aim of coordinating development projects in an effort to lessen their economic dependence on the then apartheid South Africa. At that stage it was known as the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC). The founding member states were Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.¹⁸

On 17 August 1992, during a Summit of Heads of States or Governments in Windhoek, Namibia, the SADCC was replaced by SADC with a new Declaration and Treaty. New member states that have been added to the original list of nine are the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles and South Africa. In June 2004, the Seychelles chose to terminate its membership, with Madagascar taking its place.¹⁹ This change from a Co-ordination Conference to a Council was the result of SADCC leaders realising that although the co-ordination conference had served them well and had demonstrated the need to cooperate in development efforts, it was necessary to give the Organization a legal and more formal status.²⁰

Since its inception as a newly constructed organisation in 1992 until 2001 the functioning of SADC involved the allocation of specific sectors of responsibility for each member state. In practical terms this meant that each state was supposed to propose policies, strategies and priorities for the sector it was responsible for, process projects and report to the Council of Ministers. These sectors were as follows: Angola – energy commission; Botswana – agricultural research, livestock production and animal disease control; Lesotho – environment, land management and water; Malawi – Inland fisheries, forestry and wildlife; Mauritius – tourism; Mozambique – culture, information, sports, and the Transport and Communications Commission; Namibia – marine, fisheries and resources legal affairs; South Africa – finance, investment and health; Swaziland – human resources development; Tanzania – industry and trade; Zambia – employment, labour and mining; Zimbabwe

18 Department of Foreign Affairs of South Africa, "Southern African Development Community", 2007 (available at <http://www.dfa.gov.za/foreign/Multilateral/Africa/sadc.htm>, as accessed on 30 Jan. 2008).

19 S Sitta, "Seychelles: The obituary of a former SADC member", *SADC Barometer*, 8, March 2005, p. 8.

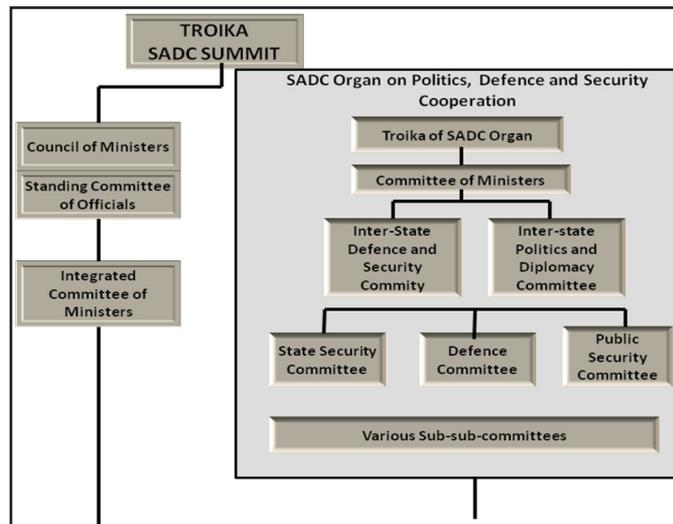
20 Anon., "SADC history, evolution and current status", 2006 (available at http://www.sadc.int/about_sadc/history.php, as accessed on 21 Jan. 2008), p. 2.

– crop production, food, agriculture and natural resources.²¹

This sector-based approach and strategy for achieving the goals of SADC was not successful and the need for drastic changes to procedures was keenly felt amongst member states. Therefore, in 1999, a decision was made by the SADC Summit that a review must be conducted of the institutions of SADC as well as its operations in order to strive more successfully in achieving the ultimate objective of SADC, namely to build a harmonious region “...to enable the pooling of resources to achieve collective self-reliance so as to improve the living standards of the people of the region”²², and to foster market integration²³. The mentioned review was completed in December 2000 and endorsed at a SADC Summit meeting in March 2001. Its implementation started immediately after that.

Institutional framework

Following the adoption by the extra-ordinary Summit of the Report on the Restructuring of SADC Institutions, the principle institutions of the SADC are as follows²⁴ (see figure 2):



21 Department of Foreign Affairs of South Africa, “Southern African Development Community”, 2007 (available at <http://www.dfa.gov.za/foreign/Multilateral/Africa/sadc.htm>, as accessed on 30 Jan. 2008).

22 Anon., “SADC history, evolution and current status”, 2006... p. 2.

23 The overall objectives of SADC are contained in Chapter 3, Article 5, of the 1992 SADC Treaty. It is notable that in 2000, SADC member states added to the existing list of objectives the combating of HIV/AIDS and poverty eradication. MC Lee, *The political economy of regionalism in Southern...* p. 47.

24 Anon., “SADC history, evolution and current status”, 2006... pp. 1-6.

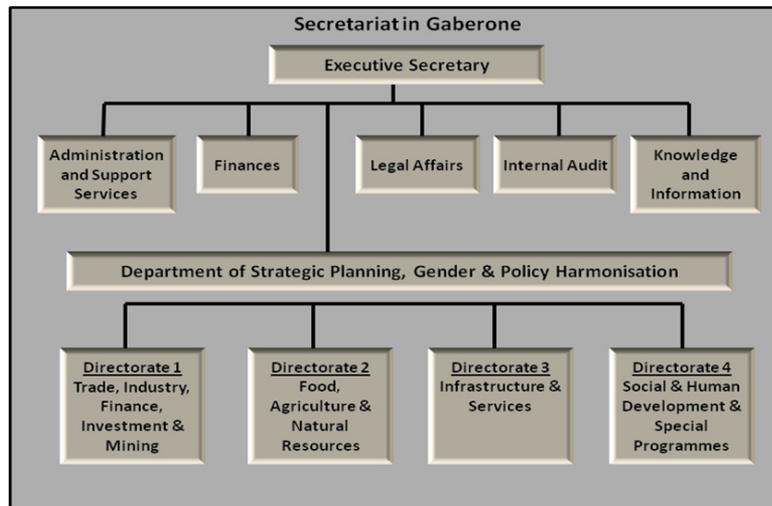


Figure 2 (Cont.): Summit of the Report on the restructuring of SADC Institutions

- **Summit** – consists of the Heads of State and/or Government. The Summit is the ultimate policy-making institution of SADC. It is responsible for the overall policy direction and control of functions of the Community. It usually meets once a year (August/September). More functions of the Summit are summarized under Article 10 of the SADC Treaty.
- **The troika** – The Troika system consists of the Chair, Incoming Chair and the Outgoing Chair of SADC. It has been in practice since it was established by Summit at its meeting in Mozambique in August 1999. Other member states may be co-opted into the Troika as and when necessary. The purpose of this system was to enable the Organization to execute tasks and implement decisions expeditiously and to provide policy direction to the SADC Institutions in-between regular SADC meetings.
- **Organ on politics, defence and security** – The Organ is co-ordinated at the level of Summit on a Troika basis and must report to the Chairperson of SADC; the Chairperson of the Organ serves on a rotational basis for a period of one year; the Member State holding the Chairpersonship of the Organ also provides the secretariat services; the Chairperson of the Organ shall not simultaneously hold the Chair of the Summit; the structure, operations and functions of the Organ are regulated by the Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation.
- **Council of Ministers** – the Council consists of Ministers from each member state, usually from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Economic Planning or Finance. The Council is responsible for overseeing the functioning and

development of SADC and ensuring that policies are properly implemented. Council usually meets twice a year in January and just before Summit in August or September.

- **Integrated Committee of Ministers** – this is a new institution with the purpose of ensuring proper policy guidance, coordination and harmonization of cross-sectoral activities. The Integrated Committee performs the following functions:
 - Oversee the activities of the four core areas of integration, namely trade, industry, finance and investment ;
 - Constituted by at least two Ministers from each member state and responsible to the Council of Ministers; and
 - Provide policy guidance to the Secretariat.
- **SADC Tribunal** – The Treaty of SADC also makes provision for a Tribunal which is not yet established. A protocol to create the Tribunal was signed in Windhoek, Namibia, during the 2000 Ordinary Summit. Once established, the Tribunal will ensure adherence to and proper interpretation of the provisions of the SADC Treaty and adjudicate disputes referred to it.
- **SADC National Committees** – these committees are composed of key stakeholders, notably government, private sector and civil society in member states. Their main functions are to provide inputs at the national level in the formulation of regional policies and strategies, as well as coordinate and oversee the implementation of these programmes at the national level.
- **Standing Committee of Senior Officials** – the functions of this Committee are provided for under Article 13 of the Treaty. The standing Committee of Officials consists of one Permanent/Principal Secretary or an official of equivalent rank from each member state. The responsibility of this Committee is to give technical advice to the Council of Ministers.
- **Secretariat** – this is the principal executive institution of SADC responsible for strategic planning, co-ordination and management of SADC programmes. It is headed by an Executive Secretary and has its headquarters in Gaborone, Botswana. The Extra-Ordinary Summit agreed that the Secretariat should be strengthened in terms of both its mandate and the provision of adequate resources to achieve its goals effectively as provided under Article 14 of the Treaty. The most important functions of the Secretariat are:
 - Strategic planning and management of the programme(s) of SADC;
 - Implementation of the decisions of the Summit and Council;

- Organization and management of SADC meetings;
- Financial and general administration;
- Representation and promotion of SADC; and
- Promotion and harmonization of policies and strategies of Member States.

A Department of Strategic Planning, Gender and Development and Policy Harmonization has also been established to strengthen the Secretariat in achieving its main functions, particularly regarding strategic planning, gender mainstreaming, and the management and harmonization of policies. This department consists of the following four Directorates:

- Trade, Industry, Finance and Investment (TIFI);
- Infrastructure and Services;
- Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources (FANR); and
- Social and Human Development and Special Programs.

What is important in this regard is that the former 20 sectors of responsibility were now all clustered under these four directorates.²⁵ This, of course, highlights the importance of these directorates in terms of their role in realising the SADC's general objectives. Consequently, mention must also be made of the SADC Programme of Action (SPA) which represents the totality of the previously mentioned Sectoral Programmes and which are now the responsibility of the four Directorates mentioned above. At the end of 2006 the number of projects under the SPA stood at 407 with an estimated cost of US\$8.09 billion.²⁶ This gives an indication of the scope and importance of the activities of SADC's programme of action.

Under the SPA, several protocols have been developed and signed in the fields of Shared Water Course Systems, Energy, Combating Illicit Drug Trafficking, Transport, Communication and Meteorology, Trade²⁷, Education and Training, Mining, Immunities and Privileges, Health, Wildlife Conservation and Law Enforcement, Tribunal and Legal Affairs. Most of these have been ratified and are at various stages of implementation.

25 Anon., "SADC history, evolution and current status", 2006... p. 6.

26 Anon., "SADC history, evolution and current status", 2006... p. 5.

27 The trade protocol is viewed as very important for SADC's integration process and started functioning in January, 2000 following its ratification.

Importantly, the work of the Department of Strategic Planning, Gender and Development and Policy Harmonization and the four directorates functioning under it is supposed to actually spearhead SADC in the direction of achieving its objectives. The first directorate, Trade, Industry, Finance and Investment, has the task of achieving regional economic integration and poverty eradication in Southern Africa. It is trying to do this by creating a positive investment and trade environment in SADC countries. Objectives include the establishment of a single regional market; the removal of barriers to the movement of goods, services and people; and the promotion of cross-border investment.²⁸

In accordance with the Protocol on Trade, all intra-SADC trade tariffs were to be removed by 2012, a custom union was to be implemented by 2010, a common market by 2015, a monetary union by 2016, and a single currency was to be introduced by 2018. Plans and activities to achieve these goals are still on track with the approval of the 2009 SADC budget by the SADC Council of Ministers.²⁹ The extent to which the preparatory groundwork for the successful implementation of these objectives are in place, is, however, seriously questioned and will later be discussed when the obstacles and challenges to SADC are reviewed.

The second directorate, that of Infrastructure and Services, is also active in its efforts to achieve its objectives. This Directorate focuses on transport, communications and meteorology, energy, tourism and water. As can be expected, at the SADC's birth, transport was regarded as the most important area to be developed, because if that was not done, other areas of cooperation would of course have become impractical.

Interaction

The SADC's road network, covering a distance of more than 1 million km, is the most important mode of transport for both freight and passengers and therefore crucially important to the economy of the region. The continuing process of upgrading roads can thus be regarded as part of a wider strategy to alleviate poverty and the pursuit of economic growth and development.

28 Anon., *The Europa world yearbook, volume 1* (London, Routledge, 2006), p. 376.

29 N Dlamini-Zuma, Post Council media briefing, 27 February 2009, p. 7.

The tourism sector functions within the context of national and regional socio-economic development objectives. It comprises four components: tourism product development; tourism marketing and research; tourism services; and human resources development and training. SADC has promoted tourism for the region at trade fairs in Europe and has initiated a project to provide a range of promotional material and a regional tourism directory.

The Directorate of Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources aims to develop, coordinate and harmonize policies and programmes on agriculture and natural resources with the focus on sustainability. The directorate covers the following sectors: agricultural research and training; inland fisheries; forestry; wildlife; marine fisheries and resources; food security; livestock production and animal disease control; and environment and land management. SADC figures indicate that agriculture contributes about 30% of the region's GNP, accounts for about 25% of total earnings of foreign exchange and employs some 80% of the labour force. The principle objectives of this directorate are regional food security, agricultural development and natural resource development.³⁰ Planning and budgeting for achieving these objectives on a continuous basis, are done annually.³¹

Generally, under the auspices of this directorate, SADC aims at protecting and improving the health, environment and livelihoods of people living in the Southern African region; at preserving the natural heritage and biodiversity of the region; and at supporting regional economic development on a sustainable basis. There is also a focus on capacity building, training, regional co-operation and the exchange of information in all areas related to the environment and land management.

The fourth directorate, namely on Social and Human Development and Special Programmes, aims at supplying the region with skilled manpower by providing training in the following categories: high-level managerial personnel; agricultural managers; high- and medium-level technicians; artisans; and instructors. As a special programme, SADC adopted a protocol on Health in August 1999. A strategic framework and programme of action for tackling the HIV/AIDS endemic in the region, formed part of this protocol. A special summit on HIV/AIDS was held in July 2003 in Maseru, Lesotho, also attended by representatives of the World Bank, UNAIDS, and the WHO.

³⁰ Anon., *The Europa world yearbook 2006...* p. 361.

³¹ N Dlamini-Zuma, Post Council media briefing, p. 7.

The Maseru Declaration on HIV/AIDS was issued after the meeting, which identified priority areas for action, including prevention, access to testing and treatment, and social mobilization.³²

The aims and objectives stated above of each directorate translate into major challenges. The important point is that these challenges must be decisively and successfully tackled as a condition for functional regionalism and, ultimately, regional integration³³ in Southern Africa. Undoubtedly, an adequate institutional and policy foundation has been laid for the potential successful functioning of SADC. It can even be said that the institutional framework that was created and implemented since 2001 is almost too comprehensive to the point of making SADC a clumsy Inter-governmental Organization (IGO). Even so, the organisation is expected to perform better in its attempts to address the development problems facing the region. However, much is still to be done of which the strengthening of the Secretariat is probably one of the most important tasks. Unfortunately, this is not enough to render and guarantee effective leadership and policymaking.

For the SADC it is crucial to address the developmental needs of the region that it represents and to position Southern Africa in such a way that it can effectively meet the challenges of a globalizing world economy and to take advantage of the opportunities presented by globalisation. This, along with other dynamic changes taking place in the region on a continuous basis, represents major challenges to the organization. In fact, it can be said that the SADC is only now beginning with the real process of regional integration³⁴. However, this process is severely hampered by a range of issues (apart from those already mentioned) that the members of SADC will need to address constructively as a prerequisite for achieving even its most basic objectives.

Obstacles and challenges

Regionalism and regional integration are not new concepts in sub-Saharan Africa. Since decolonization, policy-makers tried to make regional integration a reality in Africa. Gibb³⁵ points out that a widely held belief exists "...that

32 Anon., *The Europa world yearbook 2006*... p. 362.

33 Regional integration is regarded as the next higher phase of economic cooperation in a specific region.

34 H Masemola, "An analysis and appraisal of restructuring in SADCC/SADC since 1990" (MA, UNISA, 2005), p.163.

35 R Gibb, "The challenge of regional integration in Southern Africa", *South African yearbook of international affairs*, 2006/7, p. 75.

the economic integration of Africa is a condition for real independence and development". Indeed, Southern Africa faces such serious development issues that governments have to recognise that existing national boundaries have a serious inhibiting effect on economic growth and recovery. Therefore, it seems as if regional integration is a necessary step to take.

It is with this realization in mind that the SADC, during the past few years (1992-2003), adopted policies and protocols aimed at furthering regional integration and also involved the region more actively in the global economy.³⁶ In this regard the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP), adopted by SADC, is regarded as very important because it provides strategic direction to the organization and is also supposed to operationalise the common agenda of the SADC.³⁷ Trade is the main instrument with which deeper regional cooperation and integration is to be achieved; and for that purpose a trade protocol was integrated into the framework of the RISDP. In terms of this trade protocol it was the goal to create a free trade area (FTA) in the region already by 2008, a customs union by 2010, and a common market by 2015. However, the achievement of these goals is hampered by several factors which are found mainly within the SADC itself.

Mulaudzi³⁸ mentions the following obstacles: problems regarding the original rules in terms of which SADC was created, a lack of enthusiasm for trade liberalisation, low levels of intra-regional trade, tariff and non-tariff barriers, and overlapping membership of various regional organizations. With reference to the first issue, Mulaudzi states that the current SADC rules changed notably from the earlier ones and that they have become complex and restrictive and as a result inhibit the liberalisation of regional industries and trade. Therefore it is important that these rules be reformed and simplified so that intra-regional trade can be boosted and the process of the SADC's integration into the world economy be furthered. Regarding trade liberalisation, some member states are guilty of being reluctant to help create an environment auspicious for the free movement of goods in the region. This is because of fears that trade liberalisation will reduce revenue from trade taxes due to the fact that all SADC countries, except South Africa, receive more than 10% of their total revenue from this source of income. Subsequently low levels of intra-regional trade are the result, a substantial problem in its

36 Anon., *South African yearbook 2005/06* (Pretoria, GCIS), p. 341.

37 Anon., *The Statesman's yearbook 2009*, (New York, Palgrave), p. 62. .

38 C Mulaudzi, "Going nowhere slowly", *Global Dialogue*, 13(1), 2008, p. 30.

own right. What is more, intra-regional trade is inhibited by the existence of extensive non-tariff barriers (NTBs) across Southern Africa like cumbersome customs procedures, complex import and export licensing and quotas, and unnecessary import bans. Ironically, the SADC has thus far done very little to remove these obstacles. This fact contributed largely to a Free Trade Area not being implemented in 2008 as has been planned.³⁹

Finally, there is the obstacle of overlapping membership of various regional organizations, namely the East African Community (EAC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the South African Customs Union (SACU), and SADC. These institutions overlap geographically, structurally, and through shared membership. This situation impedes greater integration and continues unabated⁴⁰. Mulaudzi⁴¹ concludes that regional governments will not successfully reach their goals unless they commit themselves much more seriously to a common integration agenda. In this way the region's role in the global economy is undermined as well as the possibility of progressively reducing poverty.

Apart from the obstacles indicated above, there are also strong indications that the SADC Secretariat is experiencing problems with its monitoring and integration responsibilities, a direct result of the fact that the Secretariat was not strengthened with more power and authority as was promised with the unveiling of the new institutional structure of the SADC in August 2004. The Secretariat thus remains crippled because of bureaucratic inefficiencies, staff shortages, and an inability to produce important policy proposals.⁴² Therefore if these problems and deficiencies are not addressed as a matter of urgency, the SADC will continue to be an international organization without substance and with the status of yet another example of a failed development experiment in Africa.

Gibb⁴³ mentioned another factor that can also be regarded as a threat to functional integration in Southern Africa, namely the disparities in the degree of development among the countries of the region. This problem manifests

39 C Mulaudzi, "Going nowhere slowly...", p. 32.

40 In this regard Tanzania sets a positive example by quitting its membership from COMESA in 2000 because of the high costs associated with membership of three international organizations (COMESA, SADC, and EAC) and because of accelerated co-operation within SADC and the EAC (S Sitta, "Quitting Comesa: implications for Tanzania", *SADC Barometer* (1), 2005, p. 8).

41 C Mulaudzi, "Going nowhere slowly...", p. 33.

42 C Mulaudzi, "Going nowhere slowly...", p. 30.

43 R Gibb, "The challenge of regional integration in Southern Africa...", p. 78.

itself most clearly in the inequalities between South Africa and the other countries of Southern Africa. Pretoria dominates politics and economics in the region and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. The most important issue that is raised by this reality is: "...the question of how best to merge a semi-developed state, South Africa, with developing and less-developed countries"⁴⁴. What tends to happen is that industrial development is concentrated in the most economically active member state and it is virtually impossible to decentralize these activities to other countries with much less or non-existent infra-structure. Therefore, when regional integration is allowed to continue on the principles of the free market a concentration of goods, services and development will take place in those countries with better infra-structure.⁴⁵ No clear consensus presently exists regarding both this issue and what the best approach should be to reduce regional inequalities.

Oosthuizen is of opinion that not even a better structured and more focused and cohesive SADC will be capable of improving its performance to a significant degree in the foreseeable future. The reasons for this is merely the fact that the organization and its members lack the human, financial and institutional capacity to implement and reach most of the SADC's plans and objectives. The member states of the SADC are just not capable of meaningfully participating in the organization's activities mainly because of a lack of finances, institutional weaknesses, general needs that are too great, and too few skilled personnel. Oosthuizen⁴⁶ states that a clear indication of capacity constraints regarding the members of the SADC is the fact that in their cooperation efforts they rarely move beyond statements of intent. It is not the task or responsibility of the Secretariat to address the shortcomings of members to carry out their duties. In fact, as was mentioned above, the Secretariat has its own capacity problem and cannot even perform its own duties properly.

Recent developments in the region of Southern Africa give impetus to the pessimistic views of many commentators regarding the future of SADC. Reference is being made to the role and position of Zimbabwe as a key country in the region.⁴⁷ The present government in Harare has virtually destroyed the country's viability and economic ability to survive and has

44 R Gibb, "The challenge of regional integration in Southern Africa"...p. 82.

45 R Gibb, "The challenge of regional integration in Southern Africa"...p. 83.

46 G Oosthuizen, "The future of the Southern African Development Community", *South African Yearbook of International Affairs*, p. 95.

47 H Masemola, "An analysis and appraisal of restructuring...", p. 163.

brought Zimbabwe to a position of total dependence on its neighbours and the international community. What is more, the present lack of political and economic liberalization in Zimbabwe is destined to continue for at least the short to medium term.⁴⁸ As a result of the deteriorating political and economic situation in Zimbabwe during the past five years, millions of Zimbabwean citizens have fled the country, most of who have moved to South Africa. With socio-political instability in member states of this nature it is of course not possible for an international regional organization such as the SADC to function normally and according to expectations.

This leaves us with the reality that the SADC is presently not nearly functioning according to potential and that much is still to be done before proper regional co-operation, not to speak of real regional integration, can be achieved.

Conclusion

In its pre-1994 phase of existence (as SADCC), when its main aim was minimizing dependence on South Africa, SADC enjoyed relative success. However, as a re-organized organization since 1994 as the SADC, it proved to be struggling to implement its regional programmes. Rapid progress has been made with regard to policies and agreements, but because of weak and non-functioning institutions the implementation of decisions has lagged behind. Not even the organizational overhaul of SADC in 2001 changed this lack of ability to perform. The stronger leadership and a more effective Secretariat that have been hoped for have not materialised.

One of the main reasons why weak or non-existent leadership in the SADC continues is because of the fact that the organization is still making its decisions on the basis of the principle of consensus. No supra-national decision-making powers exist and member countries cannot be forced to implement decisions. The net effect of SADC's shortcomings, is that there is an abundance of discussions and talks taking place, but very little actions in terms of successful policy implementation and solving of issues. Strong and undivided support for the SADC from all member countries are essential, which can only occur if members realise that the programme and policies of

⁴⁸ G Hill, *What happens after Mugabe? Can Zimbabwe raise from the ashes?* (Cape Town, Zebra Press, 2005), p. viii.

the organization are directly in the national interest of each country and its populations. Apparently, member states realize this and lip service is given to this objective, but in practice very little seems to be happening.

The problem seems to be located in the different political outlooks and interpretation of interest among member countries, along with huge disparities in development between member states. Although South Africa's future role as a regional power in Southern Africa and as a member of the SADC is of major importance, the specific way it is going to play its part has the potential of making or breaking the SADC. Thus far it is clear, however, that South Africa is not going to be the so-called great political and/or economic rescuer of Southern Africa or Africa in a broader sense. The growing signs of political instability taking root in the South African political reality and the realization that economic growth in the region cannot be guaranteed by Pretoria, are proof of this observation.

However, in spite of the concerns and reservations regarding the SADC's ability to achieve its integration goals, it must be noted that there is wide agreement with regard to the achievements of SADC since 1980. The view is that the SADC has actually achieved quite a lot, of which the following are specifically relevant:⁴⁹

- The SADC demonstrates that regional co-operation is indeed possible;
- The Organization contributed in creating a sense of unity and belonging among its members and strengthened an already existing tradition of consultation among the governments of Southern Africa;
- The SADC created and launched a regional plan of action which covers cooperation in various economic sectors; and
- Under the SADC's Programme of Action (SPA) a number of infrastructural projects have been undertaken and completed – rehabilitation of roads, railway lines and harbours, and the development of new seeds for adapting it to different climatic conditions of the SADC region.

Unfortunately, the mentioned list of 'achievements' represents a mere starting point. To prove its worth SADC will now have to deliver on the real integration objectives it has set for itself. Taking the past into consideration, it can be argued that the SADC failed as an instrument of development and did not change the economic well-being of the region in any dramatic way.

⁴⁹ Anon., "SADC history, evolution and current status", 2006...p. 6.

The very fact is that if SADC ceased to exist tomorrow, the general population of Southern Africa will not be adversely affected in a noticeable fashion. In other words, the SADC, in its present guise is, alas, not a successful agent of development. This means that the populations of the region can hardly hope for a major short or medium term development boost from the SADC as a regional organization.