



REGIONAL INTEGRATION OBSERVER

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Regional Integration Observer (RIO)

The RIO takes a comparative look
at West African and European
integration and deals with the
relations between the two regions.
It is a new platform for exchange.

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A Record of Regional Integration in West Africa by Essien Abel Essien*

Background

The phenomenon of regional integration has gathered momentum to the extent that there is a proliferation of economic cooperation and integration arrangements around the world. No continent is exempted and all of them are working assiduously towards strengthening the economic cooperation and integration mechanisms and architectures to make them more effective in delivering the desired objectives.

The reasons for this development are apparent. First, economic integration is seen as a veritable instrument for faster, all-encompassing, and least-costs way to achieve rapid economic development. This is essentially because strong regional economies facilitate the pooling of risks between other-wise vulnerable economies, reduce wars, promote intra-regional trade, and enable countries within the region to exploit complementarities and entrench competitiveness. Thereby attracting investment required for the development of modern industries, while ensuring better access to markets and technology. The wave

of globalization and its unintended externalities, has confirmed the reality that no individual country can go at it alone

The Creation of ECOWAS and the Revised Treaty

Regional cooperation and integration has been, and will most likely continue to be highly relevant for West Africa. The strong domestic and regional demand in trade and finance, expanding cross-border infrastructure, and increased factor mobility provides tremendous scope and imperative. Conscious of the wave of economic cooperation around the world, the overriding need to foster and accelerate economic and social development and the promotion of harmonious growth of the contiguous states of West Africa, there is need of effective economic cooperation and integration. Convinced that the integration of member states presents a viable option for self-reliance, the Heads of State and Government of 16 West African countries signed a treaty for the creation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), on 28 May 1975. This treaty was known as the treaty of

Lagos, as the meeting to sign it took place in Lagos. Considered one of the pillars of the African Economic Community (AEC), the main aim was to promote co-operation and development in all fields of economic activities in Member States. In other words, it was founded in order to achieve „collective self-sufficiency“ for its member states by creating a single large trading bloc through an economic and trading union. The treaty was framed in the context of a gradual progression from a free trade area via a customs union, to a common market.

A few members of the organization have come and gone over the years. In 1976 Cape Verde joined ECOWAS, and in December 2000 Mauritania withdrew. Later on, a Committee of eminent persons was set up to submit a proposal for the review of the 1975 treaty. This led to the adoption of a Revised Treaty in Cotonou, Benin on 24 July 1993, known as the Revised Treaty of 1993. The new treaty extended economic and political co-operation among member, and designated the achievement of a common market and a single currency as economic objectives. While in the political sphere it provides for a West African parliament, an economic and social council and an ECOWAS court of justice to replace the existing Tribunal and enforce Community decisions. The treaty also formally assigned the Community with the responsibility of preventing and settling regional conflicts. It was in this new treaty that a definitive statement on the creation

of a monetary union was made. The revision of the treaty was prompted by several factors such as the need to:

- adapt to changes in the international economic environment
- modify its strategies in order to mitigate the externalities arising from globalization
- extend the common market program to incorporate the adoption of common economic, socio-political and cultural policies.
- the need to take the principal provisions of the AEC Treaty
- recognize that its integration policies and programs were influenced by the prevailing economic conditions in its member countries

In order to achieve the tenets of the new treaty, ECOWAS undertook several programs. They include; the harmonization of regional and sectoral policies, development of regional infrastructure, abolition of trade restrictions in the form of tariff and non-tariff barriers, removal of obstacles to free movement of persons, goods and services, etc. However, the overriding objective remained the establishment of a common market and a monetary union that would be characterized by a single currency and a common central bank.

The Main Goals/Programs of ECOWAS

The principle underlying the key programs of ECOWAS is fo-

cused on achieving policy and structural convergence. Principal among them were:

- Free movement of goods and persons
- Trade liberalization and a customs union (ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) and Common External Tariff (CET))
- ECOWAS Monetary Co-operation Programme (EMCP)
- Development of infrastructure
- Implementation of common policies in agriculture, environment, management of water resources
- Consolidation of Peace, Democracy and the promotion of good governance

This framework was expected to boost intra-regional trade and factor mobility, enhance investment/growth, and create the necessary conditions for the operation of a monetary union. Several factors impeded the achievement of regional goals. For instance, for the free movement of persons and goods the existence of non-tariff barriers, the absence of a common trade policy, poor sensitization, and a lack of political will to implement the protocols has impeded progress. On trade liberalization and the creation of a custom union, an absence of an effective mechanism for an integrated approach to trade promotion, low value addition and poor quality of products emanating from the region have hindered achievements. Further factors which have delayed progress to

create a customs union include; the poor state of infrastructure in the region, a large informal goods and financial markets side by side with rudimentary formal markets, and a lack of strong political will to implement the ECOWAS CET.

The EMCP has suffered from the existence of a monetary zone, the WAEMU with a different exchange rate regime. Non-achievement of primary and secondary convergence criteria on a sustainable basis has led to postponements of the introduction of the common currency (eco) by the second monetary zone. Another problem is the lack of coherence and synergy in the multilateral surveillance mechanisms of the various ECOWAS agencies responsible for implementing the EMCP.

Food security lies in the development of the agricultural sector. Not only to meet the food demand of the region, but in providing a meaningful source of employment for its teeming population and as a foundation for the region's agro-technological take-off. Despite significant progress, the implementation of the Common Policies in Agriculture, Environment and Management of Water Resources are not without some lingering challenges. The operationalisation of a medium term regional investment program in agriculture is slow. The absence of an enabling mechanism for the prevention and management of food crises and other natural disasters in the area of agricul-



The ECOWAS Headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria.

ture and the development of an appropriate water policy and a regional framework for shared water resources as well as the effective management of the environment and prevention against risks and pollution, nuisance and hazardous chemicals that could affect human and animal health, are paramount.

The consolidation of peace, democracy, promotion of good governance and the entrenchment of democratic values are critical to meaningful economic and sustainable development. The chequered political history and instability that has characterized the region for so long can be traced to the absence of good governance, democracy and the rule of law. The need to mainstream conflict prevention into stabilization and post conflict-interventions and improvement in the mechanism to manage multiple tasks efficiently and effectively are desirable objectives. ECOWAS has made progress in

creating a conducive environment for the attraction of private investment and private sector development, working in partnership with various organizations and Member State institutions. ECOWAS Business Forums have provided a platform for public-private dialogues, the facilitation of trade and business visits, bilateral and multilateral trade agreements and benchmarking of database and index for member states.

The main challenge for the region lies in the expansion of physical infrastructure projects and the mobilization of the required resources for financing them, in order to create the requisite conditions for competitiveness. Overall, significant progress has been made in the region towards economic co-operation and integration, in line with the objectives under the Revised Treaty. The challenges that frustrate the integration process could provide

the needed catalyst for a leap to economic prosperity, through a carefully designed action plan derived from a carefully crafted regional strategy.

Re-thinking the ECOWAS Cooperation and Integration Agenda: The ECOWAS Vision 2020 and the Community Strategic Plan

Notwithstanding these regional undertakings, development continues to elude the region. ECOWAS remains one of the poorest regions on the globe with pervasive human misery and endemic and seemingly intractable poverty. Many national and regional programs have not yielded an appreciable impact on the development or improvement of the living conditions of Community citizens. This poor outcome has been compounded by the absence of discernible efforts to internalize and incorporate regional dimensions into national development agendas, thus reducing the growth impacts of regional initiatives. For instance, there is very little visible evidence at the national level of a conscious effort to adapt and apply the regional policies and instruments to complement national policies. Equally troubling is the absence of any sustained attempt at regional long-term development planning. A regional dimension or framework in any of the available national development agendas is almost completely absent. Convinced of the disadvantages of tiny balkanized economies in the 21st century in an increasingly competitive

global village, ECOWAS leaders continue to search for feasible ways of incorporating regional approaches to achieve and sustain development. It is argued that, among the numerous factors holding policy-makers back from identifying with and committing to the regional approach is the absence of a common regional frame of reference to guide and give regional scope to the articulation and preparation of national development plans. This vital framework has now been provided by the ECOWAS Heads of State in the form of a common shared vision of the future of West Africa.

ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government reaffirmed its commitment to improve the regional integration process and enhance its effectiveness with a resolution to introduce, in June 2007, a transformational ECOWAS Vision 2020. It envisions by 2020, “a borderless, peaceful, prosperous and cohesive ECOWAS sub-region built on good governance where all the people have the capacity to access and harness the region’s abundant resources through the creation of equal opportunities for sustainable development and environmental preservation”. In moving to adopt a common people-oriented regional vision, ECOWAS leaders recognized that past and unsuccessful development efforts have been dominated by government and its agents. Believing strongly that West Africa’s development can best be achieved by working together within an ECOWAS of

people framework, the ECOWAS Heads of State have expressed a common regional will by adopting a vision that replaces the current “ECOWAS of States” with an “ECOWAS of People”.

The ECOWAS Vision 2020 is aimed at setting a clear direction and goal to raise the standard of living of the people significantly through conscious and inclusive programs that will guarantee a bright future for West Africa and -shape the destiny of the region for many years to come. The Vision recognizes the imperative to make the integration progress people-centered. Connected with this, the President of the ECOWAS Commission was directed to mobilize the citizens of the region for the vision, and help to achieve it by 2020. It is gratifying to note that the visioning process has achieved remarkable progress, culminating in the formulation and preparation of a Vision Document that sets out a long-term strategy for the regional integration. A Community Strategic Plan (CSP) that defines the strategies to achieve the tenets of the Vision has also been developed. The strategic plan is built on the pillars set out in the treaty. The pillars are that the region must remain peaceful, stable and secure, with fair competition and equity within and between its members. The policies that create this stable, competitive system are in turn developed through sustainable development, cooperation, and an integration process that has a global outlook.

This is to be reinforced by a strong institutional capacity and promoted through the recognition and observance of good governance, so that the region can equitably and justly enjoy the cost and benefits of economic cooperation and integration. These core pillars require the region to have a greater outreach, sustain dialogue and cooperation, be independent and deliver efficient service. It also requires the ECOWAS Institutions to facilitate the entrenchment of regional principles in the minds of the citizens of the Community.

Lingering Challenges

The regional economic cooperation and integration journey can be described as tortuous. While significant gains have been recorded, there have also been challenges. Some of the challenges can best be described as lingering ones, refusing to go away despite efforts put in place to address them. The existence and persistence of non-tariff barriers to trade has weakened trade intensity in the region and as such ECOWAS intra-regional trade has lagged behind other regions in Africa. Trading with each other more and creating larger, more attractive markets and reaping economies of scale are conditions for deepening trade integration. The promotion of regional currency convertibility will give the needed boost to intra-regional trade. Infrastructure deficit is prevalent. Alternative sources of financing infrastructure and a clear and

innovative financial strategy is needed to bridge the gap. Despite the fact that a protocol on free movement and right of establishment exists, this protocol has often been casually contravened. New instruments and institutions are needed to come up with a workable mechanism for operationalize the content entrenched in the protocol. The quest for a monetary union continues to be elusive. All evidence points to the fact that the date of 2015 set for the launching of the Eco, the currency of the second monetary zone, known as the West African Monetary Zone, is approaching too quickly. However, it has been difficult for the member states of the WAMZ to meet the convergence criteria on a continuous basis. Despite high growth rates recorded in the last three years, fiscal dominance and high inflation has combined to ensure that there is indeed divergence. The harmonization of macroeconomic policy and statistics are still a project in the future, while the payment system infrastructure is still rudimentary. Structural convergence, a necessary condition for the introduction of a single currency has not been given much attention. The existence of two monetary zones with two monetary policy regimes is another constraint to the realization of a single currency. Consequently, the new convergence criterion that stipulates an inflation target of 5 per cent is receiving a lot of questions from countries outside the CFA zone. This is with good reason, as the realization of 5 per cent inflation by the

non-CFA countries may be difficult to achieve. It also brings into question the issue of whether an optimum or threshold rate of inflation is necessary for the sustainability of a monetary union. A genuine willingness to surrender some level of sovereignty and protectionism that would truly integrate the region is absent. The passion of territorial and colonial identity has failed to give way to pan-territorialism and regionalism. Member states must realize that as members of a regional grouping, they have bound themselves in agreements, that provide a check on policy and constraint profligacy, all in order to ensure that the goals of the region supersede national goals.

Conclusion

The region needs to develop a model of economic recovery that works, while thinking through the institutional architecture, bearing in mind that institutions are the means through which regional policies are administered and transmitted. Regional economic integration holds out the promise for achieving poverty free, prosperous, and peaceful West Africa. Much has been accomplished in recent years, but important challenges remain in achieving West African economic integration.



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Reasons for Regional Integration and why the EU should support it

by Peteris Ustubs*

The history of regional integration in Africa dates back further, almost a century, before regional integration elsewhere in Europe, Asia or Americas existed. Over the past century, impressive progress all over the globe for regional integration has taken place. Statistics speak for themselves - today intra-regional trade has reached 60% in Europe; 40% in North America; 30% in ASEAN, and yet in Africa it's between 10-20%. It would be wrong to interpret these figures and assume that there is no need for further economic integration in Africa. On the contrary – more than ever, integration should be a political priority for many African politicians at national, regional or Pan-African level.

Rules of development, economy and finance, as well as today's global market, require Africa to take more decisive steps towards regional economic integration. From a global perspective, the African continent presents a multitude of mini-markets as three quarters of African states have populations of less than 15 million, and one third, of less than 3 million. Fragmented markets mean potential losses of billions of Euros for local trade. Africa globally is the continent with the highest number of landlocked countries – 15 in total. On top of that, is Africa's remoteness from the major consumer markets, however it is estimated to absorb 10 million new entrants into the labour market every year. 80% of African exports

are primary commodities, creating severe constraints on growth due to price volatility in the absence of any significant local industrial capacity and an underdeveloped services sector. There are strong reasons for regional cooperation, such as opening up regional markets and gaining experience for regional, continental and global competition, as small

take several generations, but many preliminary decisions should already be taken. First of all – there is a need for a clarity of objectives – what comes first, regional, sub-regional or continental integration. Second, there are no ready-made solutions as each integration process is individual, with its own conditions and dynamics. Thirdly, for integration to comply with



WAEMU Commission President Cheikhe Hadjibou Soumaré, the EU Commissioner for Development Andris Piebalgs and the ECOWAS Commission President Kadre Desiré Ouedraogo at a meeting in Brussels (from left to right). © EU

and fragmented economies will be under increasingly severe difficulties to survive. African regional integration exists, yet too often on paper only. Some regions are doing better, others should speed up. In any case, real and comprehensive regional integration and cooperation starts with tremendous political homework, with political vision, leadership and readiness to entrust regional organizations to lead the process. No doubt, integration will not happen overnight, as it will

modern requirements, appropriate tools and instruments should be used, as traditional approaches and formulas have changed considerably over time. And lastly – there is a need for realistic priorities, based on realistic needs, with realistic timetables, for implementation.

Promoting regional integration has been a long-standing objective of EU development policy and it must remain a cornerstone of the 11th European

Development Fund (EDF). Under the 10th EDF, the bulk of the Regional indicative Program which envelopes (75%) has gone into supporting African regional organizations in their efforts to boost regional economic integration – building institutional capacity and supporting policies which contribute to the development of integrated regional markets. A second major focal sector of African regional programs has been support for political cooperation - implementation of the Joint EU-Africa Strategy and support for regional mechanisms seeking to promote peace and stability, prevent conflict and fight security threats. It should be noted that at the beginning of the 10th EDF framework, which doubled the budgets for regional integration, the regional organizations were not sufficiently prepared for a greater role in programming and implementing EU aid. This explains one of the reasons for the slow start we've observed in implementation of all regional programs in Africa under the 10th EDF. It is therefore worth mentioning now some of the main shortcomings and challenges we will need to address during the upcoming programming exercise:

1. A lack of national ownership of regional integration projects and strong resistance to the transfer of sovereignty. Additionally, the existence of several regional organizations whose mandates and membership overlap, adds to the complexity.

2. A lack of political will and

capacities at a national level to translate integration projects into action. We still face highly fragmented regional markets with poor implementation of economic integration agreements, and poor synergies between different, often seemingly incoherent, integration programs.

3. Inefficient or non-existent interconnections of infrastructure generating extremely high costs for transport and intra-regional services. Coupled with weak governance at national and regional levels, this translates into excessive or unlawful costs for administrative operations, inspections, and security controls.

4. A lack of adequate mandates, given the limited institutional and administrative capacities of regional organizations, as well as a general lack of legal and policy instruments for effective implementation of relevant programs.

The EU and regional organizations must clearly learn from this situation and jointly shape a new approach, so that we are not confronted with the same conclusions in 2020. Our intention is to continue supporting regional organizations with their core agenda and mandate. At the same time we feel the need to complement this support by tackling obstacles to regional integration at their very roots - providing direct support to those member states of the regional organizations with higher ambitions to play a larger role at regional level to implement

regional commitments. All the above mentioned economic and political parameters are relevant to West Africa and are all critical in the process. If compared with other on-going African integration processes, West African integration is neither the most dynamic nor the slowest. But one thing is evident – the entire region would profit enormously from far deeper and meaningful economic integration, connectivity and competitiveness. It would be wrong to say that progress depends entirely upon regional governments and ECOWAS. I also believe that the private sector should and could play a far more important role in assisting West Africa to succeed with regional integration.

There is no alternative to African regional integration. A lot has been done over the years, but global developments require doing more, better, and faster. In order to maintain the speed of impressive African economic growth, the EU will continue to support regional integration and will work with all partners to make it a success.



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The Achievements and Challenges of ECOWAS in Security Regionalism in West Africa

by Kenneth Omeje*

Introduction

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was formed in May 1975 to promote economic integration and development. It comprises fifteen countries - five Anglophone, two Lusophone and eight Francophone states. Mauritania, the erstwhile 16th member state withdrew from ECOWAS in 2000 to exclusively join the Arab Maghreb Union, a pragmatic decision by the hegemonic ethnic Moors-dominated Arab regime to solve the cultural identity crisis of the fragile state.

Since its inception, ECOWAS has encouraged and implemented diverse policies and projects to foster regional integration. Some of them include liberal immigration and travel policies, free movement of certain consumer goods and services; construction of trans-regional highways, establishment of a regional commercial/investment bank (Ecobank), adoption of a regional security policy or the construction of the 680 km subsea gas pipeline from the Niger Delta linking Benin, Togo and Ghana to bolster energy cooperation and economic productivity. Despite these positive achievements, a medley of destabilizing armed conflicts has over the years, compelled ECOWAS leaders to expand their regional project to include security cooperation and conflict intervention.

The Historical and Political Contexts of ECOWAS Peacekeeping Operations

The outbreak of civil war in Liberia in late 1989 marked a turning point in the history of ECOWAS. ECOWAS's decision to delve into the security domain by authorizing a regional peacekeeping intervention in Liberia in 1990 was both a controversial and pioneering initiative in security regionalism. The intervention was based on



an appeal from the Liberian President Samuel Doe to Nigeria for help against the advancing forces of the rebel National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor. The Nigerian President General Ibrahim Babangida made the case at the May 1990 ECOWAS summit for regional mediation in the civil war, culminating in the deployment of the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). Babangida's personal relationship with Doe – two corrupt dictators that shared common

interests in perpetuating their power against popular will – was a significant factor in the Nigerian push for ECOWAS intervention. The first phase of the Liberian war ended with the signing of the Abuja peace agreement in September 1996; NPFL and other rebel forces were to disarm under ECOMOG and UN supervision. Elections were held in July 1997 and Charles Taylor won a landslide victory to emerge as President. In August 2003, the ECOWAS Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL) was deployed following the country's relapse into civil war waged by two rebel groups, Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) against Charles Taylor's beleaguered government. The rebel groups were reportedly supported by Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea. United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was deployed to replace ECOMIL a few months later and, in line with the emerging trend of regional and international synergy in peacekeeping, ECOMIL or converted to UNMIL. Besides Liberia, ECOWAS has made similar peacekeeping interventions to help resolve the civil war in Sierra Leone (1991 – 2002) and the first phase of war in Cote d'Ivoire (2002 – 2004). In both cases, ECOWAS peacekeepers later formed the core of UN peacekeeping missions in the two countries. It is remarkable that ECOWAS's first two

peacekeeping interventions in the 1990s (in Liberia and Sierra Leone) were predominantly influenced and dominated by the regional hegemonic interest of Nigeria, which was then ruled by military regimes. Nigeria's foreign policy has long been anchored on a regional (and to some extent, continental) hegemonic ambition, which found its strongest expression under successive military dictatorships in the country. About 80% of the troops and resources for ECOMOG in Liberia and Sierra Leone were provided by Nigeria.

Many West African countries, especially the Francophone states have often been unsettled by Nigeria's hegemonic ambition in West Africa, including its initial and occasional tendency to dominate ECOWAS peace support operations. A significant aspect of the criticisms against ECOWAS initial peacekeeping operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone, especially criticisms related to the excessive indiscipline and unprofessionalism of ECOMOG's has been attributed to Nigeria's domineering role. The return to democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999 has considerably minimized Nigeria's power play in peacekeeping interventions. For instance, Nigerian troops were not part of ECOWAS peacekeeping missions in Guinea Bissau (1999) and Cote d'Ivoire (2002). It is remarkable that ECOWAS has ventured into the stormy terrain of security regionalism and made significant strides in spite of not having been originally conceived

as a regional security organisation. Ostensibly, the most important factor that accounts for this is that from the geostrategic standpoint of having interlocking development and security concerns - typical of Barry Buzan's "regional security complex" - West African states stand to suffer more directly from the impact of explosive violence in any member state. The montage of civil wars in the Mano River sub-regional states of Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Cote d'Ivoire has, for instance, exemplified some of the interlocking regional security threats - refugee influx and humanitarian catastrophe, arms proliferation, cross-border incursions and inter-flow of combatants, economic and political pressure and destabilization, and cross-border recruitment of mercenary fighters by various warring factions. It was destabilizing security threats of this nature that compelled ECOWAS to develop a positive interest in cooperative military intervention. Other additional factors have to do with the bureaucratic delay and high stakes interest-driven politics associated with the UN Security Council debate on conflict intervention and peacekeeping deployment; as well as the unconventional and complex nature of post-Cold War armed conflicts in many developing regions which has necessitated a transition from first generation peacekeeping (essentially ceasefire monitoring based on the mutual consent of warring parties) hitherto favoured by the UN to the comparatively more risky, multi-dimensional, se-

cond generation peacekeeping (including robust enforcement action) which the UN does not seem to have fully adapted. The last and probably most significant point is the late realization by ECOWAS and similar regional economic communities that without durable peace there can hardly be any significant or sustainable economic integration and development.

Achievements in Security Regionalism

ECOWAS has without a doubt made remarkable achievements in security regionalism. Firstly, the ECOWAS peacekeeping interventions have helped to mitigate largescale anarchy and humanitarian catastrophe in war-affected countries. In addition, ECOWAS' mediative diplomacy has helped to de-escalate conflicts, contain tension, and avert wars or prevent its reoccurrence in member states like Togo, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea Bissau. It is also remarkable that ECOWAS peacekeepers almost in all cases laid the foundation for UN peace operations and further facilitated them through "rehatting of troops" and cooperative peacekeeping (also known as co-deployment). Through co-deployment and rehatting of troops between ECOWAS and the UN (e.g. in Sierra Leone, Liberian and Cote d'Ivoire), ECOWAS has provided the UN with invaluable lessons for reviewing its approach to peace support operations, and making the necessary transition from first generation to second generation peacekeeping. Because ECOWAS

intervention has invariably preceded the peace support operations of the UN and other international state actors in most of the post-Cold War civil wars in West Africa, there has been a tendency to diminish the achievements of the regional body and attribute every major conflict resolution accomplishment to the world body and other actors, such as the role of the British in Sierra Leone, the French in Cote d'Ivoire and the Americans in Liberia. ECOWAS has utilized the experiences from its peace support operations to reform and strengthen its institutional and operational structures to meet emerging security challenges.

A number of new regional statutes have been adopted since the 1990s and the ECOWAS Treaty was extensively revised in 1993 to strengthen economic integration and security regionalism. The single most important protocol adopted by the regional body on security regionalism is the ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security of 1999. The evolving 'ECOWAS Security Architecture' (i.e. the 1999 Protocol) establishes a number of institutions and mechanisms to strengthen peace support operations, which include: the Authority of Heads of State and Government, the Mediation and Security Council (MSC), the Early Warning System (ECOWARN), and the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF).

Persisting Challenges

ECOWAS is a collection of largely fragile, poor and foreign-

aid dependent post-colonial states; hence, there is a sense that the regional body is unable to rise above the relatively weak institutional and resource capacities of the member states to more effectively actualize the goals of economic integration and security regionalism. From this standpoint, funding the security architecture and mustering the political will to implement it have been onerous for member states of the organization. The civil war in Mali and the fragile peace situation short of outright war in northern Nigeria following the spate of terrorist bombings by the Islamist sect Boko Haram are a source of security concern. Post-war Cote d'Ivoire and transitional Guinea Bissau are still markedly fragile. ECOWAS' delay in deploying a multinational standby force to help reverse the Tuareg separatists (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad or MNLA) and Islamist terrorist-led unilateral declaration of independence in northern Mali after the regional body had agreed on a peacekeeping action in April 2012 is, to say the least, an embarrassment to the capacity of the regional body to implement its much-vaunted new security architecture. The war in Mali is particularly complicated by the marked ideological rift between the more moderate MNLA and the radical Islamist groups (notably Ansar Dine with infiltrations from regional narco-terrorists and Jihadist groups like Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Boko Haram) within the rebel movement. It was not until France in Janua-

ry 2013 responded to an appeal by the Malian Interim President Dioncounda Traore for a unilateral military intervention to save his regime from the advancing rebel forces from the north, that about 9 ECOWAS states and a few other African Union members deployed a complementary multinational force alongside the French forces, making the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) essentially an ECOWAS/African Union joint operation. The over 6,300-strong AFISMA troops form the core of the now 12,600-strong UN Peacekeeping Force (MINUSMA) approved by the Security Council and deployed from July 2013.

Moving forward, ECOWAS stands to make greater progress in security regionalism if the members can show a strong commitment to implementing the ECOWAS security architecture and other related treaties and protocols. International donors and stakeholders can support the regional body by expanding technical cooperation and capacity-building in areas crucial to security capability and regional development.



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The Record of Trade Liberalization in the Framework of West African Regional Integration Processes

by Gervasio Semedo*

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is in the process of economic integration, involving preferential arrangements and a customs union among its member countries. In order to fast track progress ECOWAS adopts rules for nominal convergence, such as price targeting, deficits and debt reduction, in the hope of reaping endogenous and dynamic effects of real economic integration, beyond the static effects of customs unions, as earlier identified by Viner (1950). Viner (1950), a pioneer of economic integration analysis, explains that regional economic integration (REI) at customs union level has two effects: 1. a new trade effect, where trade between member countries of the customs union intensifies and 2. a trade diversion effect, where imports from the union increase relatively to the rest of the world. This static point of view was improved upon, so that the belief associated with it is that regionalism must create a space of active cooperation between member countries and that it is also important that the dynamics of REI meet development objectives.

According to this view, in many developing countries (DCs), REI has become a pillar of promoting economic growth and reducing poverty. REI can alleviate factor productivity and strengthen competitiveness through attracting new inves-

tors and transfers of technology. One of the projects to boost REI in West Africa is the ECOWAS Common External Tariff (ECT).

The Road to the ECT and slow Trend in bilateral Trade as main Determinants

ECT Implementation

Since 2007, national negotiators have been able to resolve their differences on the tariff duties on 400 products. The ECT applies to all goods entering the ECOWAS customs territory from outside the region. The ECT is comprised of commonly agreed levels of customs duties, along with the 0.5% ECOWAS Community Levy, and each country's statistical tax (generally 1%). The ECT also features the potential for applying 3 new ECOWAS trade remediation measures (two import safeguards and one countervailing duty). The four levels of customs duty under the ECT are 0%, 5%, 10% and 20% - based on the degree of processing of the product and other considerations. The ECT also involves harmonization of free trade zones, bilateral trade deals with non-ECOWAS countries, and ad hoc and statutory exemptions from customs duty. The ECOWAS Treaty eliminated customs duties on agricultural, livestock, forestry and handicraft products, while manufactured products inscribed in the ECOWAS Trade Liberali-



Mercedes-Benz Truck in Mauritania.*

zation Scheme (ETLS) can be exported within ECOWAS without customs duty. For product areas where trade between ECOWAS member countries has not yet been liberalized, the ECT can be expected to be applied. It is believed that only about one-third to one-half of intra-ECOWAS trade circulates duty free, meaning the internal free trade area is still a big concern. About one-tenth of total imports entering ECOWAS countries come from other ECOWAS members, meaning that the ECT will apply on upwards of 90% of West Africa's purchases. The ECT is intended to be the external cordon protecting the domestic markets of ECOWAS countries, but with a maximum 20% duty, the ECT certainly must be considered a low-tariff regime. Many decisions were taken with regard to the ECT between member countries of the West African Monetary Union (WAEMU), gathering most of the French speaking countries of the region, which are also ECOWAS members. Some contradictions are also relevant between WAEMU and non-WAEMU members of ECO-

WAS, concerning their completion framework policies: this is no surprise with regard to the differences between common law and law inspired by French practices.

It is through the ECT that ECOWAS is implementing the trade-related aspects of the West African common agricultural policy, or ECOWAP, which involves lowering the duties on inputs to agriculture, fishing and forestry (such as seeds, tractors, or nets). In December 2012, the process ended, and 130 specific products were identified as requiring special protection through a tax rate of 35%, as they represent sensitive products essential for the development of the region. In this context a common regional fund is ready to receive these specific taxes.

Stylized Facts concerning intra-regional trade

Authors like Acclassato (2013), Semedo (2013), de Lombaerde, Ipadre and Mastronardi (2013) found that intra-regional trade is not of consequence. In addition, as quoted by de Lombaerde et al. (2013), “WAEMU is more integrated than the other ECOWAS members and for this bloc there is a noticeable downward trend, reaching its lowest levels in Sub-Saharan Africa”. To summarize, many institutions (ECOWAS Commission, UNCTAD, COMTRADE, UNECA) and authors, as mentioned above, agree with the fact that West African regional integration remains on a low level, because regional trade only re-

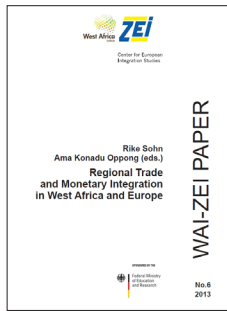
presents between 10 and 15% of the total exchange of this region. In fact, the EU is by far the most important partner of each country in the region, except for Nigeria which has strong ties with the United States. The intra-regional trade does not play an equally important role. The main reasons for this imbalance are linked to informal activities, smuggling, illegal activities and the phenomenon of re-exporting. Companies seek to escape tax controls, quality controls and health checks. Also, as monetary systems are not unified, economic agents try to take advantage of differences by trading currencies in different markets. Illegal trade is therefore prosperous and organized by rational operators, who are informed about the exchange rates of various currencies. Informal flows of goods can also be explained by geographical proximity, cultural, linguistic and ethnic communities, demonstrating the porous nature of the borders inherited from the colonial era. The populations have created trade networks suited to their life, their survival and their welfare. Baskets of goods of these informal and illegal flows are comprised of both consumer goods needed by the people (pharmaceuticals, sometimes of dubious nature, food products, etc.) but also products, endangering these populations (like weapons, drugs, etc.). Finally, ECOWAS countries claim their desire to achieve the creation of a customs union, but in fact, maintain several taxes and customs regimes which conflict

with the establishment of a single ECT. Similarly, the subsidy policies of each country is different, as well as the effective rate of protection of each product. As the taxation rate of intermediate goods used in the composition of a product varies from country to country.

Main Barriers to free trade

I mentioned the low level of bilateral trade among ECOWAS countries. This is due to multiple factors: differences of monies, parallel trade at cross-borders, the structure and composition of the ECT, heterogeneity between countries, lack of industrialization, low level of infrastructure, as well as market failures in providing new technologies, physical and human capital or information. Furthermore, political and institutional aspects have to be taken into account when analyzing the record of trade liberalization in these countries. But my analysis is not pessimistic in as far as I take an example to explain why it's possible to create net flows in the production and exchange of some activities/commodities, such as rice. My judgment is also based on the dynamic contribution concerning the customs union. With this dynamic analysis, I consider that comparative advantages are not the single way to participate in regional and international trade. Countries have to build new comparative advantages. For West African countries, that means first and foremost self sufficiency, as well as measures to boost industriali-

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WAI-ZEI Paper No. 6: Rike Sohn/Ama Konadu Oppong (eds.): *Regional Trade and Monetary Integration in West Africa and Europe*, Praia/Bonn 2013.

zation in some areas. To do that, they need commercial strategic policies and serious discussions with the World Trade Organization (WTO). Finally, these countries need reforms of their institutional and political rationales being benevolent to own vested-interests and re-election at a national level while not making good performances concerning regional integration. To achieve this goal several recommendations are relevant.

Recommendations

1. The ECT must be simplified in order to avoid the free rider behavior of importers who could choose the poorest country to enter their products.

2. In accordance with the common law and to diminish the power effect of “spaghetti bowl”, the regional competition framework must be revisited.

3. In order to diminish the power of politicians and bureaucrats, a Commission of Trade must be implemented.

4. The optimal regional trade

policy is not a simple addition of national interests, but it must be supported by compensation schemes. These mechanisms should be adapted on the relative wealth of each country of the region.

5. Soule (2010) explains the inefficiency of compensation mechanisms provided by ECOWAS. He highlights the difficulties of the coordination of information. This may result in double taxation systems. He then, argues that cross-border trade and undeclared trade are justified by high administrative costs. In fact such cascading taxes can only give a small tax return.

6. Moreover, the area of marketing and transport is the most taxed area in West Africa. Governments in each country must be persuaded to improve in the areas of communication, transportation and marketing, and ensure the regional continuity of good policies in these areas.

7. One obstacle to trade is transaction costs associated with multiple exchange rates in the region.

8. West Africa is a hotbed of crisis, and this discourages FDI. Sub-regional institutions like ECOWAS have taken the initiative in ensuring peace in countries such as Liberia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast. However, ECOWAS suffers from cohesion and the means to prevent and to manage crises.

9. According to Omisakin (2013), ECOWAS has some institutional and political challenges such as a “lack of inclusive formulation processes, weak policy evaluation and feedback mechanisms, political and financial commitment and problems of

ethnicity and weak national allegiances. ECOWAS has to improve its policy formulation and implementation for the benefit of regional development. Clarity and consistency in management policies and procedures would promote greater institutional development”.

10. West Africa needs structural transformation and this challenge needs first self-sufficiency and secondly, the promotion of industrial development with cluster creation.

12. Finally, the current specialization of ECOWAS countries does not advocate a complete openness to international trade. These countries need to strengthen their internal systems while seeking to build a regional industry first protected with an ECT, coupled with goals of self-sufficiency, in order to export in a second step agricultural and manufactured goods.

13. Also, it would be entirely appropriate to examine the compatibility between the existence of the ECT and new rules of international trade imposed by the WTO.



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The EU, ECOWAS and the multiple Dimensions of European-West African Relations

by Tony Chafer and Ed Stoddard*

Regional integration has historically been promoted by the EU as a way to establish more secure, liberal and prosperous systems of states in the international sphere. The EU's relations with Africa are no exception, with the EU actively engaged in promoting Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with regional organisations on the continent. The mandate for the EU's cooperation with regional organisations in Africa is rooted in the Cotonou Agreement and the 2005 EU Statement on Development Policy. The EU views cooperation with regional organisations in Africa as a way to boost trade with and between African states, reduce poverty, support economic development and ensure peace and security. Moreover, the regional dimension of cooperation with the ACP countries is increasing. Revisions to Cotonou in 2010 added "regional organisations" to the set of core actors and noted specifically the role of "sub-regional organisations" such as ECOWAS.

In West Africa in particular, the EU views cooperation with ECOWAS as a means to achieve several interlinked policy objectives, including increased economic and political integration, good governance and regional stability. From a scholarly point of view however, analysis of the multi-faceted and dynamic interaction of two regional blocs incorporating 43 states and over

800 million people represents a challenge. Such a challenge calls for keen attention to historical dynamics and unfolding trends in the interaction between these two regions and a set of conceptual references to help analyse this complex empirical reality. In this article we offer a series of such reference points, focusing on the core actors involved in different dimensions of the relationship, legitimacy and EU action, European and West African objectives and the major challenges that face the EU in its engagement with the region.

Actors

One of the first questions to arise in the analysis of interaction between regional configurations such as ECOWAS and the EU concerns the relevant actors. Of course, relations between the EU and ECOWAS, *senso strictu*, refer to the engagement of the respective institutions of each regional body in the areas of policy on which the member states have agreed to pool sovereignty. However, in practice, EU-ECOWAS relations exist in the context of broader European-West African relations focusing on the interaction of a number of member states (notably France and the UK) with the states of the region. The EU itself notes the complex of different actors involved in bi-regional interaction, including states, regional organisations and non-state actors such



ECOWAS members.*

as private companies and civil society (Cotonou Agreement, art. 16). One could add the sets of un-sanctioned actors that impact on European-West African relations, including insurrectionist movements, smuggling and piracy groups and terrorist organisations. Indeed, interaction between the two regions refers to a highly complex *mêlée* of different actors, with different and often competing interests. A core area of tension relates to the balance between respective supranational actors (for example on the EU side between the European Commission and the External Action Service) and members. Here the concept of relative autonomy can prove useful. In Marxist political science, relative autonomy refers to the autonomy that a national political executive enjoys from the capitalist base within a given state. However, in the context of inter-regional interaction it is fruitful to question the degree of autonomy that supranational institutions possess from their member states in

given policy areas. The level of this relative autonomy is likely to vary quite considerably from policy sector to policy sector. On the EU side for example, Parello-Plesner & Ortiz de Solórzano (2013) point out that the European Commission has a high degree of autonomy and input to policy-making in matters of trade and development policy. On security and defence matters, by contrast, the interests of France and the UK are of central importance. Such issues matter firstly, as they address the 'Kissinger question' of who foreign policy actors should speak to and secondly, because divisions between member states and between member states and supranational institutions may prove to be weaknesses that can be exploited by the other side.

Legitimacy

Scholars have only relatively recently started to focus on legitimacy as a core variable in international relations. Nevertheless, questions of legitimacy dominate the EU's external relations in practice. The post-colonial history of European interaction with African states is deeply affected by the legacies of colonialism and the legitimacy of contemporary actions of European powers is often assessed in light of their allegedly post-colonial ambitions. As Chaffer and Cumming note (2010), French desires to overcome the 'Fashoda Syndrome' and cooperate with the UK and others on Africa policy since 1997-8 were driven, at least in part, by a desi-

re to restore France's image in Africa. Indeed, France has been keen to multilateralise its Africa policy as a means of overcoming the various scandals associated with 'la Francafrique'. EU foreign policy scholars, such as Wood (2009), are familiar with the notion of 'institutional camouflage', referring to the extent to which EU member states can upload politically difficult policy areas, such as human rights, to the EU. The benefit that member states derive from this is that the more neutral and legitimate perception of the EU (relative to member states) allows national capitals to overcome negative perceptions of their foreign policies deriving from political disputes or colonial legacy. EU policy may thus reflect the interests of the larger member states, but simultaneously enjoy more legitimacy than it would if it were proposed and administered by these member states directly.

Focusing on legitimacy also draws attention to the basis for EU cooperation with West Africa. Firstly, does the legitimacy of the EU's actions in the region derive from substantive forms of legitimacy? That is to say, does EU legitimacy rest on a set of abstract morally-rightful principles pertaining to human rights or democracy that are 'just' or 'correct' in absolute terms? Equally important is the meaning that such terms have in the West African context and the degree of divergence between European and West African understandings of 'democracy' or 'good governance', for

example. Furthermore, is EU action in West Africa seen as procedurally legitimate - i.e. does EU-West African cooperation derive from a process that has received the equal input of both parties? Both of these forms of legitimacy raise the question of the extent to which the legitimacy perceptions of West African states are taken into account in EU-West African cooperation.

EU and West African Objectives

A third consideration relates to the respective objectives of each party. Two competing descriptions of EU foreign policy are of particular note and draw attention to the potential overlapping and conflicting interests of the EU in West Africa. The first concerns the EU's reputed standing as a civilian/normative power that asserts the EU's status as a different kind of actor in international politics, seeking to 'normalise' international relations based on EU norms of democracy, human rights and the non-military nature of dispute settlement between states. Second, is the notion of ethical power Europe that is concerned with investigation of the ostensibly ethical character of European policy. Such perspectives may contradict quite strongly post-colonial views of the EU and European states' involvement in Africa. Keukeleire (2003) offers an additional and perhaps more helpful conceptualisation of EU foreign policy, noting how the EU pursues a form of "structural foreign policy" and "structural diplomacy" in its ex-

ternal relations. This refers to a “process of dialogue and negotiation by which [the EU] seeks to influence or shape sustainable external political, legal, economic, social and security structures at different relevant levels in a given geographic space”. Indeed, Keukeleire argues that the EU in this way seeks to promote models of governance that are well-established within the EU such as “democracy and good government, human rights, the various OSCE principles (such as peaceful resolution of conflicts), regional political and economic integration and cooperation, free market principles and so on”. Presenting the EU in less benign terms, Hyde-Price (2008) suggests that the EU operates as a means for the EU’s dominant powers (notably the UK, France and Germany) to shape Europe’s regional milieu in line with their foreign security and economic objectives. Rather than consider any of these conceptualisations as a definitive description of European foreign policy however, it is perhaps best to think of them as highlighting the potential tensions that exist between the EU’s “other-regarding interests”, such as the promotion of democracy, and the EU’s “self-regarding interests” such as commercial objectives or security prerogatives.

Similarly, questions can be asked of ECOWAS states’ interests in engagement with the EU. Are West African states predominantly concerned with gaining access to international aid whilst defending their domestic political structures and econo-

mies from inevitable European predations (a view that, in line with many post-colonial approaches, denies these states much agency of their own)? Or are West African states motivated by more ambitious agendas, such as the attraction of investment and high technology industry, gaining international legitimacy and military cooperation (and perhaps military advantage vis-à-vis others). Or do they see attracting investment and interaction with external powers as a means of garnering legitimacy and supporting domestic rentieristic state structures. Given the heterogeneous make-up of ECOWAS, it is quite conceivable that different states in the region will present quite differing degrees of emphasis on these issues.

Future challenges, risks and key areas of engagement

All of the above factors are evolving in a period of considerable change in West Africa. The West African region burgeons with opportunity and risk for European actors. The region is experiencing a boom in economic growth, with the African Economic Outlook (2013) suggesting that West Africa will continue to grow rapidly over the next few years, achieving the fastest regional growth in Africa. Clearly the region presents itself as a potential location for European FDI and increased European exports. This, and the emergence of new actors, such as China and India, will likely drive intensified engagement of the EU and its member states in West Africa

in the next years. However the region’s potential for economic growth is challenged by a precarious security situation. The states of the region experience varying levels of security threats and risks, including (inter alia) people trafficking, smuggling, piracy, terrorism, insurrection, political instability and full-scale conflicts, such as seen in Mali earlier this year. The region has been affected considerably by fall-out from the conflicts and turmoil in North Africa, notably Libya. These issues raise notable security concerns from a European perspective and from the point of view of human security in the region itself. With North and West Africa increasingly seen by the EU as the source of significant threats to its own security, it is likely that EU engagement on peace and security issues in the sub-region, in particular by its major military powers such as France, will not diminish over the next decade.



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The Development and Relevance of regional Primary and Secondary Law

by Samuel Priso-Essawe*

Regional integration in West Africa may be classified as a classical case of regional integration. As such, the main original objective, mentioned also in the framework of the Lagos Action Plan elaborated by the Organization of African Unity in 1980, was to establish an open space for the free movement of people, services and goods, and free competition between economic actors. Established respectively in 1975 and 1994, ECOWAS and WAEMU tend to push member States towards these objectives through the rule of law. It is therefore indicative to have a look, now, some decades later on the way the law is used to reach the objectives of the treaties. We have an interest here in the legal mechanisms of ECOWAS and WAEMU institutions, in their formal dimension as well as in their substantive one.

In August 2010, the ECOWAS Commission held a meeting with the representatives of 10 member states. It was the first – and obviously only – occasion for the partners to examine together the situation of community law, through a review of protocols that had failed to be ratified by the member states. Another report has been made by the ECOWAS Commission in 2012, but there has been no joint meeting as held in August 2010. The opportunity was important and it highlights the fact that the formal aspect of regional law is

linked to a substantive one. The first element one can focus on is the nomenclature of the legal acts that the Community may take. The treaty stated that the Authority of Head of States shall take Decisions, while the Council should act by Regulations. Both are binding for the member states, after 60 days. However, some of the most important questions have been decided on the basis of additional protocols, which require ratification by the member States, such as: free movement of people, origin of regional products, regional transport, community corporations, and added value tax. The application of protocols is subject to their acceptance by the members. However, the state of ratification of these protocols did not improve over the last several years, as the Commission report from 2012 pointed out. Therefore the decision to use protocols was not the most effective.

The ECOWAS Treaty was revised in 2006, reproducing the nomenclature of the WAEMU, which now includes Additional Acts, Regulations, Directives and Decisions. The system in general is therefore mainly one of unilateral decisions of the Community, rather than acts requiring ratification by States. However it is also important to examine the substantive dimensions of these elements of regional secondary law. Reference, in the treaties of ECOWAS and WAEMU, to “Re-



Justice and Law.*

gulation” or “Directive”, is not always clear. We should therefore first note that the modification of the ECOWAS Treaty in 2006 did not include any such clarification. In the WAEMU, the Council may sometimes act by “regulation or decision” in other cases, it acts by regulation. This lack of precision may have consequences, as the legal characteristics or legal effects of regulations and directives are not the same.

Furthermore, there is a problem of fixed-term objectives. The implementation of the economic union in ECOWAS was set to be effective by 2005 that is fifteen years after the launching of the regional trade liberalization scheme in 1990 laid down in Art. 54 of the ECOWAS Treaty. The definition of fixed-term objectives is also present in the WAEMU Treaty, for example Art. 88 which states that one year after the treaty’s entry into force, attempts to free competition are forbidden “de plein droit”. This makes secondary law quite useless to implement

treaty's objectives if objections can be made on the basis of these timeframes. Therefore, there is a strong need for legal means for the community citizens and enterprises to make these measures effective for their own purposes. In fact, the best way to improve the objectives of regional integration, taking into account the resistance of member states to be bound to some of the regional obligations, is to make these objectives self-executing or, at least, effective after a transitional period. At the end of a transitional period there will be a guarantee of genuine application of the rule, only if there are legal tools for citizens and companies to make use of the rule and can apply it to their relationship with the public authorities. Regarding this aspect, two kinds

of problems appear as obstacles to the implementation of regional law in West Africa. The first is the coherence of the community law vis-à-vis national laws, and vis-à-vis the objectives of the community. The report of the ECOWAS Commission mentioned for example, that community rules are sometimes less advanced than national laws, as far as the regional objectives are concerned. For instance, the "resident card", established by the protocol of May 29th 1979 and maintained since then, has in the meantime been abolished in the national legal systems of some member states.

The second problem is that of the implication of national actors (public and private) in the defence of their rights. The

two courts of justice have an increasing but relatively low level of activity and the ECOWAS Court is actually more active in the field of human rights than it is regarding economic regional law. Therefore, most of the difficulties in the implementation of West African integration law remain unresolved by judicial means. Thus, some decades after the adoption of the treaties, free establishment or the free movement of goods on West African roads still has a way to go before being an effective daily reality and a right for the people.



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WAI organizes Seminar on the Challenges of Regional Integration together with the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA)

What are the major challenges of regional integration in West Africa and how can they be determined by the different institutions and actors involved in the integration process? These are the most important issues that have been the subject of a rigorous analysis during the training seminar: „The Challenges of Regional Integration in West Africa and in the World” from June 24 to 28, 2013, in Lomé, Togo, organized by the West Africa Institute (WAI) in partnership with the Open Society Initiative



Representatives of WAI and OSIWA at the Opening Ceremony of the Seminar in Lomé

for West Africa (OSIWA). The main objective of the training was to strengthen the capacity of different stakeholders in West Africa. Please find further detailed information on the WAI Website.

Three questions to Christophe Joseph Marie Dabiré - WAEMU Commissioner for the Regional Market, Trade, Competition and Cooperation

1. ECOWAS and WAEMU are the most important regional integration organizations in West Africa. However, in several policy fields they create an impression of duplication. How do ECOWAS and WAEMU work together to coordinate their working strategies and working procedures in order to avoid unnecessary redundancies? Do we see a tendency of convergence over the last years?

The risk of duplication of programs/projects and activities is inherent in the similarity of the community-building processes of the two regional bodies in West Africa, WAEMU and ECOWAS. This duplication is a potential source of inefficiency and wastage of rare resources. This preoccupation made the two organizations sign a formal cooperation contract in May 2004. This agreement aims at enhancing convergence and accelerating the West African integration process as a whole. The agreement installed a mechanism of coordination at two levels:

1. On the technical level, we have the Joint Technical Secretariat (Secrétariat Technique Conjoint (STC) founded by the agreement. The Secretariat is run by coordinators nominated by each Commission and gathers together the directors and heads of program of the two

organizations. It reviews the various areas of cooperation and gives recommendations how to facilitate an efficient implementation of development efforts. It meets two times a year, either in Nigeria or in Burkina Faso at the seats of ECOWAS and WAEMU.

2. On the political level, we have meetings between the Presidents of the two Commissions, which follow the meetings of the STC. Before, the results



Cristophe Joseph Marie Dabiré is WAEMU Commissioner for the Regional Market, Trade, Competition and Cooperation.

and recommendations of the STC meeting are evaluated by the Commissioner in charge of cooperation of WAEMU and the Commissioner for Macroeconomic Policy of ECOWAS. It is the task of the Commission Presidents to give political guidance to the process of convergence.

Because of the regular meetings of the current Commission Presidents, Cheikhe Hadjibou Soumaré (WAEMU) and Kadre Desiré Ouedraogo (ECOWAS), the process of converging the agendas of both organizations has gained momentum, as both Presidents share similar percep-

tions of how the process should be reinforced. Given this similarity of views, during their last meeting in June 2013 in Ouagadougou, the Presidents made the following important decisions:

1. Reinforcement of technical and human capacities of the STC in order to ensure a permanent and more efficient follow-up of the convergence process in between the STC meetings.

2. Improvement of legal cooperation in order to correct possible distortions between legal acts and provisions of both organizations and to avoid a conflict of norms, which might be detrimental to implementation in and by the Member States, especially those of WAEMU.

2. How can WAEMU and ECOWAS work together more effectively in the future to achieve the main goals of regional integration in West Africa like a common currency or a liberalized trade market? Does West Africa need a completely new institutional architecture?

For the promoters of a rationalization of Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the existence of two regional integration organizations with similar goals in West Africa is a source of inefficiency because of the existence of increased transaction costs. However, we should

keep in mind that the advancement of the regional integration process in the region is a process of variable geometry and of differentiated rhythms. ECOWAS has acquired a comparative advantage in the fields of conflict prevention and management and since the transformation of the Executive Secretariat into a Commission in 2007 it is also progressing in the field of economic policy. WAEMU was founded in 1994 as an economic union to coordinate national policies and to harmonize rules in an enlarged market. Thereby it wanted to strengthen the existing monetary pillar, the CFA Franc. Since its creation, WAEMU has implemented macroeconomic policies. In this context, it has for example installed a Common External Tariff (CET) and created a customs union. It is currently approaching a Common Market while in ECOWAS a customs union is becoming a reality. In the process of creating an own customs union and a CET, ECOWAS has largely profited from the experiences of WAEMU.

In fact, WAEMU has proved its evident legitimacy in the fields of macroeconomic and sector economic policies. It constitutes the hard core of regional integration in the zone. On this basis, the speeding

up of regional integration in West Africa in order to attain the main objectives of a Common Market and a Common Currency among others, depends on the reinforcement of convergence and coordination between the two organizations. This was also the message of the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS at their summit in 1999 when recommended to set up the mechanism of institutional coordination which entered into force in 2004.

3. What can the West Africa Institute (WAI) as a centre for research and analysis, contribute to the strengthening of West African regional integration in general, and the work of WAEMU in particular?

First of all, a research institution like WAI has a decisive role to play in the Union by offering the services of a think-tank to support the decision-making process, especially with regard to the impact of WAEMU macroeconomic and sector economic policies on the process of social transformation. The value-added of such an institution could also be to facilitate the scientific and political dialogue between researchers, decision-makers and other

stakeholders of regional integration in West Africa. Finally, as the WAEMU Commission's knowledge management policy corresponds with its strategic plan, WAI could make its network of researchers available. It could be used selectively or via converging research agendas to implement WAEMU's internal research program which is dependent on external support.

To avoid confusion, it is necessary to mention that the work of WAI cannot be considered to be incompatible with the work of the research cell WAEMU wants to put in place. In fact, an organization like ours needs a critical internal self-reflection in order to regularly adjust to new challenges and at the same time effecting critical external reflection with all the credibility which is conferred to WAI through its independence as a research center. It is on the basis of these insights into the value-added by WAI that the WAEMU Commission has associated itself with the idea of creating this institute. Adopting a Decision, its Council of Ministers has accompanied the process of establishing WAI and provided annual financial support.

*Questions were asked by Prof. Djénéba Traoré (WAI) and Matthias Vogl (ZEI).

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