

better governance, policy formulation, and regulatory reform, to education and human resource development, poverty alleviation, and the "Human Security" agenda. CIDA and Canadian Official Development Assistance will remain significant players in our relationship with Africa for the foreseeable future. Canadian businesses need to keep abreast of business opportunities that result from CIDA's programming in Africa.

A Regional Approach

Sub-Saharan Africa is made up of nearly 50 countries, representing a quarter of the world's states and encompassing many peoples, languages, political systems, and economic trends. In spite of Africa's vast size, it is possible to discern similarities within its regions, wherein neighbouring states frequently share official or business languages, legal traditions, and one or more sectors of opportunity. Accordingly, a market development approach which recognizes Africa's different regions makes good business sense.

Such a regional approach is also suggested by the fact that, on their own, many African countries represent very small markets that are not attractive enough to generate sustained Canadian interest. Furthermore, Africa's own nascent regionalization efforts support a regional market development approach. An example is West Africa, where Nigeria and other countries are quickly strengthening intra-regional ties, developing common transport and energy infrastructure, eliminating internal tariffs and negotiating a common currency. These developments are leading to a regional market that European and American firms are increasingly targeting. There are existing currency unions in three sub-regions, and ongoing negotiations that could lead to one or two more common currency zones (e.g., the West African Zone is to include Nigeria, Ghana, and the eight-member West African Monetary Union: Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo, which have recently agreed on a common exterior tariff). There is also momentum toward the establishment of sub-regional free trade areas, increasingly integrated regional stock markets, and gradually improving intra-African transportation infrastructure.

DFAIT recognized these incipient trends and, in the mid-1990s, introduced its Southern and Eastern Regional Action Plan (SEARAP) to co-ordinate trade promotion and support activities among relevant federal and provincial agencies. By 2000, this model had been extended to incorporate West and Central Africa, becoming the Sub-Saharan Africa Regional Action Plan (SSARAP) and resulting in a reorganized trade development unit (GGTT) responsible for the entire region.

Africa Trade Strategy Objectives

Africa presents some unique challenges in developing and strengthening trade and business linkages. Unlike trade plans for established export markets, a trade strategy with Africa is closely linked to longer-term strategic goals of Canadian foreign policy aimed at helping Africa reduce poverty levels and integrate into the global economy. An eco-

Recently, DFAIT reorganized and combined its entire trade development resources for Sub-Saharan Africa. This new unit (GGTT) illustrates the strong commitment to effective regional trade development.

