



## 2. A Strategic, Regional Approach to Sub-Saharan Africa

This trade strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa was designed to, among other things:

- help Canadian companies compete successfully and take maximum advantage of trade and investment opportunities in that region;
- focus Trade Commissioner Service efforts on responding to Africa's emerging opportunities; and
- show how Canadian companies can work with the Trade Commissioner Service and its expanding network of partnerships with other federal and provincial government departments, agencies, industry associations, and the private sector.

During the late 1990s, Sub-Saharan Africa usually outpaced higher-profile markets such as India and Russia as a Canadian merchandise export destination. Trade in services and two-way investment are showing steady improvement as well. Despite this, Sub-Saharan Africa remains an unknown region for most Canadian companies.

Therefore, a first goal of this trade strategy is to raise the profile of Africa for internationally oriented Canadian businesses and explain the real nature of its markets and opportunities. Second, specific efforts are being directed toward facilitating the entry of export-ready SMEs that are new to these markets, by helping them plan and execute a sustainable business strategy for Africa, especially in the field of merchandise exports. Third, the trade strategy recognizes the need to protect and build upon the accomplishments of Canadian firms already active in these markets—these firms face increasing competition and a complex and evolving business environment.

Business itself has helped clarify the obstacles to increasing private sector linkages with Sub-Saharan Africa. It has identified specific irritants—including the difficulty of accessing adequate trade and investment financing—through informal contacts, client surveys, and formal reports such as the October 1998 findings of the Regroupement des entreprises pour l'Afrique.

### **Trade and Development**

Government of Canada initiatives outside the Trade Commissioner Service and its specific trade promotion efforts are also supporting the long-term development of Africa. These initiatives range from debt relief and public sector capacity building for

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