

BRIEFING NOTE
REGIONAL ECONOMIC ORGANIZATIONS

EASTERN AFRICAN CO-OPERATION (EAC)

Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda formed the East African Community in the late 1960s as a quasi-federal arrangement covering customs, transportation, posts and telecom, universities, and monetary policy. By the 1970s relations among the countries became strained and the Community was dissolved in 1977.

During the 1980s, new leadership and economic direction brought the three former partners closer. By the mid-1990s all three countries were implementing similar economic liberalization measures, and a new sense of co-operation emerged. In March 1996, the Secretariat of the Commission for East African Co-operation (EAC) was established at Arusha in Tanzania.

The main focus of EAC is to promote trade and investment through regional policy harmonization, including the recent introduction of a common passport and plans for a Common External Tariff by 1999. The EAC Secretariat comprises only 30 professionals, not the bloated bureaucracy of times past.

THE COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA (COMESA):

The 1994 successor to the Preferential Trade Area (PTA) for Eastern and Southern Africa, COMESA aims to continue the work begun by PTA towards economic co-operation and integration, with an ultimate goal of a regional common market. Its Secretariat is based in Lusaka, Zambia.

While there have been rumblings that COMESA and SADC are rival organizations that duplicate membership and functions – the recent withdrawals of Mozambique and Lesotho in favour of SADC and failure to attract South Africa as a member have not helped matters – the April 1997 “Second Summit of the COMESA Authority” seemed to reconfirm commitment to the organization by the remaining twenty members (ranging from Eritrea to Namibia).

If COMESA can concentrate on the core functions of tariff reduction, transport facilitation, and trade and customs harmonization, it may move some way towards its broader goal of sustainable regional economic growth and development.

SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC):

The successor to the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference originally aimed at reducing dependence on South Africa, SADC now comprises twelve countries including South Africa and, most recently, Mauritius. Its Secretariat is based in Gaborone, Botswana.

While the ultimate goals of SADC and COMESA are similar – economic development through integration – SADC takes a different approach. SADC tackles specific sectors, and one country with relevant capabilities assumes leadership for each sector. For instance, South Africa heads up the finance and investment coordinating unit, while major oil producer Angola heads up the energy portfolio, and Zambia coordinates mining.

During SADC's annual Consultative Conference held February 1997, the main theme of “Productivity – The Key To Sustainable Development” focused attention on two specific sectors: finance and investment, and trade and industry. SADC has both promoters and detractors, but progress in terms of policy co-ordination has been made in a number of sectors without the creation of a huge bureaucracy.

Committed To Improving
Life & Supporting Those
Who Enrich It.



“Healthcare Partners
in Southern Africa”

A APOTEX INC.
CANADA'S PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY
IN THE BUSINESS OF LIFE