Cape Town, South Africa

“Whither SADC?
An Agenda For Southern Africa’s
Post-Apartheid Security”
18 – 19 June 2005

CONCEPT NOTE

Prepared by the Centre for Conflict Resolution
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Introduction

The Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR) in Cape Town, South Africa, will be holding a policy advisory group meeting at the Twelve Apostles Hotel, Cape Town, on 18 and 19 June 2005. This is a follow-up meeting to the seminar “Supporting South Africa’s Role as Chair of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security (OPDS)”, held in Pretoria in November 2004. In September 2005, a new SADC Executive Secretary will take office and the OPDS Chair will pass from South Africa to Namibia. The June 2005 Cape Town policy seminar will therefore focus primarily on the progress to date with the restructuring of the SADC secretariat, and South Africa’s progress in implementing the Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ (SIPO) within the context of broader initiatives to strengthen conflict management and peacebuilding in Southern Africa. The Cape Town policy seminar supports SIPO’s objective calling for “civil society engagement in conflict resolution, public awareness-raising on security issues and establishment of a forum of academic and research institutions to deliberate on peace and security matters”.

The objective of this meeting is to generate policy proposals and to track progress in the following eight areas:

* Strengthening the Role of the SADC secretariat and its Executive Secretary;
* Implementing key elements of the SIPO and strengthening the SADC security Organ;
* Examining the Role of the Southern African Defence and Security Management (SADSEM) network and the Regional Peacekeeping Training Centre (RPTC);
* Strengthening SADC’s Collaboration with the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN);
* Learning Lessons from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS);
* Tackling the Land Reform and HIV/AIDS Challenges in Southern Africa;
* Assessing SADC’s Governance Challenges, particularly Democratisation and Elections; and
* Analysing the Role of Civil Society in strengthening SADC.

The Cape Town policy meeting will thus consider expert panel inputs on six broad themes:

1. Strengthening the SADC Secretariat and Executive Secretary
2. The SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security and SIPO
3. SADSEM and the Regional Peacekeeping Training Centre
4. SADC’s Collaboration with the AU, ECOWAS, and the UN
5. Tackling the Land Reform and HIV/AIDS Challenges in Southern Africa

1. Strengthening the SADC Secretariat and Executive Secretary

Capacity constraints continue to hamper the SADC secretariat in Gaborone, Botswana. The restructuring exercise aims to boost institutional capacity and efficiency through a leaner and more focused organisation. However, the broad shift from project management to policy formulation and harmonisation through a more centralised structure have not yet improved the leadership and resource limitations that have stalled regional co-operation efforts in Southern Africa. The SADC summit in Blantyre, Malawi, in August 2001 approved the restructuring of the
secretariat with a two-year timeframe for completion. To date, SADC has managed to close down the country-based sector units and transfer planning, policy formulation and administration functions to its four directorates of its secretariat in Gaborone. However, the directorates are still developing their operational capacity, with minimum staff complements and limited administrative resources. This has restricted the secretariat’s ability to facilitate, monitor, and support member states with project implementation. The secretariat has therefore proposed the creation of a dedicated project management office to oversee this function. The Organ has established a small administrative office in the secretariat, with plans to expand the unit into a fifth political directorate by 2006. At present, there is limited collaboration between the Organ unit, the other directorates, and the Executive Secretary.

The mandate of the SADC secretariat is limited to administration with no political decision-making powers, while ironically, the Council of Ministers is often bogged down with administrative issues rather than leadership. There is a widespread feeling among civil society in the sub-region that the SADC secretariat is weak because its leaders do not want an interventionist bureaucracy in such a sensitive field as security. SADC’s restructuring has therefore not increased the powers of the Executive Secretary, but did create the post of deputy Executive Secretary. Concerns have also been expressed that the SADC secretariat has kept civil society groups at arm’s length.

However, the secretariat has engaged with some policy research institutes and universities in Southern Africa. One such collaborative project is spearheaded by the Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis. The “Formative Process Research on Integration in SADC (FOPRISA)” project aims to improve the understanding of integration policy issues and to enhance research skills and analytical capacity within SADC structures in order to assist the organisation to implement its priority policies. This research will support SADC’s objectives of regional co-operation, integration and development, with an emphasis on poverty reduction. The main areas of research are: democracy; politics and security; and building economic integration in Southern Africa. The project will also monitor progress in SADC and relationships with International Cooperating Partners (ICPs). The UN Development Programme (UNDP) has also worked with SADC to strengthen its capacity in the security field and to improve links with the AU and the UN.

2. The SADC Organ and SIPO

SADC’s Organ on Politics, Defence and Security was created at its summit in Gaborone in 1996, and a protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation was signed in Blantyre in 2001. The protocol seeks to harmonise SADC members’ foreign policy, and calls for security initiatives from conflict prevention to peace enforcement. The accord also calls for SADC states to co-ordinate their security policies through a troika of members under a one-year rotating chair, supported administratively by the SADC secretariat. By 2004, the organisation unveiled a Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ as a five-year programme to implement its security protocol. SIPO outlined plans for work in four broad sectors of politics; defence; state security; and public security. The initiative places much emphasis on HIV/AIDS and seeks to work more explicitly with civil society actors and think-tanks in Southern Africa, as well as to co-ordinate the participation of its members in UN peacekeeping missions. However, SIPO has been criticised for being too broad and general in its goals, which, according to critics, are more a long list of desirable actions than an actionable, focused implementation plan.

South Africa took over as Chair of the SADC Organ for a one-year period until September 2005. The current troika also includes the previous and future chairs, Lesotho and Namibia, respectively. South Africa is tasked with initiating and consolidating a number of key activities outlined in the SIPO document. At CCR’s November 2004 policy advisory group meeting in
Pretoria, at which donors and NGOs discussed how to support SADC, representatives of South Africa’s Foreign Affairs and Defence ministries outlined South Africa’s priority areas for the SADC Organ for the period up to September 2005. A task team comprising staff from the South African Defence and Foreign Affairs ministries was established specifically to focus on these priority areas, and to facilitate the work of the SADC Organ. A plan of action was developed as a benchmark against which the SADC Organ’s progress in implementing policies in these priority areas are to be measured.

The 11 priority areas identified by the South African government are:

1. To develop strategies and to implement a framework for activities outlined in SIPO, and to identify defence and security co-operation priorities, as well as to formulate an action plan to operationalise SIPO.
2. To enhance the capacity of the SADC Organ, especially its secretariat, by reviewing the structure of this instrument, identifying and filling gaps, and establishing common values and a common agenda.
3. To consolidate peace and political stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) with the aim of securing sustainable peace in the Great Lakes region. (South Africa will also continue to facilitate discussions to resolve disputes between the Congolese government and the governments of neighbouring states).
4. To encourage compliance with the SADC protocol on elections in the region.
5. To facilitate connectivity and complementarity between SADC and the AU, particularly in the related areas of defence, security and peacebuilding. SADC is seen as a building block for achieving the AU’s objectives of continental integration and unity.
6. To create a regional early warning centre. A draft document that outlines how such an early warning centre could be established and how it will function is being prepared.
7. To establish a SADC standby peacekeeping brigade and its civilian component. A strategic plan is being formulated, an operations doctrine is being developed, and command, control, and logistics arrangements will also be clarified.
8. To revive the Regional Peacekeeping Training Centre in Harare, Zimbabwe.
9. To support post-conflict reconstruction in Southern Africa, and to extend assistance to member states in developing strategies for the demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants, particularly the peacebuilding efforts in the DRC.
10. To mobilise political will for the accelerated ratification of SADC legal instruments and protocols by the legislatures of member states.
11. To address a number of other defence and security issues in the region, including: combating terrorist activities; countering trafficking in small arms; protecting strategic infrastructure; combating stock theft; and protecting wildlife; harmonising immigration legislation between member states; and tackling refugee issues, law enforcement at sea, and joint border controls.

The challenge that faces SADC is whether it can actually implement the numerous and ambitious activities outlined in SIPO, given the reality of limited financial and human resources at its disposal and the current political and economic challenges that confront Southern Africa. The Pretoria meeting in November 2004 recommended that, instead of new additions to the SADC agenda, it was important to strengthen existing areas and to narrow the focus. A list of “priorities of priorities” would include: achieving sustainable peace in the DRC; setting up SADC’s early warning centre; establishing the SADC standby brigade; enhancing the capacity of the SADC Organ, especially its secretariat; and implementing key SIPO objectives. It was also noted that a lack of resources, common political values, as well as political differences, have hampered success in the past, and imaginative ways must be found to overcome these constraints in the future.
3. SADSEM and the Regional Peacekeeping Training Centre

A remarkable feature of the SADC region is an impressive core of world-class NGOs. One of the most impressive security bodies in Africa is the Southern African Defence and Security Management network consisting of security institutions in South Africa, Namibia, Tanzania, DRC, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana and Zambia. SADSEM has trained over 1000 senior officials, military officers, and civil society leaders since January 2000, and the network involves one of the closest collaborations between civil society groups and military officers on the continent. SADSEM, which seeks to interact closely with SADC military institutions, has the potential to impact on the long-term military leadership within Southern Africa, though the group cannot always gain access to the top echelons of state houses. SADC members are also preparing a peacekeeping brigade as part of the AU’s standby force to be established by 2010. They have embarked on joint peace support exercises such as Blue Hungwe, Blue Crane, Tanzanite and Airborne Africa. The Regional Peacekeeping Training Centre in Harare has trained over 3000 military officers in the region. The Centre has recently been revived following a decision to bring it under the umbrella of the SADC secretariat. It remains to be seen whether the RPTC can attract sufficient funding to maintain its activities.

4. SADC Collaboration with the AU, ECOWAS, and the UN

As ECOWAS celebrates its 30th anniversary this May, it is appropriate to assess the security and governance lessons that this organisation can offer to SADC. A comparison of ECOWAS and SADC is particularly appropriate: both have established security mechanisms with political and military institutions and signed mutual defence pacts; both have conducted regional peace support operations; and both have established sub-regional parliaments and legal tribunals for arbitrating disputes. The AU/NEPAD initiatives have given sub-regional organisations new impetus to focus on democracy and good governance and to address regional conflicts. ECOWAS has had more experience than SADC in peacekeeping operations and in collaborating with UN missions and is able to provide valuable insights of the successes and pitfalls of these joint operations. However, both sub-regional bodies are constrained by limited resources and are still heavily dependent on external donors. SADC could consider adopting the idea of the ECOWAS community levy to bolster its funds. The UN High-Level Panel report on Threats, Challenges and Change of December 2004 and the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s March 2005 report to the General Assembly In Larger Freedom, called for UN support for Africa’s regional organisations, including UN funding of regional peacekeeping missions. The High-Level Panel report also called for the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission to assist post-conflict reconstruction efforts. These recommendations could be particularly relevant for the DRC and Angola: both SADC members.

5. Tackling the Land Reform and HIV/AIDS Challenges in Southern Africa

In most African countries, development policies have directed the use of land in ways that have not always been beneficial for national development and which have favoured distorted accumulation by a small elite and foreign capital. The consequences of such policies have been land alienation, the loss of local livelihoods, and increased conflicts. Land reform is thus an inherently conflictual process, as it challenges established economic and political structures and calls for restructuring of property relations and a change in power relations. Land reform can, however, deepen the democratisation of the development process if accompanied by “progressive” land tenure reforms which can defend the poor against potential land losses, as well as accommodate excluded groups. In South Africa, the slow pace of institutional land reform has given impetus to increasingly impatient social movements and intermittent violent clashes. Contestation over land ownership and access is a primary structural cause of the conflict in Zimbabwe, and potentially in Namibia. An equally important dimension of the land issue is
environmental degradation and increased competition for diminishing resources. These issues must be urgently tackled if stability is to be ensured in Southern Africa.

Another non-traditional security issue, HIV/AIDS, constitutes a potentially serious constraint to the growth and stability of many Southern African economies and societies, and could reverse their hard-won development gains. Since large segments of Southern Africa’s population and national armies are afflicted by, and will succumb to, HIV/AIDS, the disease has major implications for national security in the region. Southern Africa must become part of debates on AIDS, which have tended to be dominated by western scholars and policymakers. While much research has focused on the socio-economic impact of HIV/AIDS, the security dimensions of the disease have been under-researched. SADC must play a leading role in such efforts; Southern African grassroots organisations must continue to be supported; and Southern African governments must be assisted to strengthen domestic health infrastructure and to promote anti-AIDS campaigns. Such support can be channeled through bodies like the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Global AIDS Fund, and local NGOs in the region.

6. Governance, Democracy, and Civil Society

While SIPO outlines strategies for regional co-operation on the “hard” issues of security and defence, it also aligns itself with the AU/NEPAD focus of promoting democratisation and “good governance”. SIPO further acknowledges the role of civil society organisations in peacebuilding, and in deepening democratic practices in Southern Africa. Civil society organisations can play an important role as catalysts for “grassroots” change towards democratisation and act as “watchdogs” to hold national governments accountable in the region. Southern Africa has undergone significant change over the last decade, with a shift from civil wars to peaceful reconstruction and the emergence of electoral democracies and multi-party systems. However, democratic consolidation has been uneven, and many countries still have weak state institutions.

While elections have become a regular feature, many are marred by increased conflict, claims of flawed processes, and contested results.

The principles of governance outlined in NEPAD challenge African states to develop strong institutions and administrations that can serve the development needs of their citizens. NEPAD emphasises that development is impossible without peace, democracy, respect for human rights and democratic governance. The active participation of citizens in the political system is required to deepen and sustain a democratic culture. “Good governance” therefore requires both effective and accountable public and private institutions as well as the empowerment and participation of citizens in political systems. Indicators of democratic governance include: regular free and fair elections; the protection and promotion of human rights; accountable executives; effective parliaments; the rule of law; a free press; and an active and independent civil society. NGOs can provide important channels to monitor and hold governments accountable; to defend the rights of citizens; and to push for sustainable political, constitutional, and legal reforms. Electoral support and monitoring has been one successful area of co-operation between national electoral structures, civil society, and regional bodies. However, elections are only the first steps in building democratic systems, and there still needs to be ongoing co-operation to consolidate a culture of democracy and tolerance in the region. The constructive contributions of civil society to this process needs to be acknowledged and supported by Southern African governments in order to strengthen regional networks and their engagement with SADC structures. These and other issues will be addressed during the policy advisory group meeting in Cape Town in June 2005.