

Meeting Report

Preparatory Meeting

Briefing by African Regional Economic Communities to UN Member States
18 October 2010, 3

Cheick Sidi Diarra, Under Secretary General and Special Adviser on Africa thanked the African Union Permanent Observer Mission for the support that the office had given OSAA in making the briefing a success. He noted that the African Union has identified regional economic communities (RECs) as essential for accelerated development in Africa. Mr. Diarra noted that the briefing, which was co-organized by OSAA and the Permanent Observer Mission of the AU was aimed at enhancing the awareness and understanding of UN Member States, with a view to generate greater support from the UN and the international community at large for the work, goals, aims and priorities of the AU and the RECs.

Ambassador Tete Antonio, The African Union Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, welcomed the opportunity given to RECs to brief member states. He noted that RECs are the building blocks of the African Economic Community, which is the continental wide goal for political and economic integration. He noted that Africa now has a continental structure that is responsive to peace and security issues, humanitarian concerns, and economic development. He noted the need for greater support for the work of the continental and regional mechanisms particularly in building their capacity to respond to Africa's needs.

Mrs. Helen Kiraso, Deputy Secretary General for Federation in the East African Community (EAC) briefed member states on the history of the EAC. She noted that the community launched a Customs Union, in 2005, which became fully operational in January 2010; a Common Market was launched in July 2010, and negotiations for a Monetary Union are underway with the ultimate objective of establishing a political federation of East Africa. Towards this goal EAC member states are increasingly exchange of criminal intelligence and other security information holding joint operations and patrols to ensure border and interstate security and have adopted the UN law on mutual assistance on criminal matters. The region is implementing a protocol on combating illicit drug trafficking; and has established common mechanisms for the management of refugees; disaster management security measures to combat terrorism as well as measures to combat proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons, conflict management and resolution. At a political level, there are currently negotiations aimed at creating a unified foreign policy.

Mr. Yufnalis Okubo, the Acting Director Peace and Security Division in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) briefed Member States on the history of IGAD, and its responses to two key conflicts (Somalia and Sudan) in the horn of Africa region. He noted that IGAD had played a key role in the Somalia Peace Process, including the establishment of the current Transitional Federal Government currently in place. He noted the region had suffered the negative consequences of lack of a stable

government in Somalia and was equally concerned and active in the negotiation of the peace in Southern Sudan as well as in the continuing effort to ensure full implementation. Mr Okubo also noted that IGAD had set up an early warning centre mainly targeted at identifying and reducing conflict amongst armed pastoralist groups that straddle the borders of the countries in the region. IGAD has also set up an election monitoring capacity as well as a unit to help countries build up capacity to deal with terrorism.

Mr. João Samuel Caholo, the Deputy Secretary General for Economic Integration in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) briefed member states on the history of SADC. He noted that the region was quite homogenous economically and this boded well for economic integration. The region is currently working to integrate SADC regional infrastructure backbones to enhance universal access across the 15 SADC countries this will Provide transport access through designated priority corridors of SADC, to promote trade, free movement of persons and elimination of non tariff barriers. Similarly the region intends to improve its power pool plan to facilitate power trading and optimisation of energy costs and use of power potential based on least cost investment options. The region also plans to Inter-connect Member States ICT networks. He noted that SADC is currently working with the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA) region and with the East African Community (EAC) in order to establish a tripartite free trade area. In peace and security the region has been actively engaged in Madagascar and in Zimbabwe.

During the question and answer session, the Mission of Libya thanked the convenors for hosting the event and noted there was need for more such briefings. The Mission of Cape Verde also thanked the convenors for convening the briefing and enquired why the Economic Community for West African States was not present given that it was one the oldest and most advanced regional groupings in the continent, and had good examples to give of work done.

Mr Diarra regretted that not all regional groupings were able to attend but noted that OSAA intended to hold the briefings regularly and that there would be an opportunity to have them present in the next briefing.