

Conference Report
**Dynamics of
Decision Making in Africa**



Compiled by Jean-Christophe Hoste and Andrew Anderson
Leriba Lodge, Pretoria, 8–9 November 2010


EGMONT



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Introduction

The aim of this conference was to gain a clearer understanding of how and why decisions are arrived at within Africa's continental and regional organisations. The continental and regional levels of decision making are analysed in order to provide an improved understanding of the political dynamics and interests of a variety of African institutions, organisations, countries and leaders. This is a topic that has received limited political and scientific attention and yet an understanding of the factors that influence decision making is imperative to building partnerships with the continent on global challenges such as peace and security, economic development and the protection of the environment.

External actors such as the European Union (EU) underestimate the complexities of the continent's international relations and, even at the regional level, there is limited understanding of the dynamics shaping positions

adopted by the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). While the African Union (AU) has a Permanent Mission in Brussels, and the EU has observer status at the AU, there is still considerable potential for building greater co-operation and shared understanding. Researchers emphasise the changing position of Africa in the world and the development of a new continental agenda that will encourage that global shift.

In examining the dynamics of decision making the following questions guided the analysis: What are the key drivers and interests that influence pan-African decision-making processes? What are the areas of consensus and divergence? What countries and leaders are key stakeholders at regional and continental levels? How are national, regional and continental dynamics managed and exploited by African as well as external actors?

AU-EU

How are decisions on Africa made in and between these supranational institutions?

Africa and the EU have extensive historical and political ties that date back to the age of colonisation. Today the EU is one of the most, if not the most, important strategic partners in the global arena for Africa. Not only is the EU Africa's largest trade and aid partner but the African integration process has also been inspired largely by that of the EU. However, this does not mean that the two are completely comparable. Their respective policies with regard to trade and economy differ greatly; nevertheless, the two continents are intertwined.

The EU acknowledges that the AU should be used as an interface through which to engage the entire continent, but this engagement suffers from the tension inherent in viewing Africa as a singular entity and maintaining an appropriate and necessary recognition of its diversity. The AU and the EU face similar institutional hurdles and political dynamics, which we will look into in this report.

EUROPEAN UNION

To achieve an understanding of the interaction between the two continents we need to scrutinise how these relations are defined by the EU. The EU has a complex agenda when it comes to its international relations and this is also the case with Africa, where these relations remain burdened by the historical subtext of colonisation. The resulting national interests, of European states combined with long-standing relations on both continents, play a very important role as well. Decision making on Africa in the EU should therefore be analysed on several levels. The EU Commission (EUC) is not the only institution that has an interest in African policies; the individual member states have too. Aside from implementing their own respective national policies, the member states play a

direct role in EU policies: officials of the EU Commission work according to mandates that are given by the member states. Even at the level of these member states there is competition between departments and ministries and the relative strength of each department is an important factor when it comes to influencing decision making. Furthermore, the role of individual leaders should not be overlooked.

The EU has taken several steps towards developing new structures for its decision-making process. Since the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, the EU has a President and a High Representative as European contact points in the global arena. These new steps were developed to give the EU a stronger and more coherent voice in international affairs; however, there is still an urgent need for a more coherent strategy. The EU's position is undermined by a multitude of voices, such as those of the Council, the Commission, the member states and the political alliances. Some European countries are unimpressed if other member states enjoy privileged bilateral relations with African states. Aside from internal European dynamics, Africa plays an important role in EU decision making. The Africa Peace Facility, for example, funded by the European Development Cooperation (EDC), was the result of a request that came from the AU.

AFRICAN UNION

Although it has not always been the case, the AU is perceived as a regional interlocutor in the international arena, with the understanding that it may provide a platform to advance collective action that promotes the continent's strength and importance and counters the new 'Scramble for Africa'. However, there are some important issues that influence the effectiveness and importance of

the AU. An analysis of the power structure of the AU and how this power structure influences the decision-making process will therefore prove useful.

When examining the AU institutions and provisions, it becomes clear that the organisation was developed to enhance the sovereignty of Africa and that it has not moved past the statecentric vision of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). It has been set up as an inter-governmental organisation, and issues surrounding sovereignty and intervention play a large role in their decision making. Although the European integration model has inspired the AU structures and institutions, the AU organs, and especially the AU Commission, lack the same supranational decision-making authority of its European counterpart. All the major policy-making instruments of the AU are staffed by official state representatives and thus are a reflection of their national interests. The AU Commission (AUC) is the most visible and active of the AU organs, though, in fact, it merely serves as a secretariat. This secretarial role is the result of the long and complex policy chain within the AU that we elaborate upon next.

The highest decision-making organ of the African Union is the Assembly of the African Union, formally known as the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government (AU-AHSG). The Assembly and the Executive Council, made up of the Foreign Ministers of AU member states, prepare decisions for the Assembly and are among the most influential decision-making organs in the AU. When a policy proposal is prepared within the AU, specialists, appointed by member states, first work on it in expert meetings. Their suggestions are subsequently scrutinised in a meeting of the relevant Ministers of member states. If the proposal has any budgetary implications it has to be discussed by the Permanent Representatives' Committee, which is made up of the ambassadors to Addis Ababa of AU member states. Finally, a proposal comes back to the Executive Council, which has the authority to adopt some of the proposals; however, if the proposal contains any politically sensitive issues the Committee merely approves the text and sends it to the Assembly for final adoption.

These dynamics also play a role at the sub-regional level, in the decision making of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). The RECs are considered to be the 'building blocks' of the AU and instruments for the further integration of Africa. Many African states remain economically and politically fragile and are inefficient in dealing with some of the challenges they face. It is recognition of these challenges that drives integration mechanisms on other continents as well, and it is in this area that the AU and the RECs have to set an example as multilateral and supranational institutions.

One of the key issues for African states remains the tension between weak intergovernmentalism and supranationalism. There are several reasons for this tension: first, states are reluctant to relegate part of their 'recent' independence to the supranational institutions. Second, in the past, most African international institutions were initiated as a reaction *against* something (colonialism or apartheid) not *for* something, with the exception of a strong but hard-to-implement pan-Africanist narrative. With both the Cold War and the struggle against apartheid all but over, the only criterion has become one of geography and not qualification. The current model is therefore based on inclusiveness, with the exception of Morocco, which decided not to be part of the AU because of the continued disagreement concerning the status of the West Sahara. It is for this reason that the AU's role is fundamentally different from that of the RECs, albeit not always successful.

AN EXAMPLE OF AN AFRICAN COMMON POSITION: THE CLIMATE CHANGE NEGOTIATIONS IN COPENHAGEN

When it comes to multilateral engagement with Africa, there is a tendency to view the continent as a monolithic whole rather than as the complex mix of states, interests, and geopolitical dynamics that comprise the continent.

African common positions are the product of several factors and forces. For instance, the national interests of the member states; the personality, resources and agenda of the Chairperson; and the nature of the issue that is on the agenda play a large role. Internationally, another important factor may be the influence from external actors, such as former colonial powers. Furthermore, group and bloc politics do still play a role, even with the cessation of the Cold War. There are also certain linguistic (Anglophone versus Francophone) and geographic (North versus South) sensitivities that have to be taken into account. A major challenge to developing a sustainable African common position, besides reconciling the national interests of all 53 member states, is the fact that these common positions are not amendable to law. The implication is that the positions of the individual states on common positions are susceptible to change over the course of time, and, if their support is needed, this can ultimately have an effect on the common position.

The complex nature of internal African decision-making processes was clearly illustrated by the lack of unity that was evident – despite all the rhetoric – between African states prior to and during the Copenhagen climate change negotiations of December 2009.

In order to accurately understand Africa's position in the climate negotiations, an understanding of those

negotiations and, especially, the Road to Copenhagen is crucial. The current commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol is set to expire in 2012 and a new agreement is sought after. Views on how that agreement should be obtained and implemented differ greatly, especially concerning questions of equity and historical responsibilities. Although it is true that historically developed countries are responsible for a large percentage of the CO₂ emissions, the emissions of developing countries have been rising drastically and are likely to surpass those of the developed countries in the near future. South Africa's economy is largely based on coal, a highly polluting source of energy. China has become one of the top emitters in the world and India's emissions are rapidly rising. Despite the common challenge presented by climate change, it is evident that the divide between the developed and developing nations persists. One of the major questions in Copenhagen was: who will do what? Will a new agreement be based on historic inequities or will everyone be part of the solution? This dichotomy was perhaps best evidenced in the opposition between the US and China, the G2 of the Copenhagen negotiations. These two leading nations were at loggerheads, while the Sudan played an active role as Chair of the G-77 + China, both voicing the objections of China and permitting the Chinese not to comment on the US position in public.

Although the post-Kyoto negotiations began in 2004, it has only been since the Bali conference in 2007 that there has been a clear agenda leading to Copenhagen. The ultimate objective of that agenda has been to reach a legally binding climate agreement, at least in the eyes of the EU. However, in 2009, it became clear that this agreement would not be attainable.

One controversial debate during the negotiations leading up to and during Copenhagen concerned the form of the new agreement. The EU wanted a single, new, legally binding document. According to the EU, the Kyoto Protocol was flawed because of concerns surrounding the selling of emission rights by former Eastern Bloc countries. Due to the industrial decline after the fall of communism, these countries still emit less GHGs than in 1990, the base year of the Kyoto Protocol. The EU wanted to bind everyone in a new agreement, including developing countries, as their share in global emissions is growing rapidly. This was, however, misunderstood by some of the EU's closest partners – namely the Africa Group, the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) – and used by others to block the negotiations. This led to the infamous walkout during the negotiations by the Africa Group, because the group wanted to make progress on both instruments, namely the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention

(AWG-LCA) and the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP).

Whether or not the Copenhagen conference was a failure depends on the point of view, but the presence of the Africa Group was certainly interesting. The Africa Group was more co-ordinated than ever, even though there were many differences within the group and members of the group had separate loyalties to other countries such as China and other negotiating groups like the G-77.

The preparation of a common position, both on common interests and capacity building, has been significant. Even though it was not the first time the African countries stood together during climate negotiations, they have never previously shown such a high level of co-ordination. The African Common Position was the result of long-term and sustained co-operation on a continental level. The position they brought to the negotiating table was based on the African Union's Nairobi Declaration in 2009.

The African Common Position can provide Africa with the framework to move forward in the global arena and towards integration. Climate change in itself is a supranational challenge and therefore questions the current African approach to sovereignty (as well as regional decision making in Africa). The climate regime may prove to be the arena in which a wider pan-African agenda is fully developed. It should not be surprising that Africa has been highly supportive of the multilateral approach. However, if the process stalls and climate change is not effectively addressed, it could lead to more conflict and division. The climate negotiations are not just important for Africa because of the continent's climate vulnerability, but also because it may prove to be a stepping stone towards further regional integration. In order to enable the African Common Position to develop, when making difficult decisions there is an urgent need for more political engagement and capacity at the national levels. This will not always be easy for a continent where nation building and arriving at a national consensus are still very precarious processes.

Unfortunately the implementation of the African Common Position during the negotiations succumbed to internal differences between African states and eventually this debate led to the marginalisation of the Africa Group during the last stage of the negotiations. This gave South Africa the opportunity to come to the fore as part of the BASIC countries, which are comprised of Brazil, South Africa, India and China, or the G4. These internal differences between the African states can be partly attributed to the different loyalties and interests among these states and the fact that they belong to several different

negotiating groups. As the negotiations progressed, it became clear that both national and regional political and economic issues played an important role in influencing the African position. One of the most prominent examples of these differences was the falling-out between Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, as head of the African Group, and Lumumba Di-Aping, head of the Sudanese delegation, as Chair for the G-77 + China. Meles Zenawi came forward with a joint proposal backed by the EU regarding a yearly €100 million funding for Africa. Lumumba Di-Aping objected to the proposal, accusing Zenawi of selling out Africa. Even though they were representing two different negotiation groups the confrontation between the Ethiopian and Sudanese delegation was influenced by several factors within the climate negotiations, such as the relationship between Sudan and China, and the personality issues between Zenawi and Di-Aping, as well as national and regional issues concerning South Sudan and the Nile basin.

An analysis of these dynamics illustrates that internal African issues are a factor that is often overlooked in the determination of an African Common Position, and African decision making in general. Although this may not seem surprising, and the clash between Ethiopia and Sudan is a case in point, the Copenhagen negotiations also showed that this is not the case for many of the other negotiating parties around the table.

Sudan played the role of Chair for the G-77 + China, vigorously presenting itself as the champion and voice of the South. Apart from Sudan's close economic and diplomatic ties with China, there were nevertheless other African dossiers that played a role in the confrontation between Ethiopia and Sudan.

In Sudan, the elections of April 2010, the ICC warrant against President Omar Al-Bashir, and the run-up to the 9 January 2011 referendum might have played a role. On a regional level there are two current issues in which Ethiopia and Sudan are at odds with one other, namely the independence of South Sudan in 2011 and the Nile waters. South Sudan decided on its independence in the January 2011 referendum. This issue has elicited strong sentiments in Sudan and the wider Horn of Africa. Ethiopia is a strong supporter of South Sudanese independence and an important investor in the South, together with Kenya and Uganda. Independence means not only a shift in regional security, oil production and water governance; it could also reinvigorate the impetus for independence by movements within Sudan (Darfur), and Ethiopia (Oromo and Somali). The matter of water governance provides an interesting scenario, as the management of the Nile River has been a matter of conflict for some time. The current situation is disadvantageous for the upper-riparian states, especially Ethiopia. More than

85 per cent of the Nile water that flows through Sudan and Egypt originates in the highlands of Ethiopia. However, because of the Nile Treaties of 1929 and 1959, Ethiopia is prohibited from making use of this vast resource for agriculture and for generating hydropower. Egypt and Sudan have generally presented a united front against the calls of the upper-riparian states like Ethiopia to use their share of the water. The history of mutual destabilisation between Ethiopia and Egypt and Sudan is just one example from a fragile region where instability is a constantly lingering possibility.

The role that national political and economic expediencies play in decision-making processes is apparent, therefore, and this raises questions concerning the continent's position on a number of salient issues. As the climate change negotiations demonstrate, determining an 'African position' is a complex process, drawing together a myriad of country interests, continental (AU) and regional organisations such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the East African Communities (EAC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), not to mention different leadership styles. It was this complex interplay between states in determining common positions in international regimes that was the focus of session one of this conference.

THE DYNAMICS OF AFRICA-EU RELATIONS

These internal decision-making dynamics also play a role in the relationship between Africa and the EU. With these dynamics as a background, we can more closely examine the Africa-EU partnership. The Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) is the new basis for EU-Africa co-operation. Within the framework of this conference, two examples have been elaborated upon: on the one hand, there is the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) as a positive example of the concerted effort between the AU and the EU and on the other, the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), which lack any attempt at creating synergy between the continents. The JAES works best when European and African interests are clearly formulated and coincide. The African Peace Facility (APF) is an example of the co-operation between the AU and the RECs, with the support of the EU, towards brokering stabilisation deals in African countries like Mauritania. Other issues such as migration are much more difficult because there is no coherent migration policy in the EU itself. This being said, migration from North and West Africa was one of the triggers for the establishment of FRONTEX, the border security agency of the EU.

An important factor in JAES is the EU's philosophy of 'African Ownership' in which the AU and African regional organisations take the initiative and the EU supports them. However, this 'Africanisation process' has not yet reached its goal and some observers even suggest that the Joint Strategy is little more than a repackaging of traditional relations. This does not mean that there was no African engagement and involvement in the JAES but the Joint Strategy may have reached greater heights if the officials involved in it were experienced enough to decide on difficult political issues. Nevertheless, the EU has committed an annual €20 billion to issues that will be taken up by the JAES and the EPAs, so there is strong financial support on the European side, coming from various envelopes.

The philosophy of 'African Ownership' espoused by the EU has also had an impact on institutional support of the AU and the RECs. The EU and the Commission in general try to intervene at all levels to make the institutions more efficient and more inclusive for a variety of stakeholders. On the national level the EU Commission supports the efficiency of parliaments and co-ordination of non-state actors. On the regional level the EU has capacity-building projects with most RECs. It is the EU's objective to help RECs work more efficiently, even though it has not always done that in an appropriate manner and previously has ignored internal agendas and dynamics in the regions. On the continental level the EU has been supporting the AU with a capacity-building programme but these capacity-building processes take time and need to be respected by the EU. Apart from capacity building, the EU and the AU established a high-level political dialogue, with both general and sectorial meetings between the two Commissions.

The EPAs are a supranational issue and they therefore fall under the Commission's authority. Interestingly, the foreign ministries of the member states are upset about the manner in which the Commission has conducted the trade side of the debate as it has soured relations with the African nations. At certain stages of the EPA process, there has been some confusion about the content of the debate, and whether or not this process was about trade, regional integration or aid. Both the Directorates-General of Trade and Development are at fault, as neither one wanted to touch upon the EPA issue.

With the third Africa-EU Summit having reached its conclusion, understanding the decision-making processes on the European position at the Summit is crucial. First, it is important to know who represented the EU at the Summit. EU President Herman Van Rompuy was the lead official at the Summit, while José Barroso, the President of the EU Commission, led the delegation. EU High Representative Catherine Ashton and EU Commissioner

of Trade Karel De Gucht were not present, which already suggests that the EU is not willing to deal with controversial issues, like that of the EPAs. (Interestingly, Mr De Gucht did attend the ACP parliamentary assembly meeting in Kinshasa from 2–4 December 2010.) However, observers remarked that one cannot consider the EPAs as separate from the broader issue of EU-Africa relations. One of the factors influencing decisions regarding the Summit is the high press visibility there. With the Summit being politically very sensitive – a situation that is exacerbated by the ICC warrant for Sudan's Al-Bashir as well as the difficult relations between the UK and Mugabe – politicians will be less inclined to be present if faced with the possibility that they may be publicly confronted with such matters. Some observers have noted that for many policy makers, their main goal is to have an incident-free Summit. However, many experts still believe that the Summit has the potential to be a step towards a more equal partnership between Africa and the EU and, possibly, a move towards an even more substantial political dialogue. The question also remains as to whether the EU will present more coherence and alignment at the national level.

As has been illustrated, EU decision making on Africa is complex and includes multiple levels. There have been some changes since the Lisbon Treaty but these have hardly been radical ones. With regard to the AU, there is a need for a strong, coherent and knowledgeable African voice in Brussels but at present there is not even a Permanent Representative of the AU to the EU. Sadly, with the exception of South Africa, this is the case for many African delegations. The AU should attend to this by placing a diplomat with vision and considerable political weight at the head of their delegation. This representative should, in turn, have the support of a knowledgeable staff that has close links with (their own) experts and researchers in order to understand the dynamics of EU-Africa relations and decision-making.

THE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

One of the most contentious issues in EU-Africa relations are the EPAs. The EPAs define an important part of the economic aspect of the Cotonou Agreement and their focus is on development and regional integration. They also regulate the trade relations between the EU and the AU, following a number of World Trade Organisation rulings intended to abolish existing trade preferences and replace them with reciprocal trade agreements. Before examining what has occurred with the EPAs, we should bear in mind that trade is still firmly rooted within the

national decision-making processes. Countries and regions face different challenges and have very different approaches and many African states have little experience with trade negotiations. In the past, bilateral free trade negotiations were rare, so that in many instances there is limited understanding of the trade integration process. Furthermore, many African states are categorised as Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and therefore already benefit from market access benefits and schemes, which means that there is little incentive for them to enter into new trade agreements and free trade zones. One of the challenges in EU-Africa relations is to link trade aspects with aid, particularly as the EU is Africa's largest partner in both areas.

Issues concerning sovereignty still loom large, and it is for this reason, perhaps, that there is no grand vision for a greater African economic community. This factor has also influenced the nature of the EPAs. There has been no 'one African experience', and no common African position. Traditionally, the EU has negotiated separately with the regions and there is little coherence and dialogue between the regions. The question remains: who decided to divide the negotiations according to the regions? Was it a joint decision, or was it imposed by the EU? In fact, some observers hint at a sort of 'divide and rule' policy. It is apparent that REC secretariats have had little impact on the negotiations, which leads back to the (lack of) negotiating capacity of the RECs. It was clear from the start that the regional organisations were not capable of taking part in the trade negotiations. Furthermore, the negotiations ignored the internal structure, historical commitments and cultural affinities of the regional organisations and the multi-membership of many African countries, influenced as they are by economic considerations. The EU may have wanted to deal with the RECs on an equal level but did not take into consideration the process and time it takes for the effective transfer of sovereignty to these organisations. The splintering and overlapping of RECs and national agendas has caused a lack of coherence and has not, ultimately, led to further regional integration.

Although there has been a positive shift and greater engagement between the African countries and the EU, the overall impact of the EPAs in RECs like SADC has been ambiguous at best. In the case of SADC, experts suggest that the EPAs have, in fact, undermined the integration process because of the way the groupings were set up and the fact that some member states will end up committing to several EPAs. However, there is also a more positive view. The EPAs can function as a catalyst that may assist the RECs in ascertaining precisely what their goals are and may galvanise civil

society in the region around trade issues. The EPAs also enabled the RECs to build mutual understanding in the regions and to engage EU stakeholders.

With regard to broader Africa-EU relations, there are some lessons to be learnt from the EPAs. Africa needs to better organise itself to deal with issues at the continental level. There is a need for more co-ordination and communication between African states and a clear delineation of common goals. The private sector, civil society and other actors should become more involved, which is admittedly a difficult task as these sectors have not yet managed to organise themselves on a continental scale. This is also mentioned in the AU audit report.¹ For its part, the EU should have achieved greater understanding from working on the EPAs with African RECs, where there were no well-established criteria regarding the selection of organisations to work with and the EU ignored existing dynamics which, according to experts, was patronising and showed a lack of understanding of dynamics at continental, regional and national levels. There is a difference of opinion between observers regarding the need for both parties to discuss the EPAs at future Africa-EU summits. According to some this matter is quite crucial, but policy makers fear that this focus might enhance political fears and detract from real negotiation issues. They maintain that it is more important to focus on how to make progress in Africa-EU co-operation, how to improve political dialogue and how to make EU support more efficient. Africa (the AU) and the EU have a lot in common on issues like security, climate change and a multipolar world and this should be reflected in an alliance in the global arena.

The EU has a complex agenda regarding relations with Africa, which is motivated by the notion that the EU is Africa's most important partner. Within this agenda, regional integration, aid and trade are very important. Other issues such as security and climate change are very high on the agenda as well, as evidenced by the fact that the EU is not only a supportive partner of Africa in the climate change regime but also by the fact that it is pushing the agenda toward turning the African economies into greener economies through financing and technological assistance. If the EU wants to take its role as the most important and natural partner of Africa seriously, it should accept that issues in Africa are often very complex. The EU should take this complexity into account in its interaction with African decision makers. Until now the EU, as demonstrated by the EPAs, has not conducted its partnership in an appropriate way. The question of who owns the Africa-EU relationship is still an urgent one

and there is no definite answer. Although all parties involved subscribe to the discourse that the partnership should be equal, and that the EU has indeed aimed its policies towards that goal, there are still some obstacles to the realisation of this, both on the European side

and on the African side. The EU needs to pay greater attention to dynamics of African decision making and the African policy makers should come forward with a coherent foreign policy of their own.

Regional decision making and the RECs

In this section of the report, we will scrutinise the (sub-) regional integration processes and elaborate upon the examples mentioned above on APSA and trade in the context of the RECs. The regional integration on the African continent is complicated by the overlapping ‘spaghetti bowl’ of the different RECs. It is clear that there is some disjunction between the declarative regional integration and the economic and political reality. The creation of an effective interface between the AU and the RECs suffers from fundamental political factors that are proving to be an impediment to progress: the RECs came into existence before the AU; they evolved on their own while the OAU was focusing on Africa’s sovereignty; they have different institutional cultures; and they are confronted with the challenges of timing and multiple memberships before they can be effective building blocks of the AU.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of decision-making processes in the RECs, we must examine their structures and see how they work and relate to the AU. This may provide us with enough insight to discuss their functions and challenges and to see if there are any alternatives to the current model.

With the secretariats of the RECs, there is a considerable difference in their operational effectiveness. This is largely the result of how they were set up and what has been invested in these institutions by their respective member governments. Secretariats are supposed to initiate co-operation between member states, provide technical and administrative support, monitoring and research to support the development and implementation of regional policies. In reality the secretariats are an example of bureaucratic capture: unlike the Chairs, bureaucracies last and are seldom neutral, invariably having their own agendas. This can undermine the political ownership of

regionalisation. The same can be said about the bureaucracy of the AU.

The RECs are confronted with the practical implications of the conflict between supranationalism and national interests. States are reluctant to strengthen the national contact points within the RECs because they do not want to allow the organisations to function independently. Furthermore, there is still a lot of work to do regarding the organisational structure of the RECs. Staffing and expertise is underdeveloped. There is an over-reliance on funds from external actors instead of on regional funding, especially for strategic issues like security and poverty reduction. The secretariats lack the capacity to promote and develop common goals and strategies, which means that they are not able to work on a supranational level or promote regional integration, until the regions are reconstituted and redesigned.

Some of these issues are equally relevant in terms of the development and implementation of regional policies. RECs were formed to support regional economic integration. Trade could play an important role in the policies of the regional organisations, as trade is a strong instrument for regional and global economic integration, but inter-African trade is virtually non-existent. However, the infrastructure is focused on extraction of raw materials and this seems to hamper the stimulation of cross-border trade. For example, most trade in the SADC region is with external actors and not with other African states within or outside the Southern African region. Most experts agree that current economic integration has not been positive for Africa, although extra-regional trade is crucial for development and integration in Africa and intra-regional trade enhances capacity.

On a global level, the continent does not seem to have the capacity and capability to influence World Trade

Organisation (WTO) trade negotiations and its trade balance is very lopsided. Its exports consist mostly of primary goods, while it imports vast quantities of manufactured goods. As the AU is built on the RECs, these trade processes should be supported through enhancing institutional and infrastructural co-operation and capacity building in trade negotiations. Since 2008 the WTO has started the enhancement of the African missions to the WTO by supplying interns. This has allowed the African negotiation teams to pool their experts in focal points to optimise their negotiation capacity.

AFRICAN PEACE AND SECURITY ARCHITECTURE: THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

RECs are not only responsible for developing trans-regional policies on trade and development; they have a similar responsibility in terms of peace and security. Regional agencies are seen as useful actors for enforcing and implementing peacekeeping missions and security according to Article 53 of the UN Charter. Resolution 1631, in 2005, reiterated the multidimensional approach to peace and security and the role of the RECs. The co-operation on peace and security between the AU, the RECs and the co-ordinating mechanisms of the Regional Standby Brigades of Eastern Africa and Northern Africa was formalised in a Memorandum of Understanding, which stipulates their common responsibilities. Although the Charter states that co-operation between regional operations of the UN itself and the AU is allowed, the linkages between the RECs, the AU Peace and Security Council and the UN are not clearly defined and should be further developed. There is an important relationship between the AU and the RECs in peacekeeping initiatives but it is nevertheless a difficult one because the RECs have more experience and, according to observers, have frequently undermined the AU's ability to oversee complex peacekeeping interventions.

Although the following analysis is based on that of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), it provides some insight into African RECs in general.

SADC started as the Frontline States, their objective the political liberation of Southern Africa. SADC was preceded by the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC). Following the independence of the rest of the Southern African countries, the objective of the organisation shifted from political liberation and defence to one concerned with economic integration. Currently SADC has the following member states: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa,

Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

SADC's Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation (OPDSC) plays a vanguard role as part of the institutional mechanisms for promoting and maintaining peace and stability in the region. Nevertheless, anomalies do exist. The formation of the SADC OPDSC and its subsequent evolution into a SADC security body should be viewed as part of the transformation process of the regional economic community itself. The integration of the predecessor structures, such as the Inter-State Defence and Security Committee (ISDC) that dates back to Frontline States, has proven to be difficult. The question is whether the OPDSC should have a strong secretariat and a weak Troika system or, instead, a more robust secretariat that manages the day-to-day activities, coupled with a strong Troika system that informs and directs the activities.² The role of the Chair, which is to streamline the decisions that have to be taken and assume leadership, is crucial. For example, when Angola was Chair of the OPDSC from August 2007 to August 2008, it failed to respond to the Zimbabwe and DRC crisis situations. The Angolans failed to host any high-level meeting of the Troika after the Zimbabwe elections and didn't even make it to the AU Summit in Sharm el Sheik in July 2008. There are, however, some examples of closer regional co-operation on security in Africa. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has a well-developed infrastructure, with a Chief of Staff, comprehensive planning, and training headquarters. In general, however, it is clear that regional organisations do not have the strong, adequate leadership and extensive executive powers that they require.

The SADC Standby Brigade is an important element of the security architecture in the region. It is nonetheless based in a poor region and could benefit from external support to enhance its efficiency. There is a definite need for more adequate funding for SADC and the AU, as sustained interventions require resources and funding. However, this funding has also been used to pressure the AU and the RECs, for example, pressurising them to commit to an artificial time frame for integration. If African states want to keep external interference to a minimum, they should invest more in security and development. As long as they cannot provide these basic needs for their citizens, they will be subject to foreign agendas.

Another challenge is the lack of accountability of the national committees. These committees are not fully developed and in some instances they do not even exist. If they are functioning they receive instructions from the respective member state and yet the secretariats

lack the power and authority to hold the committees accountable. Added to this, the executive level of the RECs and the AU has not been fully developed and this should be addressed with a capacity-building framework that focuses on, amongst others, programme planning, administration and financing, which would enable the RECs to deliver on their mandate more effectively.

AFRICAN PEACE AND SECURITY ARCHITECTURE IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

The set of local, national, regional and external interests that interact in the Greater Horn of Africa region are diverse and the web of regional and international political processes is complex. This is the frontier between Africa and the Middle East where Libya, Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and others play an important role. The Nile basin is a good example of an area that is afflicted by both interstate and intrastate tensions. The relations between Sudan, Egypt and Ethiopia are subject to reciprocal cross-border interferences that complicate the matrix of interstate relations and it appears that the conflicts that afflict the Horn of Africa have internal, regional and external dynamics. During the conference, the analysis focused on IGAD, Eritrea, Sudan and Somalia.

Even though a number of RECs have been established in the region, the most prominent one is the Intergovernmental Agency for Development (IGAD). The AU and IGAD had joint supervision over the East African Stand-by Brigade (EASBRIG) until the end of 2006. At the beginning of 2007, the co-ordination was taken over by the Eastern African Stand-by Brigade Co-ordination Mechanism (EASBRICOM). The coherent operationalisation of EASBRIG is hindered by interstate conflicts and rivalries in the Horn; divergent interests of key international players; overlapping membership of countries in different RECs; and dual affiliation in regional brigades. An example of these diverging interests can be evidenced in the border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Internal division and rivalry between Eritrea and Ethiopia over their frozen border dispute constrained IGAD's capacity to help resolve the Eritrea-Ethiopia conflict. This also hampered IGAD's ability to assist with implementing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between North and South Sudan (despite its major role in brokering it) or resolve the crisis in Somalia.

The case studies of Sudan and Somalia highlight some of the challenges engendered in African and regional decision making in the area of security, economy and other issues. The use of these two case studies is important because they illustrate the complexity of

the political realities in the Horn of Africa and the continent. Models, rational choices and concepts like political cultures are not sufficient to effect the necessary developments.

South Sudan has voted in a referendum that will determine whether it stays in a unified Sudan or – more likely – achieves independence (preliminary results showed 98,8 per cent were pro-independence). This referendum is the final stage of the CPA, which was the cornerstone of the peace negotiations held within the IGAD structure. The choice to hold the negotiations under an IGAD mandate is significant, as it is one of the poorest and weakest RECs in Africa. According to experts, it is this weakness that was, and perhaps is, its largest advantage. IGAD was contingent on external forces and therefore provided a convenient cover for external actors, both within and outside the region. It is difficult to assess the nature of the negotiations, as little was adequately documented, and discourses and methods were not elucidated upon. In the case of the Sudan peace negotiations, little information was presented to the public, except for a primarily Kenyan report.³ As the Kenyans were themselves biased towards the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), it is hard to get an objective understanding of how the decisions were made. However, observers noted that as the years progressed the IGAD increasingly favoured the SPLM. Since the CPA, IGAD has not been able to play an important role in the region. It has been sidelined regarding Sudan and has now turned its attention towards Somalia.

IGAD provided the impetus for the AU to opt for a troop surge in Somalia, with troops coming from EASBRIG member states Burundi and Uganda, in light of the fact that it had not been able to get any tangible results. The situation has become more dangerous for civilians and peacekeeping forces alike. However, IGAD is not sufficiently equipped and supported to deal with the current situation, in which the peacekeeping forces are confronted with actors like Al-Shabaab⁴ and an increasingly hostile civilian population. Like the earlier Ethiopian intervention, the peacekeeping troops are perceived as occupying forces, and the running battles in Mogadishu have negatively impacted upon the civilian population. The mandate of the intervention has not been able to formulate an appropriate response to this situation, as the mandate itself does not even refer to the protection of civilians. The main problem of the peacekeeping mission is this weak mandate: it supports a currently dysfunctional peace process and as such does not provide a solution to the crisis. To avoid such ineffective policies, future missions in Somalia and elsewhere in Africa should be

built more on a holistic, comprehensive and realistic approach that takes regional and international dynamics into account and less on an ideological or financial basis. The latter refers to the financial drive of external actors like the UN and especially the US to urge others

to take up a flawed or inadequate mandate. In this way the AU and IGAD committed themselves to peacekeeping interventions in situations where there was no peace to keep and no willingness on the part of the UN to step in and enforce it.

Back to the future

Challenges for the RECs and the AU

The AU and IGAD committed to the peacekeeping mission in Somalia although it didn't have a strong mandate, nor was it in their respective interests. Both institutions committed themselves because the US and other external actors made political and financial promises to them. These external actors play a significant role in influencing regional decision making in Africa and should refrain from forcing methods and interventions onto African countries and organisations, especially when these are not in the best interests of the continent.

A proper dialogue with the AU and African RECs is necessary to assess the nature of a problem and the best way to solve it. However, it is not only the external actors who are at fault in these situations. Africa should be able and willing to set the agenda at a regional level. If African nations are not willing to co-operate more closely and transfer more power to the regional and continental levels, there is little hope for appropriate, balanced and effective policies on regional issues.

There is undoubtedly a need for stronger and more efficient executive power on the regional and continental level. We have already examined the roles of the secretariats and national committees and in the internal audit published by the AU in 2007, in which similar conclusions were reached. The audit report called for more political continuity and real leadership in the Assembly to drive the integration process, and it made similar recommendations for the Commission.⁵

One of the biggest challenges is to reconcile the national interests of the 53 African states within the AU. This is also mentioned in the AU audit report, which states that '[m]ember States have not incorporated integration strategies into their programmes, policies and institutions at all levels'.⁶ An analysis of the national level should take into account several national

actors, such as individual leaders who have political clout when formulating regional policies, like former Presidents Thabo Mbeki and Olusegun Obasanjo. Political parties, the business community and other domestic and foreign elements contribute to the definition of the national interest and strategies, often as a result of continuity as opposed to any break with tradition, whether or not it involves any transfer of power within or outside the system. For example, there was no significant policy change when President Jacob Zuma came to power in South Africa.

Another challenge for African regional organisations involves the matter of their inclusiveness. The fact that a state merely has to be geographically part of a region to enable it to join certain RECs and the AU is a problem, as the vast differences between many of these countries affect the effectiveness of the organisations. This is especially the case with countries that are members of several RECs because they then have to commit to several organisations and their infrastructure. This multi-membership is problematic because of the different values and logics that motivate the various RECs and the stages of economic integration that they are in. This problem was also affirmed in the AU internal audit report. Although there were some questions raised regarding the current linear model of integration, it was clear for the participants of this conference that once the RECs reach a certain stage of integration, it becomes difficult to subscribe to several of them.

This multi-membership also has implications for the RECs as 'building blocks' of the AU. As a result of the fact that these RECs have been in existence for longer than the AU itself and were developed with different logics, they may therefore not fully subscribe to the current AU logic. According to some

observers RECs can indeed be strong instruments for the integration of Africa but the attainment of their rightful place will take some time. For now, the focus should be on the issues that they share and points of convergence so that they understand how they can take advantage of these mutual interests, define cross-cutting challenges and work more closely together. Furthermore, there should be more information sharing and understanding between RECs and the AU, which until now has been underdeveloped. By developing blueprint programmes on economic and security issues, the RECs and the AU will be able to achieve more policy coherence both within and across the regions. Similar conclusions were drawn in the internal audit report of the AU, which referred to 'the insufficient inter-RECs' co-operation and lack of co-ordination and harmonisation at the continental level'.⁷ This would, however, require reinforcement of the different structures, especially the AU.

As mentioned above, one of the challenges of integration is working with the national interests of the member states. They are the driving forces behind the integration, the principle actors in international politics and the common denominator of the AU and the RECs. As long as states feel that it is in their interests for the RECs to co-operate, further regional co-operation and integration is possible. This might be why the AU has shown little initiative on inter-REC co-operation and what interest it has shown has been on an ad hoc basis and at the initiative of the RECs themselves. The nation state should therefore not necessarily be seen as an impediment to further integration.

One proposed solution would be to work with a 'coalition of the willing' at the regional level, in which not every state of a region is *per se* included. The

integration process could move forward with those states that express the willingness and capability to answer to the financial and infrastructural responsibilities that comes with membership of the RECs. Another similar suggestion is that of an African 'G' in line with so-called club governance. This suggestion is aimed at the continental level and examines the advantages of working with an informal and flexible group of like-minded African states that have the ability and capacity to build consensus. Club governance is aimed at making existing organisations more efficient and is a fairly recent global phenomenon. By working outside the rigid confines of regional institutions, these groups can encourage a more high-level exchange between the countries and provide a more adapted approach to certain issues, complementary to the AU. These groups or clubs do not usually have an official membership and therefore provide flexible and informal forums in which to create a common understanding of mutual challenges and needs. Contrary to the membership of the AU and the RECs, this club governance is by definition elitist and exclusive so as to ensure efficiency. These kinds of groups are based on the notions of responsibility and power and are aimed at states that are willing and able to influence and set regional agendas. Experts raised some crucial questions concerning the criteria of the proposed African 'G'. Should that group be based on economic power, bureaucratic and diplomatic capacity to shape African issues, or willingness and ability to exert authority in the continent? Other criteria like population, democratic governance or regional representation were found to be insufficient, because these did not take into account the capacity and willingness to exert authority in the region and on the continent.

Policy considerations

The aim of the conference was to determine *how* and *why* positions are arrived at within Africa's continental and regional organisations and to provide some considerations for African and European officials and policy makers. Below are some of the most cited and most urgent issues discussed during the conference:

- The AU can function as a platform to promote collective action and to counter the new 'Scramble for Africa', but it needs to address some crucial issues that influence its effectiveness and importance.
- The AU and the RECs function as intergovernmental organisations, lack supranational decision-making authority and have difficulties reconciling the interests of their member states.
- Each individual REC has its own history and paradigm, often predating the AU. Aligning them with each other and the AU will take some time and effort. What should be done at this point is to define mutual interests and challenges and to increase information sharing and understanding between the RECs and the AU.
- It is clear that the EU's method of negotiating with a select group of RECs on the EPAs was badly conceived. Not only were the RECs not mature enough to negotiate with the EU and implement the agreements, but issues like multi-membership and regional dynamics were completely ignored.
- Regarding the structures of the organisations, reference was made to the fact that the administration shows a greater continuity than the political level but lacks investments from national governments.
- However, these structures hold little executive authority and are often understaffed and underequipped, as are the secretariats.
- The creation and support of national committees and contact points by national governments lack means and political will.
- The EU and the AU envisage an equal partnership but for them to be truly equal there is a need for equal representation. This is especially the case with the AU permanent representation to the EU. If any party wants to be taken seriously they need to represent themselves properly.
- The fact that a common African position is influenced by a range of factors has to be taken into account: national interests, regional interstate relations, political personalities, structures of the organisations, the nature of the issues, linguistic (Anglophone versus Francophone) and geographic (North versus South) sensibilities, etc. In short, the political economy of African integration plays a role that should not be ignored.
- External actors like the EU, the UN and the US have to be cautious when providing support for, or exerting their influence on, African decision making on regional and continental levels. Driven by financial promises, African actors have taken up policies, missions and processes that have not been beneficial for them. One example was the peacekeeping mission in Somalia, which the AU took over from the UN, even though the AU was not properly prepared or equipped to deal with the crisis situation in the country (that is, terrorist activities, and an insurgent civilian population). However, there are some nuances and remarks to be made. Emerging powers like China and India also have to be taken into account, as they are – under the cloak of South-South co-operation – very much part of the new 'Scramble for Africa'. Furthermore, we cannot ignore the shared responsibility of external actors

and Africans alike. Africans also have to be able and willing to come to coherent and informed common positions to counter these external pressures.

- During the conference, the idea of an African G (G5, G6, G7) was presented. Such an informal and flexible group of important African states could stimulate the realisation of a common African position. The

question, however, remains which countries should be part of this group. That question is not just a formal one, because a strong representation of North African states – generally the strongest states both economically and politically even if they will fall back on internal politics for a while – could lead to a conflict of interest between North and sub-Saharan Africa.

Notes

1 Audit of the African Union, p 70.

2 See also Sivuyile Bam, *From State Security to Human Security in Southern Africa Policy Research and Capacity Building Challenges*, ISS Monograph 122, April 2006.

3 <http://unmis.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=515>.

4 Al-Shabaab is an Islamist insurgent group fighting to overthrow the government of Somalia. As of the summer of 2010 the group is said to control most of the southern and central parts of

Somalia, including 'a large swathe' of the capital, Mogadishu. The group is an offshoot of the Islamic Courts Union, which splintered into several smaller groups after its removal from power by Ethiopian forces in 2006.

5 Audit of the African Union: p 42-54.

6 Audit of the African Union: p 136.

7 Audit of the African Union: p XXV.

Programme

THE DYNAMICS OF DECISION-MAKING IN AFRICA

EGMONT Institute, Institute for Global Dialogue, Institute for Security Studies
 Leriba Lodge, Centurion, 8 – 9 November 2010

DAY ONE	
08:30 – 09:00	Arrival and registration
09:00 – 09:30	Opening and Welcome H.E. Jan Mutton <i>Belgian Ambassador to South Africa</i> Dr Zondi <i>Institute for Global Dialogue</i> Paul-Simon Handy <i>Institute for Security Studies</i> Jean-Christophe Hoste <i>EGMONT Institute</i>
SESSION 1	
9:30 – 12:00	Setting the scene: Africa in the changing global order This session will consider the role that Africa is assuming on the international stage and sets out to address the question of what shapes decisions in defining an African position. This focuses particularly on the internal dynamics of decision making within the AU (challenges, strengths and weaknesses), before moving on to consider the case study of the Africa Group at the climate change negotiations. The political dynamics behind the 'African position' will be discussed further in a case study on the dynamics in the Nile Basin and South Sudan. This case study will give us more insight in the decision making within the relevant multilateral institutions and how member states work with – or against – each other to address these issues.
9:30 – 9:40	Introduction by chair Paul-Simon Handy <i>Institute for Security Studies</i>
9:40 – 10:00	Dr. Francis Ikome <i>Institute for Security Studies</i> The AU in international relations: the dynamics of decision-making
10:00 – 10:20	Maurizio Di Lullo <i>European Council</i> Observations on the climate change negotiations
10:20 – 10:40	Dr. Lesley Masters <i>IGD</i> Case Study: The Africa Group and climate change
10:40 – 11:00	Jean-Christophe Hoste <i>EGMONT</i> African decision making processes: from climate change to the case of the Nile Basin and South Sudan
11:00 – 12:00	Discussion
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch The two sessions after lunch will consider the regional organisations in decision-making relating to guiding regional socio-economic development and peace and security initiatives.

	SESSION 2
13:00 – 15:15	Regional Economic Organisations (RECs) and the AU This session addresses the question of economic integration and the challenge presented by the ‘spaghetti bowl’ of overlapping regional institutions on coherent decision-making. This session will also address the relations between the RECs and the AU, given the fact that RECs are considered ‘pillars’ of the continental governance architecture
13:00 – 13:10	Introduction by chair Dr. Brendan Vickers <i>DTI</i>
13:10 – 13:30	Dr. David Monyae <i>DBSA</i> The role of secretariats
13:30 – 13:50	Paul-Simon Handy <i>Institute for Security Studies</i> An African G5?
13:50 – 14:10	Dr. Francis Nwonwu <i>UNECA</i> Intra- and extra-regional trade and regional integration
14:10 – 14:30	Dr. Siphamandla Zondi <i>IGD</i> Regional Economic Organisations (RECs) and the AU
14:30 – 15:15	Discussion
15:15 – 15:30	Tea Break
	SESSION 3
15:30 – 18:00	Understanding the economic development-security nexus The third session will analyse the role of the RECs with regard to the African peace and security architecture. Africa currently has the highest number of UN peacekeeping operations in the world. Yet there has been a tendency to view the continent’s complex conflicts and peace-keeping on the continent through a single lens. As such there is a need to understand the different elements (political, economic, social) that shape these conflict and impact on the decisions taken within African peace and security structures, and specifically on regional organisations. During this session, there will be ample opportunity to illustrate these dynamics with case studies, in particular from the Horn of Africa. With the recent negotiations surrounding a new Nile treaty and the expected referendum on Southern Sudan’s independence in 2011, these two issues are very topical.
15:30 – 15:40	Introduction by chair Roger Middleton <i>Chatham House</i>
15:40 – 16:00	Dawn Nagar <i>CCR</i> The challenges facing regional organisations in shaping peace and security
16:00 – 16:20	Andebrhan Giorgis <i>Revival Africa Initiative</i> African RECs, APSA and UN peacekeeping missions in the context of the Horn of Africa
16:20 – 16:40	Richard Cornwell <i>FRIDE, Institute for Security Studies</i> RECs and Sudan

16:40 – 17:00	Henri Boshoff <i>Institute for Security Studies</i> RECs and Somalia
17:00 – 18:00	Discussion
19:00	Reception
	Dinner
DAY 2	
	SESSION 4
9:00 – 11:30	Dynamics of Africa-EU relations The final session will look at the development of EU-Africa relations and at the policy implications of the lack of attention for and understanding of the dynamics of the African political context for the EU-Africa Partnership. This session will focus on the complex challenge of multilateral relations between these international organisations as they face transboundary challenges in a globalized world. The EU has taken on board the idea of the AU as the counterpart organisation on the African continent, with which it has developed a significant commitment, but the EU has difficulty implementing its policies towards Africa. Can we consider the EU and AU as each other's counterparts? Are the EU and the AU facing similar issues in terms of balancing national and regional interests? What lessons can be learned from the dynamics of African decision making for the upcoming Africa-EU Summit? With the summit taking place at the end of November, this focus is very topical and will provide considerations for the Africa-EU summit.
9:00 – 9:10	Introduction by chair Dr. Francis Ikome <i>Institute for Security Studies</i>
9:10 – 9:30	Andrew Sherriff <i>ECDPM</i> The dynamics of formal and informal EU decision-making processes on Africa
9:30 – 9:50	Catherine Grant <i>SAIIA</i> EPAs and the impact on Africa EU relations
9:50 – 10:10	Axel Pougjn de la Maisonneuve <i>European Commission</i> EU-Africa Relations
10:10 – 10:30	<i>TBC</i>
10:30 – 11:30	Discussion
11:30	Vote of thanks

List of Participants

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Nicasius Achu Check	African Institute of South Africa	Research Specialist
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Siphamandla Zondi	Institute for Global Dialogue	Director

The staff of the Egmont Institute, which had the honor of working with Henri Boshoff these past years, wishes to express its enormous sense of loss with the sudden passing of Bossie, and wishes to express its deepest condolences to his wife Leonie, son Jean and to his colleagues and friends at the ISS and around the world.



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