



Media Release

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC), the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD), the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the European Union (EU) discussed a new joint cooperation programme worth 1.3 billion Euros.

Meeting on 10 and 11 December 2014 at the SADC Headquarters in Gaborone, Botswana, Regional Organisations of Eastern and Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean (EA-SA-IO) comprising COMESA, EAC, IGAD, IOC, SADC and the EU agreed on the priorities of cooperation under the 11th European Development Fund (11th EDF).

The agreed joint Regional Indicative Programme (RIP) determines the EU's support to regional integration pursued by the five Regional Organizations. The EU has allocated 1.3 billion Euros to this programme for final approval in 2015.

The programme will focus on 3 priority areas: peace, security and regional stability; regional economic integration; and natural resource management. It will also support infrastructure projects through a proposed allocation of 600 million Euros. It will take into account progress made through the recent conclusion of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the region.

EU support includes strengthening the institutional capacity of the Regional Organisations and their Member States, which should play a key role in the implementation of the joint RIP.

The meeting was co-chaired by the Executive Secretary of SADC – Dr. Stergomena Lawrence Tax, on the EA-SA-IO side, and by the Director for Southern and Eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean region at the European External Action Service – Mr. Koen Vervaeke, on the EU side.

Delivering her opening remarks, Dr. Tax indicated that "the programme provides an excellent platform for the Regional Organisations to exploit the full potential for regional integration covering half of the African continent". She stressed that, by working together, the countries of the region can make further progress towards finding a lasting solution to poverty eradication, and creating conducive conditions for economic growth, social progress and prosperity for all.

Speaking on behalf of the EU, Mr Koen Vervaeke stated that "building on its own unique experience, the new programme is a testimony of the EU's continued support for the deepening of regional integration in order to sustain Africa's emerging potential".

It is anticipated that the joint RIP will be signed before the second quarter of 2015, and will be implemented during the period 2015 – 2020.