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by Harry Zarenda

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South Africa's National Development Plan and its implications for regional development

by Harry Zarenda

Introduction

In 2012/2013, the African National Congress and South African Government adopted the National Development Plan (NDP) as its launchpad and blueprint for a future economic and socioeconomic development strategy for the country. Supposedly incorporating both the more recent Department of Trade and Industry's (DTI) Industrial Policy Action Plan (IPAP) and the Economic Development Ministry's New Growth Path (NGP) into the new National Planning Framework, the NDP has critical and important implications for the various regional economic communities in southern Africa at present. The purpose of this contribution is to provide an overview and assessment of these possible implications.

Background to the NGP

Since 2010 the South African Government has introduced various policy initiatives which have formed the basis of industrial policy in the country. The incipient plan at that time was the 2010/2011-2012/13 Industrial Policy Action Plan (IPAP2), released in February 2010 by the DTI, which in turn represented a modification and update of the previously introduced initial IPAP (2007) strategy. This second version attempted to focus on strategic efforts to diversify, intensify and enhance the domestic and international competitiveness of the country's industrial sector.

The New Growth Path (NGP) document, released later in the year in December 2010 by the Economic Development Minister, Ebrahim Patel, set job creation as a dominant priority in the country, with the aim of reducing levels of unemployment by some 10 percentage points by 2020. The NGP prioritised six areas for job creation- infrastructure development, agriculture, mining, manufacturing, tourism and a 'green' economy. The NGP also indicated a strong emphasis on social equity and competitiveness, fundamental changes to mobilise domestic investment in sustainable industries and a social dialogue to focus all stakeholders on directing growth towards employment-creating activities.

In May 2010, President Jacob Zuma appointed the National Planning Commission (NPC), under the Chairmanship of the Minister in the Presidency for National Planning, Trevor Manuel, to draft a

vision and national development plan for consideration by Cabinet and the country. The NPC represented an advisory body consisting of 26 people drawn largely from outside government, 'chosen for their expertise in key areas' (National Planning Commission, 2011: 15 Executive Summary). The Commission released a Diagnostic Report in June 2011 which 'set out South Africa's achievements and shortcomings since 1994' and set out nine primary challenges, listed in the executive report (Ibid) including inter alia chronic unemployment, poor education and infrastructure, an economy which is 'unsustainably resource intensive', inadequate and poor quality public health and general public services, high levels of corruption and a society which was deeply divided.

Building on the diagnostic report (National Planning Commission Diagnostic Report 2011) and subsequent public comment, a draft development plan was released in November 2011 which added four thematic areas to the above list – a focus on the rural economy, social protection, regional/world affairs and community safety. Extensive consultations and comments on the draft plan were forthcoming and the overall response was, in general, positive. The plan was endorsed by the ruling party at its Manguang Conference in December 2012 and after being very favourably considered by Cabinet, formed the basis of President Zuma's State of the Nation address in the opening of Parliament on 14 February 2013.

To assess the seriousness that the South African Government is placing on the NDP one can reflect on how it has influenced the presentation of the Minister of Finance's most recent budget speech (South Africa, Treasury 2013) in which the plan was referred to as a new strategic framework at the core of South Africa's future 'leap forward'.

A broad outline of the plan

This section of the discussion paper will present a brief summary of the essential elements of the plan. At the outset, it must be emphasised that the full text of the plan (National Planning Commission, 2011) comprises a 444-page document, daunting to say the least, and contains considerable details that are spelled out in each of the chapters dealing with specific issues. The relevant issues pertaining to the region based on the more detailed full text will be focused on in a later section in this paper

For present purposes (and to provide a broad understanding of the outline of the plan), the overall objectives of the plan, its vision and suggested implementation, are abstracted from the shorter 70-page Executive Summary (National Planning Commission, 2011, Executive Summary) and the Post-

State of the Nation (SoNA) media briefing by Ministers Trevor Manuel and Collins Chabane (South African Government Information (SAGI) Release, 19 February 2013).

The strategic perspective of the NDP offers a long-term vision for the country (until 2030) and 'aims to ensure that all South Africans attain a decent standard of living through the elimination of poverty and the reduction of inequality' (SAGI-SoNA, 2013: 1).

The core elements of a decent standard of living identified in the plan are:

- housing, water electricity and sanitation
- safe and reliable public transport
- quality education and skills development
- safety and security
- quality health care
- social protection
- employment
- recreation and leisure
- clean environment
- adequate nutrition.

There are four overriding implementational **objectives** of the plan and these are stipulated as (SAGI-SoNA, 2013: 1):

- i) providing overarching goals for what is to be achieved by 2030
- ii) building consensus on the key obstacles for achieving these goals and identifying what needs to be done to overcome these obstacles.
- iii) providing a shared long-term strategic framework within which more planning can take place in order to advance the long term goals set out in the NDP
- iv) creating a basis for making choices about how best to use limited resources.

The plan is explicit and very specific in listing its poverty reduction objectives by 2030:

- reducing the number of people who live in households below the R419 (in 2009 prices) from 39% to zero
- a reduction in income inequality (using the Gini Coefficient measure) from 0,69 to 0,6 over this time period
- employment to be raised (from 13 million in 2010 to 24 million in 2030)
- per capita incomes to be increased from R50,000 in 2010 to R120,000 and shares of national income of the bottom 40% (from 6% to 10%) by 2030.

In addition the plan (Ibid. adapted) lists manifold objectives such as:

- establishing a competitive base of infrastructure, human resources and regulatory frameworks
- matching skilled, technical, professional and managerial posts to better reflect the country's racial, gender and disability profile
- broadening asset ownership to historically disadvantaged groups
- increasing the quality of primary education
- providing affordable health care while promoting health and well-being
- providing safe and affordable public transport
- producing sufficient energy to support industry, at competitive prices ensuring access to such energy for poor households and reducing power emissions by one-third
- ensuring access to clean running water for all
- maintaining a competitively-priced high-speed broadband internet universally
- realising a food surplus with one-third being produced by small-scale farmers or households
- ensuring household food and nutrition security
- providing social protection for the poor and needy through an entrenched social security system

- realising a developmental, capable and ethical state that treats citizens with dignity
- ensuring that all people live safely with an independent and fair criminal justice system
- broadening social cohesion and unity and redressing inequities of the past
- playing a leading role in continental development, economic integration and assuring human rights.

The plan is divided into some 15 chapters incorporating:

- Economy and employment (Chapter 3)
- Economic infrastructure (Chapter 4)
- Environmental sustainability and resilience (Chapter 5)
- Inclusive rural economy (Chapter 6)
- South Africa in the region and the world (Chapter 7)
- Transforming human settlements (Chapter 8)
- Health care for all (Chapter 10)
- Social protection (Chapter 11)
- Building safer communities (Chapter 12)
- Building a capable and developmental state (Chapter 13)
- Fighting corruption (Chapter 14) and
- Nation building and social cohesion (Chapter 15).

The above list of objectives, aims and coverage of the NDP is certainly ambitious, exhaustive and comprehensive, incorporating a vision of a dramatic transition in the country by 2030, in each of the above activities, with targeted milestones to be reached by 2030. A key issue in achieving the stipulated laudable targets rests with the implementation, monitoring and capabilities of the key players in attempting to achieve the core aspects of the vision. After the 2013 State of the Nation address, the post-SoNa briefing by Trevor Manuel and Collins Chabane provided an explanation as to how the Planning Commission intends implementing the plan, focusing on the prioritisation and sequencing as well as the identification of the role of the key players in the process.

The briefing stipulates immediate as well as longer term time periods for prioritisation and sequencing.

In 2013 the envisaged critical steps incorporate the identification and implementation of those programmes that do not require additional resources and long lead times. At the same time, there would be preparation for the 2014-2019 Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) as the first five-year building block of the NDP. It is also envisaged that during the remainder of 2013 focused dialogues to identify existing areas where obstacles exist and implementation is in need of improvement would take place.

After 2013, a series of five-year planning cycles are envisaged (2014-19, 2019-2024 and 2024-29) with continual review regarding the progress (or failures) of respective cycles to meet the stated objectives of the goals of the NDP informing the process and formulation of the subsequent plan.

The briefing then explains how the NDP will be integrated into the broad government planning process. Given the NDP's wide-ranging and extensive coverage, almost every government department and ministry would become involved. These apply not only at national, but also at provincial as well as at municipal levels. According to the briefing (Ibid.: 2), 'Government has already started a process to align the long-term plans of departments with the NDP and to identify areas where policy change is required to ensure consistency and coherence'. In addition, the Presidency and Treasury are leading the formulation of the first MTSF in consultation with departments and evaluating strategic and performance plans in accordance with their alignment to the NDP. It is also envisaged that key outputs, indicators and targets for the five-year planning period from each department contain outcomes related to the New Growth Path, National Infrastructure Plan and Industrial Policy Action Plan in their budgets.

Aspects that are integral to the above involve the anticipated role of various ministries in attempting to ensure delivery at various stages of the process. It is important to note that the Minister of Economic Development will be responsible for the coordination and monitoring the various economic growth and job creation drivers in the New Growth Plan. In addition to incorporating the Treasury, crucial roles are foreseen for Ministries of Public Service and Administration, Health, and Basic and Higher Education. Additionally, as infrastructure straddles across a variety of the targeted sectors and has a heavy emphasis in the main report, the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission will drive and monitor the process of accelerating the development of the economic infrastructure required to enable increased economic growth. From the pronouncements in the 2013 budget, the focus on job

creation and infrastructure has already been given impetus through a form of youth-employment subsidy and a massive infrastructural drive through the workings of the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Committee.

The State of the Nation Briefing document also spells out the actions needed at provincial and municipal levels of government to assure a vast improvement in the quality of public services as well as strengthen the ability of both provincial and local government to fulfil their developmental role. Continual monitoring and reporting (informed by evidence-based monitoring and evaluation) will be overseen by the national Department for Performance Monitoring and Evaluation.

Perhaps the most important ingredient in the NDP relates to the commitment of government to engage with all sectors of society, incorporating the private sector which, in the opinion of the NDP, has a major role to play in helping to achieve the objectives of poverty reduction, economic growth, economic transformation and job creation. Additionally, sectoral dialogues are suggested as a means of identifying and overcoming those obstacles identified within the parameters of the NDP. Regular high-level leadership meetings are anticipated between government and business, government and labour, and government and civil society. In the words of the SoNA briefing, 'these will provide a route for focused dialogue to discuss the contribution of each sector to the implementation of the NDP, identify blockages and develop a common understanding of how obstacles will be overcome' (SoNA, 2013:4).

A brief retrospective digression relating to the issue of development planning in Africa

Before considering in more detail the impact of the NDP on the region, it is interesting to note that the notion of medium- and long-term planning is not a new issue – either in South Africa or in the region in general. Historically, the apartheid government attempted to introduce its five-year Economic Development Plans throughout the 1960s and 1970s with little achievable results, beyond being a form of indicative planning guiding the then Nationalist Party government's intentions with regard to planning. South Africa's democratic transition in the early 1990s was initially solidly focused on the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP), a policy that, even though it formed the democratic government's attempt to attack poverty and deprivation, was never adopted much beyond its vision and was abandoned in 1996 in favour of the famous fiscally conservative Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy that aroused a lot of controversy.

On the African continent, more generally, development planning began since independence took root in the 1960s and was characterised by centralised planning with three- to five-year time spans. Most countries during this phase had a national development plan (Lopes, 2013: 1). This first phase of development planning, among African countries, continued until the 1980s. It was characterised by an emphasis on state-engineered economies, with resources allocated by governments, focusing on the role of state-owned enterprises operating in most of the productive sectors. According to Lopez, these plans generally yielded only limited success, which he attributes to deficiencies in the plan documents and failure to implement them. Additionally, the ambitious formulation of targets together with institutional and bureaucratic weaknesses reflecting a lack of capacity, exogenous shocks and political factors could be cited as reasons for such failures in the planning process.

According to Lopes, the impact of neo-liberal Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) for many countries in Africa during the 1980s-1990s marked a wholesale abandonment of planning in that with the support of the Bretton Woods institutions, the role of the state in production and service delivery was substantially reduced. The emphasis during this period was on macroeconomic stability, the downsizing of public sector institutions, privatisation and reduced government spending and budget deficits. Such measures resulted in increased unemployment, reduced social service delivery and human capital development and low actual growth outcomes. Despite the replacement of SAPs since the early 2000s with a variety of official, externally imposed Poverty Reduction Strategies focusing on the social sector instead of the productive sectors, questions arose concerning the sustainability of the poverty reduction agenda (Lopes, 2013: 2).

Lopes (Ibid.) then expands on the fact that the present period has witnessed an emergence of a new era of development planning on the continent. Many countries have adopted long-term development visions and planning frameworks with more ambitious growth and development objectives than before. A crucial component of many of the present development plans in African countries focuses on accelerated growth, employment creation, structural transformation and sustainable development. Another characteristic of the present-day planning process (unlike the 1960s and 1970s) is that these plans incorporate a mix of state- and market-based approaches, thus appreciating the role of both the public and private sectors in the development process. Additionally, the process of a more participatory consultative approach to plan construction involving not only the private sector but also a broad spectrum of stakeholders including civil society, decentralised constituencies and development partners has been evident. Additionally, these broader development plans often take into consideration various global and continental goals and frameworks. While correctly emphasising the

changing nature of present-day development planning, Lopes does reflect on the present challenges of such comprehensive long-term planning, and although the brief in this paper is not an exercise in providing a critique of the NDP in South Africa, it is worthwhile pointing out some of the challenges pertinent to all such forms of planning in developing countries. These include ensuring credible consultation processes, prioritising funding in line with development aspirations, coordinating donors, and strengthening capacities to implement projects and programmes. In addition, comprehensive and effective monitoring and evaluation systems that feed back into the policy-making process have to be introduced. 'In short, more work is required to improve the planning frameworks in Africa in order to translate development aspirations and priorities into concrete results' (Lopes, 2013: 4).

The NDP and Regional Economic Communities in Southern Africa

The introductory discussion in this paper has attempted to provide an overall summary of the extensive and wide-ranging nature of South Africa's National Development Plan comprising its proposed aims, objectives and implementation. The core issues relate to economic growth and the ability of the growth initiative to broaden socioeconomic transformation in the country by 2030. It is really when one reads the more detailed version of the NDP (rather than the much briefer executive summary) that the implications of the plan for the various regional communities with which South Africa is engaged become evident. These implications are to be found principally in Chapters 3 and 7, dealing respectively with 'Economy and Employment' and 'Positioning South Africa in the World'.

It is only when reading this detail that one can appreciate the challenges facing South Africa's regional economic partners at various levels – the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the impending wider Tripartite Free Trade Agreement (TFTA) need to urgently and constructively engage with South Africa regarding the plan.

Chapter 3 begins by emphasising that the New Growth Path represents the government's key programme to launch the economy onto a higher growth trajectory (National Planning Commission, National Development Plan, 2011: 92). The Growth Path is regarded by the Planning Commission as the vehicle for faster growth and employment, through government investment, microeconomic reforms that lower the costs of business, competitive and equitable wage structures, and the unblocking of constraints to investment in these sectors. The NDP thus recognises the complementarities between the New Growth Path and the development plan. On the issue of 'promoting exports and competitiveness' later in the chapter (Ibid.: 93) there is important reference to

the need for 'playing a more pivotal role' in regional development and a statement regarding encouragement for South African companies to participate in regional infrastructure projects and regional supply chains to promote industrialisation.

Before considering the section in the chapter dealing in more detail with South Africa's participation in the region, there is a discussion on 'Stimulating domestic-oriented activity' that places an emphasis on promoting industrial development through 'local procurement rules which, according to the Commission, have been used effectively in a number of countries (Ibid.: 108). The plan refers to the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act which is aimed at stimulating local procurement through public-sector procurement and the Local Procurement Accord, negotiated through the Department of Economic Development and social partners committing both the private and public sectors to ambitious targets in respect of the localisation of procurement. On immediate reflection, a slight widening of the definition of 'local' could possibly be extended to other SACU partners as well, although there is no mention of this in the document.

On the section in the chapter dealing with 'South Africa as an integral part of regional growth' there is reference to the prospect of 'leveraging a regional platform establishing a substantial consumer base that can attract foreign investment'. Additionally, the plan refers to enabling economies of scale and scope in the region through the larger market and possible production chains. There is acknowledgement that South Africa's growth potential will be 'tightly linked' to the region (Ibid.: 108). There is continual reference to the potential for South Africa with regard to commodity investments, large infrastructural projects and growing consumer demand in the region. In order for this potential to be unlocked, a much more integrating and active role as far as South Africa is concerned is required (Ibid.: 109). This section concludes with a highlighted summary on regional opportunities (Ibid.: 109):

South Africa will act as a spur to regional growth, rather than merely relying on it. This will involve greater commitment to regional industrialization and supply chain linkages, shifting trade balances, power purchase agreements, the establishment of a Financial Centre for Africa and substantially more financial resources devoted to funding projects in the region with linkages to South African companies.

The latter part of Chapter 3 has relevance to regional initiatives currently under discussion within the various regional organisations affected. There is a discussion of the agro-industrial sector (Ibid.: 122-124) and the references to downstream and upstream processing of foodstuffs, beverages, food

manufacturing and the like has a purely local focus – neglecting possible synergies and complementarities within a wider regional context. The subsequent discussion of the minerals and metals sector (to its credit) does make mention of this possibility in its presentation of proposals which refer to the need to ‘identify opportunities to increase regional involvement and benefit the whole minerals cluster. This could include encouraging the establishment and development of alternative providers of partially processed intermediate inputs in other countries in the region’ (Ibid.: 126).

While Chapter 3 generally envisages a relatively positive role regarding South Africa’s constructive participation in the region, a more nuanced impression emerges in Chapter 7, dealing specifically with positioning South Africa in the world. In summary, the views in this particular chapter sound an implicit warning to the various regional economic communities to get their act together if there is to be a prospect of South Africa’s full participation in the process.

The chapter begins with the key objectives of expanding intraregional trade in southern Africa from present levels of 7% of trade to 25% by 2030 and, over this same period, expanding trade with regional neighbours from 15% of South Africa’s trade to 30%. In summary, the anticipated actions involve a strong emphasis on road, rail and port infrastructure in the region, a reduction in red tape, corruption and delays at border posts, using financial institutions to partner with businesses wanting to expand on the continent, strengthening regional cooperation in food and energy markets and water management, and identifying and promoting practical opportunities for cooperation based on complementary regional endowments.

In the detailed plan, the overall, implicit, nuanced tone is set by the following quotation:

The shift in global power towards developing countries provides South Africa with an opportunity to maximize its regional and international influence over the next 20 to 30 years. Policy making should be driven by the objectives set out at the inaugural meeting of the National Planning Commission in May 2011: To grow the economy, reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of all South Africans. *In other words, government’s global and regional policy-making stance should be South Africa-centric* (own italics). Policy making should improve the country’s functional integration in the region, on the continent, among developing countries – especially with key states like Brazil, India and China – and in the world, with measurable outcomes (Ibid.: 216).

What follows in the detailed plan are more specific guidelines regarding policy making in the present environment, focusing on ‘what is practically achievable without overcommitting to the possibilities of regional and continental integration. And a stabilisation of the regional political economy through increased integration and cooperation, necessitating communicating the benefits of deeper regional and global integration to the South African and southern African public.’ The question of deepening integration is defined at the regional (Sub-Saharan) level, continentally (in the context of a progression towards an African political and/or economic level and globally (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa: BRICS) – while ensuring that Africa remains an important part of global production and value chains (Ibid.: 217).

Given the articulation of the above objectives the detailed plan then argues for a critical and objective evaluation of existing international relations. As far as the regional economic community is concerned, there is concern expressed in the plan about the overlapping of institutions and the need to untangle the ‘spaghetti bowl’ arising from regional affiliations and commitments (Ibid.: 217). The plan is also critical of the tendency of organisations such as SADC and COMESA to not sufficiently engage with business, labour and civil society on negotiations, even though structures exist to effect this (Ibid.: 218).

If the implementation of the plan is to be fully realised, there may have to be (according to the document) a redefinition of South Africa’s existing agreements particularly as far as SACU and SADC are concerned. The plan urges not only that these agreements be tested for their validity and coherence but also that global bilateral and multilateral partners, affiliations and commitments be subject to these. In this exercise there could arise hard bargaining and potential trade-offs involving short-term realignments, gains and losses (Ibid.: 220).

The plan also makes mention of the urgent need for a critical review of the progress and commitments at the SADC level regarding the regional strategic development plan, so as to inform a discussion of how South Africa sees developments in the region during the planning period (Ibid.: 220). There is an explicit recognition of the importance of SADC, but in general the Commission treads warily about being too overenthusiastic about this being the launchpad of growth.

The Plan also makes very brief mention of the current efforts of focus at the wider COMESA-EAC-SADC (Tripartite) grouping which, if realised, will account for slightly less than 60% of the continent’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and population.

It is important to realise that the mandate of the Planning Commission did not directly include a detailed review of South Africa's position with regard to its commitments to regional, continental and international partners. The focus of the Commission was rather on finding areas of comparative advantage for South Africa in a more integrated region, identifying projects and programmes where opportunities provide incentives for cooperation and identifying areas such as effective financial transaction mechanisms where the private sector ought to take the lead (Ibid.: 231). The functions of the Commission in drawing up its overall plan as it pertains to the regional economic community is to establish commonalities and review the effectiveness of existing regional organisations and their planning approaches. Furthermore, the Commission is in a position to support regional infrastructure development programmes and promote public discussion not only on the benefits and challenges of increased integration but also the appropriate sequencing of integration (Ibid.: 231).

The conclusion to the chapter reinforces the Commission's belief that regional integration is a complex process involving 'thoughtful consideration and planning'. In its strategy for deepening South Africa's commitments to the region, Africa and the global economy, the Planning Commission urges that the core objectives of growing the domestic economy, reducing poverty and unemployment, and improving the quality of life of the country's citizens represents the ultimate criterion and should not be overlooked in the greater interest. This maximisation of the national interest requires both strategic thinking as well as pragmatism when discussing existing trade relations with the world.

Conclusion

Over the past year or so, South Africa's National Development Plan has become the cornerstone of government's policy in addressing objectives such as increasing employment, reducing poverty and inequality, and improving living standards for the bulk of the population. The incorporation of its main short-term programmes has already started in earnest, as evidenced by the State of the Nation Address and the very recent budget. For the immediate future it can be considered a *fait accompli*, in that it is to provide the measuring stick for a whole slew of future economic and socioeconomic policies.

Admittedly there are going to be problems, inaccuracies, failures, uncertainties as well as local and worldwide circumstances that inevitably make such an exercise inevitably and universally questionable. A key element in the credibility of the plan rests with the capacity and capability of government to effectively implement, monitor and ensure that the plan is not captured by sectional

interests that will relegate the vision into a state of oblivion. Throughout the document there are very detailed references to the continual need to professionalise the public service, to enhance capacity and accountability, to improve government coordination, and to prosecute corruption. At a more theoretical level (and what is worthy of mention is the lack of theoretical content in the plan) is the issue of a lack of consideration as to whether the growth trajectory envisaged in the plan transmits itself into an inclusive and dramatic improvement in standards of living for the majority of South Africa's population. Notwithstanding whether these complex issues will materialise successfully over the planning phases or not, if one fact remains for the immediate future, it is that the direction which the South African Government has incorporated to shape its future policies will not be ditched (as other plans have been) in the short term. There has been extensive consultation with the private sector, civil society, labour unions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) on the thrust, content and administration of the plan.

With the planning process still in its relative formative short-term phase at present, (before the general elections next year and the introduction of longer term five-year planning cycles), it is essential that the various regional economic communities that South Africa has commitments with (principally SACU and SADC) engage with the plan from this early stage rather than neglect it. There are complementarities and positive sum gains from a comprehensive regional plan that the relevant regional communities can take advantage of – particularly in the areas of infrastructure, commodity production, food production and an expansion of horizontal and vertical supply-chain linkages that ought to be the starting point to attempt initial compatibility with South Africa's future envisaged growth strategy. South Africa has to also show sensitivity to the plight of its neighbours and, while explicitly stating that the Development Plan is 'South Africa-centric', identify and realise the mutual benefits that could be gained from the constructive and active engagement with its regional partners. Neglect of these factors from either of the participating partners will again see accusations of South Africa being the 'bullying boy' of regional integration arrangements. From both perspectives (the regional organisations and South Africa), it is an opportunity that should not be wasted.

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