

Report on the Inaugural tralac Alumni Roundtable:

Review of Regional Integration in East and Southern Africa

tralac launched its Alumni Network, and held its first Alumni Roundtable on Friday, 9 September 2011. This Roundtable were presented by alumni of **tralac**'s Postgraduate Diploma Programme in Management Practice (Trade Law and Policy), which is presented in collaboration with the Graduate School of Business, University of Cape Town. This collaborative partnership with an internationally reputable institution addresses the need for professional recognition of capacity building programmes. The workshop brought together some of **tralac**'s alumni to share their experiences on the programme and perspectives on regional integration in east and southern Africa.

The programme adopts an inter-disciplinary approach combining international trade law, trade policy and management to build not only individual technical capacity but also to enhance the institutional capacity of government departments and other institutions that play an important role in the trade policy process.

The complexity of the trade agenda necessitates ongoing technical skills development. The development of the technical capacity of individuals is absolutely essential but not sufficient to address the institutional capacity deficit. Individual learning often does not translate into institutional learning and development, due to the lack of incentives, especially in government departments, to transfer knowledge and learning, and to change the methodology of work.

The distinction between technical skills development and institutional capacity development poses a particular challenge. The programme offers the integration of management disciplines, principles and processes into a trade policy and trade law environment. This also means tailoring the programme very specifically to the trade capacity and institutional needs in this part of the world.

The first part of the workshop focused on regional integration experiences in southern Africa and national trade policy developments. The first presenter, Petros Shayanowako, highlighted the successes and challenges facing the Southern African Development Community (SADC). A number of

infrastructure related projects have been undertaken in SADC, including transport corridors and one-stop border posts. The SADC members have adopted various protocols focusing on sector specific issues such as energy, transport and communication. These protocols are at various phases of ratification and implementation. Unfortunately, some members to the SADC Free Trade Area have delayed or applied for derogations from the implementation of tariff phase-down schedules in accordance with the SASDC Trade Protocol. A range of implementation issues in SADC were highlighted, for example, members need to fast-track the implementation of protocols, pay particular attention to matters relating to trade facilitation, and ensure compliance and enforcement of commitments. The following presenter, Reginald Selelo, focused on the implementation challenges facing the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and referred to the absence of common institutions, national bodies and dispute settlement tribunal. In addition, the absence of a common industrial development policy places the common external tariff under pressure. Nonetheless the Heads of State and Government of the SACU members recently adopted a new vision for the customs union that focuses on five priority areas namely, regional industrial policy, trade facilitation, review of the revenue sharing formula, establishment of common institutions, and building a framework for unified engagement. SACU will in future need to develop principles and clear guidelines on accession in order for it to become a nucleus for deeper regional integration in the region.

Niven Muneesamy discussed experiences on trade policy formulation and commercial diplomacy in Mauritius. The country established a trade policy unit in 1996 which led to a better structured and more consultative trade policy making process. However, some industries and bodies such as such small and medium size enterprises, consumer bodies and non-governmental organisations are only consulted on an ad hoc basis. Trade policy has been mainstreamed into the national developmental policy through a number of instruments and channels, for example, development studies and plans, and annual budget allocations. State intervention in specific areas of the economy through the state-trading corporation, the reform and modernisation of customs, and the establishment of a competition commission was also highlighted. In conclusion, the costs and benefits of Mauritius belonging to multiple regional trade arrangements need to be considered.

Herbital Maluleke focused on South African trade and industrial policy development. It was highlighted that some of the industrial policies are confusing and difficult to implement. In addition, the high cost of doing business in the country must be addressed and reduced in order to encourage domestic and foreign investment.

The last presenter in the session, Kalua Simba, discussed the trade policy making process in Tanzania which is based on a partnership involving both the private sector and government. The lack of implementation of policies was highlighted. Some of the major challenges to regional trade facing the business community in Tanzania include the SADC rules of origin and non-tariff barriers.

In the second part of the workshop participants shared their capacity building experiences in eastern and southern Africa. Karabo Modimokwane stressed the need to strengthen regional institutions such as the SACU Secretariat and the SADC Tribunal. Some SACU members do not have the financial and human resources to implement their commitments in terms of the SACU Agreement. Tebelo Hlabeli highlighted the state of trade financing in Sub-Sahara Africa and the difficulty of doing business in particular getting access to credit. Better access to affordable credit would reduce the cost of doing business in the region. Humphrey Katotoka said the programme enabled him to engage with stakeholders and to undertake effective trade policy consultations at a national level. Ekshaan Jawoodeen described the role of the South African Parliament in the implementation of international agreements and the need for capacity building programmes for parliamentarians. Trade capacity building programmes should also, according to Lerato Ntlopo, put greater focus on the analysis of trade offers and requests to better equip trade negotiators for negotiations.

A grand total of 60 students have graduated from this prestigious programme since its inception in 2006 and it is anticipated that the Alumni Roundtable will become an annual **tralac** event.