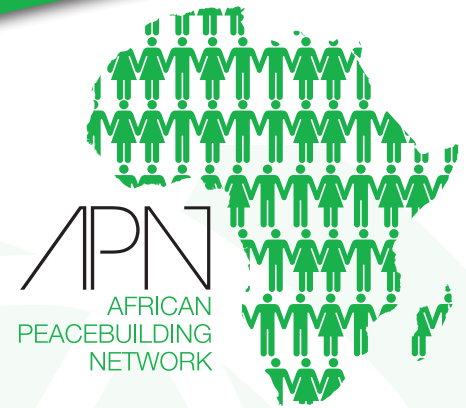




# SSRC



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## **Conflict, Peace, and Regional Economic Integration in Southern Africa:** *Addressing the Policy Challenges*

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### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **Democratic processes, practices, and culture** in the region need to be scaled up—including specifying term limits for political officeholders.
- **Pan-African and visionary leadership** is essential in promoting regional economic integration devoid of violent conflicts.
- **Xenophobia is anathema** to regional integration.
- **The problems of poverty, inequality, and unemployment** have to be addressed squarely in Southern Africa.
- **Equity should define** the regional development project.
- **Southern African leaders should invest** in institution building and capacity development for SADC.
- **Effective early warning systems should be developed** at the local, national, and regional levels.
- **More research and knowledge are needed** on the dynamics and intricacies of regional integration at the national level.

The Sub-Regional Office for Southern Africa (SRO-SA) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Peacebuilding Network (APN) of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) organized a seminar on “Conflict, Peace, and Regional Economic Integration in Southern Africa: Bridging the Knowledge Gaps and Addressing the Policy Challenges.” It was held at AVANI Victoria Falls Resort, Livingstone, Zambia, from October 7 to 8, 2015.

The seminar was the inaugural edition of the SRO-SA Southern Africa Seminar Series, an informal and frank forum in which academics, policymakers, and other stakeholders have the opportunity to discuss key development issues that affect the region. The purpose of the seminar was to sort out issues related to the causes of conflict in Southern Africa, the scope for regional responses and implications, the role of civil society in conflict mediation, the related issues of xenophobia and migration, the interaction of gender and conflict, and the importance of governance for economic development and to elicit perspectives from other regions.

Despite promising economic and political developments, the regional integration agenda in Southern Africa faces a number of growing challenges. The skewed nature of economic growth has resulted in in-country and cross-border migration in the region, as people search for employment and better living conditions. Furthermore, inequities in the distribution of income and wealth have inflamed tensions and led to a surge in social and political conflict within member states.

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Southern Africa has always experienced relative peace and stability, but recent incidents direct our attention and our policy concerns to the issue of conflict. Political turmoil in Lesotho in 2014 and renewed tensions and clashes led by the Renamo party in Mozambique as recently as mid-2015 are reminders that unresolved disputes continue to simmer in the region. With tensions continuing over political succession in Zimbabwe and upcoming elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, and Zambia, it is important to understand what factors underlie previous conflicts if future threats are to be defused. Moreover, at the community level, deadly attacks against African immigrants in South Africa in early 2015 speak to the complexity of identities and mobility in the region. The drivers of these conflicts are numerous, including territorial issues, natural resource-related conflict, uneven development, power struggles, elite enrichment, and authoritarianism.

Presentations at the seminar highlighted the need to undertake fundamental reforms to improve governance, mainstream gender by including women on an equal basis with men in policy and peace initiatives, enhance support for indigenous processes of conflict resolution and reconciliation, and strengthen the regional knowledge base by directing greater resources towards education and knowledge production. Participants recognized that for a developmentalist approach to economic integration to succeed in Southern Africa, democratic and inclusive processes must take root.

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

To address the challenges facing conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and regional economic integration in Southern Africa, the following policy measures are recommended:

- Democratic processes, practices, and culture in the region need to be scaled up—an effort that should include specifying term limits for political officeholders. Inclusion, participation, representation and local power should be taken seriously in national democratic and development processes, with civil society, the private sector, and other stakeholders given adequate space in democratic politics.

- Pan-African and visionary leadership is essential in promoting regional economic integration devoid of violent conflicts, based on people-to-people-centered integration and free movement of persons, organic solidarity, and common commitment to regional integration.

- Xenophobia is anathema to regional integration; hence, governments, policymakers, civil society actors, private sector actors, and other stakeholders should engage in serious policy conversations on how to eliminate it from our regional development process and manage cross-border identities.

- The problems of poverty, inequality, and unemployment have to be addressed squarely in Southern Africa, and progressive social policy, skills and capacity development, and promotion of qualitative and inclusive economic growth are essential to doing so.

- Equity should define the regional development project. Regional value chains that crowd in all countries in the region in the industrialization process should undergird the new Southern African Development Community (SADC) Strategy and Roadmap on industrialization.

- Southern African leaders should invest in institution building and capacity development for SADC. Without a good institutional framework and capacity, SADC cannot perform its role as an effective conflict manager and promoter of democracy in the region.

- Effective early warning systems should be developed at the local, national, and regional levels for identifying potential sources of conflict and community-based approaches to conflict resolution and management. The promotion of democracy should be encouraged, as well.

- More research and knowledge are needed on the dynamics and intricacies of regional integration at the national level. Interaction between academic and policy communities should be improved, with a view to enhancing the quality of policymaking on regional integration in Southern Africa.