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The EU and regional governance outside the EU"

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**REGIONAL PARLIAMENTS IN CENTRAL AFRICA:**  
**A DIFFICULT BIRTH**

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**Abstract:**

Since the 1990's, the African continent has witnessed a revival of regionalisation. The revitalisation of old and creation of new economic regional communities and their agenda's broadening towards political issues have led to the creation of communitarian Parliamentary Assemblies and forums in almost all regions. However, while in most communities, such as ECOWAS, SADC or EALA, regional Parliamentary Assemblies have already started to work, the establishment of similar bodies in the Central African region is still in a state of preparation. Indeed, neither the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) nor the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) dispose yet of the operational Parliament foreseen by their Treaties.

This paper will explore the circumstances and major reasons for this delay and question if the followed approach really presents the appropriate way to enhance the communities' democratic character.

It will start with a brief overview of the CEMAC's and the ECCAS's projects to establish regional Parliaments and their still sluggish implementation, and, based hereon, discuss major reasons for this lack of dynamism. To what degree are the limited power and resources dedicated to these institutions blocking the process? What line can be drawn between the current deadlock and the way Central African Heads of State understand and conceive regional integration? And how is the co-existence of two communities in one region causing some "paralyzing competition"? Discussing these issues shall finally allow to address the question if the planned establishment of communitarian Parliaments presents an adequate approach towards enhancing the democratic nature of Central African regional integration or if other approaches and arrangements may seem more appropriate?

The paper will conclude with a set of recommendations for Central African policy-makers, the civil society and the International Community on how to contribute towards enhancing regional democratic governance in Central Africa, given the region's specificities.

## INTRODUCTION

Ten years ago, the second wave of regionalisation that swept the African continent from the beginning of the 1990's on reached also the Central African region. In a context of continent-wide creation of new and restructuring of already existing regional communities, the Central African Heads of State decided to reactivate the regionalisation processes they had initiated but progressively neglected many years ago.

In 1994, the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) was created to supersede the 1966 established but never fully implemented Central African customs and economic union UDEAC and became operational in 1999. At the same time, new impetus was given to the 1983 set up Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in view of overcoming the community's crisis-induced inactivity since 1992. In 1998, the ECCAS process has officially been re- launched and major reforms have followed from 2002 on.

This resumption of communitarian activities in the Central African region came along, not only with a general review and partly adaptation of the communities' agendas but also with an institutional restructuring and the creation of new common bodies and institutions. Regional Courts of Justice, Parliamentary Assemblies and Specialised Committees were supposed to give additional dynamic to the regionalisation process and thereby to avoid new deadlocks and neglects similar to those that had slowed or interrupted former regionalisation initiatives before.

Today, ten years after the revival of Central African regionalisation, achievements and successes appear however rather modest and patchy so far. The implementation of communitarian policies shows only slow and uneven progress and some of the new institutions are still not fully operational.

Especially the establishment of regional Parliaments is behind schedule for both Central African communities. Whereas CEMAC's Treaty and ECCAS' Additional Protocol both provide for the creation of communitarian Assemblies, CEMAC repeatedly planned but regularly postponed the beginning of its Parliament's activities, and ECCAS is still waiting for the ratification by its members of the founding document.

Certainly, it might appear premature to already evaluate the successes of the Central African regionalisation processes and the efforts done in view of realizing the promulgated democratisation, only 10 years after the initiatives' re-launch. However, a look at other regional arrangements on the African continent that have also been reactivated during the 1990's makes it evident that these regions have already made substantial improvements in view of strengthening the democratic dimension of their member states' cooperation. In Western and Eastern Africa, the main regional communities ECOWAS and EAC already dispose since the late 1990's or the early 2000's of the Parliamentary Assemblies and Forums their Treaties or additional protocols had foreseen to establish. In Southern Africa, the Parliamentarian Forum has been created as a regional network of national Parliamentarians working in close cooperation with the intergovernmental institutions of the Development Community SADC.<sup>1</sup> And also on the continental level, the Pan-African Parliament is already operational since March 2004.<sup>2</sup>

These varying developments justify the question how to explain the delay in Central Africa. What are the major reasons that currently hamper the implementation of the Parliaments in both communities? And once established, will they effectively contribute to making the regionalisation processes more democratic and relevant for the Central African people's interests? Is the chosen approach appropriate or are there any concerns to be raised? And finally, what recommendations could be given in view of supporting and enhancing the communities' democratisation?

## **1. CEMAC and ECCAS – NEW INITIATIVES WITH OLD ROOTS**

### **1.1. Overcoming inactivity**

Whereas the two Central African regional communities CEMAC and ECCAS are often presented as rather young organisations, they both spring from old roots that can, in a way, be traced back to the early post-colonial or even colonial period. The origins of Central African regionalism were in fact laid through the decision of the newly independent states to maintain the close economic ties that existed between them in their colonial past.

The predecessor of CEMAC, the Central African Customs and Economic Union (UDEAC), was created in 1964 by Cameroon, Gabon, the Central African Republic, Chad and the Republic of Congo-Brazzaville, with the major purpose of encouraging and facilitating trade among them thanks to the harmonisation of taxes and duties and the establishment of a uniform tariff policy towards non-member nations. It became effective in 1966 after the ratification of its Treaty by the then five member states; Equatorial-Guinea joined the community in 1984. Despite shared common heritage and traditional historical bounds of its members as well as such beneficial circumstances as a common monetary policy built on the franc CFA, UDEAC's operational capabilities were soon weakened by lacking commitment from the member states, financial shortages due to the irregular payment of contributions and the economic crises of the 1980's. Progressively, the regionalisation process slowed until becoming more or less completely inactive. In the context of a general comeback of regionalism in Africa, a new initiative to revive cooperation was however started in the region during the 1990's. Across the continent, the new post-Cold-War order of emerging globalization and redefined international relations encouraged the reactivation of dormant regional alliances: in West Africa, for instance, the members of the ECOWAS community largely reviewed their alliance Treaty in 1993 in view of further accelerating the process, while in Southern Africa the transformation of SADC into SADC in 1992 expressed the member states' commitment to adapt their cooperation to the context of post-apartheid and a globalized world economy. In Central Africa too, the resumption and intensification of cooperation on the regional level was increasingly considered by the governments as a way to better respond to the new economic challenges generated by the new economic and political context and to strengthen the weight of otherwise largely marginalised states on the global stage. In 1994, the Heads of State of UDEAC's members agreed to reorganise the Central African customs union into the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) which became operational in 1999 after the N'Djamena Treaty had been ratified. Reaching beyond UDEAC's aim of creating a customs union, CEMAC's major objectives are the establishment of a common market based on free mobility of persons, goods, capital and services by 2014 and the regional coordination of sector policies.<sup>3</sup>

In a similar way, also the other Central African regional organisation, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), revitalised in 1998, is based on structures set up before the 1990's. The organisation's roots have in fact been laid in 1983 as part of a broad continental project. Backed by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the Lagos Plan of Action foresaw in 1980 the progressive creation of economic communities in all African regions in view of preparing for continent-wide integration.<sup>4</sup> In Central Africa, ECCAS was established in 1983 with the aim of fostering and intensifying trade and economic cooperation among the states that were already members of UDEAC and Burundi, Rwanda, former Zaire, Angola and Sao Tome and Principe<sup>5</sup>. This was intended to contribute to the general improvement of living standards and the promotion of sustainable development across the continent. From its beginning on, the ECCAS process was marked by a significant level of slowness and tediousness, largely due to limited

financial and material commitments from its member states. The outbreak of severe crises and armed conflicts in the region completely interrupted the community's activities between 1992 and 1998 as instability and tensions in the majority of states impeded the operation of trade and the effectiveness of agreements and common policies. This long interruption was only ended in February 1998, when the members convened an extraordinary summit in the Gabonese capital of Libreville. The decision to resume and re-intensify their cooperation and to bring to an end the often called "period of hibernation" present a significant commitment towards reviving dormant structures and potentials as these were considered, especially in the given context of latent political instability and marginalization in the world economy, as particularly relevant for responding to the region's conflict proneness and promoting sustainable development. Thus the community's initial economic orientation was enlarged and a new focus was set on joint security activities, mechanisms and institutions.

## **1.2. Adapting to new challenges: the regional Parliaments of CEMAC and ECCAS**

The regeneration of both regional communities in Central Africa and the adaptation of their agendas, objectives and structure to the new economic and political context in the 1990's also reflected the democratisation wave that simultaneously swept across the continent. Whereas UDEAC and ECCAS in its original form had been communities exclusively built on the economic exchange and cooperation between their members' governments, the architecture of CEMAC and reformed ECCAS now both include communitarian institutions that appear to soften the former exclusively intergovernmental structures and to complement the state governed bodies by providing a new potential basis for checks and balances.

At first glance, the 1994 agreed and 1999 ratified N'Djamena Treaty establishing CEMAC as follow-up of UDEAC certainly maintains the core parts of the customs union's institutional structure. The main administrative body is still the Executive Secretariat – renamed in 2007 in CEMAC Commission. The Bank of Central African States and the Development Bank are kept as major regional monetary institutions. And the decision making power is still given to the Conference of Heads of State and Government, assisted by a Council of Ministers. Nevertheless, the Treaty also foresees the establishment of a Court of Justice and a Parliament as two new communitarian entities.

According to articles 2 and 4 of the CEMAC Treaty, a common Parliament is to be established in the Equatorial Guinean capital of Malabo. A separate Convention has been signed by the members in 2004 and includes specific provisions on organisational aspects. According to this Convention, the Parliament shall be composed of 10 deputies per member country, making a total of 60 Parliamentarians.<sup>6</sup> These deputies are to be elected for a legislation period of five years in universal direct elections. The CEMAC will hence be among the rare regional communities with Parliamentarians directly elected by the population instead of nominated by and from the ranks of national Parliamentarians.<sup>7</sup> The Convention specifies three different functions of the CEMAC Parliament. First, the Parliament is intended to have a representative role as its members are considered as deputies of the entire CEMAC population. Second, it will have advisory functions combined with a very limited legislative role. It can be consulted on issues of communitarian interest and may provide recommendations by itself if needed. Its advice will be obligatory in a number of issues, such as questions related to the promotion of free mobility and communication, to social integration and some communitarian policies (e.g. health, research and education, the environment and agriculture) as well as on matters of Human Rights and communitarian citizenship. It will also have the right to express its point of view in case CEMAC's Treaty should be revised. Article 5 of the Convention finally attributes functions as oversight and control organ to the

communitarian Parliament. The CEMAC Parliamentarians are given the right to oversee the activities of the executive power through oral or written questioning or auditing. Upon request by two-thirds of the deputies, they will also have the possibility to temporarily set up a special committee of inquiry for the investigation of a specific issue and to dissolve it after the production of a report. Additional duties and rights have been defined in the 2000 adopted founding document of the preparatory Inter-parliamentary Commission that has been set up to pave the way before the Parliaments starts to work. These responsibilities shall in principle remain valid once the Parliament will be operational. They include the yearly examination of the annual report established by CEMAC's Court of Justice and the national Courts of Audit on the control over the execution of the budget as well as of the report produced by the Executive Secretariat on the community's activities and evolution.

The Parliament is supposed to hold two ordinary meetings a year and may additionally meet in extraordinary meetings, if required. It is headed by a Bureau and a President elected by the Parliamentarians for one year.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> ordinary summit of ECCAS member states in Malabo in June 2002, the Heads of State and Government reviewed the community's institutional architecture and agreed on the creation of a number of new communitarian organs and bodies, also including a Court of Justice and a Parliament.<sup>8</sup>

The ECCAS Parliament is officially called Network of Parliamentarians of Central Africa, or in short REPAC.<sup>9</sup> Its rules of organisation and functioning are defined in a specific Protocol adopted on the ordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government in June 2002. REPAC will also be located in Malabo. Its 55 seats will be filled by five deputies from each of the 11 member states, elected for a period of five years by and among the national Parliamentarians. The competencies attributed to REPAC will be much more limited than those foreseen in the case of CEMAC. They are in fact restricted to giving advice on matters related to the communitarian Treaty, notably on issues regarding Human Rights, fundamental freedoms, the communitarian citizenship, free mobility or the revision of the Treaty. It can also provide statements on issues related to the environment, science and technology, minority rights or female emancipation as well as on policies aimed to promote networking and integration in educative systems, public health, communication and energy. REPAC is supposed to meet twice a year for a session of up to 15 days, headed by an internally nominated President.

At present, the Parliamentary Assemblies of CEMAC and ECCAS are not operational yet. Although the decision to create these institutions has been taken nine, respectively six years ago, their effective establishment is still in a preparatory phase.

Although the Convention on the CEMAC Parliament does not foresee any official date, the launch of the Parliament has been planned and finally postponed several times. Up to now, the implementation process could not be accomplished as deadlines have frequently not been respected in the past and because two member states, Gabon and the Republic of Congo Brazzaville, have not ratified the Convention on the Parliament's establishment yet. During their most recent annual summit in Yaoundé in June 2008, the Heads of State have announced to schedule the launch of the CEMAC Parliament for the first trimester of 2009.

To cover this transition period, CEMAC members have set up an Inter-parliamentary Commission in the year 2000. This Commission, composed of five members from each of the six CEMAC member states, is supposed to guide the implementation process, notably by building the needed human and material capacities, by preparing basic documents that shall regulate the parliamentary

activities and by informing and sensitizing the population. The members of the Inter-parliamentary Commission may already fulfil some of the functions assigned to the Parliaments, such as giving advices and examining the annual reports established by CEMAC's Court of Justice and the national Courts of Audit on the control over the execution of the budget and by the Executive Secretariat on the community's activities and evolution.<sup>10</sup>

In a similar way, the Network of Parliamentarians from ECCAS is still not working as the ratification by some of members has not occurred. As long as the Protocol has not been ratified by a minimum of seven of the ten member states, ECCAS organises seminars of the national parliamentary deputies to prepare the official start of the Network's activities.

## **2. DRIVING FORCES FOR REGIONAL DEMOCRATISATION OR “CENTRAL AFRICAN PAPER TIGERS”?**

At a first glance, the institutional broadening of Central African regional communities may appear as a significant commitment of the member states towards promoting the democratic dimension of the communitarian structures. It is indeed a very positive development that CEMAC and reformed ECCAS foresee in their legal documents the creation of Parliaments whereas UDEAC and former ECCAS did not include any democratic aspects in their institutional structures. In this perspective, the set up of these representative supranational institutions is likely to allow a certain softening and balancing of the hitherto almost exclusively intergovernmental cooperation that has most often been made responsible for slow progression and weak performance. By this, the Parliaments could positively act on the entire process in three ways:

- first, by being a driving force that push forward the communitarian cooperation, especially when it is blocked by lacking commitment from the member states or any disagreement among them;
- second, by promoting the performance on the communitarian level and strengthening the coherence between expectations, policies and achievements, which is fundamental for raising the legitimacy of communitarian actors, activities and policies;
- and third, by giving more emphasis and strength to the protection of Human Rights and Good Governance on the communitarian level and enhancing the credibility of Central African regional cooperation initiatives vis-à-vis the International Community and donors.

Nevertheless, several factors tend to cast doubt about the effectiveness and hence appropriateness of the planned Central African Assemblies for really realising this threefold potential.

### **2.1. Performance issues**

In Central Africa, up to now, the slow development of the regionalisation processes and the implementation of policies and institutions behind schedule can primarily be explained by lacking willingness from the member states and conflicts of interests among them. The failure of UDEAC and early ECCAS to effectively promote the region's development has largely been due, on the one hand, to insufficient contributions and commitments from the members, and on the other hand, to lacking consensus among them. Despite the set of institutional reforms in the 1990's, these problems remain relevant today. The realisation of the CEMAC economic union is for instance not done according to the elaborated three-stage scheme as the implementation of agreements such as on the free movement of people or the abolishment of visa requirements is largely behind schedule in many member states.<sup>11</sup> In a similar way, also the creation of new joint military and civil ECCAS institutions and the implementation of policies foreseen by the Additional Protocol signed in 2002 are a long time coming.

Up to now, supranational bodies such as the Executive Secretariats or the Courts of Justice have been too weak and powerless to act as mediator or supervisor and counter these deadlocks and delays.

The introduction and strengthening of democratic elements and the set up of representative institutions might however bring some change. This would however presuppose that functions and competences are appropriately re-distributed between actors, institutions and acting levels. Here, doubts may be raised.

The role and responsibilities of REPAC are indeed considerably limited. Deputies are only given the right to express their – non-binding – advice on all matters directly related to the regionalisation process with a specific focus laid on the facilitation and intensification of exchanges, trade and communication, on energy and information networking, on the harmonisation in the fields of health, education, science and technology, environment and agriculture, as well as on the protection of Human Rights and citizenship. In these questions, all ECCAS institutions may seek the advice of the deputies and the Parliament can also express its unsolicited opinion. Nevertheless, there is no provision making the deputies' advice binding for the adoption and implementation of communitarian decisions and policies. Thus the Parliament's point of view can largely remain disregarded.

Concerning CEMAC's Assembly, the legal conceptions seem far more promising as has been described above. Indeed, the preceding presentation has shown that the CEMAC Parliament will be given a relatively wide field of action with – yet limited – legislative and overseeing competences that exceeds the capacities of most other African communities' Parliaments. Particularly remarkable are indeed its competences to control the yearly activity reports and to set up committees of inquiry to investigate on specific procedures that are at least defined in the legal documents. De jure, the Parliament would therefore be given a certain capacity to overlook the proper implementation of policies which might perhaps incite states and their representatives to place individual interests behind communitarian ones. The question if, under these conditions, the Parliament will also de facto be able to act as a driving force and to contribute to minimising the risk of conflicts and deadlocks based on competing particular interests will however depend on its autonomy and capacity to emancipate from external influences (notably by member states and intergovernmental bodies) as well as to effectively and significantly influence the process' orientation and progression.

For the moment, this remains however questionable.

Concerning the legislative function of the Parliament, the effective competences and rights of the deputies are, after all, considerably small and subject to restrictions. Indeed, it is to be asked why the legislative power of CEMAC's Parliament is limited to the adoption of directives and does not also include the production of other legal norms within the community, such as additional acts, regulations or decisions. In a similar way, it is worth noting that in case the community's founding Treaty would be amended, Parliamentarians will only have the possibility to give their non-binding advice. In contrast, the Convention does not provide them the right to also actively contribute to the elaboration of Additional Protocols and texts in cooperation with the Conference of Heads of State. Finally, the Parliament will not possess any power of legislative initiation. Although it is true that also the European Parliament is lacking such a right, it has nevertheless the possibility to make proposals for legislations which have, in the past, most often been followed by the European Commission. In the case of CEMAC, such an option is even not considered by the regulating Convention which significantly limits the Parliament's possibilities to effectively influence the selection of issues addressed and regulated on the communitarian level.

Regarding the Assembly's function as oversight and control body, the CEMAC Parliamentarians shall have the right to control the activities of the executive power through oral or written questioning or auditing, or by temporarily establishing a special committee of inquiry for the investigation of specific issues. Following the adoption in 2000 of the regulating document on the preparatory Inter-parliamentary Commission, the Assembly may additionally acquire the responsibility to check the annual activity reports elaborated by CEMAC's Court of Justice and the national Courts of Audit, as well as by the Executive Secretariat.

Whereas the attribution of such a control function might certainly give CEMAC's Parliament a role that not many communitarian Parliaments in Africa do exert, their effective competence to provide checks and balances is however constrained in several ways.

A first concern can be raised regarding the scope of the control functions of the Parliament. The Parliament is in fact only empowered to check the reports on the community's activities and the yearly use of the budget at the end of the year. Especially as regards the budgetary control, it is only controlling the yearly spending afterwards and does not participate in the elaboration of the budget itself. It has therefore only limited knowledge on provisions, plans and projects which might make an effective control more difficult. In addition, by not taking part in the elaboration process, the Parliament is also not empowered to approve or to amend the draft and thereby to influence and guide in advance the yearly spending of the community's budget. A reason for not involving the Parliament in budgetary preparation activities may lie in the intention of not additionally complicating this already sometimes difficult process. However, a broadening of the Assembly's competences in this direction, at least in the long term, would allow to give more transparency and hence credibility to the budget's use.

A further critique can be made on the potential impact of the control. Indeed, the Parliament is only entitled to check the activity reports. It has not to discharge the implementation of the previous budget in a way the European Parliament is currently doing. In case the Central African deputies should disclose any inconsistency, the Convention neither empowers them to censure the executive power nor foresees any possibility for them to go to the communitarian Court and take legal actions.

Finally, the autonomy of CEMAC's communitarian Assembly is severely undermined by article 9 of the Convention. This article, addressing the event of a vacancy of seats, also includes the provision that the Parliament can be dissolved by the Conference of Heads of States upon simple consultation of the Parliamentary Bureau and the Council of Ministers. In such a case, new elections have to be held within the following 90 days. Whereas this stipulation presents a clear and important violation of the principal of separation of powers, it is also problematic for another reason. Indeed, it certainly strengthens the control of the members' governments' representatives over the Parliament. This may hence indirectly influence and guide, and hereby impede the autonomy of the deputies' decisions.

Under these conditions, the ability of ECCAS' and CEMAC's Parliaments to act as counterparts to the intergovernmental institutions and contribute to overcome potential deadlocks and delays appears rather unimportant.

## **2.2. Legitimacy issues**

From the beginning on, the civil society has played a very marginal role in the construction of the Central African regional process. Whereas in the first stages of regionalisation, in the decades before 1990, it has been completely absent – or rather excluded – there have been small and occasional efforts to stepwise include it in the revived regional structures and activities since the 1990's. However, the majority of regional and transborder activities directly involving the

population still continue to largely remain on a more informal level, notably in form of informal trade and exchange beyond national borders.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, the public awareness of and identification with formal regional structures and initiatives remain considerable low. Developments on the regional level, such as meetings and conferences, the adoption of policies or agreements or the set up of communitarian agencies, institutions or military operations – are largely considered by the citizens as state-led and not directly relevant for improving their live conditions, if noticed at all.

Strengthening the legitimacy of the Central African regional processes is therefore fundamental for ensuring that the cooperation initiative is also supported by the civil society and that communitarian policies are recognized as leading towards the development and well-being of the entire region. This is indeed essential for building the process also increasingly on a social fundament, for regulating the frequent unsteadiness and current imbalance due to the predominant position of the states and for hence encouraging a stronger commitment of the population towards consolidation the regional communitarian acting level and giving the process more consistency. Supranational representative bodies would bring some improvements in this question if they effectively act as a direct interface between the supranational, the national and the subnational level and foster the coherence between expectations, performances and achievements. It is therefore necessary that the people recognise these representative bodies as a mean to have their concerns heard in communitarian decision-making processes and that the achievements largely respond to their expectations. In return, member states and their political actors have to accept these institutions as the main vehicles of people's interests within the regionalisation process.

It is not evident if CEMAC's and ECCAS' Parliaments are the appropriate institutions for raising the legitimacy of Central African regional communities and communitarian governance. On the one hand, the reduction and curtailing of competences and rights that is particularly problematic in case of REPAC, as well as the various possibilities to exercise influence on the deputies and partly guide their work make it questionable if the Assemblies are indeed accepted by the governmental actors as autonomous representative bodies. At the moment, the governments appear rather reluctant towards effectively giving these Assemblies sufficient rights and power so that they can act as guardians of people's interests. This largely challenges their recognition by the states as important pillars of the communities' democratic dimension and legitimacy.

At the same time, it has also to be asked if, on the other side, the Central African population will recognize these Assemblies in their role as direct defenders of their interests on the communitarian level. Concerns can especially be raised in this question with regard to several factors that are likely to hamper the effective identification of the population with their communitarian representatives and notably the way deputies are elected. CEMAC presents one of the unique cases in Africa where the communitarian Treaty foresees the direct and universal election of the regional deputies. Comparable provisions are in fact foreseen in very few founding documents of communitarian Parliaments, such as for instance in the one of the West African ECOWAS-Parliament.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, ECCAS' Protocol on the Parliamentarian network stipulates that deputies are to be elected by and among MPs on the national level. Although universal elections may appear, at first glance, quite promising for encouraging public engagement and hence confidence with the Parliament, a number of concerns needs however to be raised regarding its effective realizability and practicability, as well as in view of still remaining constraints.

First, direct and universal elections are likely to be more complicated, cost intensive and logistically difficult to organise than indirect elections or nominations of deputies. Indeed, this would require the drawing of electoral maps and region-wide voter registration. Holding the communitarian elections in each country the same day would certainly be favourable for ensuring continuous integrity and work of the Assembly. However, this is very likely to cause logistical

problems and generate confusion. In this perspective, the effective implementation of this provision and organisation of direct universal elections at the communitarian level will certainly not be for tomorrow. By the way, also the authors of the Convention on the Parliament seem to have themselves cast doubt on this matter. Article 18 of the document fixes that, transitorily, deputies may be selected among the national Parliamentarians in each country. A similar provision has also been foreseen in the case of ECOWAS and has been in force for years.

A second problem, besides the question of direct or indirect elections, is related to the way candidates are nominated. Indeed, the document establishing the CEMAC regional Parliament clearly stipulates in its article 7 that the definition of selection and eligibility criteria for potential candidates is a matter of the states themselves. In other words, even if the right to directly elect their deputies on the regional level is given to the population, a certain control and influence is nevertheless left to the governments in form of a pre-selection of candidates.

Finally, the role of the communitarian Parliaments as direct representatives of the Central African populations and their interests is in addition likely to be mitigated, once the Assemblies will have been established, by the not really addressed question how to ensure the identification of the region's citizens with their deputies on the communitarian level. As a matter of fact, there are no provisions on this concern in the two establishing documents. Certainly, the weak relation between the electors and their communitarian deputies is also often criticised regarding the European integration process. However, European citizens are given more and more possibilities to get in contact with their deputies on the communitarian level. Besides the right to individually or collectively submit a petition in form of a complaint, request or observation, European citizens have also the possibility to contact the Parliament through its "Correspondence with Citizens Unit" for asking questions, requesting information or even making proposals. Moreover, since November 2007, representatives from European civil society organisations are regularly invited to meet with the EU MPs in consultative events, so-called Agoras, to express their view on the integration's latest evolution and to discuss on issues currently being considered by the Parliament.

In Central Africa, none of the communities is foreseeing such provisions for ensuring the direct participation of citizens and the civil society in the Parliaments' work. Here the relationship with the communitarian deputies will even be challenged by the weak parliamentary culture on the national level in most Central African countries and the lacking trust of citizens in their national Parliamentarians. In addition, this problem is aggravated by generally insufficient popularization of the regionalisation process and a resulting low degree of sensitization of the population for decisions and developments on the communitarian level.<sup>14</sup>

### **2.3 Good Governance issues**

Within both regionalisation processes, the promotion and protection of Human and minority Rights as well as of fundamental freedoms is considered as a central part of the Parliamentary Assemblies' work. These principles are indeed included among the issues and subjects the Parliaments are supposed to give advice on.

This circumstance could make the regional Parliaments become pivotal institutions for the communities and their members to show and demonstrate their commitment towards Good Governance and democratic values. They may thereby give the regionalisation processes more credibility, especially towards external actors, the International Community and international donors. By promoting this guardian role of their Parliaments and by enhancing at the same time their function as direct representatives of the civil society within the process, CEMAC and ECCAS might be able to progressively overcome the bad image of undemocratic and state dominated entities defending only particular interests and lacking "esprit communautaire" that often creates

(local and international) mistrust against them and their potential performance. In contrast, they could hereby underline their willingness to respect and strengthen Good Governance and democracy in a region that is often criticized for its weak and fragile parliamentary base.<sup>15</sup>

At the moment, a major problem can however be seen in that the effective responsibilities of the Parliaments are considerably unimportant and not going beyond the mere expression of non-binding advices and recommendations on these issues. The deputies have very limited decision-making and legislative power. They have no considerable and relevant competence to effectively control the conformity of policies and activities on the communitarian or on the national level and to take any punitive measures if necessary.

Additionally, it may seem rather questionable if these Parliaments can effectively be presented as the guarantors of democratic acting and Good Governance on the communitarian level as long as the problem of lacking identification of the population with the process in general and the communitarian institutions more precisely is not satisfactorily addressed. In a similar way, there would also be need for satisfactorily measures to ensure public participation and contribution in shaping the role and impact of Parliaments as protectors of Human Rights and social concerns. Under these conditions, the Assemblies seem to largely remain paper tigers or the results of the member states' lip services.

### **3. PROMOTING THE DEMOCRATISATION OF REGIONAL COOPERATION IN CENTRAL AFRICA: ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **3.1. Three remarks**

The preceding analysis and discussion have revealed that the ability of the CEMAC Parliament and REPAC to realise this threefold potential – to act as a driving force, to rise the process' legitimacy and to generate more credibility – is largely hampered on several levels. In summary, it is possible to make the three following remarks.

First, the initiative to democratise the Central African regional processes, its institutional architecture and communitarian politics is in principle a very positive development and presents a considerable improvement compared to UDEAC and former ECCAS. What is however problematic is the way this initiative is implemented. As a matter of fact, it remains questionable if the current efforts will lead to the set up of institutions that will be appropriate for representing the people's interests and able to supervise the member states' activities at the same time.

Second, a major problem in this context can be seen in the circumstance that the democratisation processes are largely state-driven and conceived by the member states' representations. This is problematic for two main reasons. First, it is questionable if such an approach will meet the approval of the Central African population and hence effectively promote and encourage public awareness and participation; or if, on the contrary it does much more respond to the expectations of the states and their representatives. A second concern is based on the problem that the members' governments have shown, up to now, insufficient commitment and willingness to effectively and timely implement the communitarian policies and provisions they have agreed to and to strengthen the supranational acting level which has regularly delayed the process. Therefore, it appears rather questionable if the set up of operational and powerful regional Parliaments will really succeed as long as it is primarily in the hands of state leaders with limited motivation and interest in further intensifying regional cooperation and with certain reluctance towards transferring capabilities and responsibilities, as they consider it as loss of power.

And third, it is not evident if Parliamentary Assemblies really present an appropriate institutional framework for promoting the democratic dimension of regional cooperation, or if alternative settings would be better suited for counterbalancing the intergovernmental aspects and

rising public awareness and identification with the process. This doubt is based on the one hand on the possibilities national governments will have to exercise control on the Parliaments according to the hitherto approved provisions. On the other hand, another factor of doubt is provided by the weakness of parliamentary culture and traditions in Central Africa and the weak identification of citizens with their parliamentary representatives on the national level. The coexistence of two regional Parliaments with overlapping functions in one and the same region is not likely to facilitate the situation as this fact might be a factor of confusion, or even generate a certain “banalisation” and “democratic fatigue”, even before the Parliaments would effectively have taken up their work.

### **3.2. Recommendations for Central African governments**

The limited power assigned to the communitarian Parliaments by their founding legal documents as well as the slowness and tediousness of the implementation reflect the general attitude of most Central African governments towards the regionalisation process. Since the creation of CEMAC and the re-launch of ECCAS, the member states’ political actors have been considerably reluctant to the idea that the intensification and deepening of the process and the establishment of communitarian institutions may require a sharing of power and responsibilities, and hence force them to pool some part of their sovereignty. A brief look at the institutional architecture of both communities shows very well how the main functions, responsibilities and decision-making power are principally concentrated on the main institutions formed and governed by the states’ direct representatives – the Conference of Heads of State and the Council of ministers. In contrast, the main supranational bodies, such as the Secretariats, the Courts of Justice and the planned Parliaments, seem only to exist to support and assist these intergovernmental organs in carrying out their activities.

To support communitarian Parliaments in developing their potential as driving force and central pillars within the regionalisation processes, national governments and their representatives have first of all to reconsider and change their perception and understanding of regionalisation and its objectives in general. At the moment, Central African national political leaders seem to primarily perceive regional cooperation as a way to pursue and fulfil their particular interests and goals. For long, regionalisation has had a clear economic focus and was seen by the states as an approach to promote economic development and to strengthen and protect their national economies. The inclusion of a political dimension besides the economic objectives seems to have been done in view of consolidating existing political structures and fostering the exclusive authority of national states and their representatives. Besides the still relevant aim of increasing the weight of national economies, the states may mainly see here a possibility to acquire new roles and functions on the communitarian level and to pursue their political interests. As a result, governments are rather reluctant towards partly transferring responsibilities from the national to the supranational level and giving institutions increased acting capacities as this would be opposed to their objectives. What is still remaining largely underdeveloped is an “esprit communautaire”, and a perception of and commitment to communitarian interests.

Under these conditions, governments do not sufficiently see the value-add that intensified regional cooperation with strong supranational structures could offer, on the one hand for overcoming their international marginalisation and, on the other, for better approaching common challenges and threats for the region’s stability and security. As a matter of fact, since the 1990’s, it becomes more and more obvious that the weak Central African states are proving unable and incapable to satisfactorily address all challenges they are confronted with. Ensuring security, reacting to environmental threats and health risks, such as pandemics, and guaranteeing welfare and satisfactory living conditions to their population is significantly exceeding single states’ capacities

and would require a form of governance going beyond traditional forms of co-operation between sovereign states.<sup>16</sup> Here an approach based on strong supranational structures and bodies and on a pooling and sharing of responsibilities, capacities and competences would be most appropriate.

In this perspective, it is, second, fundamental that governments accept to further empower the supranational acting level and to give more responsibilities and competences to act and to control to supranational institutions. These actors should not be considered as concurrence and power cutting factors but as a way for merging capacities and resources in view of adopting new and better suited approaches.

The objective should not be the realisation of particular interests but the identification and consideration of regional communitarian interests as being relevant for the development, security and stability of the entire region and its population. There has to be understanding for the need of a form of governance where responsibilities are distributed among actors on different acting levels, according to their appropriateness and suitability, allowing to better and effectively meet these shared interests.

Communitarian representative bodies play hereby a fundamental role. In Central Africa, instability and insecurity are to an important degree related to the inability and incapacity of the states to address and satisfy the needs and concerns of their populations. Misery, public discontent over living and human security conditions, as well as missing coherence between public concerns and politics present indeed fundamental factors nourishing civil tensions and conflicts. Powerful supranational institutions that can control and influence acting and decision-making processes on the communitarian level while allowing the population to express their concerns would therefore provide a crucial contribution towards reviving the social dialogue. Whereas relations between the civil society and governments are most often rather distant and of marginal importance on the national level, such supranational bodies could be the framework for a better exchange and cooperation on the communitarian level and therefore present an important basis for an intensified social dialogue. This would however presuppose that regionalisation is build on a consolidated and legitimised basis set up by the population's perception that the process is also shaped and brought forward by them with respect to their concerns and interests and not only state-led.

In view of the above discussion, the question of the appropriateness of regional Parliaments as institutional framework for reviving the social dialogue has therefore to be re-considered. The appropriateness of the currently conceived approach built on directly elected deputies, such as in the case of CEMAC, appears rather questionable in view of the weak awareness and sensibilization of the population for the regional communities as well as of the missing trust in parliamentary structures on the national level.

In this perspective, Central African governments should also consider the possibility of opening the regionalisation process towards alternative ways and settings for strengthening the participation and involvement of civil society actors. They should notably also accept the participation of public forums or people-backed networks that are not so easily controllable as Parliaments if these show more appropriate for expressing public interests, merging capabilities and capacities and hence raising the legitimacy of communitarian policies and decisions.

### **3.3. Recommendations for the Central African civil society**

The civil society's role is essential for realising the potential communitarian Parliaments and supranational institutions in general bring along. As a matter of fact, if the launched regionalisation processes are to contribute to Central Africa's development, they have to progress in particular in sectors and policy fields that are relevant for the population and their direct concerns. The currently limited interest of the Central African civil society can largely be related to the fact that the

development and evolution of CEMAC and ECCAS has not brought any remarkable direct amelioration and improvement for them up to now. Measures to improve their living conditions, such as for instance the effective eradication of trade barriers and the facilitation of free movement, are still not implemented and have fallen behind schedule. If social issues are approached on the communitarian level at all, they are rarely subject to communitarian policies as governments are reluctant to tackling policy fields considered as traditional reserve of the state, such as notably questions of domestic policy.

What is needed are, on the one hand, appropriate measures for making the population become aware of the communities they live in and the value-add regional integration can offer. On the other hand, there is a need for channels and means to allow them to express their concerns on the communitarian level and hence to contribute to shaping the CEMAC and the ECCAS processes and making them become also directly relevant for them.

In this regard, the Central African civil society has, first, also to change its perception and understanding of the CEMAC and ECCAS regionalisation processes. At present, these processes are either not recognized by the population or primarily seen as largely state-led and pursuing the governments' individual interests. Therefore, it appears necessary to raise the public awareness of these initiatives so that the population may conceive them as being relevant for promoting development and well-being in the entire region. The civil society should view regionalisation as a way towards generating new political approaches and capacities and hence seek and use channels that allow for further public participation and influence on decision-making processes. Already today, the concepts of CEMAC and ECCAS are present in the population's every day life, such as for instance mentioned on water bottles ("sold in the CEMAC/ vendu en CEMAC"), on coins or on advertisements in the streets. Supporting the population in increasing their interest in these communities and the value-add they might offer is therefore important and should be promoted in all different situations. The creation of a CEMAC memorial day, such as decided by the Heads of State in June 2008, may certainly help to further this public awareness. Moreover, efforts should be put on moving forward the projects of creating a joint airline, Air Cemac, and a CEMAC passport, as these could become essential symbols and indicators of the existence and progress of the communities, relevant and directly perceptible for the population.

Second, if the problem of regional Parliaments such as CEMAC's Assembly and REPAC is that they are likely to be considered as influenced and controlled by the national governments and their representatives on the communitarian level, citizens should try to get involved in communitarian parliamentary activities through other ways and approaches than those conceived by the founding documents. The evolution of the European Parliament's role and functions could hereby be taken as some form of guidance. Whereas this Assembly has often been criticised for not sufficiently sensitizing the European citizens for the integration process and serving as a voice for their interests, new settings have recently been introduced in view of improving the exchange and communication between the people and European MPs. The above mentioned possibilities to directly contact the "Correspondence with Citizens Unit" of the Parliament, to submit a petition or to participate via representatives of civil society organisations at the Agora exchange forums present novel approaches to encourage European citizens to directly contribute to the European parliamentary work. In the Central African case, similar provisions could present an appropriate solution for tackling the question how to ensure a sufficient level of identification of the citizens with their communitarian parliamentary representatives, for overcoming the critics of lacking transparency and finally addressing the problem of generally underdeveloped "parliamentary culture" in Central Africa.<sup>17</sup> The role of the population, and the civil society more precisely, should

therefore be on the one hand to encourage and support the development of direct channels of participation in the parliamentary work, such as regular meetings and communication between MPs and civil society organisations, or even individual citizens, similar to those existing for the European Parliament. On the other hand, it should promote the active use of these facilities.

To further overcome the problems of lacking public identification and limited responsibilities and autonomy of communitarian Parliaments, the civil society should finally also consider the possibility of contributing to the regionalisation process via more direct forms of participation that must not be an official part of the formal communitarian structures. Such bottom-up approaches are indeed already working in other African regions. Here civil societies have launched own initiatives to influence and partly guide regional cooperation into directions that are of concern for them. In West Africa, for instance, the West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOF) has been set up in December 2003 by over 100 non governmental organisations located in the ECOWAS member states. In view of protecting and promoting the population's concerns and interests on the communitarian level, WACSOF regularly meets before the ordinary ECOWAS summits of Heads of State and expresses public views and positions on the agenda items. In addition, the forum has committed itself to monitoring the respect and implementation of communitarian policies by the member states. In a similar way, also in Southern Africa, the Council of Non Governmental Organisations (SADC-CNGO) has been set up in 1998 with the objective of directly representing the interests of the civil society within the SADC process. The council's meetings are generally held at the same time as the SADC Heads of State and Government Summits to deliberate on issues related to the region's development and integration.

The advantage of such forms of participation can primarily be seen in that they exist outside but in close contact with the official regional structures. They have therefore a higher level of self-determination and autonomy. In return, their independence makes it also more difficult for them to get recognized and have their opinion, advice and requests heard and considered by the main decision makers. In West and Southern Africa, the relevance of WACSOF and SADC-CNGO is primarily built on the states' recognition that „there is a need to support a strengthened Civil Society which can engage constructively and maturely with governments”, while ignoring them is likely to result into a contentious relationship.<sup>18</sup>

### **3.4. Recommendations for the International Community**

The role of the International Community in this process should be supportive. By recognising the importance of regional approaches for sustainable development, security and stability in Central Africa, the International Community should support the building of strong and operational communitarian bodies and the progression of regional integration beyond the present state of intergovernmental cooperation. Promoting the role of institutions that basically appear appropriate for reinforcing the democratic dimension of the regionalisation process should hereby be seen as essential. As has been said above, these bodies can play a fundamental role in enhancing the legitimacy, transparency and credibility of the process and hereby contributing to the respect of Good Governance in the region. Moreover, they are key for giving more emphasize to the population's interests and thereby increasingly moving the cooperation process into policy fields that are of particular concern for them. This could help to find appropriate approaches for challenges that single states can not sufficiently address and that are therefore likely to generate tensions and instability.

As regional integration is also moving forward on the European continent, the European Union should on the one hand promote the intensification of the regionalisation process in Central Africa by favouring bi-regional cooperation to bilateral relations, when appropriate. The promotion

of bi-regional cooperation and the support of the African integration agenda play already an increasing role in the European policy towards the African continent. One of the objectives of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership adopted in Lisbon in December 2007 is in fact the promotion of the socio-economic and political integration of the African continent as this is considered as an essential contribution towards development, economic growth and employment, as well as for the eradication of poverty. Regional communities are hereby considered as key partners for the EU in Africa.<sup>19</sup> On the inter-parliamentary level, the inter-regional dimension remains however rather underdeveloped. Under the Cotonou Agreement, the Joint Parliamentary Assembly brings together twice a year members from the European Parliament and national Parliamentarians from ACP countries. However, there are up to now no real provisions for the participation of deputies from regional Parliaments despite the Joint Assembly's objective of also strengthening regional integration.<sup>20</sup> Favouring cooperation networks and activities with members of communitarian Parliaments in Africa should be among the priorities for the next review of the Cotonou Agreement. Indeed, it would allow to give these Assemblies more importance within the regional structures as they would become a direct interface to the European Parliament. Moreover, Central African states would be less tempted to cut the deputies' competences or to hamper their independent acting as they would fear the reproach of lacking democracy and Good Governance.

On the other hand, the International Community should also encourage and support the formation of forums and networks carried by the region's civil society. Compared to the situation in other African regions, such as in West Africa or Southern Africa, civil society organisations are not yet well developed in Central Africa. Especially their cooperation beyond national borders is still considerably weak. However, civil society covered regional groupings appear particularly appropriate for expressing and promoting the people's interests, needs and concerns and for guiding the integration process into relevant policy fields. As they are in return less institutionalised, these forums usually lack the necessary capacities and resources to work in a more or less professional way, to maintain regular communication and to attend relevant meetings and conferences. Moreover, their recognition by the national governments and other actors on the communitarian level is most often uncertain which hampers their potential to influence communitarian intergovernmental decisions.

By recognizing their potential of making regionalisation more relevant and perceptible for the population, the International Community should on the one hand support these organisations in gaining more strength and importance and developing more capacities to influence decision-making processes on the national and on the communitarian level. On the other hand, supporting the consolidation of civil society regional formations and emphasizing their importance and relevance for the region's stability, development and well-being should therefore be an important objective for the International Community in view of making also the states realise the – yet mainly underdeveloped – potential that these actors bring along. To some degree, the involvement of civil society actors is already promoted in a number of fields. Before and during the EU Africa Summit in Lisbon in 2007, non-state actors were, for instance, invited to express their wishes, visions and expectations on a specially created internet platform, administered by the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM). Nevertheless, further efforts to address civil society organisations as representatives of the population of a specific region, such as Central Africa, largely remain unimportant. This would however be essential for consolidating them as actors and promoting their inclusion also in communitarian policy making processes.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Coming back to the initially formulated question how to explain the delay of the Parliaments' implementation, the previous discussion leads to the following considerations.

The major reason for the slow evolution of the democratisation of CEMAC and ECCAS can be seen in the chosen approach, based on the establishment of regional Parliamentary Assemblies by the member states. The predominant role of governments whose leaders consider regional cooperation primarily as a mean to realise their particular interests, as well as the almost complete exclusion of the population and the civil society from this process can explain the absence of dynamism and motivation towards setting up operational and powerful parliamentary bodies. While Central African national political leaders have limited interests in creating democratic bodies capable of controlling and supervising their acting – or inactivity – in communitarian policy fields, citizens do not see how these Parliaments could emphasize their concerns on the regional level given their restricted power, the control exercised by the states and the absence of adequate channels for public participation in parliamentary work.

Strengthening the democratic aspects of CEMAC and ECCAS through the very different and diverse dimensions and approaches that been discussed here is therefore likely to present a key for adequately addressing the major weaknesses and obstacles of current democratisation efforts and furthermore also overcoming deadlocks and delays the process is encountering in a more general way. Raising the competences and autonomy of the regional Parliaments, while also fostering the possibilities of the citizens to participate via exchange with their communitarian deputies and via specific civil society networks presents a promising way towards having the regionalisation initiatives in Central Africa more widely supported and therefore giving more dynamic, importance and weight to the timely and efficient achievement of aims and objectives. The enhanced integration of the population into the regional process, via the Parliamentary Assemblies or specific independent forums would also be important for having their concerns increasingly heard and addressed on a supranational acting level that appears to some degree more appropriate for tackling challenges single states prove too weak to deal with on the national level. It therefore may appear as an appropriate key towards providing a new basis for consolidating the dialogue between the population and their political leaders and fostering security and stability in a region that has been among the most conflict prone on the continent.

This aspect seems particularly relevant in view of the fact that the Central African regionalisation processes have indeed been re-launched in the 1990's, especially as far as ECCAS is concerned, with the aim of leading towards the region's peaceful, stable and constant development.

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1 The Parliamentary Forum of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) is the oldest regional Parliament in Africa. Its creation has been planned since the Windhoek Initiative in 1993 and was formally realised in July 1996. The Parliament of the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) is operational since January 2001 after its creation had been fixed in the revised Treaty of 1993 and formalised by a specific Protocol signed in 1994. And in November 2001, the East African Community (EAC) inaugurated its Legislative Assembly.

2 See: Ulf TERLINDEN (2004). African Regional Parliaments – Engines of Integration and Democratisation? Hintergrundinformationen aus der Internationalen Entwicklungszusammenarbeit. Bonn, September 2004

3 The Treaty of CEMAC foresees the establishment of an economic union in three steps (1999-2004; 2005-2009; 2010-2014). The first step encompasses legal harmonisation and common economic and financial legislations, joint actions in economic sectors and horizontal issues such as education and research to coordinate national policies as well as coordinated external trade relations. The second primarily focuses on establishing free movement of goods, services, capital and persons. The final step will be used to evaluate and finalise the achievements of the first and the second steps. Despite a

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very comprehensive body of legislation, the implementation on the national level has been quite slow and not as scheduled. At the end of the second stage, the agreement on the free movement of citizens has, for instance, not been put into reality so far, as most states still require visa for the entry in their country from CEMAC citizens. (Convention régissant l'Union économique de l'Afrique centrale U.E.A.C., July 1996.)

4 The 'Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa, 1980-2000', backed by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), was drafted in April 1980 on a conference in Lagos, Nigeria, by a number of African political leaders. Its major aim was to increase Africa's self-sufficiency. For this purpose, the Plan envisaged the establishment of three regional arrangements in order to promote economic development on the sub-regional level. In Western Africa, this task was given to the already existing Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). A Preferential Trade Area was created to cover the countries of East and Southern Africa and later on replaced by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). Finally, regarding Central Africa, ECCAS was created in 1983 with the aim of achieving and maintaining economic stabilisation through harmonious cooperation between its member states.

5 Rwanda has withdrawn its membership from ECCAS in 2007.

6 As the Parliament has still not been established yet, the definite composition has in fact not been decided. The audit initiated by the member states to assess how the functional capacity of the community could be enhanced has presented three possible scenarios for the regional parliament's composition: One would be the egalitarian distribution of the 60 seats such as defined by the 2004 Convention. Alternatively, it would be possible to allocate the seats proportionally to the member states' population. A final solution would be to combine the first two models by giving a minimum of 5 seats to each state and distributing the remaining 30 according to the demographic strength.

7 For more details on the question of election or nomination of regional Parliamentarians in Africa, see: Ulf TERLINDEN (2004)

8 On their 10th Ordinary Summit in Malabo in June 2002, the ECCAS Heads of State and Government decided to adopt a protocol on the establishment of a number of new institutions supposed to promote and accelerate the process. They agreed on the creation of a Network of Parliamentarians of Central Africa (REPAC) and the adoption of standing orders of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX), including the Defence and Security Commission (CDC), Multinational Force of Central Africa (FOMAC) and the Early Warning Mechanism of Central Africa (MARAC).

9 REPAC refers to the French abbreviation of the Network of Parliamentarians, „Réseau des Parlementaires de l'Afrique centrale”.

10 CEMAC (2000). Règlement intérieur de la Commission interparlementaire. Malabo, 21 June 2000 (Art. 3)

11 See also the analysis made by the European Union. European Commission (2008). Overview of regional integration in ACP countries. Published under:

[http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/consultation4-Overview-of-regional-integration-in-ACP-countries-03-03-2008\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/consultation4-Overview-of-regional-integration-in-ACP-countries-03-03-2008_en.pdf) (22.07.2008)

12 More detailed information and analyses can be found: on the Central African region, in Karine BENNAFLA (2002). *Le commerce frontalier en Afrique centrale : acteurs, espaces, pratiques*. Paris : Karthala; and on Africa in general, in Daniel BACH (1999). *The revival of regional integration in Africa*. Documentos de Trabalho, CEAs, Lisbonne, n° 56; and in Daniel BACH. *New Regionalism as an Alias : Regionalization Through Trans-State Networks*. In : J. Andrew GRANT / Fredrik SÖDERBAUM, (2003). *The New Regionalism in Africa*. Aldershot : Ashgate

13 See ECOWAS (1994). Protocol A/P2/8/94 Relating to the Community Parliament. In: Official Journal of ECOWAS, 27 (July/ August 1994), pp. 4-10

14 EUROPEAN CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENT POLICY MANAGEMENT (ECDPM) and PERFORMANCES MANAGEMENT CONSULTING (PMC) (2006). Diagnostic institutionnel, fonctionnel et organisationnel de la CEMAC. Tome I. Rapport Final. February 2006 (pp. 42)

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16 Ingolf PERNICE (2001) 'The role of national parliaments in the European Union', in: Walter Hallstein Institut-paper 5/01 (p.9)

17 CEMAC (2006). Diagnostic institutionnel, fonctionnel et organisationnel de la CEMAC. Tome I. Rapport Final. (In cooperation with ECDPM and Performances Management Consulting). February 2006 (pp. 42)

18 Then-Minister of Foreign Affairs in Lesotho, quoted in the article "The SADC Council of Non Governmental Organisations SADC-CNGO's Second Civil Society Forum Meeting, Maseru, Lesotho, from 14-16 August 2006", published on the website of the Lesotho Council of NGOs [http://www.lecongo.org.ls/news/SADC\\_CNGO\\_Meeting.php](http://www.lecongo.org.ls/news/SADC_CNGO_Meeting.php) (30.07.2008)

19 Council of the European Union (2007). The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership. A Joint Africa-EU Strategy. Lisbon, 9 December 2007

20 Partnership Agreement between the members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States of the one part, and the European Community and its Member States, of the other part, signed in Cotonou, Benin, on 23 June 2000. See in particular article 17 on the creation of a Joint Parliamentary Assembly.

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