

Secretary-General, Mr Sindiso Ngwenya, has noted that the African continent is underdeveloped and badly needs to develop if it is to eliminate poverty because the pace of development is not fast enough to match the aspirations of the people.

Mr Ngwenya made this remark while addressing the SADC Chambers of Commerce and Industry in South Africa in a paper entitled: "Progress in the Tripartite FTA: Achievements, Challenges and Prospects".

Mr Ngwenya said the African people are increasingly impatient, hence the many demonstrations and popular uprisings on the continent.

"heis enjoins us to develop and deploy development models and paradigms that can deliver development cost-effectively, efficiently, holistically and, above all, very quickly," he said.

He however reiterated the commitment to change exhibited by the countries in COMESA, EAC and SADC, through a process of regional integration. He added that this is not a new development model, but rather one that puts into practice the pledges and ideals of Africa. the countries in n deliver development cost-effectively, efficiently, holi a single and economically viable economic space called the African Economic Community.

"into practice the pledglet me give you an abbreviated, historical account of this development model we refer to as the Tripartite Framework of Co-operation and Integration. This framework of co-operation and harmonisation of regional policies was initially between COMESA and SADC in 2001; and was expanded to include the EAC in 2005. The framework seeks to streamline regional integration programmes and activities to ensure member countries derive maximum benefits from integration while avoiding duplication."

The Secretary-General added that after nearly eight years of co-operation at the Secretariats' level, the three RECs reviewed the framework and received strong stakeholder endorsement and direction in October 2008 during the first Tripartite Summit of the 26 Member/Partner States.

He told the meeting that the Tripartite framework of co-operation is anchored on three inter-related and inter-dependent pillars of: market integration, infrastructure development and industrial development.

“Under the market integration pillar, countries are expected to establish a grand FTA and later a customs union. Under infrastructure development, the Heads of States directed that a joint investment and infrastructure master plan be compiled and infrastructure projects prioritised. The Tripartite Task Force was tasked to identify sources and establish mechanisms and means of funding these projects,” and be compli

He concluded that the industrial development pillar is intended to address the limited productive capacity of the region, and the low productivity of the region, prioritised. T.

He further said that in pursuit of faster economic growth and development through deeper regional integration and to resolve the challenge of overlapping membership in the area of trade, the three RECs have decided to establish a single, larger and better FTA than their individual existing REC FTAs.

“than their individual existing REC FTAs, and better. Frough deeper regional integration and to resolve the challenge of overlapping membership in the area of trade, theortive enough to specific product lines or tariff lines which require more elaborate rules of origin. COMESA and EAC have, therefore, adopted the change in tariff heading as an additional criterion for conferring origin on such products,” Mr Ngwenya elaborated.

He explained that the SADC trade regime has product-specific rules of origin but these are seen as trade-inhibiting and favouring the more industrialised economies to the disadvantage of the less developed countries and do not facilitate intra-regional trade.

“as trade-inhibiting and favouring the more industrialised economies to the disadvantage of the less developed countries and do not facilitate intra-regional trade. tional criterion for conferring origin on such productsvernment and strengthenf cumulation, among others.”