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**CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION: TOOL FOR PEACE,
REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

**CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION: A TOOL FOR PEACE, REGIONAL
INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Cross-border cooperation is one of the components of the African Union Border Programme (AUBP). It supports, sustains and enhances the process of demarcation and delimitation of African borders. This cooperation features in two forms: cross-border cooperation driven by local initiative and large-scale cross-border cooperation – both of which contribute to the consolidation of peace and stability, and to fostering the process of integration and the dynamics of development in Africa. These forms of cooperation indeed represent strategic directional tools and instruments for harmonization of policies. Viewed from this perspective, cross-border cooperation, be it large-scale or local initiative driven, constitutes a construction laboratory for sectoral policies coherence at bilateral and/or community levels.

2. The Regional Economic Communities (RECs) which are cooperation and integration organizations are concrete manifestations of the will of the continent's leaders to build and strengthen sub-regional and regional solidarities and complementarities. The RECs not only organize relations among Member States but also establish bridges between the various sub-regional groupings. These institutional frameworks and the African Union Commission do structure numerous inter-State cooperation processes. An example is NEPAD. This programme indeed marks the aforesaid will on the part of Africans to institute political reforms and work resiliently towards increased investments in sectors such as agriculture, education and training, environment and climate change, infrastructure, health, information and communication technologies, etc.

3. Additionally, large-scale cross-border cooperation mechanisms have been established under the auspices of the States with various appellations (Authority, Economic Community, Secretariat, Initiative and Organization) denoting different organizational models. Examples are development corridors such as the *Maputo Development Corridor* which links the port of Maputo to Swaziland and to the East of South Africa. The joint and shared management of river basins also represent a symbolic dimension of this type of cooperation. Common and concerted strategies for natural resource management (fauna, flora, minerals, etc.) have equally been implemented.

4. In addition to inter-State cross-border cooperation projects and programmes which for the most part were devised a few decades ago, local initiative driven cross-border cooperation promotion strategies have been implemented in the recent past. This type of cross-border cooperation is the focus of this note.

II. LOCAL INITIATIVE DRIVEN CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION: THE LOCAL PLAYERS AT THE CENTRE OF THE REGIONAL INTEGRATION PROCESS

5. Local initiative driven cross-border cooperation is a trans-national activity which, by virtue of the presence of an international border, brings local players and populations linked by proximity in direct contact and into diverse and quasi day-to-day relations. The terms of reference of this cooperation most often include administrative divisions, especially the contiguous border regions of two or several countries within which various categories of local players (populations, administrative authorities, local elected personalities, economic operators, socio-professional and civil society organisations) interact and work together.

6. As a matter of fact, this type of cooperation is built over a long period of time according to historical links as well as socio-economic and cultural relations. Settlements and population mobility have crafted, beyond borders, interpenetrations and mutual influences among different ethnic groups, and contributed to the development of mechanisms and strategies for preservation of the cultural peculiarities of the ethnic groups concerned.

Local Initiative driven cross-border cooperation: a promising political project

7. The potential of this local initiative driven cross-border cooperation as a tool for management and regulation of relations was highlighted between Nigeria and its neighbours through the pioneering activities of Nigeria's National Boundary Commission. Subsequently in 2000, it was conceptualized through the "border country" notion by Alpha Oumar Konaré, former President of Mali and former Chairperson of African Union Commission, as *"a geographical space straddling the frontier lines of two or several contiguous States home to populations that are bound by socio-economic and cultural links"*.

8. Under the above-mentioned dual impetus and thanks to the advocacy actions of certain State and non-State players, local initiative driven cross-border cooperation was in 2007 considered by the African Union Commission as a political agenda and a strategic tool. Cross-border cooperation has since been perceived as a leverage for:

- promoting and consolidating peace, security and stability, ensuring social and economic development and facilitating effective application of community texts, laws and regulations;
- strengthening and developing relations of good neighbourliness among grassroots communities or regional border authorities belonging to two or several States, and for conclusion of the necessary agreements and arrangements in the regard;
- speeding up regional integration, opening up border areas and facilitating rapid realization of the socio-economic development of cross-border areas and community spaces; and

- contributing to improving policy coherence at community level and the alignment of norms and practices.

Diversity and variety of local initiative driven cross-border cooperation

9. It can be said at this juncture that mobilization for promotion of local initiative driven cross-border cooperation will gather pace. Efforts at documentation of contexts, stakes and challenges are gathering momentum; directories, atlases and other manuals on cross-border cooperation and related matters such as free movement of persons and goods, have been produced; cross-border projects and programmes have been formulated and financing thereof sought; community radio networks have been established to inform and communicate on cross-border issues; federations of associations from both sides of the national border, under cross-border label, have been established and have endowed themselves with joint action plans.

10. It is noted that the cross-border dimension is beginning to be mainstreamed into spatial planning and regional development, in addition to the pilot operations launched in certain development zones. Cross-border projects have been implemented in several areas by both State and non-State players. Such projects involve transport, communication, trade, agro-pastoral development, tourism and the crafts industry, water works, energy, industries and mines, health, drinking water, education, environmental protection, harmonization of property and land tenure legislations, free movement of persons and goods, security, culture, sports and leisure, etc. The examples given hereunder illustrate the variety and diversity of local initiative driven cross-border cooperation experiences.

Peace, security and stability

11. Cross-border areas are sometimes terrains for conflicts, banditry, robberies and all sorts of trafficking. Cross-border security constitutes a major concern for the administrative authorities of border areas. Strategies for ensuring border security and/or conflict prevention include the organization of joint patrols by security forces between neighbouring countries. Such patrols focus on combating criminal activities (movement of armed groups, arms trafficking, cattle stealing, etc). The governors of border areas have established cooperation and collaboration mechanisms to accompany the peace processes in conflict areas, reinforce the security of the populations and facilitate the movement of persons and goods on both sides of borders.

12. However, the local peace and security initiatives of cross-border mechanisms are numerous. Such initiatives are the handiwork of civil society organizations which initiate awareness-building, watchdog and collaboration activities to promote peace and good neighbourliness among communities and countries. In close collaboration with civil and traditional authorities, these associations combat the effects of conflicts particularly the disintegration of the social fabric and of community cohesion. They promote clemency, reconciliation and negotiated integration for refugees and displaced persons returning to their

countries of origin. Strengthening cross-border cooperation in furtherance of the culture of peace is an effective means of resolving conflicts and brings together both State and non-State players in ensuring the security of the area concerned.

Environmental management and preservation of natural resources

13. Access to, control, exploitation and management of natural resources in border areas sometimes generate conflict among the users of such resources as well as between these users and the officials responsible for administration and surveillance of the resources. The absence of concerted management of cross-border resources is also a source of tension between the administrative authorities and policy makers in the neighbouring countries.

14. Local initiative driven cross-border cooperation contributes to the promotion of concerted sustainable management of cross-border resources (grazing lands, forests and water) and helps to reduce the vulnerability of the populations most affected by the effects of desertification in cross-border areas. It also allows for the negotiated use of pastoral resources, range lands, water and lands resources with, in particular, the development of cross-border valleys, etc.

Production, trade and economic exchanges

15. Commercial exchanges based on local productions and import goods represent a major vehicle of the dynamism of local initiative driven cross-border cooperation. Generally, a system of markets, weekly or otherwise, are scattered all over cross-border areas. Such network of markets feeds the sub-regional markets which serve as collection and redistribution points.

16. Producers' organizations establish agreements with merchants/retailers on both sides of the border. Such mechanisms enable them to ensure the security of the productions and the marketing sub-sectors for market garden products, for example. To facilitate the free movement of products, a permanent dialogue is instituted with the control services of the two countries (the customs, police, gendarmerie, immigration, water and forestry departments, etc). The free movement of persons and goods constitutes the backbone of cross-border cooperation. It is at the heart of the initiatives of the numerous players that offer cross-border projects.

III. PROCESS OF ESTABLISHING CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION INSTITUTIONS

17. Ongoing cross-border cooperation initiatives would benefit much if incorporated in formal institutional frameworks. It is gratifying that the African Union and the RECs are currently working in this direction. The legal instruments under preparation would, if adopted, constitute a significant progress towards institutionalization of cross-border cooperation. The instruments would provide cross-border cooperation with a legislative basis capable of sustaining community policies by creating integration hubs at the grassroots and defining action

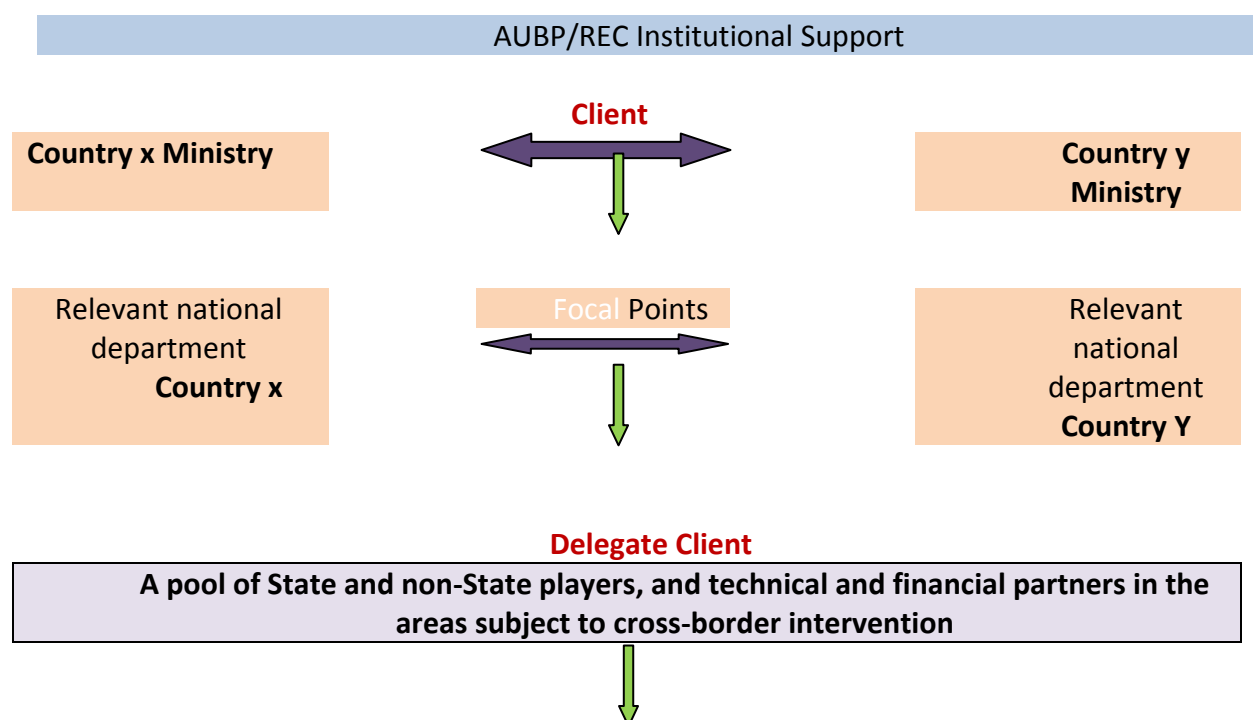
plans for development as well as for political and social change in the border areas which would thus become spaces of complementarity, solidarity, stability and peace.

18. In the institutional and organizational mechanisms to be established, the authorities/local, regional and border communities, elected representatives of the people in the national assemblies of the various countries and the Administrations, central and regional alike, will quite probably have a fundamental role to play. The schedule presented hereunder offers the advantage of bringing on board all categories of players in the operationalization of cross-border cooperation. It also defines the roles of the different categories of players at national level.

An example of institutional mechanism and management structure

Roles	Players	Actions
Client	Supervisory body (Relevant Ministry) Focal Points (Department or other structure of the Ministry)	Institutional support/political and strategic orientation
Delegate Client	A pool of State and non-State players, and technical and financial partners in the areas subject to cross-border intervention	Management Advocacy Counselling support Observation
Principal Contractor	Local/regional communities and civil society organizations	Implementation Technical support Capitalisation
Operational implementation mechanisms	Procedures specifications to be defined in accordance with the agreed financing modalities	

Institutional Support Framework



Principal contractor

Local/regional communities and civil society organizations

Source: *Groupe de Recherche et de Réalisations pour le Développement Rural (GRDR)* (Rural Development Research and Construction Group), *Programme d'aménagement concerté du bassin du Karakoro* (Karakoro basin concerted development programme), *Coopération transfrontalière Mali – Mauritanie, juillet 2006* (Mali-Mauritania Cross-Border Cooperation, July 2006).

19. As the local level is where these projects are to be implemented, it will be necessary that Governments allow local players, local and/or regional authorities to, inter alia, define and conclude agreements with neighbouring countries, such as cross-border conventions, for example.

Elements for Action Plan 2010-2020 on Local Initiative driven Cross-Border Cooperation

- Fast track the formulation and establishment of legal, institutional and organizational mechanisms to operationalize local initiative driven cross-border cooperation in the RECs;
- Establish mechanisms for formulation and validation of legal instruments for cross-border cooperation;
- Establish regional funds for the financing of local initiative driven cross-border projects;
- Organize exchange visits on good practices in local initiative driven cross-border cooperation;
- Produce a comprehensive inventory of existing cross-border cooperation initiatives and agreements;
- Encourage the creation of a local initiative driven Cross-Border Cooperation Support Network in each REC;
- Promote local initiative driven cross-border cooperation in the RECs where this does not already exist as a political orientation;
- Carry out consultation with a view to establishing an Association of African Border Regions;
- Integrate local initiative driven cross-border cooperation in border delimitation and demarcation projects and trans-national programmes (infrastructure, energy, environment, etc);
- Reduce the number of local initiative driven cross-border projects and programmes in the continent;
- Compile a repertoire of African expertise in the sphere of local initiative driven cross-border cooperation.