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## EU launches € 117 million programme for regional integration in Eastern and Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean region

The European Commission today pledged € 117.72 million in support of the regional integration process in the ESA-IO region, which is covering the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Eastern African Community (EAC), Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC).

Derek Fee, the Head of the European Union Delegation in Zambia, said: "The European Union is the prime example of how deeper integration improves livelihoods, benefiting people all over the continent. The ESA-IO region is ready to follow this example, and the benefits will be felt in terms of economic growth as well as stability. The EC has a long-standing and substantial commitment to enhancing integration in the ESA-IO region. We look forward to continued strong collaboration."

The EU's strategy in the region supports the agreed integration process that is being led by the four regional organisations. The programmes will contribute to deeper economic integration by reducing the barriers to trade and the free movement of goods and services across borders. Improving the management of shared resources in the region will help to ensure sustainable growth and contribute to improved food security. Closer political integration between the member countries is equally supported, notably focussing upon conflict prevention and improved governance.

The EU is by far the largest contributor to the regional integration process in Southern Africa. The € 117.72 million approved today is the first instalment of funding under the 10<sup>th</sup> European Development Fund (EDF) to be allocated to regional programmes, from a total regional envelope for the ESA-IO region of € 645 million. Further support to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) integration process is already programmed.

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