

**DISCUSSION DOCUMENT**

**CRITERIA FOR THE DEMARCATION/DELIMITATION  
OF REGIONS**

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## CRITERIA FOR THE DEMARCATION/DELIMITATION OF REGIONS

The purpose of this document is to provide a framework for considering the criteria, for the demarcation of regions, provided as a terms of reference for the Commission on the Demarcation /Delimitation of Regions. The discussion of the criteria is undertaken in the context of the consensus reached by the Commission members that the boundaries demarcated/delimited must make sense from an economic, development, governance and administrative perspective. It also takes the categories decided upon at the June 12, 1993 as its point of departure.

### 1. ON THE CONCEPT OF "REGION."

A region may be defined as a geographic area which has evolved a social, economic and/or political milieu which distinguishes it from some other sub-national areas. An area can be considered a regions due to economic functionality, for administrative purposes or because of its homogeneity.

An **economically functional region** exists when the level of interaction of components of the economy within an area is significant as compared with other places.

**Homogeneous regions** are characterised by internal similarity based on common activities, culture, climate, or even level of economic development.

**Administrative regions** are formed for managerial or organizational purposes. Both private organisations and governments often organise their activities along regional lines. Unlike either functional or homogeneous regions, administrative regions are usually more clearly delineated. Nonetheless, administrative regions may not be distinct from homogeneous or functional regions. Furthermore, the creation of an administrative region may itself foster homogeneity and functionality to emerge within an area.

The concept of a region can be applied at a national or international level. That is, there are regions within national boundaries, as well those constituting groups of nation-states. Examples of the latter are the countries of the Southern African Development Committee (SADC) and those of the European Economic Community (EEC).

The three different types of regions discussed above can also occur at both the national and international level.

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## 2. REGIONAL DEMARCATION: COMPARATIVE EXPERIENCE

The significance of the process of demarcating South Africa into regions, that is currently underway, is certainly not lost to most. The process is significant in several ways as already alluded in the discussions that have already been held by the Commission.

First it is significant because the demarcation process is occurring almost in tandem with the constitutional process of determining, what role regions will play. In this regard, the Commission has resolved the dilemma by agreeing that, whatever their ultimate role, the regions demarcated must make sense from the economic, political and social sense.

Second, unlike other countries where regionalism emerged as a tier of government, apart from the provinces, South Africa does not have historically entrenched regions that can readily form a such a tier of government. Certainly regional conceptions exist as indicated by the development regions used by the Development Bank of Southern Africa, recently emerged Regional Fora, sports and others. The question is to what extent do these form a sound basis for determining future regions.

Therefore, the Commission in its deliberations is faced with the advantages and disadvantages of what Uwe Leonardy refers to as the "hour zero" scenario. That is, starting from ground zero, at zero hour to establish regions.

In conclusion, the issue to be decided with regard to this issue is what weight current versions of regions, including those being proposed by the political parties should be given as a point of departure or should the Commission begin on its own "clean slate."

## 3. CRITERIA FOR THE DEMARCATION OF REGIONS

The key issue in the demarcation of regions pertains to the appropriate criteria to use in determining where boundaries should fall. At its meeting of June 12, 1993, the Commission grouped the ten criteria provided, in the terms of reference, into categories. These categories are as follows:

1. Economic Aspects - (criteria 1.4, 1.8, and 1.9)
2. Geographic Coherence (criterion 1.1)
3. Institutional and Administrative Capacity (criteria 1.2- 1.6)
4. Socio-Cultural Issues (criteria 1.7, 1.10)

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### 3.1 Points of Departure

Before going into a discussion of the specific criteria, it is important to discuss certain principles that some experts of the demarcation issue have identified. Uwe Leonardy,<sup>1</sup> in his discussion on the Demarcation of Regions discuss some of them. It may useful for the Commission to determine whether these are worth being considered as a point of departure.

First, the most basic principle he indicates is that the more comparable the parts or regions demarcated are in terms of size, institutional structure, administrative capacity, economic viability and financial strength, the more stable the whole will be.

Second, is that regional boundaries should never cut through densely populated areas. In particular, they should not separate highly industrialised areas within the same region from each other.

Third, secondary weight should be given to ethnic factors. This is in order to avoid the convergence between regional identity and ethnic identity as this could prove detrimental to the whole. Minority rights, if they are a concern, in the ethnic factor should be a matter to be protected by through a human rights framework entrenched in the constitution and "not a matter for regionalism as a principle for territorial organisation."

Fourth, the regional system formed should avoid the creation of geographical units with extreme inequalities in their size, political, economic, and financial potential. This will have a negative impact on the system's equilibrium.

Finally, metropolitan regions should be avoided. This is in order to maintain the rural-urban balance of the regions as well as to insure that rural areas have the benefit of the infrastructure and capacity inherent in major cities. In the South African context, where historically there has been a spatial separation between high labour supply and labour demand areas, through influx control measures, this issue becomes particularly important.

### 3.2 Economic Issues.

Several dimensions have been identified as critical to consider as part of the Economic criterion. These are, economic functionality, economic viability, development potential, infrastructure (social and physical), and fiscal capacity.

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<sup>1</sup> Leonardy, Uwe. " The Demarcation of Regions: Comparative Standards and German Experience." Paper presented at the Human Science Research Council Workshop in Regionalism, April 1-2,, 1993.



### 3.2.1 Economic functionality

The notion of economic functionality refers to a situation whereby the level of interaction of components within a region is significant compared with other places. An economically functional region could take many forms. For example, nodal regions have a centre of concentrated economic activity which serves other sub-centres or residential areas. An example of this would be the PWV region with the Central Witwatersrand as its key centre and Pretoria and Vereeniging as sub-centres. The functionality of region is measured by the flow of goods and services, labour flows, and to an extent by the market areas for the local production sector.

### 3.2.2 Economic Viability

Economic viability relates to the extent to which a particular region has an adequate resource base to provide for the welfare of its population. This includes an economic base to provide jobs, produce goods and services and a sufficient tax base to provide fiscal capacity.

It is important to note several issues with regard to the questions of economic functionality and viability. First, economic functionality is a necessary but not sufficient condition for economic viability. In short, an economically functional region is not necessarily economically viable in all respects, particularly in terms of tax base. Second, it is not possible in the demarcation of regions to create regions which are of equal economic viability because this may in fact interfere with their functionality. Finally, having economically functional regions, has the potential of nurturing economic viability in the future. Therefore, everything equal, economic functionality should be considered as a critical criterion for the demarcation of regions; however this does not mean that economic viability should not be taken into account.

### 3.2.3 Infrastructure

Infrastructure is an important factor in determining the economic functionality and development potential of an area. In this regard both physical and social infrastructure needs to be considered.

**Physical infrastructure** includes, transport, energy, and telecommunications. Physical infrastructure is critical to development and economic functionality because it impacts on production and consumption costs. In many cases the cost of particular aspects of infrastructure are factored into the price of inputs and those of final goods and services. For example, energy is often part of the cost of production and transportation directly impacts on the cost of distribution of goods and by implication on the price of the final good. The major issues to be considered in the demarcation of regions is the both the amount of infrastructure that exists and how effective and efficient it is in promoting intra- and interregional linkages.

Other than its impact on economic viability and functionality, physical infrastructure also



impacts on the quality of life of citizens because it has a direct effect on access to services (e.g., transport) and information (e.g. energy and telecommunications).

**Social infrastructure** includes health, housing, education and social welfare facilities, and their relative accessibility to the regional population. Social infrastructure impacts on the quality of life of the regional population. Particular aspects of social infrastructure especially health and education affect the quality of human capital a region has and hence its economic viability and development potential. International experience indicates that different qualities and types of human capital attract different types of production processes.

While it may not be possible to equalise infrastructure among different regions, there is a need to assess what capacity exists. One output of the Commission's report might be to point out existing gaps and consider how they might be met through a sharing of inter-regional capacity.

### 3.2.4 Development Potential.

The goal of development is to improve the quality of life or standard of living of the population. One aspect of development is economic growth. Another dimension of development is the transformation of socio-economic and political institutions so that they contribute towards the growth and self-determination of communities. Given this, the issues of economic functionality, economic viability and infrastructure are clearly important components in determining the development potential of an area. Furthermore, it is clear that other dimensions to be dealt with later, particularly institutional and administrative capacity are also important.

In considering the development potential of regions, one needs to take into account at least two issues. The first is the existing development needs as indicated by current socio-economic indicators. A second, is the economic viability of particular regional economies in the context of both national and international trends. That is, regions that are currently leading in terms of economic growth and development (e.g., Region H/PWV), may not necessarily be so in the future given their economic structure and comparative advantage. Therefore, development potential has to be looked at in terms of both a national and international context.

### 3.3 Institutional and Administrative Capacity.

As indicated above, regions can exist for managerial and administrative purposes. The institutional and administrative capacity of the regions ultimately determines their effectiveness, efficiency and performance of tasks in an accountable manner. This has direct bearing on the quality of goods and services that will be provided to regional populations as well the quality of governance.

**Institutional and administrative capacity** refers to the existence of workable structures and systems to execute governmental functions and provide the necessary public goods and social



services. Thus, it relates not only to structures of governance, it includes as well institutions for the provision and management of social and physical infrastructure.

In addition, institutional capacity concerns the degree to which appropriate policy formulation, implementation and monitoring and planning of the region's development can be undertaken.

With regard to **administration**, international experience demonstrates that the evolution of appropriate bureaucracies, to meet national needs, is a long term process which requires systematic intervention and planning. Therefore, the nature of the existing capacity, particularly within the civil service structure, its possible configuration under a new constitution, and the long term potential of regions to develop the needed capacity, need to be considered.

Finally, the issues of institutional capacity indicated above, has fiscal implications. Arguments have been advanced purporting on the one hand that regional government under a federation is costly. On the other hand, there are those who argue that there is a negative correlation between the number of regional governments a country has and the cost of operating the public sector. These two perspectives have to be weighed and a determination made of their validity or invalidity.

### 3.4 Geographical Coherence

Geographical coherence pertains to the idea that regions must be compact and exhibit a level of rural-urban balance. Attention to this criterion is precipitated, in part, by the history of South Africa and the creation of disjointed homeland territories. It is further a caution that the effect of topography on the coherence of regions needs to be considered in the demarcation of regions.

### 3.5 Socio-Cultural Issues

The criteria that have been identified as essential to consider in this regard are, a sense of identity with the region, language and culture considerations.

#### 3.5.1 Sense of Identity

As currently categorised sense of regional identity is seen as relating to socio-cultural dimensions. However, it is important to note that sense of identity is a multifaceted concept in that it can be the result of social, cultural, political, geographic or economic factors. It is therefore important to balance these various dimensions in the demarcation of regions.

#### 3.5.2 Language and Culture Considerations

There are two elements that need to be highlighted with regard to this issue. The first is the

need for sensitivity to maintain sense of identity (however defined) without creating preconditions that may lead to problems of discrimination against minority interests and/or ethnic cleansing. Second, a clear understanding of what the objective of considering this particular criterion is needs to be discussed. Uwe Leonardy's point on ethnicity as a factor discussed above is worth noting in this case.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The above discussion has tried to highlight the key issues relating to the identified criteria for the demarcation of regions. It is safe to surmise that the Commission would have to maintain a flexible framework in its deliberations. Certain criteria could be seen as carrying a lot weight because of the overarching national goals, such economic growth, development and the creation of a democratic culture, facing the country. In other cases, the criteria have differing weight depending on the case under consideration.

Finally, if possible, it would be useful if certain principles for demarcation could be agreed upon at as a beginning point. This will provide a context for evaluating the relative weight placed the different criteria.

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