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## PUBLIC LECTURE

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IHS, Stumpergasse 56  
1060 Vienna, Lecture Room SZ VI

### The Limitations of European Union's Interregionalism: the Example of the Economic Partnership Agreements in Sub- Saharan Africa

#### ABSTRACT

The European Union is not only a model for other regional arrangements; as a regional entity itself it has also built specific links with other regional groupings in Asia, Latin America and Africa. In the case of the African-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP) countries, the EU has devised interregional strategies that have been subject to recurrent controversies, from the Lomé and Cotonou Conventions to the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). The EPAs introduce rules that markedly differ from the previous preferential arrangements, i.e. Free Trade Areas and reciprocity between the EU and ACP regional groupings. EPAs involve several explicit objectives that work via different linkages and channels, such as promoting development, integration in world markets and reinforcing regional integration. The paper argues that in poorer regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa, EPAs are characterised by intrinsic discrepancies between ex ante objectives and ex post outcomes. EPAs are confronted with a series of features and constraints that prevent the achievement of their goals and explain the difficulty of the negotiations: i) a conceptual framework that remains debated (e.g., the links between FTAs and growth, the theory of the suboptimal character of South-South arrangements); ii) the multiplication of other regional arrangements; iii) the lack of complementarity between countries within regional groupings, the distorted export structures of Sub-Saharan African countries (commodity dependence, narrow industrial bases) and unbalanced trade relationships with the EU: with such economic structures, reciprocity with the EU entails risks; benefits can be assessed only on a country-by-country and sector-by-sector basis; this is also aggravated by weakly institutionalised political economies, which distort trade flows.

**Alice N. Sindzingre** is Research Fellow at the National Centre for Scientific Research (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique-CNRS), Paris and at the EconomiX Research Centre, CNRS-University Paris-X, Nanterre. In addition, she works as a Visiting Lecturer at SOAS, University of London, Department of Economics. Her major publications include "Uncertain Prospects of Commodity-Dependent Developing Countries", in Machiko Nissanke and George Mavrotas (eds.): *Commodities, Governance and Economic Development under Globalization, in Memory of Alfred Maizels* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) and "Explaining Threshold Effects of Globalisation on Poverty: an Institutional Perspective", in Machiko Nissanke and Erik Thorbecke (eds): *The Impact of Globalization on the World's Poor: Transmission Mechanisms* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).