

609221

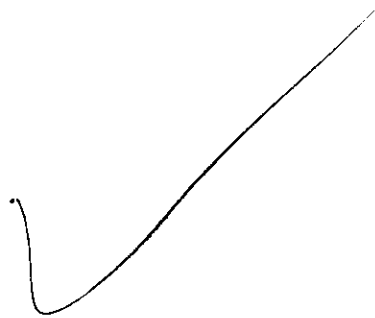


**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

Distr.
GENERAL
E/ECA/CM.12/42
28 March 1986
Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
Seventh meeting of the Technical
Preparatory Committee of the
Whole
Yaounde, Republic of Cameroon,
7 to 14 April 1986
(Item 13(c) (iii) of the
Provisional Agenda)*

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
Twenty-first session of the Commission/
Twelfth meeting of the Conference
of Ministers
Yaounde, Republic of Cameroon,
17 to 21 April 1986
(Item 6(c) (iii) of the
Provisional Agenda)*



PROJECT ON REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPACT OF THE
UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA (ECA)
ON AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT-POLICY-MAKING, PROGRAMMING
AND EXECUTING PROJECTS, 1975-1985

* E/ECA/TPCW.7/1.
E/ECA/CM.12/1.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. One of the important ways of improving the efficiency of an institution is to undertake, periodically, the review and appraisal of operations of such an institution with a view to determining the extent to which the institution is pursuing the objectives that have been set for it. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) should not be an exception, given its unique position in Africa as "the main general economic and social development centre, within the United Nations system, for Africa" ^{1/} and as a result of which it is to "exercise team leadership and responsibility for co-ordination and co-operation at the African level" ^{1/}.

2. Review and appraisal of the functions and functioning of an organization could be requested by its governing body. The exercise could also be initiated by the secretariat of the Organization itself, that is, it could be "self-evaluation". It is in the context of self-evaluation that it has been decided to carry out a review and appraisal of the functions and functioning of the Economic Commission for Africa particularly during the fortuitous period, 1975-1985.

3. While the Commission was established in 1958 and since then it has been in the forefront of international organizations in assisting member States not only in clarifying the concepts of development and economic growth but also in providing technical assistance and promoting the creation and nurture of institutions for collective reliance, it is believed that the period 1975-1985 was unique in many respects and therefore it is important to review and appraise the functions and functioning of the Organization during that period.

4. It will be recalled that it was in 1974 that the General Assembly adopted the resolution on the Declaration and Establishment of a New International Economic Order (Resolution 3201(S-VI)). It will also be recalled that it was in the early parts of the 1970s that the continent first experienced the traumatic effects of drought. In fact, the 1970s saw the

^{1/} General Assembly resolution 32/197 restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system, Section IV.

world discuss a lot of issues that had implications for new approaches to development and economic growth environmental problems, role of women in the development process, raw materials and development, economic and technical co-operation among developing countries, development and international economic co-operation, etc.

5. In Africa itself, efforts to chart a new course of development started about the middle of the 1970s and culminated in the adoption in 1980 of the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos.

6. Finally, the first half of the 1980s has seen Africa confronted once again with drought and famine, world recession, food and other crises, which towards the end of 1985 seemed to have been abating.

7. Therefore, in various aspects, the period 1975-1985 appears to be a period against which the functions and functioning of the Economic Commission for Africa can be reviewed and appraised. This is the purpose of the project document attached to this note as annex.

II. NATURE, SCOPE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE REVIEW AND APPRAISAL

8. As already indicated above, the proposed review and appraisal are "self-evaluation". However, as indicated in the project document, it is self-evaluation which is being undertaken with the assistance of an external consultant.

9. Since the purpose of the project is to review and appraise the extent to which the Commission and its secretariat had responded to the needs of member States and their intergovernmental organizations in the context of the terms of reference of the Commission and against the background of the important development and economic growth issues of the Decade, the review and appraisal will cover the process of decision-making by the Commission, planning, programming and budgeting process, as well as programme and project implementation.

10. In that context, both the secretariat and the member States will be involved in the exercise. In particular, the secretariat will provide the necessary background documents, assist in the design of questionnaire and exchange ideas with the consultant on what it does and how it does. As far as member States and their intergovernmental organizations are concerned, some of them will be requested to complete the questionnaire while such member States/intergovernmental organizations and/or others may be interviewed.

III. THE PROJECT AND MEMBER STATES' CALL FOR BETTER METHODS OF PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

11. In 1984, when the Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole (TEPCOW) examined the biennial report of the Executive Secretary, it recommended that the secretariat should seek ways of improving methods of performance assessment and called for assessment of physical implementation. That call has been strengthened by the recent request of the intergovernmental committee of high level experts appointed to examine the administrative and management of the United Nations for short statements by Programme Managers on the main achievements in their programmes in the period 1976-1985. The secretariat wished the present exercise had been completed before that request came since the results of the exercise would have assisted it greatly in preparing such statements.

12. In general, while the main objective of the project is not to examine physical implementation per se, it is clear that if any meaningful review and appraisal are to be carried out, then some of the projects already or which are being implemented will be examined in situ. The findings of such examination can assist the secretariat in modifying its methods of performance assessment.

13. In the circumstances, it is hoped that member States and their intergovernmental organizations will give the project their maximum support particularly by filling the questionnaires and answering questions that may be put during the interview.

ANNEX

Project title: Review and appraisal of the impact of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) on African development - policy-making, programming and execution of projects, 1975-1985

I. Background and justification

1. Since the inception of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in 1958 member States and their intergovernmental organizations have at one time or the other and usually during meetings organized by the Commission expressed views about the role they want the Commission to play in their arduous task of transforming their economic and social structures. However, there has never been any specific 'evaluation' ^{1/} of the adequacy of the Commission to its task. Yet, periodic evaluation of any organization's performance is an important method of revitalizing such organization and nudging it on for better performance. Indeed, "evaluation systems attempt to help maximize the effectiveness of an organization's activities by providing analytical information on results, impact and effectiveness to secretariats and intergovernmental bodies to improve current and future programmes. They also help to provide accountability to intergovernmental bodies for effective use of resources and to stimulate general organizational interest in assessing experience and applying the lessons learned to future operations on a continuing basis". ^{2/}

2. Unfortunately, 28 years constitute too long a period for such an evaluation of the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of an organization for the purpose of distilling lessons of experience and charting a new course of action for such an organization. This is why in general evaluation work is usually carried out for shorter periods and periodically. And fortunately, in the present case, it is possible to divide the 28 years of ECA's fortuitous existence into clearly identifiable periods for the purpose of evaluation. Thus in 1969, member States themselves reviewed in general the role of the organization over the period 1958-1969 but without the assistance of a specialist evaluator and made some specific recommendations. ^{3/} A similar exercise was carried out in 1979. ^{4/}

^{1/} That is, "a process which attempts to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of activities in the light of their objectives" (JIU/REP/85/II).

^{2/} Ibid.

^{3/} See Economic Commission for Africa Annual Report (1 March 1968-14 February 1969) particularly paragraphs 268-399 and resolutions 187(IX), 183(IX), 189(IX) and 190(IX).

^{4/} See Economic Commission for Africa Annual Report (5 May 1978-25 March 1979) particularly paragraphs 12-266 and resolutions 330(XIV) and 332(XIV).

3. In a different context and on two occasions, two organization specialists 5/ have in general tried to "evaluate" the organization indirectly.

4. There have of course been "evaluations" by the Administrative Management Service of the United Nations (AMS) 6/ and the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). 7/ But, as it is, both the general review by implication done by member States and those by Isebil Gruhn and S. Magee are general assessments not deep enough to provide insights into how the Commission and its secretariat can really improve their working methods, and the exercises carried out by both the AMS and JIU were respectively concerned with the question of reorganizing the secretariat with a view to improving its management efficiency and the question of strengthening the Commission and the secretariat in the light of the requirements of resolution 32/197 and the other restructuring resolutions. Moreover, all these reviews and assessments are not strictly 'evaluation' as defined by the Joint Inspection Unit and in general have dealt largely with the period when the crisis which afflicted the continent in the late 1970s and the first half of the 1980s had not shown its intensity.

5. Therefore, at least on two grounds, namely, the significance of the period 1975 - 1985 in terms of the crisis that has gripped Africa and its intensity; and the need to have a real 'evaluation' of the impact of the Commission and its secretariat on African development policies and operations during this critical period, a review and appraisal of the impact of the Economic Commission for Africa on African development in the crucial areas of policy-making, programming and execution of projects in the period 1975-1985 can be justified.

6. After all, as the United Nations General Assembly resolution (32/197) on restructuring the economic and social sectors of the United Nations System has rightly said, the regional commissions are the main general economic and social development centres within the United Nations system.

5/ See S. Magee, ECA and the Paradox of African Co-operation and Isebil Gruhn Regionalism reconsidered: Economic Commission for Africa.

6/ See United Nations Administrative Management Services - Organization of the Secretariat of the Economic Commission for Africa, Report No. 4-77/ Corr. 1 and Corr. 2; and United Nations Administrative Management Service-Review of the Organization, Management and Staffing of the Secretariat of the Regional Economic Commission for Africa, Report No. 3 - 80.

7 7/ See Report on the Economic Commission for Africa: Regional Programming, Operations, Restructuring and Decentralization Issues (JIU/REP/82/1) Prepared by Alfred W. Forde and Miljenko Vokovic, JIU Geneva, 1982.

for their respective regions. In addition, they are expected to exercise team leadership and responsibility for co-ordination and co-operation at the regional level, taking into account the special needs and conditions of their respective regions. They are also expected to provide inputs for the global policy-making processes of the competent United Nations organs and participate fully in the implementation of the relevant policy and programme decisions taken by those organs. Similarly, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 34/206, the regional commissions have the status of executing agency in their own right. Therefore, when one takes into account the unique status of the Commission on the continent and the particular situation which prevailed in the continent during the period 1975-1985, the decision to review and appraise the impact of the Commission on African development with a view to benefiting from lessons of experience as a basis for reshaping the Commission for a stronger and more meaningful future role can also be justified.

II. Objective and orientation of the study

7. This is a "self-evaluation" exercise being undertaken by the secretariat with the assistance of an outside expert. Its audience is the secretariat of ECA although the results may be published later for wider circulation. Its ultimate purpose is to provide the secretariat with information and advice on how it can improve its impact on the development process at African national, subregional and regional levels.

8. Moreover, this type of study is in line with Commission resolution 508(XIX) of 6 May 1984 on the biennial report of the Executive Secretary which inter-alia requested the Executive Secretary in collaboration with the Programme Planning and Budgeting Board to improve the methods of evaluating programme performance so that information on effectiveness and the physical implementation of projects can be provided to member States, since in carrying out the exercise on review and appraisal, one is bound to examine how some projects have been implemented and their impact on member States.

III. The nature and content of the study including the programme for data collection and the final preparation of the study

9. There is no doubt that any realistic evaluation of the performance of an organization and its impact on the policies, programmes and development efforts of the beneficiaries of its services must start from what the organization is and its *raison d'être*. Hence, the study must contain an analysis of its terms of reference as well as how they have been modified over time. Similarly, since the audience of the final output is the ECA secretariat, the staff of the secretariat particularly at the directorate level must be involved in the study throughout the time allotted to its preparation and finalization.

10. Since member States of the Commission and their intergovernmental organizations are the primary users of the goods and services produced by the Commission, their involvement in the exercise is imperative.

11. In carrying out this exercise, it must be constantly borne in mind that ECA as an organ of the United Nations does not work in a vacuum. Indeed, the whole United Nations apparatus which provides the milieu for its work may hinder or promote its activities and hence contribute positively or negatively to its success or failure. Therefore, the relationship between the Commission and the United Nations on the one hand, and between it and the remaining elements of the system on the other must be critically examined.

12. Over the years, the Commission in common with the other bodies, organs and organizations of the United Nations system have developed certain mechanisms for responding to the needs of its constituents. Such mechanisms must also be examined.

13. Finally, a realistic evaluation requires the formulation of indicators of achievement or failure.

14. In the light of the foregoing, the consultant will visit ECA headquarters in the first instance for briefing and preparation of the outline of the study.

15. At ECA headquarters, the consultant will review the relevant documents and resolutions which contain the terms of reference of the Commission and its secretariat. He will discuss with programme managers who formulate and implement programmes and projects in favour of member States. In such discussions, such issues as methods of work, questions to be asked respondents in the field, and indicators of performance will be raised and the view of programme managers obtained. Finally, as part of the secretariat input into the project, programme managers will collaborate in the design of a questionnaire to be addressed to respondents such as government ministries intergovernmental organizations and selected individuals.

16. Since, as already stated above, member States and their intergovernmental organizations are the primary users of the goods and services produced and delivered by the Commission and its secretariat, their views as well as those of their intergovernmental organizations on the impact of the Commission on their development policies, programmes and projects are essential for a realistic evaluation of the role of the Commission. In this connection, the questionnaire will be sent to a number of member States and intergovernmental organizations with a view to obtaining their views.

17. However, it is a well-known fact that not many individuals and institutions respond to questionnaires. Therefore, in order to improve the coverage as well as have on-the-spot discussions with representatives of governments and of their intergovernmental organizations and even individuals that may have personal knowledge of the activities of the Commission, the consultant will visit a number of member States and their intergovernmental organizations.

IV. Final output of the project

18. The output of this project is definitely a "report to the Executive Secretary of ECA on a study on review and appraisal of the impact of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) on African development with emphasis on policy-making, programming and execution of projects, 1975-1985".

19. In this connection, the consultant will analyse the information contained in the questionnaire and relate it to what he obtains in the field and at the secretariat of ECA within the framework of the terms of reference of the Commission and its methods of work with a view to drawing relevant conclusions for the improvement of programme formulation and management by the Commission.

20. Since the secretariat of ECA has been involved in the project right from the beginning, it will also have the opportunity to comment and make suggestions on the findings of the study before it is finalized.