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**TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION BETWEEN UNDP AND THE REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMISSIONS: ECA
(REPORT PREPARED BY THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT)**

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Technical co-operation between UNDP and the
regional economic commissions

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Technical co-operation between UNDP and the regional economic commissions" (JIU/REP/86/10).

JIU/REP/10

Geneva, November 1986

TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION BETWEEN UNDP AND THE
REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMISSIONS

The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

Prepared by

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Joint Inspection Unit

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Technical co-operation is recognized as being one of the United Nations priority activities, and a substantial proportion of resources are devoted to promoting co-operation for economic and social development.

2. In promoting the creation of regional economic commissions, the General Assembly recognized very early on that it would be impossible to co-ordinate and conduct effectively all the Organization's development activities, particularly those being carried out thousands of miles away in the field, from United Nations Headquarters in New York alone.

3. Accordingly, in 1977, the Secretariat took the initiative of drafting a resolution on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system. This led to the adoption of resolution 32/197 by the General Assembly in December 1977, at its thirty-second session.

4. The aforesaid resolution clarifies and systematizes the place and role assigned to each department and organization of the system, including UNDP, the regional economic commissions and the specialized agencies, in the conduct of United Nations development activities. Section IV of the annex to the resolution, dealing with the regional commissions, indicates which activities and responsibilities will henceforth be assigned to them. From this we note that:

(a) The regional commissions are to strengthen their relations with the specialized agencies, establish close co-operation with UNDP, participate actively in operational activities and intercountry programmes, and act as executing agencies in areas which do not fall within the purview of the specialized agencies (para. 23);

(b) The regional commissions are to assist countries in identifying joint projects and preparing joint programmes and intensify their efforts to strengthen economic co-operation at the subregional, regional and interregional levels (para. 24);

(c) In order to discharge these responsibilities, the regional commissions are to have the necessary technical and financial means to meet their commitments to Member States as project executing agencies.

5. Aware of the difficulties which would inevitably arise, the General Assembly sought to strengthen resolution 32/197 by adopting in January 1979, at its thirty-third session, resolution 33/202 granting the regional commissions the status of executing agencies in their own right. The regional commissions are thus called on to play the same role in the execution of projects as the specialized agencies of the United Nations system. The advantages of the resolution are obvious:

- the commissions can use their experience and knowledge of the project environment;

- the commissions' secretariats are closer to the region's real needs and problems.

The transfer of activities must, of course, be accompanied by the permanent or temporary transfer of the means of execution.

6. An evaluation of technical co-operation between UNDP and the regional commissions should make it possible not only to gauge the effectiveness of such co-operation but also to:

- identify the difficulties encountered by it;
- propose ways of improving such co-operation and also determine what practical results resolutions 32/197 and 33/202 are producing.

7. This report will focus on the following: programming, formulation and implementation of regional projects, financing, suggestions and recommendations.

II. PROGRAMMING

A. Background to the problem

8. Like all the regional economic commissions, the Economic Commission for Africa was entrusted by its charter and its terms of reference with a very important role in the development and co-ordination of technical assistance activities aimed at promoting the economic and social development of countries of the region. This mandate requires that three essential components face up to their responsibilities:

(1) The Executive Secretariat of ECA which, taking into account the level of development of the African countries, must devise and implement a systematic policy of approaching these countries, listening to them, identifying their needs, advising them and drawing up policies and programmes which will help them to improve their living conditions.

9. The task is thus essentially one of encouraging, guiding and channelling the individual or collective initiatives undertaken by the international community to support the African countries in their development efforts.

(2) The various agencies of the United Nations system involved in development activities in Africa, in particular UNDP which, because of its privileged position within the system and the financial resources it centralizes, bears an important responsibility for implementing any development policy defined within the United Nations system, taking into account the priorities established by States. 1/

1/ Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa, 1980-2000.

10. While UNDP's contribution was a key factor in setting up the Commission's institutional structures, the same cannot be said of the strengthening of the Commission's role in the design and co-ordination of regional and country programmes.

11. Although the situation has evolved considerably in the last 25 years, at no time and at no level has UNDP really involved the Commission in the preparation of regional programmes, still less country programmes. It has become customary in UNDP and in its network of representatives in the field to completely ignore the Commission at the decisive stages of regional and country programming. This practice has had the serious consequence of totally marginalizing ECA and even excluding it from the circuit, confining it to a peripheral role when it should in fact have been at the centre, and keeping the central role for UNDP. This is also why most States are largely unfamiliar with ECA.

12. It has taken until the fourth programming cycle, which begins in 1987, for UNDP to "involve" the Commission for the first time in preparing its policy document and in programming for the fourth cycle (1987-1991).

(3) States themselves, since now more than ever the Economic Commission for Africa will be only what States want it to be. Speaking of the place and role which the Commission should occupy in the conduct of the continent's affairs - States can do much to strengthen the moral authority of the Commission not only by taking a very active part in its various activities but also by referring to it constantly in their negotiations and relations with other partners. This will gradually prompt everyone to take ECA into account.

B. The UNDP policy document for the programming of the fourth cycle

13. We saw that, for the first time, UNDP has involved ECA in the design of the policy document for the programming of the fourth cycle. This document was adopted by the Conference of Ministers of ECA held at Yaoundé in April 1986.

14. The priorities established in this document do not, however, have very much in common with those established in the Lagos Plan of Action and the five-year medium-term plan also adopted by the ECA Ministers. Furthermore, at the most recent Conference of Ministers, held at Addis Ababa in October 1986, the ministers expressed serious reservations concerning this document.

15. The document also makes no mention of multisectoral projects, which are another important aspect of ECA's work. In its present form, it favours sectoral projects and is thus addressed far more to the specialized agencies than to ECA.

C. The formulation and implementation of multisectoral projects

16. According to its mandate, ECA is responsible, inter#alia, for promoting multisectoral projects. Unfortunately, this mandate is far from being fulfilled in practice, however. Until very recently, the Commission's work had been geared more

towards the formulation and execution of sectoral projects, placing it in competition with the specialized agencies.

17. The explanation given for this situation was that needs in the field express themselves in clearly defined sectors and can be tackled only in such a context. The fact is, however, that ECA is not technically equipped to formulate and execute projects of this kind which, we acknowledge, are obviously complex. The Commission has none the less made some efforts in this area and formulated and submitted multisectoral projects for the fourth cycle to UNDP for consideration. It must still take all the necessary measures to ensure that they are properly executed, however.

D. ECA participation in the preparation of country programmes

18. We mentioned that the Commission has had very little input into the design and preparation of the UNDP regional programme for Africa. The situation is even worse with regard to country programmes. The problem must be viewed at two levels: that of the discussion and preparation of programmes, and that of the formulation and execution of country projects.

1. Programme preparation

For the time being, we are forced to note that UNDP does not invite the Commission to participate in the programme preparation process, out of habit rather than any deliberate policy. One of the at least immediate consequences of this situation is that the various specialized agencies deluge Governments and UNDP with sectoral projects which are of questionable social usefulness and in any case strictly national in nature. Executing agencies do not always concern themselves with the regional dimension, preoccupied as they are with getting part of each country's indicative planning figure (IPF).

19. It would therefore seem to be in the interest of UNDP and individual States to use the Commission at least as a catalyst for all these excesses.

20. It must also be noted that the situation described above has the other serious effect of encouraging States to close in on themselves and their national interests rather than remain open to regional approaches to problems. The role which ECA would play as regional co-ordinator and promoter, if given the chance, would help to promote this spirit so essential to the development of the African continent.

21. This is especially important since within UNDP, even at Headquarters, there is no central mechanism for co-ordinating all country programmes. This results in duplication of effort in countries of the same subregion, which is why we strongly recommend the establishment of such a central co-ordinating mechanism to ensure coherence between country programmes and regional programmes. UNDP headquarters should play a more global role in the co-ordination and design of programmes, rather than simply endorse in New York what resident representatives have already done in the field.

22. To come back to the Commission's participation in the country programming process, it is necessary that:

(a) The existing regulation whereby the Commission can only approach Governments at their request be reviewed in order to make the Commission more dynamic and committed;

(b) UNDP increasingly invite ECA to assist Governments in preparing their programmes and projects by providing advice and guidance.

2. Country project formulation and execution

As we said earlier, it is neither possible nor desirable to envisage ECA's participation in this process in the short or even medium term. As an executing agency, ECA is a relatively recent and very inexperienced protagonist and does not have the financial and technical means to compete with the specialized agencies. However, it should do everything to foster States' confidence in its ability to implement country projects so that it can be integrated gradually into the circuit.

III. PROJECT FINANCING

23. Most of the regional technical assistance programme implemented by ECA is financed from UNDP funds or from other sources of financing under UNDP supervision (UNFPA, Development Fund for Women, etc). However, like all United Nations bodies, UNDP is not immune from the financial difficulties which have beset the United Nations system in recent years. Already during the third cycle, UNDP programme funding had to be cut by 55#per#cent. This situation calls for a much stricter management of available resources. UNDP for its part has already taken the measures required to ensure a better attribution of funds.

A. ECA-sponsored institutions

24. To date, ECA has helped establish and is sponsoring some 30 institutions on the African continent. Most of these were set up with financial support from UNDP and some of them have been funded by UNDP since their establishment, to the point that they could not survive without UNDP assistance.

25. UNDP has announced, with justification, that it will suspend its financing of certain projects during the fourth cycle. It must be recognized that UNDP cannot seriously be expected to continue to finance these projects indefinitely, 2/ while the institutions do virtually nothing to finance themselves and, in particular,

2/ Some of them have been financed by UNDP for nearly 20 years, for example, the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP).

while the States which set them up fail to pay their budget contributions regularly – the only way of clearly expressing their support for these institutions.

26. In these circumstances, all ECA can do, as the sponsor of these institutions is study the situation carefully, review their objectives and programmes in order to assign them productivity goals that are compatible with the current crisis, develop initiatives for obtaining extrabudgetary financing and carry out activities capable of generating new income with a view to making the institutions self-financing.

The following proposals might be examined:

(a) Promotion and development of income-generating activities by these institutions;

(b) Getting African public or private bodies to put up part of the capital of these institutions, thereby ensuring them markets;

(c) Merging institutions that have the same goals. 3/

27. Most of these measures have already been suggested and envisaged by top ECA officials. Now, however, in view of the acute and urgent nature of the problem, it will be necessary to step up the study of solutions and, especially, to move on to their practical implementation.

28. With the support of member States, ECA officials are also considering a downward revision of the staff salary scales of these institutions in order to alleviate the burden on States of financing them. We feel that such a measure could have adverse effects for these institutions:

(a) Loss of competent staff;

(b) Difficulties in recruiting high calibre staff;

(c) Decreased efficiency, etc.

29. The implementation of the first solutions considered above: promotion and development of income-generating activities, as well as getting other bodies to put up part of the capital of these institutions, would require the latter to revise their policies and programmes significantly and acquire new institutional capacities. This cannot be achieved from one day to the next, especially when these institutions have been used to receiving subsidies for so long.

3/ An inter-State Committee was set up by ECA to study the question and make proposals, but States apparently found its conclusions unacceptable although they were perfectly realistic.

30. UNDP could participate in this essential reorientation. Over a clearly and deliberately limited period of time (two to three years), it would help those institutions judged capable of developing their internal capacities to generate funds and attain self-sufficiency.

31. Lastly, we recommend generally that from now on any project document for UNDP assistance, especially assistance to an inter-State body, should contain an express clause specifying the duration of such assistance, so that all partners (States, ECA, UNDP, executing agencies, etc.) can face up to their responsibilities from the outset. This would give UNDP the latitude to judge whether any particular assistance should be continued beyond the limit set or to end it if it considered that necessary.

B. The UNDP Bureau for Arab States

32. While the Economic Commission for Africa covers the entire continent and is designed to help every country develop, execute and co-ordinate programmes, in UNDP there are two offices which share the resources destined for the African countries.

33. The UNDP Bureau for Africa only covers the non-Arab countries south of the Sahara. The Maghreb countries, together with Egypt, ^{4/} Sudan, Somalia and Djibouti, have been assigned to the UNDP Bureau for Arab States, which also has responsibility for the Arab countries of the Middle East. However, 80#per#cent of the population covered by this office live on the African continent, a fundamental consideration in the allocation of programming resources.

34. The existence of these two offices apparently gives rise to many difficulties and misunderstandings. We have observed that the difficulties essentially have to do with:

- the formulation of regional technical assistance programmes;
- the distribution of UNDP resources between these two offices;
- the financing of African regional programmes and ECA activities by the two offices.

35. The result is a dispersion of effort and bad relations in the areas of technical and financial co-operation between the two offices and ECA. In fact, while ECA's relations with the Bureau for Africa are fairly good - almost normal - the same is not true of its relations with the Bureau for Arab States.

36. To date the latter office has not participated financially in any African regional programme or project or any other form of ECA activity, except for the

^{4/} It should also be noted that Egypt, although an African country, is a member of ECA and ECWA (Economic Commission for Western Asia).

MULPOC women's programme at Tangiers which also has an agricultural component, even when projects are implemented in countries for which it has responsibility. This limits not only the scope and impact of such projects but also ECA action. The fact that all the projects are funded by the Bureau for Africa makes a hole in the financial resources available to the rest of the continent.

37. The Arab Bureau has never participated in, or even attended, any meeting of the ECA Council of Ministers, although nearly half the countries that it covers are represented at ministerial level on this Council.

38. One can only be astonished at UNDP's great inertia in dealing with this specific problem. It would be highly desirable for these problems to be solved fairly quickly, at a time when UNDP is preparing to embark on a new programming cycle.

39. Effective mechanisms must be found to allow a better use of resources, which takes account of the laws of numbers and needs, based on well-conceived and well co-ordinated joint programmes conducted in co-operation with ECA. In other words, UNDP must bear in mind the oneness of the African continent, an aspect that should be reflected in the preparation of the regional programme and the allocation of resources.

IV. EXECUTION OF REGIONAL PROJECTS (ECA AS EXECUTING AGENT)

A. Specific problems

These are encountered essentially at three levels:

1. At the ECA level

40. ECA was long considered a research centre. As a result, habits crept into the attitudes of Governments and other United Nations bodies (UNDP, specialized agencies and even the Secretariat), and also the staff of the Commission itself. The ECA secretariat has become aware of the need to transform its staff into operational agents for backstopping and executing projects. Efforts must be made to change the attitudes and habits of those in charge and the staff of the Commission in general in order to increase the operational efficiency of both technical divisions and administrative services.

1.1 The backstopping capacity of ECA

41. As we have made clear, ECA's capacity to sustain and manage projects is far from adequate or satisfactory and, in any case, falls far short of what might be expected of an executing agency. As we have pointed out, this is mainly due first to the fact that ECA is relatively young as an agent for executing projects other than studies and, secondly, to the fact that ECA's present structures - technical and above all administrative - are ill-suited to its new function. This prompts

UNDP and the other specialized agencies to say, inter#alia, that ECA does not have the necessary technical capability to move on to the project execution phase. This shortcoming is also due to lack of co-ordination among ECA's different technical divisions. It seems to us that a radical overhaul of ECA's working methods is needed at this point. More specifically, the PPCO office and the TACOO division could take on more responsibilities. We would add in ECA's defence, however, that the implementation of multisectoral and multidisciplinary projects is also made difficult by the specialized agencies involved in executing them. These agencies often create difficulties about following ECA's instructions, even though it is the principal executing agent.

1.2 The administration of overheads

42. We said that in order to be effective in the areas of project execution and support, ECA must strengthen those of its structures directly involved in these operations. One vital key to this is an efficient and strict management of the administrative costs associated with projects, the "overheads". Like other specialized executing agencies, ECA must try to define a systematic policy for the use of these overheads in order to give active support to the projects that generated them and, where possible, to give rise to other projects. Unfortunately, for the time being there is no obvious link in ECA between project-generated overheads and the "backstopping" of these same projects - a link which must exist if there is to be a minimum of efficiency.

43. In our view, "overhead" funds should be used eventually for three purposes:

- strengthening the capacities of the structures responsible for project execution (staff and equipment of technical divisions);
- strengthening the structures which provide administrative support to project execution, such as recruitment of experts, purchase of equipment;
- lastly, financing programming missions to States, UNDP, other sources of financing and other organizations of the system, to ensure an ECA presence wherever projects are being discussed.

44. We have been forced to note that ECA is not very aggressive about programme development either at regional or national level. Such a task could be entrusted to a programme development branch. We also think, and we shall develop the idea later, that this could provide the Multinational Programming and Operations Centres (MULPOCs) with an effective area for retraining and deployment. Similarly, at Headquarters, the PPCO office must be strengthened to enable it to play its full role in the development and co-ordination of technical assistance programmes.

2. At the level of the United Nations Secretariat in New York

45. It must be recognized and emphasized that resolution 33/202 assigns tasks to the regional commissions but does not provide clearly for the means to perform them. There is still an excessive centralization of powers, which weakens some of the operational structures of the commissions and slows down certain procedures. Some Headquarters departments and even some staff see the problem in terms of their own survival. In such circumstances, it is very difficult to envisage the situation evolving rapidly in a positive way.

3. At the level of the project itself

46. Some experts and staff involved in projects executed in co-operation with other agencies and recruited by them wish to work independently of the Commission, which is responsible for the project. This gives rise to considerable conflict and misunderstanding and can result in bad management and even misappropriation of funds.

B. Recruitment of staff

47. A distinction must naturally be made between Secretariat staff and technical staff recruited for projects. In both cases, however, the recruitment procedure remains ostensibly the same, with the economic commissions having to defer to New York (Technical Assistance Recruitment Service - TARS, or Office of Personnel Services - OPS) for recruitment beyond a certain level: P-5 and above for Secretariat staff, L-5 and above for project technical staff.

48. We shall purposely avoid considering the problems involved in recruiting Secretariat staff. Besides, they are well known and boil down to the following conflict: the regional commissions want complete freedom to recruit at every level, as a fundamental principle of their autonomy and of the decentralization decided upon in 1977 in resolution 32/197, while the Secretariat invokes the defence of certain principles, such as equitable geographical distribution of staff, plurality of candidates and the universal nature of the United Nations, in order to retain these powers in New York.

49. The recruitment of technical staff for projects financed by UNDP, which is what concerns us here, raises problems of a completely different nature. These are essentially threefold:

(1) ECA has no serviceable roster. Until now, for all recruitment ECA has published vacancy announcements at Headquarters or in the other organizations of the system, or in the press. In addition, in most cases user divisions themselves try to find candidates. The current ECA procedure is therefore very rough and ready and unreliable. The New York recruitment service could place a roster at the disposal of ECA and help train staff to use it. This would have the advantage of making available to projects staff better adapted to the specific environment and problems of the continent. UNDP support is indispensable for implementing this plan.

(2) ECA has no specialized service for the recruitment of project staff. All recruitment, of whatever kind, is carried out by the same people. This heavy concentration of recruitment tasks causes slowness and errors in implementing the procedure. The establishment and strengthening of a specialized service should be envisaged in connection with the establishment of the roster suggested above. The new functions of ECA as project-executing agent and its ambitions in this area should justify setting up this kind of support infrastructure. This is one area in which "overhead" resources could obviously be put to good use, as we already mentioned.

(3) There is no internal procedure or standard for measuring the efficiency of the staff recruitment service. We admit that this could further complicate the current situation, given the scarcity of qualified staff, but the introduction of such tools is indispensable if ECA is to be provided with a roster and a recruitment service as suggested above.

C. Purchase of equipment

50. Here again, the fact that New York must approve any expenditure above \$40,000 seriously undermines the execution of projects. ECA officials want such authority to be decentralized, at least for purchases from extrabudgetary funds. There are three other sources of problems with respect to the purchase of equipment:

(1) At ECA

The technical divisions in charge of projects have no sense of timing, i.e. of planning purchases to a calendar. They wait until the last minute, generally the end of the year, and then rush to submit their purchase requisitions. This causes considerable error and a bottle-neck because the purchasing service is understaffed.

(2) At project level in the field

The equipment descriptions submitted by experts are very often incomplete. Since neither the staff of the purchasing service nor the members of the approvals committee are specialists, certain purchase requisitions are often held up for long periods in ECA before they are even sent to New York.

(3) At the level of the resident representatives

There is a problem of co-ordination in the clearing of expenditures. Resident representatives take action only if UNDP headquarters asks them to, even though ECA is the project executing agent. On this particular point, resident representatives should proceed in the same way as they do with the specialized agencies.

51. One important point to emphasize with respect to the recruitment of experts and the purchase of equipment is that a bottle-neck is being caused by the excessive concentration of signing power in the person of the Executive Secretary. Although he delegates this power during some long absences, provision should be made for the systematic and definitive delegation of these powers to the services

concerned, except for recruitment at very high levels - P-5 and above - and very large orders for equipment which may commit the good name of the Commission.

D. The specific case of the MULPOCs

52. These important programme development tools established by ECA are currently in a state of almost complete lethargy. Quite apart from financial difficulties, a number of administrative bottle-necks are hindering the co-ordination of activities and preventing the MULPOCs from functioning normally. The need for these centres is fairly generally recognized. Optimum use should be made of them by assigning them precise and innovative roles, in keeping with the new ambitions of the Commission. We mentioned the important aspects of programme development, in which the MULPOCs are the Commission's right hand in dealing with Governments and other organizations, with a view to inspiring much needed confidence in the Commission and generating projects to be executed on behalf of States and organizations. In order for them to be able to play this role, a certain number of stumbling blocks must be eliminated from relations between the ECA secretariat and the MULPOCs. We should perhaps think in terms of a little more autonomy or flexibility in administrative procedures in order to improve their operational capabilities.

E. The role of resident representatives in the management of regional projects

53. With regard to regional projects, from the very start the resident representatives are hardly consulted or involved in drawing up the regional programme, which is prepared by UNDP headquarters almost in a vacuum, ^{5/} so that resident representatives in the field feel very little concern for something in which they have not really participated and for which they have no "feel". This explains why they are largely uninterested in the project while it is being executed. However, according to the agreement concluded between ECA and UNDP, UNDP is supposed to represent ECA for the follow-up and immediate management of the regional projects the Commission executes in the field.

54. The resident representatives do not even take the trouble to visit Commission headquarters, as they usually do with the specialized agencies. At least those of them overseeing regional projects executed by ECA should do so.

^{5/} We also showed that ECA itself is very little involved in the elaboration of the regional programme. It is all these obstacles that make the regional programme ineffective.

V. CONSIDERATION OF CERTAIN STRUCTURAL REFORM PROPOSALS

A. The UNDP Liaison Office at ECA

55. Since 1977, UNDP has maintained a Liaison Office at ECA to help that organization design and develop programmes, draft projects and work smoothly with UNDP.

56. By its presence, this Office has helped ECA to understand and follow UNDP procedures and to solve a number of minor practical problems. In operational terms, however, it is not so clear that the Office is useful because no responsibilities have been decentralized to it from UNDP headquarters. Anything involving the signing of project documents, regardless of the amount involved, or even the most minor revisions in project budgets, is required to go through headquarters.

57. It would unquestionably be worth revising the Office's terms of reference in order to broaden its authority, thus making it more operational. In that case, the quality of its staff might have to be improved by raising the level of representation so that powers of signature or revision could be delegated to them, as is the case with the resident representatives.

58. It must also be borne in mind that the Liaison Office deals only with projects based in Addis Ababa since, in accordance with UNDP procedures, projects outside Addis Ababa are under the authority of the resident representatives concerned.

59. We have shown, however, how low regional projects rank among the resident representative's concerns. Here again, we must insist on the need to actively involve the resident representatives in regional programmes and projects.

B. The regional bureaux at UNDP headquarters

60. There is an interesting discussion going on as to whether the UNDP regional bureaux might not benefit from being moved to the field, close to the actual situation. The question is pertinent for all of them.

61. We believe that such a plan would probably create logistical problems. The advantages and drawbacks of such a move would have to be weighed in the light of the new role to be given to the regional bureaux in the design and co-ordination of programmes. We believe that the regional bureaux should play a role in guiding UNDP to act according to a new policy based on the integration of development programmes. At the moment, we note that when it comes to the development of regional programmes, headquarters does not rely enough on the resident representatives; the latter have not been made particularly aware of the question and hence cannot in turn make Governments aware. A greater effort must be made to give the resident representatives more responsibility in the very important area of regional programmes and projects.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

62. The international community as a whole, and the United Nations in particular, is working hard to support the efforts of the African countries confronted by the considerable difficulties inherent in their state of underdevelopment. Here, the action taken by two bodies, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is altogether remarkable. Very positive results have been achieved, not only in carrying out technical assistance programmes but also in alerting African and international public opinion to Africa's problems, and mobilizing the resources needed to implement development programmes.

63. In this report, we have deliberately chosen not to expand on the successes which, in any case, are common knowledge. We thought it would be more interesting to focus on relations between the two agencies, UNDP and ECA, because, from our point of view - which we hope we have made sufficiently clear in this report - although there is now a high degree of co-operation between them, certain difficulties remain: some areas of co-operation can be improved, developed and enriched for the benefit of the continent, which includes 26 of the world's least developed countries.

64. The recommendations we are proposing below are not exhaustive in covering all the problems we have been able to identify and discuss in our report. In the interests of clarity and effectiveness, we have chosen to make those recommendations which we believe to be the most pertinent to the current status of co-operation between UNDP and ECA. However, we have strongly urged action to be taken on a number of major problems we have discerned, and we would hope that those responsible for UNDP-ECA co-operation, at whatever level, will give serious attention to our suggestions as they go about their respective tasks in the design and execution of technical assistance programmes. Lastly, we earnestly hope that the few recommendations that follow will be favourably received by all those in charge in both the Secretariat and UNDP and ECA and that they will be followed by specific action aimed at overcoming the difficulties we have highlighted.

A. Economic Commission for Africa

Recommendation 1

The ECA secretariat must redefine its programmes by reviewing its order of priorities and specifying the operational content of programmes. The aim must be to refocus ECA activities on the essential aspects of its mandate, namely:

(a) Its role as principal co-ordinator of development activities on the African continent;

(b) Its responsibility for designing and implementing multisectoral programmes or projects;

(c) Its obligation to help States design their country programmes and to co-ordinate those programmes at the regional level.

Recommendation 2

If the ECA secretariat is to take full charge as project executing agency, it will have to substantially reinforce its project backstopping capabilities without delay. To do so, it must establish a firm, clear policy on the management of overheads incurred by projects. Projects themselves must centre on operational activities and their management must be clearly distinguished from the management of ECA regular budget resources.

Recommendation 3

ECA must adopt a new policy with regard to the functioning of the MULPOCs. MULPOCs are the operational arm of ECA in its dealings with States on development programmes. Their important role, which has actually been recognized, must be given practical application in the coming years. The Commission will have to use them innovatively in a manner consistent with its new ambitions.

Recommendation 4

ECA must continue its case-by-case study of the functioning of the institutions which it has helped to set up and which it supports, so that it can submit to those who provide funds - UNDP and States in particular - specific proposals for making such institutions self-sufficient.

B. UNDP

Recommendation 5

When regional and country programmes are being designed and formulated, UNDP must rely heavily on ECA and tie in its functions with those of ECA, given the latter's knowledge of the social and economic realities of the States of the region, in order to achieve the greatest possible consistency between these two groups of programmes.

Recommendation 6

The UNDP Policies and Procedures Manual must be revised to include sections or paragraphs on strengthening ECA's role, in order to allow ECA to take full charge as co-ordinator of development activities in Africa.

Recommendation 7

UNDP must establish, at headquarters, a central co-ordinating mechanism for all country programmes, in order to bring them into greater conformity with the regional priorities defined by Governments. This would also make it possible to avoid any duplication of work, thus ensuring substantial budget savings.

Recommendation 8

Any document for an assistance project financed by UNDP or other sources of funding must include a clause expressly indicating the duration of such assistance over and above that indicated in the current project documents, the purpose being to spell out clearly to all the partners (States, executing agencies, UNDP) from the start what their responsibilities will be.

Recommendation 9

The existence of two different Regional Bureaux within UNDP, for Arab States and for Africa, makes for a dispersion of efforts and resources to the detriment of ECA and of Member States. We recommend that UNDP bear in mind the oneness of the African continent in terms of programming and the allocation of resources for programme funding.

Recommendation 10

UNDP must involve the resident representatives to a greater degree in the formulation and follow-up of regional programmes, in order to make them much more sensitive to the outcome of the resulting projects that are carried out in the countries under their jurisdiction. They should also report regularly on their implementation to ECA.

Recommendation 11

As regards the implementation of multisectoral projects, UNDP must recognize that ECA has the main authority for such projects. ECA will be free and competent to choose which specialized agency is to execute any given part of a project which it itself cannot implement.
