

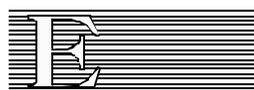


**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Fifth Session of the Committee on Trade,
Regional Cooperation and Integration (CTRCI)

8-10 October 2007
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



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REPORT

I. Introduction

1. The fifth session of the Committee on Trade, Regional Cooperation and Integration (CTRCI), established by resolution 827 (XXXII) of the ECA Conference of Ministers, was held on 8 to 10 October 2007 at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

2. The main focus of the meeting was to consider matters pertaining to ECA's activities in advancing the African Union's continental agenda on economic cooperation as well as the promotion of trade within and outside Africa. In this regard, the meeting examined the progress made on regional integration in Africa. The fifth session of CTRCI also reviewed developments in intra-African trade with a view to providing practical suggestions and guidance towards making discernible progress on intra-African trade in the short- and medium- term. In addition, the meeting also examined the latest developments in the international trade arena, and particularly in the context of the World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations and the discussions on the economic partnership arrangements with Europe, and assessed Africa's realistic expectations as to the outcomes from these global trade talks. Given its importance in the developmental agenda of the continent, the meeting examined the progress made on the NEPAD initiative and made suggestions on how the initiative could be strengthened. The CTRCI also further examined ECA's activities in the area of transport infrastructure and services and made recommendations on how it could be further strengthened. Finally, the Committee reviewed the major activities undertaken during the current biennium and work priorities for the next biennium (2008-2009).

II. Attendance

3. The meeting was attended by the following member States: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Congo (Republic of), Democratic Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, the Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

4. Italy attended in an observer capacity.

5. The following regional and international organizations and other institutions participated in the meeting: the African Union (AU), the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), the Southern Africa Customs Union (SACU), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA/WAEMU), the Manu River Union (MRU), the African Development Bank (ADB), the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Bank, the World Food Programme (WFP), and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the Ethiopian Economic Association, the Ethiopian Economic Research Institution, and the Department for International Development (DFID-UK). The list of participants is appended as an annex.

III. Opening of the meeting (agenda item 1)

6. The United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the ECA, His Excellency Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, opened the meeting. Opening statements were also made by His

Excellency Dr. Maxwell Mkwezalamba, AU Commissioner for Economic Affairs, His Excellency Mr. Mekonnen Manyazewal, Ethiopia's State Minister of Finance and Economic Development, and Honourable Isaac Musumba, Uganda's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in charge of Regional Cooperation, and outgoing Chairman of the Bureau

7. The Executive Secretary of ECA, Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, welcomed the participants to the meeting. He pointed out that the outcomes of the biennial committee meetings are fed into the deliberations of the annual meetings of Commission's principal legislative organ, the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

8. Mr. Janneh informed participants that since the last meeting in March 2005, ECA has undertaken a number of activities in accordance with the recommendations of the Committee. He mentioned that as a follow-up to the recommendations of the last meeting, ECA, in collaboration with the African Union, focused the second report, *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa*, on the rationalization of the regional economic communities (RECs). The report was presented to the Assembly of African Union Heads of State in July 2006, in Banjul, the Gambia.

9. He also said that the African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC), based in ECA, and ECA's Geneva office, have provided technical assistance to African trade negotiators, and that the ATPC continues to train African experts on new tools and methods for conducting international trade analysis. He commended the AU Commission for working closely with ECA in periodically bringing together senior officials from African countries to discuss major trade issues, with a view to forging a common African voice on major international trade negotiations.

10. It was the expectation of Mr. Janneh that the outcome of the fifth session of the Committee would include among others: (i) a clear guidance on ECA's work programme in the areas of trade, regional integration and infrastructure; (ii) how to use trans-boundary solutions to address the energy challenges facing many African countries in the search for and development of alternative sources of energy; (iii) how to strengthen the capacity of the RECs to implement their integration programmes at the national level; and (iv) how do we ensure that the programmes of the RECs are aligned to and converge with the AU's continental integration agenda.

11. The Executive Secretary concluded by reiterating ECA's commitment to the advancement of the trade and regional integration agenda of the AU and looked forward to the outcome of the meeting as it would provide guidance on how ECA's activities could strengthen the promotion of trade and regional integration on the continent.

12. On behalf the Chairperson of the AU Commission, the AU Commissioner for Economic Affairs, H.E. Dr. Maxwell M. Mkwezalamba, extended his sincere appreciation to the ECA for associating the AU Commission to the CTRCI meeting.

13. The Commissioner began by recalling the *Lagos Plan of Action*, the *Abuja Treaty*, the *Sirte Declaration of 9.9.99*, and the *Constitutive Act* among others, as decisions taken by the leadership of the continent to strengthen the continental integration agenda. He pointed out that despite modest efforts, Africa continued to face huge development challenges. He emphasized the need to address a number of key issues, including promotion of peace and security, good governance, infrastructure development, the adoption and implementation of sound macroeconomic policies and the creation of a conducive atmosphere to attract both domestic and foreign direct investment.

14. Dr. Mkwezalamba commended the RECs for their efforts in advancing the continental

integration agenda, particularly in the areas of transport and communication; macroeconomic policy convergence; trade and customs; free movement of persons, goods, services and capital; and peace and security. The AU Commissioner indicated that despite the encouraging progress made by the RECs, a number of significant challenges still remained on the integration front. Among them might be cited the multiplicity of RECs; the lack of political will to implement protocols of the RECs and the AU at the national level; and the failure of some member States to honour their financial obligations to their respective RECs and the AU at large.

15. The Commissioner also called on the donor-partners to adhere to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and translate pledges made at the G-8 meetings into real commitments. He ended by calling on participants to carefully deliberate on the matters on the agenda so as to provide concrete guidance on how the promotion of trade and integration could be strengthened on the continent.

16. H. E. Mr. Mekonnen Manyazewal said that there was a rise in bilateral, regional and multilateral trade agreements and that Africa still had high expectations as to the successful outcome of the Doha Round and the economic partnership agreements (EPAs). He, however, pointed out that the fulfilment of these expectations would depend on how quickly Africa combined its resources and acted in a collective manner to protect its interests in the trade talks. He recalled the long history of Africa's integration from the Lagos Plan of Action to the Constitutive Act of the African Union, and emphasized that while we all shared these visions, the critical issue at stake was how we worked effectively to achieve them. He touched on the problems faced by the RECs, and opined that the minimum that could be done to resolve these problems would be to bring to fruition the process of rationalizing them, which had been in abeyance over the past couple of years. He stressed the need to take action to make it happen. The Minister recognized that although there had been some progress on Africa's integration agenda, this progress had been uneven across the RECs. He added that the meeting should be an opportunity for candid deliberations and soul-searching on the reasons behind the inadequate progress. In that regard, he offered the following suggestions:

- Review recent developments in intra-African trade;
- Assess whether poor progress on regional integration is due to lack of appropriate action or lack of political commitment and whether we indeed have the right road map for action;
- Assess the EPAs negotiations and consider options in the event that countries are not able to conclude the agreement by the deadline of 31 December 2007;
- Need to be realistic about goals and expectations and focus on actions that African countries are prepared to undertake;
- Prioritize regional projects to include infrastructure as a basis for development; and
- Embark on analytical work to demonstrate the benefits accruing to member States from regional integration so that political commitment can be enhanced.

17. Hon. Isaac Musumba stated that Africa's infinitesimal 2 per cent share in world trade should

compel it to accelerate the integration of Africa as a single unified economic and market space. He said that Africa had close to 800 million people with fragmented economies across the individual 53 states, comparable to the United States of America and its 50 states. In this regard, he gave the example of the Olympic Games where Africa competes as separate individual nations, compared to the USA which competes as a single nation. He also did not see why African countries should have separate visa and customs regulations and financial and monetary systems, imposing undue hindrances to free trade and free movement of people, goods and services across frontiers. He emphasized that the vitality and survival of Africa in a rapidly globalizing world lay in its unity, and that it was high time African countries came to grips with that reality and acted speedily to establish the African single market and economic community.

18. Hon. Musumba noted that as one of the pillars on which continental integration could be built up, namely the East African Community (EAC), was making tremendous progress in achieving economic and political integration of the subregion. The EAC was at the stage of full customs union and the member States were working hard at achieving a common market. They were developing their infrastructure to strengthen the physical connection between the member States and support the economic activities in the subregion. It was the desire of member States to see to it that there was a convergence of efforts in line with the aspiration for a United States of Africa. Uganda was fully committed to the objectives of the EAC and the AU on the whole. Ugandans would work hard towards achieving the aspirations of the continent.

19. The outgoing Chair ended with a call to the Committee to provide guidance to ECA in its work of addressing the enormous development challenges, including those of infrastructure, international trade negotiations, and climate change. Many of these challenges required trans-boundary solutions. Hon. Musumba noted that it was therefore important that we have a frank discussion on the items on the agenda so that ECA would be in a better position to place its technical capacity at our full disposal in addressing the needs identified at the level of our respective countries and regions.

IV. Account of proceedings

Election of Officers (agenda item 2)

20. The meeting elected the following countries to constitute its Bureau:

Chairman:	Sudan
First Vice-Chairman:	Rwanda
Second Vice-Chairman:	Nigeria
Third Vice-Chairman:	Chad
Rapporteur:	Malawi

V. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work (agenda item 3)

21. Next was the adoption of the following agenda and programme of work:

Monday, 8 October 2007

Morning session

09:00 - 10.00 - Registration

10.00 – 10:45 - Opening of the meeting
Statement by Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ECA
Statement by Dr. Maxwell Mkwezalamba, AU Commissioner for Economic Affairs
Keynote Statement by Mr. Mekonnen Manyazewal, State Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Ethiopia
Election of Bureau
Adoption of Agenda and Programme of work

10:45 – 11:00 - Coffee break

11.00 – 12:45 - Progress in the implementation of *regional integration programmes*,
by *ECA Secretariat*
State of Play on the Continental Integration Agenda,
by *African Union Commission*

12:45 – 14:30 - Lunch break

Afternoon session

14:30 – 15:45 - Developments on Intra-African Trade,
by *ECA Secretariat*

15:45 – 16:00 - Coffee break

16:00 – 17:30 - Developments in the transport sector,
by *ECA secretariat*

Tuesday, 9 October 2007

Morning session

9.30 - 10.45 - Developments on International Trade and WTO and EPAs negotiations,
by *ECA secretariat*

10:45 - 11 :00 - Coffee Break

11:00 – 12:30 - Statements/Presentations/Remarks by Representatives from Regional Economic Communities (RECs) on developments and the state of integration within their respective institutions and subregions

13.00 – 14:30 - Lunch break

Afternoon session

14:30 – 15:45 - An Overview of ECA's/United Nations support on the implementation of NEPAD,
by ECA secretariat

15:45 – 16:00 - Coffee Break

16:00 – 17:30 - Review of the NEPAD and Regional Integration Division's (NRID) work programmes including priorities for the next biennium 2008-2009, by ECA secretariat

Wednesday, 10 October 2007

16:00 – 17:00 - Adoption of the report of the Committee Meeting.

VI. Session II: Progress on the implementation of regional integration programmes and the state of play on the continental integration agenda (agenda item 4)

22. A representative of the ECA Secretariat made a presentation on progress at the continental, subregional and national levels in the implementation of regional economic programmes. He informed the Committee that since its last meeting and with the endorsement of the July 2006 Banjul AU Summit, the ECA had repositioned itself to better respond to the continent's priorities, and particularly the agenda relating to regional integration. The Summit had also reaffirmed the role of ECA as a key African institution to assist and facilitate the work of the AU and the RECs in advancing the development agenda on the continent. The meeting was informed that the need for the repositioning was because the priorities of the continent had changed with the transformation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) into African Union (AU) and the adoption of the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). In that regard, ECA had deemed it necessary to refocus and reposition its programmes and activities in order to better respond to these strategic changes.

23. The ECA representative noted that the promotion and strengthening of the continental regional integration agenda will be a central focus in the repositioned ECA. In that respect, ECA would concentrate on fully supporting the AU's efforts to accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent, promote and defend African common positions, and establish the necessary conditions to enable the continent to play its rightful role in the global economy. Furthermore, ECA would seek to strengthen capacities and provide technical assistance for the

institutions that were driving the regional integration agenda, including the RECs, and would endeavour to scale-up its involvement in trans-boundary initiatives and activities in sectors vital to the regional integration agenda. Pursuant to the decisions of the Banjul Summit, the meeting was informed that ECA would scale-up its collaboration with the AU Commission and the AfDB in all matters relating to the advancement of the continental agenda on regional integration.

24. The ECA representative further informed the meeting on recent decisions undertaken by the eight RECs. The decisions included the transformation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Secretariat from an Executive Secretariat to a Commission; the expansion of the EAC to include Burundi and Rwanda as well as its transformation into a Customs Union; the Southern African Development Community (SADC) becoming a free trade area (FTA) in 2008 and a Customs Union in 2010; the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) expected to be a Customs Union in 2008; and member States of ECCAS agreeing to remove tariffs and non-tariff-barriers by 2008.

25. The ECA representative noted that, despite the progress made on the integration agenda, a number of challenges still remained, including: (i) the multiple memberships of countries in various RECs, and the resulting overlap and duplication of functions of the RECs; (ii) the lack of a compensation mechanism for the “losers” of the integration; (iii) weak infrastructure; (iv) numerous roadblocks on African highways, delays at border posts, lengthy and inappropriate customs clearance procedures and corrupt practices pursued by some officials; and (v) a weak macroeconomic environment.

26. The meeting was informed that ECA’s work programme and activities pertaining to addressing the challenges to regional integration in the coming year would include among others:

- ***Assessing Regional Integration in Africa***: the flagship report, which is published jointly with the AU monitors and tracks progress in achieving integration in key sectors at the subregional and regional levels.
- ***Review of the Abuja Treaty***: in collaboration with the AU Commission and AfDB, ECA would review the Treaty, taking into account the Sirte Declaration of September 9, 1999 (9.9.99) and the Constitutive Act, and provide a timetable for the implementation of the various stages of integration by the RECs. The findings of the review would be presented at the January 2008 AU Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- ***Promoting intra-African Trade through stronger RECs***: with a view to facilitating trade within the continent, ECA would, through the SROs, support the regional economic communities in their transformation into free-trade areas (FTAs) or Customs Union or Common Market. In addition, ECA would work with the RECs on harmonization and coordination of trade policies and programmes; improving trade facilitation; and establishment of PTAs/FTAs between the RECs.
- ***Technical assistance on capacity-building and cooperation***: ECA will provide technical assistance to member States, the AU and the RECs in building their capacities to implement integration programmes and activities.

- ***Peer-Learning Group on natural resources management:*** ECA will establish a Peer-Learning Group on natural resources management. This Peer-Learning Group will bring together natural resources development practitioners from government, the legislature, private sector, academia and civil society in order to sensitize them on the contribution of natural resources to long-term economic development and growth.
- ***Infrastructure initiatives:*** ECA proposes to align its programmes and activities to NEPAD's infrastructure initiatives by providing strategic support with the review of existing feasibility studies in transport, energy, water resources, and natural resources aimed at promoting regional integration. ECA would also work with the RECs to harmonize and coordinate infrastructure programmes and services in all the subregions.

27. The ECA representative stressed that ECA ardently perceived regional integration as a crucial strategy for accelerating the economic, social, cultural and political development of African countries. Economic synergy could be nurtured from economic integration since the economic advantage of a whole regional community was greater than the sum of the economic advantages of its separate member States. The need for deeper economic integration on the continent was also underpinned by a new world economic order, with the formation of regional blocks across continents, borderless globalization, advances in information and communication technology, and the multilateral trade negotiations under the WTO among others. Moreover, enlargement of national markets and harmonization of regulatory frameworks would help create an environment conducive to profitability of investments in the continent.

28. In concluding, the ECA representative called on the Committee to support the ECA work programme so as to provide sound technical support to member States, RECs and the AU Commission in their efforts to advance the continental integration agenda.

29. A representative of the AU made a presentation in three parts. The first part focused on the role and importance of regional integration in addressing the developmental challenges facing the continent. He then highlighted the key milestones of Africa's integration process, starting from the creation of the OAU in 1963; the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos of 1980; the Abuja Treaty of 1991, which established the African Economic Community (AEC); the Sirte Declaration of 1999; and the Constitutive Act, which established the AU in 2001.

30. The AU representative noted the serious constraints impeding the continental integration agenda. Among the challenges he highlighted were those of finance, poor leadership, "cacophony" and the proliferation of RECs. He further gave an overview of the current situation in the different RECs in respect of the rationalization process and pointed out some of the activities the AU Commission had been undertaking in an effort to rationalize the RECs.

31. The second part of the presentation dwelt on a study the Commission had carried out on the review of the six stages of integration as contained in Article 6 of the Abuja Treaty, and elaboration of the Minimum Integration Programme (MIP) to be implemented by the RECs with a view to achieving accelerated and deeper African integration.

32. The meeting was informed that two approaches had been undertaken with a view to accelerating the integration process and the rationalization of the RECs, namely the revision of Article 6 of the Abuja Treaty and the definition of a minimum programme of integration.

33. Among the recommendation arising out of the exercise was that: (i) the eight RECs should be streamlined in order to enhance the rationalization process; (ii) the problem of overlapping membership should be urgently addressed; (iii) some key provisions of the Abuja Treaty (*including Article 6*), should be revisited to make them compatible with the Constitutive Act and the Sirte Declaration; (iv) there needed to be harmonization of Customs Union Policies at the continental level; and (v) there was a need for ratification and effective implementation of the Protocols.

34. With regard to the study on an MIP in each REC and among RECs, the AU representative noted that each REC had to formulate programmes in which all of its integration activities were spelt out. The priority sectors would then be identified from an MIP for each REC. Member States would then identify and agree to develop the necessary institutional and legal frameworks to implement agreed common programmes in a timely manner. Among the recommendations of the study as the initial stages for developing MIPs were those pertaining to: (i) free movement of persons, goods, services and capital; (ii) agriculture and food security; (iii) infrastructure and energy; (iv) customs and trade policies; (v) monetary harmonization, finance and banking; and (vi) peace and security.

35. The AU representative concluded his presentation by informing the meeting about the decisions of the AU Summit in Accra, in July 2007, on the United States of Africa and the second Conference of African Ministers responsible for Integration. He noted that the AU Commission would collaborate with ECA and AfDB to implement the decisions.

36. Participants commended the representatives of ECA and the AU Commission for their presentations. Some of the participants expressed the view that rationalization of the RECs should be undertaken through the harmonization and coordination of the activities of the RECs. It was noted that a distinction should be made between economic integration and political integration. Most participants were of the view that regional integration should be used as a strategy for the development of the continent. In that regard, the meeting called for efforts to remove all forms of barriers to trade within the continent as a way of strengthening intra-African trade. It was noted that SADC, EAC and COMESA had set up a tripartite task force at the ministerial level to look into the harmonization and streamlining of their policies, protocols, programmes and activities, with the aim of increasing trade as well as tackling trans-boundary challenges within the three communities.

37. Participants also noted that the key challenges in the regional integration agenda primarily lay in the issue of commitment of member States to implement integration programmes at the national level.

38. In regard to regional infrastructure, the meeting reiterated the call for enhanced infrastructure development on the continent. The meeting noted that given the enormous financial capital required to upgrade existing infrastructure and develop new ones, Africa should look into the avenues for domestic mobilization of funds to complement those generated from external sources.

39. The meeting called on ECA to continue to provide technical assistance to the RECs and member States in the implementation of regional integration programmes. It was also suggested that there was a need to strengthen the capacities of the secretariats of the RECs to deliver integration programmes. With respect to member States, the meeting called on ECA to assist in mainstreaming regional integration at the national level.

VII. Session III: Developments in intra-African trade (agenda item 5)

40. A representative of the ECA Secretariat presented document E/ECA/CTRCI/54 on developments in intra-African trade, which addressed the following issues: why intra-African trade is important; Africa's export and import patterns; challenges of intra-African trade; intra-African trade potential; and ECA future in-depth research on intra-African trade in the context of the fourth edition of Assessing Regional Integration in Africa (ARIA).

41. The ECA Representative stated that through the Abuja Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community (now the AU), Africa had a vision to create a common continental market for goods and services. The vision made sense for Africa's 53 mostly small economies, as the common market would provide access to a larger trading and investment environment, induce backward and forward supply links and permit the economies of scale that made countries competitive. The common market is expected to help increase the level of trade among the member countries because more trade would generate more retention of wealth within the bloc, and enhance availability of funds to permit new investments and job creation. For this reason, the RECs had aimed to expand trade at the subregional level by eliminating tariff and non-tariff barriers.

42. The ECA representative provided statistics relating to the period 2000 to 2005 in order to demonstrate Africa's export and import trade patterns by selected regional groupings, showing key export destinations and sources of imports. The statistics were quite instructive in terms of the average share of trade of each group within the REC itself, with the rest of Africa, and with the rest of the world, over that period. Intra-REC exports varied by a range of 0.4 per cent to 21.5 per cent from RECs to RECs. Exports to the rest of Africa vis-à-vis total exports ranged from a high of 18.6 per cent to a low of 1.8 per cent. Although there was some growth of intra-bloc trade between 2000 and 2005, overall, the trade statistics clearly showed dominance of intra-African trade by only a few countries, and particularly South Africa; a strong export reliance on fuel and mining products, and a persistently small intra-African trade volume — consistently hovering around 10 to 12 per cent, and at any rate under 15 per cent over the past two decades. By contrast intra-regional trade within the European Union (EU) had been over 60 per cent, and in Asia of over 20 per cent.

43. The ECA representative went on to highlight some of the main challenges confronting intra-African trade.

- Structural constraints, in terms of:
 - Commodity profile of exports, which are dominated by primary commodities;
 - Commodity structure of imports, heavily dependent on manufactured goods;
 - Product diversification hamstrung by inadequate technological progress;
 - Lack of capacity to move forward on the production/supply frontier and take advantage of linkages with global production and supply chains.
- Weak implementation of liberalization schemes manifested in a complex “spaghetti” of trade liberalization agreements across Africa, and lack of readiness to implement tariff reduction measures against a backdrop of a fear of loss of revenue.

- Natural and human-induced barriers to trade manifested in transport-related trade costs, infrastructure-induced increases in trade costs, and additional trade costs arising from inefficient red-tape and rent-seeking practices.
- Infrastructure challenges arising not so much from lack of plans and policies, as from a mismatch between Africa's huge infrastructural needs and investment support.

44. Against the backdrop of these challenges, the ECA representative highlighted the findings from two empirical studies, based on the gravity model, to demonstrate the potential for trade in North Africa and West Africa. For instance, the study conducted in ECOWAS had estimated that West Africa had a potential of achieving 25 per cent intra-trade by 2020, while simulations in North Africa showed that North African intra-trade in exports would be ten times higher than its current level. According to the model used, factors such as the economic size of countries, their per capita income level, common cultural affinities and currency, had positive influence on bilateral trade, while geographical distance and surface area had an inverse impact. Other less perceptible aspects, such as administrative, technical or information-related barriers, quantitative restrictions, high-priced procedures, and exchange restrictions, may also severely affect the trade flows between partner countries.

45. The conclusions from the gravity model estimations were that African countries remained less open to trade among themselves. However, simulated intra-bloc exports appeared to be much higher than their level on the ground. That potential should be a sign of encouragement for reforms to remove the trade obstacles.

46. The ECA representative concluded by informing the meeting about future work of ECA to delve more deeply into the issue of intra-African trade within the framework of the ARIA series, and in the context of ECA/NRID's 2008-2009 work programme. ARIA IV would thus attempt to deepen the investigations and analysis on intra-African trade.

47. The meeting commended the representative of the ECA for his presentation. Participants made a number of observations on this agenda item. Some participants raised concerns about lack of action to address well-known challenges of intra-African trade such the weak industrial base and infrastructure needs. In response, the ECA representative said that as long as those obstacles remained unresolved, they would remain the subject of repeated discussions in subsequent fora. It was, therefore, imperative for member States, with the support of development partners like ECA, AU, AfDB and others, to ensure that concerted efforts were made to remove the protracted impediments to intra-African trade at the national, regional and continental levels.

48. There was some debate as to what member States could do in the immediate future to address supply constraints. In that regard, serious efforts to support the private sector, upgrade infrastructure and relax rules of origin to enable domestic firms to explore linkages with global production and supply chains would help develop domestic productive and marketing capacities.

49. The Committee also noted that, oftentimes, domestic products lacked appropriate markets due to inadequate market information and cheaper imports. Efforts were therefore needed to improve the marketability of local manufactures in Africa's regional markets.

50. The Committee further noted that as trading interests of certain countries often went beyond their immediate REC community markets, there was a need to consider the establishment of FTAs between and among RECs. In that way, there would be a wider trading environment for business and commercial activities.

51. Additionally, active efforts were needed to clean up the national, subregional and regional trading environment of natural and human-induced barriers in order to allow for freer and less restrictive movement of people, goods and services.

52. The Committee also noted that to the extent possible, efforts should be made to reflect informal-sector trade in Africa's trade data so as to help improve the overall intra-African trade arena.

VIII. Session IV: Development in the transport sector (agenda item 6)

53. Under this agenda item, a representative of ECA Secretariat made a presentation on "the transport situation in Africa". She pointed out that, even though transport infrastructure and services were a key element for socio-economic development, trade promotion and regional integration, the African transport sector was still faced with serious problems. She further pointed out that, in spite of the two Transport and Communications Decades in Africa (UNCTADA I and UNCTADA II) launched by the United Nations in 1978-88 and 1991-2000, and the priority objective set under NEPAD, the African transport infrastructure and services had not achieved any notable improvements. She indicated that all transport modes (road, rail, air, maritime and inland water) were characterized by very low network density, poor infrastructure resulting from lack of maintenance and/or outdated equipment, lack of interconnectivity owing to missing links, lack of human and institutional capacity in the area of management of transport operations, and lack of security and safety for transported goods and passengers, resulting in overall high transport costs.

54. The ECA representative then presented the major challenges facing the transport sector in Africa which could be summarized as lack or inappropriate pursuit of transport policies; inadequate infrastructure network; inadequate financing; lack of human and institutional capacities; inadequate transport facilitation measures resulting in high transport costs; particularly for landlocked countries; inadequate safety and security; need for modernization of fleet used in all transport modes; inadequate consideration of environmental issues and anti-pollution measures; under-exploitation of possibilities offered by ICTs; lack of reliable transport database; and the need to mainstream HIV/AIDS control and gender issues into transport policies and programmes.

55. The representative also indicated that a number of initiatives had been taken to help develop transport infrastructure and services. The most notable ones included: setting up regional economic communities' Transport Coordination Committees to harmonize their transport facilitation programmes and facilitate the sharing of experiences; the sub-Saharan Africa Transport Programme (SSATP) which was a joint initiative of ECA and the World Bank with the participation of African countries which was set up to improve transport-sector performance through transport-policy reform and institutional changes; the NEPAD transport infrastructure and services development dimensions; and the Almaty Action Plan initiated by the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island countries as a framework for developing efficient transit transport systems for landlocked developing and transit countries; and the financial facilities put in place by the development banks.

56. The ECA representative concluded her presentation by proposing a number of recommendations, among which are the following:

- Demonstrate a real political will and sustained efforts in the transport sector;
- Adopt an integrated approach to the transport development policy, taking into account all transport modes;
- Pursue reforms initiated in the transport sector and put in place regulatory frameworks to allow for greater private-sector participation in the management and financing of infrastructure projects, and promote the public-private partnership (PPP);
- Ensure greater security and safety in all transport modes;
- Reinforce human and institutional capacities and rehabilitate training institutions;
- Establish and maintain databases to facilitate the assessment of progress made in the development of the transport sector;
- Increase transport facilitation measures;
- Promote the increased utilization of ICTs in the transport sector; and
- Promote the construction of the missing links in the transport infrastructure and harmonize norms and standards at the subregional and regional levels.

57. The meeting commended the representative of the ECA for her presentation and took note of the report.

IX. Session V: Development in international trade and World Trade Organization (WTO) and Economic Agreements' (EPAs) negotiations (agenda item 7)

58. A representative of the ECA presented document ECA/CTRCI/5/2 entitled "Developments in International Trade and WTO/EPA Negotiations" that gives an update on the major trade negotiations in which Africa was engaged at the multilateral and bilateral levels .

59. The ECA's representative started by giving an update on growth in global trade, pointing out that Africa's share of global exports of merchandise remained low, representing only 2,85 per cent in 2005. He then presented the profile of the multilateral negotiations since the launch of the Doha Development Round in 2001, highlighting the major WTO challenges for African countries through major events and milestones such as Cancun Ministerial Conference (2003) which ended in a deadlock; the July Framework (2004), the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference (2005), the Pause in the negotiations (July-November 2006) and the publication of draft modalities (July 2007).

60. The ECA representative further presented the positions and prospects in WTO negotiations on Agriculture, Non Agricultural Market Access (NAMA) and other issues such as services, trade facilitation, rules for regional integration as well as the Aid-for-Trade Initiative. With regard to the

EPAs negotiations, the ECA representative underscored the fact that even though negotiations had speeded up in some subregions to meet the deadlines, there was a risk of “bad deal” as a result of rushing. In that regard, recommendations for more time and resources for negotiations had gone unheeded (ECOWAS, AU Heads of State, EPA reviews, and African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP Group) declarations. The ECA representative dealt with other developments in international trade negotiations, such as preferential trading schemes and bilateral trade talks.

61. During the discussions that followed, the participants commended the quality and the insights of the presentation. The participants then raised some issues on the WTO negotiations and several concerns about the EPAs negotiations. On the WTO negotiations, the participants requested some clarifications on Non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA) issues and the eight African countries that needed to apply the tariff reduction formula. Some questions covered the issues of the impact of export subsidies on African countries and the role of African countries in the WTO negotiations. Participants also emphasized the need for AU member States to support countries acceding to the WTO.

62. Regarding the EPAs negotiations, participants expressed a major concern on the deadline of 31 December 2007 for the signing of the Agreement and the readiness of the countries and subregions to sign and implement the agreement. Some RECs such as ECCAS were willing to sign a Framework Agreement by the deadline while leaving the specific sectoral issues to be negotiated at a later stage. Other regions like West Africa were proposing to explore the possibility of seeking an extension of the waiver for one year under article 9 of the agreement, and then to try to finalize the negotiations in the intervening period before signing the EPA. Drawing on the example of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), the negotiating groupings could register an official request at the WTO and keep on negotiating up to the middle of next year.

63. Participants raised the issue of alternatives to the EPA which maintained the current advantages. The meeting was informed that the alternative may not be WTO compliant. Participants also raised the issue as to whether or not there would be disruptions in trade flows with the EU if the EPAs were not signed by the deadline, considering that the EU is traditionally one of the largest trading partners of African countries.

64. The meeting also questioned the preparedness of the subregions and countries embarking on negotiations on tariff cuts, agriculture, fishing, consumer protection, infrastructure, the preparation and determination of the lists of sensitive products at the country and regional levels, the development issues, the establishment of common external tariffs (CETs) among others. Also considered was the issue of liberalization levels (60 per cent or 80 per cent) and its compatibility to the WTO agreements on the dismantling of tariff barriers.

65. As concerns the signing of the agreement, some participants expressed their reluctance to sign an agreement because some of the components of the issues needed to be clarified. Some participants expressed the view that the issue of the EPAs would undermine and divide the ACP and the AU member States. It was pointed out that the EPAs did not cover the sugar protocol which ends in 2010.

66. The meeting asked whether the issue of market access could be revisited under the agreement. The meeting called for a clear road map for the transition period should the agreement be signed. The meeting further called on the AU Commission to coordinate the WTO and the EPAs negotiations.

67. In response to the several interesting comments and questions, the AU Director for Trade and Industry, the Trade, Finance and Economic Development Division (TFED) of ECA, and the presenter, provided answers as set out in the paragraphs next following.

68. A representative of the AU Commission informed the meeting on the long drawn out involvement and the contributions of the AU Commission in bringing African countries together with a view to forming a consensus and common African positions on the EPA and WTO negotiations. The AU efforts were undertaken through the different meetings in Geneva and Brussels with the support of ECA, as well as the Conferences of Ministers, and a Summit of Heads of State and Government in 2005. She recalled a Summit decision that mandated AU Commission to coordinate the WTO and EPA trade negotiations at the continental level. Within the same framework, she informed the Committee that a Ministerial meeting would take place in Cotonou, Benin, on 24 October 2007.

69. In providing further clarification on the EPA negotiations, a representative of the ECA Secretariat emphasized that the technical and sectoral issues relating to the negotiations had been tackled at a very late stage. He further noted that broader issues took a lot of time, a case in point being the question of stressing the importance of the asymmetry requirement in the tariff liberalization process and the issue of not disrupting the trade between African countries and the EU. He also indicated that ECOWAS had approached the EU in Brussels to seek an extension of the deadline for signing the EPAs, but the request was not granted. He informed the meeting of the coordination efforts made by the AU Commission in collaboration with the ECA on the EPA and WTO negotiations. He underscored the need to strengthen the dialogue between all the various parties involved in the negotiation processes, as well as strengthening the capacities and the preparedness of African countries to negotiate. On the role of the African group in the WTO negotiations, he informed the Committee that it was fully engaged in every aspect of the Doha Round. He further indicated that there was strong political solidarity existing within the group, particularly in terms of having the capacity to formulate concrete and technical proposals, with the support of the AU Commission and ECA. He took the opportunity to commend the work accomplished by the trade negotiators in Geneva.

70. The ECA representative, in further response to questions raised by participants, informed the meeting that the African countries understood the questions on the table regarding the proposed tariff formulas of the WTO negotiations. On the EPA tariff dismantling process, he informed the Committee that from the mid-term review, it had been found that African countries should liberalize 60 per cent of their tariff lines in order to break even. On the determination of the lists of sensitive products, he stated that it was the responsibility of the individual countries to choose their own criteria.

71. Concerning the issue of alternatives to the EPA, the representative emphasized the fact that the ACP countries had not exploited the opportunities flowing from the Cotonou Agreement. He further stressed the importance of non-disrupting trade and the feasibility of requesting for an extension of the waiver. He however pointed out that more time was needed before signing the Agreement.

In concluding, he informed the Committee that the road map of the transition period would be drawn up during the Cotonou meeting on 24 October 2007.

X. Session VI: Interventions by Regional Economic Communities (RECs) (agenda

item 8)

72. Representatives of four RECs, (i.e. SACU, UMA UEMOA and ECCAS) also made presentations at the CTCRI session. In addition to the presentations of the four RECs, the representative of the AfDB Group at the meeting also gave a brief presentation on the Group's work on country strategy papers, NEPAD regional integration and trade, and its infrastructure programme.

73. The presentation on SACU traced back its existence to 1910, but with explanations to the effect that the agreement had been re-negotiated several times since then, with the latest re-negotiation taking place in 1994. The REC, with its Secretariat in Namibia, was said to operate largely as a customs union with a common tariff. The operative work programme focused on consolidating SACU through the establishment of a tariff board, a tribunal, and the development of common policies in the area of industrial policy and agriculture. The presentation highlighted some salient issues on the negotiations on the SADC-EPA, acknowledging its late take-off, and the commitment to reaching agreement on market access by end 2007. It was noted that if the negotiations were not completed by end 2007, three member States of SACU would face market-access problems in the EU. SACU was identified as one of the regions that were applying "the Swiss formula". It was also noted that South Africa already had an agreement with the EU.

74. A representative of UMA dwelt on the five member States in the subregion, the area of the REC, its access to the sea, population, natural resources endowments and per capita income the objectives contained in the Marrakech Declaration (1989) establishing the Union as well as the overall governance structure for the subregion. In 1991, UMA had adopted a development strategy to be implemented in four stages, namely, the creation of a free-exchange zone (FEZ), a customs union, a common market, and an economic union. Existing cooperation relationships between the member States and other countries outside of the union were highlighted. The presentation also dealt with concrete achievements to-date, including the conclusion of 38 conventions, electricity inter-connection among the five member countries, establishment of a joint groundwater monitoring system for the Sahara (Albian) Aquifer System shared by three member countries (Algeria, Libya and Tunisia), establishment of a Union of Maghrebine Banks in Tunis, a website for environmental protection, and so on. The presenter also enumerated the challenges facing the union, including low level of integration, very weak coordination of economic policies of member States towards external markets, volume of goods exchanged among members standing only at 3 per cent of total exchange in the subregion, annual loss of 2 per cent on the economic growth of member countries, and low attraction of foreign direct investment (FDI) into the region. In all, 10 obstacles to integration in the subregion were singled out, including high transportation costs, multiplicity and complexity of commercial regimes, lack of harmonization standards, and lack of competitiveness, as well as the appropriate reforms being considered to remove the obstacles. The presenter highlighted seven integration projects for the subregion, and appealed for the support of international organizations to the subregion in respect of four intervention areas identified for enhanced trade and regional integration in the subregion.

75. A representative of UEMOA highlighted five main objectives of integration of the subregion, and six objectives specifically related to trade. He presented the organigram of the union, describing in detail the different components (Conference of Heads of States and Government, Council of Ministers, the UEMOA Commission, the Central Bank of West African States [BCEAO], the West African Development Bank [BOAD], the Regional Consular Chamber (CCR), the Regional Council for Public Savings and Financial Markets (CREPMF), and the Regional Stock Market for West Africa (BRVM)). The presenter described the modus operandi of UEMOA and its economic policies in support of a stable monetary system. He emphasized the union's adoption of a common customs

union as the pillar for trade within the union, as well as the adoption of a common policy on trade. He underscored the fact that the financial market of the union has had a favourable impact on the development of the trade sector, and emphasized the sectoral policies relating to trade and telecommunications, inter-connections of electricity networks within the subregion for improved production and trade, as well as agricultural and environmental policies for ensuring food security within the subregion. With respect to the way forward, the presenter elaborated on the Regional Economic Programme (PER) revolving around five strategic areas, namely economic governance, infrastructure, productive and integrated instruments, human-resource development, and partnerships for resource mobilization and monitoring and evaluation. He provided indications on the total cost of the programme (2812 billion FCFA), funds already mobilized (829 billion FCFA), and the balance being sought (1983 billion FCFA).

76. A representative of ECCAS recalled that it was made up of 11 member States, six of which had formed a monetary union, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC). The presenter highlighted the vision for integration within the subregion, and the achievements registered to-date in the areas of trade policies and other ancillary measures. It was indicated that the treaty establishing ECCAS aimed at promoting economic development and growth through the integration of the markets of the member countries. Among the achievements of the community were: the establishment of an FTZ in July 2004; harmonization of the CET with CEMAC, as a mechanism for achieving a customs union in January 2008; removal of non-tariff barriers; harmonization of customs documentation; free movement of people, and in particular economic operators; development of supporting infrastructures, such as the adoption of a transport master plan, creation of an energy pool for the subregion; adoption of a food-security programme; and establishment of a 0.4 per cent community tax (CCI) to finance regional integration. The presenter mentioned various challenges to integration in the subregion, including the lack of political will as demonstrated by the weak realization of decisions of the community.

77. A representative of the AfDB also made a presentation on activities of the Bank. His presentation identified the Bank Group as the premier development-financing bank in Africa. The presenter highlighted the prominence of a NEPAD, Regional Integration and Trade Department (ONRI) established for achieving the vision of a continent integrated regionally and into the global economy. He emphasized the reinforcement of AfDB's regional integration mandate, and highlighted the focus of the Bank's project preparation role to include managing the Bank's relations with the RECs, infrastructure development, articulating and preparing the AU and NEPAD regional integrated spatial development programmes, as well as the prioritization of integrated programmes of RECs. In the area of capacity-building, the focus included the RECs, regional organizations, member States, the support for reform through policy-based lending (PBL), a better mix of programme/project financing, and preparation of regional assistance strategies.

78. During the debate on the presentations by the representatives of these four RECs, some participants sought further clarifications on the presentations of UEMOA and UMA. The discussion brought to the fore some of the difficulties encountered from the very beginning, since the creation of ECOWAS particularly on the issue of a common currency for the West African subregion, including the inability of non-UEMOA countries to team up with the UEMOA countries on how a single currency should be launched, which had culminated in the establishment of the second monetary programme. Some participants wanted to know what factors had changed on the ground that might have made a new single currency project feasible for the subregion, as well as the time-frame for achieving the objectives.

79. In response, the representative of UEMOA provided further clarification on how UEMOA itself had commenced with only six member States, before growing to, currently, eight-members, and cited Guinea-Bissau and Mali among States that had joined the union at a latter stage. He explained that the main requirements for joining the UEMOA had to do with macro-economic stability and member States meeting the convergence criteria, and acknowledged that Ghana had indeed made investigations on the possibility of using the West African CFA Franc. He acknowledged the fact that ECOWAS had prepared a second monetary zone called the West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ) and that there were plans to merge this with UEMOA in the long run in order to have a single currency for the ECOWAS subregion. The UEMOA representative emphasized that the union had a very solid currency unit, and expressed the view that there were no obstacles to integration within the subregion, nor for merging the two currency units. He expressed the belief that should WAMZ become effective in 2009, there should be no more reason to have two currencies within the ECOWAS subregion; but because WAMZ was currently facing problems, it was necessary for countries to work towards facilitating the creation of a monetary union within the ECOWAS subregion.

80. In response to a question, the representative of UMA emphasized the importance of economic and social factors, in addition to political considerations, that promote regional integration. In that regard, he highlighted the fact that although the problem affected the road transport linkages between the two countries directly concerned by the problem, air and maritime transport were doing quite well. The UMA representative also highlighted the fact that the high rate of trade exchange between UMA member States and Europe, which he rated at seventy five per cent of all trade exchanges within the subregion, was one of the major impediments to regional integration within the subregion, but added that the issue was the fact being addressed.

XI. Session VII: Overview of ECA's/UN's support on the implementation of NEPAD (agenda item 9)

81. A representative of ECA, in presenting an overview of ECA's support to the implementation of NEPAD, recalled that NEPAD's objectives included poverty eradication, sustainable development, regional and global integration of Africa, and the empowerment of women, and that those objectives were underpinned by good governance, African ownership and leadership of development, and development anchored on resources and resourcefulness of Africans. He highlighted some of the priority areas of NEPAD namely political, economic and corporate governance, agriculture, infrastructure, education, health, science and technology, market access, tourism, and environment. The ECA Representative pointed out that, as a strategic partner of NEPAD, ECA was mandated to provide support to the continental initiative. ECA's support to NEPAD was also rooted in the General Assembly's resolutions 57/2 and 57/7 of 2002, which recommends that NEPAD should be the framework within which the international community, including the United Nations system, should concentrate its efforts for Africa's development. The ECA representative gave an overview of the role ECA was playing in support of NEPAD: ECA had established a NEPAD Support Unit for implementing ECA's special subprogramme on regional coordination of and support for NEPAD. The unit was responsible for implementing the major objective of strengthening the United Nations system-wide support to the implementation of NEPAD at the regional and subregional level.

82. The representative of ECA noted that other key objectives of this the NEPAD coordination and support unit included promoting advocacy and communications on NEPAD, and fostering internal

inter-divisional coordination in ECA to promote NEPAD activities. Additionally, ECA's mandate and work programmes, and the activities carried out through its substantive divisions and five subregional offices, supported the achievement of the objectives of NEPAD in general. Several elements of ECA's work inform, and are informed by, NEPAD's agenda.

83. It was also noted in the presentation that as a strategic partner to the NEPAD process, ECA had responded to specific requests by NEPAD, whether through the NEPAD secretariat, the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSGIC), the African Union, or other associated organs and structures. In that context, ECA had implemented activities to promote and accelerate Africa's development in areas consistent with the objectives and priorities of NEPAD, including analytical studies, advisory services, policy advocacy, capacity-building programmes, and operational activities. ECA's "convening power" had also allowed it to mobilize stakeholders—including member States, development partners, civil society and the private sector— to discuss, make decisions and implement actions in support of NEPAD's agenda.

84. The representative pointed out that a major contribution of ECA to the NEPAD process was the strong intellectual, institutional and logistical support it had provided and continued to provide to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) process, which was a major distinguishing feature and milestone of NEPAD. Over the next three years, ECA intended to intensify and consolidate its support to NEPAD as a strategic coordinator of UN support to NEPAD and as a knowledge hub on NEPAD-related issues. Among the key strategies in that regard would be to maintain a strong electronic and web presence and provide an effective platform for knowledge-sharing and knowledge-networking to improve on the implementation of NEPAD and develop and implement an effective process of monitoring and evaluating support to the implementation of NEPAD at various levels.

85. The meeting commended the representative for his presentation. In the ensuing discussions, participants expressed concern about a patent mismatch between NEPAD objectives and concrete results on the ground, and wondered if there were any significant practical attainments one could cite since its inception in 2001. An observation was also made to the effect that the infrastructure programmes of NEPAD tended to ignore needs at the borders in the context of cross-border trade.

86. In response to those concerns, the ECA representative pointed out that NEPAD had identified several aspects of development challenges with policy, institutional and sectoral dimensions. People wanted to see the roads, railway lines, and power grids on the ground. Hence, their frustration with NEPAD would appear to be directed towards the implementation of the sectoral priority areas. However, such programmes had a long gestation period from identification to actual realization, whereas the "softer" policy and institutional aspects such as the APRM and policy dialogue seemed to be moving forward. Furthermore, given the huge, multifaceted development needs of Africa, it was imperative, in order to address those challenges, to develop partnerships within countries on one hand, and with the international community, on the other. The ECA representative emphasized the fact that a partnership approach to Africa's development was indeed a cardinal principle under NEPAD.

87. The representative of ECA provided additional examples of realizations within the framework of NEPAD, such as the Yamoussoukro Decision, energy pools, integrated master plan on infrastructure, and spatial development initiatives. He stressed the need for African countries to do their utmost to mobilize domestic resources so as to fill some of the financing gaps associated with

NEPAD's initiatives and projects.

88. The AfDB Representative also intervened to respond to some of the misgivings surrounding NEPAD by giving examples of some NEPAD infrastructure projects in the pipeline or completed. He, however, emphasized that there was often a "shopping list" of projects some of which ran into millions, if not billions, of dollars. Against a backdrop of scarce and limited resources, it was imperative to prioritize. The AfDB representative also observed that one of the weaknesses of NEPAD was the lack of publicity and public awareness surrounding its accomplishments, projects, and indeed the entire spectrum of what transpired under its aegis. Enhanced sensitization and awareness efforts were therefore imperative in order.

XII. Session VII: Review of work programme of ECA NEPAD and Regional Integration Division (NRID), including priorities for the next biennium(2008-2009) (agenda item 10)

89. The representative of the ECA Secretariat stated that NRID was among the new ECA divisions created as a result of the ECA repositioning exercise which had been put in place by the Executive Secretary of ECA to focus more closely on support to regional integration and NEPAD. In that regard, the main objectives of the Division were to strengthen the process of regional integration in Africa, strengthen the United Nations' system support for the implementation of NEPAD at the regional and subregional levels, and provide support to the NEPAD Secretariat. In furtherance of those objectives, NRID was structured into three sections, namely the Regional Integration Section; Infrastructure Section; and NEPAD Support Unit.

90. NRID was chiefly concerned with:

- Promotion of regional integration;
- Institutional support to RECs;
- Assessment of regional integration in Africa (ARIA);
- Support on trade issues;
- Infrastructure and natural resources development (and more specifically, transport, energy, water and mining); and
- Support to NEPAD as a strategic partner.

91. The ECA representative provided highlights of major results of the Division and priorities for 2008-2009. Among the major activities that were being undertaken were:

- ***Assessing Regional Integration in Africa*** (ARIA) series: The ARIA publication series was conceived to provide a holistic appraisal of where the continent as a whole stood on its integration agenda.

- To address the problem of multiplicity of RECs and overlapping membership, the second edition of (ARIA II), published in June 2006 and launched in July 2006 by ECA in collaboration with the AU Commission, focused on the need to rationalize the RECs. The programmed 2007 edition, ARIA III, focuses on the important issue of macroeconomic policy convergence within the RECs.
- **Capacity-building support to the RECs:** To strengthen the role of the RECs as sub-regional development policy institutions, the division supported a number of RECs in their human capacity development activities, especially on the information and statistics, trade, facilitation and ICT policy development.
- **Support to the implementation of NEPAD:** in terms of support to NEPAD, the Division undertook a review of the regional consultations mechanism among United Nations system agencies in support of NEPAD, including the Cluster System. It revived the regional consultations meeting by convening its seventh session with strong participation by United Nations agencies, the AU Commission, AfDB and the RECs. The Division also produced a major advocacy report to raise awareness of the need to enhance United Nations system-wide support to NEPAD at the regional and subregional levels.

92. The representative informed the meeting that activities planned during the 2008-2009 biennium included:

- Continuation of the ARIA series;
- A five-year review of the NEPAD Short-term Action Plan;
- Tracking the status of energy and transport development in Africa;
- Tracking the status of implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision in selected countries;
- Enhancing road safety in Africa; learning from best practices; conference on investment in infrastructure and natural resources development in Africa; and
- Group training, seminars, and workshops.

93. Finally the representative pointed out that in implementing its activities, the Division endeavoured to foster partnership with United Nations system organizations, the AU Commission, the AfDB and other relevant partner institutions.

94. After fruitful, frank and exhaustive deliberations on the agenda items the Committee made the following recommendation:

- (i) ECA, in collaboration with the AU Commission and the AfDB, should develop a framework for the harmonization and coordination of policies and programmes of RECs as important strategies for rationalization of the RECs;

- (ii) ECA and AU should harmonize their meetings on trade and regional integration and support member States to mainstream regional integration into national programmes, and provide technical support to the RECs in their transformation to FTAs/customs union/common market/monetary unions;
- (iii) Future meetings of the Committee should make provision for member States to make presentations on their experiences, challenges and best practices on the items on the agenda;
- (iv) Future Committee meetings should also be highly focused, and tailor the agenda to in-depth discussions on one or two themes or issues;
- (v) ECA should continue to work closely with the AU Commission, AfDB and the RECs in the advancement of the continental integration agenda. In that regard, there was a need to be realistic about goals and expectations and to focus on actions that countries were prepared to undertake;
- (vi) ECA should work with the RECs and other inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) to strengthen the facilitation of trade in the subregions. In that regard, ECA, in collaboration with the AU Commission and AfDB, should develop a framework for the harmonization of rules of origin; efficient management corridors; automation and harmonization of customs documentation; effective monitoring of non-tariff barriers; harmonization of transport policies; and development of inland waterways in the subregion;
- (vii) ECA should develop a framework for deeper cooperation between the RECs with a view to harmonizing the trade protocols of the RECs and promoting intra-African trade and diversification of production. In that regard ECA should undertake studies on the economic cost and benefits of the inter-REC FTAs;
- (viii) Taking into consideration the major concerns raised by the participants on the deadline of 31 December 2007 for the signing of the EPAs, the imperative of an extension of the deadline by at least one year, was underlined, in order to finalize all outstanding issues in the EPA negotiations;
- (ix) ECA should continue with its technical collaboration with the AU Commission, the RECs and member States on the international trade negotiations. In that regard, ECA should provide technical support to the AU Commission in its mandate to coordinate the WTO and EPAs negotiations, with a view to fostering a common African voice as well as ensuring that the outcome of the negotiations supported Africa's development agenda; and
- (x) ECA should continue to provide technical support to member States in their WTO accession process.

XIII. Any other business

95. During the discussions on the adoption of the report, the representative of Benin informed the

meeting that the ministerial meeting on the EPAs, which had been scheduled to take place in Cotonou, Benin on 24 October 2007, had been postponed. The ministerial meeting had been scheduled on the margins of the high-level meeting on the EPAs, also billed to take place in Cotonou from 22 to 26 October 2007. However, the high-level meeting had itself been postponed and as result, it would not be practical to hold the ministerial meeting as scheduled.

XIV. Adoption of the report of the meeting (agenda item 11)

96. The report was adopted with amendments.

XV. Closure of the meeting (agenda item 10)

97. The meeting was closed by Mr. Robert M. Okello, Director of NRID, on behalf of the Executive Secretary of ECA. In his closing remarks, the Director thanked the member States, the RECs, the international institutions and the development partners for effectively participating in the meeting. He assured the meeting that ECA welcomed the recommendations reached at the meeting and would ensure their implementation.

ANNEX I

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