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Years of service to Africa

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# **E C A T O D A Y**

**ITS TERMS OF REFERENCE,  
PAST ACTIVITIES AND POTENTIAL ROLE  
IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
OF  
AFRICA**



**UNITED NATIONS**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 29 April 1979, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) will be 21 years old. This means in effect that the Commission has developed *pari passu* with those African countries that became independent from political tutelage in the early 1960s, and that it has witnessed the growth of the ever increasing efforts devoted by the countries of the region to the restructuring and development of their economies. The purpose of this paper is twofold in this context: to review, albeit briefly, the past role of the Commission as a partner in this arduous task, and to indicate its potential role in the attempts to resolve the undoubtedly more complex socio-economic problems of the future, for the information of member States in general and for those newly independent, the land-locked, island and other least developed ones in particular.

2. With this object in view, the paper is organized as follows. <sup>NAming the terms by end</sup> Firstly, the terms of reference of the Commission are enumerated. <sup>of the</sup> This is necessary because the terms of reference constitute the legal basis of the Commission and define its operational modalities. In view of the reinforcing character of the recent decision of the General Assembly on the role of the regional commissions, extracts from that decision are also added. Secondly, the terms of reference are followed by a description of the organizational structure of the Commission in terms of its legislative organs and the secretariat. The third item dealt with in the paper is the work programme and activities of the secretariat, including its relationship with other United Nations development organizations operating in Africa, African regional development organizations and the Organization of African Unity. This section is followed by an enumeration and description of those development institutions which the Commission has helped to create or is helping to create in view of their potential usefulness in future socio-economic activities. The paper concludes with some suggestions on how member States can maximize the use of the Commission and its institutions as well as how member States can improve the operational efficiency of the Commission.

3. In submitting this brief paper on the activities of a regional arm of the United Nations which the ECA is, the secretariat would like to state clearly that, in the nature of things, it is quite impossible to cover all the activities of the Commission in one single paper. Two of the sources for such comprehensive coverage are: (a) the Annual Report of the Commission and (b) the work programme and priorities of the secre-

tariat. The message of this paper is principally directed at those busy yet interested policy makers, government officials, and other citizens of member States who have always wanted to know more about ECA and its relevance to the solution of their socio-economic problems. The information provided here is intended in addition to assist policy makers and government officials in identifying the specific areas in which they can enlist the assistance of the Commission.

*have in mind as a purpose or plan*

## II. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF ECA

4 The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is the African regional arm of the United Nations, created by Economic and Social Council resolution 671 A (XXV) of 29 April 1958, which inter-alia requested it to:

(a) Initiate and participate in measures for facilitating concerted action for the economic development of Africa, including its social aspects, with a view to raising the level of economic activity and levels of living in Africa, and for maintaining and strengthening the economic relations of countries and Territories of Africa, both among themselves and with other countries of the world;

(b) Make or sponsor such investigations and studies of economic and technological problems and developments within the territories of Africa as the Commission deems appropriate, and disseminate the results of such investigations and studies;

(c) Undertake or sponsor the collection, evaluation and dissemination of such economic, technological and statistical information as the Commission deems appropriate;

(d) Perform, within the available resources of its secretariat, such advisory services as the countries and Territories of the region may desire, provided that such services do not overlap with those rendered by other bodies of the United Nations or by the specialized agencies;

(e) Assist the Council at its request in discharging its functions within the region in connexion with any economic problems, including problems in the field of technical assistance;

(f) Assist in the formulation and development of co-ordinated policies as a basis for practical action in promoting economic and technological development in the region; and

(g) In carrying out the above functions, deal as appropriate with the social aspects of economic development and the interrelationship of economic and social factors.

5. The Commission is empowered to make recommendations on any matter within its competence directly to the Governments of member States and to the specialized agencies.

6. There are similar regional commissions for Europe, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and Western Asia.

7. Over the years, attempts have been made to expand the role of the regional commissions especially into two directions: assumption of greater responsibility through decentralization of more and more of the activities being carried out from Headquarters, and acting as Executing Agency of UNDP projects particularly in the areas of subregional and regional economic co-operation and integration. General Assembly resolutions 1709 (XVI) and 1823 (XVII) constituted the first tentative steps to give a legal backing to the demand for decentralization of economic and social activities to the regional economic commissions and the need to strengthen their role. General Assembly resolution 32/197 took the decisive step to get those wishes implemented.

8. In this resolution, which is devoted to the onerous task of restructuring the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system so as to make the latter more fully capable of dealing with problems of international economic co-operation and development in a comprehensive and effective manner, the General Assembly has firmly pronounced that "the regional commissions should be enabled fully to play their role under the authority of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council as the main general economic and social development centres within the United Nations system for their respective regions, having due regard to the responsibilities of the specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies in specific sectoral fields and the co-ordinating role of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in respect of technical co-operation activities".

9. The resolution further states that "taking into account the special needs and conditions of their respective regions they should exercise team leadership and responsibility for co-ordination at the regional level".

10. Measures, including the delegation of the necessary authority, have been and are being taken to devolve more responsibilities to the regional commissions, even though the budgetary and financial provision is still inadequate.

11. In carrying out its role as the main general economic and social development centre within the United Nations system for the African region and its responsibility of exercising team leadership and for co-ordination and co-operation at the African regional level, the Commission centres periodic meetings, as necessary for the purpose of improving the co-ordination of the relevant economic and social activities of the United Nations system in Africa. Through such media and others such as joint planning and consultations at the professional personal level, the Commission works closely not only with the United Nations Headquarters but also with the specialized agencies in such fields as food and agriculture, industry, trade and international payments, transport and communications, education, science and cultural matters and manpower and employment.

12. The call for measures to enable the regional economic commissions to exercise, in consultation with the governments concerned, the functions of executing agencies of the United Nations Development Programme was formally enshrined in General Assembly resolution 2688 (XXV) of 11 December 1970. In the framework of the restructuring exercise, the General Assembly has confirmed its wish by indicating unequivocally in its resolution 32/197 already referred to above that "without prejudice to the special needs and conditions of each region, and taking into account the plans and priorities of the Governments concerned, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council should take measures to enable them (the regional commissions) to function expeditiously as executing agencies for intersectoral, subregional, regional and interregional projects and in areas which do not fall within the purview of the sectoral responsibility of specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies, other subregional, regional and interregional projects".

13. The Commission is now exercising the functions of executing agency of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in the areas of subregional and regional projects. In fact, the value of UNDP projects being executed and those planned for programming totals over \$US 22 million.

14. In carrying out its activities, the Commission has not failed to co-operate with purely African institutions involved in the development business. Thus the Commission has co-operated closely with the African Development Bank, for whose establishment it was responsible, and the Organization of African Unity. In particular, the Commission provides technical support services to OAU activities connected with its fields of competence and the two organizations jointly sponsor such activities as the organization and servicing of conferences, meetings, seminars, etc.

15. The geographical scope of the Commission's work is the whole continent of Africa, Madagascar and other African islands. The membership of the Commission is now made up of the 49 independent States of Africa. All national liberation movements recognized by the Organization of African Unity can send observers to participate in the consideration of any matter of particular concern to such movements. They have the right to submit proposals which may be voted upon at the request of any member of the Commission. The Commission is empowered to defray all travel and other related expenses of representatives of the national liberation movements invited to attend its proceedings.

### III. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF ECA

16. The Economic Commission for Africa is made up of its legislative organs, certain specialized technical advisory bodies and the secretariat. The legislative organs and the technical advisory bodies have in fact been modified over the years and certain proposals have again been submitted to the Conference of Ministers for approval designed to streamline those organs and tailor them to the new dynamic operational role of the Commission. The proposed changes will therefore be discussed under the appropriate headings.

#### Legislative organs

17. The legislative organs consist of (a) the Conference of Ministers, assisted by the Technical Committee of Experts, (b) the Executive Committee, (c) sectoral ministerial conferences, each assisted by an appropriate committee of technical officials, and (d) the Council of Ministers of each Multinational Programming and Operational Centre (MULPOC) assisted by its committee of officials. Certain changes have, however, been proposed in the status and periodicity of the meetings of the legislative organs.



(a) Conference of Ministers

18. The Conference of Ministers, which is composed of ministers of all member countries responsible for economic development, planning and financial affairs, in recent years has met every two years. It is however proposed that henceforth it should meet once a year to deliberate on economic and social problems in Africa and to issue the necessary policy guidelines to the secretariat on its work programme and priorities. The Technical Committee of Experts, which in the past reviewed the technical studies prepared by the secretariat and prepared recommendations on the work programme and priorities of the secretariat for submission to the Conference of Ministers would be abolished and the work programme would henceforth be derived from the decisions of the Conference of Ministers, the various sectoral ministerial conferences and the MULPOC Councils of Ministers.

(b) The Executive Committee

19. The Executive Committee, which is a committee of the Conference of Ministers, has met at least twice a year to review the work of the secretariat and assist the Executive Secretary to implement the decisions of the Conference of Ministers. Although there is no definite proposal before the Conference of Ministers, it is felt that there is a need for some committee to meet prior to the Conference of Ministers, be it the Executive Committee or not, but that the Executive Committee should no longer meet twice a year.

(c) Sectoral ministerial conferences

20. These include such conferences as the Conference of African Ministers of Industry, the Conference of African Ministers of Social Affairs, etc., whose main preoccupation is the definition of appropriate policies for their relevant sectoral fields. The sectoral ministerial conferences are assisted by appropriate committees of officials which do the preparatory technical work for the ministers.

(d) Council of Ministers of the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres (MULPOCs)

21. From the inception of the Commission, subregional co-operation and integration have been central to its activities. For these purposes, the region has always been divided into four subregions - North, East,

West and Central. With the emergence of more liberated States, the eastern subregion has been expanded to cover the independent countries of southern Africa as well.

22. During the 1960s, not much could be done through the sub-regional offices owing to lack of resources. However, in the early 1970s, the problems of the least developed African countries received more attention. And to assist these countries in attacking their development problems more effectively, the United Nations Multinational Interdisciplinary Development Advisory Teams (UNDATs) were established. However, in view of the widespread and common nature of the problems of all African countries, the work of the UNDATs was soon expanded to cover all the countries in the subregions they served.

23. Since 1977, the structure and modalities of operations of the UNDATs have been changed to bring them closer both to the countries which they serve and to the secretariat of the Commission. The new institutions are now called "Multinational Programming and Operational Centres" (MULPOCs) and they constitute the operational arm of the secretariat in the field.

24. There are at present four operating MULPOCs based at Lusaka (Zambia) for the Eastern and Southern subregion; Gisenyi (Rwanda) for the countries of the Economic community of the Great Lakes (Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi); Yaounde (United Republic of Cameroon) for the Central African subregion; and, Niamey (the Niger) for the West African subregion. The work programme of each MULPOC is established by a Council of Ministers, made up of ministers of the countries of the sub-region responsible for economic planning and development. It is assisted by a committee of officials who, in collaboration with the secretariat and the specialized and other United Nations agencies are responsible for the technical work underlying the work programme. The work programme, which in effect reflects the priorities of the countries of the particular subregion, is ultimately integrated into the over-all programme of the secretariat and its implementation is the joint responsibility of the countries, the MULPOC experts, the secretariat and the other United Nations agencies which participate in the work of the MULPOCs.

25. With the creation of the special subregional committees on women and development, the work on the integration of women in development is now integrated into the work programme of the respective MULPOCs.

## Specialized technical advisory bodies

26. There are three standing technical subsidiary bodies which assist the Commission and the secretariat in carrying out their functions. These are the Conference of African Statisticians, the Conference of African Planners and the Conference of African Demographers which perform advisory functions in the fields of statistics, development planning and projections and demography and other population problems respectively.

27. These bodies, which were specifically created by the Commission, also act as centres for the exchange of professional experiences and of technical information. Membership is open to all the States members of the Commission.

28. The regular meetings of the three bodies, which are held biennially, are serviced by the ECA secretariat. Invitations for participation are sent by the secretariat to all member States, United Nations agencies, other African regional organizations and bilateral aid donors involved in development efforts in the region.

29. There is however a proposal to combine these three bodies in view of the fact that their subject areas are directly interrelated.

## The secretariat

30. To assist the Commission in discharging its duties to its member States in particular, and the Economic and Social Council and the United Nations in general, there is a secretariat whose financial and human resources are provided by the General Assembly of the United Nations and through extrabudgetary bilateral and multilateral sources, particularly UNDP.

31. The work of the secretariat is now carried out by over 300 professional staff in all the fields of competence of the Commission. Over 70 per cent of the staff are Africans drawn from 36 States members of the Commission. The Commission's staff represents the largest concentration of expertise in the field of socio-economic development in Africa.

32. On the basis of the terms of reference of the Commission as indicated above, the tasks of the secretariat cover development problems in general and their economic, social and technological aspects in particular, as the following description of the structure of the secretariat amply indicates.

(a) Cabinet Office of the Executive Secretary

33. Firstly, there is the Cabinet Office of the Executive Secretary, which is responsible for over-all policy formulation, execution and direction, which includes the Division of Administration and Conference Services, responsible for providing supporting administrative, financial, general and conference services to the substantive technical work of the secretariat.

34. Within the Cabinet Office of the Executive Secretary there are two offices whose activities are of great importance to the operational activities of the Commission: the Technical Assistance Co-ordination and Operations Office and Economic Co-operation Office.

Technical Assistance Co-ordination and Operations Office

35. Extrabudgetary resources both for direct project implementation and for training fellowships have become an important part of the total resources available to the secretariat. It is the responsibility of the Technical Assistance Co-ordination and Operations Office not only to negotiate with aid donors including member States but also to liaise with member States on the choice of candidates for fellowships.

36. One innovation with regard to extrabudgetary resources was the institution of the 'Pledging Conference' in 1977. For the first time in the history of the Commission, a pledging conference was organized in 1977, at which member States made voluntary financial contributions towards the implementation of the programme of work and priorities which the member States have approved through their representatives in the Conference of Ministers. Up to that year, only extra-African bilateral aid donors generously supported the extrabudgetary resources for the activities of the Commission. But with that action in 1977 on the part of a number of member States, the meaning of "collective self-reliance" has been practically demonstrated. The second Pledging Conference is scheduled for March 1979 immediately after the fifth meeting of the Conference of Ministers and fourteenth session of the Commission.

Economic Co-operation Office

37. In view of the low level of development of African countries and of the small size of many of them, economic co-operation and integration for collective self-reliance are very crucial. This is why activities in these

two areas have always been predominant in the over-all operations of the secretariat. The Economic Co-operation Office is the secretariat unit responsible for planning and overseeing the work in the area of economic co-operation and integration.

38. Mention has already been made of the MULPOCs and their work. The Economic Co-operation Office is the secretariat unit responsible for co-ordinating the activities of the MULPOCs.

39. Apart from economic co-operation and integration activities in Africa, the Economic Co-operation Office is also charged with the problems of economic co-operation between Africa and the outside world, particularly economic co-operation among developing countries (ECDC) and technical co-operation among developing countries (TCDC).

(b) Substantive (specialized) divisions

40. Secondly, for the substantive technical assistance and other technical activities of the secretariat, the remaining resources of the secretariat are grouped into the following divisions and offices corresponding to certain well-defined disciplines.

(i) Socio-Economic Research and Planning Division

41. Two of the time-honoured activities of the Commission are the regular provision of information on the working of the African economy including its external aspects, and the undertaking of research into specific development problems as a basis for general policy making and development planning both in the national and the collective self-reliance frameworks. This work, which is carried out annually by the secretariat on its own responsibility, is concentrated in the Division of Socio-Economic Research and Planning. Basically, the Division, in collaboration with the other relevant divisions in the secretariat, conducts research into specific socio-economic problems of African development, prepares the annual Survey of Economic and Social Conditions in Africa, a publication that has wide reputation as a mine of information on the progress and problems of development of African countries and undertakes macro-economic projections of African economies. The Division also co-ordinates secretariat activities connected with the problems and prospects of the least developed, land-locked and island African countries.

42. It also services the meetings of the Conference of African Planners.

(ii) Statistics Division

43. Very early in the life of the Commission, it was recognized that statistical and other quantitative information was very vital to the understanding of the development problems of the countries of the region and to sound policy making. The activities which are connected with conceptual clarification, advisory services, seminars and working groups, establishment and management of statistical training schools, and the collection and analysis of statistical and other quantitative information on individual African countries have always been concentrated in the Statistics Division. The work of the Division also includes the preparation of subregional and regional statistical and other quantitative information which has been most invaluable in the preparation of the annual Survey of Economic and Social Conditions in Africa and other studies.

44. The Division also services the meetings of the Conference of African Statisticians.

(iii) Population Division

45. The work of the Population Division is directed towards assisting member States to understand the relationship between population and socio-economic development.

46. The work is carried out through research studies and advisory services in such important areas as fertility, mortality, family planning and urbanization problems. Demographic projections work is also done.

47. The Division also services the meeting of the Conference of African Demographers.

(iv) Public Administration, Manpower and Management Division

48. The role of efficient public administration in generating and sustaining development is now well recognized. In its work on public administration, the secretariat undertakes not only studies into public administration problems of the countries of the region, but also training through workshops, seminars and fellowships. More will be said below about these different means of performing the tasks of the secretariat and of assisting the States members of the Commission.

49. If there is one particular area where the countries of the region lack the necessary means of tackling their development problems, it is in the area of manpower. Even though manpower in all its various forms is the kingpin of development efforts, its deficiency is widespread in the countries of the region. An awareness of this deficiency has led the secretariat not only to promote the establishment of joint manpower training institutions, about which more is said below, but also to provide fellowships for manpower training and to undertake relevant studies to identify manpower bottle-necks and to propose measures for overcoming them.

50. More and more Governments of the States members of the Commission are getting involved directly in economic activities. This involvement has led to the creation of public enterprises whose efficient management is very crucial for resource management in the particular countries. In the area of management, including purchasing and materials management, the secretariat provides advisory services and on-the-job training arrangements for officials of member States.

(v) Natural Resources Division

51. If endogenous and self-sustaining development is to be achieved in any country of the region, knowledge of the type and volume of the natural resources available in that country is very important. To obtain such knowledge, appropriate skills and technology are needed. It is the task of the Natural Resources Division to assist the countries of the region to establish the necessary institutions and to train appropriate skilled manpower for obtaining such knowledge. But in addition to the knowledge of the type and volume of natural resources, there is the need to exploit and process such natural resources. In all these areas, the secretariat provides advisory services and promotes the establishment of such institutions as mineral development centres, survey and mapping institutes and data collecting and user-service centres in remote sensing techniques, about which more is said below.

(vi) Science and Technology Unit

52. The role of science and technology in the development process is now well recognized. Hence the secretariat also devotes an appreciable amount of resources to the investigation of the conditions under which technology is transferred and to encouraging the adaptation of foreign technology and the development of indigenous technology. The main

thrust of the work in this area at present is the establishment of a Regional Centre for Technology whose activities are expected to reinforce those of national institutions of member States.

53. Among other things, the Centre will provide advisory services to its member States on the establishment of national institutions for the development, transfer and adaptation of technology, organize training seminars and workshops on various aspects and problems in the field of technology, and establish and operate a technological information and documentary service for its member States.

54. The Centre has its headquarters in Senegal.

(vii) Joint ECA/FAO Agriculture Division

55. Even though the problems of the development of food and agriculture in the United Nations system are properly the concern of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the interests of the Commission were so embracing that right from the beginning it could not ignore the role of food and agriculture. Thus as early as 1959, the Commission succeeded in establishing a joint Agriculture Division with FAO, the first achievement in the field of close collaboration with the specialized and other United Nations agencies.

56. Through this medium, the two organizations normally establish joint programmes for assisting African countries in attacking their food and agricultural problems. It is also the means through which the two organizations service the meetings of the FAO Regional Conference of African Ministers of Food and Agriculture.

(viii) Joint ECA/UNIDO Industry Division

57. Industrialization matters within the United Nations system are primarily the concern of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). But, "as the main general economic and social development centre within the United Nations system for Africa", the Commission is involved in industrial development activities. And through its co-operating arrangements with the specialized sectoral agencies, the secretariat has succeeded in establishing a joint Industry Division with UNIDO. Within this framework, the secretariat and UNIDO prepare joint programmes for assisting African countries in solving their industrialization problems.



58. Through the joint Division, the two organizations service the meetings of the Conference of African Ministers of Industry as well as those of its Follow-up Committee on Industrialization in Africa.

(ix) Transport, Communications and Tourism Division

59. In the field of transport and communications, the secretariat assists member States to plan and improve the management of their roads, railways, ports, airline systems, inland waterways and shipping. Moreover, the secretariat promotes intercountry co-operation through networks of roads and other means of transport. The most outstanding examples of co-operation in the fields of transport and communications are the networks of trans-African roads like the Cairo-Gaberone road, Mombasa-Lagos Trans-African Highway and the Trans-Saharan Highway, and the Pan-African Telecommunications Network, to name only a few.

60. But perhaps the biggest project that is likely to have the greatest impact on transport and communications in Africa and hence on the socio-economic development of the continent is the United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa. This project, which has been established by the United Nations General Assembly on the recommendation of the Conference of Ministers of ECA, is expected not only to strengthen the existing transport and communications systems in Africa but also to start and implement new projects. The strategy is expected to comprise national, subregional and regional projects which are being built up with the collaboration of member States.

61. In the field of tourism, the secretariat concentrates on advisory services to member States on how to organize and manage their tourism enterprises.

(x) International Trade and Finance Division

62. In the important areas of international trade and finance, the secretariat not only assists member States to understand the problems and issues involved but also promotes intra-African trade, trade with other developing regions of the world, trade with the advanced countries of Western Europe and North America, and trade with the centrally planned economies, China and Japan. This work and the related activities are carried out by the Division of International Trade and Finance.

63. There is also a lot of work in the area of payments arrangements, which is carried out in strict collaboration with the Association of African

Central Banks, which the secretariat has helped to create.

64. Similarly, the secretariat promotes co-operation among African producers, and between them and producers in the other parts of the developing world through the creation of producers' associations.

65. In view of the increasing importance of international negotiations, the secretariat is being called upon by African countries to provide them with the necessary technical backstopping services and to provide a forum for mutual discussion and resolution of problems involved in international negotiations, with a view to establishing a common stand. The secretariat also assists in the preparation of African positions for UNCTAD sessions. This type of service is becoming more important in the framework of the negotiations of a successor to the Lome Convention and the Multinational Trade Negotiations now being carried out under the auspices of GATT.

#### Africa Trade Centre

66. A special activity of the International Trade and Finance Division is that on the restructuring and promotion of African trade. The unit responsible for such promotion is the Africa Trade Centre situated within the Division.

67. Specifically, the Centre undertakes studies on potentials for African commodities in various world markets, organizes training and workshop seminars in trade promotion for officials of member States and arranges for on-the-job training and visits for such officials through fellowships.

#### Transnational Corporations Unit

68. Transnational corporations have long been identified as purveyors of capital, management skills, technology and know-how. In recent years, however, their influence beyond their acknowledged fields and the effects of such influence have also been recognized. In order to be in a position to undertake continuing surveillance over their over-all activities, the United Nations has established a Centre for Transnational Corporations based at Headquarters, New York. Recently, through the close collaboration of that Centre, the Commission succeeded in establishing its regional arm.

69. The duties of the regional arm are to undertake studies into the role of the transnational corporations in the development process in Africa, organize meetings for the discussion of the findings of such studies and disseminate the recommendations, and advise member States on legal, economic, technological and social aspects of the activities of the transnationals. The resources of the Headquarters Centre are available for the implementation of these tasks, in addition to the Commission's resources.

(xi) Social Development Division

70. As the terms of reference of the Commission demand, the Commission is to deal with all development problems, including their social aspects. The treatment of the social aspects of development problems, particularly the social effects of industrialization and the problems of youth, has always been an integral part of the activities of the Commission.

71. The work on social aspects of development is concentrated in the Social Development Division which undertakes studies into social development problems of African countries and disseminates the results of such studies. It also gives advisory services to member States on the solution of their social development problems and on the management of their social development institutions.

African Training and Research Centre for Women

72. The 1970s have seen the broadening of the activities of the United Nations in general and of the Commission into new and important areas of development. One such area is that of the integration of women in the development process. In connexion with this big task of catering for the interests of women who constitute a significant proportion of the population and the labour force of the countries of the region, the African Training and Research Centre for Women has been established.

73. The Centre, which is an integral part of the Social Development Division, has as its main task the upgrading of the status of women in the development process. This task is carried out through research into the existing role of women in all walks of life and assistance to member States in building up national machinery for the integration of women in development, itinerant training workshops for trainers, and the organization of training workshops and seminars for trainees, particularly on appropriate techniques for food production and preservation, and home economics generally.

(xii) Environment Co-ordination Office

74. Another new area of concern to the United Nations is that of environment and development. Over the years, the negative effects of economic activities have largely been neglected. But with the successful organization of the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the environment, the importance of the need to take account of the probable deleterious effects of development activities and hence of the equally logical need to provide measures for dealing with such effects has been accepted. The establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) whose duty is to see that environment problems in all their dimensions are taken into account in the development process is the United Nations answer to those needs.

75. In order to have a specific unit charged with the problems of the environment in the context of over-all development, the Commission, in close collaboration with UNEP, recently succeeded in establishing an environment co-ordination office.

76. The Office, which liaises between the Commission and UNEP headquarters and the UNEP office for the African region, has as its main function the co-ordination of the activities of the various units of the secretariat in the important area of the environment. Such co-ordination involves, among others, the collection and maintenance of the necessary information on environmental aspects of social and economic activities on a global and regional level, and the development and maintenance of an assessment of the state of the environment.

(xiii) Human Settlements Unit

77. Housing and construction problems have always constituted part of the preoccupations of the Commission. Such interest in the housing and construction aspects of development reflects both the comprehensive interest of the Commission and its concern with social aspects of development.

78. The 1976 Vancouver Habitat - United Nations Conference on Human Settlements and its results with 64 recommendations for national action and the recommendations on action at the regional level have not only vindicated the original orientation of the Commission but have also demanded that more concrete action should be taken. Hence, the former activities of the Commission in the areas of housing and construction are now properly incorporated in the area of human settlements.

79. The work on human settlements consists of not only the promotion of measures to improve the standards of housing and construction but also of those to encourage the identification, production and use of materials available locally, the promotion of measures to mobilize savings for housing for the use of the poor majority and the promotion of general awareness in the region of human settlement problems as integral parts of over-all development problems. The work is done through advisory services and specialized studies.

✓ IV. PROGRAMME OF WORK AND PRIORITIES OF ECA AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION

80. The work of ECA is carried out through five principal means: advisory services, on request, to member States and African multi-national groupings; studies; meetings, seminars, training workshops and conferences; collection of information and its dissemination through publications; and identification, analysis and execution of multinational projects.

(i) Advisory services

81. The United Nations system is basically a technical-assistance delivering organization. Through advisory services, the secretariat and other relevant United Nations agencies supplement the resources available to member States and provide on-the-job training for officials of the member States. Such services are available in all the fields already described above and are usually for short periods. In view of the principle of national sovereignty, such services can be rendered only if formal requests are made to the secretariat by the member States.

82. Such requests can be sent to the secretariat directly, through the Office of the relevant MULPOC and/or through the office of the UNDP Resident Representative of the member State. Through whatever channel the request may be sent, it is advisable that a copy of it should be sent to the office of the UNDP Resident Representative because the UNDP Resident Representatives also represent ECA in the member States.

(ii) Studies

83. In conformity with the terms of reference of the Commission, the secretariat undertakes studies into the economic, social and techno-

logical problems of development relevant to conditions in Africa. Within the framework of studies, the Commission performs its intellectual task of assisting the member States to consider the direction, speed and mode of advance which they have adopted, assesses existing working models and comes up with some conclusions as to what working hypotheses will best enable the member States to achieve their development objectives and targets.

84. The results of the studies are either published directly and distributed to member States, or they are first submitted for discussions at technical meetings of representatives of member States, after which they are revised to incorporate the suggestions made at such meetings, then published and distributed to member States.

(iii) Meetings, seminars, training workshops and conferences

85. Two principal objectives are achieved through meetings, seminars, training workshops and conferences: the exchange of experience in the solution of socio-economic problems and the acquisition of skills by country participants. Such meetings, seminars, training workshops and conferences are increasingly being organized in collaboration with the specialized and other United Nations agencies, OAU and African regional organizations.

86. In some cases, the United Nations pays for the participation of representatives and in other cases, member States themselves pay for the participation of their representatives.

(iv) Collection of information and its dissemination through publications

87. The purpose of this method of work is to make available to a wider circle the results of the research studies carried out for the secretariat either by regular staff members or consultants. Mention has already been made of the annual Survey of Economic and Social Conditions in Africa, one of the most important and useful publications of the secretariat. Another publication which is also very useful is the Economic Bulletin for Africa, a new version of which will soon be issued under the title of "Economic and Social Bulletin for Africa".

88. But perhaps the most important of recent publications especially in relation to the Commission's intellectual task of clarifying development concepts and giving guidance on viable paths of development in the light

of African realities and needs is the publication entitled "Revised framework of principles for the implementation of the New International Economic Order in Africa" (E/CN.14/ECO/90/Rev.3). As the title suggests, the publication is the result of the secretariat's review of the various elements of the United Nations Declaration and Plan of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order. In view of the fact that the issues raised in the context of the New International Economic Order are lively issues which are bound to form part and parcel of the contents of the International Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade, the matters treated in the "Revised framework" have continued to be revised and amplified. A meaningful and comprehensive view of the orientation of the document can be obtained only if such revisions and amplifications are read in conjunction with it.

89. There are in addition to the three important publications referred to above various other publications in all other areas of competence of the Commission in general and on statistics in particular. Publications of the Commission are distributed to member States through the appropriate channels. However, requests for them may be sent to the Publications Service of the secretariat either directly, or through the MULPOC Offices or the offices of the UNDP resident representatives.

(v) Identification, analysis and execution of multinational projects

90. In recent years, ECA's activities have spread appreciably into the area of the identification, analysis and execution of multinational projects, thanks to the decision of UNDP to accord ECA the status of executing agency and to the increasing availability of extrabudgetary resources particularly through the Trust Fund for African Development to which reference has already been made. Most of the new institutions described later in this paper have been identified and analysed and are being directly executed by ECA.

V. SOME ECA SPONSORED INSTITUTIONS FOR THE PROMOTION OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

(i) United Nations African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP)

91. Right from the start, planning as an instrument for socio-economic development was recognized. While national institutions existed in some

countries, it was rightly felt that the interest of most of the countries of the region could be catered for through the creation of a regional institution, and this led to the establishment of IDEP in Dakar, Senegal, in November 1963. The Institute, which is a subsidiary body of the Commission, has been jointly supported by African countries and UNDP right from its inception. The Institute trains high-level government officials in the techniques of planning and organizes national, subregional and regional short-term training workshops, seminars and conferences. Within the limits of the resources at its disposal, the Institute undertakes research and renders advisory services to member States.

92. Every year, the Institute issues brochures on its activities and requests applications from officials of member States for its courses. Such requests are usually sent through the Ministry of Development and Planning of the country concerned and the UNDP resident representative in that country.

93. IDEP is one of the UNDP regional projects being implemented by ECA.

(ii) African Development Bank (ADB)

94. At the time that the need for the creation of IDEP was being discussed, the need for a regional development bank to assist African countries in financing development projects was also being considered.

95. The African Development Bank was established at Abidjan, the Ivory Coast, in 1964. Nearly all the States members of ECA are members of the Bank.

96. Although the Bank was sponsored and created by the Economic Commission for Africa, it is legally no more under the jurisdiction of the Commission. However, close collaboration is maintained with it in the interests of African development.

(iii) Statistical training centres

97. Statistical development constituted one of the priority areas of the Commission in the early years of its existence and continues to receive important attention.

98. While collection, distribution and exchange of information and improvement and harmonization of concepts and methods with a view to



adapting them to African circumstances figured prominently right from the beginning in the work of the Commission, the training of African statisticians and the necessary training institutions represented the top priorities. In this connexion, attention was first directed to the training of middle-level manpower in view of its crucial importance in the collection and analysis of statistical information.

99. Thus as early as 1961, three middle-level training centres - Achimota (Ghana), Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) and Yaounde (United Republic of Cameroon), have been established as joint projects of the Governments of the countries concerned and the United Nations. In the same year, another middle-level training centre for international use was established in Abidjan (the Ivory Coast) under the auspices of the Government. The East African middle-level training centre in Dar es Salaam (United Republic of Tanzania) was established in 1965 to be followed in later years by the Nigerian Statistical Training Centre attached to the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, an enhanced version of the former arrangement operated at the Federal Office of Statistics, Lagos. All these institutions, which started as national institutions with the assistance of the United Nations, opened their doors to students from other African countries. They have now all been absorbed into national universities. Assistance took the form of fellowships, teachers' salaries and the supply of equipment.

100. In the area of high-level training in the field of statistics, United Nations and hence ECA efforts are notable in respects of two institutions - Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics, Rabat (Morocco), and Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics, Kampala (Uganda). The Rabat Institute which started as a national institute under the auspices of the Government of Morocco was later converted into an institute with assistance from the United Nations Special Fund. The Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics, Kampala, was created with United Nations assistance as a result of the recommendations of an expert group appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the initiative of ECA. The Institute has always been part of the Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda. The Institute is still being assisted by the United Nations.

(iv) Demographic training institutes

101. In the area of demographic training, a North African demographic research and training centre was established in Cairo in 1963 by the Government of Egypt with the assistance of the United Nations. The fact

that the courses of the Centre are run in both Arabic and English has made it possible for a larger number of African countries to make use of its facilities. In later years, another demographic research and training centre was established in Achimota (Ghana), with the assistance of the United Nations.

(v) African Centre for Applied Research and Training in Social Development

102. In view of the need for continuing research into the problems of social development particularly on a comparative basis and of the analogous need to provide training for social workers in the context of African conditions, the Conference of African Ministers of Social Affairs decided at its meeting in Alexandria, Egypt, in January 1977 to recommend to the Conference of Ministers of ECA the establishment of an African centre for research and training in social development. The recommendations, were carefully examined by the Conference of Ministers at its meeting in Kinshasa, Zaire, in February/March 1977, when it was decided to create the centre.

103. Among other activities, the Centre will be involved in the initiation of applied research programmes and the development of indigenous teaching and research materials, the training of high-level personnel required for research and training, initiation of or contributions to research aimed at the development of rural development programmes, and the provision of assistance to national universities and social work institutions in the field of training.

104. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has been chosen as the host country for the Centre which will soon start its activities.

(vi) Training and user services in the field of natural resources

105. Knowledge of the type and volume of natural resources is very important for accelerated socio-economic development. To acquire this knowledge, certain skills of a specialized nature, in which African countries are extremely deficient, are necessary. It was in recognition of this situation that the Regional Centre for Training in Aerial Surveys at Ile-Ife, Nigeria, and the Regional Centre for Services in Surveying and Mapping at Nairobi, Kenya, were sponsored and established. The Centre at Ile-Ife has already graduated 93 photogrammetric technicians from 17 African countries and 23 photogrammetric operators from nine African

countries. In addition to surveying and mapping services at the Centre in Nairobi, an agreement establishing a Regional Remote Sensing Training and User Assistance Facility at the Centre was recently signed with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and a Director for the Facility has already taken up his post at the Centre.

106. In view of the increasing importance of earth resources satellites for the collection and interpretation of information on natural resources, there is under way a programme to establish three data receiving centres and five user-service and training centres. The data receiving centres are for Ouagadougou, the Upper Volta, which has already started operating; Nairobi, Kenya, which will soon start operating and Kinshasa, Zaire, for which arrangements are well in hand. The user service and training centres are for Ouagadougou, the Upper Volta, which is already operating; Nairobi, Kenya, to which reference has already been made in the preceding paragraph; Ile-Ife, Nigeria; Cairo, Egypt, and Kinshasa, Zaire; arrangements for which are nearing completion. The centres in Cairo and Kinshasa are national centres but arrangements are being made to convert them into regional centres.

107. Equally in connexion with mineral resources development is the ongoing project for the creation of mineral resources development centre in each of the subregions of ECA to serve the members of the particular subregion. The mineral resources of the countries of the region are at present being developed with the assistance of transnational corporations whose manner of operations does not always protect the interests of the host countries. The centres are designed to assist the countries of the region in their exploration, evaluation and exploitation activities as well as provide advice on negotiations with transnational corporations. On-the-job training is also expected to be provided to officials of member States in all these crucial areas of mineral resources development.

108. The East African Mineral Resources Development Centre is based in Dodoma, United Republic of Tanzania. The Director-General of the Centre recently took up his post. The arrangements for the establishment of the other centres are still in their early stages.

(vii) African Regional Centre for Technology

109. The importance of technology to development cannot be over-emphasized. Yet this is an area where all the countries of the region are less developed. Consequently, all the countries of the region have resorted

to importing technology at very high costs to them, both in terms of foreign exchange and in the inappropriateness of such technologies. Moreover, not much is being done in the area of the development of indigenous technology and capability. It was because of all these problems and the need to assist African countries to solve them that a decision was taken at the fourth session of UNCTAD in Nairobi in 1976 to create a regional centre for the transfer, adaptation and development of technology in Africa:

110. The over-all objective of the Centre is to assist member States to be aware of the crucial role of technological development, including methodologies of technology planning in the development process to establish the requisite institutional machinery and to constantly make available the resources, both human and financial, required for the efficient operation of such machinery.

111. The work of the Centre will be carried out through research, advisory services, organization of training seminars and workshops and the operation of an information and documentation service.

112. Senegal has been chosen as the host country of the Centre.

(viii) Proposed African Regional Centre for Engineering Design and Manufacturing

113. The role of industrialization in the socio-economic development of African countries has never been doubted. However, the type of industrialization strategy that has so far been adopted in the region has intensified the dependence of the region on the industrially advanced countries, in terms of imports of machinery, parts and accessories, technology and high-level skills. Yet, if the goal of indigenous and self-reliant development is to be achieved in the countries of the region, this heavy dependence on external sources for the crucial factors in industrialization has to be changed. One step in the direction of the needed change is the acquisition of the capacity to identify industrial problems and to design and manufacture tools, machinery and equipment for solving them. This approach is particularly important in the context of the Lima Declaration and Plan of Action on Industrialization.

114. It was in consideration of the foregoing problems and objectives that the Conference of African Ministers of Industry decided, at its fourth meeting held at Kaduna in Nigeria in November 1977, to create a regional

centre for engineering design and manufacturing. This decision was the culmination of the efforts of African Ministers of Industry and the Conference of Ministers of ECA to promote the establishment of industries producing capital goods, especially machinery and machine parts and of their desire to remove the big obstacle of inadequate development and, in some cases, the absence of any national capability for the conception and design of machinery and equipment.

115. The functions of the Centre will comprise the following: adaptation of foreign designs of machinery and industrial equipment, development of indigenous design of equipment, training of engineers and technicians for design and engineering development and organization of an information service on the engineering design of machinery and on the work of the Centre.

116. In order to spread the results of the work of the Centre effectively within the region, it is hoped that national centres will be identified or created which will establish contact and maintain close liaison with the Regional Centre as well as undertake their own tasks at the local level. It has been proposed that the activities of the national centres shall broadly comprise the training of engineers and technicians, in particular draftsmen, for the design and development of machinery and engineering equipment, the design and production of equipment, machinery and special tools in selected sectors to suit the particular needs of the country, and the general promotion and development of national capability for machine design and production through technical assistance to local workshops and other private organizations.

(ix) Proposed African Institute for Higher Technical Training and Research

117. To meet the neglected and growing needs of African countries for trained technological manpower as an essential input in the process of industrialization, it has been decided to establish an African Institute for Higher Technical Training and Research.

118. The functions of the Institute are expected to include:

(a) The education and training on a large scale of professionally qualified technologists to meet a wide spectrum of industrial needs;

(b) Research in such important but neglected areas as skill transfer, improvement and multiplication; the adaptation of rural migrants

to industrial employment; factors affecting the processes of technological invention and innovation in Africa; factors affecting labour productivity; social attitudes in industry, etc.;

(c) A substantial research programme in the area of what is currently described as 'appropriate' technology, in particular the upgrading of traditional technology;

(d) Serving as a reference centre on education technology;

(e) Experiments with bridging courses, designed to shift students in non-technological education courses to courses in technological education;

(f) Training job analysts, technical teachers and instructors and researchers for open-ended technical training; and

(g) Consultancy services to the education sector for Governments and to the 'business sector', both public and private.

119. Arrangements for the establishment of the Institute are already in full swing.

(x) Proposed African Centre for Industrial Consulting and Management

120. As part of the network of institutions to provide infrastructure for accelerated industrialization in Africa, a centre for industrial consulting and management has been proposed. This centre is envisaged as a project consulting organization whose main task will be the provision of advisory services on project analysis, including financing and management operations of such projects.

121. This project is still on the drawing board.

## VI. ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA (ECA) AND THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES

122. The 1960s and the 1970s have in large measure constituted a special period for ECA in two particular senses: it has attempted to establish for itself a unique and recognized position in the United Nations

system in general and in the United Nations<sup>1/</sup> in particular, and it has been actively involved in the development efforts of member States particularly through the creation and management of national and multinational development institutions. While the Commission will continue to reinforce its efforts in these two areas in response to changing circumstances, it is right to say that the recent decision of the General Assembly and that of the Economic and Social Council to which reference has already been made as well as the decision of UNDP to accord the Commission the status of an Executing Agency have confirmed the indispensable role of the Commission in the development efforts of member States.

123. Similarly the institutions which it has assisted in establishing have helped to lay a solid basis for future development efforts. Also the decision of member States to back the activities of the Commission with direct financial support has reinforced the position of the Commission. In this context, the future lies in the effective utilization of the status of the Commission and of the institutions that have been established. This calls for action on the part of both the Commission and member States.

#### The role of the Commission

124. As already indicated, there are five principal methods by which the Commission carries out its technical assistance activities: advisory services to member States and their multinational institutions, on request; studies; meetings, seminars, training workshops and conferences; collection of information and its distribution through publications; and identification, analysis and implementation of intercountry projects. The first four methods relate to the traditional activities of the Commission and the fifth reflects its newly acquired status of executing agency of UNDP-sponsored and other projects. The Commission has no choice but to intensify its activities in all these areas.

<sup>1/</sup> A distinction is usually made between (i) the United Nations itself which comprises Headquarters (New York), the United Nations Office at Geneva, the five regional commissions and such other units as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations; and (ii) the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); and (iii) the specialized agencies such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), etc.

125. It has been general criticism of the Commission in the past that it was a research rather than practically oriented organization. The combination of its new activity with the traditional ones is likely to bring out more clearly to member States that the role of research is to illuminate operational activities just as work on operational activities normally throws up subjects for research. In any case, research is an indispensable tool for effective international negotiations, the clarification of concepts and comparative studies of development experiences, subjects that will become important in the context of our new orientation in the development field.

126. But while research activities will continue, they will only form an integral part of the increasing involvement in the implementation of concrete projects. Inevitably, more and more resources will be devoted to the identification, analysis and implementation of multinational projects. Out of the experience gained will emerge the capacity to assist Governments individually in the crucial area of project analysis and implementation, an area in which most member States are still extremely weak.

127. Finally, following the decision of member States to designate the Commission as the forum for the discussion of issues coming up in international negotiations, the Commission is bound to build up expertise in this area so that advisory service can also be given to individual member States and the different multinational organizations on the continent.

#### The role of member States

128. In discussing the role of member States, particularly in making the Commission efficient, it is important to bear in mind that, according to the rules, it is the prerogative of member States and their institutions to request formally the services of the Commission. Thus while the Commission strives to make known to its member States the different services it can provide, it is the duty of member States to identify those areas in their development activities where they believe the Commission can be useful in complementing their efforts. This is a task for every department of Governments of member States. But more importantly, it might be advisable for each Government to designate an appropriate unit in its governmental set-up as the link between the Commission and its Government.

129. There are at least two important ways of addressing the question of the role of member States: the use they make of the services of the Commission and of the institutions which it has helped in creating, and the



contributions which they make to the policy-making activities of the Commission and to the task of guiding its orientation.

Use of the services of the Commission and of the institutions it has assisted in creating

130. The need to make effective use of the services of the Commission as well as those of the institutions it has assisted derives principally from the role of the Commission as the main general economic and social development centre within the United Nations system for the African region and from the fact that the institutions that the Commission has assisted in creating constitute part of the irreducible minimum of infrastructure for internally-generated and self-sustaining development. This is particularly so in the areas of training institutions and of institutions for the exploration, evaluation and processing of natural resources, including institutions for the transfer, adaptation and development of appropriate technology.

131. Therefore, member States are in a very strong position to complement their national resources by using the services of the Commission through its secretariat in all the areas of its competence and of those development institutions which it has assisted in creating. The action of member States in these areas in the past left much to be desired. This is a particularly serious situation when it is remembered that those institutions and the secretariat of the Commission are supported financially directly or indirectly by member States.

Contributions to the activities of the Commission and to its orientation

132. When we talk of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), we are in fact talking about the member States which constitute the Commission and not of its secretariat whose primary responsibility is to carry out the decisions of the Commission. Therefore, if the Commission is to be effective in discharging its responsibilities, its member States must show that they are fully responsible for determining and directing its policies. This they can do only by participating fully in the work of its Conference of Ministers and that of the other legislative bodies that have already been mentioned. Participating in the work of the Commission of course costs money and time. But it has to be realized that collective self-reliance, which is indispensable for national self-reliance in a world that is becoming more and more interdependent in spite of itself, has to cost money and time.

133. The other area in which member States can assist to make the Commission effective and efficient is through participation in its meetings, seminars, training workshops and conferences organized through the standing technical advisory bodies and ad hoc groups. An effective instrument for strengthening collective self-reliance is the sharing of experience gained in the identification and solution of development problems. Participation in meetings constitutes one of the principal means of sharing such experience.

134. Finally, experience gained in working in the secretariat is invaluable in the arduous task of coping with socio-economic problems at the national level. Some of member States have to work as regular staff members of the Commission, others have to work as consultants and as attachés with the sole objective of gaining the required experience and returning home to work or to continue to work.

135. In these three distinct areas, member States have to make the necessary sacrifice since international institutions created by them must be managed by competent experts. And in the context of self-reliance, this means practically African experts.

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