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PROMOTION OF TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION
BETWEEN AFRICA AND LATIN AMERICA

Status report on the implementation
of UNDP project INT/80/908

A note by the ECA secretariat

Introductory background

Project INT/80/908 is the first interregional TCDC/ECDC project of its kind to be implemented jointly by the secretariats of the Economic Commission for Africa and the Economic Commission for Latin America, with financial support from the Special TCDC Unit of the UNDP. The project, which has been under implementation for the past one and a half years, has as its ultimate objective the promotion of mutual co-operation between Africa and Latin America through the identification, formulation and execution of joint economic and technical co-operation activities beneficial to countries of both regions.

The project was conceived as a result of mandates given to the two regional commission secretariats by their respective legislative organs. Thus, in February and May 1977 at meetings of ECA and ECLA member States, the countries of Africa and Latin America adopted resolutions 302(XIII) and 363(XVII), respectively, on the strengthening of existing economic and technical co-operation arrangements and promotion of new co-operative programmes among the countries of their regions, using for that purpose their respective regional commissions. Pursuant to these resolutions, the secretariats of the two regional commissions decided to design projects for joint implementation in three priority sectors - i.e. manpower development, interregional trade, and science and technology. In March and April 1979, the initiatives taken by the two secretariats were formally endorsed by their respective Commission's sessions in ECA resolution 355(XIV) and ECLA resolution 387(XVIII). It is also worth recalling that the present project is in keeping with the spirit of decisions adopted at the Group of 77 Conference on Economic Co-operation

among Developing Countries held in Mexico City in 1976, and at the United Nations Conference on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries held in Buenos Aires in 1978.

Implementation of the project to date

The implementation of the project got seriously under way in January 1981 with the signature of the project document by the three parties concerned, namely ECA, ECLA and UNDP. The activities carried out under the project can be summarized as follows:

(a) Desk studies

The professional staff of the ECA and ECLA secretariats carried out desk studies which provided useful background or supplementary information on the extent, actual and potential, of economic and technical co-operation between African and Latin American countries in the three priority fields stated above. The findings of these studies were used by consultants to supplement their own findings based on field interviews and research.

(b) Study missions by consultants

Provision was made in the project budget for the hiring of three consultants for each region, that is, one in each field of specialization. A total of six consultants' reports have therefore been produced. In other words, there are two reports on each of the three fields of specialization, one prepared by the Latin American consultant from a Latin American perspective, and the other prepared by an African consultant from an African perspective. The consultants worked, of course, under the supervision of the substantive divisions of the regional commissions' secretariats which also prepared their terms of reference.

Due to limitation of funds, the field study by the consultants had a more limited geographical coverage than would have been desirable: the African consultants were only able to visit Algeria, Nigeria, Senegal and Zambia; while the Latin American consultants were able to visit Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago. The reports by the consultants as well as the joint document prepared by the secretariats will be presented to a joint meeting of experts which will be convened in Addis Ababa 1 to 5 June 1982.

(c) ECA/ECLA inter-secretariat consultations

As this is a joint ECA/ECLA project, it goes without saying that the two secretariats have worked pari passu, consulting each other every inch of the way. From the time the project was conceived, the two Executive Secretaries have always had this project on the agenda of their regular consultations.

At the operational level, the two secretariats have had two consultative meetings. The first was held at ECA headquarters in Addis Ababa in November 1981, and the second at United Nations Headquarters in New York in February 1982. Besides agreeing on procedural matters, these consultations made it possible for a common position to be reached on the preparation of documents, including the principal joint document for presentation at the forthcoming joint meeting of governmental experts.

(d) Joint meeting of Governmental Experts from Africa and Latin America on economic and technical co-operation, Addis Ababa, 1-5 June 1982

The culmination of the present project will be the convening of a joint Meeting of Governmental Experts from Africa and Latin America on economic and technical co-operation at ECA headquarters in Addis Ababa from 1 to 5 June 1982. Invitations to the meeting have already been sent to all African and Latin American countries requesting their participation at the highest expert level. Discussions at the meeting will be focused primarily on how to intensify existing, and forge new, co-operative ventures between the two regions in the three priority sectors selected, namely: manpower development, trade, and science and technology.

Seeing that this meeting is only about one month away, one reason why the secretariat has written this note is to remind member States present at this Conference of the great significance that the secretariat attaches to their participation in this joint meeting. The call that economic and technical co-operation among developing countries should be demonstrated in tangible form has been strong and persistent, and the message to their secretariats from the Ministerial Conferences of both ECA and ECLA as contained in formal resolutions adopted in recent years has been loud and clear.

It is expected that the joint meeting of experts will consider proposals and recommendations made by the ECA and ECLA secretariats on the basis of the consultants' reports, as well as on the basis of their own knowledge and experience; and that out of their deliberations may emerge concrete decisions on co-operative projects or joint ventures for financing and execution by the Governments, public organizations or private institutions of both regions.