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Statement by the ECA Secretariat on:

THE AFRICAN REGIONAL PLAN FOR THE WORLD PLAN OF ACTION

Introduction

After the UNGAST<sup>1/</sup> sessions held in Geneva in 1963, the United Nations, by ECOSOC resolution 980A(XXXVI) 1/8/63 set up an Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to development (ACAST) whose main role was defined as that of advising the Economic and Social Council and, through it, the General Assembly on ways and means by which to translate into action the concern and the ideas expressed at UNGAST.

In May 1966, in their Third Report to ECOSOC, the ACAST proposed that the desire of the United Nations to assist the developing countries to apply science and technology for the promotion of their development should be embodied in a formal plan of action which would provide a framework for international co-operation in this domain by the United Nations system of organizations, the developed countries and the developing countries themselves. The ACAST also proposed a set of objectives for the proposed plan of action in which were specified the pattern and the scope of intervention recommended. The objectives proposed for the World Plan of Action in the Third Report of ACAST were the following:

- (a) To assist the developing countries to build the necessary basic structure of institutions (national and, when appropriate, regional) and to train the necessary skilled personnel on which their capacity to apply science and technology to their development will depend. Full advantage must be taken of existing institutions;

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<sup>1/</sup> United Nations Conference on the Application of Science and Technology for the Benefit of the Less Developed areas, Geneva, 4-20 February, 1963.

- (b) To promote the more effective application of existing scientific knowledge and technology in the development of the less developed countries and, with that in view, to improve the arrangements for the transfer and adaptation of knowledge and technology already available in developed and developing countries, and at the same time, to develop a more-favourable climate in developing countries for the adoption of innovations in the techniques of production;
- (c) To focus increasingly the attention and mobilize the efforts of scientists and research organizations in highly developed countries as well as in the developing countries on problems whose solution will be of special benefit to the developing countries, and to this end to encourage co-operation between developing countries as well as between developed and developing countries;
- (d) To promote a greater knowledge among Governments, the scientific community, the general public and especially young people, in developed as well as developing countries, of the needs of the developing countries for science and technology.

In August of the same year, by its resolution 1155(XLI) - 5/8/66, ECOSOC approved the proposal of the ACAST for the preparation of a United Nations sponsored World Plan of Action for the application of science and technology for development. In the following year, the General Assembly in its resolution 2318(XXII) of 21 December 1967, confirmed the decision of ECOSOC to establish a world plan of action for the application of science and technology to development and endorsed the objectives for the proposed plan set forth by the ACAST.

Four years later, the ACAST produced the World Plan of Action<sup>2/</sup> report which was presented to ECOSOC at its 51st session during July 1971. This report (hereafter referred to as the global Plan) which was an indicative plan of comprehensive scope in its coverage, set out the global objectives, the areas

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<sup>2/</sup> United Nations publication, Sales No. : E.71.II.A.18.

of priority for action and the types of action proposed by the Advisory Committee for United Nations action and support. The most important function of the global Plan was to provide the framework for international co-operation in planning and action for the application of science and technology for development which was requested in the General Assembly resolution 1944(XVIII) of 11 December 1963 adopted after the UNCAST conference. The second main function of the global Plan was to furnish a cadre and a guide for the further elaboration of regional plans for the W.P.A. which would focus more closely on the regional needs and priorities of each of the developing regions.

The World Plan of Action can be considered as an offer from the United Nations system to assist with the development of the scientific and technological capacity of the developing countries in selected areas of high priority.

#### Preparation of Regional Plans

The need for regional plans had been recognized by ACAST at an early stage in its preparation of the W.P.A. The Advisory Committee decided that regional plans should be selective rather than comprehensive in their contents, and, within the same objectives as laid down for the global Plan, should consist of programmes of action chosen so as to answer to the priority needs of each respective developing region in science and technology. The Committee empowered its regional groups to function as Sub-Committees responsible for the preparation of the regional Plans. The regional economic commissions were requested to act as secretariats to the regional groups of ACAST for the purpose of preparing the draft proposals for the regional plans.

The Economic and Social Council considered the World Plan of Action twice, at its 51st and 53rd sessions. At both sessions, ECOSOC endorsed the proposal of ACAST that a further stage of elaboration of the W.P.A. in the form of regional plans was necessary.

In preparation for the African Regional Plan for the W.P.A., country surveys of needs and priorities in science and technology were carried out in thirty-eight African countries during 1969 and 1970. Twenty-three of these

country surveys have been published in the series S&T/WPA/1-41. In addition to these country surveys, submissions and documentation on types of action programmes relevant within different sectors were made available by individual specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system.

Draft proposals for the African Regional Plan were considered at three successive meetings of the Regional Group for Africa, namely, the fifth, sixth, and seventh meetings. At the seventh meeting of the Regional Group held in Addis Ababa from 10-12 July, 1972, the Regional Group approved a final draft for the regional Plan. This draft Plan was presented to the full meeting of ACAST by the Chairman of the Regional Group on behalf of his Sub-Committee at the 17th session of ACAST held in Geneva during 23 October - 1 November 1972. After making a number of amendments to the draft, the ACAST approved the African Regional Plan<sup>3/</sup> in the final form in which it is now presented before the Conference of Ministers. The regional Plans for ECLA and ECAFE were also approved at the same session.

#### Implementation of the W.P.A. in the African Region

In its resolution 1717(LIII) adopted on 28 July 1972, ECOSOC requested, in relation to the implementation of the W.P.A., as follows:

- "(b) The regional economic commissions, in consultation with the specialized agencies concerned, to consider specific plans of action being prepared for each region, with a view to commending them to the attention of the Governments of their member and associate member States in formulating national science and technology policies, establishing science and technology institutions, promoting research and science and technology education, and in formulating requests for aid:"

In reflection of the intention of this request by ECOSOC, the ACAST has requested that the regional Plans be presented to the respective economic commissions for consideration at their annual sessions in 1973. The Advisory Committee further requested that the secretariats of the regional economic  
<sup>3/</sup> ECA Document E/CN.14/579.

commissions take the initiative of following the plans through by organizing, in close collaboration on the special agencies, consultations with science policy-makers and planners in national Governments, by organizing national committees or by any other means at their disposal.

The African Regional Plan translates the indicative proposals contained in the global Plan into more concretely specified programmes for action, selected in accordance with the needs and priorities of the African region for the build-up of their capacity to acquire and to utilize technology.

In presenting the African Regional Plan to the Conference of Ministers, it is important to clarify the purpose and role of the Plan. The principal purpose of the Plan is to serve as a guideline and a source of inspiration to national Governments in the choice and design of projects most relevant to their respective countries for inclusion in their national development plans. Within the regional Plan will be found reflected, the priorities for action that are relevant to the needs of individual countries in science and technology. The regional Plan is not a comprehensive Plan for science and technology development for every African country to carry out. It is a typology and a thesaurus of programmes which will promote the objectives set out for the World Plan of Action in each country. These objectives can be summarized as "to promote the capacity of each developing country to utilize science and technology for development through the establishment of institutional infrastructure, the training of skilled personnel and the mobilization of international assistance.

#### Action at national level

The implementation of the W.P.A. will take place through action at national level. Such action will include the creation of the necessary organs and instruments for science and technology policy and planning and the selection and design of projects for implementation as part of national development plans.

Since no one country will be in a position to adopt all the programmes proposed in the Plan nor find it necessary to do so, the implementation of the African Regional Plan will lie in the extent to which individual countries take

advantage of the Plan by selecting particular projects within relevant programmes and incorporating these in their national development Plans.

The rôle of the regional Economic Commission in the implementation of the W.P.A. is to assist the member States to take maximum advantage of the Plan through a promotion of a thorough understanding of the objectives and the content of the Plan, through collaboration with the planning machinery in each country in the task of selecting national projects within the framework of W.P.A., and through the provision of assistance for the mobilizing of resources from United Nations and bilateral aid-giving bodies for their execution. The United Nations specialized agencies have been enjoyed by the General Assembly and ECOSOC to provide technical assistance in their special areas of competence for the projects which may be finally selected for implementation within individual country plans.

The idea behind the W.P.A., as enunciated by ACAST, is to develop the capacity of individual countries to apply science and technology to their own problems rather than to intervene directly on the final social and economic problems to which science and technology may be applied. This strategy is founded on the overall United Nations philosophy of helping the developing countries to help themselves.

As far as the ECA is concerned, our work programme in connexion with the W.P.A. in the immediate future will consist of:

- (a) promoting a better and wider knowledge of the World Plan of Action in the African countries;
- (b) working with individual countries in the creation of their national committees for the W.P.A., and providing assistance to the national committees in their selection and definition of projects within the framework of the African Regional Plan;
- (c) promoting an understanding of the African Regional Plan within the developed countries and, in particular, by the aid-giving agencies, whether government or non-government, of the developed countries;

- (d) collaborating with and assisting the developing countries in the mobilization of resources for the implementation of projects, particularly such resources as may be properly available within a context of international aid or co-operation.

The regional commission has been charged with the responsibility for co-ordination of United Nations assistance for the implementation of the Plan at regional level and for periodic review of progress. In discharging this role, the ECA will work in close collaboration with the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system.