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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE HUMAN DIMENSION
OF AFRICA'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT

(Khartoum, Sudan, 5-8 March 1988)

I. BACKGROUND

One of the adverse consequences of the economic crisis in African countries has been the aggravation of the deterioration of the wellbeing of the generality of the African people and the neglect of the need to effectively develop and utilize human resources to the extent that today, there is a human crisis as a fallout of the economic crisis.

Opportunities for education and training have been reduced; unemployment and underemployment are on the increase; the problems of refugees and migrants have worsened; and, human malnutrition levels and infant mortality are on the increase in many parts of Africa. These problems have had a particularly severe impact on vulnerable groups such as children, women, youth and on rural communities.

The ECA had predicted in its ECA and Africa's Development 1983-2008, that the political situation in Africa would worsen in the years ahead unless the human dimensions of the economic crisis are given a focus of attention. "Riots, crimes, and misery would be the order of the day in the year 2008 if present trends continue without conscious change." The structural adjustment and policy reform programmes, without being properly devised and appropriately funded and supported by the international community, have inevitably made the deterioration of living conditions for the vast majority of Africans unbearable.

Apart from the need to sensitize governments and the international community to the need to institute measures to protect the welfare of the people and ensure the effective development and utilization of human resources in the design and implementation of structural adjustment programmes and policy reform measures, there is also the moral imperative to look for solutions to the growing problems of unemployment and under-employment, of illiteracy, and of malnutrition, and high infant mortality, etc. within the context of development strategies and policies. The international community in concert with African governments must therefore urgently search for the solution to this highly volatile situation.

To this end, during the third meeting of the UN Steering Committee on the Follow-up on the UN Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, held in New York on 25 and 26 November 1986, it was decided that a United Nations inter-agency effort should be mounted to organize a major international conference in Africa on the Human Dimension of Africa's Economic Recovery and Development within the framework of activities related to the implementation of the UN-PAAERD.

The UN Inter-Agency Task Force on the Follow-up on the UN-PAAERD at the Regional Level assumed responsibility for the organization of the Conference and appointed an Inter-Agency Preparatory Committee to be responsible for all aspects related to the organization of the Conference. This Preparatory Committee is chaired by the Executive Secretary of ECA and composed of FAO, IBRD, IFAD, ILO, UNFPA, UNIDO, IMF, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, WHO and ADB. The UN Inter-Agency Task Force also decided that the

International Conference on the Human Dimension of Africa's Economic Recovery and Development should be held prior to the ECA Conference of Ministers Responsible for Human Resources Planning, Development and Utilization. The Government of the Republic of the Sudan has agreed to host the two conferences during the period 5-8 March and 9-13 March 1988, respectively.

The Khartoum Conference will be organized, as a collective UN inter-agency effort, as part of a series of conferences that would deal with the UN-PAAERD and its implementation. Indeed, it will follow on the wake of the International Conference on Africa: The Challenge of Economic Recovery and Accelerated Development which was organized by the ECA in June 1987 in Abuja, Nigeria, in collaboration with the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and with the support of the OAU and ADB. This Conference, which dealt with macro and global issues related to Africa's recovery and development challenges and opportunities, was, in a way, the pace-setter for the envisaged series of conferences which would deal with sectoral and thematic aspects of recovery and development in Africa. The Khartoum Conference will be the first in the series.

II. JUSTIFICATION AND OBJECTIVES

The human factor is central to the process of socio-economic transformation in that it is both the ultimate objective and the most powerful means of achieving socio-economic development. Human capacities will, on the one hand, need to be appropriately developed to bring about accelerated growth and development, and on the other hand human well-being will always remain the central objective of all development.

The UN-PAAERD and APPER have singled-out human resources development as one of the four priority areas of development at the national, sub-regional and regional levels during the period 1986-1990. Both documents also stressed the need for improvements in the management of the African economies and the role that human resources play therein. "Ensuring the effective participation of the people in all dimensions of development and establishing sound basis for political, economic and social justice" were also emphasized by the UN-PAAERD. Indeed, long before APPER and UN-PAAERD, the Lagos Plan of Action had accorded special importance to the human dimension describing human resources as the "custodian and mentor of socio-economic development" and asserting that "the attainment of the objectives of the LPA and FAL depends, in the final analysis on the development of a wide range of human resources". The LPA also stressed the need to engineer human-focused development with the full participation of the people in the benefits of that development.

However, because of the series of economic crises that African countries have been experiencing since the second half of the 1970s, particularly during the 1980s, there has been much neglect of the human dimension in development in Africa. In fact the situation has been severely aggravated by the structural adjustment measures that have been pursued which emphasize short-term financial and fiscal adjustment concerns rather than long-term balanced development. There is evidence that in many instances such adjustment measures have been implemented at high human costs and sacrifices in terms of depressed levels of investment in human resources and on the satisfaction of human needs. Such neglect for the human dimension is not only counter-productive from the point of view of well-

being, but is also detrimental to the economic process and the achievement of the objectives of recovery and the establishment of self-sustained and self-reliant development. There is a need thus to ensure that an end is put to such neglect and that a central place is once again accorded to the human dimension in Africa's efforts towards economic recovery and development.

More specifically, the Conference will seek to achieve the following objectives:

1. To critically assess the central role that the human dimension plays, both as a means to and an objective of development, in Africa's efforts towards achieving economic recovery and accelerated self-sustaining and self-reliant development.
2. To assess trends in a number of African countries as related to human resources development and to the elements of well-being and analyse the offsetting actions that are required for a broader and a more human-focused approach to adjustment.
3. To identify positive examples of sectoral and national as well as regional and sub-regional actions taken in Africa in recent years which could serve as models of human development that are worthy of being built upon.
4. To propose practical measures at the sectoral and national as well as subregional, regional and international levels through which the strengthening and further development of human capacities, and the enhancement of conditions of human well-being are made integral parts of national strategies, plans and programmes of economic recovery and development.

A Khartoum Statement on the Human Dimension of Africa's Economic Recovery and Development will synthesize the views of the Conference on the above points.

III. ORGANIZATION

The Conference will be organized as a collective UN inter-agency effort under the auspices of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on the Follow-up on the UN-PAAERD at the Regional Level. A Committee composed of ECA (Chairman), UNICEF, UNDP, FAO, ILO, UNESCO, WHO, World Bank, IMF, UNFPA, UNIDO, IFAD and ADB is responsible for all aspects related to the preparation of the Conference.

IV. PARTICIPATION

1. African ministers and senior officials concerned with economic development and planning, human resources and the human dimension of development; representatives of agencies and organizations of the UN system; representatives of African sub-regional, regional and inter-governmental organizations; donor countries and organizations; African and non-African NGOs, and eminent African and non-African scholars and development experts. All participants will be expected to cover the cost of their participation.
2. Some prominent African and international personalities will be invited to contribute papers and participate at the Conference in their personal capacity. The cost of their participation will be borne by the organizers.

V. FUNDING

The Government of the Republic of the Sudan will finance the local costs. Funding for the external component of the costs has been provided by a generous grant by UNDP and the Government of Canada and from contributions by co-operating agencies of the UN system.

VI. OUTPUT OF THE CONFERENCE

1. Publication of the Khartoum Statement on the Human Dimension of Africa's Economic Recovery and Development.
2. Publication of the Proceedings of the Conference.
3. Dissemination of the principal conclusions and recommendations of the Conference.

The Khartoum Statement and the proceedings of the Conference will be made available to the following:

1. ECA Conference of Ministers Responsible for Human Resources Development, Planning and Utilization (9-13 March 1988, Khartoum, Sudan)
2. UN Secretary-General
3. ECA Conference of Ministers
4. Member States and Ministries concerned with human resources development and the human dimension of structural adjustment
5. All UN Agencies and Organizations

6. President of ADB
7. Donor Countries and Organizations
8. NGOs and other International, Regional and Sub-regional Organizations
9. Institutions of higher learning in Africa and specialised research and manpower development institutions

VII. PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

Session Themes

Session I

1. The Human Factor and the Challenge of Recovery and Development in Africa

Session II

2. The Human Crisis at the Country Level: Country and Sub-regional Initiatives to Sustain the Human Dimension In spite of the Economic Crisis

Session III

3. The Human Dimension of Africa's Economic Crisis: The Impact on the Vulnerable Groups in African Societies

Session IV

4. Structural Adjustment Measures and Macro and Sectoral Human Dimensions

Session V

5. Long-term Development and Structural Change in Africa: Manpower Development Requirements and Utilization

Session VI

6. Short-, medium- and long-term support for the Human Dimension: The Role of International and Regional Organizations, NGOs and The Private Sector

Session VII

7. Consideration of the draft text of the Khartoum Statement on the Human Dimension and Africa's Economic Recovery and Development

Session VIII

8. Adoption of the Khartoum Statement
9. Closure of the Meeting