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WEST AFRICAN SUBREGIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE SECOND UNITED NATIONS TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS DECADE IN AFRICA

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INTRODUCTION

1. The present report has been prepared to describe the strategies and action programmes of the West African subregion for UNTACDA II.

2. At the request of the IGOs of the subregion, ECA prepared this document using reports received from those IGOs. It therefore should be seen as an initial synthesis of the available information both on transport and communications systems and the analysis thereof and on subregional strategies and programme of action.

3. Because the data do not cover the subregion as a whole and because the analysis does not cover all sixteen countries concerned, the document remains general on some issues, particularly the major problems to be addressed and the specific strategies and activities to be pursued in the effort to find appropriate solution.

4. Much use has been made of the CEAO transport survey extended to include Togo (adding up to eight countries) and the major findings could easily be extrapolated to cover other countries of the subregion.

5. Because of the limited number of NCC reports received (four out of sixteen) the document only very superficially deals with projects. This aspect should be subsequently developed on the basis of the priorities decided on by member States.

II. PRESENTATION OF THE SUBREGION

Physical data

6. The West African subregion is made up of sixteen countries covering a total surface area of 6,140 million square kilometres.

More than 40 per cent of this is desert, swampland and forest. There are three land-locked countries (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger), one island country (Cape Verde) and 12 coastal countries (Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo).

7. All the three land-locked countries are at least 1,000 kms away from their main transit ports.

Socio-economic data

8. In 1988, the subregion had a population of 189.6 million which meant a mean density of 31 persons/sq. km. From 1980 to 1987, the population grew at a rate of 2.9 per cent per year and this rate should continue until the year 2000.

9. The urbanization rate is very high. The urban population accounted for 30 per cent of the total population in 1988 and grew from 1980 onward at a mean annual rate 5.9 per cent.

10. In all countries of the subregion, the mainstay of the economy is agriculture with industry little developed and rather average tertiary sector.

11. The mean per capital GNP in 1988 was approximately US$399 while the GDP was US$62.09 billion. Only three countries of the subregion are classified among the middle income countries and the remaining thirteen fall into the category of low income countries.

12. As a result of the crisis created by a very substantial debt burden estimated in 1987 at US$64.427 billion (83 per cent of that being official public debt) and adverse climatic conditions prevailing in certain countries the economy of the subregion did not make any significant progress over the last decade.

13. The major indicators characterizing this situation are the following:

(i) The mean annual growth rate of GDP which was 2.7 per cent for the period 1965 - 1980 fell to 1.47 per cent over the period 1980 - 1988;

(ii) At least five countries have also experienced a negative growth rate;

(iii) The terms of trade continued to deteriorate, falling from the 100 index in 1980 to 94.5 in 1985 and 85 in 1987;

(iv) Both imports and exports continued to decline from 1980 to 1987 respectively from the figures of US$26.1 billion and US$33.9 billion to US$15.2 billion and US$14.3 billion. In contract, cereal imports increased from US$1.9 billion in 1974 to US$2.8 billion in 1987.

III. ANALYSIS OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS

The place transport and communications in the economy

14. From the data available, it is not possible to assess what part transport and communications play in the subregional economy. What is known however is that in eight countries of the subregion (CEAO member countries plus Togo) the share of the transport sector in GDP ranges from 7 to 10 per cent. Moreover, transport and communications would seem to account for 8 per cent of total household consumption.

Presentation of transport and communications systems

Transport systems

15. All the transport modes (road, rail, air, maritime and to a lesser extent inland water transport) are represented in the subregional transport systems.

Road transport

Infrastructure

16. The road transport mode dominates overland transport.

17. The current road network of the subregion is made up of about 154,000 km. of major roads constituting the classified network and of 155,000 km. of secondary unclassified roads making a total of 319,000 km.

18. Of the classified network 62,000 km. or 40 per cent are surfaced roads and 92,000 km. earth roads. The total road density is 5.2 km/100 sq.km. In terms of major roads, the road density is not more than 2.5 km/100 sq.km. but given the fact that about 40 per cent of the total surface area of the subregion is not habitable, the figure comes 4.2 km/100 sq.km. The surfaced road network links the capitals to the major towns of the countries and links up the capitals of the various countries. This is a relatively well maintained network with 58 per cent being in good repair, 17 per cent average and 25 per cent in poor repair.

19. In contrast, the earth road network is much less properly maintained with 11 per cent being in good repair, 31 per cent average and 58 per cent in poor repair.

20. From the standpoint of the physical integration of the subregion, the basic road network on which such integration would be based is made up of, on the one hand, longitudinal highways commonly referred to as corridors and which open up the three land-locked countries of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger and, on the other hand latitudinal highways (the trans-coastal highway linking up the coastal countries and the trans-Sahelian highway linking up the land-locked countries).

21. The current status of infrastructure in the transport corridors is as follows:

Burkina Faso corridors

22. Nearly 98 per cent of the international traffic of this country goes along the following corridors:

(a) The Abidjan - Bobo Dioulasso - Ouagadougou railway;

(b) The Abidjan - Bobo Dioulasso - Ouagadougou highway;

(c) The Lome - Ouagadougou highway.

23. The Abidjan - Ouagadougou railway is 1,118 km long with a metric gauge and has relatively adequate running characteristics in terms of routing and axle load.

24. The Abidjan - Ouagadougou highway is 1,118 km long and fully surfaced and properly routed. The Lome- Ouagadougou highway is 967 km long, also tarred and fairly well routed.

Mali corridors

25. About 99 per cent of Mali's international traffic passes through the corridors of:

(a) The Dakar - Bamako railway;

(b) The Abidjan - Bamako highway and accessorily, the Abidjan - Ouagadougou railway and the Ouagadougou - Bamako highway.

26. The 1,230 km long Dakar - Bamako railway is in relatively good repair while Abidjan - Bamako highway is entirely surfaced and well routed.

Niger corridors

27. Nearly 92 per cent of Niger international traffic transit through the three corridors of:

(a) They combined rail- road route linking Cotonou, Parakou and Niamey;

(b) The Lome - Niamey highway;

(c) The Lagos - Niamey link which can be travelled entirely by road or by a combination of road and rail.

28. The road and rail combination from Cotonou to Niamey is 1,060 km long with 438 km being railway and 622 km being highway. While the railway is in satisfactory state of repair the highway is entirely tarred. The Lome - Niamey highway link has a total length 1,241 km which is fully tarred and well routed.

29. The Lagos - Niamey highway link has a length of 1,525 km and is fully tarred. The combined rail and road link from Lagos to Niamey includes 1,150 km of good railway and 935 km of tarred road making a total of 2,086 km.

Trans-African highways

30. According to information provided by ECOWAS, 88 per cent (4,023.5 km out of 4,563 km) of the Nouackchott - Lagos trans-coastal highway is tarred while the Dakar - N'Djamena trans-Sahelian highway is 83 per cent (3,509 km out 4,232 km) tarred excluding feeder links.

31. For the trans-coastal highway, the untarred segements are in five countries only (80 km in Cote d'Ivoire, 156 km in Liberia, 178.5 km in Sierra Leone, 125 km in Guinea and 61 km in Guinea - Bissau). For the trans-Sahelian highway, the segments yet to be tarred can be found in three countries only (Senegal: 208 km, Mali: 424 km, Burkina Faso: 131 km).

32. While the untarred segements of the trans-coastal highway represent a genuine handicap to inter-State transport, the same cannot be said of the trans-Sahelian highway.

33. Indeed, the railway is used for trade between Mali and Senegal while between Mali and Burkina Faso, Bamako is linked to Ouagadougou by two other tarred roads even if those roads make the distance longer by 211 km and 275 km.

Road vehicle fleet

34. Updated data on the road vehicle fleet for the subregion as a whole are not yet available. However, using 1983 estimate of slightly more than one million vehicles with a per capita density of about 6 vehicles, it may be estimated that the vehicle fleet in 1988 was 1.2 million at the same density. This estimate is not exaggerated.

35. Considering CEAO member countries in addition to Togo (a total of eight countries) the vehicle fleet totalled 358,374 in 1988 giving per capita density of 6.8 vehicles. In this area of

the subregion, the average age of vehicle is relatively high (with 80 per cent being more than five years old and nearly 45 per cent of that being more than ten years old) and the average annual distance travelled by lorries and articulated trucks ranges from 42,000 km to 48,000 km which denotes a low rate of productivity.

36. The observations made in the CEAO region which has the highest per capita density of vehicles because of the low population desity both in terms of the age of the vehicle fleet and the low productivity of goods transport vehicles should hold true for the subregion as a whole.

Rail transport

Infrastructure

37. The railway network in the West African subregion covers a total length of 10,188 km divided into three different gauges: 1,435 mm over a distance of 1,179 km; 1,067 mm over a distance of 4,536 km and 1,000 mm over a distance of 4,473 km. This network includes 12 national rail networks (a) Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo of which three are for transporting mineral ores, (b) Liberia, Mauritania and Sierra Leone.

38. From the standpoint of the physical integration of the subregion only six national networks can be used subregionally (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Nigeria and Senegal) and the few existing inter-connections concern only four countries (Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali and Senegal) with the inter-connected networks having been the only inter-State networks that existed in the past.

39. Nearly all the railway infrastructure of the subregion was built at the beginning of the century. The tracks are old and characterized, particularly for the public transport networks by: