NOTES ON DEVELOPMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS IN AFRICA

(Prepared by the Joint ECA/ITU Mission)

In Resolution 108(VII), adopted at the 7th Session of ECA in Nairobi in February 1965, the Commission expressed the conviction that "efforts must now be concentrated on installing the equipment needed for the establishment of suitably integrated African telecommunication network" and went on to recommend to African countries steps to be taken to this end. The Joint ECA/ITU Mission has been actively pursuing this aspect of the work with both positive results and some encouraging future prospects.

The governments of Ethiopia and Ivory Coast are to establish a pilot telecommunication circuit between Addis Ababa and Abidjan with the support of the United Nations Special Fund and the ITU. The purpose of this circuit is not only to establish commercial services between these two countries but also to obtain valuable traffic statistics which could be used as a guide to the viability of similar circuits in Africa. For this reason the results of the pilot project are of considerable interest to the countries grouped in the East African sub-region.
The Executive Secretary of ECA has just been informed by the Ambassador of the Netherlands that they will assist in the provision of telecommunication circuits in Burundi, Congo (Léopoldville), Rwanda and Uganda. The exact details of the aid have not yet been released, but these circuits form a most valuable contribution to the development of the countries concerned and a very useful connexion between the vast networks of the Congo and of East Africa. The provision of these circuits forms an integral part of the Joint ECA/ITU short-term programme and it is an example of "co-ordinated bilateral aid".

Future activities of the Joint ECA/ITU Mission concern the sponsoring of further co-ordinated bilateral aid for the short-term programme and in the setting up of the pre-investment survey which would precede the implementation of a long term, large-scale African telecommunication network, originally referred to in ECA Resolution 106 of the 6th Session. Work on both these aspects is well advanced and some positive steps can be expected shortly.