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A0357

Distr.
LIMITED
S&T/CESTD/I.2
12 September 1973

ENGLISH
Original : FRENCH



ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
Intergovernmental Committee of Experts
for Science and Technology development

First meeting
Addis Ababa, 6-9 November 1973

MACHINERY FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AFRICAN REGIONAL PLAN AT COUNTRY LEVEL

Introduction

The African Regional Plan for the World Plan of Action is now completed. It was approved by the Advisory Committee at its seventeenth session in 1972. The Plan was later on presented to the Conference of Ministers of the ECA which reviewed, discussed and adopted it at its second meeting held from 19-23 February 1973, in Accra.

Since then the African Regional Plan has been published as a United Nations document (Ref. No. E/CN.14/579). The Plan document deals with the different kinds of scientific and technological programmes which can promote a more or less rapid development of the African countries through the rational application of science and technology. The programmes and projects included in the Plan have been selected as examples, but are based on the results of a survey of needs and priorities of the different African countries in science and technology. The programmes are not intended to be exclusive, but represent a minimum body of planned activities which can contribute to significant development within the framework of the Second United Nations Decade for development.

Preparation of national plans

Before passing on to a consideration of operational arrangements, it is useful to consider the general strategy envisaged for the implementation of the African Regional Plan. The scenario for the implementation of the Plan is conceived as follows: the World Plan of Action which is a global indicative plan with a coverage of all the developing countries has been translated through the African Regional Plan into programmes and projects of particular relevance to the needs of the African region. The Regional Plan in its own turn should then form a point of departure and provide the guidelines for national plans which will be more specifically oriented to satisfy the needs of individual countries. Certain programmes or projects in the African Regional Plan will turn out to be common to two or more countries, whether they are neighbouring countries or not, and their implementation will require co-operation on an international level. Such projects will be designated as regional projects.

The execution of the World Plan of Action within the African region will therefore be based essentially on the implementation of national plans. The preparation of these national plans will be the task of the national committees. The next stage therefore and perhaps the most important stage for the application of the African Plan within the African region is the preparation of a national plan in each member State.

Creation of national committees

It is proposed that each Government created a national committee for the regional plan which will work under the authority of the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development. These committees would operate more effectively if they were under the authority of the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, which would lend its assistance in carrying out studies needed in taking decisions as to investments in the projects selected.

It is, however, possible that in some countries the national committee will not be able to carry out the role assigned to it effectively unless it operates under the authority of another ministry or government agency. In such cases, it would be advisable to put the committee under the ministry or agency most apt to further the fulfilment of the committee's objectives. The Ministry of Planning and Economic Development or other ministry or governmental agency responsible for the committee should submit to the National Cabinet of Ministers a proposal for the creation of this national committee or equivalent organ; the proposal should envisage, for example, the membership of the committee or organ, its relations with the ministry responsible for it and with other ministries, research institutions and universities as may be involved in the implementation; the proposal should also include the terms of reference of the Committee, its plan of work and the location of the secretariat to service it.

In any case, full use should be made of any national scientific and technical councils and similar bodies engaged in scientific and technical planning. In fact in countries where institutions for scientific planning may be modified or re-structured to perform the role envisaged for the national committees, it may not even be necessary to create a new organ.

The important things to concentrate on are the membership and role of those organs responsible for implementing the African Regional Plan at the country level. It will be the task of those organs to ensure that all the activities pertaining to the African Regional Plan are co-ordinated at the highest possible level of government. An efficient secretariat capable of preparing the work of the organ and satisfactorily transmitting its decisions to the highest level of government will be by far the most important factor in determining the success of any national organ responsible for implementing the African Regional Plan.

Structure and composition of committees or organs responsible for implementing the African Regional Plan

As for the structure and the composition of the national committees or organs for implementing the African Regional Plan, it is envisaged that they will include representatives of each and every ministry responsible for the different sectors included in the African Regional Plan, as well as representatives from the Ministry

of Finance. The Ministry of Planning and Economic Development or another ministry should provide a secretariat. The committees or equivalent organs should be able to create working sub-committees which will deal with specific problems. Each sub-committee will need to select its own chairman and a rapporteur and will undertake studies of programmes and projects which fall within its area of competence.

It must be understood that, in addition to government representatives, national committees or equivalent organs must include representatives of universities and the private sector so as to ensure that there is a general mobilization of efforts on the part of those elements in each country which have the largest role to play in implementing the plan.

Responsibilities of the national committees or equivalent organs

The national committees or equivalent organs, where necessary, through their sub-committees, will have as their principal task to select the programmes and projects of interest for their country in the context of their national development plan, to study these projects and to prepare a fully elaborated report incorporating a properly considered design for each project. They should also prepare estimates of costs for each project and suggest possible sources of finance for its implementation.

Each programme or project selected should be elaborated in a report containing a clear definition of the project and all relevant information showing the relationship between the project and the rest of the national plan, the objectives to be achieved, an estimate of the period of implementation and the material and financial resources that will be required. In addition, the project report should state the kinds of expertise required and, where possible, name the institutions that could provide such expertise and the different stages of execution of each project where applicable.

All programmes and projects that have been prepared at the level of the sub-committees should be presented at the plenary sessions of the national committee or equivalent organ for discussion and review. At this level, a harmonization of the proposals from the different sub-committees can be carried out which will result in the adoption of a single plan of programmes and projects of high priority, capable of being realized within the resource possibilities of the country concerned.

The programmes and projects selected by the national committee or equivalent organ should then be presented by the Chairman of the committee or organ to the Government for final review and approval. At this level might be discussed the financial contribution from the revenue and capital budgets of the Government, in relation to the total requirements for plan implementation.

All other additional alternatives for financing the country plan which may be suggested by the national committee or equivalent organ should also be reviewed at the Cabinet level.

After a national selection of projects has been made by a country, the projects in the country plan should be defined in greater detail so that they can be presented by the Government to different sources for financing whether bilateral or multilateral.

Relations of national committees or organs for the African Regional Plan with the ECA

The first task of the Commission will be to provide assistance for the creation of national committees or equivalent organs for the African Regional Plan in all the member States and for the commencement of their work. The procedure envisaged in this regard is that ECA will designate an official who has been concerned with the preparation of the African Regional Plan to participate in the meetings of the national committee or equivalent organ and to assist it in its work. This official will, at the same time, provide a liaison between the national committee or equivalent organ and the secretariat of the Commission. The official should be capable of providing any additional information that may be required about the structure of the Plan and its objectives and additional information that is required from the secretariat for the work of the national committee or equivalent organ.

The role of liaison will include the responsibility to report to the secretariat the problems that arise, in course of the work of the national committee or equivalent organ and to keep the Commission informed on the progress of implementation of decisions taken by the committee. This reporting arrangement will enable the Commission to study problems that may arise in the work of the national committee and provide advice on the best approaches to adopt in order to solve these problems. Once the national programmes and projects have been prepared, the secretariat will join its efforts to those of the member States in order to mobilize the resources necessary for the implementation of the Plan from all sources, including bilateral and multilateral. In order to facilitate such mobilization, the ECA should undertake a promotional programme of information to stimulate the intervention of Governments and such other institutions as may be interested in offering assistance. This initial promotional initiative should be followed up by each country on behalf of specific projects within their national plan. In addition, the Commission will undertake the responsibility of co-ordinating the necessary contributions from the institutions within the United Nations system.

It is recommended that to bolster its efforts, the Commission should take advantage of any facilities offered by the offices of the United Nations Resident Representatives in each of the countries concerned.

The Commission will also be responsible for the task of reviewing and monitoring the progress of implementation of the Plan. The organ provided for this purpose will follow the progress achieved and suggest any modifications that may be necessary in the course of the execution of the Plan.

Relations with the organizations of the United Nations system

It will be the responsibility of each National Committee to plan and to organize the task of preparing their own country plan. In addition, those coun-

tries which have the necessary personnel will be expected to proceed with the preparation of project studies under their own efforts. However, the organization of the United Nations system will be prepared to provide assistance to any countries that do not possess the qualified personnel for the study of their projects, or which might require special assistance for certain programmes and projects. The organizations of the United Nations, at the request of any member State, will then be able to participate either at the stage of the preparation of the national plan within the sub-committees, or in any case should be prepared to offer assistance at the stage of preparation of feasibility studies and project design.

Intergovernmental organizations whose co-operation might be sought in connexion with programmes and projects within their competence should also lend their assistance at the request of member States.

Machinery for review and evaluation of progress of implementation of the African Regional Plan

The African Regional Plan being primarily a plan of action rather than an indicative plan, it is necessary that a body be charged with the responsibility of following the progress realized in its implementation. This body will also evaluate the results obtained and formulate recommendations where necessary. Such an organ will provide an assurance that the Plan is properly applied and that solutions are found to the difficulties which might arise in the course of its execution.

The Conference of the Ministers of the ECA at its second meeting held in Accra from 19-23 February 1973 has provided the machinery for this purpose by its adoption of resolution 248(XI) on science and technology. By this resolution, the Conference decided to create a special Intergovernmental Committee of Experts chosen from among member States which will be charged with the follow-up and the regular review of the work of the secretariat of the Commission in the application of the African Regional Plan.

The Intergovernmental Committee of Experts is also requested to provide assistance to the secretariat of the Commission in the co-ordination of the activities of the organizations of the United Nations system which are expected to participate in the implementation of the Plan within different member States.
