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**THE MULPOCS:
STRENGTHENING ECA'S SUBREGIONAL PRESENCE**

SUMMARY

At its thirty-first session/twenty-second meeting held in Addis Ababa from 6 to 8 May 1996, the ECA Conference of Ministers adopted resolution 810 (XXXI) on the strengthening of the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres (MULPOCs). In that resolution, the Conference requested the Executive Secretary of ECA "to take the necessary steps to strengthen the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres (MULPOCs) by putting at their disposal sufficient and competent staff as well as the necessary financial resources... to ensure that the Centres play their role more efficiently as centres of excellence for the exchange of experiences and information and provision of support for the implementation of regional economic integration ..." and to report on the implementation of the resolution.

In implementing the resolution, the secretariat undertook extensive consultations both in-house as well as with member States and partner institutions on modalities for enhancing the effectiveness of the MULPOCs. This was done as part of the ongoing renewal process by the Commission to serve Africa better.

The purpose of this report is, therefore: (a) to inform the Conference of Ministers of the actions taken to strengthen the MULPOCs as requested, and (b) to seek guidance on measures aimed at further reinforcing the capacity of MULPOCs in order to enhance ECA's impact at the subregional level.

The Conference is called upon to make decisions on the following issues:

- (a) Revising the mandate of the MULPOCs in line with the new orientation in the Commission;
- (b) Change in name from MULPOC to Subregional Development Centre (SRDC); and
- (c) Establishment of separate centres for Eastern and Southern Africa.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its twenty-second meeting held in Addis Ababa from 6 to 8 May 1996, the ECA Conference of Ministers adopted a resolution¹ requesting the Executive Secretary of the Commission to take necessary measures to strengthen the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres (MULPOCs) "... with improved leadership ... and quality staff", and to report on the implementation of the directives so given (copy of the resolution is annexed to this report.)

2. The adoption of this resolution reflected the dominant view among member States about the need to enhance the role of the MULPOCs so that they could become effective partners of the regional economic communities, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Conference was also guided by the recommendation made by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) in its Report on the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and beyond (UN-NADAF)² which suggested further decentralization of resources to the MULPOCs. The underlying factor in the views of member States and the recommendation of the JIU was the fact that MULPOCs had the potential to better serve their respective subregions if adequately equipped. The thrust of the resolution clearly showed that the Conference of Ministers had chosen to reinforce the role of ECA at subregional level over the option of discontinuing the MULPOCs.

3. In implementing the resolution, the Executive Secretary sent the Deputy Executive Secretary on a fact-finding mission to three MULPOCs to consult member States and partner institutions on modalities for enhancing the effectiveness of the MULPOCs. Subsequently, an ECA in-house Task Force was established to make proposals on strengthening the MULPOCs as part of the ongoing renewal process undertaken by the Commission in order to serve Africa better. Finally, missions were fielded to carry out further consultations with countries as well as the regional economic communities, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) offices and other selected institutions on the proposed strengthening of MULPOCs. The list of countries and institutions visited is annexed to this report.

4. In his consultative missions carried out in 1996, the Deputy Executive Secretary visited the MULPOC offices in Lusaka, Niamey and Tangier to assess their operations, and held consultations with the host Governments of Zambia, the Niger and Morocco. In addition, he held discussions with the UNDP offices in these countries as well as with the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA).

5. The in-house Task Force on MULPOCs was established by the Executive Secretary to undertake a thorough review of all aspects of the MULPOCs, including their mandate, geographical coverage, membership and headquarters location, institutional framework, operational modalities as well as resource requirements. The work of the Task Force complemented the report of the Deputy Executive Secretary and was guided by the principles of the new strategic directions of ECA, namely the need to seek excellence, cost-effectiveness and effective partnership.

6. After consideration of the above reports, the Executive Secretary outlined actions to be taken in strengthening the MULPOCs. Although a number of proposals in these reports could easily be implemented in fulfilment of resolution 810 (XXXI), it was felt that there was need for further consultations with stakeholders in restructuring the MULPOCs. Among the actions taken in this regard were:

¹ Commission resolution 810 (XXXI).

² Document JIU/REP/95/12.

(a) Deployment of an average of ten professional staff to each of the five MULPOCs, raising the staff level from the present 21 (or 9 per cent of total ECA staff) to 49 (or 20 per cent). The additional staff have already begun moving to the MULPOCs;

(b) Extensive consultation with member States, the regional economic communities and partners on the proposed strengthening of the MULPOCs; in this regard, the Executive Secretary briefed the African Ambassadors based in Addis Ababa; visited the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda to consult on the location of the proposed new MULPOC office for Eastern Africa; and sent five teams of consultants and ECA staff to over 20 countries and all the major regional economic communities to consult on the proposals to strengthen the MULPOCs.

7. The results of these consultations and recommendations for changes are summarized in the next chapter for consideration by the Conference.

8. The purpose of this report is, therefore (a) to inform the Conference of Ministers of the actions taken to strengthen the MULPOCs as requested; and (b) to seek guidance on measures aimed at further reinforcing the capacity of MULPOCs in order to enhance ECA's impact at the subregional level. These measures include the proposed new orientation and terms of reference of the MULPOCs, location, geographical coverage, institutional framework, resource allocation as well as their operational modalities.

II. ACTIONS TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THE RESOLUTION

A. Mandate of the MULPOCs

9. The mandate of the MULPOCs derives from two resolutions adopted by the ECA Conference of Ministers, namely resolution 311 (XIII) of 1 March 1977 on the establishment of the MULPOCs, and resolution 702 (XXV) of 19 May 1990 on transforming and strengthening the MULPOCs. Resolution 810 (XXXI) on the strengthening of the MULPOCs adopted by the twenty-second meeting of the ECA Conference of Ministers on 8 May 1996, while not specifying any change in the mandate of the MULPOCs, however empowered the Executive Secretary to consider all aspects that could positively impact on their performance. This naturally includes revisiting their mandate.

10. The MULPOCs were established as the operational arms of ECA with the objective of fostering economic cooperation and integration at the subregional level in Africa. At the time of their establishment in 1977, Africa had actively begun fostering the concept of regional integration as the most effective approach to achieving accelerated development in the continent through collective self-reliance. The terms of reference as defined at their establishment were:

(a) Identification of activities/projects of a multinational and multisectoral character, and national activities which have a multinational character;

(b) Provision of assistance to member States of their subregions in pursuing those activities by undertaking prefeasibility and feasibility studies and in the process of implementing projects; and

(c) Provision of assistance, on the basis of the identification by the countries of the subregion, of the core development issues of the subregion on which the member States wish to address themselves.

11. However, successive assessment reports revealed considerable dissatisfaction with their performance and achievements, which prompted the General Assembly, through resolution 43/216, to strongly recommend that "the achievements of the MULPOCs be thoroughly evaluated with a view to deciding whether this experiment should be continued or whether the mandate, number and structure of these Centres should be completely reorganized."

12. Accordingly, a Review Team was jointly appointed in March 1989 by the Executive Secretary of ECA and the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management to assess the functioning of MULPOCs, especially in view of the decision by UNDP to end its financial support to the Centres. Following consideration of the report of the Review Team, the ECA Conference of Ministers adopted resolution 702 (XXV) of 19 May 1990, which, *inter alia*, adopted new terms of reference for the MULPOCs, namely:

(a) To provide member States and IGOs with technical assistance in project identification, planning and the formulation of multisectoral programmes and projects for execution by the MULPOCs in association with IGO secretariats and the specialized agencies of the United Nations system;

(b) To provide member States and IGOs with short-term advisory services in development planning and to assist in the translation of those plans into multinational and multisectoral programmes and projects including the identification and formulation of programmes and projects for execution by them or, at their request, by the MULPOC itself, in association with the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, as required;

(c) To undertake pre-feasibility and feasibility studies, research on and analyses of priority areas identified by member States and IGOs for enhancing subregional cooperation and integration;

(d) To provide assistance and support in the development of human resources and in organizing training courses, seminars, lectures, workshops and round-tables, with a view to strengthening the institutional capacity of member States to execute multinational development programmes and projects for socio-economic advancement;

(e) To develop in light of the above, effective working relationship with governments, IGOS, UNDP offices and other international organizations with a view to harmonizing the designing, programming and implementation of technical assistance programmes at the subregional level;

(f) To develop and execute programmes for more effective participation of women in all aspects of development efforts at the subregional level; and

(g) To collect and disseminate at the subregional level, information and statistical data on macroeconomic indicators in the member States and to assist them in establishing compatible systems for exchanging information among themselves and with their development partners.

13. These revised terms of reference brought into a much sharper focus the multinational programme/project identification and implementation role of the MULPOCs which was not clearly described in the initial mandate contained in resolution 311 (XIII). It was also made clear that at the national level, the Centres would provide advisory services and training in development planning and in facilitating the harmonization of national plans with subregional programmes and projects.

14. In considering the new strategic directions of ECA at its twenty-second meeting, the Conference of Ministers further assessed the performance of the MULPOCs. Member States reaffirmed the relevance of the MULPOCs, particularly in relation to the need to respond more directly to their requests and those of the regional economic communities, and insisted that as a key component of ECA's comprehensive renewal exercise, the MULPOCs should be strengthened to serve member States effectively.

15. Therefore, it is necessary to revise their mandate in order to enhance the reach and effectiveness of ECA at the operational level. The division of labour between the MULPOCs and the secretariat headquarters should be defined in such a way as to ensure complementarity, synergy and cost-effectiveness. Operationally, the MULPOCs should be the secretariat's main instrument in designing, and implementing

subregional programmes to the extent possible with other development partners, in light of the differentiated priorities of the subregions served by the respective centres.

16. Outcome of consultations: There was overwhelming support from all countries, the regional economic communities, UNDP and institutions visited for the proposed reform in ECA in general, and the strengthening of MULPOCs in particular. Indeed, many stated that the renewal, including the reorientation of the MULPOCs, was long overdue. Furthermore, the need for a simpler designation of the Centres was generally recognized and the appellation Subregional Development Centres (SRDCs) is regarded as a better portrayal of their functions.

RECOMMENDATION 1

17. In light of the above considerations and the results of consultations, it is recommended that the mandate of the Centres be revised to ensure strategic focus for the activities and role of the MULPOCs in line with the new orientation of the Commission. Specifically, the role of the MULPOCs will be as follows:

(a) Act as operational arms of ECA at the country and subregional levels and catalysts to leverage ECA's resources. In performing this function, the MULPOCs should be perceived as integral organs of the secretariat rather than separate structures, and should be guided by the same operational culture and oversight principles;

(b) Be instruments for ensuring harmony between subregional and regional programme orientations and those defined by the strategic directions of the Commission. This is to ensure pertinent programming at the subregional level, while taking account of ECA programme focus;

(c) Provide advisory services to member States, regional economic communities and subregional development operators, with back-stopping from the secretariat and other centres of excellence in the subregions;

(d) Act as mechanisms to link ECA, member States, regional economic communities, ECA-sponsored institutions and other centres of excellence in the subregion and help project ECA's policies and image and sensitize governments on the work of the Commission;

(e) Facilitate subregional economic cooperation, integration and development by assisting in strengthening the regional economic communities in each subregion as pillars for the implementation of the Abuja Treaty, IGOs and member States in the field of economic cooperation and integration and incorporating regional issues into national policies and programmes;

(f) Promote gender issues. This will be achieved through a systematic analysis of the roles, relations and processes involved in order to ensure the balance in access and control of resources, decision making and distribution of workload between men and women;

(g) Act as centres for policy dialogue. The MULPOCs should serve as centres or fora for intellectual dialogue, exchange of information and consensus building on subregional priorities, development policies and strategies with emphasis on promoting economic cooperation and integration in the subregion;

(h) Collect and disseminate information. The MULPOCs should disseminate the results of ECA's programmes and activities to member States in their respective subregions and provide ECA with feedback on developments in their subregions;

(i) Be the coordinators of United Nations system activities for integration. The MULPOCs should play a leading role in coordinating the programmes and activities of United Nations agencies

operating within the respective subregions as well as the United Nations global programmes, such as the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) and the United Nations System-Wide Special Initiative on Africa.

RECOMMENDATION 2

18. In order to better reflect their new orientation as an important link between the Commission, the member States, regional economic communities, IGOs, NGOs and the United Nations system at the national level, it is suggested that the MULPOCs be redesignated as Subregional Development Centres (SRDCs). This name would better portray their functions.

B. Consultations with member States and partner institutions

1. Geographical coverage, membership and location of headquarters

19. Since the regional economic communities have been designated as the building blocks for the African Economic Community, ECA, along with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the African Development Bank (ADB), within the framework of the Joint Secretariat, has undertaken the responsibility for strengthening the regional economic communities. Among the activities to be carried out in this respect are institutional support to the regional economic communities for capacity building and rationalization of IGOs in the subregions. Consequently, the country coverage of the MULPOCs should correspond, to the extent possible, to those of the regional economic communities. This constitutes the principal criterion for grouping countries under each MULPOC subregion.

20. However, while the regional economic communities form the anchor for MULPOC activities in the subregions, other factors must be considered as well in determining the most effective configuration of MULPOC membership and location. These factors include:

- (a) Similarities of problems/priorities among countries in a given subregion;
- (b) Historical and cultural background of the countries and organizations in a particular subregion which may have a bearing on integration activities (e.g., language affinity and organizations);
- (c) The number of countries to be served by each MULPOC; and
- (d) Proximity of the MULPOC office to the countries and regional economic communities.

These factors constitute the criteria to guide the proposed groupings. Of course, other factors will come into play in considering the implementation of these proposals; these include financial and physical constraints.

21. Based on the above principles, three scenarios for possible groupings of countries and location of the offices of the MULPOCs were considered; these are maintaining the present grouping, creating separate MULPOCs for Eastern and Southern regions, and combining the Gisenyi MULPOC with the Lusaka MULPOC to cover all the member countries of COMESA and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). The headquarters location, geographical coverage, advantages and disadvantages of each of these scenarios are discussed below.

(a) Scenario 1: Maintain present status

22. The main advantage of maintaining the present status of the MULPOC country coverage is that there would be no disruption of the strengthening exercise by possible non-technical implications of regrouping member countries or relocating the offices of MULPOCs. There are, however, several disadvantages in the

current arrangement, notably: very uneven membership of the MULPOCs (three in Gisenyi and 21 in Lusaka); country groupings often do not correspond to the regional economic communities (except for the Niamey MULPOC); and MULPOC offices are often not at same location with those of designated regional economic communities (except Lusaka). These factors are regarded as having negative impact on the delivery of MULPOC services to the countries and regional economic communities.

(b) Scenario 2: Create separate MULPOCs for Eastern Africa and Southern Africa

23. This scenario would involve creating a new MULPOC for Eastern Africa, to be located where the countries concerned would decide, to serve mainly the non-SADC countries currently served by the Lusaka MULPOC. The Lusaka MULPOC would continue to serve the SADC countries. The Economic Community of the Great Lakes countries (CEPGL) would be grouped with the Yaounde MULPOC countries, which would be consistent with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) region. Mauritania would join the North African MULPOC, thus placing all Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) countries within one MULPOC, along with Egypt and the Sudan, which are already members of that MULPOC and the offices could remain at Tangier or would be moved to Rabat. The West African MULPOC would serve 15 countries and its offices would remain at Niamey.

24. The main advantage of this scenario is that it meets best the criteria for the most desirable grouping of countries: general correspondence to regional economic communities (except Eastern Africa); homogeneous grouping of countries by similarity of problems and priorities as well as history of cooperation and culture; and a fairly even distribution of countries (except for West Africa). While there are no major disadvantages according to the guiding principles, nevertheless, such arrangement would require that the two MULPOCs for Eastern Africa and Southern Africa work very closely with COMESA and SADC and harmonize their own activities to accommodate the overlap of membership of these organizations.

(c) Scenario 3: A single MULPOC for COMESA and SADC countries

25. Under this arrangement, all COMESA and SADC countries would be served by the Lusaka MULPOC. This would represent a recognition of the current overlap of membership between COMESA and SADC, and would include the Sudan and the CEPGL countries. The Central African MULPOC would serve the seven countries currently in the Yaounde MULPOC and maintain the Yaounde offices. The North African MULPOC would be composed of the five UMA countries, plus Egypt, and would maintain the Tangier offices. The West African MULPOC would consist of fifteen countries and would maintain the Niamey offices.

26. The major advantages of this scenario are that it would group together all the countries of COMESA and SADC and enable the MULPOC to coordinate its activities more directly with those of the two regional economic communities; the group of countries would remain basically homogeneous; and there would be no need to set up a new MULPOC office. The basic disadvantage would be that the Lusaka MULPOC would cover even more countries than it covers now, which is already viewed as being too large.

27. Of course, there could be variants of the two scenarios consisting of changes in membership, but this would not affect the basic elements of these scenarios.

28. Outcome of consultations: The issue of geographical coverage, membership and location of headquarters was viewed as probably the most sensitive in the whole proposal by ECA, mainly because of the prevailing situation of the regional economic communities in the Central as well as Eastern and Southern African subregions. The specific responses are presented by subregion as follows:

(a) West Africa: No significant change from previous arrangement was deemed necessary, and the office should remain in Niamey;

(b) North Africa: No significant change from previous arrangement. The office remains in Tangier for the moment, but the Government is actively considering the possibility of a move to Rabat. The inclusion of Mauritania in this subregion is subject to further consultation with the authorities in the country itself;

(c) Central Africa: Some concern was raised about Zaire's membership in the Central African subregion. One country stressed the need for careful consultation on where Zaire should be included, either Central African or other subregion. While its official position will be communicated to ECA at a later date, Zaire is considering the possibility of being associated with the Eastern African subregion;

(d) Eastern and Southern Africa: Reservations were raised by some countries as well as the COMESA Secretariat about the establishment of separate centres for the Eastern and Southern African subregions. It was their view that such a separation would likely be misinterpreted as ECA's support for a split of COMESA into COMESA-South and COMESA-North. This concern was also echoed by some interlocutors of the mission who cautioned about the sensitivity of the relations between SADC and COMESA. However, the majority of countries and institutions in the subregion strongly supported the establishment of separate centres in order to better serve the subregion as a whole. The United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda expressed interest in hosting the new centre.

RECOMMENDATION 3

29. In view of the foregoing, it is recommended that the present composition of the MULPOC areas be redefined and a new MULPOC be established for Eastern Africa (as envisaged in scenario 2 above) to include Rwanda and Burundi, the headquarters location to be determined in consultation with member countries of this subregion. [See table 1 (a) and (b)]

Table 1(a). Present geographic coverage of ECA Multinational Programming and Operational Centres (MULPOCs)

Tangier	Niamey	Yaounde	Gisenyi	Lusaka
Member States				
Algeria Egypt Libyan Arab Jamahiriya Morocco Sudan Tunisia	Burkina Faso Benin Cape Verde Côte d'Ivoire The Gambia Ghana Guinea Guinea-Bissau Liberia Mali Mauritania Niger Nigeria Senegal Sierra Leone Togo	Cameroon Central African Republic Chad Congo Equatorial Guinea Gabon Sao Tome and Principe	Burundi Rwanda Zaire	Angola Botswana Comoros Djibouti Eritrea Ethiopia Kenya Lesotho Madagascar Malawi Mauritius Mozambique Namibia Seychelles Somalia South Africa Swaziland Uganda United Republic of Tanzania Zambia Zimbabwe
◆ 6 States 8,250,000 km ² Population: 160 million	◆ 16 States 6,168,000 km ² Population: 210 million	◆ 7 States 3,025,000 km ² Population: 53 million	◆ 3 States 2,398,000 km ² Population: 53 million	◆ 21 States 9,904,000 km ² Population: 270 million

Table 1(b). Proposed geographic coverage of the new ECA Subregional Development Centres

North African	West African	Central African	East African and Indian Ocean Islands	Southern African
Member States				
Algeria Egypt Libyan Arab Jamahiriya Mauritania Morocco Sudan Tunisia	Burkina Faso Benin Cape Verde Côte d'Ivoire The Gambia Ghana Guinea Guinea-Bissau Liberia Mali Niger Nigeria Senegal Sierra Leone Togo	Cameroon Central African Republic Chad Congo Equatorial Guinea Gabon Sao Tome and Principe Zaire	Burundi Comoros Djibouti Eritrea Ethiopia Kenya Madagascar Rwanda Seychelles Somalia Uganda United Republic of Tanzania	Angola Botswana Lesotho Malawi Mauritius Mozambique Namibia South Africa Swaziland Zambia Zimbabwe
7 States	15 States	8 States	12 States	11 States

(b) Institutional framework for policy making at the Subregional Development Centres

30. Each MULPOC was established with a legislative policy organ consisting of a Council of Ministers or Plenipotentiaries and an Intergovernmental Committee of Experts of the countries in the respective subregions [Commission resolution 311 (XIII)]. However, a flexible approach was adopted, depending on the institutional development in each subregion.

31. The role of these organs as decided by the ECA Conference of Ministers included providing technical and policy guidance in designing work programmes based on subregional priorities and monitoring the implementation of such programmes. However, soon after they had started operating, it was observed that the attendance by ministers steadily declined to a point where in some cases only two ministers participated in the meetings. The reasons for this decline in participation included lack of interest in the work of the MULPOCs, insufficient impact and credibility, and increased number of meetings to be attended by the same ministers.

32. It was consequently decided in 1987 to hold meetings of the policy organs every other year, with a meeting of a Follow-up Committee in the intervening year. This Committee was composed of diplomats accredited to the MULPOC host country. After four years, this formula did result in increased attendance of meetings at ministerial level. Hence, in 1990, the ECA Conference of Ministers decided to abolish the ministerial meetings of the MULPOCs but to maintain the Intergovernmental Committees of Experts. However, attendance at meetings at expert level also continued to decline and some MULPOCs failed even to hold meetings due to lack of a quorum. Consequently, several options were reviewed in order to improve the functioning of the MULPOCs.

(i) Alternative 1: Reinstate the ministerial councils

33. The reinstatement of the Council of Ministers/Plenipotentiaries of the MULPOCs could be considered in the process of strengthening the MULPOCs; the ministers may have renewed interest in the supervision and operations of more credible MULPOCs. However, this turn-around is not guaranteed, especially given the fact that the regional economic communities are now generally functional in most of the subregions and, as mandated in the Abuja Treaty, they are the building blocks for the African Economic Community. As a result, it would not be appropriate either to demand or to expect that the ministers responsible for economic cooperation and integration in the subregions participate in supervising the MULPOCs, a task that would, inevitably, be seen as duplicating the functions of the regional economic communities.

(ii) Alternative 2: Maintain the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts

34. Another alternative is to maintain the current arrangement of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts for each MULPOC with two possible scenarios for its operations by organizing of either a joint policy meeting between the regional economic communities and the MULPOCs or separate and consecutive meetings of the two bodies. The major disadvantage of this formula would be elimination of duplication with the regional economic communities as pointed out earlier.

(iii) Alternative 3: Joint policy organs with the regional economic communities

35. Under this scenario, the MULPOCs would formally report to the same policy organs as those of the major regional economic communities. In this case, meetings would be jointly organized. However, the modalities for reporting to such hybrid organs would remain to be further elaborated.

(iv) Alternative 4: Abolish MULPOC policy organs in the subregions

36. In view of past experience with persistently disappointing participation in meetings, and given that the MULPOCs are an integral part of ECA, they do not require separate policy organs from the ECA Conference of Ministers. Therefore, there is no need for separate policy organs at the subregional level. Under this formula, the MULPOC, as part of its technical assistance, would assist the regional economic communities in preparing the documents for their policy organs. The dual advantages of this approach is that there would be no need to reinstate the Councils of Ministers of the MULPOCs and it would enhance the effectiveness of the activities of the MULPOCs by providing direct inputs into the policies of the regional economic communities.

37. Outcome of consultations: It was generally agreed that, with the existence of functional regional economic communities in most subregions, there was no need for a separate policy organ for the MULPOCs. However, there was lack of unanimity on this issue as well, as summarized by subregion below:

(a) West Africa: The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Secretariat and member States generally do not see any need for separate institutional machinery/policy organ at the subregional level for the MULPOCs. However, one country expressed some reservation that the MULPOCs risked losing their identity if the separate policy organs were abolished;

(b) North Africa: General support was expressed for integrating the decision process between the MULPOC and UMA. However, the UMA Secretariat, while agreeing in principle, expressed need for caution in that the UMA does not yet cover all the countries of the proposed MULPOC area and, therefore, certain elements in the UMA programme may need to be separate from those of the MULPOC;

(c) Central Africa: There was general support for close coordination of MULPOC programmes with those of the subregional organizations. However, concern was expressed about integration of the

institutional mechanism in that the programming cycles of the MULPOCs differ from those of the organizations;

(d) Eastern and Southern Africa: General support was expressed for the abolition of the subregional Intergovernmental Committees of Experts and integration of programming between the MULPOC and the regional economic communities in the subregion. One regional economic community has even proposed establishment of an ECA liaison officer within its secretariat.

RECOMMENDATION 4

38. The report recommends the continuation of the Intergovernmental Committees of Experts of the MULPOCs as a framework for providing legislative guidance for their activities at subregional level, although ultimately their work programme is endorsed by the ECA Conference of Ministers. Indeed, the subregional mandate would empower them to interact more easily with the regional economic communities and other IGOs.

3. Resource requirements

39. Inadequate resources were at the centre of the unsatisfactory performance of the MULPOCs, both in terms of staffing and operational requirements, particularly consultancy funds. Up to the end of 1996, only 21 staff (or 9 per cent of ECA's total staff) in the professional category were based in the MULPOCs. Operational resources have also been insufficient and since 1992, after UNDP ceased support, the MULPOCs have not received any significant extrabudgetary resources. Moreover, pledges made by member States to the United Nations Trust Fund for African Development (UNTFAD) to support MULPOC activities were also not fully paid.

40. The resource requirements will derive directly from the refocused terms of reference of the MULPOCs and the need to strengthen delivery capacity, reach and impact. A core expert staff will be assigned to each MULPOC in accordance with the priorities and requirements of the subregion as identified in consultation with the member States, regional economic communities and IGOs. In defining the staff profiles, special attention will be given to balancing experience with the need to provide staff, particularly young professionals, with field exposure. In this respect, the Executive Secretary has already decided to allocate 25-30 per cent of regular budget posts to the MULPOCs.

41. It should, however, be emphasized that the assignment of additional staff to the subregions is simply a strategy to more effective utilization of the existing resources of the Commission. It involves decentralization of staff resources away from the Commission's headquarters in Addis Ababa.

42. Most MULPOCs benefitted in the past from secondment of national experts and such support was very helpful in strengthening the MULPOCs to implement their programmes. In the context of the recent Commission resolution 810 (XXXI) on the strengthening of the MULPOCs, more of such assistance should be further explored, subject to the United Nations Secretary-General's Administrative Instruction ST/AI/231/Rev. 1 of January 1991 which states the conditions under which governments can second national experts to the United Nations system. In the past, some African countries also pledged financial assistance in the context of UNTFAD to support the activities of the MULPOCs. It is recommended that outstanding pledges in this regard be fully honoured by member States in order to further enhance the efforts to strengthen the MULPOCs.

43. The proposed increase in the staffing level in the MULPOCs will require additional office space and facilities. Host countries should therefore take this into consideration and, in this regard, there may be need to review the existing host agreements.

44. Results of consultations: The countries and organizations were unanimous in supporting the deployment of additional resources to the subregions. The host countries were generally confident that sufficient facilities will be made available to accommodate additional staff to the Centres. Specific views are summarized by subregion as follows:

(a) West Africa: There was overwhelming support for the deployment of additional staff and resources to the subregions. Nigeria indicated the possibility in future to second national staff to the Centres. On the other hand, the Niger wanted additional local staff recruited into the Centre;

(b) North Africa: The existing office facilities in Tangier are deemed sufficient to accommodate the additional staff;

(c) Central Africa: It was emphasized that only competent staff should be sent to the subregions. In addition, it was suggested that national experts should be seconded to the offices to supplement staff being deployed from ECA headquarters. In this regard, it was strongly recommended that the MULPOCs be sufficiently equipped to effectively interact with their partners and clients. As regards facilities, it would appear that the current office space would not be sufficient to accommodate the maximum of nine professional and associated support staff envisaged in the proposal. There would, therefore, be need to construct additional office space within the present location;

(d) Eastern and Southern Africa: The existing office facilities in Lusaka are sufficient for the proposed level of staffing. Of course, appropriate facilities will have to be provided for the new centre for Eastern Africa.

RECOMMENDATION 5

45. Taking the above analyses and views into consideration, the following actions are recommended:

(a) Allocate additional resources to the MULPOCs in terms of staff and operational funds;

(b) Those member States that have made specific pledges to UNTFAD to support MULPOC activities should be invited to pay the outstanding amounts;

(c) All member States should explore the possibilities of reinforcing the capacities of the MULPOCs by seconding their nationals for specific assignments, in conformity with the rules governing such secondment;

(d) Regional centres of excellence should be invited to establish partnership with the MULPOCs;

(e) Countries hosting MULPOC headquarters should provide necessary office space and accord necessary diplomatic facilities to accommodate the additional staff allocated to the Centres.

D. Operational modalities

1. Programme identification and formulation

46. Being part of the ECA programme, the activities of the MULPOCs should be guided by the same principles that have guided the reform of the Commission, namely relevance (i.e., demand-driven), effectiveness (i.e., comparative advantage) and internal consistency. The programmes will be driven by sub-regional priorities and will clearly reflect specific subregional concerns. The Centres will provide the subregional inputs into ECA's overall programme in order to ensure that it is anchored in country and

subregional specificities. This calls for close coordination and interaction between the MULPOCs and ECA headquarters programming structures and substantive programme divisions.

47. A two-way process is envisaged in the formulation of the MULPOC work programme and its incorporation into the overall work programme of the Commission. In consultation with the main partners in the subregion, each MULPOC will prepare a draft programme of activities which is compatible with the strategic directions and capacity of ECA. Basically, the MULPOC programme will be part of the regional cooperation and integration programme of ECA and will consist of three components: programmes jointly identified and implemented with the regional economic communities and other IGOs in the region; technical advisory services to regional economic communities, IGOs and member countries; and thematic issues arising from ECA's strategic thrusts requiring national and subregional dimensions.

(a) Joint programmes

48. The need to provide technical assistance to the regional economic communities, particularly in the areas of capacity building, and to enhance a close working relationship, requires that the joint programme be formulated for implementation by the regional economic communities and the MULPOCs.

49. The MULPOCs would strive to coordinate United Nations system development programmes at the subregional level, linking the national coordination mechanisms. Such an arrangement would provide a mechanism for effective implementation at the subregional level, of United Nations global and special programmes for Africa such as the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) and the United Nations System-Wide Special Initiative on Africa.

(b) Technical assistance and advisory services

50. A major component of the work programme of the MULPOCs will be the provision of advisory and other technical services (including capacity building activities) on request by member States and their IGOs, particularly the regional economic communities. This aspect of the MULPOCs' programme should fully exploit subregional centres of excellence, local expertise, the United Nations system and bilateral agencies active at the subregional level, through networking to forge partnerships. In this context, the MULPOCs will strive to engage local consultants to augment their programme delivery capacity. Furthermore, the MULPOCs will be supported by resources available from ECA's substantive programme divisions and the services of the team of regional advisers.

(c) Participation in ECA thematic issues

51. The third component of the work programme of the MULPOCs will derive from activities initiated by the substantive divisions of ECA on thematic issues which the Commission would want to propagate throughout the continent. The MULPOC staff will be called upon to participate in the studies which require inputs on subregional and country dimensions, drawing on their field knowledge. This approach will not only ensure that the regional programmes are anchored on the realities in the field, but also provide a channel for MULPOC staff to maintain direct links with the programme divisions.

2. Programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation

52. The component of the MULPOC programmes of work that is planned jointly with the regional economic communities/IGOs will be implemented in close cooperation with the latter. Expertise available at the centres of excellence, ECA-sponsored institutions and IGOs will be tapped to implement such programmes whenever possible.

53. The activities of the MULPOCs will be subject to the overall monitoring and evaluation system established by the United Nations Secretariat. The Directors of the MULPOCs will be directly answerable to the Executive Secretary. They will have close programming links with the new Regional Cooperation and Integration Division and will closely interface with the other substantive divisions to draw upon the Commission's consolidated pool of multidisciplinary professional staff for region-wide technical assistance and advisory services. The Centres will, therefore, be able to secure multidisciplinary resources from ECA's overall programme of technical assistance to respond to the needs of member States, regional economic communities and IGOs beyond the staff resources available at each Centre.

3. A framework for partnership

54. In line with General Assembly resolutions 44/211 and 47/199 which call for greater coordination between United Nations system agencies at the country level to achieve complementarity in their operational programmes, the implementation of all the components of the MULPOC programmes within their respective subregions should avail itself of opportunities for inter-agency collaboration and support.

55. As an agent for promoting regional cooperation and integration, each MULPOC should work closely with the centres of excellence in their subregions, country offices of other United Nations agencies and multinational as well as bilateral development partners in the region to bring in a regional dimension to their national programmes.

56. In order to achieve this partnership and facilitate greater networking between the MULPOCs and the centres of excellence and other regional and subregional institutions within the region, extensive consultations will be required. Among the arrangements that can be envisaged as a means of stimulating partnership between the MULPOCs and these partners are formation of consortia with centres of excellence to address specific issues, offering consultancies to the centres and other mechanisms for institutional cooperation.

4. Information and communications strategy

57. An efficient communications and information strategy is essential for effective collection and dissemination of information by the MULPOCs and should serve as a vehicle for increasing awareness of ECA's programmes and vision at the subregional level. The MULPOCs should be given the necessary resources to maintain subregional databases and service centres to support in-house data needs and to serve as subregional data service centres on economic, social, demographic and environmental statistics.

58. Outcome of consultations: The concept of joint programming between the MULPOCs, the regional economic communities and IGOs was supported as being the most effective means of ensuring the relevance and impact of ECA activities in the field. In this, regular consultation between the MULPOCs and the other organizations would be essential. Furthermore, the MULPOCs would fully participate in the technical meetings of the regional economic communities, particularly during programme formulation. In the same vein, modalities should be established for MULPOC participation in the formulation of country programmes of cooperating organizations active in the region, in particular, the United Nations agencies and multilateral development institutions.

RECOMMENDATION 6

59. The following recommendations are made in view of the above:

(a) The work programme of the MULPOCs should derive from the assessed priorities of their respective subregions as reflected in the programmes of the regional economic communities and IGOs

concerned, and in this regard, the MULPOCs should formulate programmes with the regional economic communities and IGOs;

(b) The MULPOCs should undertake periodic self-evaluation, so as to ascertain that their activities achieve the expected impact;

(c) The MULPOCs should be provided sufficient resources and accorded autonomy in the management of resources made available to them, in strict conformity with relevant regulations and rules;

(d) The MULPOCs should develop, in consultation with UNDP offices, other United Nations organizations, the regional economic communities, IGOs and the ECA-sponsored institutions, a framework for partnership which could provide a strategic dimension to their effectiveness; and

(e) The MULPOCs should develop an effective communication strategy in order to improve their outreach.

Annex I

RESOLUTION 810 (XXXI) ON STRENGTHENING OF THE MULTINATIONAL PROGRAMMING AND OPERATIONAL CENTRES

810 (XXXI). Strengthening of the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres (MULPOCs)

The Conference of Ministers,

Recalling its resolution 611 (XXII) of 24 April 1987 on acceleration of the process of subregional economic integration in Africa and the new role of the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres as well as its resolution 702 (XXV) of 19 May 1990 on the transformation and strengthening of the Centres so as to enable them to play an effective role as catalysts for subregional economic integration,

Recalling further its resolution 708 (XXVI) of 12 May 1991 on speeding up the economic integration of Africa and the strengthening of the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres and its resolution 745 (XXVIII) of 4 May 1993 on the strengthening and rationalization of the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres,

Taking note of the new strategic vision of the Commission as outlined in the document entitled: Serving Africa better: Strategic directions for the Economic Commission for Africa,

Mindful of member States' expressed interest to enhance the role of Multinational Programming and Operational Centres in their respective subregions as effective partners of member States, the subregional economic communities and intergovernmental organizations,

Bearing in mind the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit in its Report on the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa, particularly the recommendation related to the decentralization of resources to the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres to make them more effective,

1. Requests the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa to take the necessary steps to strengthen the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres by putting at their disposal sufficient and competent staff as well as the necessary financial resources including recourse to competent consultants and to endow them with sufficient administrative autonomy as appropriate to enable them operate effectively;

2. Further requests the Executive Secretary of the Commission to take the necessary measures to ensure that the Centres play their role more efficiently as centres of excellence for the exchange of experiences and information and provision of support for the implementation of regional economic integration;

3. Calls upon the Executive Secretary to undertake, in coordination with regional intergovernmental organizations, the necessary consultations with a view to recommending whether or not to reinstate the subregional conferences of ministers of the Centres to enable them to focus more on specific subregional priorities and enhance the Commission's presence at the subregional and country levels;

4. Further calls upon the Executive Secretary to undertake a study on the rationalization of the membership of the different Centres and make appropriate recommendations;

5. Appeals to member States to contribute to the United Nations Trust Fund for African Development in favour of the institutional strengthening of and activities to be undertaken at the Centres, and to put national experts at the disposal of the Centres, at their own expense, for short assignments;

6. Calls upon the United Nations Development Programme, bilateral and multilateral funding agencies to support programmes of technical cooperation at the Centres, in favour of member States and the intergovernmental organizations;

7. Requests the Executive Secretary of the Commission to follow-up on the implementation of this resolution and to report thereon to the next Conference of Ministers.

Annex II

**LIST OF COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS VISITED BY
THE CONSULTATIVE MISSIONS**

Subregion	Countries	Organizations
Central	Cameroon Congo Gabon Zaire	ECCAS UNDP country offices
Eastern	Kenya United Republic of Tanzania Uganda	UNDP country offices
North	Algeria Morocco Tunisia	UMA UNDP country offices
Southern	Botswana Zambia Zimbabwe	COMESA SADC UNDP country offices
West	Burkina Faso Ghana Niger Nigeria Sierra Leone Senegal	ECOWAS UNDP country offices
Total	19	