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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA  
SILVER JUBILEE ANNIVERSARY MEETINGS  
Eighteenth session of the Commission  
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INTERREGIONAL ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION

Executive summary\*

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\* The present summary constitutes the main document for the consideration.

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Lagos Plan of Action does not devote a separate chapter or section to inter-regional economic and technical co-operation, nor is the subject treated explicitly in the Final Act of Lagos. Resolved to adopt a far-reaching regional approach based primarily on collective self-reliance, the Lagos Plan naturally lays greater stress on national, subregional and regional co-operation than on inter-regional co-operation. Nevertheless, implicitly or explicitly, the significance of economic and technical co-operation between Africa and other world regions in the implementation of various aspects of the Plan does emerge, particularly in the context of third world solidarity.

2. Thus, in the implementation of the Industrial Development Decade for Africa, the Lagos Plan of Action explicitly asserts that member States consider it essential to co-operate with other regions of the world in order to attain their industrial development objectives; and elsewhere it asserts the need for fruitful co-operation among member States on the one hand, and between them and the other developing regions on the other hand. Other explicit references appear in the chapter on science and technology in which it is stated, inter alia, that machinery should be provided for bilateral and multilateral co-operation between African and third world countries in a conscious effort to promote collective self-reliance, and that carefully planned institutionalization of the learning-by-doing process deserves serious attention. African States should take a leaf, as it were, from the experience of countries such as Japan, China, India, the Republic of Korea, Mexico and Brazil. The need for inter-regional co-operation is also affirmed for purposes of restructuring financial institutions for science and technology and of establishing a third world bank for science and technology.

3. In the area of international trade and finance emphasis is laid on the need for the systematic exploration and exploitation of trade and economic co-operation opportunities with other developing regions, and ECA and OAU are called upon to give the necessary logistic support to African countries in their negotiations with other countries on such matters as GSTP, transnational corporations and the establishment of new African and world economic orders, which include the reform of the international monetary system.

4. These brief citations are enough for illustrative purposes. What follows is a succinct summary of what action the secretariat has taken in pursuit of these objectives.

## II. ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION BETWEEN AFRICA AND OTHER DEVELOPING REGIONS (ECDC AND TCDC)

5. Consideration of the role played by the ECA secretariat in the promotion of inter-regional economic and technical co-operation must, therefore, be based partly on the recognition that the Lagos Plan of Action, with its emphasis on collective self-reliance and on internally-generated and self-sustained development, does not place inter-regional ECDC and TCDC at the centre of the stage, even though their significance is clearly recognized. In the face of limited resources and the given priorities, activities in pursuit of inter-regional economic and technical co-operation since the Plan was adopted have of necessity somewhat been circumscribed and selective. For the most part they have in the first place sought to forge closer co-operative links between Africa and Latin America, not because other regions are less important but because it is impossible with limited resources to advance on all fronts at once. Inter-regional TCDC and ECDC between Africa and Latin America is therefore described first, followed by other illustrative cases of co-operation with other regions.

### A. Co-operation with Latin America

6. The promotion of inter-regional ECDC and TCDC by the ECA secretariat is carried out mainly in the context of co-operation with other regional commissions. In particular, co-operation between Africa and Latin America has been, and is being, carried out within the framework of a joint ECDC/TCDC programme between ECA and ECLA.

7. A significant milestone in the history of economic and technical co-operation between the States members of ECA and ECLA was the convening of the Joint Meeting of Governmental Experts from Africa and Latin America on Economic and Technical Co-operation, which took place in Addis Ababa from 1 to 4 June 1982. The meeting was the culmination of a preparatory project executed jointly by ECA and ECLA, with UNDP financial support, with the aim of enabling participants to adopt recommendations on how to forge closer economic and technical co-operation between the countries of the two regions, within the context of economic and technical co-operation among developing countries. Attended by 27 African countries, 10 Latin American countries, and 10 observer delegations from the United Nations and other agencies, the meeting was a signal success. Having considered the recommendations prepared jointly by the ECA and ECLA secretariats on the basis of consultants' reports, the meeting reached full agreement on detailed action-oriented proposals for joint implementation in three priority fields, namely, inter-regional trade, human resources development and utilization and science and technology for development. It also resolved, inter alia, to establish an inter-regional consultative machinery to monitor the implementation of the agreed recommendations.

8. Documents prepared for the meeting by six consultants working independently in the two regions explored the existing and potential scope for TCDC arrangements between Africa and Latin America in the three fields indicated. Available in English, French and Spanish, these documents have added significantly to the as yet thin stock of information available on the subject. The documents as well as the report of the joint meeting, have been published jointly by ECA and ECLA for wide circulation throughout Latin America and Africa.

9. The ECA secretariat has also been executing a project, funded by the Netherlands, on trade expansion between Africa and Latin America, among other developing regions. Begun in 1980, the project has entailed organizing missions of African officials and especially businessmen from chambers of commerce to various countries in Latin America and Asia to examine the possibilities of expanding trade and economic co-operation among them, taking into account the list of products available on both sides as well as other pertinent considerations. The Latin American part of this project is being implemented within the framework of the joint ECA/ECLA programme adopted at the Addis Ababa meeting in June 1982. In September 1982, ECA and ECLA had consultations concerning preparations for a tour of Latin American countries by African businessmen. The result was that, in October 1982, members of the Kenya Chamber of Commerce were able to visit Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Colombia. Further ECA/ECLA consultations held in November 1982 after the mission ended have formed the basis of a further joint project which is now under preparation, focusing on extending business and commercial contacts and identifying relevant products to be traded.

10. In addition, the secretariat has taken steps to promote co-operation between Africa and Latin America in the field of mineral resources development. In October-November 1982, African specialists in mineral resources development made a tour of five Latin American countries to study the organization, financing and operation of Latin American mineral resources establishments. Organized by ECA in collaboration with ECLA, with financial support from the United Nations Trust Fund for African Development, the mission included participants from nine African countries, one participant from the Eastern and Southern African Mineral Resources Development Centre based in Dodoma, United Republic of Tanzania, and two staff members from the ECA Mineral Resources Unit. During the study tour, a workshop was organized in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, at which recommendations were adopted for submission to Latin American and African Governments. Follow-up action on these and other proposed or on-going TCDC/ECDC activities between interested countries of the two regions is expected to be taken within the framework of the action programme which was adopted at the Joint Meeting of Governmental Experts from Africa and Latin America on Economic and Technical Co-operation held in Addis Ababa in June 1982.

11. Contacts organized by the ECA and ECLA secretariats over the past two-to-three years have resulted in the inter-regional meetings, missions, and the adoption of joint action recommendations already referred to. These contacts will be continued and intensified, so as not to lose the momentum already gained. It has been agreed, for example, that as a follow-up to the recent tour of Latin American countries by African mineral resources development specialists, a tour of Africa by Latin American mineral resources development specialists should likewise be organized in the immediate future with the assistance of the ECLA secretariat. Further meetings, missions and study tours in both directions are to be encouraged. The stage is now set for such activities to be planned and carried out directly by the countries of the two regions on a Government to Government, or institution-to-institution basis, with or without the intermediation of the ECA and ECLA secretariats.

12. The two secretariats, for their part, will continue to step up efforts to give the maximum publicity to the joint action recommendations agreed to by both sides. Already, the report of the Joint Meeting of Governmental Experts from Africa and Latin America has been given the widest publicity throughout both regions, and has also been brought to the attention of international donors and development agencies. Information concerning opportunities for mutual co-operation in the mineral resources sector is being disseminated in the same way. It is expected that the Latin American Governments and interested organizations and persons, and their African opposite numbers, will also do their best to spread the knowledge of TCDC and ECDC potential that has been revealed, or that has yet to be uncovered, in addition to taking concrete measures to exploit those opportunities.

13. A specific recommendation agreed jointly by the two sides is that the secretariats, using their TCDC/ECDC Focal Points, should help to create an inter-regional consultative machinery to monitor and follow up the implementation of the joint action programme. The two secretariats are already taking initial steps in this direction. They are holding consultations on the establishment of an inter-regional consultative committee, which will be served by the two secretariats, and which will consist of a selected number of interested countries from the two regions. If present plans materialize, it is expected that the inter-regional consultative committee will be operational by the end of 1983. The mineral resources experts recommended the establishment of working groups; one for each region, to prepare a medium- or long-term action programme for promoting co-operation in the mineral resources sector. These working groups on mineral resources, or similar groups dealing with specialized sectors - e.g. trade, science and technology, human resources, etc. - can be established and their activities organized and co-ordinated within the framework of the inter-regional consultative machinery which is now being created.

#### B. Co-operation with Asia and the Arab World

14. Turning to promotional activities by ECA on economic and technical co-operation between Africa, Asia, and the Arab world, in recent years, the secretariat has organized a number of contacts with India to enable member States to learn from the Indian experience in the field of industrialization. For example, in the case of potash fertilizers, ECA utilized in 1981 a grant of \$90,000 from the Netherlands Government to commission experts from India to undertake a study on the exploitation, development and utilization of Ethiopian potash for the benefit of the Eastern and Southern African subregional market. The study was completed in November 1981 after Indian consultants and a team of ECA staff visited six African and seven Asian countries to collect information and to ascertain their interest in the project in terms of equity holding and potash purchases. Similar prefeasibility studies on pesticides and pharmaceuticals, financed by a Nigerian grant of \$99,180, were also carried out with the assistance of Indian experts in collaboration with ECA staff. These studies have confirmed that it is virtually impossible for African countries, with the possible exception of the oil producing ones, given their extremely small markets, to produce and be self-reliant in major pesticides and pharmaceuticals. Most African countries will have to pool their resources, to undertake feasibility studies and to formulate and execute their plans on a multinational basis in the framework of TCDC.

15. The promotion of small-scale industries also received impetus in 1980 when ECA fielded study missions to India and to several African countries. The growth of small-scale industries appears to suffer from lack of information on products to be manufactured, availability of raw materials, production technology, equipment supplies, manpower requirements, financing and marketing. The secretariat is assisting member countries to fill this gap, and hopes, in 1983, to publish a Directory of project profiles containing this type of data if funds can be secured for this purpose.

16. Economic and technical co-operation with India also promises to be fruitful for the building materials and construction industry in Africa. Development in this field tends to be hampered by inadequate knowledge of the chemical composition and utilization of available local raw materials, ignorance of technological development in building materials and construction, and the lack of quality control and standardization. In 1981, a study tour to India was organized under the sponsorship of the Indian Government to enable participants from various African countries to benefit from the Indian experience. The tour was followed by a workshop which made recommendations to Governments. Moreover an in-plant training programme, also followed by a workshop, was organized for participants from six African countries. The knowledge acquired from these activities is now being used to build up an information network for Africa in the building and construction materials industry.

17. The Dutch supported project on trade expansion between Africa and other developing regions, already referred to in the context of co-operation with Latin America, has also enabled the secretariat to expand the scope of inter-regional co-operation, by bringing African countries into contact with countries in Asia and the Middle East. This project is still ongoing. The experience gained in the course of such visits and study tours is not limited to trade promotion but is valuable in promoting economic and technical co-operation generally.

18. Mention should also be made of inter-regional co-operation with the Arab countries in the use of outer-space technology. In June 1982 ECA hosted a meeting on the subject, organized jointly with ECWA. Fifteen countries participated in the meeting. The experts noted that remote sensing by satellite is a very powerful tool for resource inventory assessment, monitoring and development planning. The countries of the two regions agreed therefore to develop, adopt and use this technology in their resource development efforts. In particular, participants saw the need for the two regions to harmonize their negotiating positions regarding orbit and frequency allocations. Concern was expressed that, when their countries were ready to place satellites in geo-stationary orbit, frequencies and orbit allocations might not be available to satisfy their needs. It was essential, therefore, that methods and procedures be devised now to guarantee all countries equitable access to the geo-stationary orbit. It was expected that a regional satellite system would be used to transmit instructional programmes in education, health and agriculture, as well as to improve telecommunications by supplementing terrestrial networks.

19. The meeting recommended that an inter-regional satellite organization be set up to bring together the various existing space committees for communication and direct broadcasting. The need for experience-sharing was underscored, especially in view of the shortage of space communication specialists in the developing regions. It was also felt that the proposed inter-regional satellite organization could spearhead the development of indigenous technology in the manufacturing of small, inexpensive, rural receiving stations for educational radio and television, and possibly also in the development of simple easy-to-maintain solar energy power supplies.

20. To strengthen Afro-Arab co-operation, the secretariat is undertaking studies on ways of improving trade relations and increasing financial flows between African and Arab countries. Because of the shortage of resources, it has not been possible, so far, to visit all the countries envisaged in the studies for data collection and the necessary sensitization. When the studies are completed, hopefully in 1983, it is expected that Afro-Arab meetings of experts and of ministers of trade will be convened in late 1983 or early 1984 to consider their recommendations and map out the course of future action. In this connection, it is necessary that contacts established in recent years between ECA and BADEA be maintained and strengthened, for the purpose of mobilizing financial resources from Arab countries in the interests of Afro-Arab co-operation.

### III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

21. It is clear that the activities carried out by member States in the field of inter-regional economic and technical co-operation with the assistance of the secretariat, modest as they may perhaps seem, are well in line with the requirements of the Lagos Plan of Action. The steps so far taken to advance inter-regional co-operation must be strengthened and consolidated. In particular, the action proposals agreed between Africa and Latin America require vigorous implementation by countries of the two regions, assisted by the secretariats of their respective regional commissions.

22. To be sure, there is scope for strengthening inter-regional co-operation all round. The potential of Afro-Arab co-operation, which is still virtually untapped, will in particular be given the closest attention in the immediate future. The opportunities for complementarity provided by the oil-rich capital-surplus economies of the Arab countries on the one hand, and the economies of sub-Saharan African countries on the other, must be seized and exploited in the spirit of collective self-reliance for the benefit of both regions.