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ASPECTS OF TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT IN WEST AFRICA

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## ASPECTS OF TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT IN WEST AFRICA

Investigations into the transport requirements of the sub-region have recently been carried out under bi-lateral aid by expert teams provided by the German Federal Republic and French Governments.

A small transport mission from ECA has also visited all 14 countries in the sub-region.

The German Bi-lateral Transport Study

The report of the German bi-lateral team which extends to 560 pages, studies existing transport networks, including those for Marine Transport with Ports & Harbours; Inland Waterways; Air Transport and Airports; Road Transport and Rail Transport; in the six countries of Dahomey, Ghana, Upper Volta, Niger, Nigeria and Togo. It assesses the capacity of the existing networks and facilities to carry both the existing traffic and the foreseeable increase in this by the year 1980 based on projections of trends and macro-economic studies.

The report considers that the main requirement of the area for the period to 1980 is for an improvement and densification of the road network which is at present only passable all the year round to the extent of 25%. For this it recommends the construction of 25,205 kms. of new laterite roads and of 11,548 kms. of road to bituminous standards. It also recommends the construction of 238 kms of new railway in Ghana and 750 kms in Nigeria and the extension and improvement of certain Seaports and Airports.

The cost, over 15 years, of these proposals which the report recommends should be phased over three 5 year periods, is estimated to be as under:-

	<u>US \$ (Millions)</u>
Roads ... ..	741.3
Railways ... ..	59.3
Seaports ... ..	64.0
Inland Waterways ...	22.9
Airports ... ..	17.1
Total ...	<u>US \$904.6</u>

Beyond pointing out that only a small part of these capital requirements could be provided by budgetary means, the report does not make recommendations regarding possible sources for long-term foreign funds which will clearly be needed to implement the proposals. The report includes discussion and recommendations for Traffic Organization, Traffic Administration and Traffic Law.

#### The French Bi-lateral Study

A summary of the report of the French bi-lateral study, which covered the group of countries comprising Gambia, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal and Sierra Leone, will be circulated as an addendum to this document.

#### ECA Transport Mission

This small mission, which was in West Africa for the period 21.3.66 to 24.4.66 consisted of a Regional Transport Adviser and an Associate Economic Affairs Officer, both of the Transport Section of the secretariat. The two members, either together or singly, visited all the 14 member countries of the sub-region. The principal objective of the mission was to discuss with the governments the desirability of creating some form of machinery for co-ordinating transport planning and policies on a sub-regional basis. They found that there was very general support for the proposal that machinery for this

purpose should be set up and that it should include a group of sub-committees each dealing with a different mode of transport with an overall co-ordinating council. A separate paper, E/CN.14/INR/119, discusses this in more detail and may be considered suitable as a basis for discussion and decision on this matter.

The Mission discussed in each country certain other aspects of Transport which had been the subject of a questionnaire sent out in advance. These included:-

Maritime Transport: Following a survey by an ECA Shipping Consultant, Mr. S.F. Klinghoffer, document E/CN.14/TRANS/27 entitled "A Preliminary Survey of Factors contributing to the level of Rates in the Seaborne Trade of Africa - Part I, West and Central Africa Sub-regions" has been issued. Not all countries had received copies by the time of the Mission's visit, but there is much interest generally in Maritime transport matters including the development of African Shipping Lines and Coastal Shipping. The proposal that there should be a West African Meeting on Ports and Harbours, Freight Rates and other Maritime questions, sometime in 1967 was fully supported and land-locked as well as maritime States expressed a wish to be kept informed. It is clear that there will be an adequate number of subjects for fruitful discussion, including Port Operations and Coastal Shipping.

Inland River Transport: Both the Nigerian Government and those of the Senegal River riparian States expressed great interest in developing the maximum use of the Niger and Senegal rivers for transport and in improving navigability of the rivers in conjunction with other schemes for irrigation or hydroelectric power development. It is expected that navigability studies of the Niger will be carried out, under bi-lateral aid, by the Netherlands Government and the Inter-State Committee for the Senegal River have included transport in the studies that they are carrying out with some assistance from ECA and other UN

agencies. The optimum area of influence for transport on the Gambia river seems to merit further study by the States concerned - Gambia, Senegal and Guinea.

Air Transport: This subject was discussed only with the Governments of the countries who had been invited to the Conference on the Formation of a West and Equatorial African Airline, held at Lagos in April 1965 viz., Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

There is clearly both need and scope for improving the economy and efficiency of the many existing air-lines in West Africa. The only extensive system providing services on what might be called a sub-regional scale is the Air-Afrique network whose services do not, however, seem to be co-ordinated with other air-lines operating in the sub-region. There is a measure of support for rationalization and for continuing the work commenced at the Lagos Conference referred to.

#### Rail Transport

(i) General: Little rail expansion is in early sight in the sub-region though three different extensions into Niger - from Upper Volta, Dahomey and Nigeria - are contemplated. There may be some conflict between these proposals and co-ordination of planning is desirable.

(ii) Standardization: The fact that the railways in West Africa (as elsewhere in Africa) have been constructed to one or another of three different gauges - 1.067 m., 1.00 m. and 1.435 m., each having different coupling and breaking systems and different loading gauges, presents a serious obstacle to the integration of the different networks. No early conversion of the existing tracks to a single, common, gauge is foreseen, but a common railway policy on standardization is clearly desirable. The mission gained the impression that the technical problems to be overcome are well understood and that the solutions now lie in the field of action and finance.

Road Transport

(i) Co-ordination with other forms of transport: In only a few countries is there any fully working machinery for co-ordinating road planning and development with that of the other modes of transport at the national level,

(ii) Standards: The more developed countries of the sub-region have the best road networks and vice-versa. It is generally believed that it is the cost of building to higher standards that is the factor limiting the conditions of national networks. This underlines the great importance of finding the optimum technical economic solutions to the use of locally available, and therefore comparatively cheap, construction materials.

(iii) Road Maintenance: The technical aspects of road maintenance are generally well understood but performance varies considerably. The USAID/IRF Heavy Equipment Operators & Mechanics Training Centre at Lome (Togo) has accepted trainees from 10 francophone countries and is doing very good work; there is room for more international co-operation in this field and for the setting up of more training centres.

(iv) Control of International Road Traffic: Although road transport regulations have been harmonised between the Entente countries, there is a need for a greater measure of harmonization on a sub-regional scale. It is thought that all countries in the sub-region will, as early as practicable, wish to adhere to the revisions that have been proposed for the 1949 Geneva Convention on International Road Traffic and the associated Protocol on Road Signs & Signals. The proposed revisions have been sent to all countries for comment and, in most cases, these are still awaited.

In 11 of the countries in the sub-region it is the rule of the road to drive on the right hand side. It is, however, to be noted

that in 3 countries - Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone, which between them account for 49% of the mileage of roads in the sub-region and 44% of the vehicle population, the left hand rule is still in force. All countries supported ECA VIth Session Resolution 101 (VI) which called the attention of all member countries to the necessity of introducing the right hand drive where it did not exist. Since then Gambia is the only country concerned in the sub-region to make the changeover.

(v) Road Research: Very little, if any, road research, as **distinct** from materials testing, is carried out in the sub-region. In view of the very large sums that are being and will almost certainly have to be spent on road construction and maintenance in the sub-region in the next 15 years - to which the German Report summarised above bears witness - it is considered very desirable that road research programmes should be set up in both the economic and technical spheres so that maximum economy may be made in this expenditure and the value of the investments maximised.

Institutions:

Although most countries in the sub-region have technical and institutional links with either France or the United Kingdom, there are few African institutions serving transport either in the sub-region or in Africa as a whole. It is recommended that consideration should be given to the setting up of the following:-

(i) Proposed African Roads Congress: It has been suggested that there should now be in Africa some form of association to meet the needs of road engineers, particularly the new intake of African road

engineers, for communication with others working in the same field. Such a body when formed would provide a forum for the exchange of technical and economic information and would play an important part in influencing and guiding the direction of road research, in disseminating its results and in promoting useful standardization. It is thought that the Roads Congress that has been in existence in India for over 30 years might be taken as a model and that it would be valuable if a small party of African road engineers were to attend the next Session of the Indian Roads Congress as observers.

(ii) Proposed African Railway Congress: It has been suggested that it would be of advantage to African railway development to form an African Railway Congress of Railway officials as a permanent forum for the discussion of important matters concerning the design and operation of railway networks, particularly in the field of standardization which is a serious problem in West Africa. There is in existence an 'African & Malagasy Railway Technicians Conference' and it is felt that this body could be invited to review its constitution and make whatever amendments may be necessary to cater for economic as well as technical aspects of railway planning and working on an all Africa basis.

(iii) Proposed African Transport Institute: Careful thought is being given in the secretariat to the practicability of creating as a high level teaching foundation, an African Transport Institute. The mission found that there was widespread interest in the need to train the African managers for the African transport systems of the future and general support for ECA's embryonic scheme for an African Transport Institute for this purpose.

#### Summary

This summary of the mission's findings suggests that there are a number of important matters that will merit the early attention of the proposed sub-regional machinery for co-ordinating transport planning and policies when it is set up. These would include:-



1. General: A review of the French and German bi-lateral reports and decisions for practical follow-up action.
2. Air Transport: Continuation and possibly enlargement of the work of the 1965 Lagos Conference on the Formation of a West & Equatorial African Airline. This is, in the view of the ECA, of growing importance as a result of the great strides now taking place in the technology and management of air transport and in the economic and financial implications of these developments. Particular attention is drawn to the expanding role of air freighting.
3. Maritime transport: Preparations for the convening of a sub-regional Meeting on Ports and Harbours, Freight Rates and other Maritime questions, to be held in 1967.
4. Rail Transport: The standardization of rail gauges, couplings and braking systems. Consideration of the scope for the manufacture of railway components in West Africa.
5. Road Transport:
  - (i) The designation of a sub-regional network of international ways.
  - (ii) The standardization of geometrical and engineering specifications for sub-regional roads.
  - (iii) Harmonization of policies regarding the proposed revision of the 1949 Geneva Convention on Road Traffic and the Protocol on Road Signs & Signals.
  - (iv) Consideration of the establishment of a Roads Research Centre either for the sub-region or on a wider basis.
6. Manpower: A review of manpower available in the sub-region in the middle and higher grades of all sectors of transport planning and management and of the facilities available for training at these levels, with special reference to the proposed African Transport Institute.

