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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Eighth session of the Conference
of African Statisticians

Addis Ababa, 21 to 30 November 1973

**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE ELEVENTH SESSION OF
THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA**

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MATTERS ARISING FROM THE ELEVENTH SESSION OF
THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

INTRODUCTION

1. The eleventh session of the Economic Commission for Africa, which was also the second meeting of the Conference of Ministers, was held in Accra from 19 to 23 February 1973.

2. A full account of the material submitted to the meeting, together with information on discussions, resolutions, work programme, etc is given in the ECA Annual Report to the Economic and Social Council for the period 14 February 1972 - 23 February 1973, E/CN.14/591. In this note the essential points relating to statistical and other activities are summarised or reproduced for ease of reference.

WORK OF THE COMMISSION SINCE 13 FEBRUARY 1972

3. The following extract is taken from the report on the activities of the Commission. It should be noted that a number of the projects reported as being in progress have since been completed. More up-to-date information is contained in document E/CN.14/CAS.8/6.

Statistics and economic information

Development of national and multinational statistical services

Statistical training

4. The training programme in statistics continued in the two Institutes of Statistics and Applied Economics which are operating in Morocco and Uganda, as well as in the lower level (Statistics Training Institute) in Cameroon. The East African Statistical Training Centre was taken over by the East African Community on completion of United Nations assistance. Previous middle level centres in Ethiopia and Ghana were absorbed some years ago by local universities. A new training project located in the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland is being established with the help of UNESCO.

National accounts

5. One of the principal continuing tasks was assistance to African countries in developing comprehensive and balanced statistical programmes by applying the revised United Nations System of National Accounts. The activities involved were advisory services, work on methodology and technical meetings. During the review period, direct technical assistance was given to the Central African Republic, Congo, Gambia, Malawi, Sudan, Tunisia, Upper Volta and Zaire.

6. A national accounts training seminar was organized at Rabat in February 1972 and a working group on household sector statistics met at Addis Ababa in November. A meeting on external transactions was cancelled due to lack of funds and the project will be implemented in the form of a secretariat report.

7. Other national accounts activities included data compilation and analysis together with a number of statistical studies which are reported separately below. It should be noted that countries of the region did not agree to publish provisional estimates of key national accounts aggregates as recommended in ECA resolution 231(X), so the preparation of these figures was continued by the secretariat.

General economic statistics and economic information

8. Advisory missions were undertaken to assist the UDEAC secretariat and the Chad Government in respect of trade statistics and computerization of data. Work on the adaptation of industrial statistics methodology for use under African conditions continued although training projects in this field had to be postponed because funds were not made available.

9. A survey of distribution statistics was undertaken and papers on country practices and methodology in this field are being prepared. Practical research was also carried out into problems arising from the use of electronic data processing equipment in Africa, which the seventh session of the Conference of African Statisticians described as specially important. Meetings on both subjects are scheduled for 1973.

Demographic and social statistics

15. In the field of demographic and social statistics, activities have been mainly concerned with the African Census Programme which involves field operations in some 21 countries of the region. Six regional advisers are attached to the secretariat to assist in the implementation of these projects. Two population census courses were conducted in 1972 and a further two are planned for 1973. However, it was necessary to postpone some other demographic statistics projects, partly because two staff posts remained unfilled, and partly because basic material will be available from the countries later than expected.

Development of a regional statistical and
economic information service

Statistical studies

11. Statistical studies conducted at the regional level are intended as a means of filling the more important gaps in African statistics by bringing together information from all available sources.

12. Satisfactory progress was made in a study of the pattern of private consumption expenditure, for which the North and West African sections were completed. A report on capital formation in African countries was finalized, although work on this topic will continue. A study on the change in terms of trade of developing Africa was completed ahead of schedule.

13. In addition, work continued on the development of data collection arrangements to make the effective international comparison of prices possible. This was connected with both the international comparison study on purchasing power parities and a regional project specially established to enable wider coverage of Africa.

Collection and dissemination of information

14. An Economic Information Section was added to the Statistics Division in 1971 and during the reporting period, better co-ordination and development of statistical and related publications became possible. Two series on Foreign Trade Statistics of Africa and the Statistical Newsletter continued unchanged. The previous Quarterly Statistical Bulletin was converted into a Statistical and Economic Information Bulletin to serve as a means of publishing the results of statistical studies and general information of special interest, as well as tabulated data. The Statistical Yearbook was completely revised in line with international recommendations to present data on a country basis, and the 1972 issue was completed and sent for reproduction.

15. In addition, the 1972 issues of Economic Data Summaries for individual African countries were prepared. The Summaries are revised annually and supplement and interpret the material contained in the Yearbook. Combined issues may be produced from time to time. An issue of another series, entitled African Economic Indicators, was also produced and will in future continue on an annual basis.

16. During the period June-September 1972, visits were made to 22 selected African countries for the purpose of collecting current data and promoting the speedier circulation of material from national sources. Governments had previously been recommended to give urgent attention to this matter in ECA resolution 231(X), but no significant response had been noted. The visits considerably improved the availability of data at ECA headquarters which is important not only for statistical publications, but also for projects such as the annual Economic Survey and appraisal of progress during the Second United Nations Development Decade.

17. Special attention was given in 1972 to assembling essential available data in standard form. In 1973 the secretariat expects to begin development of its existing punch card records to provide the basis for a fully computerized data bank, even though the equipment available for this purpose is likely to be limited.

ELEVENTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

18. The principal topics examined by the Conference of Ministers were matters arising out of the recent work of the General Assembly and of the Economic and Social Council, economic conditions in Africa, activities of the Commission and its programme of work, and co-operation with other international organisations. The points of general interest were indicated in the Executive Secretary's report and the relevant extract is given below.

Report by the Executive Secretary

19. In his report to the Conference of Ministers, the Executive Secretary highlighted some of the features of the African scene at the beginning of the Second United Nations Development Decade. Particular attention was drawn to the fact that the growth of economic activity had shown little change in comparison with the average 4 per cent which prevailed during the 1960s. Since this fell short of the minimum target growth of 6 per cent he thought this situation had grave implications for the Second Development Decade.

20. Among the problems being experienced by African countries were balance of payments difficulties, adverse trends in the volume of transfer of financial resources to developing countries, and the serious fall in the share of resources allocated to the region. He pointed out that in terms of constant prices capital transfers had fallen to about four-fifths of what they were at the beginning of the 1960s. The broad commodity composition had not altered significantly with all its attendant difficulties. Problems still to be resolved concerned monetary independence.

21. Against this background he outlined the ongoing activities of the Commission in key sectors which were likely to influence the main objectives set for the Second Development Decade. He stressed the need for the populations of countries to be able to feed themselves. Although it appeared that more food was produced in 1972, there had been a severe incidence of drought in the Sahelian regions. Among the programmes to improve agriculture and living conditions in rural areas, he mentioned projects financed by the World Bank and voluntary agencies but he proposed that each State consider the possibility of granting a Farmers' Charter to help increase supplies, regulate prices, and improve the competitive position of the farmer by guaranteeing his access to improved scientific methods of farming and security of tenure. He offered the services of the secretariat to assist those States that wished to prepare such a charter. He declared that economic co-operation was necessary, and that existing groupings in the region should be placed on a firm footing so that they might be able to request support from the United Nations Organization. He pointed out that UNDATs which had been established in East, West and Central Africa should be used as a nucleus to provide technical support.

22. In respect of labour he referred to the need for good neighbourliness. He pointed out that several member States had expelled alien workers from their countries although traditional patterns of labour movements in different parts of Africa responded to ecological and other factors. He also drew attention to press reports that African workers were being enticed to a number of European countries to work under substandard conditions. He suggested that collective action be taken to cope with these problems.

23. With reference to investment, he drew attention to the need for African countries to create a favourable investment climate. He thought however that greater African participation in the control and management of their economies was in accordance with the actions required by the African Strategy for Development in the 1970s. He pointed out that such participation should be achieved with subtlety, and that greater efforts should be made to mobilize domestic savings for development. The secretariat had undertaken to bring up-to-date document E/CN.14/INR/28/Rev.2 on Investment Laws and Regulations in Africa. He hoped that an up-to-date version might enable member States to benefit from one another's experience.

24. In the field of industrial development, there had been a perceptible thrust in a number of countries towards the establishment of intermediate and capital goods industries, but the narrow industrial base prevailing in many African countries today had made it impossible for them to take full advantage of the general scheme of preferences offered by a number of industrial countries. He thought that new export industries could be established as a result of new legislations

on industrial locations to protect the environment or because of the rising of wages and costs in the industrialized countries. An area where little had so far been achieved was in the sub-contracting for the production of labour intensive components for assembly in high labour cost countries. There had, however, been notable progress in expanding small-scale industries in a number of countries. But the growth of employment had fallen short of expectations.

25. ECA and OAU had convened the first Conference of Ministers of Industry in May 1971 which had adopted a Declaration on Industrial Development during the 1970s. This Declaration highlighted the critical issues and constraints on industrialization and suggested measures that could be promoted either singly or collectively to cope with these constraints. The second Conference of Ministers of Industry was planned to be held in Cairo in 1973.

26. The initiatives taken by ECA to assist in promoting multinational co-operation were now being followed up by studies to guide policy-makers in appraising the benefits to be derived from African multinational industries and also on investment proposals involving foreign participation. The secretariat hoped to organize a floating exhibition of small-scale machinery and equipment in co-operation with the Government of Japan.

27. The Executive Secretary reported that ECA had pursued a policy of co-operation and co-ordination of its activities with UNIDO. On the recommendation of the Executive Committee of the Commission, he had held consultations with the Executive Director of UNIDO which had resulted in an agreement to establish a joint ECA/UNIDO industry division. The steps taken by the two secretariats were outlined in document E/CN.14/590.

28. In the field of science and technology, the Commission had been called upon to promote a better understanding of the objectives and content of the African Regional Plan, to help member States establish National World Plan of Action Committees, collaborate with national planning agencies in selecting projects and in mobilizing resources to implement them. No financial provisions had, however, been made for these activities so the secretariat hoped that it might be possible to change the cost of answering requests for assistance from member States against country UNDP funds. It might also be possible to arrange intra-African mutual assistance to make it possible to carry on the programme in spite of the financial difficulties being experienced by the UN system at the time. Because of the importance which member States attached to the application of science and the transfer of technology, the Executive Secretary indicated that the secretariat would welcome suggestions from the Conference of Ministers on the launching of a well-financed effective region-wide programme.

29. He informed the Conference that the work programme of the Commission in the field of public administration had been re-organized on the basis of the decision of the First Conference of Ministers so as to assist member States in training personnel in public administration and in private enterprises. The emphasis in the current programme was on encouraging member States to work towards the localization of qualifications in the various fields.

30. In 1971-1972 national training workshops in government purchasing and supply systems, each of two to three weeks' duration, were organized in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Lesotho, Nigeria and Ghana. Two regional advisers undertook missions to Botswana, Lesotho and Malawi to consult with senior officials and staff of training institutions. Missions were also undertaken to Mali and Gabon and arrangements were made for French technical assistance (FAC), OCAM and ECA to run a training course with the African Institute for Information Science in Libreville. ECA also collaborated with UNITAR in organizing a UNITAR/SIDA regional seminar on international procurement in Nairobi. The secretariat had also established a unit to conduct peripatetic workshops.

31. In the field of trade, aid and international monetary and payments problems, the Executive Secretary reported that following the consensus reached at the third session of UNCTAD at Santiago in 1972, developing countries would be able to participate more fully in international decision-making on monetary and trade questions than had been the case in the past. In the negotiations on monetary reform, developing countries had assured themselves a position which they did not enjoy before, while in respect of trade they obtained some greater leverage with regard to the multilateral trade negotiations within GATT. Thirteen African States which are members of the Commonwealth have, under Protocol 22 of the Treaty of Brussels, been invited to negotiate special relationships with EEC. In view of these developments the ECA Executive Committee, after having discussed the results of UNCTAD III and the implications for African countries on the basis of a note prepared by the secretariat and the report of the Seventh ECA/OAU Joint Meeting on Trade and Development, requested the Executive Secretary to prepare and forward to UNDP a regional project request for assistance to ECA to enable it to assist its member States by providing all information and expert services necessary for African countries to participate effectively in the forthcoming negotiations in the trade, monetary and finance spheres.

32. The Executive Committee also invited the OAU Administrative Secretary General to convene a ministerial conference to consider several interrelated problems: while in 1972 the OAU Heads of State and Government at their meeting in Rabat in June decided to convene a conference of African Ministers of trade and development. The Board of Governors of the African Development Bank at its annual meeting in July also requested its President to explore the possibility of convening an African conference at ministerial level.

33. A co-ordinating committee of OAU, ADB, ECA and the Association of African Central Banks were currently planning a ministerial conference to

be convened at the beginning of May 1973 so as to ensure that its resolutions could be acted upon by the next meeting of the OAU Heads of State and Government at the end of the same month.

24. ECA had prepared and submitted regional projects to UNDP. Subject to UNDP approval two meetings would take place in June and July 1973 to prepare technical positions. It was expected that one high level meeting would be convened in the second quarter of 1974 to consider all aspects of the issues involved, evaluate the positions and the progress of the negotiations, and formulate instructions for future action. This project had been submitted to the Governments of all member States with an invitation to them to convey their support to UNDP with a view to securing its approval, and the Executive Secretary expressed the hope that African Governments would act expeditiously on this invitation.

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS

35. Resolutions adopted by the Conference are listed below with a brief indication of their content. It will be noted that none relate specifically to statistics, but the implementation of some will require the provision of comprehensive data.

36. 288(XI). Africa's Strategy for Development in the 1970's

Development of methodology for evaluation and appraisal of those factors both intra-African and extra-African affecting progress. There have been addition to the Strategy of new sections more specifically related to transport, communications, science and technology and natural resources.

239(XI). Drought in the Sudano-Sahelian Zone

Recommendation that the zone be declared a disaster area and request for appropriate short, medium and long-term measures.

240(XI). The situation in Southern Rhodesia

Support and assistance for Zambia.

241(XI). Establishment of Multinational Interdisciplinary Development Advisory Teams

Concentration of teams mainly on multinational projects, their working relationships with sub-regional offices of the Commission and the establishment of action programmes.

242(XI). Reporting on staff and administrative questions

Provision of reports concerning the ECA secretariat for the Conference of Ministers and Executive Committee.

243(XI). African participation in migrations negotiations in the trade, finance and monetary spheres

Provision of information to assist African countries in the negotiations and the establishment of a United Nations Development Programme regional project for this purpose.

244(XI). Declaration on trade and development

Development of joint efforts by African countries with respect to commodity problems and policies, manufactures and semi-manufactures, trade relations with socialist countries, export promotion, development finance and aid, special measures for the least developed, land-locked and island countries, shipping, transfer of technology, economic co-operation, multilateral trade negotiations and the international monetary situation.

245(XI). Conference of African Ministers of Trade, Development and Finance

Organisation of the Conference and proposals for its agenda.

246(XI). Intra-African economic co-operation

Report of the Panel of Experts on Intra-African Economic Co-operation and Africa's Relations with the European Economic Community, and continuation of studies in these topics.

247(XI). Association of African Trade Promotion Organisations

Formation of the Association

248(XI). Science and technology

Adoption and implementation of the African Regional Plan for the World Plan of Action.

249(XI). Co-operation with international organisations

Reports on co-operation, co-ordination of work programmes and the establishment of joint ECA/Agency divisions.

250(XI). African Institute for Economic Development and Planning

Continuation of assistance to the Institute

251(XI). Date and place of the twelfth session of the Commission

Twelfth session to be held in 1975 in Kenya.

PROGRAMME OF WORK AND PRIORITIES, 1974-1976
WITH PROJECTIONS TO 1979

37. The content of the approved statistical programme is given below, using a somewhat simpler presentation than that in the ECA Annual Report. Some considerations regarding possible amendments are discussed in the Report on ECA Statistical Activities, 1971/1973 and Future Work Programme, E/CN.14/CAS.8/6

38. STATISTICS

- A. BROAD ISSUES AND TECHNIQUES RELATING TO DEVELOPMENT
12.18.10. Development of national and multinational statistical and economic information services

Origin:

Commission terms of reference, Commission resolutions 18(II) and 146(VIII) and reports of the Conference of African Statisticians.

Project aim:

Development and co-ordination of statistical services in the African region to meet the growing needs of administration, industry, policy formulation and planning for economic and social development.

Priority A:

Work content:

(a) Assistance to countries and territories:

Advisory services in demographic statistics, economic statistics, national accounts, sample surveys, statistical organization, data processing, national economic surveys and the development of economic information services.

Support to existing national and regional training centres at middle and professional levels through participation in their training programmes and provision of advisory services in curriculum development.

(b) Studies:

Methodological studies and manuals.

National accounts:

Study on the application of the revised United Nations System of National Accounts in African countries (1974);

Preparation of an African National Accounts Manual (1974);

Demographic and social statistics:

Study on the enumeration of nomadic populations (1973-1974);

Preparation of Manual on Vital Statistics and Civil Registration (1974);

Study on the methods and problems of African population censuses and surveys, 1964-1974 (1975);

Study on migration statistics (1975-1976);

(d) Conferences, meetings, seminars and expert working groups:

The ninth (1975), tenth (1977) and eleventh (1979) sessions of the Conference of African Statisticians;

National accounts:

Training workshop on income and financial transactions of enterprises (1974);

Seminar on the revised United Nations System of National Accounts (1975);

Seminar on fixed capital formation and construction statistics (1976);

Seminar on the treatment of the services sector in national accounts (1976);

Second African seminar on price and quantity statistics (1977);

Working group on international price comparisons (1978);

Second African seminar on national accounts estimates at constant prices (1979);

General economic statistics;

Working group on transport statistics (1974);

Working group on index numbers of foreign trade (1977);

Seminar on industrial statistics (1978);

Demographic and social statistics:

Second African seminar on civil registration and vital statistics (1974);

Working group on evaluation of the 1970 World Population and Housing Census Programme in African countries (1975);

Second meeting of the working group on demographic and social statistics (1975);

Working group on recommendations for the 1980 round of population and housing censuses in Africa (1977);

Third meeting of the working group on demographic and social statistics (1978);

Working group on migration statistics (1979);

Economic information:

Seminar on economic information services (1974);

Working group on the provision of information for the appraisal of economic and social progress in the region (1976).

Related programmes:

All components of this project will be implemented in co-operation with ECA member states. The work will be carried out in collaboration with the United Nations Statistical Office, OTC, UNESCO, FAO and other specialised agencies. Activities will be co-ordinated with those of other ECA secretariat units where appropriate, and non-African Governments with relevant experience will be invited to participate.

12.18.20 Development of a regional statistical and economic information service

Origin:

Commission terms of reference, reports of the Conference of African Statisticians and the increasing demand for comprehensive and standardised information on the African region.

Project aim:

To develop a regional framework of statistical information, supported by detailed studies, to provide a reasonably comprehensive account of the African economic and social situation.

Priority A

Work content:

(b) Studies:

Statistical studies.

National accounts:

Compilation and analysis of economic aggregates for all countries of the region, using secretariat estimates where necessary (annually);

Purchasing power parities of African currencies (1969-1976);

Patterns of private consumption expenditure (1969-1973 and 1974-1976);

Growth of capital budgets between 1960 and 1970 (1974);

Price movements by type of economic activity during the period 1960 to 1970 in relation to similar movements in other regions (1974-1976);

Public debt of African countries (1974-1975);

Level of taxation (1974-1975);

Financing of public sector investments (1975-1977);

Structure of the public sector (1976-1978);

Statistical relationships between economic variables (1977-1979);

Analysis of money and banking statistics, 1965-1975 (1977-1979);

Relationship between budget estimates and actual government revenue and expenditure, 1960-1975 (1978-1979);

Analysis of trends in private and public consumption expenditure, 1960-1975 (1978-1980);

General economic statistics:

Processing and analysis, mainly for other ECA divisions (annually);

Food balance sheets (1974);

African industrial censuses undertaken in connection with the 1973 World Programme of Industrial Statistics (1974-1975);

Balance of payments of African countries (1974);

Retail trade and distribution (1975);

Analysis of household budget surveys completed during the last fifteen years (1975-1976);

Construction statistics (1976);

Structure of prices of imported goods (1977-1979);

Structure of the prices of some important African products (1977-1979);

Structure of African imports (capital, intermediate and consumer goods) (1977-1979);

Demographic and social statistics:

Evaluation of selected social indicators (1977-1978)

(c) Collection and dissemination of information:

Quarterly publications:

Statistical Newsletter;

Statistical and Economic Information Bulletin;

Foreign Trade Statistics for Africa, Series A, Direction of Trade;

Half-yearly publications:

Foreign Trade Statistics for Africa, Series B, Trade
by Commodity and by Country;

Annual publications:

African Economic Indicators;

African Statistical Yearbook;

Economic Data Summaries for individual African countries;

Biennial and other publications:

Bibliography of African Statistical Publications;

African Directory of Statisticians.

Related programmes:

The preparation of statistical studies and compilation of regular regional statistical publications requires close contact between the ECA secretariat, member States and the agencies with official data-collection responsibilities. Contact between the ECA secretariat and African countries has recently been considerably improved through visits and mail inquiries, but needs further development.