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REGIONAL TRADE PROMOTION CENTRE WITHIN ECA

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## SECTION I. GENERAL

1. The United Nations family of agencies has paid increasing attention to the role of trade and foreign exchange generally as a factor in the economic development of the less advanced countries. This culminated in the establishment of UNCTAD within which efforts are being pursued to secure the adoption of policies that are favourable to a steady expansion in the foreign exchange earnings with which developing countries can finance their economic growth. It is recognized, however, that the existence of favourable international trade policies is not by itself sufficient to assure increased export earnings. In many cases careful and deliberate programmes of export promotion are needed to enable countries to take advantage of the trading opportunities offered by more enlightened trade policies. African countries are particularly likely to miss such opportunities in the absence of adequate efforts in trade promotion. It therefore appeared urgent to devote more of the resources of the United Nations system to assist developing countries in the detailed tasks of expanding their trade in specific products as a complement to the initiatives which were being pursued on the general policy level.
2. At a special meeting of the Executive Secretaries of the Regional Economic Commissions held in January 1967, it was decided to establish a coordinated United Nations Programme of Export Promotion. This programme aims at combining the knowledge, activities and resources of all United Nations agencies connected with the field of trade promotion in order to ensure a proper response to the increasing demands of developing countries for assistance in this field. Recognizing the potential role which the regional economic commissions could play in export promotion matters, in view of their knowledge of the conditions in their regions, the meeting of the Executive Secretaries held at Geneva in July 1967 agreed that each regional economic commission in the developing parts of the world should be a centre of initiative for the United Nations Export Promotion Programme. For this purpose, it was recommended that regional trade promotion centres be established in the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) and Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) and be operated under the direction of the respective Executive Secretaries.

3. Basically, the regional economic commissions are expected, under the United Nations Export Promotion Programme, to

- (a) assist member Governments in their export promotion efforts to increase trade both among themselves and with countries outside the region;
- (b) assist in the development of deliberate and concerted export policies of the Governments of their regions;
- (c) assist Governments in the light of the commissions' intimate knowledge of the conditions of their regions, in formulating requests for advisory services, research, market surveys and training, these requests would be met by pooling the resources of the regional trade promotion centres, the facilities of the joint UNCTAD/GATT International Trade Centre, and the UNDP which dispenses the financing for technical assistance;
- (d) assist in arranging for training within their regions.

4. On 1 January 1968 the joint UNCTAD/GATT International Trade Centre at Geneva began operation, following the agreement reached between UNCTAD and GATT to combine their resources in order to make the most effective contribution to the export promotion programme of the United Nations. The Geneva Centre will provide support - in research, information, training and other functions that can be usefully centralized - to the field activities in trade promotion for which primary responsibility is to be carried by the Regional Economic Commissions.

5. The establishment of the ECAFE Trade Promotion Centre was formally announced by the Executive Secretary on 6 May 1968. The decision of ECLA on this matter has not yet been published.

6. It is now proposed to establish a Regional Trade Promotion Centre within ECA in order to further the objectives of the United Nations Export Promotion Programme described above.

7. The primary functions of the Centre will be to advise and give technical assistance to member States of ECA under the following heads:

- (i) All matters concerning the promotion of their export trade, intra-African and overseas;
- (ii) ~~The simplification and standardization of trade documents;~~
- (iii) The promotion and establishment of export oriented industries;
- (iv) The training of personnel in actual trade promotion work.

8. The activities of the Centre will be expanded by stages to include ~~advice and assistance in marketing and market surveys and in the holding of trade exhibitions.~~

9. The functions and activities proposed for each stage may be undertaken earlier or later in accordance with the demand from member States and with the funds and personnel available. The initial staffing required has been based on assumptions of the number and volume of advisory requests which may be received.

10. In meeting the requests of African countries in matters of trade promotion, the Centre will call upon and co-ordinate the assistance and ~~co-operation~~ of the UNCTAD/GATT Trade Centre, UNDP, UNIDO and other international organizations as may be necessary, particularly in the training of personnel and in obtaining technical and commercial information.

## SECTION II. FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

### Stage I

11. Advice and technical assistance will be provided to member Governments of ECA and to the private sectors of African economies in the following matters:

- (a) The organization and strengthening of national trade promotion services, particularly in respect of improving trade intelligence services, export promotion policies and techniques, activities of diplomatic and commercial representatives abroad, organization of trade missions, planning of export production, government incentives

- for export growth, market research and marketing channels, training in export techniques and the creation of ancillary export services such as export credit guarantee systems and credit insurance, design, standardization, pricing, packing and packaging, labelling, freight handling, trade publications, etc.;
- (b) The simplification and standardization of trade documents, on which preliminary work has already been done in the Region;
  - (c) The establishment of export oriented industries and the encouragement and expansion of those already in existence, with special emphasis on increasing intra-African Trade;
  - (d) The establishment of industries to process local raw materials now exported only as primary products;
  - (e) The expansion and diversification of non-traditional exports of African countries, particularly of semi-manufactured and manufactured products;
  - (f) The fostering of the overseas export trade of the African countries by
    - (i) co-operation with existing multinational bodies established in Africa to promote the interests of producers and exporters of such primary products as cocoa, coffee, groundnuts, etc.;
    - (ii) making new contacts with importers, bankers, port authorities, trade associations and other public or private bodies in overseas markets, either directly or through the UNCTAD/GATT International Trade Centre.
  - (g) The training of personnel in trade promotion work as soon as it is able to do so. In co-operation with other United Nations bodies, the Centre will organize training and refresher courses for sponsored officials and private enterprise personnel on the techniques of trade development, including state trading, customs procedure and policies, negotiation of trade agreements, export credit and insurance, tariff and tax structures, pricing policies, etc.

### Stage II

12. The Centre will provide information on market potentials, tariff and other trade barriers and government policies on foreign trade. It will obtain this information from world trade organizations such as the UNCTAD/GATT International Trade Centre and by collecting information itself in the Region for intra-African trade promotion.

13. The Centre will later be prepared to undertake regional market surveys and research on market potentials for specific regional products. To provide these services the Centre will maintain detailed documentation of all the products and manufactures of member countries, which will be kept up to date and ready for distribution as required. Relevant data on all trade matters and policies will be collected and collated. Close contact will be maintained with international organizations concerned with the administration of customs and trade laws and regulations so that the Centre can give member countries up-to-date information on such matters.

### Stage III

14. At this stage the Centre will extend its activities to include the rendering of advice and assistance to member countries on the holding of international trade fairs and exhibitions and on their organization. Technical and advisory services regarding participation in overseas trade fairs will also be available.

### SECTION III. STAFFING AND INITIAL OPERATIONS

15. Staff - It is proposed that the Regional Trade Centre should be staffed as follows:

- (a) Director to be Senior Regional Adviser on Trade Promotion;
- (b) Regional Advisers;
- (c) Economists, International Trade;
- (d) Research Assistants;
- (e) Secretaries.

16. Initial Operations

- (a) During 1969-1970 the Centre will collect and study all available information on the trade promotion services of member States.
- (b) Analyse in what respects these services may be improved and the best approach towards this.
- (c) Establish contact with the member States.
- (d) Continue the efforts to bring about the simplification and standardization of trade documents by member States by
  - (i) engaging experts to advise interested member States;
  - (ii) arranging sub-regional tours by the experts;
  - (iii) disseminating information on questions of trade documentation.
- (e) Assist in the study of the economies of member States to find out in which countries there are possibilities of establishing new export-oriented industries and where and how existing industries may be encouraged and expanded, with special emphasis on industries which will help to increase intra-African trade and on those which process local raw materials.
- (f) Formulate, upon request, plans for the diversification and expansion of non-traditional exports of member States.
- (g) Organize seminars and training courses in trade promotion work for nominees of member States in co-operation with IDEP, the UNCTAD/GATT International Trade Centre and other appropriate bodies.