

53403

Distr.
LIMITED
IND/IF.2/L.3
25 March 1968
Original : ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
Conference on Industry and Finance
Addis Ababa, 25-27 March 1968

STATEMENT BY MR. RAFIK ASHA,
SENIOR FINANCIAL ADVISER TO THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE
UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

M68-387

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Mr. Executive Secretary,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As this is my first intervention, allow me to convey the greetings and best wishes of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, Mr. Paul G. Hoffman, who has requested that Mr. René Gachot, Resident Representative of the UNDP in Ethiopia, and Dr. Jean Michel de Lattre, Consultant to the Administrator, and myself should represent him at this very important meeting of ECA. Mr. Hoffman has also requested us to convey to all participants his appreciation for their attending this Conference and for bringing with them experience and competence which they have gained in their countries and abroad over a great number of years.

The aims and objectives of this Conference are far-reaching and it is the earnest hope of the UNDP that the deliberations and discussions will contribute to speeding the solution of many important problems of industrialization on the great Continent of Africa, and help ensure an orderly and sound development of its vast economic resources.

This Conference will again provide an opportunity to draw the attention of African Governments to the various types of assistance available to them, not only from multilateral sources, including UNDP, but also from the major bilateral programmes. The series of sub-regional conferences which have been organized by ECA over the past three years have brought into sharp relief the impossibility of satisfying all of the most urgent needs and requirements from purely public sources of assistance. UNDP therefore, welcomes the fact that ECA and its member governments are apparently well aware of this problem and of the fact that some of the needs in question can best be satisfied by having recourse to non-governmental sources of finance and experience in the developed countries.

One of the most essential pre-requisites for the successful operation of Industrial Promotion Centres is the availability of sound investment projects and adequate feasibility studies in all the sub-regions of Africa. So far, we are not sure if that is the case. In our opinion, no progress can be achieved without a sizeable portfolio of such projects and studies, complete in every sense of the word. This certainly will avoid disillusionment among potential investors.

Mr. Chairman, UNDP appreciates the approach of sub-regional co-operation to fostering an integrated African economy. We believe that the sub-regional industrial information and promotion centres may play a useful role in this context.

We support the cautious line taken in paper IND/IF.2/WP/2 to establish only one centre for each sub-region for the time being. On the basis of the experience gained, further centres might be created if the need arises.

The paper states in paragraph ten that the tasks attributed to the centres are of a "rather comprehensive nature". We feel that the catalogue of activities which the centre is supposed to undertake is extremely vast and perhaps further exploration on limiting and concentrating the scope of the centre's activities to certain major fields may prove necessary.

With respect to the relations between the Council of Ministers and the Industrial Promotion Centres as described in paragraph twelve of the paper, those relations are not altogether clear. We express the hope that this question will be further discussed and clarified.

We appreciate the modesty of the staff requirements provided for the Centre in the present draft. We feel, however, that experience will prove the adequacy or inadequacy of the staff envisaged. Perhaps the proposed level is sufficient for the very early stages of the Centre. It is clear that the question of staffing will have to be reconsidered in the light of experience.

But while we are in favour of the creation of the IPCs to serve the various sub-regions of Africa, we consider it to be urgent that assistance from organizations in the United Nations family be provided in a coherent and

integrated manner. Also, in this age of proliferation of agencies and programmes, harmonization of activities of non-United Nations bodies must also take place. Otherwise, waste and confusion will occur because different organizations are engaged in the same work, perhaps even helping to set up rival institutions for nearly identical purposes. Could not these activities - those emanating on this continent and overseas, mainly in Europe and North America - be suitably co-ordinated? In our view all parties should avoid any duplication of activities, and of course, conflict of interest.

As to the creation of overseas offices for Industrial Promotion, we feel that although they are an essential part of the whole programme, they should, as a general rule, be left alone for the time being. It would be better to set up the home offices first. Only if these function satisfactorily will they be able to give their offices abroad the necessary support, information, material and the instructions needed to be effective, provided that no international organization has created similar centres.

With respect to the financing of the costs of the IPCs, we are glad to note that ECA will be in a position, in the formative years, to secure assistance from friendly Governments towards the annual recurring costs of establishing and operating IPCs, and that the major part of their expenditure will be met by member Governments concerned, until such time as the Centres become well established and are in a position to levy a charge on industry for services rendered by them.

Mr. Chairman, I do not need to remind this august body that in the harmonizing of national interests and endeavours, international organizations of the UN family - which are impartial and disinterested by their very nature - can play an especially valuable role.

Finally, may I convey to you the most sincere good wishes of the UNDP's Administrator for the success of your efforts, on which so many hopes for speeding the industrial progress of the Continent have so rightly been placed.