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REPORT OF MISSION ON INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS
ON
UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
PREPARATORY PROCESS

by

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**INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS ON UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT
AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCED) PREPARATORY PROCESS**

1. The informal consultations in the context of UNCED preparatory process in Africa were held at the UNESCO offices at the United Nations Gigiri Centre from 17-18 May 1991. The meeting was organized by UNSO Regional Office Nairobi. The list of participants and the agenda are attached as annex 1 and 2 respectively.

2. The meeting was opened and chaired by Mr. Samuel Nyambi, Deputy Director, UNSO. In his introductory statement Mr. Nyambi outlined the importance of the UNCED preparatory process. He pointed out that one of the primary goals of UNCED is to come up with novel ideas on sustainable development and particularly on the integration of environmental concerns in the development process. Previous conferences had focused on environment per se but in UNCED a balance has to be struck between development and environment. There will be need to create alternative development scenarios in order to achieve sustainable development.

3. Mr. Nyambi then outlined activities of various intergovernmental organizations and the United Nations organizations in the UNCED preparatory process for Africa. Specifically he briefed the participants on the activities of the CILSS, SADCC and IGADD, ECOWAS, ADB and PTA as well as the United Nations organizations (ECA, UNEP, UNSO, UNESCO, etc).

4. One of the main objectives of the informal consultations was to exchange ideas and information on the UNCED preparatory process in order to get a better understanding of what is going on. It was further envisaged that participants would go from the consultations

with richer understanding and therefore a greater commitment for enhancing UNCED preparatory process. Mr. Nyambi praised ECA for its role in preparing the orientation document for the Cairo meeting scheduled for 11-16 July 1991. He then invited the ECA to present the working paper.

5. Dr. L. Tandap of the Environment Section at ECA presented the highlights of the ECA working document. He traced the UNCED preparatory process for Africa from the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development) which emphasized the multi-sectoral approach to environmental management. The Kampala Conference on Environment and Sustainable Development was held in pursuance of resolutions 42/186 and 42/187 of the General Assembly adopted in December 1987. The General Assembly also adopted resolution 44/228 of September 1989 on holding a United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Brazil in June 1992. This resolution also invited the Regional Commissions to play an important role in the UNCED preparatory process. The ECA working document therefore aims at, putting together and presenting the African position at UNCED.

6. UNCED 1992 will be an exchange of ideas on integrated multi-sectoral programmes and the implementation of strategies appropriate for achieving sustainable development. Nine issues of global concern have been identified for discussion in Brazil. ECA paper has made an attempt to harmonize the seven issues discussed in Kampala with the nine UNCED issues. It is quite clear that Africa's environmental concerns for the 1990s must encompass broad issues, and must recognize inter-sectoral links instead of pursuing the narrow sectoral concerns.

7. Dr. Tandap then outlined the structure and content of the ECA orientation document which was prepared at the initiative of the ECA Executive Secretary. He (the Executive Secretary) had convened a Multidisciplinary Task Force to give an orientation to the

document. The paper was reviewed by a Forum of Eminent Africans who met in Addis Ababa 21-22 February 1991. It remains a working document until after Cairo when it will be presented to Prep Comm in August 1991 in Geneva.

8. Apart from the nine issues, UNCED will also discuss six other cross-cutting items, and an agreement reached on them in Brazil. These will then constitute the outputs of the UNCED-1992 Conference.

(i) Conventions on:

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| (a) Climate change | conventions will be presented |
| (b) biodiversity | and opened for signature in Rio |
| (c) forestry - | though they would be formulated |
| | and negotiated during the UNCED |
| | preparatory process. |

For climate change an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee meeting was held in Washington D.C. (4-14 February 1991) to try to come up with a framework for signing in Rio.

(ii) Earth Charter

This will be a United Nations document declaring the principles by which people should conduct themselves in relation to each other and the environment - "to ensure our common future in both environmental and developmental terms".

- (iii) Agenda for action, "Agenda 21" to provide concrete measures for implementation of these principles through agreed international work programme in the period following the conference and leading into the 21 century.

It is a statement of goals and objectives as well as a list of strategies and actions that will be taken to meet those objectives.

(iv) Financial resources

Measures for financing the action provided for in Agenda 21 and to ensure access by developing countries to new and additional financial resources they will require to integrate environmental dimensions into their developmental policies and practices. The Global Environmental Facility to the tune of: US\$ one and half billion has been established by World Bank, UNDP, and UNEP to provide grants to developing countries to enable them tackle problems of environmental degradation.

(v) Technology transfer

Measures to ensure favourable access to, and transfer of, environmentally-sound technologies, in particular developing countries, including on concessional and preferential terms.

(vi) Institutions

Measures for strengthening existing institutions, notably UNEP, UNDP; the environmental capacities of developing agencies and organizations, the processes of collaboration and coordination amongst them.

Statement by UNDP Resident Representative (Nairobi, Kenya),
Mr. Jean-Jaques Graisse

9. Mr. Graisse is in charge of the UNCED secretariat, Nairobi Liaison Office. In his speech Mr. Graisse stressed the need for

dialogue between environmentalists and planners in order to achieve sustainable development. He was disappointed that no planners had been invited to attend our consultation meeting. He pointed out that there would be no negotiations in Brazil; however, the main negotiations would be carried out in the prep. comm. meetings to be held in Geneva (August/September 1991) and New York (March 1992). He emphasized that the recommendations of the Cairo meeting should form part of the strategy for negotiations in the August prep. comm. He further informed the meeting that the Cairo Conference declaration is the main document which will be discussed in prep. comm. He further lamented that there had not been continuity in prep. comm. participation by the African Governments, nongovernmental organizations or intergovernmental organizations unlike the developed countries. He hoped that African countries would make a point to participate regularly in the future meetings. The UNDP in Kenya had assisted Government representatives to participate in previous prep. comm. meetings; he hoped that other UNDP country offices would do likewise. Mr. Graisse announced that a cluster meeting of Ministers of Planning for Kenya, Uganda, nearby Islands, Tanzania, Zambia would be held in Nairobi just before the Cairo meeting. It was also probable that a Scientific Symposium in the context UNCED would be held in Africa late June 1991.

10. Key Ideas Emerging from the Discussion

(a) Role of subregional organizations - particularly in the promotion of integration of environment in development. How can we create dynamism at the subregional level? CILSS and IGADD held their subregional meeting in February 1991 in Ouagadougou. SADCC was preparing a subregional paper to be sent to ECA before July 1991.

(b) Drawing up of a calendar of events within the frame work of UNCED preparatory process (ECA/OAU/UNSO) and the promotion of

participation of all concerned. Attempts to be made to ensure that the representation in the Geneva Prep. Comm. is the same as that in the Cairo meeting.

(c) Which Ministry should go to Brazil - Planning or Environment or both? How can we forge integration of environment in the development process?

(d) How can we ensure effective participation by African in the negotiations on conventions as well as in the Cairo and other subsequent meetings? ECA/UNEP/OAU were requested to follow on conventions.

(e) To what extent can the ADB assist in the UNCED preparatory process?

(f) Since the representation in Brazil will be at the Head of State level, there may be need for the African Heads of State to hold their normal summit in May 1992 in order to attend the UNCED in June 1992.

11. Some Specific Comments on ECA Working Document

(a) There is need for preparation of an Executive Summary.

(b) There is need to mention where appropriate in document about initiatives by the African Women's Assembly as well as the Charter for Popular Participation.

(c) It may be desirable to tone down on language used particularly in Chapter 2 against certain institutions i.e. document too aggressive;

(d) It is also necessary to recall major efforts undertaken by member States in the field of environment and development;

(e) There is need to highlight the Bamako convention;

(f) It is unlikely that UNCED will become institutionalized, despite the suggestion made in the ECA document;

(g) There is an apparent contradiction on the population issue - expansion vs a plea for its reduction!

(h) There is a systematic presentation of what ECA and other United Nations organizations should be doing and not what the African countries ought to be doing. Need for political support for the document.

(i) Role of UNDP particularly in funding of programmes and project has been minimized. Role of ADB not mentioned.

(j) What happens after 1992 is not clearly addressed.

(k) The title of the document should read:

Achieving our Development Goals through Environment
(Development had inadvertently been omitted).

(l) It will be difficult to appraise the projects without finances. Projects should therefore be appraised in 1992. Need to spread the time table for projects.

(m) Role of projects in document. Whether projects should constitute an annex.

COMMENTS ON UNCED PREPARATORY PROCESS

Integration of environment in development

12. Since the 1972 Stockholm conference on environment and human settlement, some 42 African countries have formulated national action plans for the management of the African environment. The plans have included strategies for the management of forests, soils, drought, decertified lands, etc. Needless to add that African governments have recognized the need to protect their environment, and hence, the establishment of ministries or agencies of environment. The African ministries or agencies of environment are, however, poorly funded; moreover, environmental concerns continue to be dealt with haphazardly. A big mistake made during the last two decades was for the establishment by governments of environment units as separate entities rather than cutting across various sectors of the economy. Indeed, in most member States there is a lack of correlation between conservation strategies on one hand and the national development plans on the other. Moreover, in most countries the national developmental plans span a period of five years. This period is too short for the regeneration of depleted natural resources such as soils, forests. Even the fast-growing trees will certainly not mature in five years for use as fuelwood or poles for building dwelling houses, etc. African governments must not only integrate environmental programmes in development process but must, in addition, design long-term national projections to accommodate environmental needs. To ensure full integration of environment in decisions-making process, African governments should establish high level environmental representation in key economic ministries. An alternative arrangement could be to establish a specific agency on environment and development to be responsible for all final decisions on economic development matters. A major responsibility of the agency would be to ensure that environmental concerns are

made part of, and constitute the backbone to planning process of all development programmes.

13. This is probably the most difficult step to achieve because the Ministers of Planning consider the Ministry of Environment just like any other Ministry-such as Industry or Social services. African Ministers of Planning rarely concern themselves at their meetings with environmental issues. At the recently completed ECA Ministers of Planning meeting in Addis Ababa, a paper on UNCED preparatory process was presented. However, when the Ministers made their statements, very few of them mentioned the UNCED preparatory process. In the same month (May 1991) the African Ministerial Conference on Environment was held in Nairobi at the United Nations Gigiri Centre, the environment Ministers urged ECA to incorporate into the document relevant and pressing needs such as education and training. However, the Ministers of Environment failed to mention or even allude to the need to integrate environmental concerns in development, when they were asked to speak the status of environment in their respective countries. A conference on environment and sustainable development held in Kampala in June 1989, and which was attended by Ministers responsible for Environment, Planning and Education also failed to evoke discussion on this issue. The pertinent questions which all African Ministers of Environment and Planning must consider seriously as they prepare for the UNCED may be summarized as follows:

- (i) whether national planning agencies include environmental experts as part of their staff;
- (ii) whether strategic frameworks and economic development are sufficiently integrated and are being pursued as goals of equal importance;

- (iii) whether monitoring of environmental matters in relation to economic indicators is in place;
- (iv) whether public inquiries and hearings as well as environmental impact assessment studies are being carried out routinely to assist decision-makers in setting development projects such as large-scale hydro-electric and irrigation schemes, etc;
- (v) whether a deliberate attempt is being made to raise public awareness and the participation of the local people in the design and implementation of projects;
- (vi) whether equitable distribution of benefits of development is practice.

14. Environmental initiatives in Africa have hitherto encountered daunting challenges due to flows in environmental protection laws. The laws are scattered in the various economic sectors whose activities impinge on environmental management. Because different authorities are responsible for enforcing different aspects of the laws, it is difficult to know which takes priority over the other. Time has come when the national environmental protection laws should be harmonized and re-enforced. African governments should also institute mechanisms for environmental review for proposed projects - locally or internationally sponsored so long as they hinge on exploitation of natural resources. Any national projects - in mining, agriculture, fisheries industry etc. should endeavour to rationally utilize the resources in a manner that sustains the environment.

15. This reinforces the question of environmental impact assessments (EIA) for proposed projects. This should be carried out by prospective investors (or donors) in collaboration with government environmental agencies. It may be most prudent to set

up parastatal organizations mandated to carry out EIA as most governments and donors are now increasingly insisting on EIA.

ANNEX

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