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Item 6 of the provisional agenda*

A SUBREGIONAL APPROACH TO NATIONAL SURVIVAL

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INTRODUCTION

1. The drought that swept through Africa in 1984 was as widespread and disastrous as it was because conditions were ripe for it: because of the structural weaknesses of African economies, none of the countries seriously affected by the drought could keep its systems of production from collapsing. Despite the fact that the recipient countries were ill-organized to cope with a sudden, massive inflow of international assistance, many human lives were saved and utter calamity was averted. Everyone is waiting anxiously for the next act in the play to unfold because they know that international assistance has provided but a brief respite and that the spectre of famine and ruin has retreated only temporarily. It is therefore high time Africa took steps to ward off disaster once and for all.

2. Purely national strategies revealed their limits and inefficiency a long time ago. It would probably be better for African countries to pool their resources together. Initially, however, concerted action seems best suited to subregions because it is at that level that complementary courses of action seem most obvious and most readily accepted. The aim of this report is to present possible courses of action to be pursued in each of the subregions on the basis of data specific to each one of them or common to several.

I. GREAT LAKES SUBREGION (GISENYI MULPOC)

A. Overall situation

3. The member countries of the Gisenyi MULPOC (Burundi, Rwanda and Zaire) were not spared by the international economic crisis and the climatic disturbances. They started having sectoral problems as far back as 1981. Burundi and Rwanda are running current account deficits while Zaire has a deficit in capital flows. On the one hand, the considerable volume of unilateral transfers and capital flows only partially offsets the deficit in the balance of goods and services in Burundi and Rwanda; on the other hand, the balance is positive in Zaire whose deficit in unilateral transfers and capital flows most probably results from paying off its external debt. The total external debt increased rapidly to 15 per cent of GDP at current prices in Burundi and Rwanda in 1982, and exceeded Zaire's GDP. The ratio of external debt servicing to total export earnings f.o.b. however remained below 20 per cent for the three countries.

4. Apart from the external balance-of-payments deficit, the Gisenyi MULPOC countries have also had imbalances in their operating and investment budgets since 1981. Such imbalances were low in Burundi (10 per cent of total budget revenues in 1982) and in Rwanda (13 per cent), but as high as 42 per cent in Zaire.

5. In agriculture, the three countries have a climate which permits two harvests per year for most food crops and makes it possible to compensate within a year for seasonal shortfalls in production arising from drought, late or prolonged rains. For this reason, they have not had weather disturbances extending beyond a growing season to cause serious or prolonged shortages of foodstuffs. In 1984, however, there was a shortfall in rain with quite serious consequences, especially in Burundi and Rwanda.

6. In the industrial sector, many firms work below their capacity and leave actual needs unsatisfied. This is due either to an inadequate supply of local raw materials for sugar mills, vegetable oil mills and flour mills or to salts at a loss due to the poor quality of products put on the market. In either case, the idle capacity helps to keep prices high because of the way depreciation is calculated on all investments, even those that are unproductive.

7. Finally, transport and telecommunications networks are not integrated and this makes communications among the countries difficult. The situation briefly described above obviously calls for corrective measures. Subregional co-operation could provide answers to the problems.

B. Areas of subregional co-operation in the face of the crisis

(i) Agricultural research and food security

8. In agriculture, co-operation is already well-established under the Institut de recherche agronomique et zootechnique (IRAZ). Apart from research and the multiplication and dissemination of high-yielding seeds and animals, this Institute is also responsible for carrying out studies on and popularizing the best methods of cropping, animal breeding and crop preservation. The existence of such an agency allows member countries to benefit from the results of research which can often be expensive and risky when it is carried out by individual countries; pooling resources considerably reduces the cost of such research for each of the countries while increasing the chances of success.

9. The building up of security food stocks, which has already begun nationally, should be co-ordinated at the subregional level; the three countries have already embarked on such a common policy through a food security programme on which preliminary studies have already been carried out. The programme should make it possible to solve the problem of food security in the subregion as a whole, allowing local deficits to be compensated for by surpluses elsewhere. The soil protection campaign based on anti-erosion methods and reforestation begun in Burundi and Rwanda should be carried out jointly because only proper co-ordination can produce long-lasting results in each of the countries concerned.

(ii) Strengthening and increasing the number of common and community industries

10. In industry, a co-ordinated policy would make it possible to revitalize some industrial plants by providing markets for them in the subregion. The planned exploitation of the methane gas deposits of Lake Kivu would permit the manufacture of chemical fertilizers, improving agricultural productivity by supplementing the organic fertilizer already in use. Similarly, there are prospects for co-operation in cement production: the expansion of some of the plants already in operation would make it possible to cover the requirements of some of the countries that currently import cement. Finally, activities such as engineering which individual countries do not have the resources to undertake could be carried out under subregional co-operation.

(iii) Greater joint utilization of transport and communications infrastructure

11. As far as communications are concerned, the existing facilities are not used to the optimum because there is not enough harmonization. Thus, air links still require proper co-ordination. There is a current project to open up the subregion which, when completed, should bring about the integration of the various modes of transport in the subregion.

(iv) Greater and better utilization of energy potential

12. In the area of energy, Energie des Grands Lacs will become fully operational when it completes the projects now under way and the electrical networks are connected up. Then the subregion will have the cheap electricity it requires for economic activity by tapping the enormous energy potential of the subregion.

(v) Increased mobilization of financial resources

13. To facilitate the implementation of the various community development projects, the member countries of the Gisenyi MULPOC established the Banque de Développement des Etats des Grands Lacs (BEDGL). The Bank should not only facilitate the co-financing of common or community projects and activities but also promote greater involvement by indigenous private entrepreneurs, individually or jointly, in the development of the subregion.

C. Conclusion

14. Although this review of possible areas of co-operation is not exhaustive, it indicates that if subregional co-operation were intensified available resources which are becoming increasingly scarce, could be better utilized. Such co-operation would in particular help to save industrial plants whose decline would otherwise be irreversible. It is clear that the institutional infrastructure required to develop such co-operation exists at least for the key sectors. What is lacking are the financial and, in some cases, human resources to provide the

required impetus and a link between the common policy that attempts are being made to promote at the subregional level and national policies. This situation recurs in other subregions.

II. EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICAN SUBREGION (LUSAKA MULPOC)

A. Overall situation

15. The economic crisis which has been affecting the world economy for a decade also affects the countries of this subregion. Although from 1977 to 1981 GDP growth rates in the countries of the subregion were on the whole rather satisfactory (for example, 4.6 per cent in Somalia, 6.2 per cent in Kenya and 9.7 per cent in Botswana), 1/ they have definitely gone on the decline since then. This slowdown in productive activities can be seen in the balance of payments since, according to the World Bank's data 2/ all the countries of the subregion ran current account deficits in 1982 which ranged from \$US 43 million for Mauritius to \$US 706 million for Zimbabwe. These deficits were however largely offset by capital transfers which accounted for instance for \$US 370 million for Madagascar, \$US 564 million for Kenya and \$US 776 million for the United Republic of Tanzania. As for the external debt service, it is above 20 per cent of export revenues in Malawi (22.8 per cent), Uganda (22.3 per cent) and Kenya (20.3 per cent) and is nearly 20 per cent in Zambia (17.4 per cent).

16. In agriculture, the per capita food production index (base 100 in 1969-1971) deteriorated everywhere (especially in Somalia and Mozambique) except in Swaziland (107 per cent) and in Mauritius (110 per cent). This situation indicates increasing dependence on imported food. The trend was aggravated still more by the 1984 drought which affected several countries in the subregion: 11 of the 21 countries that required food aid in 1984 are from this subregion.

17. Similarly, several industrial plants are operating below capacity for the same reasons as in the other countries affected by drought, namely shortage of local or imported raw materials and spare parts, high production costs and uncompetitive prices, capacity disproportionate to the available markets because of excessive protection of national markets, etc. It follows that many fragile industries compete for a small market and that customs liberalization comes up against strong opposition.

B. The need for increased subregional co-operation

18. This quick overview of the overall situation in the subregion clearly shows that the countries concerned cannot improve the situation without strengthening their mutual co-operation. Fortunately, they have already grasped the problem and have successively set up the Southern Africa Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) and the Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern African States (PTA). SADCC aims at freeing its member countries from the heavy economic bondage imposed on them by South Africa while PTA, which has wider membership, seeks to integrate the economies of the subregion through common policies to be gradually implemented.

1/ Source: Towards sustained development in sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, August 1984).

2/ Op. cit.

(i) The search for subregional food security

19. In agriculture, food security for all can be attained only through the harmonization of efforts. That is why the countries concerned have decided to establish a subregional maize research centre, maize being one of the most important staples in the subregion. Both SADCC and PTA have undertaken activities in this regard which range from the establishment of an early-warning system to the establishment of food reserves and also cover desertification control, development of forests and the control of epizootic diseases. Although these projects are promising, they have not yet attained the operational phase.

(ii) Co-operation in the development of common basic industries

20. With respect to industry, the countries of the subregion are co-operating in iron and steel and chemical fertilizers. These two sub-sectors were probably selected because of existing potential and because there are major constraints, an increasing the number of national manufacturing plants, such as the high cost of investment and the local availability of raw materials. The advantages of co-operation in these two sub-sectors are particularly important in the current situation since they would offer sources of essential products which otherwise would absorb considerable amounts of foreign exchange.

(iii) Integration of transport and communications networks

21. In the transport sector, many projects aimed at integrating the various modes of transport and harmonizing transport regulations and equipment have been identified. Unfortunately, there are grounds to fear that the operating difficulties of some subregional facilities could hamper other efforts to bring about subregional co-operation.

22. In conclusion, the Eastern and Southern African subregion has institutional assets which should permit the development of subregional co-operation especially by:

(a) Making better use of existing subregional institutions and better co-ordinating their activities to avoid dissipation of resources;

(b) Abandoning national policies that are almost exclusively concerned with maximizing the benefits of projects to individual countries;

(c) Adopting more selective priorities for subregional co-operation in order to concentrate on projects which respond to the most immediate needs and could bring about expanded co-operation;

(d) Channelling external aid towards such subregional projects despite national self-interest which is often fanned by the policy of donors.

23. Eastern and Southern Africa has to face a peculiar situation because decolonization of the subregion is not yet complete; there is also the economic strength of South Africa which exerts a strong influence on its immediate neighbours. However, South Africa's neighbours have become aware of the fact that in isolation they could not resist the economic might of South Africa; they have hence decided to strengthen their mutual co-operation.

III. WEST AFRICAN SUBREGION (NIAMEY MULPOC)

A. Overall situation

24. West Africa, which has about half the population of Africa and covers one fifth of the surface area of the continent, has extremely varied resources such as mineral resources (petroleum, bauxite, iron, gold), forest resources and an agricultural potential which is clearly under-utilized. Despite such obvious assets, West Africa is going through economic difficulties with respect to both domestic output and external balance. With respect to the latter, it should be noted that in 1982 all the countries except the Ivory Coast and Ghana ran current account deficits. The biggest deficits were recorded by Nigeria (\$US 7,324 million) and Mauritania (\$US 252 million). Those deficits were partly offset by net capital inflows which amounted to \$US 1,767 million in Nigeria, \$US 230 million in Mauritania, \$US 191 million in Benin, etc.

25. The external debt situation of the subregion is also critical. It amounted to 48 per cent of GDP in Benin in 1982, 86 per cent in Togo and 133 per cent in Mauritania; in 1982, debt servicing accounted for 36.9 per cent of export earnings in the Ivory Coast and 11.8 per cent in Mauritania.

B. The difficult situation of subregional co-operation and action required to cope with the current crisis

26. To exploit its enormous economic potential, West Africa began quite early to develop subregional co-operation. Currently there are more than 30 inter-governmental organizations in West Africa. Paradoxically, albeit in appearance only, this mushrooming of organizations in various areas complicates instead of promoting co-operation.

(i) Food and agriculture

27. In agriculture, the land under cultivation represents barely 20 per cent of the 50,000,000 hectares of land considered arable. During the period 1980-1982, the per-capita food production index (base 100 in 1969-1971) dropped everywhere except in the Ivory Coast and Benin.

28. This explains why from 1975 to 1980, food imports accounted on average for \$US 753 million per year. Obstacles to increasing food production include the little attention paid to agro-climatic conditions the knowledge of which would have made it possible to make the best use of capacity in neighbouring countries, the drought, inappropriate pricing policies, the low level of trade in food products among States, inadequate use of irrigation, and competition between industrial crops and food crops - won by cash crops, to which at most all resources (equipment, fertilizers and research) are devoted.

29. The need to increase food production is reflected in the large number of organizations working directly or indirectly towards that end. In other words, the countries of the subregion have realized that the struggle to reverse the tendency towards a deterioration in the food situation can only be carried out within a subregional framework. Such co-operation is already intense within organizations such as the Organization for the Development of the Senegal River (OMVS), but it should be expanded to cover the whole subregion and deal with aspects as diverse as: production of inputs and fertilizers, farm implements, marketing of produce, dissemination of selected seeds, research, irrigation, pricing policies, storage facilities, etc. All this clearly exceeds the resource capabilities of individual countries.

(ii) Water resources and desertification control

30. The same need for co-operation applies to the utilization of water resources and desertification control. Of the 5.5 to 6 million hectares of irrigable land in West Africa, barely 500,000 hectares are cultivated through total or partial control of water. To work together for the better management of underground or surface water resources generally shared by two or more countries, West African countries have established many organizations such as OMVS, OMVG, CIEH and the Niger Basin Authority. Similarly, the advance of the desert which since the beginning of the 1970s is estimated to have encroached in West Africa on an area as large as Burkina Faso, has led to the establishment of CILSS. The problem of desertification which directly threatens human beings, fauna and flora cannot be solved properly if others do not help in finding solutions; this therefore calls for the co-ordination of efforts, in particular the support of the international community for the various Governments.

(iii) Industry

31. Industrial co-operation comes up against the same difficulties as elsewhere in Africa and for the same reasons: production plants utilizing imported raw materials, small markets, high prices, idle production capacity, competition between similar highly protected industries and so on. Two negative examples of industrial co-operation are enough to illustrate the hazards of not co-ordinating policies: the CIMAOC cement plant which involves the Ivory Coast, Ghana and Togo and the Onigbolo Cement Factory which is a joint enterprise between Benin and Nigeria are hampered by a lack of sales outlets because the very countries promoting the ventures also have national plants that compete with the community industries. Similarly, the Nigerian ammonia production project and the Senegalese fertilizer project have so far not borne fruit in the subregional framework.

32. At the national level, the authorities are adopting piecemeal rehabilitation measures to deal with the problems encountered by existing industrial plants: association with the private sector, handing over to the private sector or in extreme cases closing down enterprises. However, such solutions cannot solve the basic problems. Genuine industrial co-operation would require subregional planning and co-ordinated national rehabilitation measures turning existing plants into specialized units. Such rehabilitation could begin through bilateral or

multilateral agreements. The first step would be making an inventory of existing production capacity and evaluating the corresponding demand; the next step would be to implement a subregional policy in conformity with the objectives stated in the Lagos Plan of Action and the Industrial Development Decade for Africa.

(iv) Transport and communications

33. In the air transport sector, the difficulties so far encountered should encourage West African countries to co-ordinate the activities of their national airlines. None of those airlines has the means, on its own, to handle the air transport crisis which even international airlines are going through. As can be seen, West Africa has as much reason as the rest of Africa to promote subregional co-operation. But contrary to what is happening in other subregions, West Africa should endeavour to co-ordinate the activities of the many organizations whose scope of action overlap. Fewer organizations with well-defined terms of reference and better co-ordinated activities would probably be more useful than the large number of organizations that currently exist.

IV. NORTH AFRICAN SUBREGION (TANGIERS MULPOC)

A. Recent developments in the food situation of the subregion and major structural problems

34. For the past few years, the food deficit has been growing alarming to the six North African countries. Yet, food production potential is extremely diversified and could be exploited to produce all kinds of cereals, sugar-producing plants, vegetable oil plants and fodder, plant and fruit crops, cash crops and livestock. In spite of this large diversification, the systems of production are strongly influenced by the vagaries of the weather and productivity falls far short of the results obtained by research and experimentation. Indeed, without expanding the surface area under cultivation and using available techniques, cereal production could be doubled in the Maghreb countries. In the Sudan, the only country with a production potential which far outstrips the current level of production, the potential can be tapped only if human and financial resources which are very difficult to secure in the short term can be made available.

35. To problems facing small and medium-size farms, whose situation remains precarious, one should add the fact that the land is broken up into too many plots, the problem of insufficiently robust farm equipment, and dependence on imported inputs. Things are different in the modern large-scale farms.

36. The countries of the subregion share the same problems. They are producers, importers and exporters of identical products and only the Sudan, because of its geographical position and natural potential, could put more products on the market. However, its agricultural performance remains poor.

B. Elements of co-operation in agriculture

37. At the moment, trade is not the main means of improving collective food security which can be attained only through increased agricultural productivity and a better use of resources. Indeed, the countries could utilize their potential better through co-operation and trade not only in food products but also in agricultural production including activities that contribute to or derive from agriculture such as industrial inputs, improved seeds, research, training, storage, processing, etc. However, it should be noted that such a policy requires a continuity of effort and a combination of short-, medium- and long-term activities.

38. There is almost no co-operation in agriculture if one overlooks an insignificant volume of trade when compared to trade with third, particularly developed, countries. Nevertheless, there are co-operation agreements with provisions on agricultural co-operation stressing programmes to study common water resources, prospecting and drilling and joint programmes to develop desert zones and control erosion; there are also provisions for consultations on facilities using the water resources of common basins. The agreements lay particular emphasis on agricultural research and manpower training. It is only recently, after intensive information campaigns and especially because of the worsening food deficit, that countries are considering co-operation through the establishment of joint agricultural projects aimed at satisfying national needs and exporting the surpluses to third countries.

39. Only the Sudan and Egypt have taken major steps towards agricultural co-operation under the Charter of Integration promulgated in 1981. Since then, bilateral machinery has been established to implement the provisions of the Charter; an integration fund has been set up to support the integration strategy by guaranteeing the funding of projects and mobilizing national, regional and international capital. In agriculture, it has been decided to implement several agricultural projects concerning the cereals sector, fish production, improvement of transport facilities, research, training and so on.

40. In the subregion, it would be advisable to co-operate as much as possible in carrying out and harmonizing certain activities. In particular, complementarity in some areas should be developed: the production of secondary cereals (sorghum, maize), red meat and sugar (in the Sudan) as the huge deficit of the five other countries in these three types of products will remain structural for a long time.

41. The major food circuits should be streamlined by making provision for links among the countries. Plans for sustained trade ties should give due precedence to standardization in the technological and health sectors. Joint action should also be taken with respect to the production and supply of inputs required for agriculture such as fertilizers, improved seeds, pesticides, farm equipment, pumps and irrigation equipment. This will bring about economies of scale and avoid costly duplication of efforts. Finally, it should be obvious that co-operation in research, training, information, pooled experience and technical assistance are required if collective food security is to be improved.

C. Industrial co-operation

42. Apart from research and training, co-operation in agriculture necessarily implies co-operation upstream and downstream of this sector -- in other words, the industrial sector. In the current state of bilateral relations the industrial sector offers the greatest prospects for trade and co-operation. The external trade statistics show an increase in industrial products in proportion to overall trade. Achievements in the implementation of agreements and recommendations of joint commissions fall far short of expectations and are limited to some industrial projects set up by Tunisia with each of the three Maghreb countries. In this area, co-operation agreements focus on the establishment of joint manufacturing projects, not only to develop complementarities but also to increase the production capacities of already established enterprises whose capacities are well beyond the absorptive capacities of a single country.

43. Lists of projects for joint manufacturing ventures have been established but implementation work has started on only a few of them; there is a host of industrial projects to streamline production, make better use of production capacities and improve productivity. Subregional co-operation can promote such ventures while bringing about a better rate of integration. The study of potential in the light of long-term industrial policies shows that it is in countries' interests to co-operate more in order to benefit from trade in industrial products which will help them to better integrate their production and make it more competitive both within and outside the subregion.

44. Trade can be boosted if more mixed plants are established. It should be possible to market the output of such units in any of the countries involved (like any national products) and thus substitute such products for imports from third countries.

45. Apart from the establishment of new industries, co-operation could involve the expansion of existing industries in any of the countries and the joint manufacture of components, spare parts, etc. for existing industries. The establishment of joint ventures will bring about industrial interdependence. It is a matter above all of increasing subregional industrial integration, reducing the subregion's imports of technology, equipment, components and sub-contracting services, and gradually bringing about specialization and giving fresh impetus to small and medium-size industries.

46. In the immediate and short terms, co-operation could cover improving countries' capacity to carry out the studies required for implementing projects, pooling experience and expertise and training specialists. It should be noted in this regard that some countries are in a position to swap manufacturing techniques in the chemicals sector and designs for turn-key factories in the chemical, building materials and poultry sectors.

47. In the longer run, subregional co-operation should make it possible for the countries to attain their desired objectives: economic integration and complementarity, optimum use of means of production at the national and sub-regional levels, improved productivity, expanded markets and subregional industrial competitiveness at the international level.

D. Transport and communications

48. At the current stage of trade, the transport sector does not appear to pose any particular problems; it will, however, be a major obstacle if co-operation develops in other areas. Efforts have been made but just as in the other sectors, there is a big gap between stated objectives and actual achievements. National road networks are relatively well developed. The same does not apply to roads between countries except between Egypt and the Sudan, which plan to develop road, rail, sea and lake communications. In the area of rail transport, Tunisia and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya have been thinking for several years of expanding the Tunis-Gabes network as far as Tripoli.

49. Finally, the development of maritime transport is expected to have the greatest impact on the expansion of trade. The countries are aware of this. Only after they have actually decided to develop co-operation in the other sectors will the establishment of sea links become imperative, because this mode of transport in view of the considerable distances to be covered in such a large subregion is both the most appropriate and the most economical. The countries do not find the current level of trade substantial enough to warrant the opening of regular lines.

E. Institutional problems

50. One of the most serious difficulties in North Africa when it comes to promoting subregional co-operation is the lack of an appropriate institutional framework. The Tangiers MULPOC fills that vacuum but is woefully short of resources. It is to be hoped that the countries of the subregion will gradually become more and more determined to seek subregional solutions to problems that obviously require a subregional response; failing that, they could at least consult with each other at the subregional level.

V. CENTRAL AFRICAN SUBREGION I (YAOUNDE MULPOC)

A. Overall situation

51. The Central African subregion is affected in various ways by the crisis. From 1977 to 1981, Cameroon and the Congo recorded sustained annual growth rates of 9.1 per cent and 8.6 per cent respectively while Gabon, Chad and the Central African Republic had negative growth rates of -10.5 per cent, -8.1 per cent and -0.3 per cent respectively. In 1982, they all ran current account deficits except for Chad and particularly Gabon, which had a heavy surplus (\$US 680 million).

52. External debts account for 50 per cent of GDP in Chad and 68 per cent in the Congo. Servicing external debt accounted in 1982 for 22.6 per cent of export revenues in the Congo, 15.6 per cent of Cameroon's export earnings and 12.6 per cent of Gabon's.

B. Current difficulties and the need for expanded subregional co-operation

53. Despite its considerable and diversified natural resources, Central Africa has so far been able to tap only a very small proportion of its potential. In the agricultural sector, it was noted that during the period 1980-1982 the per capita food production index (base 100 in 1969-1971) dropped everywhere except in Cameroon and the Central African Republic. This trend towards a deterioration in food self-sufficiency is aggravated by the fact that more cash crops are being grown at the expense of food crops and little incentive is being provided to develop food crops. The solutions proposed elsewhere are equally applicable to this subregion and would make it possible to make the most of its variety of climates. It should be noted that under the guidance of the Yaoundé MULPOC, a food security programme is being established. Implementation of that programme will allow the introduction of a consistent policy on various aspects of food production.

54. In the past steps were taken to bring about a better utilization of water resources. Cameroon and Chad signed an agreement on the joint development of the Logone River. Little progress has been made, however, in implementing this agreement.

55. With respect to attempts to control the expanding deserts which is an ever-increasing threat, the countries most concerned should co-ordinate their efforts because isolated action has only a limited impact on the spread of the desert which seriously threatens the environment in the whole subregion.

56. Industrial development in the subregion is facing the problem of divided markets encouraged by a narrow view of the national interest which has led to a large number of competing units, very often operating well below capacity. Very soon, each of the countries will have its own sugar producing plant while current installed capacity is ample to cover the requirements of the subregion; it will then be more difficult than now to harmonize sugar production. To maintain these unproductive plants, States will no doubt have to subsidize them or exempt them from taxation thus using already scarce resources in what could only be called a highly uneconomic manner. The projects proposed for the subregion under the Industrial Development Decade for Africa would make it possible to avoid the harmful effects of the policies applied to date.

57. Nothing has been done with respect to the harmonization of transport. And yet, the subregion has two land-locked countries for which any amount of time or money gained is of priceless value. The council for the co-ordination of transport in Central Africa which has been on the drawing board since 1976 has yet to be established. Its role will be to harmonize the various modes of transport in the best interests of the subregion as a whole.

58. A particular problem facing the subregion is the co-existence and co-ordination of activities between UDEAC, to which six of the seven States of the subregion belong, and the Economic Community of Central African States which has 10 member States. To avoid duplication of efforts which leads to wastage and inefficiency, it would be useful to establish a framework for co-operation between the two institutions without delay. The same problem applies to the CEPGL member States.

VI. CONCLUSION

59. For quite a long time now, Africa has been preaching the need to strengthen economic co-operation among African countries. However, after two decades of independence, it has to be admitted that there is a big gap between intentions and achievements. The institutions established to help bolster co-operation have not for the most part really become indispensable because there are such divergencies between national policies and defined objectives jointly within a subregional framework. Unfortunately, the current economic crisis which has brought several countries to the brink of economic disaster has a tendency to aggravate national chauvinism. Many countries struggling for economic survival are tending to adopt protectionist policies, even at prohibitive cost, towards production units that are economically and financially unsound.

60. It is hoped that all the countries of the region will become increasingly aware of the fact that their individual survival depends more than ever on their capacity to make the fullest use of all their collective resources. In this respect, the subregions offer a solid framework for co-operation in areas as crucial as agricultural production, food security, production of agricultural inputs, development of water resources, and drought and desertification control. Indeed, the subregional framework makes it possible to diminish the harsh impact of emergency situations by using emergency food stocks collectively and to lay the foundation for short-term programmes to resuscitate productive activities.

61. As the crisis continues unabated it is more necessary than ever to use the subregional framework systematically, not only to help feeble national economies to withstand the crisis but also, once the crisis has been overcome, to enable each subregion and Africa as a whole to get back on the road to economic growth and development.

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