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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
Fourth Joint Meeting of the ECA Working Party
on Intra-African Trade and the OAU Expert
Committee on Trade and Development
Geneva, 18-23 August 1969

ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AMONG AFRICAN COUNTRIES

(Note by the ECA secretariat)

1. The Third Joint Meeting of the ECA Working Party on Intra-African Trade and the OAU Expert Committee on Trade and Development in January 1969 devoted considerable time to discussing the role which increased economic co-operation among African countries could play in accelerating their development. It considered that highest priority should be given to such co-operation.
2. The meeting was of the opinion that the ECA and the OAU should play a greater role in the efforts to promote African integration. In particular it expressed the hope that sufficient resources would be put at the disposal of the ECA by the United Nations to enable it to expand and strengthen its activities for trade expansion and economic co-operation in Africa. It further supported the establishment of continuing machinery within UNCTAD in order to promote research on global aspects of the problems of economic co-operation. The recommendations of the meeting are reproduced in Annex I.
3. Through their regional bodies, in particular the Economic Commission for Africa and the Organization of African Unity, African countries have repeatedly expressed their determination to take measures aimed at overcoming the adverse economic effects of the fragmentation of the region into small economic units. Since 1964 the sub-regional approach has been adopted as a pragmatic solution to the problem of size. Within each sub-region the programme proposed by the ECA, and increasingly accepted by member States, is meant to proceed on two levels. First, the principle of economic co-operation must be translated into inter-governmental institutions in which the Governments can initiate collective policies and projects. Secondly, and simultaneously, a number of concrete multinational projects should be agreed upon and means found for implementing such projects.
4. So far the progress made by the four sub-regional groups has been rather uneven. The following presents in a summary form the most recent events:
5. In Eastern and Central Africa a Conference of Heads of State and Government of fourteen States, which was preceded by a Ministerial Meeting, has adopted a number of specific concrete proposals for closer economic co-operation among the countries of the region. These proposals will be further developed and amplified in a number of sectoral meetings which are scheduled to take place before the end of the year. The secretariat of the Economic Commission for Africa is preparing the substantive documentation for these meetings.
6. Within the Eastern African sub-region economic co-operation has gained momentum as Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda started in December 1967 to implement the Treaty for East African Co-operation. A number of countries of the sub-region have expressed interest in being associated with this co-operation. Burundi, Ethiopia, Somalia and Zambia have applied for membership of, and association with, the East African Community. Preliminary talks with these applicant States have been held, and a series of negotiation is about to commence.

7. Following the assistance originally given by the United Nations to the three East African countries in the drawing up of the Treaty, the UN is also extending support to the Community and to individual applicant States in preparing for these negotiations. The ECA and other agencies of the United Nations are maintaining contact with the Community in order to ascertain its requirements for assistance and to try to provide such assistance.

8. In West Africa the meeting of April 1967 was followed by another one at Ministerial level in December 1967, and finally by a Conference of Heads of State and Government in Monrovia in April 1968 at which the West African Regional Group was formally established. This new Group is now being given statutory shape in the form of a treaty, a draft of which has been circulated and which is going to be discussed at a Ministerial Meeting before the end of the year.

9. The ECA has been closely associated with these West African meetings, and particularly with the substantive and other work which has had to be done in between meetings, to sustain the pace of advancement towards West African economic co-operation. The secretariat of the ECA is further continuously working with a number of countries in the sub-region on more limited projects for increasing economic contacts between them and their neighbours.

10. In North Africa the Maghreb countries decided late in 1967 to adopt a more comprehensive approach in their policy of co-operation, but no further progress has been made towards enlarging the scope of organized co-operation in the sub-region as a whole. However, a comprehensive set of studies for a co-ordinated industrial development of the sub-region, including Sudan and the UAR, is now on the point of being completed for the ECA secretariat. A sub-regional meeting will be called to examine these studies.

11. In Central Africa the problem of producing and implementing a programme for balanced development that could meet the aspirations of all the countries of the sub-region has been a major obstacle to economic co-operation. The ECA secretariat has under preparation a set of co-ordination studies which will outline some of the possibilities for joint development. A sub-regional meeting is scheduled to take place later in the year to consider these studies.

12. In addition to the multinational industrial studies that are being conducted for the North and Central African sub-region, the ECA is now finalizing multi-sectoral studies on the possible pattern and pace of development of the West and Eastern African sub-regions during the Second United Nations Development Decade. These studies have been carried out with the assistance of the United Nations Centre for Development Planning, Projections and Policies and of FAO, UNCTAD AND UNIDO.

13. On the basis of the various studies either completed or in the process of completion, the ECA secretariat will outline programmes of action comprising those areas and projects of co-operation which it is considered that the Governments could embark upon. The ECA has proposed, and the UN Committee for Development Planning has agreed, that during the Second United Nations Development Decade multinational co-operation should constitute one of the most important elements in the strategy for the development in Africa. In those areas where institutions for economic co-operation are yet to be established, the ECA is elaborating proposals, both on institutional matters and on substantive programmes of co-operation. For those groupings that are already established, further efforts are required to put more development content into the institutional arrangements. To be meaningful co-operation must be translated into specific projects of development in agriculture, industry, infra-structure, trade, etc. which would not exist in the absence of such co-operation.

14. For this to happen, international agencies should supplement local efforts by performing some of the civil service, technical and advisory work that would otherwise have to be done by national officials. There is a minimum level of efforts below which these activities in the promotion of economic co-operation cannot produce results. It will therefore be necessary to strengthen the capacity of the international agencies to assist multinational groups in Africa.

15. The Economic Commission for Africa at its ninth session in February this year clearly recognized this need. It further considered that the role of ECA in this development was clear. There was broad-based support for substantial delegation to ECA of wide functions, with commensurate resources, and wide-spread feeling that much of the work undertaken by specialized and operating agencies of the United Nations should be channelled through, and co-ordinated with, the ECA. The keynote of all statements made during the session was "African self-reliance". The concept of self-reliance should be signified by a growing and concrete commitment to the concept, principles and practice of effective economic co-operation within the region.

16. The Executive Committee of the Conference of Ministers of ECA, which met in Addis Ababa in July this year, followed up these decisions of the ninth session with a memorandum to ECOSOC in which it is stated that "if an overall development strategy is to succeed within the coming decade in Africa, it is incontestable that its component elements must be designed and its programming and implementation supervised within the region ... The member States are convinced that only an institution such as ECA ... can properly be entrusted with such co-ordinating functions ... Individual agencies tend to work in isolation within the region ... The consequences of this approach include ... the failure to recognize development possibilities at the multinational level." 1/

1/ Memorandum by the Executive Committee of the Conference of Ministers of ECA for consideration by ECOSOC (E/CN.14/ECO/10) para. 8.

17. In the light of the strong desires expressed both at the ninth session and by the Executive Committee that the time has come for the ECA to move from the era of theoretical studies to the period of practical operations, the Executive Secretary has put forward carefully considered estimates of resource requirements to make the secretariat of the ECA a more efficient and practical mechanism for economic co-operation in the region.

18. Global bodies, and in particular UNCTAD, have formulated important operational programmes of direct assistance to Africa. The value of this work was clearly recognized by the Third Joint ECA/OAU meeting. But in most cases these programmes have been arranged bilaterally between the global body concerned and the individual African countries. Such projects could benefit by drawing upon the facilities of the Economic Commission for Africa and in many instances by being implemented through the Commission. The world shortage of skilled manpower requires arrangements which will lead to optimum utilization of available resources of skill.

ANNEX

RECOMMENDATION

The Third Joint Meeting of the ECA Working Party on Intra-African Trade and the OAU Expert Committee on Trade and Development:

Recommends:

Trade expansion, economic co-operation and regional integration among developing countries

- (a) that African countries redouble their efforts to translate into specific measures, agreements and programmes their long-standing acceptance of the principle of economic co-operation;
- (b) that they reaffirm in the OAU and the ECA the cardinal importance of economic co-operation both in their national plans and policies of development and in the international strategy which is set for the African region for the Second United Nations Development Decade;
- (c) that in order to facilitate progress by African countries towards the achievement of co-operation, the United Nations through the ECA should devote substantially more resources towards the technical study of possible fields and projects for co-operation;
- (d) in particular, co-operative projects and programmes which will accelerate the rate of development of the partner States in each sub-regional grouping should be studied in sufficient detail as to facilitate their early implementation;
- (e) that through their sub-regional groupings African countries should seek to increase rapidly the volume of their trade with each other, where necessary by granting special privileges and preferences to each other; ECA should investigate through the proposed Regional Trade Promotion Centre some practical arrangements whereby at least in their official purchases African Governments could give preference to African suppliers;
- (f) that the ECA continue its studies on payments questions as they affect trade among African countries and make suitable recommendations aimed at removing all the difficulties in these fields;
- (g) that, upon request, the United Nations through the ECA should assist in running or consolidating African institutions for multinational co-operation;

- (h) that African countries in UNCTAD should support the establishment of continuing machinery within that organization in order to promote research on global aspects of the problems of economic co-operation, to keep international attention focussed on the subject, and thereby to assist in calling forth material and policy support from the outside to African efforts at economic co-operation;
- (i) that the ECA and OAU should be closely associated in the work of the proposed Inter-governmental Group and in further development of institutional arrangements for the consideration of this subject.