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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

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PADIS MEDIUM-TERM PLAN
FOR THE PERIOD 1990-1995

Cover note for submission of the draft plan to specialized
intergovernmental bodies

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with the relevant parts of the regulations and rules governing programme planning, the programme aspects of the budget, the monitoring of implementation and the methods of evaluation (ST/SGB/204) the draft section of the medium-term plan for the period 1990-1995 is attached for review and comment by the Regional Technical Committee for PADIS. In particular, the review should be focus on:

- (a) the determination of relative priorities among activities subsumed under a given programme;
- (b) initiatives proposed by the Secretariat;
- (c) the identification of activities which are proposed for termination or curtailment;

Recommendations for changes adopted by the RTC will be taken into account in revising this draft to produce the plan to be submitted to CPC, ECOSOC, and the General Assembly. As is the case with the programme budget, the approval of the medium-term plan is a prerogative of the General Assembly.

Subprogramme 7: ELECTRONIC WORD AND DATA PROCESSING SERVICES FOR ECA
SECRETARIAT

(a) Legislative authority

The legislative authority for this programme is Commission resolutions 359(XIV), 438(XVII), 469(XVII), 498(XIX), 534(XX), and 581(XI).

(b) Objectives

To provide electronic word and data processing services for all needed computer applications in the ECA secretariat, to maintain computer facilities, and to train inhouse users in the utilization of available facilities.

(c) Problems addressed

While other United Nations secretariats have automated their data and word processing needs for substantive activities, financial, personnel, other administrative and management services and have thereby increased tremendously their productivity, lack of resources has prevented ECA from modernizing its computer facilities, resulting in low productivity. system.

(d) Strategy

(i) The situation at the end of 1989

Given the rate at which activities are increasing, by the end of 1989, the number of computer applications in use at the secretariat will put a strain on the existing computer facilities - two HP CPU units, consisting of an HP 58 (upgraded from the existing HP 44 in 1987) and an HP Micro 3000 XE (which will replace the HP 3000/III in 1988), the bulk of which were purchased from project funds. It is expected that at the end of 1989, these two systems will be interconnected, with 70 terminals or micros linked to them and possibility of connection of another 100. The New York/Addis Ababa alternate voice data (AVD) line will be in operation, with access possible from any terminal at ECA. Computer services will be provided to users in substantive divisions as well as the administration.

(ii) The period 1990-1995

In the period 1990-1995, the following will be undertaken:

Provision of microcomputers to stand alone, to operate in local area networks (LAN) and/or be linked to the mainframe central processing unit, to staff (both professional and general services) in substantive divisions as well as in the administrative and other management services; continued provision of access to ECA of other United Nations system data bases; increased exchange of data and information with the rest of the United Nations system through the data communication network, training of in-house users in microcomputer utilization and

applications; advisory services to ECA substantive divisions and administration on equipment purchase to ensure maximal price performance and compatability with ECA and the rest of the United Nations system, development and maintenance of operating systems, data bases and applications software; provision of technical assistance programming support services to ECA substantive divisions; maintenance of the ECA mailing list; scheduling and monitoring of the maintenance of system hardware; and design and development of utility programmes and new applications to offer improved planning, control and forecasting systems to end users.

SUBPROGRAMME 8: INFORMATION SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT AND USER SERVICES

(a) Legislative authority

The legislative authority for this programme is Commission resolutions 359 (XIV); 438(XVII); 469(XVIII); 498(XIX), 534(XX); and 581(XXI).

(b) Objective

The objective of this subprogramme is to respond to the needs of member States for reliable, accessible information on aspects of economic and social development in Africa by creating a series of numeric and non-numeric data bases for storage and dissemination; to assist member States, subregional and regional institutions in the development and use of information systems and to promote the exchange of information among member States in the context of technical co-operation.

(c) Problems addressed

Member States need immediate access to national and comparative data on economic and social development for planning and decision making. Frequently, the necessary information exists in Government offices or in offices of international organizations, but is not available/accessible to end users (Government planners, decision makers) at the time of need. African information and documentation infrastructure lags sadly behind the region's pressing needs for development information. For decades, the information area has been neglected, and, as a result, the vital role which information plays as an input to and output from every area of human endeavour was neglected. Information, properly organized and managed, is a pre-requisite to Africa's self-reliant development.

Specifically, the major problems hindering the efficient organization of information and the smooth delivery of information services at the national level in Africa are: the absence, in most cases, of national information policy and policy-making organs; the scarcity of human material and financial resources; the lack of awareness on the part of users of the availability and accessibility of data, and the reluctance

on the part of users to seek out information/data for use in planning and decision making; the inadequacy of training facilities; the severe shortage of middle level specialists and technicians; the low status accorded to information personnel; the paucity of training opportunities in modern information handling techniques; the use of outdated methods of information processing, storage and dissemination; and the low priority given to information systems and services in national development plans. Use of incompatible information collection and classification methods, and poor communication mechanisms have hampered inter-country exchange of development information and experience.

(d) Strategy for the period 1990-1995

(i) The situation at the end of 1989

The following data bases will have been created: statistical data base; data base of African experts; of projects; of development institutions. The data bases will have been installed in 10 national and sub-regional documentation centres and regional institutions. Eight external data bases will have been acquired. Fifteen national documentation and information centres will have enrolled in the network; norms and standards for the harmonization of documentation will have been established at ECA-sponsored subregional and regional institutions. Three subregional documentation and information centres will be operational.

(ii) The period 1990-1995

Activities under this subprogramme are of a continuing nature:

- Advisory services on formulation of national information policy and the establishment and strengthening of national documentation centres and linkages with the PADIS network;
- Development of user services to encourage utilization of the network through development of innovative information products and training of users;
- Training of staff of national, subregional and regional institutions in network utilization;
- Processing of economic and social data in data bases, and acquisition of data bases from commercial and non-commercial sources;
- Training of staff of national and subregional documentation centres and regional institutions in harmonization of standards and methodologies;
- Horizontal co-operation in the continuing exchange of information, including the installation of data bases at participating centres;
- Provision of direct access to PADIS data bases for the majority of African countries through public

- telecommunication networks and installation of data bases on magnetic media to 15 other participating national and subregional centres and regional institutions;
- Strengthening subregional centres by improving linkages with national centres for the exchange of data; and
 - Publication at regular intervals of selected data base contents and delivery of other hardcopy data-base derived information products such as question/answer services, selective dissemination of information and current awareness profiles. The PADIS Newsletter, DEVINDEX-AFRICA and directory of African experts will continue to be published. New data bases will be developed and existing ones modified according to the results of surveys of changing user needs.

Research on improved methodologies for statistical and non-numerical data base development will be undertaken. Specialized reports as well as guidelines for the utilization of the PADIS system will be published. Establishment of a fourth subregional documentation and information will be undertaken. By the end of 1995, the network of PADIS participating centres will reach all countries of the region. To provide guidance for the network, the subregional and regional technical committees will continue to meet.