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Committee for PADIS

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Item 6 of the provisional agenda

**REPORT OF THE SECOND MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
ON HARMONIZATION AND STANDARDIZATION OF
DOCUMENTATION AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS
AT ECA-SPONSORED
REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

PART I

ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

Introduction

1. The Second Meeting of the Standing Committee on Harmonization and Standardization of Documentation and Information Systems at ECA Sponsored Regional and Subregional Institutions was convened by PADIS from 15 to 17 March at the UNECA Headquarters in Addis Ababa.
2. The present report contains an account of the meeting.

Attendance

3. The members of the following ECA-Sponsored Regional and Subregional Institutions and other agencies attended the meeting: African Development Bank (ADB), African Regional Centre for Technology (ARCT), African Regional Organization for Standardization (ARSO), Council for the Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA), Eastern and Southern African Universities Research Programme (ESAURP), Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS), and International Livestock Centre for Africa (ILCA).
4. The International Trade Centre/Preferential Trade Area (ITC/PTA) attended as observer.

Opening of the meeting

5. The Director of PADIS, Mr. D.E. Benzine, opened the meeting on behalf of the Deputy Executive Secretary Mr. Tchouta Moussa. After recalling the decision of the Seventh Meeting of the Conference of the Chief Executives of ECA-Sponsored Institutions to establish the Standing Committee on Harmonization and Standardization of Documentation and Information systems of these institutions, and the decision of the Eighth Meeting of the same Conference to extend the membership of this Committee to all African institutions interested in the subject, he stated that the main purpose of this Meeting was to discuss the major constraints in establishing the system and extending the network and develop modalities to overcome these. The meeting would also be a forum for exchange of experiences among the members.

Election of Officers (Agenda item 2)

6. The following officers were elected:

Chairperson: ECA/PADIS
Vice Chairperson: ARCT
Rapporteur: ARSO

Adoption of the Agenda (Agenda item 3)

7. The proposed agenda was adopted.

PART II

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

Matters arising from the First Meeting of the Standing Committee and the Eighth Meeting of Chief Executives of ECA-Sponsored Regional and Subregional Institutions (Agenda item 4)

8. The Secretariat informed the Committee of the follow-up activities taken by PADIS in implementing the recommendations and decisions of the First Meeting of the Standing Committee. He expressed confidence that the decision to expand the Standing Committee membership to include other non-ECA sponsored institutions would stimulate and encourage greater participation. Noting the catalytic role that PADIS could play in promoting co-operation among regional and subregional institutions, he urged the Standing Committee to take stock of existing major problems and come up with a general orientation which could be translated into specific programme actions. In this regard the Standing Committee was invited to consider the proposal for merging bibliographic data bases on development literature of various institutions.

9. In the discussion that followed it was emphasized that it was necessary to know as accurately as possible the level of computerization of each institution to take appropriate actions for co-ordinating and harmonizing activities undertaken by each institution. It was pointed out that the data available from a previous study was very sketchy due to a very low response rate. It was stated that it is planned to update the survey by sending out new questionnaires. The Standing Committee supported the proposal put forward by PADIS to merge a number of bibliographic databases of ECA-Sponsored Institutions and other agencies. It was

felt however that such an attempt could only be made after compatibility issues were resolved.

Draft Agreement between PADIS and Institutional Participating Centres

10. It was emphasized that institutions planning to participate in the PADIS network should sign the agreement as adopted by the Conference of Chief Executives of ECA-sponsored Regional and Subregional Institutions. After a lengthy discussion, in which differing views were expressed in respect to the format of "the agreement of participation" the representatives agreed to follow up with their Chief Executives regarding the signature of the agreement.

Report of the Sub-committee on norms and standards (Agenda item 5)

11. In connection with the meeting of the Sub-committee on norms and standards, a member of the Sub-committee underlined the main recommendations of the Meeting as follows:

- (a) distribution to all Standing Committee members of the revised PADIS Bibliographic Record Preparation manual;
- (b) elaboration of an institution authority file and an institution identification code;
- (c) elaboration of codes to categorize academic qualifications and degrees;

12. In addition it was indicated that many of the recommendations adopted at the ARCT/IDRC sponsored meeting on harmonization of standards and methodologies for inventories of research, at which PADIS, ARSO and ARCT participated, were retained. These recommendations could be summarized as follows:

- (a) PADIS should co-ordinate inventory preparation activities of institutions in the region;
- (b) ARCT and CODESRIA with the co-operation of PADIS, should examine and evaluate existing questionnaires and manuals used for developing research inventories with a view to developing methodology handbooks and training manuals;
- (c) the ISO 2709 data exchange format should be adopted for information exchange;

(d) PADIS should take the lead in the marketing of information products produced by regional and subregional institutions;

(e) Training in the preparation of directories together with techniques of desktop publishing should be organized;

13. In the discussion that followed the question was raised regarding the basis on which the sub-committee has been selected and also whether it was in a position to develop norms and standards for the network. It was explained that the Sub-committee, which had only an advisory role has been selected from members which attended the first meeting and which were actively involved in the field of information. Its mandate was to review existing PADIS tools and make recommendation for improving the applicability of the norms within the network. The Standing Committee recommended that PADIS explore the compatibility problems, if any, for the merging of various ECA-Sponsored Institutions and other agencies bibliographic data bases

Progress report on the implementation of the PADIS Programme During 1987-89 (Agenda item 6)

14. The Secretariat presented a progress report on PADIS. Reference was made to PADIS technical assistance activities including training, advisory services to member States and African Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs), and technical cooperation activities. Details of progress made in networking, database development, user services in the preparation of tools and methodologies, and promotional activities were also described. The Secretariat gave an outline of meetings and technical consultative seminars organized during the period under review. It was indicated that the publications produced by PADIS were available upon request. Information was provided in respect of production of outputs, attainment of project objectives, and the impact the PADIS project had during the period under review.

Reports by representatives of institutions on development and activities in the fields of information systems (Agenda item 7)

15. The experiences of the Standing Committee members were presented by representatives from: ADB, ARCT, ARSO, ESAURP, ECOWAS, ILCA, and ITC/PTA.

16. ADB - The Bank's library/documentation centre which is being computerized with the assistance of the Government of France using the IBISCUS system and TEXTO software was described. The Committee was informed that within ADB there were information units dealing

with record management and Bank management systems. The representatives indicated that the focal point for PADIS would be the Library/Documentation Centre. They also requested PADIS assistance in the area of microfiching.

17. ARCT - The representative presented his paper "Activities of the ARCT in industrial and technological information, 1988". He gave an overview of the centre, its personnel, activities, equipment, products and services. He described ARCT's information system (ARCTIS) and provided details on the various databases produced and maintained by ARCT including ongoing activities for the elaboration of a directory of directories. He announced that an invitation will be extended to the Standing Committee members to attend a workshop on computerized information handling, scheduled before the end of 1989.

18. ARSO - The representative highlighted the major activities, products and services of ARSO's network (ARSO-DISNET). He described the planned activities for the year 1989-90, which includes training in the use of CDS/ISIS software, the organization of two seminars for anglophone and francophone countries on management of information systems on standards and the provision of fellowships to ARSO network members.

19. CODESRIA - The representative began by describing CODESRIA, its activities and objectives. She described the International Development Information Network (IDIN) in which CODESRIA is a member and she presented the IDIN Manual and the Draft manual for Institutes, Research Projects and Specialists. It was explained that CODESRIA has produced a number of directories using Micro CDS/ISIS: Directory of Research Projects, Roster of Social Scientists, Directory of Training and Research Institutes, Index of African Social Science Periodical Articles. She circulated a number of publications that were produced by CODESRIA: African Development Newsletter and Books and indicated her willingness to undertake joint activities with other institutions in areas of common interest.

20. ECOWAS - The representative gave an overview of the ECOWAS library, which has only one professional and one junior staff. She indicated that the library gets most of its documents from international and United Nations organizations and revealed that it had just acquired WANG computers. Having stressed the role ECOWAS played in the West African region the representative argued that institutions such as UNECA could be better served if some kind of support was provided to enable it develop a network among its member States. It was also mentioned that assistance was required in the areas of training, equipment and finance.

21. ESAURP - The Committee informed that ESAURP has only just begun to take steps towards the establishment of a database on research in progress, following the PADIS/ESAURP joint project in this area. It was indicated that ESAURP had acquired an IBM PC/XT and that more are expected in the near future.

22. ILCA - The representative began by describing ILCA and particularly its activities in the field of information and documentation. He reported that ILCA's database contained some 55,000 records supported on MINISIS software; CDS/ISIS was used in field offices. The various products and services of ILCA's documentation centre were also described.

23. ITC/PTA - The observer from ITC/PTA informed the meeting that PTA has established a trade information centre with the assistance of ITC. He gave information on the various databases which are being developed at the PTA: traders (exporter/importer) data file; trade statistics; trade rules, regulations and documents; trade control measures; tenders, tariffs and cost of different transport corridors; prices and market information; joint ventures, on bibliography. He referred to a project proposal being prepared for submission to the EEC with a view to connect the PTA trade information network to the Chambers of Commerce of PTA member States. He outlined the role of the national focal points serve as reporters.

Recommendations

After discussing relevant issues raised during the presentations, the Standing Committee made the following recommendations: (a) PADIS should explore the possibility of compiling a directory of databases and information systems of ECA-Sponsored institutions and other agencies and (b) PADIS should prepare an inventory of all telecommunications links presently operational connecting on line African institutions to access external information sources.

Review of specific items of the system (Agenda item 8)

24. Review of proposed institution code - The Standing Committee had before it a secretariat paper (ECA/PADIS/SCH/II/5a) which outlined the purpose, definition and proposed format for the representation of names of PADIS institutional participating centres. The Standing Committee was informed that institutions planning to participate in the PADIS network should sign the agreement of participation.

25. Review of the revised worksheet and manual - The revised PADIS manual for bibliographic record preparation was submitted to the participants for comment. The secretariat indicated that final

editing and review remained to be completed and expressed the hope that the manual would be translated into French and distributed before the end of 1989. A Committee member expressing his satisfaction at the useful work accomplished in revising the manual observed that this should have been done years ago. He further asked PADIS to circulate the working documents well in advance of the scheduled meeting to allow members of the Committee to effectively participate in the debate.

26. Review of the PADIS experience in the use of CDS/ISIS software - The Secretariat introduced a document entitled "PADIS manual for document analysis - Micro-ISIS version" (ECA/PADIS/SCH/II/5d) and conducted a brief demonstration of the CDS/ISIS version I software. Oral presentation was also made by the representative of ARCT on the various CDS/ISIS generated outputs.

27. Review of the PADIS institution authority file - The Standing Committee had before it a paper (ECA/PADIS/SCH/II/5d) outlining the details of the PADIS institution authority file designed to promote information exchange by maintaining consistency within the network. The secretariat explained the procedure for maintaining the authority file and introduced a sample worksheet which could be used by institutions planning to create their own file. The Standing Committee recommended that the institution authority list be made available on diskettes for wide dissemination.

Training requirements and schedules for 1989/1990 (Agenda item 8)

28. The secretariat presented a paper entitled "Training requirements and schedules for 1989/90" to the meeting. It was stated that most of the training courses, seminars and workshops planned by PADIS were geared mainly toward national and institutional centres in PADIS system. For the ECA-Sponsored Regional and Sub-regional Institutions, the training to be planned should be training that would ensure the use of compatible information classification and processing norms, as well as standards and tools in order to maintain compatibility and facilitate exchange of information among the institutions involved. The secretariat requested participants to forward to PADIS the planned 1990 training programmes in their institutions so that co-ordination of training between the institutions and PADIS could be effected.

29. The meeting also requested PADIS to send to their institutions PADIS planned training programmes well in advance, so that their institutions might include some of these programmes in their work programme. The PADIS training programmes should also be

announced in the PADIS Newsletter. In the discussion that followed some participants wanted to know if PADIS could sponsor the participation of people from intergovernmental organizations like ECOWAS and non-governmental organizations like CODESRIA, to PADIS training programmes, and also if PADIS could sponsor resource persons to their training programmes. In answer to this the secretariat stated that support being given to institutions in Africa by PADIS was normally in the context of the development of the PADIS system and network. This meant that if any intergovernmental institution is officially designated as a PADIS institutional participating centre, then PADIS assistance, with funds permitting, could be extended to such an institution. Representatives of ADB suggested to PADIS the possibilities of co-operating in training programmes. They requested PADIS to start a dialogue with the ADB training centre, so that the ADB training centre might consider including information training component in its training programmes. They then suggested to PADIS to discuss with ADB training Centre, the possibility of organizing an "Information management workshop for development institutions" to take place in 1990, where the PADIS network could be discussed. The secretariat took note of this suggestion.

Any other business (Agenda item 9)

30. The Standing Committee recommended that efforts be made to make all working documents available in both French and English.