

JS277

Distr.
LIMITED
S&T/CESTD/I.4
15 October 1973
Original : ENGLISH

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UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
Intergovernmental Committee of Experts
for Science and Technology Development
First Meeting
Addis Ababa, 6-9 November, 1973



PROMOTION OF INFORMATION ABOUT
THE AFRICAN REGIONAL PLAN

Introduction

The African Regional Plan for the Application of Science and Technology to Development was approved by ACAST 1/ at its 17th Session in November 1972. Acting on the recommendation of ACAST, and of ECOSOC in its resolution 1717(LIII), the secretariat printed the Plan early in 1973 (Doc. E/CN.14/579) and submitted it to the Conference of Ministers of ECA at their second meeting held in Accra, Ghana from 19 to 23 February 1973. That meeting discussed the African Regional Plan, and as a result of these discussions adopted an important resolution 2/ on the implementation of the Plan. One of the tasks entrusted to the ECA secretariat by this resolution and by an earlier pertinent resolution of ECOSOC was the promotion of fuller knowledge of the Plan within the African countries and the international community at large. A number of measures that have already been considered within the secretariat for the promotion of the Plan are dealt with below.

Objectives of the promotional programmes

Within the African region the promotion programme would be focussed mainly on the African Governments in order to inform them about the African Regional Plan, its objectives and also the results likely to be achieved if the Plan were fully

1/ Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development

2/ Conference of Ministers resolution 248(XI) Science and Technology

implemented. This information would be provided before and during the period when ECA would be rendering actual assistance to member States in preparing their own programmes for implementing the African Plan. It is considered essential for the promotional programme to be extended to include relevant organizations and institutions within each country, so as to create sensitivity and awareness amongst them about the African Regional Plan and to rally their support for its implementation. It is envisaged that they would include: scientific and technical research institutions; universities, polytechnics, technical vocational institutions; professional science and technological associations and mass media both public and private.

In addition, there exists a number of Intergovernmental Co-operating Organizations in the African region which play a significant role in promoting regional co-operation. Since it is already envisaged that a number of regional programmes would emerge under the world Plan of Action, the ECA secretariat would endeavour to interest existing intergovernmental co-operating organizations in participating fully in the implementation of the African Regional Plan, particularly in the promotion and execution of those regional projects which fall within their sphere of influence.

The secretariat also plans to direct its attention in its promotional activities to the advanced countries. Indeed the very concept of the World Plan of Action envisioned the stimulation of scientific, technical and financial co-operation between the developed and the developing countries. In this respect, therefore, the promotional activities would aim at informing them about the African Regional Plan and its potential contribution to the development of the African countries. Along with this, the advanced countries should be solicited to support country or regional programmes that would be initiated under the Plan. The main target areas comprise of: Governments and government agencies; scientific and technological institutions (including universities and research institutions), technological professional organizations, donor agencies. The secretariat is also aware of a number of international non-governmental organizations which have already shown considerable interest in the scientific and technological development of the African region. These too would be contacted with a view to soliciting their support in the implementation of the African Regional Plan.

Dissemination of literature on
the African Regional Plan

Copies of the global Plan, the African Regional Plan and Commission resolution 248(XI) dealing with the implementation of the African Plan have already been sent to ministries responsible for economic affairs and national development planning in all member States, and to government agencies and councils responsible for science and technology. Additional copies of the Plan would be sent to the countries to facilitate the work of their National Committees when they are set up. The UNDP resident representatives in all member States have also been sent copies of the Plan and Commission resolution 248(XI).

In view of the large number of copies of the Plan which would be required for distribution to the African countries and elsewhere, and of the limited stock held by ECA, the eighth consultative meeting of the African Regional Group of ACAST requested the secretariat to seek the agreement of the United Nations for Governments and interested organizations in the region to reproduce and distribute the Plan. The Group further requested the Office for Science and Technology, United Nations, New York to publish a popular version of the African Regional Plan similar to that produced in respect of the global Plan. The Group considered that the popular version could be used to reach a wider public in the region. The secretariat is pursuing both these proposals with the relevant officials at United Nations Headquarters.

Country Seminars in Africa on the
World and African Plans 1974-78

In response to a request by ECOSOC, the Office for Science and Technology, United Nations, New York, has planned a series of seminars for promoting better knowledge and understanding of the World and Regional Plans among government officials and amongst the scientific and technological community.

In the case of Africa the seminar programme envisages the holding of 41 seminars one in each member State, distributed over a five-year period, from 1974 to 1978. It is hoped that the seminars would provide an opportunity for the United Nations officials to explain the concepts of the global and the African Plan to decision makers in Government and leaders in the scientific and technological community. ECA has been requested to present the African Regional Plan at these seminars to be held in Africa.

The organization and financing of the seminars will be the responsibility of the countries themselves, however, both ECA and the Office for Science and Technology would, on request, assist with the organization of these seminars as resources permit.

Promotion of the African Regional Plan through mass media

The secretariat has been requested by the African Regional Group of ACAST to promote wider knowledge of the African Regional Plan through the press and other mass media. Preparations are in hand to send copies of the African Regional Plan to editors of important journals for review, in line with the recommendation of the African Regional Group of ACAST.

The African Regional Group also requested UNESCO to devote at least one edition of their journal "Impact" to a review and discussion of the African Regional Plan. The secretariat is in touch with UNESCO regarding this matter.

Promotional work with Universities and technological associations

The secretariat believes that existing African universities, other institutions of higher learning, and professional technological organizations within the region could provide expertise to assist in the formulation and execution of projects evolved under the auspices of the African Regional Plan. The secretariat plans to set in motion early next year promotional work among the African universities with a view to stimulating the holding of meetings within individual universities or by groups of universities to discuss and exchange views on the African Regional Plan and its implications for national development plans. Similarly the science and technological professional associations should be brought into the picture early so as to sensitize them to the possibilities and challenges posed by the African Regional Plan.

The existing contacts between universities, and professional associations in Africa and similar organizations in advanced countries could be of particular relevance in locating sources of assistance for the implementation of the Plan.

Promotion of the Plan at African Regional meetings

The ECA secretariat has been requested by the African Regional Group of ACAST to introduce the Plan as an agenda item at future African regional meetings of the United Nations organizations, as well as of OAU, at ministerial or other levels. The secretariat will endeavour to utilize future African regional meetings to publicise the Plan.

The African Regional Plan has been earmarked as one of the two working documents for the forthcoming UNESCO Conference of African Ministers of Science (CASTAFRICA) scheduled for 21-30 January 1974 in Dakar, Senegal. The secretariat has already dispatched to UNESCO 200 English and 200 French copies of the Plan for distribution to participants at this meeting.