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Distr.
LIMITED

S&T/IGCESTD/7/5
5 June 1991

Original:ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
Intergovernmental Committee of Experts for
Science and Technology Development(IGCESTD)

Seventh Meeting

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia,
4 - 8 November 1991

ACTIVITIES OF THE WORKING GROUPS OF THE
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE

Introduction

1. At its sixth meeting held in November 1989, the Intergovernmental Committee requested the Secretariat to mobilise resources for the implementation of the subregional projects elaborated by its Working Groups. The following report highlights the progress achieved in this regard and it also covers the activities of the Working Groups during the period under review.

Working Group meetings

2. At the end of 1989 three ^{1/} out of the five Working Groups had prepared projects for implementation on a subregional basis. Since then the Central and Western Africa Working Groups also met and undertook similar activities for their respective subregions.

Central Africa Working Group

3. The Central Africa Working Group held its third meeting ^{2/} in Yaounde, Cameroon from 2 to 4 May 1990. It was attended by experts from Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Gabon, Rwanda and Zaire. The Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) were represented by observers. The OAU, through a UNDP project, provided financial sponsorship for the participation of the member States and the ECA secretariat.

4. The meeting reviewed the status of science and technology in the member States of the subregion on the basis of the country reports presented by the participants. These reports focused on the three subject areas designated by the IGCESTD i.e Science and technology development; Basic needs(food and agriculture, forestry, health, water, housing, and environment); and Industry including energy, transport and communication. Taking into account the needs of the member States highlighted during the discussions and the priority fields identified at its second meeting, the Working Group elaborated the following subregional projects:

(a) Feasibility study on the commercialisation of research results in the pharmaceutical field in Central Africa.

1/ Northern Africa (25 - 26 February 1989), Eastern Africa (19 - 21 April 1989), Southern Africa (11 - 12 October 1989).

2/ First and second meeting held in Yaounde (11 - 14 March 1986) and (3-6 March 1987) respectively

(b) Study and improvement of infrastructures and methods for storage of agricultural products in the Central African countries.

(c) Workshop on the harmonization of subregional science and technology policies in Central Africa.

Finally the meeting appealed to the ECA and the OAU to assist the member States in the mobilization of the necessary resources for the implementation of the projects.

Western Africa Working Group

6. The Western Africa Working Group held its second meeting ^{2/} in Niamey, Niger from 21 to 23 March 1991. It was attended by experts from seven countries of the subregion, namely: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cap Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) participated as observers.

7. Although the Secretariat did not provide financial sponsorship for the participation of member States, seven out of sixteen sent delegations to the meeting. Furthermore, it was noteworthy that governments were represented by high level experts conversant with the science and technology issues and policies in their respective countries.

8. The Working Group considered the reports presented by the participants on the development of science and technology in their countries. Taking into account the current situation in the member States, the meeting approved the following two draft projects based on priority areas identified by the first meeting:

(a) Workshop on scientific and technological subregional policies integration in West Africa

(b) Training seminar on the commercialization of research results in the agro-business sector in West Africa

9. The meeting also stressed the importance of solar energy and biotechnology in the Western Africa subregion, and agreed that subregional projects be formulated in these fields.

3/ First meeting held (7 - 9 April 1987)

Promotion and Funding of the Subregional Projects

10. Pursuant to the mandate given by the IGCESTD and its Working Groups, the secretariat presented the projects (see annex) to twenty five organizations and donor agencies for their consideration for funding. The secretariat also undertook promotional activities amongst the member States with a view to ensuring a speedy realisation of the subregional projects.
11. With regard to financing, the secretariat has received one positive response from the Islamic Foundation for Science, Technology and Development (IFSTAD). The Islamic Foundation indicated its support for the subregional approach being pursued by the ECA through the Working Groups of the IGCESTD and expressed interest in supporting the following projects:
- (a) Technology assessment in East Africa: a training programme.
 - (b) Development of a subregional policy in science and technology for the East african subregion.
 - (c) Atelier sur l'harmonisation des politiques scientifiques et technologiques sous-regionales en Afrique Centrale.
12. The Islamic Foundation further indicated the possibility of extending these activities to cover the Western and Northern Africa subregions. As a follow-up to this gesture and at the invitation of the IFSTAD, a representative of the ECA visited its secretariat in Jeddah and held consultations on the technical and financial arrangements for the implementation of the above projects.
13. In addition to mobilising external funding, the secretariat also directed its attention to securing local resources for the implementation of the subregional projects. It would be recalled that, at the sixth meeting of the IGCESTD, the Egyptian delegation offered to finance the implementation of the two projects emanating from the Northern Africa Working Group. The secretariat contacted the Government on this matter but so far no response has been received.
14. The secretariat also contacted the co-ordinators in Lesotho, Zambia, and Zimbabwe responsible for the implementation of specific projects prepared by the Southern Africa Working Group. It was confirmed that Governments were still interested in the projects, though this was not fully reflected in their implementation.
15. Pursuant to the mandate in the Commission resolution 629 (XXIII) the Lusaka MULPOC took the initiative to promote the projects emanating from the Southern Africa Working Group amongst governments and intergovernmental organisations in its constituent

countries. Among the responses received, the SADCC secretariat indicated that one of the project coincided with their planned activity i.e. a subregional technology policy workshop, and sought ECA's collaboration in its implementation. The ECA secretariat is working out means for realising this collaboration. Other ECA MULPOCs have extended their collaboration with the ECA secretariat in the planning and execution of the meetings held during the period under review and in the follow-up activities.

Conclusions and recommendations

16. From the foregoing, it can be seen that the activities and achievements of the Working Groups were rather limited for a number of reasons:

(a) The financing of the Working Group meetings continued to rely on external support. The OAU through a UNDP project, provided financial sponsorship for two out of the three meetings held during the period under review; and four out of five since 1987. It is necessary for the member States to assume financial responsibility for such meetings and consultations. Co-operation amongst member States is such an important matter that it can't be left to the whims of external financing.

(b) The convening of Working Group meetings, the identification of priority fields and the preparation of subregional projects must be seen as an essential first step towards forging collaboration in science and technology. The owners of the projects i.e. the member States should take individual and collective responsibility so as to ensure their implementation and the eventual realisation of the projects' objectives.

(c) The participating Governments should designate co-ordinating organs to oversee and promote the TCDC activities being pursued through the Working Groups of the IGCESTD. Such reference point would facilitate continuity and follow-up.

(d) Pursuant to the Commission resolution 629(XXIII) member States should make full use of the ECA MULPOCs in the promotion and implementation of the activities of the Working Groups. These activities should be fully integrated in the overall programme of the MULPOCs.

(e) Co-ordinating member States should assume their role fully by taking an active role in the search for funding and the implementation of the projects.

LIST OF PROJECTS SUBMITTED TO DONORS

- Northern Africa (Tangier 25-26 February 1989)
- (i) Subregional network on prevention of post-harvest losses with special emphasis on training and transfer of technology.
 - (ii) Workshop on research management training for Agricultural Research Institutes Directors.
- Eastern Africa, (Addis Ababa, 19 - 21 April 1989)
- (iii) Technology assessment in East Africa: a training programme.
 - (iv) Water conservation for food production.
 - (v) Development of a subregional policy in science and technology for the East African subregion.
- Southern Africa (Lusaka, 11-12 October 1989)
- (vi) Large-scale production of school science equipment
 - (vii) Procurement, repair and maintenance of scientific equipment in the Southern African subregion
 - (viii) Workshop on the development of a subregional policy in science and technology for the Southern African subregion
- Central Africa (Yaounde, 2 - 4 May 1990)
- (ix) Atelier sur l'harmonisation des politiques scientifiques et technologiques sous-régionales en Afrique Centrale
 - (x) Etude de faisabilité commerciale des résultats de recherche dans le domaine de la pharmacopée en Afrique Centrale
 - (xi) Etudes et amélioration des structures et méthodes de stockage des denrées agricoles dans les pays de l'Afrique Centrale.