

# **The ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA**

## **Its origin, development, problems and prospects**

*This is a revised text  
of the statement by Prof. Adebayo Adedeji,  
United Nations Under-Secretary General  
and Executive Secretary  
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## NOTE

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## Introduction

It is more than a pleasure for me to address this fifth meeting of the Conference of Ministers, which represents the fourteenth session of the Economic Commission for Africa. It is indeed a great privilege to be here at this moment in time and on this historic occasion. Those of us who have been privileged to watch the impressive opening of this Conference, who have read the various commemorative messages from the African Heads of State and Government, and who have listened to the most inspiring addresses delivered at the formal opening would, no doubt, have realized that we are taking part in a great drama of momentous significance to Africa, in the presence of such an august gathering as we have here today. I am greatly moved by what I have witnessed and heard; and as long as I live, this occasion will remain evergreen in my memory.

Most of the honourable ministers here assembled, many of the distinguished participants and most of my colleagues in the United Nations and the specialized agencies who arrived only a few days ago have, no doubt, begun to taste the legendary hospitality of the people of Morocco. His Majesty King Hassan II and the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco have demonstrated to us, in ways that words cannot describe, how exceedingly hospitable they are. This Conference of African Ministers responsible for development and co-operation in their respective countries is the fifth in the series of meetings which have been held in Rabat during the past few weeks. Even a cynic cannot but doff his hat to the Government for the excellent arrangements made for ensuring that all these meetings are held in the most congenial atmosphere, thus guaranteeing their success. I would therefore like to seize the opportunity, once again, to express my most sincere appreciation to His Majesty, to His Majesty's Government and to the people of the Kingdom of Morocco.

They say, History never repeats itself. That may be true. But events of great historical significance have a way of recurring. As I listened to the speeches, I could not help recalling the words of His Majesty, King Mohammed V of blessed memory, in a

speech delivered on his behalf, on 26 January 1960 1/, in this same city of Rabat, at the opening of the second session of the Commission, when he declared to the assembly then gathered, and through it to the world at large, that

"Long considered merely as a storehouse for raw materials and human energy for the benefit of foreign capital, Africa, once it had again become a political entity quickly understood that the true purposes of its rebirth could be attained by an economic revolution. (And) in this, Africa was merely conforming to the imperative demands of our modern age."

Nor, honourable delegates, could I help recalling the statement of the late Dag Hammarskjöld at the opening of the First session of the Commission when he said that "one day one may look back to the establishment of the Commission as marking the moment when Africa began to assume its full role in the world community" 2/.

The celebration of the 21st anniversary of the establishment of ECA this year the coming of age of the Commission in 1979 - impels us at this Fifth Conference of Ministers and fourteenth Session of the Commission to reflect on events since 1958. Indeed, the presence here today of representatives of 49 independent sovereign African States shows how far we have gone in this tortuous and arduous but challenging and exciting task of ensuring that Africa assumes its full role in the world community.

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1/ The speech was delivered by the present King Hassan II, then H.R.H. Moulay Hassan, Crown Prince of Morocco, on behalf of his father.

2/ In Commemoration of the Opening Day of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa, December 29, 1958; Speech delivered by Dag Hammarskjöld at the opening of the First session of UNECA.

## I. THE GENESIS OF THE COMMISSION

Only very few among us here, today, would remember what a battle royal it was to get the ECA established at all. Events, epoch-making events, have happened with such rapidity in Africa during the past two decades that most people have given up even the pretence of attempting to keep pace with these events, much less retain a fresh recollection of them. The battle for ECA was fought and won before 40 of today's 49 independent African States achieved their political sovereignty. It is not surprising therefore that the overwhelming majority of independent African States arrived on the international scene without adequate knowledge and understanding as to the long and tortuous processes by which the Commission was brought into being; and what was its *raison d'être*. I have sometimes wondered whether the victory which was achieved would not have been sweeter and more appreciated, had the battle involved some 25 to 35 of today's independent African States. For, after all, ECA is Africa's first international, continent-wide organization. And for five years, from its establishment to the founding of the Organization of African Unity, it was the one regional forum for waging not only the economic battle but also the war against colonialism, racism and exploitation.

Accordingly, I owe this august assembly the duty of reminding it vividly of the facts, so as to enable each and everyone of us to develop a proper perspective about the historic role of ECA in launching Africa into the international community and in enabling the newly-independent African States and their foreign friends and well-wishers to mount a decisive attack on colonialism.

Indeed, the struggle for the establishment of ECA was no less dramatic than that for the founding of the OAU, with independent Africa being divided, between 1960 and 1962, into the so-called Casablanca and Monrovia groups. In fact, in the case of ECA it was more complicated since the entire international community was involved in the drama, at a time when the colonial powers had the upper hand and the independent African countries were too few, too weak and rather inexperienced to exert any decisive political pressure.

What are the facts? In 1946, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolved to establish the Economic



Commission for Europe (ECE), mainly to provide effective aid to the European countries which had been "devastated by war". the following year, the Economic Commission for Asia and the The East (ECAFE), now re-designated Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), was established. In founding ECAFE (now ESCAP), the major concern was that the vast population of Asia was entitled to United Nation assistance in tackling the overwhelming problems of post-war reconstruction. Moreover, it was recognized that while the War and the devastation it had brought had certainly aggravated Asia's economic problems in many ways, more fundamental changes were needed in the structure of the Asian economies than mere reconstruction.

Thus, in 1947, when ECAFE (now ESCAP) was established, it became evident that the step taken represented the first most important admission of the United Nations that the world included Asia in its own right and not simply as the area of responsibility of European colonial powers, and that the United Nations had responsibility for alleviating mass poverty and promoting development. So it was that one of the arguments used by the Economic and Social Council during its fifth session in August 1947, in recommending the establishment of the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), was that the low standard of living of the inhabitants prevented that region from making its full contribution to the welfare of the rest of the world. Even so, a guarantee had to be given that every effort would be made to avoid duplication - that is, with the work of the International Conference of North American States and the Pan-American Union - and that steps would be taken to ensure co-operation between existing inter-American organizations and the proposed regional commission.

But while the establishment of ECE, ECAFE (now ESCAP) and ECLA did not pose too much trouble, that of ECA involved a long struggle which lasted more than a decade. Indeed, it has been truly said that the struggle over the creation of ECA marked one of the last attempts by the major colonial powers to hold back the political and economic development of Africa.

First, two working groups were established in 1947 to study the reconstruction needs of Europe and Africa on the

one hand, and of Asia and the Far East on the other. On the basis of their findings and of subsequent negotiations, due recommendations for the establishment of the Economic Commissions for Europe and for Asia and the Far East were made while in the case of Africa, the Council proceeded merely to take note of the fact that North Africa and Ethiopia were already included within the scope of the activities of the temporary Sub-commission for Economic Reconstruction of Devastated Areas. I should significantly add that soon after the decision to establish the two regional economic commissions (ECE and ECAFE) was taken, the activities of the Sub-commission were terminated and brought to a complete stop.

In 1947, a resolution was introduced by the Economic and Social Council calling for the establishment of an economic Commission for North Africa and Ethiopia but without any success. In 1950, when the request was repeated, the consensus in the Economic and Social Council was that it would be premature to establish such a commission. Instead, the Secretary-General was requested to prepare a review of economic conditions in Africa. Subsequent requests in 1951 and 1956 were similarly turned down by the Economic and Social Council.

It is significant, but probably coincidental, that it was about this period (1950-1951) that the Commission for Technical Co-operation in Africa South of the Sahara (CCTA) was established "to ensure technical co-operation between territories for which member (colonial) Governments were responsible in Africa South of the Sahara". It is also worthy of note that this basically colonial inter-governmental body very quickly succeeded in stretching its operational wings to cover a wide-ranging number of technical matters in such fields as animal health, labour, community development, agriculture, engineering, geology, housing, survey and maps, and conservation and utilization of soils.

It is not surprising, therefore, that when the matter was raised again in 1957, the developing countries came to the aid of Africa by deciding to circumvent the Economic and Social Council so as to introduce the question direct to the Second Committee of the 12th Session of the General Assembly. There, the developing countries and their friends among the developed



countries found it comparatively easy to obtain majority support for an Assembly resolution directing the Economic and Social Council to establish an African regional economic commission at its next session. Accordingly, the Council, by its resolution 671(XXV) of 29 April 1958 established the ECA and laid down its terms of reference.

I have the greatest pleasure in acknowledging the presence with us, today, of the President of the Economic and Social Council at the time when that resolution was passed. My distinguished colleague and friend, George Davidson, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management was then not only the representative of his great country, the Dominion of Canada, in the Economic and Social Council, but also had the distinction of being the Council's President at the time. I must also pay tribute to the five African combatants who did all they could to ensure that Africa had its own regional economic commission and were even responsible for preparing the draft terms of reference for the Commission. These five sons of Africa were Mr. Mekki Abbas (Sudan) who later became the Commission's first Executive Secretary, Mr. Omar Loutfi (Egypt), Mr. Mengesha Kifle (Ethiopia), Mr. Frederick Archust (Ghana) and Mr. El Mandjra (Morocco). I salute them all. In this connexion, I cannot help but express publicly my delight that all my colleagues of the older regional commissions - Janez Stanovik of ECE, Johannes Maramis of ESCAP, Enrique Iglesias of ECLA - are here with us at this 21st anniversary celebration. So also is Mohammed Al-Attar the Executive Secretary of the youngest of our five commissions - ECWA.

## II. THE FORMATIVE YEARS

So, on 19 April 1958, was established the Economic Commission for Africa - the first-ever inter-governmental organization in Africa whose geographical scope covered the whole continent. By succeeding in establishing a Commission that covered the whole of Africa, ECA paved the way for the founding of the OAU five years later. Indeed, it did more. As the colonial powers had feared, it immediately became the forum for waging the anti-colonial and anti-apartheid war. The first shot was fired during the negotiations on the definition of the Commission's terms of

reference. The African members, few as they were, insisted on the need for the problems of "social development" to be included within the purview of the Commission.

Not only was this a significant departure from the terms of reference of the other Commissions, it was also a departure that was full of portents and forebodings as far as the colonial powers were concerned. For, in a continent where the practice of colour bar was widespread, where economic exploitation was the order of the day, where the memories of the inhumanities perpetuated by the slave trade and its latter-day version - forced labour - were still alive, the colonial powers, quite understandably, feared that such a move would, among other things, lead to investigation into an extremely sensitive area of their record, with the political embarrassment that such exposures would bring. But, in spite of their opposition, ECA's terms of reference, at its establishment in 1958, included, unlike those of its sister regional commissions, a provision for dealing with the social aspects of economic development and the inter-relationship between economic and social factors.

Accordingly, during the first few years, the annual ECA sessions reflected the overwhelming priority which the African governments gave to such issues as colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism and apartheid in Southern Africa. These sessions also reflected the character and direction of pan-Africanism. Furthermore, ECA became the place where African leaders debated such major and extremely thorny economic issues as the relationships between African countries and the OECD countries; the impact of the EEC; the concept of Euro-African co-operation; and the structures of pan-African co-operation. The programme of work and priorities of the Commission during these formative years reflected these concerns. It consisted mainly of studies, such as the detrimental effects of social discrimination in Southern Africa; the impact of the European Economic Community on African economic development, co-operation and integration; and the need to change the dependent economic relationships between the Western market economies and Africa. Dare we suggest that this was the beginning of the demand for what is now known as the new international economic order - the restructuring of the international economic system on a truly interdependent, just and equitable basis? Dare we also suggest that this was the genesis of the ACP/EEC relations epitomised

in the Lome Convention which was made possible by the Commission when at its 11th session held in Accra, Ghana in February 1973, it rejected the contribution, even on a revised basis, of the Yaounde Convention which then governed the relationship of Francophone Africa with EEC countries.

These were no small achievements in those days, particularly as the composition of the Commission was quite different from what it is today. When the Commission was established in 1958, the Economic and Social Council opened full membership to 15 member States, only 8 of which were African States. Those States were Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia and the United Arab Republic. The 6 non-African States which enjoyed full membership were Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom. The Union of South Africa, which was in a class by itself, was also a full member. On 12 December 1958, Guinea became a member of the Commission, thus bringing the total number of independent African States to 9.

The associate members admitted by the Council on 29 April 1958 were: the Federation of Nigeria, Gambia, Kenya, Zanzibar, Sierra Leone, British Somaliland Protectorate, Tanganyika and Uganda. On 28 July 1958, the Italian-administered Trust Territory of Somaliland was also admitted to associate membership.

The African member States of the Commission, from the earliest years, were concerned that certain non-self-governing territories were not represented in the Commission as associate members, whereas certain non-African States with territorial responsibility in Africa were full members. The African members were firmly of the view that it was their collective responsibility "to take decisions affecting Africa without the said decisions being influenced by the opposing votes of non-African powers", and they, therefore, insisted on the full membership status of the colonial powers being altered or terminated and on an African participation on behalf of non-self-governing territories. 1/

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1/ Resolutions 42(IV), 68(V), 69(V), 84(V), 94(VI), 151(VIII).

Accordingly, Italy ceased to be a member of the Commission in 1960 upon the cessation of its territorial responsibility for what has now become the Republic of Somalia; and Belgium in 1962, upon the achievement of independence of the Belgian Congo (now Zaire), Rwanda and Burundi. France, Spain and the United Kingdom eventually agreed to a reduction in their status to associate membership and to allow, in accordance with the will of the Commission, the non-self-governing territories under their administration direct representation as associate members. The position was ratified by the Economic and Social Council by an amendment to the terms of reference in 1963. 2/ Thus, in 1963, Fernando Po and Rio Muni (administered by Spain) and Mauritius, Basutoland (now Lesotho), Bechuanaland Protectorate (now Botswana), Swaziland, the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyassaland, and Gambia (all administered by the United Kingdom) became associate members. In 1964 Fernando Po and Rio Muni were, at their own request, admitted as a single associate member under the name of Equatorial Guinea. After the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyassaland (the Central African Federation) was dissolved, Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), Southern Rhodesia (now Rhodesia) and Nyassaland (now Malawi) attended as separate associate members in 1964.

From the earliest times of the Commission, African member States expressed opposition to the Apartheid policies of South Africa, which was a full member of the Commission. 3/ Because of this continuing opposition, the Economic and Social Council 4/ eventually suspended South Africa from participation in the work of the Commission "until conditions for constructive co-operation have been restored by a change in its racial policy". In 1963, the Council expelled Portugal from membership of the Commission for non-compliance with resolutions of the Commission and the General Assembly. 5/ The illegal declaration of inde-

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2/ See Economic and Social Council resolution 974 D I (XXXVI).

3/ See Resolution 44(IV) and 88(V).

4/ By its resolution 974 D IV(XXXVI).

5/ Economic and Social Council resolution 974 D III (LXXVI).

pendence by Rhodesia in November 1965 was not recognized by the General Assembly, and, consequently, the associate membership of Rhodesia in the Commission ceased. Thus, by 1965, ECA had become totally African in its composition having exactly the same member States as the OAU.

The development of the structure of the secretariat itself makes an interesting study. Initially, in 1959, the substantive Divisions of the secretariat of the Commission totalled only three: a Research Division, comprising sections dealing with economic research, social research and statistics; the ECA/FAO Joint Agriculture Division; and a Community Development Branch, comprising units in social welfare services.

A Division of Industry, Transport and Natural Resources was added, during 1960, bringing the total number of substantive Divisions to four (excluding Division of Administration and Office of the Executive Secretary). In the first restructuring of the secretariat, which took place in 1963, two new Divisions - Trade and Surveys and Statistics - emerged. From then until July 1976, when the present administrative structure was attained, the office of the Executive Secretary was strengthened to provide for a Training Section and a Technical Assistance Co-ordination Unit. An Information Unit was also established. And, finally, it was on 31 July 1976, that the present administrative structure of the secretariat was attained, providing for ten substantive Divisions; namely Socio-Economic Research and Planning; Joint ECA/UNIDO Industry; Joint ECA/FAO Agriculture; Social Development; Natural Resources; Transport, Communications and Tourism; Public Administration; Management and Manpower; Statistics; Population and International Trade and Finance. The Cabinet Office of the Executive Secretary was also re-organized to provide for: a Policy and Programme Co-ordination Office; Economic Co-operation Office; Technical Assistance Co-ordination and Operations Office; Office of the Secretary to the Commission; the Environment Co-ordination Unit; and the Administration and Conference Services Division.



### III. ECA's ROLE: EXPECTATIONS AND PERFORMANCE

ECOSOC, by resolution 671 A(XXV) of 29 April 1958, not only established ECA but also laid down its terms of reference. Eight months later, at the First session of the Commission, the UN Secretary-General, the late Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld, in spelling out those terms of reference, laid down the guidelines for the Commission. In a memorable statement he suggested that ECA should be:

- (i) an institution which will serve as a centre for consultations where governments can freely define and elaborate the form of their co-operation.
- (ii) an institution where the economic needs of the African people will be expressed and where action designed to meet these needs will be initiated and stimulated;
- (iii) an institution which will make available to countries and to regional groupings and sub-groupings a body of technical services for the study and exploration of common problems;
- (iv) an institution which is a well-organized clearing house for the exchange of information and experience and which provides an analysis and critical appraisal of this information; and,
- (v) an institution which establishes close relationship with the various programmes of the United Nations, including the substantive work of the specialized agencies.

These guidelines embrace both the formulation and the implementation of policy which are, basically, the two key elements in the running of any institution - public or private. Adjunctively, the Commission was given, in its original mandate, co-ordinating, information and operational roles. But neither the clarity of the terms of reference nor of the elucidation which the then Secretary-General of the UN provided at the first session of the Commission has prevented the question, "what is the role of ECA", being asked repeatedly by member States, particularly



since the first decade of the organization. The mere fact that such a question has been posed and posed persistently might imply that a serious gap existed between member States' expectations and the actual performance of the Commission.

Naturally, in performing its role over the years, the Commission has had to respond to the needs of the day. I have already given an account of the political battles waged by the Commission during its formative years. When one takes into account the fact that during the colonial era, African countries lived in complete isolation from one another and the fact that there was a dearth of socio-economic data either at national or at regional level, it is natural that the Commission should see its role in the early years as primarily that of gathering, analysing, evaluating and disseminating information and basic data on African economies and their associated problems, and organizing meetings and seminars to exchange views and experiences on ways to resolve these problems. Furthermore, the Commission embarked on the provision of technical assistance and advisory services to member States in many socio-economic sectors. It also endeavoured to assist in the training of African nationals to acquire skills and experience in order to speed up the Africanization of public services which most newly-independent States had made a matter of the highest priority.

Over the years, however, purposeful attempts have been made to expand the role of the regional commissions especially in two directions: assumption of greater responsibility through decentralization of more and more of the activities being carried out from Headquarters, and acting as Executing Agency of UNDP projects, particularly in the areas of sub-regional and regional economic co-operation and integration. In this connection, it is most significant to recount the efforts which the African governments themselves have expended in order to achieve the necessary reforms in the role of the Commission.

Although General Assembly resolutions 1709(XVI) and 1823(XVII) constituted the first tentative steps to give some legal backing to the demand for decentralization of economic and social activities to the regional economic commissions, it was evident that a systematic campaign had been waging, since the Second session of the Commission, at all the legislative levels of the United Nations.

The first breakthrough came in February 1962, when the fourth session of the Commission, in resolution 50(IV) - Decentralization of the economic and social activities of the United Nations and strengthening of the regional economic commissions - recommended strongly that the Secretary-General should "take the necessary measures to endow the Commission's secretariat with the requisite authority and sufficient technical personnel to enable it to fulfill its functions efficiently with regard to the services required of it by Governments of member States, in particular by transferring progressively substantive and operational functions, so that the Commission's secretariat may play an increasing part in assisting Governments of member States in the formulation, evaluation and execution of technical assistance projects throughout the region and in associating these projects more closely with the Commission's work programme."

A fuller examination of the case, and a more positive action for more substantial and effective decentralization of operational activities constituted the main debate and pre-occupation of the ninth session/tenth Anniversary of the Commission as well as of the first two meetings of the Executive Committee, in 1969 and 1970. In a memorandum 1/ presented by an appointed delegation of Executive Committee to ECOSOC, the pros and cons of the case were elaborated and the force of the arguments in favour of greater responsibility for ECA through decentralization was considerably made stronger than ever before.

Furthermore, it was observed that the Commission's attention had been concentrated upon attempts, through studies and investigations, to understand the nature of the development process in the Region, and to determine the most efficacious means both of overcoming the constraints which it had identified and of establishing the conditions for concerted action. In contrast, however, it was emphasized that far less attention had been paid to the need to ensure that its discoveries and proposals led, in actuality, to the practical action which had been foreseen, in the terms of reference of the Commission.

In consequence, at the ninth session of the Commission, the African States - reviewing the work of the Commission during

1/ E/CN.14/ECO/10.

its first ten years - concluded that the time had come to move from the era of theoretical studies to a period of practical action for concrete and meaningful development.

In conclusion, the memorandum pressed upon the attention of ECOSOC the grave and complicated problems of development that confronted the governments and peoples of the Africa region; the dark consequences which were likely to follow if ECOSOC failed to solve these problems; the far-reaching decisions which had been taken at the Commission's ninth session to fashion a new instrument by which to avert such failure. The memorandum further pointed out that, for the Commission, the 1960s were not a development decade, since during that period the African people and their leaders were seeking to establish the foundations of independence; and that it was only in the 1970s that the Region expected to embark upon its first genuine development decade and join the rest of the world in its efforts to improve the lot of mankind.

A second memorandum and delegation were dispatched by the Executive Committee to the Secretary-General in New York in March 1969. Agreements were reached on issues concerning the terms of reference of ECA, on structure of the Commission and of the secretariat. On the question of decentralization and transfer of greater executive role to ECA, the Secretary-General in a letter addressed to the Chairman of the ninth session, agreed that:

"the commissions, because of their geographical position and experience, are admirably suited to the needs of the countries in their respective regions, and can therefore centralize action, and help in the formulation and implementation of operational programmes. Consequently, I am in favour of some degree of decentralization which I think can be extended, at the appropriate time, to the sub-regions especially by way of advisory services to member Governments.

There are, however, two points that must be considered. The first is the permanent need for certain aspects of our operational activities to be administered at Headquarters, such as: the administration of finance, the use of currencies,

contracts for the implementation of Special Fund projects and staff recruitment. The second point is that, since strengthening the secretariat to enable it to discharge its increased responsibilities inevitably involves finance, the prior approval of the General Assembly will be necessary for any arrangements required."

Finally, on the issue of decentralization, it was General Assembly resolution 32/197 which took the decisive step. In this resolution, which is devoted to the task of restructuring the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system, so as to make them more fully capable of dealing with problems of international economic co-operation and development in a comprehensive and effective manner, the General Assembly firmly pronounced that "the regional commissions should be enabled fully to play their role under the authority of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, as the main general economic and social development centres within the UN system for their respective regions, having due regard to the responsibilities of the specialized agencies and other UN bodies in specific sectoral fields and the co-ordinating role of the UNDP in respect of technical co-operation activities".

What is even more gratifying and pertinent to the issue is the additional provision made by General Assembly resolution 32/197 that "taking into account the special needs and conditions of their respective regions, they (the regional commissions) should exercise team leadership and responsibility for co-ordination at the regional level."

Measures, including the delegation of the necessary authority, are being taken to devolve more responsibilities to the regional commissions, even though the financial resources available to the regional commissions are gravely inadequate.

The other demand for measures to enable the regional economic commissions to exercise, in consultation with the governments concerned, the functions of executing agencies of UNDP was formally enshrined in General Assembly resolution 2688(XXV) of 11 December 1970. In the framework of the restructuring exercise, the General Assembly has confirmed its wish by indicating unequivocally in its resolution 32/197

(already referred to) that "without prejudice to the special needs and conditions of each region, and taking into account the plans and priorities of the Government concerned, the General Assembly and ECOSOC should take measures to enable (the regional commissions) to function expeditiously as executing agencies for intersectoral, sub-regional, regional and inter-regional projects and in areas which do not fall within the purview of the sectoral responsibility of specialized agencies and other UN bodies."

Thus, it is with much satisfaction that I report that after 20 years' struggle, the ECA has been designated an executing agency of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its own right in the areas of sub-regional and regional projects of multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral character.

Right from its inception, the Commission paid attention to institution building and development as part of the necessary infrastructure for social and economic development. Today, these institutions operate in various sectors and cover different services. They range from training and research institutions to banking and finance institutions and African professional bodies. Thus, in its very early years, ECA established the African Development Bank, the African Institute for Economic Development Planning, a number of statistical training centres, and the regional institutes for population studies. Since then, other institutions have been or are in the process of being established. These include the African Centre for Applied Research and Training in Social Development training and user services institutions in the field of natural resources; the African Regional Centre for Technology; the African Regional Centre for Engineering Design and Manufacturing; and the African Institute for Higher Technical Training and Research, to mention only a few significant ones.

A number of important association and professional bodies (such as AFCAC, AFRA, UAR the port management associations of West, Central, Eastern and Northern Africa) owe their existence to the Commission. Similarly, the Commission has sponsored the establishment of lake and river basin commissions, the development of a network of trans-African highways and pan-African telecommunications. But, in spite of these remarkable



achievements, there is no doubt that compared with Asia and Latin America, Africa still needs more specialized regional, subregional and multinational institutions to promote development and co-operation. Needless to add that the existing ones urgently need to be strengthened.

Another major area of concern and concentration has been the promotion of regional co-operation. The Commission has promoted ideas and concepts about economic co-operation and has consistently played a very positive role in the setting up of appropriate institutional machinery for fostering co-operation.

Why is it then, that in spite of all these achievements, which have been selected at random and are far from being exhaustive, member States have expressed from time to time their impatience and dissatisfaction? The answer lies in the fact that the expectations of member States were running far ahead of ECA's capabilities and resources. Some of these dissatisfactions were explicitly brought out during the 10th anniversary of the Commission.

For example, while in his statement to the Commission, at the 10th anniversary celebrations, the Secretary-General, U Thant, in his characteristic modesty, observed "that during its ten years of existence, ECA had given special attention to the building of African institutions that should stand ECA in goodstead when it enters into a new phase of activities with greater emphasis on operational activities", the then out-going Chairman of the Commission chose to put it in another way. After tracing the development of ECA through three phases, he elaborated and said: "the first phase was, a formative one with many teething problems; the second, a phase of accumulating economic and social information and running seminars, working parties and conferences; and, the third, the recent phase of encouragement of economic co-operation between member States..." In exasperation, another senior representative of a member State, in the heat of the general debate at the Thirteenth session of the Commission, pointed out that "his Government was concerned about the low returns on the efforts expended by the ECA secretariat and its resignation to the achievement of nothing but the recording of recommendations, decisions and resolutions ... When the Development Decade had been launched, it had not been expected that Africa would finance



its development unaided; external assistance had been promised. The secretariat should find out to what extent those promises had been fulfilled, and attention should be focussed on the factors responsible for the poor performance of African countries."

To those of us in the secretariat, and to the entire membership of the Commission itself, these expressions of dissatisfaction must indeed pose a number of questions on the role of ECA and the proper interpretations of its functions: "What precisely is the role of ECA in the United Nations system with particular reference to operational activities in Africa? How could ECA satisfy the development needs of member States? To what extent could ECA promote better economic co-operation and self-reliance among African countries within subregions? And in what should the secretariat be further developed in order to increase the confidence of member States as to its ability to help them?"

We may well pause to ask ourselves how far we have found the full answers to these pertinent questions posed some ten years ago. Are we to continue insisting on our conviction that, alas, the answers to these very questions are as illusive, now, as they were at the inaugural session of the Commission? The consensus of opinion points, I am afraid, to the fact that there are still a lot of things to be straightened out.

As I said recently at the OAU/ECA Colloquium on Perspectives of Development and Economic Growth in Africa up to the Year 2000, the African reality today is that after two decades of political independence for most African countries, the economic emancipation which had been expected to follow closely on the heels of political independence and which was to result from the economic transformation of the continent and thus bring about a significantly higher standard of living to the masses of the people, has still remained a mere hope. Although during the past two decades there have been some structural changes in the African economies, the fact is that today the African economy is still basically underdeveloped: low income per head, a very high proportion of the population in agriculture, low levels of productivity, a circumscribed and fractured industrial base, a high dependence on a vulnerably narrow spectrum of primary export commodities, a transport network geared largely to the export

sector, a sharp bifurcation between the traditional and modern sectors, a high degree of illiteracy, low levels of life expectancy, and predominance of expatriate business enterprise in banking, commerce, finance industry and management. Although these are merely some of the pointers to Africa's underdevelopment they suggest the magnitude of the challenges confronting African countries.

It is this reality about Africa's worsening economic situation that has made ECA vulnerable. The member States wanted to see it fully and directly involved in helping them meet the challenge of development; in changing from an institution of marginal concern with their problems to one whose role would be crucial and which could be in the vanguard of their development effort. The member States could not see why the institution which they fought so hard to get established could not help them to a degree sufficient to meet their expectations.

But having said this, there is the moral commitment on my part to draw attention to at least two crucial areas of consensus which the ECA has fostered in recent years and which can facilitate the early achievement of the wishes of our African Governments. The first relates to the newly-discovered consensus in this Commission that the future of Africa depends upon the African people themselves, and that self-reliance should be stressed for two reasons: in order to bring home to the young African generation that escape from poverty lies not in help even from their friends in other countries, but in hard constructive efforts within their own borders; and to assure everyone - friends and critics alike - that Africa is determined to escape from poverty through its own efforts, with outside co-operation if available.

The second consensus appears to be that the experience which the ECA secretariat has actually accumulated during the past 20 years of its existence must be put to practical use if our region is to make any progress. Rather than continue levelling criticisms at the secretariat, which is in fact only an organ of the Commission, Governments should sustain their present effort of fashioning ECA into a dynamic instrument for promoting a new national economic order and for fostering a new regional order in Africa which will lead to an increasing measure of national and collective self-reliance. If I may be permitted to repeat what I said at your 13th session and 4th meeting of the Conference of

ministers, ECA can be as effective or as poor an instrument as member States wish to make it. In the Commission you have a most potent force. Let us exploit it to the fullest. I do most sincerely believe that this institution is capable of playing a positive, catalytic, practical and honourable role in helping the region in its advance towards the three new orders - a new national economic order, a new regional economic order and a new international economic order \*

#### IV. DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEGISLATIVE AND OTHER INSTITUTIONAL MACHINERY

The ECA, acting within the framework of the policies of the United Nations and subject to the general supervision of ECOSOC, is made up of its legislative organs, certain specialized technical advisory bodies, and the secretariat. The legislative organs and the technical advisory bodies have been modified over the years; and, this session of the Commission will further be invited to consider certain further proposals for modification which are designed to streamline those organs and to tailor them to the new dynamic and operational role of the Commission.

The first major changes in the legislative and other institutional machinery of the Commission took place at the ninth session and tenth anniversary of the Commission, <sup>1/</sup> during which member States set out, inter alia, the following three principles to guide future operations of the Commission:

- (i) That the Commission "should be reorganized with a view to making it a more effective instrument for collective action". This request appears to have stemmed from the consensus of that session that "member States were somewhat remote from the Commission and its work; (thus) Governments were not sufficiently committed to the Commission's collective decisions and (consequently) there was lack of action";

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\* Adebayo Adedeji, Africa: The Crisis of Development and the Challenge of a New Economic Order, p. 33.

<sup>1/</sup> See Commission resolution 188(IX) of the ninth session.

- (ii) That "it was high time to give practical meaning to the vast amount of information amassed on development over the past decade; and, to that end, the secretariat's structure and functions should be reformed";
- (iii) That "ECA (secretariat) must also be enabled to develop from a purely academic institution into an operational one". 2/

Accordingly, three principal organs were set up. They were the Conference of Ministers, the Technical Committee of Experts and the Executive Committee. Since 1969, these organs have played very important roles in the activities of the Commission. But there have been certain drawbacks. The Conference of Ministers meets only biennially - an arrangement which has created a vacuum in getting urgent economic matters dealt with. While biennial meetings might have been justified in the past, the magnitude of the challenges that face Africa today and in the years ahead is such that the African ministers responsible for economic development, co-operation and integration can no longer afford to meet once every two years. It is this arrangement that has led the OAU Council of Ministers - a Council composed of Foreign Ministers - to get involved in international economic issues no doubt in order to bridge the vacuum but with serious consequences since this cuts across ministerial cabinet responsibilities at the national level. The time has therefore come for the ministers responsible for economic affairs, for development and for economic co-operation and integration to accept fully their responsibility and meet more frequently - i.e. annually - to discharge their duties and responsibilities to Africa and international community.

The character of the Executive Committee has changed fundamentally during the past two years. As originally conceived, it was a small body of 16 member states, representing the whole region in between the biennial meetings of the Conference of Ministers. When it dealt with routine matters, its lack of effective representation of all shades of African Governments' opinion did not matter much. But since October 1975 the Committee had become increasingly concerned with policy matters, often of great

significance. For example, it was to the Committee that I submitted the Revised Framework of Principles for the implementation of the new international economic order in Africa, 1976 - 1981 - 1986. 3/ Because of its unrepresentativeness, the Committee asked me to circulate to all member States this important document which attempts to spell out the African strategy for development for a ten year period and marks a fundamental departure from the past not only in terms of strategies and priorities but also in terms of concepts, attitudes and approaches. A second and more representative meeting had to be convened to discuss the document before it was finally adopted. Since 1976 the Committee has functioned as a committee of the whole and since I am obliged, in accordance with your resolution setting it up, to convene two meetings every year, it means four meetings of the Executive Committee in between the biennial meetings of the Conference of Ministers but these are all meetings whose decisions have not got the same legal basis as those of the Conference of Ministers even though it is the same ministers who attend both. Even, if there was no statement in the attempt of the past two years to enlarge the membership of the Committee, I would still be in favour of its abolition. It is better and cheaper for the Conference of Ministers to be held annually and decisions to be taken on issues before it, than hold four meetings of the Executive Committee, whose decisions have very limited legal basis and cannot therefore be implemented until they have been approved or endorsed by the Conference of Ministers. Therefore I fully endorse the recommendation for the abolition of the Executive Committee. Not only will it lead to substantial reduction in the number of meetings, it will also enhance the Commission's effectiveness as it can take decisions on issues coming before it at its annual meetings.

The abolition of the Technical Committee of Experts which meets biennially and its replacement by a meeting of officials just before the conference of Ministers should also commend itself to you. Similarly, the recommendations that the work programme of the Commission should be substantially derived from the sub-regions through the MULPOCs will bring the Commissions closer to member States and accelerate the process of decentralization from the region to the sub-regions.

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3/ E/CN.14/ECO/90(Rev.3).



## V. THE REGIONAL COMMISSION AND THE UN SYSTEM

ECA has, since its inception in 1958, found itself entangled in a number of constraints which, although not of its own making, have nevertheless been real. First, until very recently, there had never been any careful consideration of how the regional economic commissions were supposed to merge with the rest of the UN system. Because of their purposeful regional orientation, they often found themselves left standing in the cold, outside the rest of the United Nations system. Furthermore, since the bulk of the UN system is organized not on a regional or geographic basis, but on a functional basis it is not often clear in practice (assuming that it were in theory) just how a regional commission, like ECA, with a strong regional point of view on most issues, should or could fit into a system of functional structures dominated in theory, by a world point of view. Yet, a regional viewpoint is considered vitally important, especially by African governments which often complain about the lack of adequate influence of an "African View" on international issues.

Secondly, the Commission, like the other regional commissions, experienced serious problems relating to its ambiguous relationship to the rest of the United Nations system. For years, several unsuccessful attempts were made to turn the commissions into operational agencies and not just research organizations and forums for meetings.

A cursory look at the reports of the past 13 sessions of the Commission and its various resolutions would show its consistent advocacy for a great degree of decentralization of responsibilities to ECA, of corresponding redeployment of resources to the Commission and of its decisive involvement in the operational activities of the United Nations in the economic and social sectors. At every opportunity, member States have expressed their disappointment at the limitations on the Commission and on its powers of initiation and execution.

The effectiveness of the co-ordinating role of the Commission has also been a matter of great concern to member States over the years. The ECA secretariat as a multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral organ is better able to appreciate the interrelationship and impact linkages of activities in the various sectors. These activities



need to be properly co-ordinated, lest problem-solving operations in one sector create new problems in the development of other sectors.

While no one doubts the necessity for programme co-ordination at the national level, lip service only has frequently been paid to the co-ordination of the activities of the various multilateral and bilateral organizations that have designed and implemented programmes aimed at facilitating social and economic development in the region. African States which are on the receiving end have from time to time called for a more co-ordinated approach to the provision of technical assistance in order to relate such assistance to the priorities and development strategy of the recipient countries. With regard to assistance from the organizations of the United Nations family, programme co-ordination and harmonization of policies and strategies have been weak at the regional level.

It was this need for effective co-ordination of programmes and policies which led the Conference of Ministers in resolution 249(XI) of February 1973, to request the secretariat to examine, with the United Nations and other agencies, the possibility of establishing workable arrangements for co-ordinated action in the formulation and implementation of work programmes, and, where practicable, for the establishment of joint divisions in the secretariat.

What does the co-ordination responsibility mean for ECA in its overall role of guiding, encouraging and assisting African States to achieve internally consistent, self-generating and self-reliant economies? First and foremost, it means that its own programme of work and the development strategy it advocates for Africa in the coming years must take a multisectoral impact approach and emphasize the inter-linkages of sectoral programmes and projects.

Secondly, it requires at the regional level that ECA should seek the collaboration and active participation of agencies operating in the specialized sectors. To ensure mutual advantage, it means that these agencies would increasingly have to consult ECA on their programmes for Africa in order to avoid working at cross purposes. The implication for all concerned will be a

departure from the mono-sectoral to multisectoral and interdisciplinary approach in evolving strategies and programmes for solving African socio-economic development problems.

Consequently, assistance to member States in the years ahead demand intensified co-operation between ECA and other agencies and the increasing use of joint programming and task force arrangements for the identification, formulation and implementation of development projects and programmes, particularly as regards the inputs of the United Nations system.

Fortunately, there has recently been a clear directive from the General Assembly on these issues of decentralization, operational activities and regional co-ordination. In resolution 32/197 relating to the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system, the General Assembly has, inter alia emphasized the need for the regional commissions to:

- (a) function as the main general economic and social development centres within the United Nations system for their respective regions;
- (b) exercise team leadership and responsibility for co-ordination and co-operation at the regional level;
- (c) provide inputs for the global policy-making processes of the competent United Nations organs;
- (d) participate fully in operational activities and function as executing agencies; and
- (e) intensify efforts to promote regional co-operation.

These are far-reaching mandates which are designed to foster harmonized policies and strategies for regional integration and co-operation. Fully implemented, they will go a long way in meeting some of the demands of member States. In this connexion I am glad to say that a meeting of the Executive Secretaries of all the regional economic commissions has just been held from 18-20 March 1979 here in Rabat on the implementation of the General Assembly resolution. As a result of this meeting and subsequent follow-up action, the Secretary-General will present to the 34th session of the General Assembly proposals

on "appropriate measures for the strengthening of the commissions" as promised in his report on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system (A/33/410).

## VI. THE SUB-REGIONAL STRUCTURE

This brings me to the sub-regional structure. It is not often realized by outsiders how consistent member States have been in their demand for decentralization. They have argued for decentralization from United Nations headquarters to the regional commissions just as strongly as they have pressed for decentralization from the regional headquarters to the sub-regions. Indeed, as early as the fourth session of the Commission, it was decided to divide Africa into four sub-regions — North, West, East and Central — and to establish an ECA office in each sub-region. Each sub-regional office was to assist in the promotion of sub-regional co-operation and integration and, being closer to the member States than the Commission's secretariat at Addis Ababa, would be more closely associated with their respective national and sub-regional interests and problems. This would then enable ECA to provide member States, through these offices, with technical assistance fully adapted to local conditions.

Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, the sub-regional offices were not as effective as had been expected. For one thing, they suffered from the dearth of resources which has plagued ECA itself for many years. For another, they were treated merely as an extension of the secretariat — since no mechanism was established to ensure the involvement of the governments in each sub-region in their activities and work programmes.

The succeeding experiments with United Nations Developing Advisory Teams (UNDATS) fared no better. They suffered from the same weaknesses as the sub-regional offices and in any case governments had come to need far more than passive advice. The decision of the fourth meeting of Conference of Ministers and thirteenth session of the Commission to do away with the sub-regional offices and the UNDATs, which had been superimposed on them and to establish a new sub-regional structure - which is not merely an administrative extension of the secretariat but an operational arm of ECA, each with its own legislative organs". at

official and ministerial levels end its own work programmes and resources (limited as they are) have already begun to yield some positive results. The five Multinational Programming and Operational Centres (MULPOCs) which have been set up for West Africa, Central Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa, the Great Lakes Community of Burundi, Rwanda, and Zaire, and North Africa have with the exception of the last - the North African MULPOC - begun to show that they have the capability of being effective operational arms of ECA, the focal point for the activities of all the specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations in each sub-region and the catalytic agent for promoting meaningful sub-regional co-operation and integration, as a prelude to establishing sub-regional common markets which in their turn will become the basis for establishing an African Common Market.

May I at this juncture express my profound gratitude to the Administrator of the UNDP and to the Regional Director of the Africa Bureau, Mr. Bradford Morse and Mr. Michel Doo Kingue respectively, who have been our most loyal partners in this MULPOC experiment right from its inception and who have given the MULPOCs substantial financial support as indeed they have assisted ECA in translating into reality the expressed wish of member States that the Commission should become operational by their designating ECA as an executing agency even before the recent General Assembly resolution to this effect. I have been assured by my colleague, the Regional Director of the Arab Bureau, Mr. Alshaikhly, that his Bureau stands ready to give similar support to ECA and to the North Africa MULPOC.

## VII. STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND AFRICANIZATION

I shall now attempt to show how the Commission has grappled, over the years, with the problems of staff development and Africanization - including the problems of recruitment; measures to achieve equitable distribution of posts and staff, on the basis of countries, sub-regions and working languages; and, the development of policy guidelines on staff development and Africanization.

As I have already observed at the beginning of this statement, the substantive units of the secretariat, in 1959, totalled only

three: a Research Division, the ECA/FAO Joint Agriculture Division, and a Community Development Branch. Recruitment of staff members, particularly at professional grade from member States, began very slowly. By the end of 1959, only 17 professional staff members were at work, while 35 local (G.S.) staff had been recruited. Until such time that the services of higher qualified Africans could be enlisted for high-level policy-making posts, the headquarters of the United Nations undertook to second a number of its secretariat's senior staff members to the ECA. Thus, by the end of 1960/61, the total staff strength stood at 105 of whom 46 were in the professional grades, 18 being African nationals.

As early as 1959/60, African members of the Commission were expressing great concern about the slow pace of Africanization of the secretariat. Although repeated recruitment missions were sent to independent African States, they were invariably unsuccessful in recruiting suitably qualified Africans. This was not surprising as all newly independent African States were suffering from acute staff shortage. The relatively few qualified Africans available were badly needed by their respective countries to replace the numerous expatriates who had been manning the senior posts before independence.

In order to implement the work programmes approved by the Commission, the secretariat had to resort to a number of daring arrangements, which included an intensification of technical co-operation arrangements with other regional economic commissions - notably ECE and ECLA, both of which proved very helpful in seconding some of their senior staff to the Commission. FAO out-posted a number of its staff to strengthen the ECA/FAO Joint Agriculture Division; and the Bureau of Technical Assistance Operations at the UN Headquarters provided a number of Regional Advisers, ranging from 16 in 1963 to 30 in 1966, to enable the Commission to carry out its regional duties.

By 1962, the staff situation had improved generally, but to the disadvantage of the Africanization process. In response to an appeal from the Commission to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, to seek active support in the immediate improvement of the situation and to clarify the extent to which the secretariat should be Africanized, the Secretary-General addressed a cable to the Executive Secretary in which he stated as follows:



"You may assure the Commission of my personal interest and deep concern in increasing number of African nationals at all levels in the United Nations Secretariat. For this purpose, Director Personnel, Chief of the Cabinet and I personally are in close touch with delegations here. We are using all means to find qualified candidates including circulation of description of vacant posts, special recruitment assignement to officials travelling in Africa, contacts with universities in Africa, Europe and North Africa and advertisements in journals in those areas. Regarding staffing of Commission I am anxious to increase number of African nationals considerably and would hope that in another few years African nationals might comprise from 75 per cent of staff." 1/

The commitment to develop the Commission's staff and to pursue a vigorous Africanization policy continued in earnest. Among the many measures which were taken towards staff development and Africanization - specifically in response to Commission's resolution 184(VIII) of the 8th session - was the setting up of a Committee on Staff Recruitment and Training in 1967, to assist the Executive Secretary in recruiting African nationals for the secretariat. This Committee which met for the first time in Lagos, submitted its first report 2/ on equitable distribution and Africanization of posts in ECA. Inter alia, the Chairman of this Committee observed in the report that "Africanization should not be undertaken for its own sake, nor at the sacrifice of standards; and that it was only by being given an opportunity to train that Africans would acquire the experience necessary to enable them to play their part in the development agencies and administrations in the member states..."

The Committee's second meeting, which took place in Addis Ababa a few days before the ninth session of the Commission, addressed itself in some detail on problems in recruitment, the need for the equitable distribution of posts, training, priority in recruitment for ECA, Africanization in relation to the UN Charter, and on qualifications required.

1/ E/CN.14/168, page 78.

2/ E/CN.14/CSRT/WP.5.



On the crucial question of Africanization, the Committee agreed that "there was no conflict between the provisions of Article 101 of the UN Charter empowering the Secretary-General to recruit staff for the Organization and the principle of Africanization". 1/ But it argued that "it was not necessary to set a 75 per cent limit to African membership of the secretariat. It favoured an arrangement which would absorb as many qualified African as possible, as they became available, and allow for the possibility of exceeding the 75 per cent target" 2/. The Committee recognized, however that it would be unwise to aim at 100 per cent Africanization as an objective; and it "doubted whether a decision to have the staff entirely made up of nationals of the ECA member States would not contradict the principle of universality of the United Nations." 3/

One of the most important recommendations of the Committee which has yet to be implemented in full was that since it seemed likely that some of the member States might not be able in the near future to provide qualified candidates and in order to avoid an overall under-representation of the Africa region in ECA, a formula should be found to interpret the desirable ranges for various countries and sub-regions in Africa in a sufficiently flexible manner, so as to promote the desired increase in the employment of African nationals generally.

In my report to the 19th meeting of the Executive Committee (Arusha, 1978), I stated that 86.8 per cent of the secretariat's total professional posts (financed by both the regular budget and by extra-budgetary resources) were, as of October 1978, occupied by Africans drawn from 38 independent African States and from Zimbabwe and South Africa. Thus, we have today achieved the objective of Africanization. But we have done more. For in the pursuit of the objective, the ECA secretariat has become the most international civil service in Africa drawing its staff from 40 African States and a few non-African States.

1/ E/CN.14/CSRT/WP.9, page 7.

2/ E/CN.14/CSRT/WP.9, page 7.

3/ Ibid.

It is indeed my hope that before long, all African States will be represented in the secretariat. In this connexion, may I seize this opportunity to appeal once more to the governments of those countries not yet represented in the secretariat to make the supreme sacrifice by providing us with some of their most qualified and experienced personnel, even for a limited period, to join forces with us in the service of Africa in the promotion of African development and integration. This appeal is addressed to the Governments of Cape Verde, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe and Seychelles. If as I have argued on many occasions national interests are intertwined with regional interests in Africa, it is in the national interest of these countries to make available the services of some of their most qualified personnel to serve Africa through the ECA. Today, we have in ECA a secretariat which is overwhelmingly African, which is unique and which is second to none in the quality of its work and its dedication and commitment to the cause of African development and integration. Let us all join hands in strengthening it further.

#### VIII. DEVELOPMENT OF FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY RESOURCES

Let me now refer very briefly to the problems of the financial and budgetary resources of the Commission since its inception. Given its terms of reference, the large number of its member States and the magnitude of the development problems facing these countries individually and the region as a whole, the resources which have been made available to the secretariat for discharging its responsibility have repeatedly fallen short of requirements. Little wonder that approved programmes of work and priorities invariably remain under-implemented - more often than not grossly under-implemented.

The secretariat depends on two principal sources of finance: the regular budget - through which the United Nations General Assembly appropriates resources to the ECA - and extra-budgetary resources - that is, contributions from bilateral donor countries and institutions and from UN organizations and specialized agencies. While the UN has for some years now adopted a programme budgetary system, the biennial appropriations always fall short of the requirements of the programmes since there

are severe constraints on the rates of growth of the resources available to the organization. The biennial regular budget of ECA, including provisions for special programmes and consultancy services now stands at about US\$31 million.

Accordingly, one of the major tasks confronting the secretariat is the mobilization of additional resources. Without these extra-budgetary resources, the secretariat would have been hard put to it to implement any significant part of the approved programme. Indeed, over the years, we have become increasingly dependent on these resources which in 1976 accounted for over 21 per cent of ECA's total budget. The corresponding figure in 1970 was 9.3 per cent.

The extra-budgetary resources are made available to ECA in an attempt to bridge the gap between requirements and resources available from the regular budget. Unfortunately, the gap has never been bridged. For example, it has been calculated that, to cover the cost of the implementation of most projects at the pre-feasibility and feasibility study stage of the project cycle and to cover in full the implementation of certain key projects, the resource gap between 1977 and 1979 would be of the order of some US\$30 million.

Unlike member States of the other regions of Latin America, Asia and the Pacific, and Western Asia which have for years supported materially and financially the programme of activities of their regional economic commissions, by the provision of regular and substantial bilateral contributions, no African member State had, before 1977, provided any substantial contribution to augment the resources of the Economic Commission for Africa.

It was therefore in this context that, following consultations with UN Headquarters, I devised a plan in 1976 to establish a third source of funds: direct contributions from African Governments themselves which, together with resources made available under bilateral technical co-operation arrangements with donor Governments and other organizations in the developed countries, would constitute the United Nations Trust Fund for African Development.

Resolutions adopted by the ECA Conference of Ministers and the expanded programmes of work and priorities approved

at various sessions of the Commission, during the past six years, reflect a strong awareness, not only of the need to strengthen economic and technical co-operation among African countries, but also of the need for collective action to be taken in mobilizing the resources required to achieve the objective of making African countries more self-reliant in attaining their development goals.

A significant step in the direction towards self-reliance by African countries was taken by the fourth meeting of the ECA Conference of Ministers, at the thirteenth session of the Economic Commission for Africa, held in Kinshasa (Zaire) in February/March 1977. The Commission adopted resolution 288(XIII), requesting the Executive Secretary to convene a Pledging Conference of African Government Plenipotentiaries within 60 days following the fourth meeting of the Conference of Ministers, in order to review arrangements for voluntary contributions (by member States of the Commission) and to submit a report to the next meeting of the Executive Committee on the outcome of the Pledging Conference, on the funds contributed and on the uses to which such funds were being put.

The Pledging Conference accordingly took place at Lagos, Nigeria, from 26 to 29 April 1977. Thirty-two African Governments participated, as well as the African Development Bank (ADB) and BADEA. At the Conference, pledges totalling US\$3,874,196 were made by 14 African Governments, while 10 other Governments indicated that they would communicate their pledges in due course. By February 1979, 24 African Governments had pledged a total sum of about US\$5 million. <sup>1/</sup>

While pledges by African Governments to date fall far short of the necessary US\$30 million mentioned above, what is encouraging is that member States have taken an historic step in giving practical expression to the principle of self-reliance. Significantly, the Lagos Pledging Conference decided that pledging conferences should be convened biennially for the purpose of mobilizing resources, albeit on a voluntary basis, from African governments.

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<sup>1/</sup> A second pledging conference took place at the fourteenth session/fifth meeting of the Conference of Ministers in Rabat, on 28 March 1979.

It is my hope that over the years this will become an increasingly important source of funding for our activities. If the average contribution per member State is US\$500,000 per biennium, we will derive about US\$25.0 million from this source biennially. This, I am sure is not beyond the realm of possibility given the necessary political commitment. The cumulative effects of such relatively modest contributions in terms of accelerating the development of economic and technical co-operation and integration in Africa are better imagined than described.

The problem of mobilizing additional resources for implementing ECA's approved work programmes also calls for more international action. The secretariat provides a means through which international funds can be channelled and utilized for the advancement of economic and social life in Africa. It is through this pooling together of the resources on a sub-regional and regional basis that an effective impact for accelerated development in Africa can be achieved. It is therefore my hope that the international community will give us substantial material support regularly to enable us to implement fully our approved programme of work and priorities. Before ending this part of my statement, let me express my most sincere appreciation to all those countries and institutions that have given material support to ECA during the past 21 years.

#### **IX. THE TASK BEFORE ECA IN THE 1980s AND 1990s IN THE LIGHT OF THE CHALLENGES FACING AFRICA**

Allow me to end this statement by sharing with you my perception of the task facing this Commission during the remainder of this century. By a happy coincidence, this year in which we are celebrating the Commission's 21st anniversary is also the beginning of the last 21 years of this century. Moreover, our anniversary is taking place at a time when we are preparing for the new international development strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade. Above all, this is the time when many African leaders are asking the question: What kind of development should there be for Africa? Indeed, as we all know full well, the OAU and the ECA recently organized a Colloquium on this very issue in Monrovia and the UNEP and ECA jointly organised in Addis Ababa, following the ECA/OAU Colloquium, an intergovernmental seminar in Alternative Patterns of Develop-



ment and Life Style in Africa. A draft strategy paper on the Third Development Decade has been prepared, based largely on the results of the Monrovia Colloquium and the Addis Ababa Seminar. In talking, therefore, about the task before ECA in the years ahead we must first be clear in our minds as to our perception of the challenges facing Africa during the rest of the century.

In the years since independence, the apparently firm basis of assumptions as to the nature of economies and societies, governments and communities which should be built in Africa has steadily been disintegrating. It became no longer clear that the models implied in policies and strategies for closing gaps were either desirable in terms, for example, of solving the growing evils of mass unemployment and mass poverty or of enabling member States to establish self-sustaining process of development and economic growth. The material and social technologies which had sustained these model were beginning to be seen to be rapidly generating high and extensive social costs - environmental degradation, depletion of material resources, technologically created unemployment, pathological forms of urbanization associated with rural depopulation and the erosion of communal values which had been concealed under the rubric of market prices determined by impersonal and socially indifferent market forces. These technologies seemed in any case unable, in spite of numerous repairs and reinforcements, to continue to provide the motive power required for an endless pursuit of growth of material output.

It was therefore open to question whether these models could be widely and safely replicated. Could it then be the reasonable objective and target of governments and communities in Africa to continue blindly to pursue these models, bearing in mind the manner in which the Third World, over a period of four hundred years, had become integrated into these models and the clearly observable consequences of this integration. Could it also be the reasonable objective and target to continue to pursue, at a time when scholars and practical men in advanced countries are themselves anxiously casting about for ways and means by which to escape from the increasingly complex and unmanageable problems and stresses which these technologies had perforce created to develop economies and societies which are caricatures of this or that developed models?

Since 1975, we in ECA have, at the international level, at the regional level and at the multinational and national levels - whether within the secretariat, or in our legislative and consultative meetings, or through working groups of experts or independent thinkers and consultants - been putting together an answer to this question, and I think it is now possible to identify some elements of this answer.

First comes the broad statement of intent: the initiation of self-sustaining and self-reliant processes of development economic growth and welfare which would free us from an undignified and frustrated dependence on others for skilled manpower, technology, finance for the development of capital goods and services, essential institutions and markets for social and material creativity, invention and innovation, for food and increasingly for self-definition in terms of culture and life styles.

It will not, therefore, I hope, be strange that the first challenge that we see for Africa in the 1980s and 1990s is full recognition of the need to establish her own identity and the devising of the means to do so. These are matters falling within the fields of education, history, ethnography and geography. It is beyond my competence professionally to say what ought to be done and done very soon in these fields but I do feel that without vigorous and imaginative action here we would not have begun to lay the foundation of genuine African independence whether economic, technological or social.

The next and closely related challenge, as I see it, is the recovery of self-confidence. I do not really think that we understand the enormous power of this factor. The countries which have broken the barrier of dependence in history are today those which have in one way or the other wakened up to the realization that there are many things within their abilities to do, if only they want, with sufficient conviction and intensity, to do them.

There is simply no way in which we can significantly contribute to the shape of a new international economic order than through our own will, talents and resources. It is from this point of view that I sometimes feel we ought to examine more systematically the meaning of the now frequently used expression "the political will". The recovery of self-confidence may be achieved partly through an appreciation of the record of ancient

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of the industrial sector in such a way that the components of the industrial sector reinforce each other and the industrial sector then becomes a propulsive force for the development of other sectors, particularly agriculture. There are four concerns here beside the familiar ones of market size and production scale, the mobilization of investment resources, the cost of technology, etc.. One is the spatial distribution of industry; another is its employment-generating capacity; a third is the extent to which the industrial sector genuinely contributes to the growth of wealth and income rather than serving as a conduit for draining away foreign exchange; and, the fourth concerns the need for and ways of organizing the production demonstration effect. To these we might add a fifth: the availability of entrepreneurial resources.

As in the case of the neglect of the factor of self confidence we find it very difficult to understand why the question of indigenous entrepreneurial resources has received a little and so superficial an attention. Planners seem to address development plans to no one. With the exception of reference to government projects, it seems to be often assumed that some unidentified persons or corporate institutions, subsumed under the title "the private sector", exist who (a) are capable of undertaking the implementation of substantial and specific parts of the plan and (b) will enthusiastically do so. In this we misunderstand the significance of the entrepreneurs' responsibility for making choices about product lines, technology and employment, location, pricing, profits and their disposal and so on. Our ongoing studies of entrepreneurial resources suggest that neither in numbers, nor in managerial and technical capability, sectoral distribution, etc.. can they be said at present to be capable of mobilizing production and creating employment on the scale and variety implied in some development and growth targets. Frequently, the support institutions - e.g. development banks, business consultancy services materials and products testing services - which supplement their abilities to function are deficient in number, range or quality.

Our third priority is the removal of narrow market constraints on production and distribution. African domestic markets are at present divided into two: a high income market and a poverty market. The former reflects a consumption pattern which precludes the efficient and economic local production of many of the items in the basket of consumption goods. Capital

cities tend to be extensions of the marketing systems of advanced countries and like them are characterized by technological fragmentation, extreme product differentiation, rapid product succession, brand names and trade marks, the increasing use of advertising and sales promotion techniques, the growth of hire-purchase, and the development of oligopolistic structures. The poverty market enlarges as population growth is accompanied by increasing unemployment and poverty. It is thus unlikely that the market constraint can be removed by the adding together of several such rational markets without their reconstruction to provide a mass demand base.

The fourth priority we are faced with is the inescapable task of promoting economic co-operation among African countries and between African and other third world countries in ways that will not lead to the creation of new vulnerabilities, new forms of domination and new varieties of frustration. This is a factor that is likely to tax severely the statesmanship and negotiating capabilities of governments and business communities in the region in the years to come particularly where this involves the gradual evolution of a regional common market, the foundations of which through the MULPOCs and other subregional groupings should have taken definite shape in the 1980s.

Fifthly, I believe we must pursue vigorously the physical integration of the continent. I need not elaborate on the role of the United Nations Transport and Communications Decade for Africa 1978-1988 in this but I ought to point out that this needs to be reinforced by a wide variety of multinational and regional institutions.

Then we must finally give some substantial operational meaning to the concept of sovereignty over natural resources. It is sometimes not fully understood how important this subject is for the control of resource utilization not only by foreign but by indigenous business entrepreneurs or for the control of environmental pollution, especially by the extractive industries. In any case, in a world hungry for industrial raw materials and often unscrupulous about the methods by which they are acquired sovereignty over natural resources is an unfinished business which ought to be rounded off.



During the 1980s and 1990s also we must lay the foundations of a scientific and technological revolution in Africa. It will be too much for me to attempt here to set out more than a few features of the revolution we have in mind. Firstly, we need to bear in mind the increasing intimacy between science and technology. As Jorge Sebado points out, science is now used to "manufacture" technology. An approach to science teaching and research which divorces it from the concerns and needs of the community is unacceptable. There are attitudinal factors here often built into educational systems, which urgently need examination and change. There is the question of incentives which is often wrongly confused with the amplitude of material rewards. Next we come to the type of technology that we must avoid at all costs in Africa. This includes technology which isolates and depersonalizes, which creates unemployment and deprives the worker not only of work but of significance and meaning; the technology which unbalances the distribution of the social product, and the technology which creates waste and is curiously described as efficient. There are also the technologies for endless scaling up and speeding up on the assumption of an infinite capacity of men and societies for instant adjustment which we will do well not to imitate from the industrialized countries.

These are not all the challenges facing the region in which the ECA must prepare itself to play a major role in clarifying issues suggesting policies and strategies and designing or recommending programmes and instruments. But they do illustrate sufficiently the overall challenge to this institution whose 21st anniversary we now honour.

Therefore, as we celebrate this anniversary, let us think of the task ahead, the herculean task of building a prosperous, self-reliant and dynamic African economy. To meet this challenge, we must resolve to be resolute, decide to be decisive and adamant to change the economic fortunes of Africa and its peoples for the better. We must pursue relentlessly and with single-minded determination the objective of establishing a new national and regional economic order in Africa based on an increasing measure of national and collective self-reliance and dedicated to the task of achieving an equitable distribution of the products of development among the African peoples.

Finally, let us not delude ourselves into thinking that the challenge which we face will be met for us by outsiders. Outsiders may help - and such help is to be welcomed - but the task is ours to perform, the war is ours to fight until total victory over poverty, disease, ignorance and economic underdevelopment is achieved. Therefore, in commemorating the 21st anniversary of the Economic Commission for Africa, let all the member States, individually and collectively, fire the first shot now and thus launch the African economic revolution and, in doing so, lay the foundation of an economically self-reliant and dynamic Africa which, in our own interest, and in the interests of the entire international community must perforce emerge before the end of this century.