REPORT OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON INTRA-AFRICAN TOURISM

Note

The secretariat hereby submits to the Conference of Ministers a synthesis report of the "Regional Conference on Intra-African Tourism Co-operation" held at Niamey from 2 to 6 October 1984.

At its session of 26 May 1984, the ECA Conference of Ministers requested the secretariat, in its resolution 523 (XIX) Tourism, to submit some reports to this meeting.
REPORT ON THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON INTRA-AFRICAN TOURISM CO-OPERATION HELD IN NIAMEY (NIGER) FROM 2-6 OCTOBER 1984

1. Background

In 1978, ECA and the WTO organized an African Regional Conference on Tourism and Economic Development in Banjul. The Conference analysed the economic effects of tourism development in Africa and proposed actions for integrating tourism in the other economic sectors of the States in such a way as to benefit all strata of the African peoples. It had to be admitted, however, that these resolutions had not been followed up even though some countries had taken prompt but isolated actions in line with the Banjul recommendations.

Relations between the WTO and ECA during the period following the Conference were stalemated, each of the secretariats carrying out their individual activities in Africa and sometimes duplicating each other's efforts, while the African countries signed bilateral agreements of co-operation in tourism. Multinational intra-African co-operation organizations such as ECA, ECOWAS, l'autorita du Li,;t..:to-Gaurm- ind the CEPGL, just to mention a few, included tourism in their action programmes and sometimes carried out specific projects at the country level in their respective subregions. Development aid agencies, on their part, systematically carried out activities for the development of tourism.

The most striking characteristic of this period was the total lack of co-operation efforts among the African countries at the continental and subregional levels; while the foreign 'partners' adopted a concerted approach in their exploitation of the African tourist resources. Furthermore, all attempts at creating multinational tourism co-operation structures during the past ten years have failed. For these reasons, ECA decided to organize an African Regional Conference on Tourism in conformity with the provisions of the Lagos Plan of Action and subsequent resolutions passed by the member States.

The first Regional Conference on Intra-African Tourism Co-operation was organized in Niamey from 2 to 6 October 1984 in co-operation with the World Tourism Organization and thanks to the hospitality of the Government of Niger. The objectives, decisions and recommendations of the Conference are briefly described in the following paragraphs.

2. Objectives

The Conference sought to persuade senior African tourism officials to ponder the need for concerted development and exploitation of tourist resources in Africa and to establish machineries for intra-African tourism co-operation.
In the face of the present situation, characterised by lack of coordination and co-operation and which had, in some instances, resulted in the loss of control of tourist resources and management to foreign corporations and, in others, to the distortion of African cultural values, it was necessary to promote the establishment of regional and subregional tourism co-operation structures and to stimulate a more active participation of Africans in the development of their resources.

It was therefore proposed to reinforce tourism co-operation among African States and operators along the following structural guidelines:

(a) Inter-governmental co-operation:
- at the regional level: Conference of African Ministers of Tourism;
- at the subregional level: Subregional (intergovernmental) committees for promotion of tourism;

(b) Sectoral co-operation at the technical level and with respect to the exploitation of tourist resources:
- hotels;
- marketing of the product: African association of travel agencies and tour organizers;
- vocational training: Association of African Tourism Training Centres and Schools.

The gradual implementation of this programme would require close co-operation between ECA, WTO, OUA and all other parties concerned with the development of tourism in Africa.

The secretariat therefore proposed creation of the following:
- The Conference of African Ministers of Tourism,
- The subregional committees for the promotion of tourism,
- The African Hotels Association,
- The Association of African Tourist Centres and Schools. These bodies were to be rapidly made operators in the tourist sectors and by political will but also by all operators in the tourist sectors and thus give the African peoples the high quality services to which they are entitled.
The establishment of these bodies reflected the urgent wish to put at the disposal of tourist operators the machineries for intra-African co-operation. The experience concerning previous inter-governmental co-operation bodies had prompted the proposal of flexible bodies for which ECA would in the initial stages act as secretariat with the assistance and the participation of international organizations which are willing to co-operate. The operating cost of the associations will however be met from contributions by members.

3. **Decisions taken at Niamey (e.g. Resolutions of the Conference)**

After consideration of studies undertaken and the recommendations made, the Conference took the following decisions:

1) To establish a Conference of African Ministers of Tourism; this body will be under ECA and will meet every two years;

2) To establish at a latter date and under the auspicious of the Conference of African Ministers of Tourism, subregional co-operation machineries as well as sectoral ones (hotel trade, travels, vocational training, joint promotion of the tourist product);

3) To establish an inter-agency committee for the development of tourism in Africa;

4) To undertake a series of studies:

   (a) A general study on personnel needs in the African tourism sector and proposal of specific ways and means of adapting training to the needs of the countries of the region as a whole and recommendation of the facilities required,

   (b) General study on the establishment of a joint tourism promotion machinery in Africa.

5) To convene a general African Conference on Hotel Management with a view to formulating a common strategy of African States in respect of trans-national hotel management corporations.

The Conference further requested member States to establish information circuits with each other on the activities of trans-national corporations.
4. **Recommendations**

ECA, having been mandated by the Conference to implement the decisions taken at Niamey, in collaboration with OAU, WTO and other organizations and institutions, it was recommended to the ECA Conference of Ministers to endorse the said decisions so as to enable the secretariat to implement them.

It was also recommended that sustained attention be paid to problems related to tourism as it had been seen that this sector actually played a no less important role in the economic, social and cultural development of the continent.