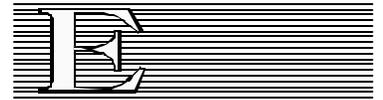




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Twenty-sixth Meeting of the Committee of Experts

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
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**Review of the Intergovernmental Machinery of the
Economic Commission for Africa**

Note by the Secretariat

A. Introduction

1. In March 2006, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) established a Task Force to assist in repositioning ECA to better meet Africa's development priorities. The work of the Task Force was informed by a process of consultations including ECA staff, its member States and key partners such as the African Union (AU), the African Development Bank (AfDB), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and its sister agencies, the regional economic communities (RECs) as well as ECA's bilateral partners.

2. The thrust of the repositioning was considered and endorsed by the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development in Ouagadougou in May 2006. The strategic directions and the priorities of the Commission are presented in the document "*Repositioning ECA: Harnessing Regional Resources to meet Africa's Development Priorities*".

3. To better address Africa's development challenges, the work of the repositioned ECA is now anchored around two thematic pillars – *Promoting regional integration in support of the AU vision and priorities* and *meeting Africa's special needs and the emerging global challenges*. In this regard, one pivotal element of the repositioning is the greater emphasis placed on supporting the AU agenda and strengthening the collaboration between ECA's Subregional Offices (SROs) and the RECs, while building enhanced partnerships with United Nations agencies and other relevant stakeholders in support of Africa's development.

4. Following the repositioning exercise, the new programme orientation is articulated around 10 subprogrammes. These are: Trade, finance and economic development (subprogramme 1); Food security and sustainable development (subprogramme 2); Governance and public administration (subprogramme 3); Information and science and technology for development (subprogramme 4); Economic cooperation and regional integration (subprogramme 5); Gender and women in development (subprogramme 6); Subregional activities for development (subprogramme 7) – Component 1: Subregional activities in North Africa, Component 2: Subregional activities in West Africa; Component 3: Subregional activities in Central Africa; Component 4: Subregional activities in Eastern Africa; Component 5: Subregional activities in Southern Africa; Development planning and administration (subprogramme 8); Statistics (subprogramme 9); and Social development (subprogramme 10).

5. To complete this phase of the repositioning of ECA and comply with the Resolution 844(XXXIX) – *Repositioning ECA to better respond to Africa's priorities* – adopted by the Conference in May 2006, another level of reform is required to align the intergovernmental machinery with its new strategic orientation and programme structure, including legislative organs and subsidiary bodies of the Commission. The present proposals are therefore submitted herewith for consideration and endorsement by the Conference.

B. Review of past reforms of ECA's intergovernmental machinery

6. The intergovernmental machinery of the Commission has undergone several revisions over the past decade. A major revision of the intergovernmental machinery was adopted, in 1997, at the thirty-second session of the Commission. At the time, several reasons were put forward to revise the machinery including the need to adapt it to the changes made to the composition and orientation of the Commission's work programme, and to meet the request of member States of the United Nations

to undertake reviews with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of their intergovernmental structures. Another consideration was the need to foster coordination and coherence with the intergovernmental machinery of other regional organizations in Africa.

7. A major feature of the revised intergovernmental machinery was the abolition of several ministerial meetings and the creation of sectoral committees to guide the work of the subprogrammes of the Commission.

8. Since that date, the Commission has endorsed a number of proposed revisions to the intergovernmental machinery including, in Algiers in 2001, the decision to hold joint Conferences – namely Africa’s Ministers of Finance and Ministers of Economic Development and Planning – on an annual basis. Furthermore, at the thirty-fifth session of the Commission in Johannesburg in 2002, it was agreed that ECA and AfDB would convene the meetings of their main policy organs consecutively in the same venue in order to achieve additional coherence and cost-effectiveness in the inter-ministerial function. They would also organize an annual AfDB-ECA symposium. The current structure of the intergovernmental machinery is presented in Annex I.

C. Recommendations on the new intergovernmental machinery

(a) Legislative organs to be retained or modified

1. Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and its Committee of Experts

9. The Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development would continue to provide legislative mandate and policy guidance to the work of the Commission, consider and endorse the work programme of the ECA secretariat, serve as a forum for articulating Africa’s position on key development issues on the agenda of the United Nations, and decide on the recommendations of its subsidiary bodies and of the Executive Secretary.

10. It is proposed that from the next meeting, the AU and ECA jointly organize the Conference to further enhance their partnership, achieve additional coherence and cost-effectiveness in the inter-ministerial function, increase attendance and ensure highest-level participation. The proposed format for the Conference is for the AU and ECA to discuss together key issues related to African economic and social development while the agenda dealing with statutory issues would delineate those associated with the African Union and ECA.

11. The proposal to organize a joint AU-ECA Annual Conference has already been endorsed by the Conference of African Ministers of the Economy and Finance (CAMEF II) in Yaoundé in November 2006 (AU/CAMEF/MIN/Rpt(II)).

12. If approved, the joint Conference of Ministers would meet on an annual basis and the next meeting would be held in 2008. The Committee of Experts would meet prior to the Conference and provide technical support to the Conference.

13. The Bureau of the Commission would include a representative from each of the five subregions, namely, North, West, Central, Eastern and Southern Africa. It would consist of a chairperson, three vice-chairpersons and a rapporteur.

2. *Subregional Ministerial Conferences*

14. The Report of the Secretary-General on “*Enhancing the role of the subregional offices of the Economic Commission for Africa*” (A/61/471) responds to the observations made by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) regarding the limited impact of the intergovernmental committees of experts that govern the subregional offices. The Report stresses the need for the outcomes of these meetings to reach appropriate national and subregional political levels. It also requires that the interaction among subregional offices, national offices and regional economic communities should be improved and follow-up mechanisms strengthened.

15. As a result, it is proposed that the five intergovernmental committees of experts should be converted to subregional ministerial conferences. To ensure attendance and reduce logistical and other costs, these meetings would be held in conjunction with and at the same locations as the meetings of the policy organs of the respective REC of each subregional office. To further improve the functioning and enhance the effectiveness of the intergovernmental machinery, subregional ministerial caucuses would be held for the five subregions during the annual meetings of the Conference of Ministers to follow up on key issues of interest to the different subregions.

16. The annual ministerial conferences would oversee the overall formulation and implementation of the programme of work and priorities of the respective SROs, make recommendations on issues concerning economic and social development in their respective subregions, as well as on the promotion and strengthening of subregional economic cooperation and integration.

(b) *Subsidiary organs to be retained or created*

17. The new programme orientation is anchored, as indicated above, on two thematic pillars and structured around ten subprogrammes. Given that structure, the mandate of the subsidiary organs of the Commission is to provide guidance to the work of the subprogrammes.

18. To establish an effective subsidiary structure and ensure that its decisions and recommendations influence the development policies and strategies of member States, there is need for congruence between the ECA subprogrammes and the sectoral committees. To this end, it is proposed to have seven sectoral committees – subprogramme 7 is under the purview of the above proposed annual subregional ministerial sessions and the work of subprogramme 8 is guided by a Governing Council. The proposed committees would meet on a biennial basis for a period of three to five days. They would be the following:

1. *Committee on Food Security and Sustainable Development*

19. The Committee would serve as a forum of experts that provides advice to the Commission in the interlinked areas of food security and environment, work being undertaken under subprogramme 2. In this regard, it would provide a platform for advocacy and assessment of follow-

up activities by African governments to regional and global plans of action, such as the relevant decisions and outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

2. *Committee on Governance and Popular Participation*

20. The Committee's objective would be to provide guidance on the establishment of an enabling environment for sound economic and corporate governance in Africa. The Committee would focus on interventions needed to enhance democratic governance practices, promote the adoption of human rights international standards, improve post-conflict management and mainstream the role of civil society. The Committee would also discuss issues related to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). The deliberations of the Committee would influence the activities of ECA subprogramme 3.

3. *Committee on Development Information, Science and Technology*

21. The Committee would aim at strengthening the role of the Commission in assisting its member States to develop their national information and communication infrastructure as well as integrate science and technology in their development programmes and strategies by bringing together experts and policy makers to advise it in these areas. The Committee would also address issues related to knowledge and information services that are key to move forward the African development agenda. The members of the Committee include experts from such fields as information and communication technologies (ICT), geo-information systems, libraries and science and technology. The Committee would guide the work of subprogramme 4.

4. *Committee on Trade and Regional Cooperation and Integration*

22. The Committee would promote the implementation of measures designed to strengthen economic cooperation and integration among African countries. It would influence the work programme of subprogramme 1 and subprogramme 5. It would coordinate and harmonize economic policies among African countries as a prerequisite for accelerating regional economic integration. In view of the importance of trade in regional cooperation and integration, the Committee would also focus on issues related to intra-African and international trade. In addition, the Committee would also deal with natural resources development and management. Its membership would comprise experts in the field of trade and integration drawn from governments and the private sector.

5. *Committee on Women and Development*

23. The role of the Committee on Women and Development as an advisory forum of experts and policy makers, would be to provide guidance to the Commission in its work, under subprogramme 6, on the importance of gender and women in development. It would continue to provide a platform for advocacy and for assessing follow-up and implementation by African governments of the global and regional platforms for action for the advancement of women. In particular, it would continue to address issues relating to the economic empowerment of women, protection of their legal and human rights and improved access to education and health.

6. *Committee on Statistics*

24. The Committee, composed of experts and policy makers in the field of statistics, would be responsible for providing strategic directions to the work of the Commission, under subprogramme 9, on statistical development in Africa.

7. *Committee on Human and Social Development*

25. The Committee's mission would be to promote human and social development in African countries and provide guidance to the work of ECA subprogramme 10. It would conduct development and follow-up activities pertaining to global conferences and regional action programmes. It would review major trends and issues of regional interest regarding human and social development.

(c) *Subsidiary organs proposed for abolition*

Committee on Human Development and Civil Society

26. It is proposed that the work of this Committee be subsumed partly in the Committee on Human and Social Development and in the Committee on Governance and Popular Participation.

D. *Conclusion*

27. The Conference is therefore invited to consider and endorse the proposals to:

- (1) Organize a joint AU and ECA Annual Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development;
- (2) Convert the intergovernmental committees of experts into subregional ministerial conferences; and
- (3) Structure the subsidiary organs of the Commission around seven sectoral committees as proposed above.

Annex I: Current structure of the intergovernmental machinery of the ECA

A. ECA legislative organs dealing with overall development issues

1. Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and its Committee of Experts.

The Conference serves as the principal legislative organ of the Commission and meets on an annual basis. The Committee of Experts meets prior to the Conference and provides technical support to the Conference.

2. Intergovernmental Committees of Experts of the five Subregional Offices (SROs)

The Intergovernmental Committee of Experts of ECA's five SROs meet annually and report to the Commission through the meeting of the Committee of Experts.

B. Subsidiary bodies

The role of the subsidiary bodies is to review problems and issues pertaining to their respective development sectors, formulate policies and strategies to address Africa's development challenges, and determine sectoral work priorities to be reflected in the work programme of the Commission. These committees are composed of senior officials and experts from member States and meet on a biennial basis. The subsidiary bodies of the Commission are composed of the following committees:

1. Committee on Women, Gender and Development
2. Committee on Development Information
3. Committee on Sustainable Development
4. Committee on Human Development and Civil Society
5. Committee on Regional Integration and Cooperation

Annex II

**SCHEMATIC PRESENTATION OF THE PROPOSED INTERGOVERNMENTAL
MACHINERY OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA**

