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**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION
FOR AFRICA**



**NATIONS UNIES
COMMISSION ECONOMIQUE
POUR L'AFRIQUE**

SUBREGIONAL OFFICE FOR WEST AFRICA

Distr.: LIMITED
ECA-WA/ICE.9/2006/3
Original: ENGLISH

**Ninth Session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts
27-29 March 2006
Lomé, Togo**

**REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
2004-2005 WORK PROGRAMME AND
ORIENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR
THE BIENNIUM 2008-2009**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The proposed programme of work for the biennium 2004-2005 was submitted to the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts at its Sixth Session held at Banjul in May 2003, prior to its finalization and submission to the review bodies of the United Nations General Assembly. The format and structure of the programme of work of that biennium was conform to the logical framework of the results-based programme budgeting introduced by the General Assembly as from December 2003. Similarly, the proposed work programme for the Office for the biennium 2006-2007 was submitted to the ICE at its Eighth session held at Ouagadougou in March 2005.

2. The purpose of this report is to remind members of the Committee of Experts on the main features of the programme, provide member States with information on the status of its implementation and core achievements and provide a brief on the strategic orientation of the programme for the biennium 2008-2009 that has been submitted to the General Assembly as an indicative medium-term plan.

II. SCOPE AND ORIENTATION OF THE 2004-2005 WORK PROGRAMME

3. The programme of work for the biennium 2004-2005 under the ECA subprogramme on "Supporting sub-regional activities for development." was consistent with the strategic directions of the Economic Commission for Africa adopted by the Thirty-sixth session of the ECA Conference of Ministers held at Addis Ababa in June 2003. It also reflected the outcome and action plan of the AU extraordinary Summit on poverty reduction through employment generation. Its established two expected accomplishments were (i) *Enhanced capacity of member States to formulate and harmonize macroeconomic and sectoral development policies at the national and sub-regional levels, particularly in the areas of trade, infrastructures, human development including gender mainstreaming, agriculture and food security and environment; and (ii) Strengthened human and institutional capacities of RECs and other IGOs to coordinate the implementation of and monitor inter-country priority programmes/projects under the NEPAD.*

4. The structure of the programme to which the members of the ICE are acquainted with, encompassed analytical work meant to support the policy advocacy, the preparation of parliamentary documentation to support the policy dialogue in the context of the ICE meetings, technical cooperation with member States and major regional economic communities (RECs); group training and workshops in support of capacity building; and filed projects and special events.

III. REVIEW OF CORE ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED DURING THE BIENNIUM 2004-2005 AND ACCOUNT OF ACHIEVEMENTS

5. The analytical work undertaken by the ECA Office for West Africa generated the policy advocacy materials that led to the overall institutional strengthening in support of economic cooperation and integration. The Office prepared and disseminated 2 annual reports on the economic and social conditions in West Africa. It also prepared and published three major technical materials in relation to (i) implications of the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire on the economies of the neighboring Sahelian land-locked countries; (ii) economic implications of HIV/AIDS in West Africa; and (iii) Progress towards the achievement of the MDGs by West African States. These technical materials informed the formulation of a number of sectoral policies in at least half of the 15 countries.

6. In accordance with provisions of the ECA/ECOWAS memorandum of agreement and as a result of technical assistance provided by the Office for West Africa to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), the anticipated

baseline of 3 common policy measures and frameworks set for the end of the biennium have been largely exceeded. In actual fact, member States of the later adopted a Common Economic Programme (2004) and common investment code (2004); and the former successfully completed its Common Agricultural Policy Framework and the framework for regional infrastructures development plan as part of the implementation of NEPAD.

7. Consensus on emerging challenges such as poverty reduction strategies and policy responses to multilateral trade negotiations under the World Trade Organization as well as economic partnership arrangement with the European Union have been translated into subregional common positions. The harmonization of macroeconomic policies were vigorously pursued by ECOWAS member countries although the formation of the second monetary zone under WAMI did not materialized as scheduled in 2005. The regional infrastructures development strategies were put into practice with the materialization of the West Africa Power Pool and the West Africa Gas Pipeline.

8. The policy dialogue with stakeholders were conducted in the framework of two meetings of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (one in 2004 and one in 2005) gathered in all cases at least 2 representatives of all countries of the West Africa subregion. The Sub-regional review meeting on the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action for the advancement of Women (2004) and ensued recommendations formed valuable inputs to the regional and global reviews of the Platform. Similarly, the sub-regional workshop on Governance served as a valuable preparatory forum for ADF IV on the theme of "Governance for a progressing Africa". The topical two Ad-hoc expert group meetings, respectively on economic implications of HIV-AIDS and WTO Economic partnership Arrangements issues represented the best practices of bridging the continuum from policy analysis to policy advocacy and of synergy building between Headquarters divisions and the Sub-regional Office.

9. The effective delivery of 9 advisory services and technical assistance to west African member States, ECOWAS, UEMOA and other inter-governmental organizations supported (i) the development, jointly with the UNDP Office in Niger, for a methodology for assessing and monitoring poverty incidence based on identified communities' basic needs; (ii) assistance, jointly with the African Centre for Gender and Development (ACGD), to the Ad-Hoc Group of ECOWAS Ministers in charge of the Social Development and Promotion of the status of Women; (iii) assistance in the drafting of a draft appeal paper for Governments of the MRU countries for submission to the Secretary-general; (iv) substantive contribution to the reviews of Ghana and Nigeria under the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) (v) preparation of 4 out of the 6 chapters of the ECOWAS medium-term strategic plan; (vi) contribution to the conceptualization of the organizational structure of the Subregional infrastructures projects development and implementation unit (DPIU/ECOWAS); (vii) active participation and contribution to the assessment of progress towards the establishment of the West African Monetary Zone; (viii) active participation and contribution to the preparation (at experts and ministerial level) of the Paris International Conference on shared vision of the Niger River Basin (ix) Ah-hoc technical assistance was provided to the Autorité du Liptako Gourma (ALG) and the West African Monetary Agency (WAMA).

10. A case of support to capacity building was the organization, in synergy with the African centre for Gender and Development (ACGD) of two training workshops, one in English and one in French, on the application of the "Easy reference guidebook on mainstreaming unpaid work and household production into national statistics, development policies and budgets". The training sessions not only familiarized participants (about 100 experts from member Sates) with the concepts, principles and tools that underpin the guidebook. As recommended by participants, ECA make available the guidebook to a larger group of stakeholders and provide further technical assistance for the implementation of national action plans meant to operationalize the guidebook.

11. In support to the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's development (NEPAD), core achievements of the ECA Office for West Africa included the provision of a number of advisory services and technical assistance to member States. Major achievements in this regard included a substantive contribution to the reviews of Ghana and Nigeria under the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) as well the production of advocacy materials on the implications of the New Partnership agenda for national policies, in relation to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The related work put emphasis on peace building, policies conducive to employment generation, support to the formulation of a strategy for the development and implementation of sub-regional physical infrastructures, and promotion of investments and enterprise development.

12. In this framework, the Office pursued the enhancement of its outreach capabilities and as a result significantly improved its collaboration with its major partners in the subregion, including ECOWAS, UEMOA, CEN-SAD, universities and research institutions and private sector organizations. The enhanced partnership supported the organization of an Ad Hoc expert group meeting on the economic impact of conflicts in West Africa, and as a special event, the West Africa Investment Forum preceded by a workshop on corporate governance that were initially planned for the end of 2005 but postponed to the early 2006.

13. The expert group meeting on the impact of conflict was organized in collaboration with the ECA Office of Policy and Programme Coordination. The experts assessed the devastating effects of conflicts on the population, cross-border security, the economic sphere and the sub-regional social cohesion. In this regard, particular concerns were raised in the limited availability of resources needed to restore the economies of some of the conflict-affected countries of the sub-region. The compendium on presentations made during the meeting would contribute to sensitizing policy-makers and development partners on the need for enhanced cooperation at national and sub-regional levels for conflict prevention, management and post-conflict peace building.

14. The West Africa Investment Forum was organized in collaboration with the Government of Mali, ECOWAS and UEMOA, at Bamako in February 2006 under the theme of building of the fundamentals for a rapid and sustainable development of small and medium-scale enterprises. The Forum that gathered not less than 200 practitioners from the business folk, discussed the fundamental requirements for enterprise development in West Africa, including the conducive environment (physical and regulatory), the financing and guarantee of investments and institutional support to entrepreneurial capacity building. Core policy recommendations included (i) a policy shift from emphasis put on foreign investments attraction to bold measures supporting the creation and sustainability of small and medium scale enterprises; (ii) adoption by all ECOWAS member countries of a charter for small and medium-scale enterprises; (iii) the formulation and negotiation of an African common position on the "Survival and Development Exception of Africa" in the framework of the WTO processes; and (iv) possible revision upward of the ECOWAS and UEMOA common external tariff to enable a minimum protection of local small and medium scale enterprises.

15. The Forum also included a Ministerial Round Table on the promotion of agro industries in West Africa with the objective of enhancing subregional food security, inducing an effective pro-poor economic growth and expanding intra-ECOWAS trade. The exploitation of the large irrigable land resources of the Niger river basin could be an entry point for the achievement of those objectives. It is in this respect that the Forum discussed the implications of the Offer of the Government of Mali to lease not less than 800,000 hectares of irrigable lands of the Office du Niger to private and public investors, out of which 100,000 hectares for investors from member countries of the Community of the Sahel Saharan Countries (CEN-SAD). A major recommendation of the Round Table was that ECA, the AU and all subregional RECs should collaborate in the rapid finalization of the coding sheet and terms and conditions meant to operationalize that offer.

16. Prior to the Forum, SRO-WA and the Development Policy Management Division organized the workshop on "Code and Standards for Good Corporate Governance in West Africa". The objective of the workshop was to: (i) revisit economic and corporate governance issues as they pertain to Africa in general and in the context of West Africa and to assess strengths and weaknesses; (ii) identify remaining challenges, and (iii) propose strategies for the diffusion and exchange of best practices.

17. Some thirty experts in governance from 10 West African countries and international organizations attended the workshop and supported that corporate governance is pivotal to the economic development and social transformation. In this connection, the participants recognized the vital role of "OHADA" and "BRVM" in leading the application of internationally agreed codes and standards for good corporate governance in West Africa. They also recognized that there is a close mutual link between corporate governance and urban governance. However the Workshop emphasized that good corporate governance cannot be achieved without good public governance consistent with APRM principles. The report on the workshop is under finalization and will be, in due course, published and dispatched to members States and all other partners.

18. In fulfilling the United Nations mandate to promote the Millennium Declaration (MD) and facilitate the attainment of then MDGs, the ECA Office continued to actively contribute to the work of the UN country team in Niger. The enhanced inter-agency coordination resulted in joint undertakings, including the conceptualization and formulation of the poverty reduction strategies in Niger and assessment of the performance of the decentralized financial (micro credit) systems in Niger.

IV. STRATEGIC ORIENTATION FOR THE BIENNIUM 2008-2009

19. The strategic orientation for the biennium 2008-2009 was based on the expanded mandate of ECA that emanated from the outcome World Summit on the implementation of the Millennium development goals, guidelines provided by the Thirty-eighth session of the Conference of Ministers.

20. The long-term objective that will be pursued is to promote the harmonization of national policies in various sectors in support of integration efforts towards the consolidation of subregional economic communities (RECs) in the overall framework of the African Union (AU) and facilitate the attainment of the goals set by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). On the basis of past achievements and current subregional circumstances, the established expected accomplishments will include, (i) Enhanced capacity of member States to formulate and harmonize macroeconomic and sectoral development policies at the national and sub-regional levels; (ii) Strengthened human and institutional capacities of RECs and other IGOs to coordinate the implementation of and monitor inter-country priority programmes/projects under the NEPAD; and (iii) Enhanced partnership with UN Agencies, the civil society and, particularly, the private sector.

21. Specifically, the work of the Office will address an array of institutional issues that impinged the progress of economic integration in the sub-region. Specifically, it will concentrate on (i) building institutional capacity for enhanced conceptualization, planning and management of economic integration projects and programmes; (ii) facilitating policy dialogue, especially in macroeconomic policy harmonization and convergence, trade liberalization, monetary cooperation, sectors development, and advocating for best practices in cross cutting areas such as information and communication technologies (ICTs), gender and environment sustainability; and (iii) support to peace building and post conflict reconstruction. The recurrence of humanitarian crises in the sub-region, brought about by drought and conflicts suggested that the Office pays special attention to the subregional dimension of these issues. The Office will also enhance its outreach capabilities to improve communication with the major partners in the subregion, including ECOWAS, UEMOA, CEN-SAD, universities and research institutions, and civil

society/private sector organizations. Especially, the strategy will call for the expansion of partnership at the national and sub-regional levels with a view to enhancing the role of the private sector.

22. The strategic framework will support the development of a programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 in the last quarter of 2006, reflecting on subregional critical challenges, actual circumstances and new priorities set by member States.