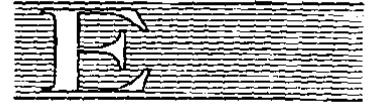




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THE EVOLUTION OF THE AFRICA REGIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE TO
THE COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

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This background document is prepared by the African Centre for women to trace the origin of the African Regional Coordinating Committee on the Integration of Women in Development (ARCC) and its subsequent evolution to the Committee on Women in Development (CWD). It covers the period beginning October 1979 through November 1997.

What is ARCC?

The Africa Regional Coordinating Committee for the Integration of Women In Development is an Intergovernmental policy – making body and a subsidiary organ of the Economic Commission For Africa (ECA) that focuses especially on the advancement of women and whose recommendations are directly submitted to the annual meetings of the ECA Conference of Ministers.

It was established at the recommendation of the representatives of national governmental organizations who met in Nouakchott, Mauritania in 1977 for the first Regional Conference on the Integration of Women in Development. This Conference was organized by ECA and during the deliberations, strong sentiments were articulated in favour of the establishment of sub-regional and regional groupings to promote exchange of experiences, strengthen solidarity and emulation among African women, as well as plan a common strategy for the integration of women in development. The Regional Conference recommended, inter alia, the establishment of committees for the implementation of plans of actions for the integration of women in development within the framework of the ECA Multinational Programming and Operational Centres (MULPOCs) [now known as Sub-Regional Development Centres (SRDCs) based in Lusaka, Yaounde, Gisenyi, Niamey and Tangiers] and national machineries for the advancement of women in all countries.

In this context, the Regional Conference recommended the establishment of the Africa Regional Coordinating Committee for the Integration of Women In Development, for the purpose of :

- Assisting in building up institutions and programmes specifically designed to promote the participation of women in development;
- Assessing the changing conditions of women;

The specific assignments of ARCC recommended by the Conference were, inter-alia:

- (a) To assist and advise ECA in its activities directed towards the integration of women in development
- (b) To co-ordinate the activities of the sub-regional Committees;
- (c) To co-operate with the Inter- Agency Working Groups established to implement plans of action for the integration of women in development in Africa;
- (d) To co-operate with relevant United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, particularly the United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Social Development and other regional commissions;
- (e) To co-operate with other relevant intergovernmental agencies, especially the Pan African Women's Organization;
- (f) To co-operate with the African Training and Research Centre for Women (ATRCW) and national machineries created to promote the integration of women in development in Africa by giving broad guidelines on research priorities and training programmes."

In accordance with the above recommendations, the ECA Conference of Ministers in its resolution 365 (XIV) adopted on 27 March 1979, established the structure and terms of reference as well as the Subregional Committees of ARCC. The Economic Commission For Africa assisted with the establishment of the subregional committees in Lusaka (July 1978) for the Eastern and Southern African subregion, in Yaounde (July 1978) for the Central African subregion, in Niamey (November-December 1978) for the western Africa subregion and Gisenyi (January 1979) for the Great Lakes Community subregion.

Structure and Terms of reference for the Africa Regional Co-ordinating Committee

In accordance with the recommendation of the Nouakchott Conference, the ECA Conference of Ministers by its Resolution 365 (XIV) formulated the structure and terms of reference of ARCC as follows :

Membership and Structure

The membership and structure of ARCC was to include:

- Three members designated by each sub-regional committee (with the right to vote);
- The Executive Secretary of ECA (without the right to vote)
- The Administrative Secretary – General of the Organization of African Unity (without the right to vote);
- The Pan African Women's Organization; United Nations agencies; and representatives of donor agencies, all of whom would be invited as observers if a particular subject under consideration was of interest to them.

ARCC was to elect its Bureau to include

- Chairperson,
- first and second Vice – Chairpersons
- two rapporteurs.

The terms of office of the Bureau would be two years.

In addition, the periodicity of ARCC meetings was to be annual and the meetings would be convened by the ECA Executive Secretary after consultation with the Bureau. ATRCW (now known as the African Centre for Women, ACW) would act as the secretariat of ARCC. Besides, the rules of procedure of the Committee would be the same as those of ECA.

The mandate of ARCC :

- 1) To harmonize and co-ordinate the sub-regional programmes, approved within the SRDCs;
- 2) To mobilize resources for the implementation of programmes agreed at the regional and sub regional levels;
- 3) To review and evaluate activities carried out in the region in the framework of programmes for the advancement of women;

4) To report to the deliberative organs of the Economic Commission for Africa on the activities and programmes carried out in the subregion (Committee of officials, Council of Ministers at the subregional and regional levels respectively).

5) To convene the African Regional Conference on Women and Development every three years;"

First Meeting of ARCC

Following the creation of ARCC, its first session was held in Rabat, Morocco from 14-16 March 1979. The session was organized in accordance with the recommendation of the first Regional Conference held in Nouakchott, from 27 September to 2 October 1977.

The chairpersons of the bureaux of the sub-regional committees reported on the activities of the committees since their establishment. The issue of ARCC machineries and their mode of operations, structural interrelationships and financing were also discussed at length. The meeting also underlined the importance of ARCC meetings where issues relevant to women are discussed from the African point of view.

On the issue of the relationship of ARCC to other ECA Technical Committees of Experts, it was underscored that ARCC was to report directly to the ECA Conference of Ministers only. Its mandate was to give advice and suggestions to the Conference of Ministers about women's programmes.

In view of the importance of broad consultations with regard to women's issues, a proposal was made that regional conferences could be convened by ARCC on an ad hoc basis whenever the need was felt. This would provide a forum for exchange of information on women and development among African countries and the elaboration of a common strategy for solving common problems in the region.

The second Regional Conference was held in December 1979 in Lusaka, Zambia. Since then, Regional Conferences have been organized every five years by ARCC.

Expansion of the role of ARCC

Since that first meeting, ARCC continued to meet on an annual basis and to work closely with ECA through ATRCW, which changed its name to ACW in 1993. By 1996, however, and in the context of the momentum of the Dakar and Beijing Conferences, ARCC at its seventeenth meeting was preoccupied with the challenge of promoting effective implementation of the Regional and Global Platforms for Action. The Fifth African Regional Conference on Women in Dakar had given ARCC the role of coordinating, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Dakar Platform for Action. But there was also the Bureau of the Regional Conference that had overseen the organization of the Fifth Regional Conference and had also led the African participation at the Fourth World Conference in Beijing. The question as to how both ARCC and the Regional Bureau would work together was a preoccupation at the seventeenth meeting of ARCC.

The second preoccupation of the meeting was the size of ARCC and whether or not its membership was adequate to play the new role of ARCC. Besides, it was felt that the existing sub-regional representation in ARCC was not equitable since the number of

countries per sub-region was not equal yet the number of countries representing each sub-region was equal.

The meeting recognized the important work done by the Bureau of the Regional Conference and therefore decided that in order to strengthen ARCC, certain modifications in the composition of its membership were imperative. The meeting therefore decided that its Bureau should include the chairperson of the Regional Conference until the next African Regional Conference. Also, the ECA Niamey MULPOC sub-region would have 4 countries instead of 3 as members of ARCC and the ECA Lusaka MULPOC would have 6 instead of 3 countries. In addition, ECA was to define clearly and precisely the criteria for membership in the regional and sub-regional Bureaux of ARCC as well as establish the principles for rotating the membership of the Bureaux in conformity with the rules and regulations of the United Nations.

Furthermore, it was suggested that the resolution which established ARCC should be amended in order to reflect its new mandate in to coordinate, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Platforms of Action. In this context, the meeting also noted with concern that ARCC was troubled by such problems as inactivity, homogeneous composition, and non-flexible working procedures. ARCC, therefore recommended that ECA undertakes an evaluation exercise of ARCC with regard to the Committee's structure, composition and functioning and make recommendations at its 18th session as to how this could be redynamized in the light of its mandate to follow-up the implementation of the African and Global Platforms of Action. ECA was also requested to carry out periodic evaluation exercises of the performance of ARCC at the sub-regional levels.

It was further proposed that in playing its coordinating and monitoring role, ARCC should work with existing institutions at the national and sub-regional levels as each had its comparative advantage in the implementation of the Platforms for Action. In this connection ECA was requested to prepare a list of existing national machineries, both governmental and NGO.

The meeting also recommended that gender focal points should be appointed to each MULPOC so as to assist member states of the sub-regions, especially with regard to the task of formulating national plans for the implementation of the Platforms for Action. This would complement the assistance that ACW provided to member States and ease communication between the sub-regions and ACW.

The need to have a thematic orientation in future ARCC meetings so as to make them more focused and more co-ordinated with those of the Commission on Status of women (CSW) and the MULPOCs was underscored.

ARCC elections

By the end of the seventeenth meeting, ARCC elected its membership to reflect the new changes. These elections constitute the current representation at government level along sub-regional lines for the period 1996-1998. ARCC membership is made up of Bureau members in the Subregional Committees as follows:

Great Lakes sub-region:	President	-	Rwanda
	Vice-president	-	Zaire
	Rapporteur	-	Burundi

North Africa Sub-region :	President	-	Tunisia
	Vice president	-	Algeria
	Rapporteur	-	Morocco
West Africa Sub-region :	President	-	Senegal
	Vice President	-	Nigeria
	Rapporteur	-	Cote d'Ivoire
Central Africa Sub-region:	President		Cameroon
	Vice President:		Central Africa
	Rapporteur :		Congo (Brazaville)
Eastern and Southern Africa Sub-regions :	President:		Ethiopia
	Vice President:		South Africa
	Rapporteur:		Zimbabwe
	Members:		Kenya
			Tanzania
		Zambia	

The results of the elections for the ARCC Bureau were as follows:

President	-	Tunisia
First Vice President	-	Rwanda
Second Vice President	-	Ethiopia
First rapporteur	-	Côte d'Ivoire
Second rapporteur	-	Cameroon

By its Decision 3 (XXX) in May 1996, the ECA Conference of Ministers endorsed the outcome of the elections and the request that ECA should periodically evaluate the activities of ARCC as well as its impact at the sub-regional levels.

Expansion of membership and change of name

In response to the request by ARCC at its seventeenth meeting, ACW presented its recommendations regarding the mandate, and structure of ARCC to better reflect its role of coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Dakar and the Beijing Platforms for Action. ACW had reviewed the role of ARCC also in the context of the new strategic directions of ECA whereby gender was treated as a cross-cutting issue which required to be mainstreamed in all programmes of the Commission.

In this connection, at the 18th meeting of ARCC which took place in Addis Ababa from 24-26 April 1997 ACW recommended that the role of ARCC should comprise advocacy and advisory work as well as assistance in the mainstreaming of gender issues. It should also entail effective coordination of activities at the national, sub-regional and regional levels. The need to mobilize political support to ensure timely action for effective implementation of the Platforms was also underscored. This required modalities for fostering collaboration and cooperation with NGOs, the civil society, regional and the international donor community.

The meeting discussed the above proposals and eventually drafted a resolution for the attention of the ECA Conference of Ministers to amend the mandate, role and structure of ARCC as follows:

Amended Mandate

The newly amended mandate was :

- To play an advocacy and policy guidance role with a view to promoting gender – sensitive policies and necessary institutional changes at national, sub-regional and regional levels;
- To undertake periodic review of progress in the implementation of strategies for the advancement of women at the sub-regional and regional levels;
- To consult and advise ECA in the formulation and implementation of regional and sub-regional programmes for the advancement of women in order to ensure the incorporation of priorities set in the Platforms and other similar instruments
- To harmonize and coordinate the sub-regional programmes on women in development in ECA Development Centres (MULPOC)
- To facilitate the exchange of information and experiences;
- To participate in the activities and meetings of the United Nations and other relevant organizations;
- To convene every three years, the African Conference on women and Development;
- To report to the deliberative organs of the Economic Commission for Africa on the activities and programmes carried out in the sub-region.

Expanded membership

With regard to membership, ARCC in the draft resolution, was conscious of the need to adapt itself to the new trends in gender and development and to have a more focused and integrated approach in order to be more effective and have a greater impact in the region. It therefore recommended that it should function as a Committee of experts which would meet once every two years. It also recommended the expansion of membership to include both policy makers representing member States and experts representing the civil society at national and sub-regional levels. ECA was requested to propose the number and modalities for selecting representatives from the civil society.

Following this Resolution, at the ARCC Bureau meeting that took place in Dakar in November 1997, ACW proposed and the Bureau approved that the experts from the civil society should be twenty selected as follows:

- five representative of women associations and NGOs at the sub-regional and regional levels
- Five representatives of rural women's organizations
- five representatives of NGOs including training institutions at the regional and sub-regional levels.
- Five resource persons
- A representative from ADB (ex-officio)
A representative from OAU (ex-officio)

The Committee further recommended that ECA should re-establish the meetings of the sub-regional Committees of ARCC and provide them with adequate human and financial resources. ECA and ARCC were also asked to ensure full and effective implementation of the Kampala and Kigali Plans of Action in the Peace Process. Besides, the bureau of ARCC should work closely with the ACW to prepare ARCC meetings while ARCC should co-operate with NGOs and other actors in the implementation of the Platforms for Action in conformity with member States' priorities

When the Conference of African Ministers responsible for Economic and Social Development and Planning met in April 1997, all the above recommendations were passed through Resolution 826(XXXII). By the same Resolution the name of ARCC was changed to *Committee on Women and Development (CWD)*.

Concluding remarks

The mandate and structure of CWD as approved by the ECA Conference of Ministers in 1997 remains operational to date. You as members of the Committee have been invited and/or elected in conformity with the resolution. This is the first meeting that the Committee has organized in its expanded structure. No doubt it will benefit from the cross-fertilization of ideas, particularly on the eve of the Sixth African Regional Conference on Women which will be held in Addis Ababa in November 1999. The success of the Regional Conference will be highly influenced by inputs from CWD. The strengthened ARCC in form of CWD will undoubtedly be reflected in the outcome of this first meeting.