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CONCERTED ACTION ON TRANSPORTATION IN THE
AFRICAN REGION

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FOR INFORMATION

The paper on "Transport Problems in Relation to Economic Development in West Africa"* which has been prepared for this session of the Commission follows from the request of the Commission for specific studies and projects in the field of concerted action. The study of transport problems is, therefore, related to other resolutions of the Commission such as that on surveys of intra-African trade and industry (Resolution 8(II)), on inventories of Africa's natural resources (Resolution 13(II)) and other items in the programme of work of the Secretariat such as Project No.02-01(c): "Studies of regional trade arrangements made or contemplated in other areas, including the significance of experience gathered in such areas to economic co-operation in Africa."

The importance of transport in economic development in the region has in recent years acquired added significance as governments in African countries and territories assume wider responsibilities for the direction and pace of economic development. The need therefore arises to formulate policies for transport development as part of general economic plans.

The most outstanding characteristic of the transportation systems of Africa is the comparative isolation in which they have developed within the confines of individual countries and territories. This is reflected in the lack of links between countries and territories within the same geographical sub-region.

The existing transport patterns were developed under conditions which did not envisage co-operation between neighbouring countries and territories or the emphasis which has been put by the Commission on concerted action in the field of economic development and trade. For a number of years the need for such co-operation has led to some investigations and to attempts to discuss common transport problems by neighbouring countries

* E/CN.14/63 of 6 December 1960

and territories.

It appears that a continuous and comprehensive examination of transport problems on a sub-regional basis, by a representative body (or bodies) with the full support of Governments, is now required. This will make it possible for full account to be taken of factors such as resources, population movements, new opportunities of linking demand and supply across frontiers which might otherwise not be recognised, etc. Whilst this aspect of transportation is essentially structural, examination of transport problems on a sub-regional basis will also be concerned with operational problems. For example the main arteries of a sub-regional system of roads will raise questions of common standards of construction, operational rules such as axle-weights, road signs and signals, other safety devices and standards, etc.

Even within national boundaries the existing transportation structure in most parts of the region is not fully appropriate for economic development. The first practical step is the examination of transport systems within the framework of natural geographical sub-regions. The urgency and importance of work of this kind is shown by the paper on West Africa mentioned above. To ensure that the evolution of transport systems in the region will begin to reflect the co-ordination of national and sub-regional plans and the desire of the Commission to promote inter-African trade and industry, the following steps are therefore recommended:

(i) It would facilitate the initial approach to the examination of the transport systems of the African region to establish two sub-regions or transport areas. The two sub-regions proposed are:

(a) West Africa defined to include: Senegal, Mali, Gambia, Portuguese Guinea, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, Ghana, Republic of Togo, Dahomey, Niger, Nigeria, Trust Territory of the Cameroons, Republic of Cameroun, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo (Brazzaville), Gabon, Rio Muni.

- (b) East Africa defined to include: Ethiopia, Republic of Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Bechuanaland, Mozambique.
- (ii) That a Working Party for each sub-region be established composed of:
 - (a) Representatives of the participating Governments;
 - (b) The Executive Secretary or other staff members of the ECA.
- (iii) These Working Parties would make an inventory of transport problems in the region and establish priorities. The Working Parties would arrange for other Working Parties or Groups of Experts to deal with special problems like sub-regional road systems both in regard to construction and to the establishment of common technical and operational standards; road research; the possibilities and problems of sub-regional railway systems; railway tariff policies; co-ordination of transport; problems of sea ports in relation to inter-African trade; coastwise shipping in relation to inter-African trade; the economics of secondary or feeder roads; problems of warehousing and materials handling; the organization of repair shops; the question of traffic safety; the transport of perishable goods; and any aspect of sub-regional or national transportation which a Working Party considers important or which is referred to it by a participating Government or by the ECA. The Working Parties may further arrange for conferences or seminars on general transport problems, submit reports to participating governments or the ECA and prepare transport work programmes.
- (iv) The findings of the Groups of Experts or other Working Parties may be submitted to participating governments who in co-operation with ECA should, if necessary, convene conferences to decide on subsequent lines of action.

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