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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Tenth Meeting of the Inter-Agency
Co-ordinating Committee (IACC)

Addis Ababa, 6-9 March 1987

REGIONAL AFRICAN SATELLITE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM (RASCOM)

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1. The year 1986 could be regarded as the turning point in Africa's efforts to establish an African regional satellite communications system. The mandate of the Inter-Agency Co-ordinating Committee (IACC) as the supervisor of the RASCOM feasibility study project was reaffirmed by the Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning at its fifth meeting held in Harare, Zimbabwe in March 1986 when it approved the recommendations of the IACC on the financing and management of the project. Throughout the year, the IACC continued its work towards the start of the feasibility study. It held three meetings at which several key decisions were made.
2. The eleventh meeting, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in February 1986, made the following recommendations to the Conference of Ministers:
 - (i) That the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) be admitted as the tenth member of the IACC;
 - (ii) The modalities, work breakdown and organizational structure for the implementation of the study;
 - (iii) Confirmation of the strategy to mobilize financing for the project mostly from African governments and other independent non-tied sources;
 - (iv) Role of the sponsoring countries and financing institutions in the conduct of the study; and
 - (v) Establishment of the project office at the Geneva headquarters of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the IACC member which is the technical co-ordinator of the project.
3. At the 12th meeting, also held in Addis Ababa in July 1986, the IACC further refined the framework for the project office, elaborated the job descriptions for the director and senior experts for the project, and drew up strategy for advertising the posts. A summary of the institutional framework, strategy and schedule of activities for carrying out the feasibility study is contained in the document ATDO/87/NO. 403-E presented at the African Telecommunications Development Conference in Tunisia in January 1987 by ITU (Annexed).
4. The selection of the project director and senior experts was initiated at the 13th meeting in November 1986 and the process was completed in January 1987. The following were selected for the three senior posts: A.O. Taylor (Project Director); S. Nkumbe (Senior Expert in satellite system); and M. Cherif (Senior Expert in telecommunications terrestrial system). The project office became operational in March 1987.
5. With regard to funding, the \$5 million estimated cost of the project is almost oversubscribed. Although only \$US 0.8 million or 16 per cent is now in the project fund provided by UNDP, UNESCO and the ITU, there have been the following pledges: US\$ 3 million ADF Loan taken by Zimbabwe; \$US 3.5 million ADF loan taken by Ethiopia;

\$US 1.9 million from UNDP; \$US 1.0 million from Italy (conditional); \$US 3.5 million (1 million DM) from the Federal Republic of Germany (to be available after January 1987).

6. Thus, by the end of 1986, the project was ready to commence. It is expected that the study will be completed within 18 months of the starting date. Therefore, if all goes well, by the end of the UNTACOA programme in 1988, the African governments would have made a decision whether or not to launch the RABCOM.