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Committee on Regional Cooperation and Integration
Third Session

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
30 - 31 October 2003

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON
REGIONAL COOPERATION AND INTEGRATION
THIRD SESSION**

I. Introduction

1. The Third Session of the Committee on Regional Cooperation and Integration established by resolution 827 (XXXII) of the ECA Conference of Ministers was held on 30 and 31 October 2003 at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
2. The aim of the meeting was mainly to consider three studies prepared by the Trade and Regional Integration Division (TRID) of the ECA on issues pertaining to the status of regional integration and air transport development in Africa, as well as a number of presentations by various experts on Africa's integration.

II. Attendance

3. The meeting was attended by the following member States: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo (Republic of), Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinée, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Tunisia, and Zimbabwe.
4. The following regional and international organizations and institutions participated in the meeting: the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC), the African Union, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Southern Africa Transport and Communications Commission (SATCC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the World Food Programme (WFP). The list of participants is appended as annex.

III. Opening of the Meeting.(agenda item 1)

5. The Director of the ECA Trade and Regional Integration Division, Mr. Ben Hakim Hammouda, opened the meeting with a short statement on behalf of the ECA Executive Secretary, Mr. K.Y.Amoako.
6. After extending a warm welcome to the participants, he recalled the purpose of the Committee body, which brings together officials and experts to review progress and constraints of the process of Africa's integration and explore options for further advancing this agenda. He emphasized that accelerated progress on Africa's integration had become more imperative given the phenomenal momentum of globalization. To this end, the advent of the African Union and NEPAD had provided Africa with another opportunity to match words with action and thereby also prepare the continent to meet the challenges of globalization and respond to the aspirations of its people.
7. He reiterated the need for bold and concrete steps to overcome current and potential obstacles to the integration process. In this context, he outlined a number of issues that needed to be resolutely addressed. These include the need to consolidate and sustain macro-economic policy discipline, accelerate progress on trade liberalization as a locomotive for growth, strengthen political commitment through an effective internalization of agreed integration objectives at the national level, address the issue of RECs' overlaps and multiple

memberships, and strengthen the capacities and resources for supporting the process of the African Union.

8. He expressed the hope that the meeting would benefit from the immense experience and insights of the participants on these and other issues confronting Africa's integration agenda, and thereby help in charting a progressive way forward.

IV. Account of Proceedings

Election of Officers (agenda item 2)

9. The meeting elected the following countries to constitute its Bureau:

Chairman:	Algeria
First Vice-Chairman:	Burkina Faso
Second Vice-Chairman:	Cameroon
Third Vice-Chairman:	Ethiopia
Rapporteur:	Tanzania

V. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work (agenda item 3)

10. Before presenting the programme of work of the meeting, the Director of the Trade and Regional Integration Division (TRID) underscored the innovation introduced in the format of the Committee in accordance with its recommendation at its second session held on March 2002 in Addis Ababa. This recommendation suggested more openness towards experienced African experts by inviting them to address during the meeting some issues key to regional integration in order to enrich the work of the Commission. It is in this spirit that he invited five knowledgeable African Experts in regional integration from several African universities. The meeting adopted the following agenda and programme of work:

(i) Agenda

1. Opening statement by the Director of TRID or his representative
2. Election of officials
3. Adoption of agenda and programme of work
4. Session 1: Regional Integration and Development.
5. Session 2: Financing Regional Integration in Africa.
6. Session 3: Report on the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision on air transport.
7. Session 4: Report on issues and prospects concerning air transport liberalisation in Africa.
8. Session 5: Political Dimension of Regional Integration.

9. Session 6: Some Perspectives on the State of Regional Integration in Africa.
10. Session 8: Report on the status of regional integration in Africa; Progress, Problems and Perspectives.
11. Any other business
12. Adoption of the report the meeting
13. Closing of the meeting

(ii) **Programme of work**

11. The meeting adopted the following work timetable:

Morning: 08:30 – 13:00

Afternoon: 15:00 – 17:30

VI. Session 1: Regional Integration and Development (agenda item 4)

12. Dr. Daniel Gbetnkom of the Faculty of Economics and Management of the University of Yaounde II-Soa started his presentation by posing the question as to whether or not regional integration exerts any effect on the development of member States and whether African countries can expect any economic growth from their membership to regional economic groupings.

13. His paper addressed the issue of growth drawing on the traditional growth theories and the conventional theories of customs union. From the conceptual viewpoint, he stated that there is no direct link between regionalism and development of member States. This link is rather indirect through investments, international trade and institutions.

14. Within the African context, various analyses have shown that both unilateral and preferential reforms have made subregional integration groupings more attractive to investments. The intra-regional trade evaluation made by using the Gravity Model, taking into account the effect of regionilisation, has shown the existence of positive impact in terms of promoting economic growth and creating potential for development. These impacts are gaining momentum and there is a need for additional efforts to be developed. However, for regionalism to be a tool for development of member States, there are still challenges to be met. These include better distribution of advantages and costs of integration at the level of member States, good governance, improvements in the infrastructure network and political will. Taking these recommendations into consideration, together with the application of reforms have the potential to deliver economic growth to those African countries.

15. During the discussions that followed the presentation remarks were made that the level and substance of economic reforms were not adequate. Furthermore these reforms invariably have tended to generate negative social repercussions. Hence, there was a challenge to ensure that the regional integration process provides a response to overcoming the weaknesses of these reforms, taking into account local realities.

16. It was emphasized that adequate attention was required on the impact of regional integration on the ordinary man of the continent. Regional integration has also experienced polarized gains and losses which need to be addressed through a compensation mechanism. Such a mechanism would help minimize imbalances in gains and losses. Liberalization coupled with infrastructure development should help absorb inequalities. A participant was of the view that the issue of political will requires an innate sense to the regional integration process and the involvement of stakeholders. Other advantages which regional integration in Africa has to be noted for include conflict prevention and resolution.

17. It was observed that the report should also highlight the significant economic performance of North African countries. They could serve as a source of inspiration to other African countries. Eventually, the regional integration process should aim to promote the development of all sub-regions in tandem.

18. It was noted that one of the main challenges facing Africa today is poverty reduction, therefore the regional integration process should address this issue. To this end, it was deemed that since a number of studies conclude that a key element of poverty reduction is economic growth, coupled with effective income distribution mechanisms, the integration process could include these policies.

19. An important element that required addressing was the level of cooperation between RECs. Although it is difficult to precisely state the level of cooperation, it is clear that there is an increase in cooperation. A major challenge is reducing distortions in each REC and increasing the share of Africa's share of world trade. Since financing regional integration is a major constraint, it was wondered whether African stakeholders implementing the regional integration process without the support of external partners was feasible. Member states should finance both the AU and NEPAD in addition to the support of external partners.

VII. Session 2: Financing Regional Integration in Africa (agenda item 5)

20. Dr. Dejene Aredo of Addis Ababa University introduced his paper on **Financing Integration in Africa** by pointing out that RECs have limited capacity to implement a wide range of objectives provided by their treaties and protocols. In particular, he pointed out that limited financial capacity has constrained the activities of many RECs. In his paper (which is a part of a larger study), he attempted to: (1) identify and describe alternative sources of finance for integration; (2) review factors that constrain the flows and utilization of funds; and (3) explore policy options and mechanisms for effectively mobilizing and utilizing financial resources.

21. Accordingly, he identified the following sources of finance for Africa's integration:
- (i) Assessed contributions;
 - (ii) Foreign direct investment;
 - (iii) Official development assistance;
 - (iv) Trade;
 - (v) Cross-border investment by African investors;
 - (vi) Public/private sector partnership;
 - (vii) Reversing financial capital flight from Africa;
 - (viii) The Diaspora Fund (i.e. turning brain drain into brain gain); and
 - (ix) Unrecorded cross-border trade.

22. He then reviewed the current status and issues pertaining to each of the potential and actual sources listed above. Further, he drew implications for the promotion of regional integration arrangements in Africa and considered policy options for mobilizing and effectively utilizing financial resources for implementation in the short and medium term.
23. Dr. Dejene's presentation was followed by floor discussions during which interesting comments were made and relevant questions raised by a number of participants.
24. A delegate noted that amongst the nine sources of financing the regional integration process, it would be beneficial to identify which is the most important source on a region-by-region basis. The presenter was of the view that the main issue which emerged was that cross-border investment by African investors should be the most important source of financing.
25. One of the participants clarified that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank have developed strategies and plans to work with RECs. It was observed that the main issue was the composition and motivation behind the strategies and plans. If it were north-south cooperation at the expense of south-south cooperation then there was a need to be cautious, as weak member states would be left behind.
26. Participants noted that the Convention on mobile equipment developed by ICAO in collaboration with Unidroit, and adopted by the Diplomatic Conference in Cape Town, South Africa, in year 2001, provides an option for member States to seek financial assistance to purchase aircrafts and other mobile equipments thus facilitating regional integration process.
27. In view of its importance, the Committee urged African States to sign and ratify the Convention on International Interest on Mobile Equipment and the Aircraft Protocol thereto, opened for signature in Cape Town, South Africa, on 16 November 2001.
28. Due to the inadequate number of studies undertaken in the financing of regional integration, AFCAC offered that ECA and AFCAC could work together in undertaking research.
29. There was a need to clarify why multinational corporations (MNCs) do not cooperate with RECs. This statement was based on a survey of two hundred and fifty European MNCs, who ranked regional integration as the least of their interests. This could possibly be due to the lack of profits foreseen.
30. There were suggestions that the notion that public sector should be involved heavily in integration infrastructure projects and programmes may not be the best approach since some infrastructure subsectors like telecommunications have their services undertaken or provided by the private sector.
31. The experience by the East African Community in this sector has been unpleasant following the discontinuation of the East African Digital Transmission Network Project in year 2000. This was after the privatization of incumbent operators in two of East African Community Partners States.

32. The best option is for RECs to provide a conducive environment in terms of legal and regulatory framework to attract the private sector in regional infrastructure initiatives and through the Public-Private Partnership (PPPs).

33. A participant highlighted that there are a number of MNCs that have started taking advantage of regional markets and the main problem is the harmonization of investment codes.

34. It was emphasized that based on some studies, unrecorded trade mainly by small-scale businesses is significant, therefore, policies to encourage these businesses to increase their trade are required.

35. The discussion also highlighted the lack of qualified human resources and a view was expressed that African governments should attract and retain qualified Africans in the Diaspora.

36. The practicality of all the sources of financing presented was emphasized and it was strongly viewed that self-financing mechanisms should be addressed, such as value added tax and airport tax. However these mechanisms would require member states to give up some of their sovereignty and allow the AU to manage the regional integration process.

37. The presenter responded to the questions raised by participants and said he would take on-board their suggestions and comments.

VIII. Session 3: Report on the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision on air transport (agenda item 6)

38. A representative of the secretariat presented document ECA/RCID/023/02/Rev.1 relating to the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision on air transport liberalization by member States. The presentation first provided an overview of the Yamoussoukro Decision, which is primarily designed to liberalize the air transport business and operations by opening up the market and thereby provide greater choices and benefits for both operators and consumers. The ECA representative then mentioned about various efforts deployed by stakeholders such as member States, sub-regional and regional organizations, ECA, the AU, AFRAA and AFCAC to promote the implementation of the Decision by all concerned. Much of these efforts has centered on sensitization and popularization of the Decision. But also, there have been significant steps taken to provide clarifications, harmonize actions across the continent and promote a common understanding and interpretation of the provisions of the Decision. Such catalytic support should hopefully generate a considerable positive impact in the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision in the medium to long run. Among the expected impacts are the creation of new routes, enhanced frequency of flights, enhanced revenues for airline operators, stimulation of investments towards the airline industry, and increased donor support.

39. The ECA representative also stated that experiences from implementing the Yamoussoukro have highlighted the need to take urgent steps to address a number of issues with a view to enhancing the success of the Decision. These issues include the removal of visa restrictions, implementation of competition policies, control of wanton proliferation of airline business not in conformity with strict safety standards, enforcement of licensing procedures,

and the establishment of a dispute settlement mechanism to help address actual and potential disputes in the application and interpretation of the Decision. To help address such issues, future courses of actions should include undertaking assessment studies in countries, consolidation and adoption of the memoranda of clarifications and intensification of information and dissemination.

40. In the discussions that ensued, the Committee noted that in reality, if one were to consider the period of 1988, when the Yamoussoukro initiative was mooted, it would be fair to observe that it has taken much longer time to implement it than is normally recognized. The Committee was informed that Mauritius had decided to withdraw from the Decision. It expressed deep concern over such a decision and hope that other countries would not follow suit. Although the Committee did not have full information about the precise reasons underlying the Mauritius position, there was a feeling that certain countries were likely to lose faith in collective decisions that are not seriously implemented by each and every participating Member State. The Committee therefore strongly recommended the need to quicken the pace of implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision by all concerned.

41. The Committee also agreed that the rapid establishment of the Dispute Settlement mechanism was necessary to provide an urgent response to actual and potential disputes and misunderstandings arising from the interpretation and implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision. The Committee noted that for uniformity and consistency in the interpretation of the provisions of the Decision, it would be better to have a single central dispute settlement body than having each sub-region establish its own mechanism.

42. The Committee took note of the report.

IX. Session 4: Report on issues and prospects concerning air transport liberalisation in Africa (agenda item 7)

43. A representative of ECA secretariat provided an overview of the progress, problems and prospects of air transport in Africa since late 1999 when the Yamoussoukro Decision was adopted by African ministers responsible for civil aviation.

44. The representative of ECA highlighted some of the progress made. He stated that following the adoption of the Decision by African policy makers, countries, regional economic communities and African organizations exerted every effort to ensure its effective implementation. These efforts have contributed to the following results: flexibility in granting of traffic rights; open skies bilateral agreements; tariff reduction; development of private sector initiatives; and facilitation of operations.

45. He also pointed out the involvement of RECs such as COMESA, SADC and EAC in devising competition rules for their member States, some expansion in the African airline industry; and greater attention to Air transport security and safety infrastructure.

46. Nonetheless, he noted that a number of issues and challenges need to be further addressed. These include: interpretation of the text of the Decision and pursuit of reforms; technical capacity and institutional framework; hostile international environment and scarcity of resources; assistance to the private sector; liberalization at the worldwide level; competition; financing; human resources development; and formation of alliances by major

airlines to enable them to penetrate all markets without their physical presence.

47. If Africa's economies, should grow in the coming ten years through reduction in conflicts, the pursuit of efforts within the framework of NEPAD, political and economic governance and support from the development partners, then the current growth trend in the African air transport industry can be sustained. However, the trend should be seen against the background of the worldwide international phenomenon dominated by: the removal of all obstacles to the air transport industry; the collapse of some major European airlines; the financial difficulties facing some African and foreign airlines; the fragility of alliances; the introduction of new technologies and the risk of terrorist attack. In view of the foregoing, the forecast of 4.8 per cent growth in 2004, in terms of passengers for the African air transport industry, can only be attained if Africa faces up to the challenges and adopts common positions on some key issues such as franchising, alliances, and control and ownership of African airlines. In addition, Africa should learn lessons from the current phenomenon, particularly the difficulties being encountered by major European and American airlines which have benefited from liberalization and deregulation. Appropriate measures should be taken to ensure that similar catastrophes do not happen in Africa. If such a phenomenon should affect the African industry, the survival of Africa's airlines would be at stake, and it is almost inconceivable that African countries will be able to inject substantial sums of money to the rescue of African airlines.

48. It is therefore recommended that African institutions to undertake a case study on the impact of liberalization in Europe and America and formulate, in addition to the Yamoussoukro Decision, an African policy towards countries outside the African continent.

49. The Committee took note of the report.

X. Session 5: Political Dimension of Regional Integration (agenda item 8).

50. After noting that the subject was a complicated one, Dr. Bujira of the Development Policy Management Forum provided a historical perspective of regional integration in Africa, pointing out that the regional integration was essentially a political process. He explained two main approaches to regional integration in Africa namely: the "Nkrumah approach" which called for an immediate political and military integration in Africa and the "Nyerere approach" which called for gradual integration.

51. The speaker informed the meeting that most African Leaders favoured the Nyerere approach. However, he noted that this approach resulted in the following obstacles:

- 1) State economies were strengthened
- 2) Political elites and parties were strengthened in African countries
- 3) An economic class system emerged in most African countries.

52. These forces moved African countries in the opposite direction to integration.

53. The speaker then stated the following constraints to political integration:

- 1) Differences in inherited colonial system. A good example is the failure of the Union between Senegal and Gambia.
- 2) The nation building process after independence, with States having vested interests in preserving power.
- 3) Several power points in African countries including: national elites, traditional Kingdoms, various kinds of unions, ethnic groups etc.
- 4) Conflicts in African countries, for examples, wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia, may have retarded the process of integration in ECOWAS.

54. In his presentation, the speaker acknowledged the efforts made by Civil Society organisations to ensure that governments honour their commitments to regional integration. He also noted the activities of people at border points, which effectively promoted integration.

55. Two other crucial issues that have had major impacts on regional integration in Africa are globalization and the Cold War. Two major forces exist at the national level, with one group against globalization and the other for regional integration. These two forces have contributed to the lack of political will of national governments. The cold war is also a factor and the second world, which maintained socialist states or encouraging socialist states to integrate with non-socialist states.

56. One of the participants highlighted that the debate of whether economic integration or political integration is the main driving force is very crucial. Economic integration is important, however, this requires political will, in order for decisions to be implemented at the national level. Therefore, strong political will should be tackled first, before addressing economic integration. One of the main issues raised was the vested national interests, which want to maintain their sovereignty, thus impeding regional integration.

57. From the experience of most participants political will is a key factor to sustaining regional integration. For regional integration to succeed today there is also a need to bring on board different stakeholders. A pertinent question that was posed was the chances of Pan Africanism surviving today and how effective the East African Community is likely to establish a strong political federation. The ideology of Pan Africanism is very strong at the AU level, but implementation at the national level is difficult due to the existence of strong pressure groups within each member state. The prospects of the EAC becoming a regional integration group is promising although it is likely to be more economically inclined.

58. It was also noted that a major obstacle to regional integration is the non-commitment of national states to the regional integration agenda. Another main factor is the colonial legacy, which has not been overcome. Economic relations and trade of African states are still skewed towards the North. Internal economic relations remain weak.

XI. Session 6: Perspectives on the State of Regional Integration in Africa (agenda item 9).

59. Professor Moustapha Kasse of the Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar, Senegal started his presentation by an overview of the economic, political and social background of Africa in the 21st century highlighting that Africa is facing a tri-dimensional crisis with less than

1.5% of total world GDP and less than 2% of total world trade. He also stated that the globalization process offers opportunities to African countries but it also creates a risk of exclusion and marginalization its benefits are not distributed in an optimal way.

60. Professor Kasse recalled that since the 70s almost African countries are under structural adjustment programmes (SAP), which according to him did not lead to satisfactory and substantial results, although some countries like Burkina Faso, Senegal and Uganda improved their economic and social situation.

61. Referring to initiatives like the Lagos plan of action and the NEPAD, the speaker reaffirmed that the promotion of regional integration remains an important economic and political goal if Africa is to achieve sustained economic growth and integrate itself into the global economy. Indeed, efficient regional integration would allow many countries to overcome the obstacles posed by their small markets, permit them to realize greater economies of scale and increase their ability to trade on a global basis, thus further enhancing growth.

62. However, due to a variety of obstacles few of the Africa's integration arrangements put in place have yielded significant benefits to their member countries. In particular, results in terms of intra-African trade were disappointing, representing less than 10% of total African trade like in ECOWAS and WAEMU. If Africa wants to increase the intra-African trade, African countries should specialize on production and use industrialization as a tool of development.

63. Prof Kasse also pointed out that Africa need more harmonized and coordinated macroeconomic policy with a step-by-step process up to a creation of a Central African Bank. He also stressed the importance of monetary markets.

64. During the discussions that followed the presentation, a question on how the informal sector could be formalized and included in the fiscal base was raised. In the case of Africa the formal sector is increasingly becoming informal, because businesses want to reduce their transaction costs. However, for the fiscal base to be adequate, the informal sector has to join the formal sector through standard rules.

65. The Committee noted that tax rates are currently very high which induce tax evasion. In order to encourage contributions by everyone, some participants are of the opinion that that tax rates should be reduced to levels that are compatible with income levels.

66. The Committee recognized also the information exchange of the demand and supply of products in African countries is required to boost trade. Another important element that would boost trade is building the confidence of buyers by improving the standards of goods and services.

XII. Session 7 : Report on the status of regional integration in Africa (agenda item 10).

1. Macroeconomic and monetary convergence in African Regional Economic Communities (RECs)

67. An ECA representative made a presentation on policy convergence in RECs. He stated as follows:

68. Several African RECs aim at achieving deep forms of monetary and macroeconomic integration (e.g. currency union, full economic community). This process of integration involves convergence across member-states on three main dimensions: (i) convergence of macroeconomic policy stance, (ii) convergence of shocks, and (iii) convergence of income levels. The extent of such multi-dimensional form of convergence will determine the overall balance between costs and benefits of integration and their allocation across countries and individuals.

69. Against this background, an econometric assessment of convergence on the three dimensions is conducted for six RECs. The assessment is based on data for the period 1970-2002 and is detailed in a report finalized in September 2003. The title of the report is "Macroeconomic and monetary convergence in selected African regional economic groupings (ECA/TRID/18/03) and represents a major extension of the analysis contained in the "Report on Status of Regional Integration in Africa: Progress, Problems and Perspectives".

70. The main findings of this assessment can be summarized as follows.

- **Convergence of the macroeconomic policy stance.** There is generally consistent evidence of convergence of monetary policies, while fiscal policies tend to remain divergent, with several countries in different RECs still struggling to achieve fiscal consolidation.
- **Convergence of shocks.** Cross-country correlations of fundamentals are low, denoting substantially divergent business cycles and shocks. However, the situation differs across RECs. In UEMOA and CEMAC monetary variables are strongly correlated, as one would expect given that they have been monetary unions since independence. Among EAC countries there is a relatively strong correlation in the shocks to terms of trade, probably due to similarities in export structures. Within SADC, CMA countries display stronger correlations than the rest of member-states. In COMESA there is strong evidence that bilateral exchange rates tend to move together and hence that the cycles of economic activity are relatively synchronized. Little evidence of convergence is reported for non-UEMOA ECOWAS countries.
- **Convergence of income levels.** With the exception of CEMAC and UEMOA, cross-country dispersion of income levels in each region does not decrease over time. Hence, outside the CFA zones, there is no evidence of income convergence. In COMESA, poorer countries tend however to converge to the bottom, suggesting that a poverty-trap might be at work.

71. Based on this analysis, policy recommendations concern: (i) the design of convergence criteria and enforcement mechanisms, (ii) economic reforms to set-up appropriate institutions for managing monetary policy and strengthen the process of budget formation, (iii) the road map towards the achievement of a stable system of fixed exchange rates (pre-condition for currency and monetary unions), (iv) the facilitation of compensation mechanisms, including the creation of structural funds.

2. Trade liberalization and labour mobility

72. The presentation discussed progress, constraints and the way forward relating to this item. The ECA Representative mentioned that the impetus for regional integration was rooted in the conviction that for most African countries, accelerated growth and development cannot be achieved without overcoming the limitations imposed by the small size of domestic markets. The Abuja Declaration called for a six-stage approach lasting 34 years (from 1994) to form the African Economic Union. Within this agenda, integrated regional markets (RECs) is a key objective that would lead to the formation of an African Common Market. The first stage of integration involves the phased elimination of tariffs on intra-REC trade, thus establishing free trade areas. Simultaneously, or subsequently, non-tariff barriers (NTBs) would be eliminated and a common external tariff adopted, forming a Customs Union. Deeper reform would also provide for free movement of goods within the community, free movement of factors of production, thus forming an Economic Community.

73. The scheme for the realization of the African Union anticipates that all the RECs would have satisfied the requirements for the establishment of a free trade area by 2017. COMESA launched its FTA in October 2000 with nine countries having reduced tariffs to zero. Other countries have reduced tariffs ranging from 10 to 90%. In West Africa, the eight members of ECOWAS who are also members of UEMOA have already eliminated tariffs among themselves. There is an agreement that all fifteen members of ECOWAS would eliminate duties on intra-REC trade, but implementation has been postponed twice and now is not to take place until the year 2003. In an attempt to speed up the process, five of the countries of the seven ECOWAS countries that are not UEMOA members have agreed to fast track negotiations among themselves. In Central Africa, six countries have already attained duty-free status under CEMAC. These six as well as three additional countries (Angola, Burundi and Rwanda) make up ECCAS, a group that has not yet achieved duty-free status. Duty-free treatment can be attained by ECCAS following the lead of CEMAC and agreeing to eliminate duties in much the same way as ECOWAS.

74. With progress of reduction of tariffs on intra-REC trade, non-tariff barriers still persist in all RECs. In addition, most RECs appear to have difficulties in liberalizing movement of people. Although there is considerable variation in the levels of achievement across Africa, on the whole regional integration arrangements seem to have had only small positive impact on intra-REC trade, which is around 10% on the average. There are major problems still to be adequately addressed in the drive towards an integrated African market. First, most of the RECs seem to be operating as if they are independent entities rather than different arms of the same corporate body. Stage 2 of the AEC implementation scheme, which is expected to last up to 2007, emphasized the necessity for coordination and harmonization of activities and policies among the RECs. Second, there is the problem of multiplicity of regional integration arrangements within the same region. This inevitably results in multiple country memberships, with the attendant burden of multiple membership costs, thus complicating the trade liberalization programmes. Third, implementation of community protocols on trade and market integration may be undermined by concerns about potential loss of customs revenue and other inter-country trade-related charges. Moreover, the issue of NTBs to intra-REC trade needs to be more seriously addressed across all the regional communities. While some of the RECs have made considerable progress towards the attainment of the trade and market integration objectives of the AU, there is the need to address the major obstacles that retarded

the progress of other RECs in the realization of their goals. Coordination and harmonization of activities and policies among the RECs should be given high priority. The introduction of stable and fully funded compensation mechanisms may be able to encourage countries to reduce tariff rates in line with REC agreements. The scope for intra-African trade expansion could also be curtailed unless issues such as intra-regional labor movement and rights of residence are placed squarely on the national public relations agenda within each REC.

75. In the ensuing discussions, a participant wanted to know why there had been limited progress in trade liberalization in ECOWAS and in other RECs. It was explained that low degree of implementation of tariff reduction schedules and limited trade interaction among the countries because of similarities of their tradeable goods were major contributory factors.

3. Institutional aspects

76. A representative of ECA provided an overview of the institutional challenges facing Africa's integration process. He stated that though RECs, as building blocs of the African Union, have provided a framework for collective action, and are gradually evolving towards fulfilling the objectives for which they were established. National governments also had a major responsibility for implementing the protocols, decisions and the integration agreements at the national level because without an absolute political commitment to the application and implementation of integration policies and programs at the national level, there can be little progress at the subregional or regional level. This political will should, for instance be translated in the establishment of national mechanisms, in particular special ministries to spearhead the country's commitment to the integration process. Such specific ministries are currently established in five countries and represent a significant step towards coordination, follow-up and the marshalling of the country's support to the integration process.

77. The ECA representative also emphasized that coordination and harmonization among the RECs was essential for achieving the AU, especially so as the African integration landscape is characterized by a multiplicity of RECs and overlapping membership. He stated that among major institutional constraints are overlapping membership, mandates and tasks, underfunding of RECs, weak monitoring, follow-up and implementation of programmes, and lack of modalities for harnessing and taking into account the voices and inputs of civil society and the public at large in integration decision-making and policy formulation processes. In terms of way forward, the ECA stated that progress towards the goals of the AU can be enhanced by addressing the various institutional bottlenecks. Measures to this end would include rationalization of the RECs, improvement of the financial resource base, such as the establishment of self-financing mechanisms and infrastructural fund, the institutionalization of private sector involvement through the creation of an AU Special Technical Committee on the private sector, and the establishment of an African multinational charter on investment to provide a framework for and facilitate private sector, and more essentially cross-border investments, in the context of the AU.

78. Other institutional challenges to be addressed are the democratization of the AU's and RECs processes through the creation of the Pan African parliament with democratically elected representatives so that the people's voice can be brought to bear on the integration agenda. In the event that such a mechanism does not materialize soon, consideration could be given to the setting up of an African Commission with independent powers to promote the interests of the AU above narrow national interests. Alternatively, the AU should be endowed

with adequate supra-national authority to enforce AU interests. The establishment of consultative mechanisms at the national level is also deemed necessary to institutionalize the active involvement of all stakeholders, including the private sector, civil societies etc. at all stages of the AU building process. Apparent inadequacies in the coordination and harmonization of approaches to building the African integration agenda should be addressed by the Creation of a Coordination Office at the AU, and focal points at each REC. Governments should also be required to provide mandatory reports on the implementation of their commitments and obligations and establish specific African Integration Ministries.

79. The issue of rationalization of the RECs took center stage in the ensuing discussions. A view was expressed that it should be looked from a holistic perspective within the framework of achieving the overall objectives of the AU. In this context, common targets and benchmarks of progress and other convergence parameters should be clearly established. Particular emphasis should be placed on proposing the reduction of periods for integration set out in the Abuja Treaty and notify them to take account of global developments. The meeting was informed that the next edition of ECA's report on assessing regional integration in Africa would be address the issue of rationalization of the RECs.

4. Integration efforts in sectors

80. Introducing the part of the document on efforts in sectors, a representative of ECA secretariat pointed out that sectoral cooperation in some critical areas including transport, communication and energy is a crucial factor in Africa's integration efforts. He presented an overview of sectoral progress in infrastructure as well as in other sectors such as water and agriculture, human resource development and cross-cutting issues in terms of peace and security, health and HIV/AIDS and gender. In the field of transport, he mentioned the contribution of the two United Nations transport and communication decades in Africa to the development of infrastructure.

81. The Committee noted that the efforts made in promoting regional cooperation in the various sectors have not always been matched by concrete positive results. A number of factors generally account for failures and limited effectiveness.

82. Many sectoral projects are dependent on external resources to implement them. RECs often lack the necessary human and financial resources to translate protocol provisions and statements into operative funded programs. Ambitious plans (in relation to available resources) and absence of priority areas are, for instance, the main causes of the serious problems encountered by RBOs.

83. The lack of involvement of the private sector is an additional factor limiting the scope of the regional integration process, especially in sectors like infrastructure and agriculture. The private sector is not only a source of finance for regional projects, but can also contribute significantly to capacity building and to the implementation of efficient procedures for monitoring and controlling the advances of projects.

84. There is often lack of co-ordination between regional, sub-regional, national and continental initiatives. This is for instance clearly observed in the transport sector and in the development of transport corridors.

85. The Committee made reference to Table 11 reflecting the main links of the Trans-African Highway Network and recommended that this table should be updated to include information about the various missing links.

86. The meeting was of the opinion that the definition of the Trans African Highways should be extended to cover South Africa. It was suggested that the TAH sections from Tripoli to Windhoek, and Cairo to Gaborone should be extended to South Africa. It was also suggested that all transit transport corridors in Southern Africa should be mentioned in the ECA document in the section on transit transport corridors.

87. The Committee took note of the report.

XIII. Any other business (agenda item 11)

88. No issue was raised under this agenda item.

XIV. Adoption of the report of the meeting (agenda item 12)

89. The Committee adopted the report with amendments.

XV. Closure of the meeting (agenda item 13)

90. At the end of the session, the President of the Committee thanked all the participants for their hard work and relevant inputs to the debates. He also extended his appreciation to the secretariat for the quality of documents and presentations, to the interpreters for their patience and excellent performance, and to all those who, in various ways, contributed to the success of the third session of the Committee on Regional Cooperation and Integration.

91. On his part, Mr. Hakim Ben Hammouda, the Director of the Trade and Regional Integration Division (TRID) thanked the President of the Committee for his excellent handling of the meeting, as well as the participants for their active participation.

92. The Director further indicated that the interaction that ECA had with its partners had given the latter the opportunity to assess the work done by the Trade and Regional Integration Division on issues relating to policy convergence, cooperation in critical sectors of integration, in particular transport, and on institutional aspects of Africa's integration process. The TRID Director expressed commitment to take on board the participant's suggestions.

93. Mr. Hakim Ben Hammouda expressed the wish to see everybody again in two years time when the Fourth session of the Committee on Regional Cooperation and Integration would take place, but this time with regional economic communities in much stronger position, with member States more committed to RECs, and with an Africa much stronger and peaceful.

94. The meeting was then formally declared close.

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