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Distr.: GENERAL

E/RCA/CH.16/12  
17 May 1990

Original: ENGLISH

**UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Eleventh Meeting of the Technical  
Preparatory Committee of the  
Whole

Twenty-fifth session of the Committee/  
sixteenth meeting of the Conference  
of Ministers

Tripoli, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya  
5-12 May 1990

Tripoli, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya  
15-19 May 1990

DOCUMENTS OFFICE

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REPORT OF THE

FIFTH MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL FOLLOW-UP COMMITTEE OF TEN  
OF THE CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR HUMAN RESOURCES  
PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND UTILIZATION

Tripoli, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya  
14-16 May 1990

## A. ORGANIZATION AND ATTENDANCE

1. The fifth meeting of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of Ten of the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Human Resources Planning, Development and Utilization was convened in Tripoli, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, on 14 and 15 May 1990. The primary objective of the meeting was to review the situation regarding human resources planning, development and utilization within the region over the past year and recommend action measures that needed to be taken to redress identified imbalances or remove existing bottle-necks.

2. For the first time, and as it had so requested at its fourth meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 1989, the Committee met in joint session with the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Human Resources Development and Utilization to consider the latter's draft "Regional Framework for Human Resources Planning and Utilization in Africa". The report of the joint meeting, as well as that of the third meeting of the Task Force which preceded it, are attached to this report.

3. The following Committee members attended the meeting: Botswana, Egypt, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Morocco, the Sudan, Togo and Uganda. ILO, WFP, UNFPA, UNESCO and UNDP were also represented in an observer capacity.

## B. OPENING OF THE MEETING

4. The Chairman, Honourable Mr. David N. Magang, Assistant Minister of Finance and Development Planning of Botswana, called the meeting to order. He congratulated the Economic Commission for Africa for the tremendous work it was doing in favour of Africa's development. He noted that the human resources sector was the key to development and that Africa's development problem was not so much one of capital shortage as it was that of human resources inadequacies. There was need to invest more in all areas of human resources development, but particularly so in scientific and technical education which was critical to Africa's socio-economic development. He expressed the hope that the Committee would look into the important issues placed before it with a view to proposing workable solutions to the problems of human resources on the continent.

5. He then invited Professor Adebayo Adedeji, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, to make a statement.

6. In his statement, the Executive Secretary welcomed representatives to the fifth meeting. He recalled that at the fourth meeting in Addis Ababa in 1989, the Committee had reviewed progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the Conference at its third meeting and concluded that although African Governments had made efforts to improve on human development, not much real progress had been achieved.

7. He said that reports that would be placed before the Committee would show that the situation continued to worsen with regard to education, employment, incomes, health and nutrition, and levels of poverty. The trends, he said had been sustained by the continued application of structural adjustment programmes in African countries, in spite of the irrefutable evidence provided in ECA's African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes (AAF-SAP) that structural adjustment programmes were inimical to Africa's development interests.

8. The Executive Secretary said that in spite of the collective commitment made to pursue new human-centred development policies and strategies, there was unmistakable evidence that other interests continued to use structural adjustment to tinker with the lives of the African people and to hold back their progress at all cost. He wondered whether, in the face of the increasing impoverishment of the African people, the growing unemployment affecting youths and educated persons, the sharp real income declines in all African countries and the truly ridiculous wages being paid to Africa's producers, this continent was not already making the transition from recolonization in the 1980s to a more severe situation in the 1990s.

9. He recalled that the recent International Conference on Popular Participation held in Arusha in February 1990 provided further evidence of the mounting frustrations and bitterness felt at the grass-roots level in all parts of Africa as the situation continued to worsen and mere survival was becoming the order of the day.

10. He urged the Committee to consider the secretariat reports with all the seriousness they deserved with a view to making realistic recommendations to stop

the continuous and persistent assault on Africa's education system, its skill base, its children, youths and rural populations, as well as do away with all policies that result in impoverishing the African.

11. Finally, the Executive Secretary recalled that at the Committee's fourth meeting he had announced the creation of a United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on Human Resources Development and Utilization under the chairmanship of ECA and the co-chairmanship of UNDP. The Task Force he said, met with the Committee on 11 May 1990 and endorsed the "Regional Framework for Human Resources Development and Utilization in Africa" which had been prepared by the Task Force. This endorsement now provided a mandate for co-ordinated United Nations actions in human resources development and utilization in African countries.

12. The Executive Secretary then concluded his statement by wishing the Committee success in its deliberations.

Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 2)

13. The Committee considered the following agenda and adopted it:

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Adoption of agenda and organization of work.
3. (a) Consideration of the reports of the second and third meetings of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Human Resources Development and Utilization, and the report of the first joint meeting of the Task Force and the Committee (Docs. E/ECA/PHSD/HRP/MFC/90/1, 90/7, 90/8);  
  
(b) Presentation of the "Regional Framework on Human Resources Development and Utilization in Africa."
4. Status report on human resources planning, development and utilization in Africa.
5. Report on the African employment crisis.
6. Date and venue of the next meeting.
7. Any other business.
8. Adoption of the report.

9. Closing of the meeting.

C. ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS

- (i) Consideration of the reports of the second and third meeting of the United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on Human Resources Development and Utilization, and the report of the First Joint Meeting of the Task Force and the Committee (Docs. E/ECA/PHSD/HRP/MFC/90/1, 90/7, 90/8) [agenda item 3(a)]

14. A member of the secretariat explained the origins and composition of the United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on Human Resources Development and Utilization. He said that the Task Force had held two meetings in January 1989 and in January 1990. The third meeting took place in May 1990 and was followed by a joint meeting of the Task Force and the Committee. He then presented the reports of the three meetings in docs. E/ECA/PHSD/HRP/MFC/90/1, 90/7 and 90/8.

15. The Committee took note of the three reports.

- (ii) Presentation of a "Regional Framework for Human Resources Development and Utilization in Africa" [agenda item 3(b)]

16. A representative of the secretariat presented the "Regional Framework for Human Resources Development and Utilization in Africa". He said that this document had been the main subject of discussion at all three meetings of the Task Force. The Framework, he said, sought to establish points of mutual understanding between African countries and their development partners, and identify priority areas for action at all levels. The preparation of the Framework had gone through a number of phases for further consolidation and enrichment. A major concern had been the need to avoid providing water-tight prescriptions as to the actions to be undertaken at the country-level. For that reason, the chapter on definitions addressed those areas of human resources that could be tackled on a priority basis.

17. He then made a brief presentation of each of the six sections of the document which were: the introduction; human resources; a working definition; human resources

development and utilization in Africa: current situation and prospects; elements of the of the framework; implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

18. The Committee then discussed the main themes and proposals of the document. It was considered important that elements of employment-generation, particularly objectives of self-employment, be built into the set of instrumental objectives for education as proposed in section II of the Framework. In this regard, the Committee pointed out the danger inherent in a compartmentalized approach to education and development and emphasized that human resources development and utilization aspects must be pursued in an integrated manner and that human resources development must be part and parcel of development strategies and plans. It also pointed out that the importance of technical, scientific and technological education should be stressed, and training, retraining and skill-upgrading programmes must be catered for, to address needs in the critical sectors. Orienting education towards these directions in Africa would help promote self-employment and remove the "job-seeker syndrome" which had compounded the unemployment problem in Africa. Also, although the development of middle- and high-level manpower was an important objective, one should not lose sight of the skill needs of low-level manpower. Such manpower needed skill improvement and upgrading so that it would become more productive and even less dependent on others. The issues of women and population factors in human resources development, were also considered important enough to warrant some treatment in the Government.

19. Regarding the objectives of employment promotion, the Committee stressed that the concept of full employment should be understood to mean the creation of conditions for the economic empowerment of people so that they could use their skills in productive activities. In addition, employment promotion programmes should aim at sustainability rather than temporary unemployment relief.

20. It was considered important that greater emphasis be placed on the need for better data and information systems for human resources planning. Within the context of the Framework itself, this was required for the implementation of the monitoring and evaluation phases.

21. Apart from these general comments, the Committee made more direct amendments to the text, which would be taken into consideration in the finalization of the document.

Status report on human resources planning, development and utilization in Africa  
(agenda item 4)

22. A representative of the secretariat presented this report which, he said, analyzed recent and continuing trends in education, employment and overall human resources development and utilization and drew broad conclusions about their implications for the development of African countries.

23. He said that in spite of the commitments made by African countries to pursue new strategies of development that would be human-centred, structural adjustment still held its primacy in the setting of development policy priorities in African countries. In the education sector, the World Bank - prescribed policies for education in sub-Saharan Africa had taken root. These policies placed emphasis on restructuring the school system, recovering costs and involving communities more in the provision of educational structures, infrastructure and services.

24. The stated objectives of those policies were to:

(a) Better democratize access to education by expanding such access at the primary level without necessarily increasing additional costs;

(b) Improve "quality" of African education; and

(c) Better prepare African countries to meet the future additional demands for education.

25. A major unstated objective was to reduce the public sector's financial involvement in education and other social sectors so that substantially more public resources would be freed to enable African Governments honour their external debt obligations.

26. Some of the results of the reforms had begun to emerge on the African continent. The restructuring exercise had reached maturity in one African country where the community at large protested over the "mass failure" of students in the secondary school-leaving examinations. As concerns measures to expand access to education, the evidence, he said, showed that drop-out rates and enrolment ratios had continued their downward slide. Quality at all levels of the education system

continued to deteriorate. However, public expenditure in education had, in fact been reduced from a high of \$US 33 per capita in 1980, to \$US 8 per capita in 1989.

27. The overall effects of these policies was a weakening of the skills base for development and a lowering of the educational ceiling. Third-level educational enrolment had begun to decline, the usual indicators showed drops in quality of education; low salaries and deteriorating conditions of service for the teaching staff had set in motion a massive brain drain from the education sector, particularly higher education institutions; and the number of illiterates had shot up from 123 million in 1980 to 161 million in 1989, with the sharpest increase of 37.5 million occurring between 1985 and 1989.

28. Turning to the question of employment and human resources utilization, the representative said that although a separate paper had made a detailed analysis of the employment crisis, the report had attempted to pull some strands together. He highlighted two serious developments which had emerged, namely the sharp decline in real wages and salaries, and the spread of poverty. He said that the reduction of earnings had been an important adjustment policy measure aimed at reducing the public sector wage bill. In agriculture, the cheapening of labour had been effectively realized through manipulations in the international market place, resulting in dramatic drops in commodity, and consequently, in producer prices.

29. Poverty, resulting from underemployment and unemployment, had spread to affect some 80 per cent of the African population, and hunger was now more widespread on the continent. Thirty million Africans were unemployed whereas some 80 million out of Africa's 243 million labour force were severely underemployed. Malnutrition, infant and maternal mortality were high and growing, and there was the phenomenon of the re-emergence of diseases that had been eradicated or controlled. This was due largely to poor nutrition and increasingly unhealthy environments.

30. The representative of the secretariat then went on to make a number of proposals for action. These included:

(a) A shift of focus from short-term adjustment, to the pursuit of strategies of adjustment with transformation as advocated in the African Alternative Framework of Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP);

(b) A redirection of resources towards the social sectors and the domestic economy;

(c) Plugging leakages and reducing the present heavy outward flow of resources;

(d) Switching expenditures from less productive sectors such as defence, to the social sectors;

(e) Embarking on joint multinational human resources development projects; and

(f) Taking measures to expand employment generation activities, to raise productivity and to provide greater managerial and institutional support to the agricultural and informal sectors.

31. In the discussion that ensued, participants expressed concern over the gravity of the situation. Explanations were given on the reasons behind some of the actions resorted to by individual member States mentioned in the report. It would appear that not much had been done by African countries to realign policies and embark on programmes that would be consistent with the objectives set at Khartoum. This may be so because of the low capacities prevailing in African countries to address the daunting problems of human resources on the continent. African Governments were still overwhelmed by the magnitude of the problems in the human resources sector. This was not to say that the will to attack problems of education and unemployment did not exist. African countries were trying to do too much with too little, by way of resources.

32. Participants concurred also with the analysis regarding the growth of illiteracy and the spread of poverty. They agreed that concerted efforts, perhaps through popular participation programmes, needed to be embarked upon to urgently reverse the trend. Equally, the growing problem of unemployment, particularly unemployment among the educated, called for the institution and consolidation of urgent action-oriented measures.

33. The continued application of structural adjustment programmes was exerting negative pressures on the education sector to at least maintain levels of quality.

The restructuring of the education sector did not begin with structural adjustment programmes. And while many reforms were introduced in response to SAPs, many educational reforms reflected a genuine need to improve in the quality and relevance of education. It was agreed, however, that the reforms were fraught with problems, especially of ease of transition from one level to the next, although the original intention may have been to provide more education to people whose education would otherwise most likely be terminal at the primary level. Although African Governments were making valiant attempts to maintain standards no positive results in this regard had as yet been discerned.

34. It was noted, however, that the "participation fatigue" was not necessarily a result of reduced real incomes. In some countries with no real problems of resource shortages, that fatigue was also quite evident. Also, quality declines in education could be brought about by resource constraints as well as by economic upswings. The latter could bring about a rapid expansion in enrolment without corresponding expansions in the provision of services, well-trained teachers, etc.

35. Finally it was observed that in future, the report should embrace broader issues of human development including an assessment of the health and nutrition status on the continent.

#### Report on the African Employment Crisis (agenda item 5)

36. The Director of ILO/JASPA introduced this report. He indicated that it had been prepared in collaboration with the OAU and ECA in accordance with resolution LC/Res.135 (XII) of the twelfth ordinary session of the OAU Labour Commission. The report had been meant for transmission to and endorsement by the next OAU Conference of Heads of State and Government after due consideration and endorsement by the OAU Labour Commission, the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of Ten and the ECA Conference of Ministers responsible for economic development and planning in May 1990 in Tripoli. It was hoped that by bringing the discussion of the African employment crisis to the level of the Heads of State, greater priority could be given to the alleviation of the employment crisis in the region.

37. Pointing out that at the beginning of the 1990s, Africa remained in a deep economic and social crisis, the Director of ILO/JASPA highlighted the decline in GDP per capita of 15 per cent in the 1980-1989 period, the increase in poverty and the

erosion of past gains in the satisfaction of basic needs. He then highlighted the major adjustments in the African labour market during the 1980s. These adjustments were categorized into: (a) substantial decline in real wages, of some 30 per cent on average, during the 1980s, accompanied by compression in wage levels between the lowest and highest paid wage earners; (b) a stagnation in modern sector wage employment; (c) mounting unemployment, with urban unemployment rates in the range of 15 to 20 per cent, the number of urban unemployed rising by 10 per cent annually; and (d) increasing reliance on the informal and rural sectors as labour absorption sponges, although the sponges were nearing saturation. He then indicated that the past poor employment record was likely to be worsened in the 1990s as the global unemployment rate would double from 5 to 10 per cent reaching crisis proportions.

38. The ILO/JASPA Director said that to arrest these trends, some 5 per cent annual growth in GDP was needed in the African economy accompanied by policies that place heavy emphasis on employment generation. In this regard, he briefly assessed past orthodox structural adjustment programmes in Africa which, though aimed at economic recovery, had largely failed while aggravating the employment and poverty problems.

39. The ILO/JASPA Director then summarized the major conclusions of the ILO-sponsored Tripartite High-Level Symposium held in Nairobi in October 1989 on the subject of Structural Adjustment and Employment in Africa, viz.: that there was no escape from the need for adjustment, the need however for a broad-based sustainable economic recovery programme based on African economic and social realities, the revival of investment in human capital, especially in respect of small scale farmers and micro entrepreneurs, fair financial compensation for retrenched workers and introduction of redeployment programmes; and finally the necessity for tripartite consultation in the design and implementation of adjustment programmes including the need for democracy and popular participation in the development and adjustment programmes.

40. The ILO/JASPA Director concluded his presentation by also highlighting recommendations aimed at stimulating employment in the rural sector as well as the urban informal sector. He stressed the need to relaunch employment generation in the modern sector through strategies such as intensified regional economic integration and the development of indigenous entrepreneurship in the modern sector.

41. The ILO/JASPA Director ended his presentation by reporting that the ILO Labour Commission passed a resolution<sup>1</sup> at its fourteenth ordinary session in Addis Ababa in April 1990, in which it endorsed the report in its entirety and called on ILO/JASPA, ECA and the OAU to prepare a draft Declaration on the Employment Crisis in Africa for submission to the summit of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity at its 1991 session.

42. In the discussions that followed, the committee commended the joint secretariat for the quality of the report, and the presenter for the lucidity and comprehensiveness of the presentation. The point was stressed that although adjustment was inevitable in the African economy, it should be used as a means of stimulating growth of the productive sectors in ways that would, in turn, stimulate the labour demand. Using adjustment programmes to generate employment in rural areas would also help increase agricultural production and productivity as well as stem rural to urban migration.

43. Unemployment and under-employment, particularly of youths and educated persons would most likely be the greatest development challenge facing Africa in the 1990s. Measures should be embarked upon now to face that challenge squarely, and in a timely manner. In this regard, the employment and productivity - enhancement needs of some 50 per cent of the labour force - Africa's women - should not be lost sight of. In like manner, the informal sector's potentials for greater employment creation should be more precisely identified, with a view to having them exploited more, to ease the unemployment problem. In the process, one should take care not to attempt to "informalize" the African economy. Such an attempt would, in the short run be degenerative. But, in the long run, an invigoration of the informal sector would rebound positively on the formal sector, by having it revitalized through the strong input and output linkages that would have been created between the two sectors.

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<sup>1</sup> OAU Labour Commission resolution LC/Res.150(XIII) on the African Employment Crisis operative paragraph 4 of which "Calls on the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity in further collaboration with the ILO/JASPA and ECA, to prepare a Draft Declaration on the Employment Crisis in Africa, for the adoption of the OAU Summit of 1991, after due consideration and adoption of the Fourteenth session of the Labour Commission", Addis Ababa, 1990.

44. Turning to questions of financing of employment generation programmes, the committee concurred with the World Bank's recommendation, made in its perspective study on Sub-Saharan African development, that a doubling of total allocations of up to 8 to 10 per cent of GDP, should be targeted for the human resources sector. Also, the committee endorsed the expenditure switches advocated in the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes (AAF-SAP), as well as its recommendation for an allocation of at least 30 per cent of total government outlays to the social sector.

45. Finally, the committee endorsed the call made by the OAU Labour Commission at its thirteenth session in Addis Ababa in 1990, for the ILO/JASPA, ECA and OAU to prepare a Draft Declaration on the Employment Crisis in Africa for submission to the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the OAU in 1991 and to the fourth meeting of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Human Resources Planning, Development and Utilization in Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt, in 1991. The Committee urged the three secretariats, in collaboration with other United Nations agencies to pursue this assignment with vigour to ensure the timely submission of the Draft Declaration for consideration.

Date and venue of the next meeting (agenda item 6)

46. A member of the secretariat announced that the next meeting of the Committee would take place in Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt, prior to the fourth meeting of the Conference of Human Resources Ministers. The exact dates would be communicated to members in good time.

Any other business (agenda item 6)

47. There was no other business.

Adoption of the report

48. The Committee considered its report and adopted it.

Closure of the meeting

49. The Chairman thanked members for their excellent contributions to the deliberations and declared the meeting closed.