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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Regional Meeting for the Creation of  
Association of African Tax Administrators  
and Consideration of Major Issues in Tax Policy,  
Legislation and Administration

Addis Ababa, 28 June - 7 July 1979

Background Note by the Secretariat

The importance of taxation as a major tool for the mobilization of domestic resources for development has underscored the need for improvements, strengthening of tax administration and adoption of proper policies and procedures for tax reform planning in African developing countries. There is a growing awareness of the need to take effective steps for the translation of fiscal policies into efficient, easily understood and operative tax measures within the meaning and context of national plans for economic and social development.

Within the constraint of its limited financial and staff resources, the Economic Commission for Africa has continued to accord high priority in its programme of work to the provision of advisory services and technical assistance to its member States in tax reform planning, the introduction of better techniques in the assessment and collection of taxes and modernization of tax administration. The carrying out of problem - oriented research and studies in the African context and the holding of regional, sub-regional and national training workshops have been important elements of this programme. The workshops have provided an opportunity to concentrate attention on significant aspects of taxation and budgetary systems of individual countries concerned and the local problems connected therewith.

In spite of the above efforts which have been made by the Economic Commission for Africa and the national efforts being made by African countries, the shortage of trained finance officers and tax administrators continues to be a serious bottleneck hindering the effective development and operation of growth oriented fiscal policies and tax reform measures. The existing facilities for training and research in taxation, financial management and revenue administration are far too short of the requirements.

It is, therefore, in this connexion that African countries have been feeling the need for a proper forum such as an Association of African Tax Administrators for the exchange of views and ideas on different tax systems and practices and related problems. Further, various international meetings, seminars and workshops, including the international conference on creation and development of Regional Center for Tax Training and Research held in Berlin (West) in June 1978 strongly urged the ECA to convene a regional meeting of high level African Tax and Finance officers to establish an

Association of African Tax Administrators along the lines of the Inter-American Centers of Tax Administrators (CIAT). The African Working Group of that conference also recommended that ECA should co-ordinate the setting up of the Association and provide interim secretariat facilities and expertise for its operation in the initial period. Such regional co-operation in tax administration, besides helping to promote harmonization of fiscal policies and measures among African countries will augment the efforts being made by international bodies like the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa for the development of further facilities and institutions for high quality training of tax administrators within the African region itself.

It is in this context and in this line of ideas that the Economic Commission for Africa urges participants at this meeting to agree to the launching of an Association of African Tax Administrators which will be dedicated to the cause of tax administration improvement in African countries through:

- promotion of co-operation in the field of taxation policy, legislation and administration;
- studying of taxation systems and policies in relation to the administration of taxes;
- holding of meetings of technical and administrative personnel in tax administration for the exchange of ideas and expertise;
- organizing seminars, training workshops on aspects of taxation policy and administration;
- collecting and disseminating information on tax policy, legislation and administration;
- collaborating with organizations in the field of taxation;
- promoting training, research facilities and institutions for tax administrators;
- and carrying out generally functions relating to the overall improvement of the capabilities of tax administrators and taxation systems and policies among member countries.