

**REPORT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE ENTERPRISE
DEVELOPMENT FACILITY (EDF/RIFED/GIE)
ACCRA, GHANA**

1 FEBRUARY 2005

I. INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday, 1 February 2005, the General Assembly of the Enterprise Development Facility (EDF/GIE) met in Meeting Room 1 of the Accra International Conference Centre in Ghana.

The work programme was based on the following points:

- Presentation of the Economic Interest Group (GIE) (definition, organization and functions);
- Regular session of the General Assembly of EDF:
 - Notification of the admission of new members;
 - Admission procedures;
 - Appointment of the six prospective members of the Executive Board;
 - Presentation of the mid-term action plan of EDF; and
 - Other matters.
- Special session of the General Assembly:
 - Introduction of the Statute of GIE; and
 - Consideration and adoption of the rules of procedure.

The following participants took part in the meeting, which lasted all day:

Seventeen countries: Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda; and nine organizations and partner institutions: the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Togo, ASCENT (India) the Uganda Investment Authority, the Commonwealth Secretariat, African Regional Agricultural Credit Association (AFRACA), the African Regional Centre for Technology, and the Universite of Lome's Information and Computer Science Centre/African Microprocessor Equipment Maintenance Training Centre (CIC/CAFMICRO).

II. OPENING CEREMONY

Ms. Opportune Santos, consultant at the African Centre for Gender and Development (ACGD), opened the session by welcoming all the participants and asked them to introduce themselves, indicating their association and/or organization.

After announcing the work programme, she gave the floor to Ms. Hilda Tadia, Regional Advisor for ACGD at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and representative of Ms. Joséphine Ouedraogo, Acting Deputy Executive Secretary of ECA.

Ms. Tadia offered her apologies on behalf of Ms. Ouedraogo, who, for reasons beyond her control, had been unable to travel to Accra to attend the session. She then welcomed those present at a meeting which was very important for ECA, which had supported the implementation of EDF for more than five years.

Speaking about the aim of the session, she recalled that ECA's objective was to give women entrepreneurs, after so many years' delay, an operational EDF/GIE with an independent status, making it a pan-African organization. In conclusion, she wished those present every success in their work.

The next speaker, Ms. Jeanne Bado, sole board member of EDF/GIE, asked the representative of ECA to congratulate Ms. Ouedraogo, on behalf of all the women present, on her appointment to the post of Acting Deputy Executive Secretary of ECA.

Her statement focused on researching ways and means of making EDF a strong network, an opportunity to circulate and share information and a framework for consultation and exchange in order to strengthen the capacities of African women entrepreneurs. EDF needed financial resources to develop; it was therefore urgent to establish an Executive Board that would handle the practical issues relating to its operationalization. She stressed that the prospective Board members would play a key role during the first two terms of office of the Executive Board.

Ms. Bado also reassured partners of the Board members' commitment and called on women entrepreneurs to contribute to the launching of EDF's activities by joining it in great numbers and paying their dues.

In conclusion, she thanked the EDF/GIE team, including Ms. Melkrist Hailu, Ms. Paule Koki and Ms. Opportune Santos, and thanked all the partners for their substantial support for EDF. She invited the partners and potential partners of EDF to maintain their confidence in it and to support it, both technically and financially.

III. WORK OF THE SESSION

A three member Bureau was appointed to lead the session:

Chairperson:	Ms. Jeanne Bado;
Resource person:	Ms. Pierrette Guillaume-Gayibor; and
Rapporteur:	Mr. John Boukary

Once the agenda had been adopted, the session covered the following points:

A. Introduction of GIE by Ms. Pierrette Guillaume-Gayibor, magistrate

Before beginning her statement, she greeted the Assembly on behalf of the members of her association, the Working Group on Women, Democracy and Development (GF2D),

which, like EDF, supports economic capacity-building for women; she wished EDF prolonged success.

The purpose of her presentation was to give all EDF members a better understanding of the goal of GIE in the spirit of the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA) which is to remove all legal barriers to business in the African continent.

Ms. Guillaume-Gayibor considered GIE to be an organization that respected its members' legal and economic independence while allowing them to pool production resources (for example, EDF/GIE would offer its members the common tool of a web site that would provide useful, pertinent and training information) in order to improve and develop their businesses more effectively and profitably than if they were acting alone. It was thus a mechanism that brought people together and acted as a "lever" in their businesses.

When GIE became a registered company with a property loan, it acquired legal personality and autonomy. EDF/GIE was registered in July 2004 in Lome, Togo, making it a pan-African organization working on behalf of women entrepreneurs.

Ms. Guillaume-Gayibor then explained that the current EDF/GIE was an economic interest group established without capital. At any time, its members could, if they so wished, decide to allocate capital to it and change the Statute by adapting it to the needs of a GIE with capital.

The GIE bodies include the General Assemblies and the Executive Board.

The regular session of the General Assembly deals with the normal functioning of GIE. It meets periodically in accordance with the provisions of the GIE Statute.

The special session of the General Assembly deals with the amendment of documents and matters relating to the continued existence of GIE.

The Executive Board is the management and leadership organ of GIE. It provides guidance and carries out other activities for the General Assembly.

The statement concerning GIE led to a series of questions and answers and gave members a better understanding of the Group.

Participants at the Assembly who were attending an EDF meeting for the first time, wished that more time had been devoted to the genesis of the project so that everyone had the same level of information.

B. Genesis of EDF by Ms. Melkrist Hailu, ACGD consultant

Ms. Hailu recalled that EDF was an initiative proposed by Africa's women entrepreneurs in 1997 with the support of UNDP and ECA. Between 1998 and 2004, training activities and consultations between African women entrepreneurs in the two subregions had been organized with support from ECA and other partners. ASCENT, EDF's partner in Asia, had jointly organized a research trip to Asia with ECA and UNDP in 1998. WAEMU, the Intergovernmental Francophone Agency and the Commonwealth Secretariat were also among EDF's partners and had helped establish the two offices of the subregional branches by

providing them with computer equipment. After those meetings in the two subregions, it had been decided to establish an autonomous body capable of providing economic and technological support for the capacity-building of women entrepreneurs on a regional scale.

C. Regular session of the General Assembly

After that statement, which had given new members a better understanding of the establishment and development of EDF, Ms. Bado, the Chairperson, announced the opening of the regular session of the General Assembly with the following agenda:

- (C1) Notification of the admission of new members;
- (C2) Admission procedures;
- (C3) Appointment of the six prospective members of the Executive Board;
- (C4) Presentation of the mid-term action plan of EDF; and
- Other matters.

(C1) Notification

She dealt with the first agenda item on notification of the admission of new EDF/GIE members by referring to article 3 of the EDF rules of procedure, which states that members shall be admitted subject to the payment of a membership fee and annual dues.

(C2) Admission procedures

Ms. Guillaume-Gayibor recalled the admission procedures. Two options were available to potential members:

- Either to pay their membership fee and/or annual dues at the meeting itself;
- Or to sign an agreement confirming they would honour their commitment to transfer the corresponding sums within the period of time stipulated therein.

The meeting was suspended for a few minutes, allowing potential members who wished to join EDF/GIE to fill in the agreement forms or to pay their membership fees and annual dues directly.

EDF recorded a total of 36 new memberships with immediate effect (see annex):

- Seventeen members were recorded as having paid their membership fees;
- Sixteen members opted for deferred payment by means of the agreements; and
- Three members paid both their membership fees and annual dues.

D. Special session of the General Assembly

When the meeting resumed, Ms. Bado acknowledged and welcomed the new EDF/GIE members who had just joined.

She then suspended the regular session of the General Assembly in order to open and hold the special session of the General Assembly, which would consider and adopt the rules of procedure, the only item on its agenda.

The Chairperson requested everyone who had not chosen to become a member of EDF/GIE to leave and added that the partners would remain in the room as observers.

Taking the floor again, Ms. Guillaume-Gayibor briefly introduced the EDF/GIE Statute to the Assembly.

This Statute contained basic information on the founding members, the name, the head office, the period of validity and purpose of the Statute, the organs and their functioning.

The Statute currently in force would not be subject to amendment during the Accra special General Assembly; however, the rules of procedure, which complemented it by making provision for internal arrangements, would be submitted for approval by the Assembly.

Pertinent observations relating to the Statute would be transmitted to the Executive Board for consideration with a view to their possible adoption during the next special General Assembly. Those observations concerned the acronym and name, “EDF/RIFED”; the relocation of its headquarters, the lifespan of EDF and other matters.

E. Consideration and adoption of the rules of procedure

In early afternoon, the session resumed once again to consider the rules of procedure. Participants agreed to discuss the rules article by article.

In addition, Ms. Guillaume-Gayibor suggested that the proposed drafting changes should be transmitted in writing to the Bureau of the General Assembly and that substantive changes should be the subject of discussion and debate.

1. Participants agreed to delete the reference to “West Africa”, which was an oversight on the part of the secretariat, and to add the word “Preamble” before the first paragraph.
2. Article 2, relating to the composition of GIE, gave rise to a lengthy debate of almost two hours, at the end of which a decision was reached by vote. Article 2 was adopted without amendment; however, as regards the procedure for voting at the General Assemblies, the formula of one vote per country was adopted.
3. Article 6: The General Assembly proposed that a “grace period” of six months after a reminder should be granted before expulsion, after which the non-payment of dues would result in expulsion.

In paragraph 2, “competitive activities” should be understood to mean activities that might threaten the continued existence of EDF/GIE.

4. Article 7: The Assembly agreed that the number of Executive Board members would be fixed at seven and that members should elect a chairperson and vice-chairperson from among themselves.
 - The Assembly also agreed that the term of office for Board members should be two years, renewable only once.
 - It was understood that written proposals reflecting members' concerns regarding Board members' duties and vacancies on the Board would be incorporated into the rules of procedure.

5. Article 8: Given the time constraints, the meeting gave the Assembly Bureau the task of taking down the recommendations in writing in order to include them in the report so that the Executive Board could deal with them. The following points would appear in the report to be submitted to the Executive Board:
 - The prerogatives of the General Assembly, to be determined;
 - The Executive Board: It was proposed that the means of electing (Board) members should be reviewed; that the Chairperson of the Executive Board should be elected by the General Assembly, not the other Board members; that the number of Executive Board members should be maintained at between five and seven while awaiting expansion of the network throughout Africa; that provision should be made for disciplinary measures against and resignation of Executive Board members, and that a mechanism to make up for financial losses should be developed.

The rules of procedure were adopted, subject to the proposed amendments.

(C3) Appointment of members of the Executive Board

Ms. Bado closed the special session of the General Assembly and resumed the ordinary session of the General Assembly, which, under the current agenda item, was to elect six new Board members. Given that the eligibility conditions could not be fulfilled immediately, the Chairperson proposed that the Assembly should appoint prospective Board members, who would be confirmed at a later date when they had provided evidence that they had met the eligibility conditions within a time period to be stipulated (payment of all membership fees and annual dues and submission of proof that they had been entrepreneurs (economic operators) for at least five years and had a good reputation in their countries).

Ms. Bado then allowed the delegates to consult for 15 minutes in order to coordinate their points of view and to select Board members from among the candidates from the two subregions, East and West Africa.

The result of the consultations was:

East Africa:

- Consolata N'Dayishimiye (Burundi)*
- Catherine Nyamato (Kenya)
- Abdi Brutawit (Ethiopia)

West Africa:

- Aissata Touré (Mali)
- Elisabeth Sanvee (Togo)
- Salamata Garba (Nigeria)

A total of six prospective Board members were appointed; when they are confirmed, the number of Board members will increase from one to seven, including the sole Board member, Ms. Bado, who was appointed when GIE was established.

(C4) Submission of the action plan

Ms. Koki, ACGD consultant, submitted the short-term and medium-term action plan to members; as time was short, participants would have to examine the documents and transmit their comments by e-mail.

IV. CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

When all the agenda items had been considered, Ms. Bado congratulated the Assembly and asked that all comments on unfinished business should be submitted before the next Assembly.

For her part, Ms. Tadria praised the efforts made by all parties and wished everyone a good return journey.

The meeting rose at 6:20 p.m.