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Tenth Meeting of Intergovernmental Experts on Transport and Communications

Statement

by

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Addis Ababa, 15 March 1995

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates and Observers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Addis Ababa, at the Headquarters of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and to the meeting of Intergovernmental Experts on Transport and Communications which will prepare the ground work for the 10th meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Transport and Communications.

This is the second meeting of this body since the programme of the Second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa was launched in 1991. As everybody knows, 1995 marks the mid-point between 1991 and the year 2000 - the period during which UNTACDA II runs.

The purpose of our meeting is to review progress that has been made in the implementation of the UNTACDA II programme, mid-way through the duration of the Decade and, where appropriate, to charter new directions for the future implementation during the remainder of the period. Notwithstanding the fact that it is mid-way through the Decade programme, the general feeling is that more progress should have been made in the programme implementation. There is therefore urgent need to redouble effort to achieve rapid development of the transport and communications sectors in Africa, so as to enable the achievement of the principal objectives of the Abuja Treaty on the African Economic Community, which came into effect last year.

Indeed, without the physical integration of the African continent through adequate transport and communications infrastructures, equipment and services as advocated in UNTACDA II, increased trade and facilitated movement of persons and goods and factors of production would simply be impossible. In essence, the dreams and hopes of the Abuja Treaty are closely linked to the success of UNTACDA II.

You will recall that in designing the UNTACDA II programme, a lot of care had been taken to ensure that the programme would remain relevant and focused on the main issues throughout the period of the Decade. This relevancy was to be achieved through two mid-term evaluations of the Decade, during which appropriate corrective measures could be taken. I am pleased to inform you that the first mid-term evaluation of UNTACDA II was carried out between July and September last year.

The mid-term evaluation concludes that:

First, the UNTACDA II programme was well conceived, adequately prepared and has succeeded in building consensus among the majority of key partners in Africa's transport and communications development;

Second, the global and sectoral objectives of the programme are coherent and well articulated and cover all critical areas for regional integration and efficient operations of transport and communications services in Africa; and

Third, the subsectoral strategies which are derived from the objectives are well formulated and articulated and form a solid basis for defining national, subregional and regional action programmes for the realization of the UNTACDA II objectives.

The evaluation, however, noted that three crucial elements that could have improved the implementation of the programme and thereby facilitate and accelerate the achievement of the objectives were missing. These elements are:

- Primo, A time frame for implementation of programme projects;
- Secundo, Allocation and delineation of responsibilities among the various parties; and
- Tertio, Explicit consideration of resource availability and their sources for implementation of the various programme components.

These three key elements should be incorporated into all future activities of the programme.

One major finding of the evaluation is that the responsibilities and functions assigned to the various organs of UNTACDA II were extremely appropriate and relevant to the effective implementation and coordination of the programme, but unfortunately all of them had not been able to perform the responsibilities as expected due mainly to lack of resources. The organs referred to are: the National Coordinating Committees, the Sub-sectoral and subregional Working Groups and the Resource Mobilization Committee.

With regard to recommendations, the evaluation among other things recommends that member States should, to the extent possible, internalize the transport and communications coordination functions within their existing structures and only establish new ones where none exists. Basically, this recommendation is saying that countries should be totally supportive of their national organs of NCCs rather than looking outside for their funding. A similar recommendation has been made for the subsectoral and subregional working groups whereby they have been urged to internalize UNTACDA II activities rather than continue to maintain that such activities are additional to their mandates.

Regarding the Resource Mobilization Committee, the evaluation recommends that its work should focus on assisting countries in searching, arranging and securing funds for their projects and that it should refrain from technical activities related to project preparation and studies because the subsectoral working groups were better suited for the latter functions.

The principal subregional IGOs are being called upon to play an active role in the implementation of the programme in a recommendation which requires them to coordinate and report on the status of all purely national projects designed to enable achievement of the UNTACDA II objectives.

Your responsibilities as experts is to advise the Ministers on the best ways forward for UNTACDA II, and I urged you to critically and carefully review every

as experts, make your own reasoned and rational recommendations to your Ministers on how the implementation of UNTACDA II can and should be speeded up during the remainder of the period. In this regard, I believe that the findings and recommendations of the evaluation do not necessarily constitute the final word as to how you may like the programme to progress. In other words, your meeting is free to look into other processes, cooperative arrangements and mechanisms that have not been covered in the evaluation and which can foster the realization of the programme objectives.

Mr. Chairman,
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Within the context of the UNTACDA II programme, there have been some on-going major regional activities relating to the Trans-african Highway Bureau, Transport Data base, the Yamoussoukro Declaration on a New Air Transport Policy and the Regional African Satellite Communications Programme, which I wish to briefly touch on.

It is now twelve years since the idea of a centralized bureau was initiated through the Kenyan proposal at the second meeting of the Cairo-Gaborone Trans-East African Highway Authority, in Cairo, Egypt in 1983. A lot of work has since been carried out and reported previously, all aimed at establishing a cost-effective bureau to serve as the secretariat for the various Trans-african Highways authorities and coordinating committees.

At the request of the last Conference of African Ministers of Transport and Communications in March 1993, a special meeting of Plenipotentiaries on the Statutes of the Trans-African Highway Bureau was kindly hosted by the Kingdom of Morocco in Rabat in September 1993, during which the Statutes of the Bureau were considered and adopted, and ten countries signed them. These are: Algeria, Central African Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Tanzania, Zambia and Zaire.

ECA took follow-up action which resulted in:

- Ghana signing the Statutes;
- Uganda paying US\$25,000 towards the implementation of the programme; and
- Egypt and Morocco ratifying the Statutes.

In view of the fact that 26 ratifications and payment of dues are needed before the Statutes become effective, it might be prudent to consider reducing the number of ratifications and having the programme started in those countries that have paid their contributions.

In conclusion on this topic, I must state frankly that after twelve years, member States must decide once and for all whether to have a central Trans-African Highway Bureau or to drop the idea now. This cannot be allowed to drag on ad infinitum - sapping out meagre resources and precious time and, also, eroding the credibility of the member States themselves and of ECA.

In 1993, your Ministers had a very useful debate on the Regional African Satellite Communications project. Most of you are aware that the RASCOM Corporation has been established and is now functional. This is a good example of an activity for which there is resolved and consensus. If need be, the Director General of RASCOM, who will join us here tomorrow, could shed light on his organization in due course.

Regarding the Transport Data Base project, I am happy to report that progress continued to be made in the pilot countries implementing the project, namely: Burkina Faso, Burundi, Lesotho, Mali, Mozambique, Senegal and Mali.

The current status of this important project is as follows:

- activities of phase I are fairly complete;
- activities for phase II have been identified and a draft project proposal has been prepared; and
- ECA is now in charge of the execution of phase II.

Funding of the phase II activities remains a major concern as donors have not clearly indicated their willingness to supplement the meagre amount that UNDP has committed itself to provide. Each pilot country needs a minimum of US\$10,000 to implement the national level phase II activities. This amount is not readily available in some cases.

Regarding the Yamoussoukro Declaration on a new African Air Transport Policy, you may recall that the Economic Commission for Africa was requested by the 9th meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Transport and Communications in May, 1993 here in Addis Ababa, to organize a meeting of the Ministers of Civil Aviation to explore modalities to speed up the implementation of the Declaration which was making little progress.

I am happy to inform you that the meeting was held in September 1994 in Mauritius, concrete decisions were taken and effective procedures established which could greatly enhance the implementation of the Declaration if member State would adhere to these procedures. The role of air transport in today's world cannot be over-emphasized and I trust that member States would endeavour to faithfully implement the Mauritius decisions.

Mr. Chairman,
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have left the most troubling of our problems for last - Resources. As mentioned previously, the mid-term evaluation of UNTACDA II has shown that some progress was made in the implementation of UNTACDA II but also that due to financial constraints at all levels, many planned activities could not be carried out. Our own experience as part of the United Nations Secretariat, lead agency of the Decade and member of the various working groups, indicates that both regular and extra-budgetary resources to Africa for development in general and transport and communications in

organs of UNTACDA II have been unable to fully implement their established work programmes due to lack of resources. And all indications are that the future will not be any better - yet we must implement the Decade because so much depends on it, for example, the fate of the African Economic Community.

Since looking outward has not helped us much and is unlikely to help us better in the future, we must look at alternative means of funding the Decade activities from within. One such alternative is internalization of the programme by supporting the activities of the Decade starting from the national coordinating organs. Indeed, the mid-term evaluation recommends inter alia that three elements be built into the programme implementation. These are: a time frame, allocation and delineation of responsibilities and explicit consideration of resources and their sources. While foreign resources will be most welcome, a greater dose of self reliance would be more realistic than total dependence on foreign and external funding which have failed us so often.

If member States are convinced that they still need a Transport and Communications Decade with national, subregional and regional organs which must function effectively and efficiently in coordinating the implementation of the programme at the various levels, they must ensure part of the funding of these activities.

I am therefore appealing through you to the Ministers of Transport and Communications to ensure that a portion of their country's pledge to the May 1995 United Nations Trust Fund for African Development (UNTFAD) is clearly designated to the UNTACDA II. Without some funds clearly designated and allocated to UNTACDA II in the UNTFAD, the most crucial activities of the Decade dealing with the programme coordination and harmonization at the sectoral, subregional and regional levels could simply remain unimplemented, with rather grave consequences for the entire programme and our collective efforts at advancing the socio-economic development in Africa.

Let me conclude by stating the obvious: the Conference of African Ministers of Transport and Communications which meets here early next week, shall be depending on the advice and recommendations you shall make to them. Very important issues concerning the future direction of the Decade are submitted to you for consideration and decision. I am referring in particular to the proposed orientation of the programme and activities of Phase II of the Decade. We expect from you, who are the architects of the future direction of UNTACDA II, sound recommendations that our Ministers will consider next week.

I thank you for your kind attention and wish the meeting every success.