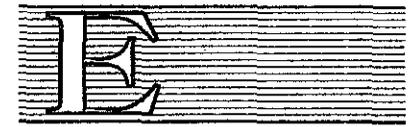


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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

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Ministers

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
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NOTE ON THE JOINT OAU/ECA/ADB SECRETARIAT

I. INTRODUCTION

1. It is now a fact that the world is gradually moving towards integrated regional blocs. The European Union (EU), which is now a reality after over 30 years' integration efforts in the countries concerned, the dynamism of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the signing, recently, of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Canada, Mexico and the United States are clear demonstrations of such trend. On the other hand, the reality in Africa is that the continent has gained independence with fragmented small countries that are unable to support large economic production entities. As a result and in addition to underdevelopment, Africa is unable to compete effectively in the world market. It is the realization of this fact that led the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to sign, in June 1991 in Abuja, Nigeria, the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community (AEC).

2. Actually the process which led to the signing of the Treaty started in April 1980 when the Assembly of Heads of State and Government adopted the Final Act of Lagos (FAL), together with the Lagos Plan of Action, at its second extraordinary Assembly. In the FAL, African countries reaffirmed their commitment to set up by the year 2000 an African Economic Community. This Community was to be established on the basis of regional economic communities which should be established where they do not exist. Since then, upon the initiative of ECA, such communities have been created in Eastern and Southern Africa, Central Africa and North Africa.

3. In July 1990, the twenty-sixth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of OAU adopted resolution AHG/Res. 179 (XXV) calling upon OAU, the ECA secretariat and the African Development Bank (ADB) "to coordinate and pool their efforts and resources so as to provide, in a joint secretariat, the required logistic and technical support to the Permanent Steering Committee of the OAU in the process of establishing the African Economic Community". Since then, the Joint Secretariat has actively contributed in the preparation, by the Permanent Steering Committee, of the Treaty establishing the Community.

4. The Treaty sees the existing regional economic communities in the region as the "building blocks" for the AEC. The first phase of the Treaty is aimed at strengthening and consolidating the regional economic communities. This has been done partly by drafting the protocol on the relationship between the regional economic communities and the emerging AEC. Other protocols on free movement of persons; the rights of residence and establishment; transport and communications; customs; industry are at an advanced stage of preparation.

II. FUNCTIONING OF THE JOINT SECRETARIAT

5. The Joint Secretariat functions at two levels. First, since 1990, the chief executives have agreed to meet twice a year to consult about problems for African development on the one hand, and the establishment of the Community, on the other. Since that time, meetings have been held in Abuja, in December 1990; Zanzibar, in June 1991; Abuja, in December 1991; Abidjan, in December 1992; Addis Ababa, in May 1993; and Cairo, in December 1993. In Cairo, for the first time, the chief executives benefitted from the counsel of the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity.

6. Secondly, the Joint Secretariat also meets among senior officials of the three institutions and under the chairmanship of the Assistant Secretary-General of the OAU for Economic Development and Cooperation (EDECO). The Joint Secretariat receives instructions and decisions for implementation from the Permanent Steering Committee. In addition, it also receives proposals for action submitted to the Permanent Steering Committee for approval. At working level, orientation is provided by the chief executives of these institutions.

7. These meetings at the level of senior officials are generally devoted to preparing for the meeting of the chief executives and meetings of the Permanent Steering Committee of OAU. The Joint Secretariat also meets at senior officials level for the preparation of the protocols and to review development issues which are relevant to Africa.

8. There is no formal structure of the Joint Secretariat as yet. It consists generally of focal points in each of the three institutions. The ECA Executive Secretary as per his circular No. 001/92 of 14 January 1992 established a Steering Committee for the Joint OAU/ECA/ADB Secretariat. This Committee is intended to prepare ECA's inputs into the work of the Joint Secretariat. It has a limited membership but can be extended to more members depending on the issues to be addressed.

9. Since 1993, efforts have been under way to provide a structure for the Joint Secretariat. In this regard, it was suggested that each organization should have a unit dealing with matters of the Joint Secretariat, especially the implementation of the Abuja Treaty. Resources for such unit would have to be provided by each organization.

10. While a definite structure is still under consideration, the Joint Secretariat, in view of the coming into force of the Treaty, has organized itself to cope with its responsibilities. In this regard, it has established two task forces on its work programme and on mobilization of resources respectively.

11. It is indeed important for the Joint Secretariat to devise a work programme which is in line with the various stages of the implementation of the Treaty. In this regard, the current work programme put emphasis on the strengthening of the regional economic communities. The Task Force on Programme will also deal with pressing issues of African development such as international trade and finance, cooperation with other regions of the world such as the European Economic Community (EEC), the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Convention, structural adjustment programmes and their related policy instruments such as fiscal, monetary and exchange rate policies.

12. With respect to the Task Force on Resource Mobilization, the objective is to devise strategies that would increase resources for the establishment of the Community and more generally for African development. In this regard, emphasis will be put on both domestic and external resources.

III. CONCLUSION

13. The main achievements of the Joint Secretariat so far include:

- (a) The drafting and printing of the text of the Treaty and its wide distribution in Africa;
- (b) The drafting of the protocols and their submission to the Permanent Steering Committee for approval;
- (c) The popularization of the Treaty through campaigns among African countries and relevant international bodies. To this effect, a seminar with a theme of "Creating an enabling environment for the implementation of the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community" was held in Addis Ababa, from 26 to 28 July 1993;
- (d) A seminar on the South Commission report was also held on 15 and 16 September 1993 to derive maximum benefits for African countries in the context of collective self-reliance;

(e) The promotion of early ratification of the Treaty (35 countries have ratified and the Treaty has come into force).

14. Given the need for the three organizations to achieve greatest impact in the use of their institutional resources, a key objective of the Joint Secretariat is to rationalize activities and avoid duplication among the three institutions. The three organizations are in close consultation so that they could continuously review their respective comparative advantages and assign the responsibilities accordingly.