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REGIONAL PROJECTS FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
IN AFRICA

The implementation of the African Regional Plan envisages action at both the individual country level and at the regional or subregional levels. At the eighth consultative meeting of the African Regional Group, the ECA secretariat introduced a paper (UNACAST/AF.REG/VIII.3) which dealt with the identification of regional projects and suggested possible machinery for the management of their implementation. During the consideration of this paper it was agreed that members of the African Regional Group of UNACAST, ECA and the United Nations bodies and specialized agencies interested in the development of science and technology in Africa could suggest programmes and projects which they considered were of a regional or subregional character. It is important to bear in mind that this suggestion was made fully cognizant of the fact that the ultimate responsibility for the regional projects would be with the countries themselves; the secretariat of the Commission would undertake whatever liaison responsibilities were entrusted to it so as to ensure that the decisions of the Group were conveyed to the countries concerned. It would also promote the implementation of whatever projects were ultimately decided upon for execution as regional projects.

Regional projects

The following is a short list of projects which are thought to be of priority economic importance in the region and which the Group is requested to consider as possible regional projects.

Regional or subregional centres for
marine science and technology

Man's long standing interest in the sea for transport and fisheries is well documented. However with new technology it is now possible to explore deeper into both living and non-living marine resources. More than half of the ECA member States border on great oceans and seas, and it is important that they should evolve the capability both in terms of manpower and institutions to manage and exploit their marine resources.

The project being proposed in this area is the creation of regional or subregional centres for advanced training and research in marine science and technology. National activities in this

field exist already but their coverage is limited. It is feasible that with the pooling of resources more viable programmes and institutions could be established that would be of greater benefit to the co-operating States.

East African Centre: this could be based on the existing Eastern African Marine Fisheries Research organization of the East African Community or the Marine Biology Centre of the University of Dar-es-Salaam. The following countries might sponsor the establishment of such a centre: Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Uganda, Tanzania.

West African Centres: (a) based at the University of Lagos (Nigeria) or Fourah Bay College (Sierra Leone) and covering Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone;
(b) based at the University of Dakar, Senegal and covering Dahomey, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Senegal and Togo.

Establishment of information and documentation centres

The need for centres to engage in the systematic collection, storage and dissemination of information on science and technology, has been recognized in many African countries. Some have indeed taken steps toward the establishment of such centres on a national basis. However, it is recognized that, given the limited financial means at the disposal of many small African countries, it would be desirable to create a few regional or subregional centres sponsored co-operatively by two or more countries. The specific fields to be pursued by the proposed centres would be one of the key questions to be agreed upon by the co-operating States. Such centres would supplement whatever effort individual countries are able to make in this area and would be complementary to any related activities at the national level.

Establishment of Research and Development centres in solar energy

The repercussions of the recent world energy crisis have brought into sharper focus the need to exploit more vigorously alternative energy sources. Solar energy presents a fruitful area for further research and development and adaptation of existing technology to African conditions bearing in mind the economic socio-cultural problems that have to be overcome before securing wider acceptability and usage of solar energy. The R & D activities associated with the utilization of solar radiation to provide energy for practical activities in private homes or community activities are quite costly and it has been suggested that this is a good area for States to pool their resources in this endeavour. According to UNESCO sources, there are at present fourteen African institutions working in the field of solar energy which could provide the basis for one or more regional institutions.