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Public Administration, Human Resources  
and Social Development Division

REPORT OF A MISSION TO MOROCCO  
[Conference on the Human Dimension of Local Development]

by

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## Introduction

The 25th International Conference on Social Welfare was held in Marrakech, Morocco between 24 and 29 June 1990 under the high patronage of His Royal Highness, King Hassan II. The Conference was jointly organized by the International Council on Social Welfare (based in Vienna, Austria), and the Ministry of Handicrafts and Social Affairs, Morocco.

Participants were drawn from 64 countries. Some came in their personal capacity, while others attended as representatives of governments, international agencies, and non-governmental organizations. The list of participants circulated by the organizers was not updated by the time the conference came to an end.

## ECA's Contribution

ECA's interest in the conference lies in the theme, "The Human Dimension of Local Development: Accepting the Challenge." Although the invitation to participate arrived in Addis Ababa only on 18 June (too late to enable the Commission to prepare a paper for, and make substantial contributions at, the conference) the decision to nominate a delegate paid off. As the representative of the ECA, Dr. N.J. Balogun, Senior Regional Adviser, PHSD, participated at the plenary sessions as well as in group discussions. He also seized the opportunity to brief delegates about ECA's perspectives on the conference theme.

## Why the Focus on the Human Dimension

The International Council on Social Welfare decided on the theme for this year's conference for two major reasons, viz.

- (i) today, people throughout the world are talking increasingly in terms of local development, and of the "local reality of development", and
- (ii) substantial development has taken place in thinking highlighting the importance of the human dimension in development

## The Plenary and Group Sessions

Substantive work began at Plenary Session II which addressed the issue "Local Development: Content and Context". The speakers at this session (Senta Essenfeld, and Rene Lenoir) examined the progress in, and the constraints on, decentralization in different parts of the world. Rene Lenoir (who is the Director of the famous Ecole Nationale d'Administration in France) demonstrated his firm grip of the subject by his detailed and comparative assessment of the situations in different parts of the world, particularly, the western Europe, U.S.A., and Africa. The two speakers, between them, provided a powerful justification for the renewed interest in popular participation at the local level.

At the end of the second plenary session, the participants joined the fora sessions of their choice. The fora sessions examined the following topics:

- Forum A: Cultural Roots of Local Development
- Forum B: Mobilizing Human Resources
- Forum C: Working in Partnership at Local Level
- Forum D: Involvement and Commitment of People is at Stake
- Forum E: Reflecting Local Realities in Policy Formulation

Plenary Session III focused on "The Human Dimension of Local Development." There were two speakers - Athonsine Bonya and Mahbub Ul-Haq. The former (Ms. Bonya) presented a paper giving a detailed account of the role of non-governmental organizations and voluntary groups in various parts of Africa. In her view, the reality of local development would be greatly enhanced if the potential of such groups were fully explored.

At Plenary Session IV, Professors Nicholas Deakin and Koertjaraningrat (of the Universities of Birmingham and Indonesia, respectively) discussed the topic "Local Development: Practice and Process." Professor Deakin noted that the nation-state, as we used to know it, was exposed to threats from two opposite sides - the local community and the supra-national bureaucracies. The clamour for popular participation and for the empowerment of local communities means that the national government has to shed some of its powers and functions. At the same time, the demand for regional economic integration leads to the possibilities that the same national government would have to surrender some of its powers to supra-national bodies. This raises two major questions. First, is there no danger of a back-lash against the whittling down of "national" power? Second, what yardsticks can we use to decide on the optimum division of powers and functions among the various levels of government - local, national, and supra-national? These questions are relevant not only to Europe (especially as 1992 approaches, and the iron curtain separating the east from the west comes down) but also to Africa.

At the end of the discussions on the Plenary IV presentations, the participants went to one of the following seminar groups:

- Seminar 1: Work and Employment
- " 2: Health
- " 3: Literacy
- " 4: Education and Training
- " 5: Housing, Town and Country Planning
- " 6: Environment

- Seminar 7: Nutrition
- " 8: Building up Local Democracy
- " 9: Creating Social Solidarity
- " 10: Linking Local Development to Regional and National Policy
- " 11: Administrative Aspects of Local Development

Plenary Session V was set aside for Morocco. Examining the sub-theme "The Dynamics of Local Development in Morocco, the speakers (Abdelwhed Belkeziz, Jallal Said, Fouad Lahlou, Mohammed Bijaad, and Driss Toulali) briefed the delegates about current developments in the administration of local communities in Morocco.

The "Morocco Day" (as Session V was tagged) was followed by the Commission Meetings. Like the fora seminar sessions referred to earlier, the Commission Meetings represented another device to enhance opportunities for individual participation in discussions. The authors' forum served more or less the same purpose.

Up to the later part of Thursday, 28 June, discussions at plenary and group sessions did not appear to be coordinated and well-focused. It was at the Regional Meetings (held between 14.30 and 17.30 on 28 June) where delegates from different parts of the world (Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America) were able to relate the conference theme to their unique situations.

In his presentation at the Africa Regional Meeting, the ECA representative brought the delegates up-to-date about ECA's perspectives on development strategies and the human dimension. According to him, the challenge which the Marrakech conference theme exhorted the people to accept had been defined at conferences organized by the ECA. Starting with the international conference held in Abuja in 1987; through the 1988 conference in Khartoum, Sudan; and the most recent (February 1990) conference held in Arusha, Tanzania, the ECA has consistently challenged the purely economic notion of development and argued in favour of a human-centred development philosophy. The ECA's view is informed not only by Africa's sad experience in implementing centrally imposed development plans and policies, but also by the reservoir of energy which the erstwhile top-down approach to development administration failed to explore and exploit. The ECA representative then proceeded to intimate the delegates about the conclusions and recommendations of the Khartoum and Arusha Conferences. He circulated the following publications and advised those who wished that copies be sent to them to supply their addresses and indicate the language preferences:

- (i) The Khartoum Declaration
- (ii) African Charter for Popular Participation
- (iii) AAF-CAP
- (iv) The African Alternative: Putting the People First

A total of 69 requests were received [please see Annex A, attached].

LIST OF DELEGATES INTERESTED IN  
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