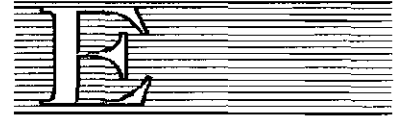
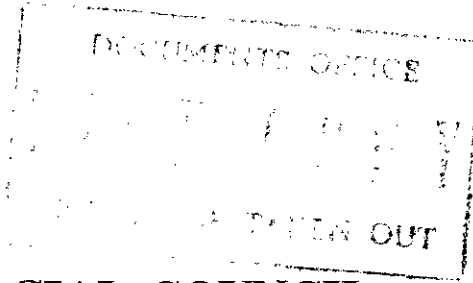


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**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**



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21 April 1998

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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

First Preparatory Meeting of Experts of the
Ministerial Follow-up Committee of the
Conference of Ministers responsible for
economic and social development and planning

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
23 April 1998

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REFORM OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSIONS:

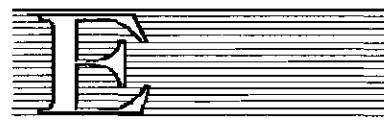
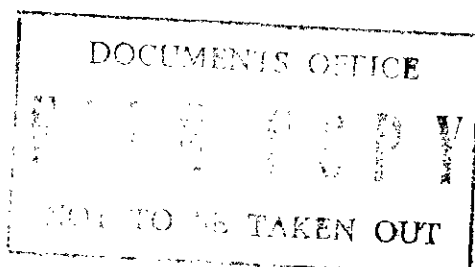
**RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ECA, UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES,
REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN AFRICA**

NOTE BY THE SECRETARIAT



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**RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ECA, UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES,
REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN AFRICA**

NOTE BY THE SECRETARIAT

Recommendation 1: Reaffirm and support existing coordination mechanisms at the regional level

United Nations General Assembly resolution 32/197 provided that the regional commissions exercise team leadership and responsibility for coordination of the United Nations system at the regional level. The national counterpart to the regional coordinating role of the regional commissions, provided in the same resolution 32/197, is the Resident coordinator system. Today, while the Resident Coordinator System is widely accepted and is being reinforced, the regional operations of the entities of the United Nations in the economic and social sector are marked by selective and fragmented coordinating arrangements, resulting in less use of the team leadership role of the regional commissions. Yet, as more and more organizations of the United Nations increase the scope of their regional level activities, the need for inter-agency coordination will increase. An important first step in enhancing collaboration between ECA and the United Nations agencies is to reaffirm and support the coordinating role assigned to ECA in resolution 32/197. The agencies should use the mechanism of Regional Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) first suggested in 1994 by the Secretary General and already in operation in virtually all the other regions. The regional ACC would be useful in addressing several regional issues, including, of course, questions such as follow-up to the global conferences, and various programmes on post conflict reconstruction developments in Africa.

Recommendation 2: Adopt some principles for regional coordination

In contemplating the issue of regional level coordination among the United Nations agencies, it is important to recognize the premise and goal of what such coordination would achieve. The key premise is that all agencies have regional or subregional level programmes, as distinct from country-level operations. The agencies should endeavour to foster regional coordination on the basis of promoting greater exchange of information on planned and ongoing work; improve complementarities among the programmes; draw on each other competencies; and bring the pool of resources - financial and human - at their disposal of agencies to bear on policy issues of common interest.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen Coordination at the subregional level

Increasingly, as noted earlier, many agencies of the UN are also operating at the subregional level. This presents opportunities for greater collaboration as well as coordination at that level. Indeed, because the subregional level is a notch closer to the member States, coordination or collaboration at this level should take the form of development of joint ventures to support the specific activities of countries in the subregional framework. In this way, the complementarities and harmony sought at the regional level is given greater impact and impetus. Given that the opportunities of linking subregional programmes to CSN and UNDAF are greater at subregional level, ECA's Subregional Development Centres for example, should serve as the bridge for involvement on those two processes.

Recommendation 4: The role of ECA in normative and operational functions

In reviewing the role of ECA, as a United Nations regional Commission and as part of the landscape of regional institutions in the service of Africa's development, it has been found that provisions of its normative services (analysis, advocacy, norm-setting) and operational activities have been mutually complementary and supportive to the member States of the region. Obviously, the balance of its work should remain tilted towards normative functions, but its technical assistance should be maintained because of its catalytic role in translating its normative work into concrete support for the development efforts of member States.

Recommendation 5: Enhanced cooperation among African organizations

At the regional level, there is already an implicit specialization and division of labour among Africa's three premier intergovernmental organizations: OAU, ECA and AfDB. Still, there is now a need to promote a more clear-cut division of responsibilities, and to rationalize and strengthen complementarities among the three organizations more strictly along their mandates and competencies as a means to increasing their combined effectiveness, impact and efficiency in their collective mandate - to oversee the overall development of Africa at the regional level. This calls for the African organizations to strengthen their Joint Secretariat by implementing among themselves similar strategies as outlined above for the United Nations system. In particular, they should :

- (a) Strengthen coordination, including collaboration in programme development, planning of activities, monitoring and evaluation, geared to building upon and exploiting complementarities;
- (b) Improve networking and communications at all staff levels, and not only at the level of the Chief Executives;
- (c) Work to establish a common ethos among their staff, based on a common perspective of Africa's political, social and economic development challenges and opportunities, and a common zeal to move Africa forward;
- (d) Streamline and coordinate their intergovernmental machineries : The governing bodies of all African organizations could be required to summarize, in a joint report, their main decisions for submission to the Summit of the African Heads of State and Government, which is the supreme organ of the African Economic Community.

The recommendations above offer a framework for a more coherent, integrated, effective and efficient system focused on the goals of Africa's development agenda. They also provide a basis for reaffirming the role of ECA in fostering Africa's development, in particular through a strong complementary relationships with UN agencies and regional and subregional organizations. The member States as represented in the Ministerial Follow-up Committee are requested to review and provide guidance on these recommendations for streamlining and strengthening the operations of the development agencies of the United Nations system in Africa as well as African regional organizations.

restructuring and streamlining, sharper focus on a consolidated set of priorities in Africa's development, a more efficient operational structure, decentralization of responsibilities accompanied by increased accountability, a higher prominence given to the use of up-to-date information and networking, and emphasis on a culture of team-work. The purpose of the reforms was to strengthen ECA to continue in its role as a major facilitator and promotor of economic and social development in Africa.

7. The reforms implemented by ECA have encompassed three dimensions : programmes and priority setting, institutional and organizational restructuring, and managerial strengthening. An objective analysis of Africa's development challenges and opportunities vis-à-vis ECA's core competencies led to the adoption of a streamlined new programme structure with a consolidation of themes from a total of 9 in the 1992-1997 medium-term plan to 5 in the programme for 1998-2001. In the new programme there is a congruence between programmes themes and implementing divisions. The five new themes are: facilitating economic and social policy analysis; ensuring food security and sustainable development; strengthening development management; harnessing information and communications for development; and promoting regional cooperation and integration. Two themes -- capacity building and promoting women in development -- were considered to be cross-cutting and, therefore, are mainstreamed across the five thematic sub-programmes.

8. Organizational restructuring, has focused on streamlining and strengthening programme planning, budgeting, financial control, monitoring and evaluation; the building of a team-based human resources and systems management function; and tightened management of physical facilities, procurement and general services. Attention has also been given to the establishment of a more effective internal and external communications strategy. This includes a new publications programme and dissemination strategy, electronic networks, and increased use of computers, e-mail and the Internet. Managerial strengthening has involved moving ECA from a hierarchical, output-oriented structure to a flat, flexible, team-based, results-oriented structure; decentralization of resources and decision-making (to the extent permitted under UN budgetary rules) to programme-implementing divisions, in return for greater accountability for results; and increased emphasis on staff training for skills upgrading and to engender a culture of team-work.

9. Institutional restructuring has involved the transformation of the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres (MULPOCs) into Subregional Development Centres (SRDCs), and strengthening these centres, in terms of human and financial resources. The goal is to redeploy 25 percent of the Commission's resources to SRDCs by the end of 1998. The Commission has also streamlined its intergovernmental machinery, eliminating overlapping bodies which deal with related issues, thus promoting greater coherence and coordination within the intergovernmental machinery. This has resulted in fewer subsidiary bodies and a reduced number of meetings, saving the time and travel costs of national decision-makers, strengthening the quality of decisions and programme directives, and releasing resources for substantive activities.

10. The early outcome of ECA's renewal, re-orientation and restructuring process has been a more focused and selective approach in its work programming and clearer responsibilities for programme managers. The results expected by the end of the current biennium are a marked increase in efficiency and timeliness, measurable impacts, and a higher rating of ECA products by Member States, partners and other clients. The long-term objective of this renewal is a better purposed and stronger ECA, more effective in its partnership with other organizations, and playing an enhanced role in the development of Africa. Thus, reforms already implemented at ECA accurately anticipated the United Nations system-wide reforms. They have laid the ground for second-track reforms of the collective operations of the UN system in Africa, to bring about greater unity of purpose, coherence of effort and agility in responding to the pressing needs of African States.

11. Looking to the future, ECA is devoting much attention to the development of performance indicators and enhancing guidelines for monitoring programme implementation and measuring results and impact. These tools will be useful in enhancing the cost-effectiveness of the Commission's work, but also in moving towards the system of results based budget to be introduced in the United Nations.

III. ROLE OF ECA IN AFRICA'S INSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM

12. An objective assessment of the role of Regional Commissions vis-à-vis global bodies of the United Nations, on one hand, and vis-à-vis other regional and subregional intergovernmental bodies, on the other, needs to be situated within the specific regional contexts within which each of the Commissions work and which shape the scope of their mandates. Thus, there are general similarities as well as specific differences between RCs which must be recognized. In the case of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the context within which its review and evaluation should be conducted is the development situation in Africa, a continental region with 53 sovereign States, Members of the United Nations.

A. The African regional context

13. The international community, acting through the United Nations, has for long recognized the development of Africa as an important priority. International attention was drawn in the mid-1980s by the grave economic crisis in Africa precipitated by an extensive and prolonged drought, a looming external debt burden, weak external markets for the region's commodities and falling terms of trade, massive disequilibria on external and domestic accounts, falling economic output, famine and deteriorating social conditions in many countries. A Special Session of the General Assembly in 1986 adopted a recovery programme for Africa -- the United Nations Programme of Action for Africa's Economic Recovery and Development, 1986-1990 (UN-PAAERD).

14. The Secretary-General's report on the final review of this programme, in September 1991, concluded that, although a great majority of African countries had implemented initiatives and reforms within the framework of structural adjustment programmes, the continent continued to need "an international framework of cooperation" in the 1990s. It recommended that "a new compact for African development in the 1990s" be forged by Africa and the international community to support Africa's development strategies. Such a compact was formalized with the adoption, by the General Assembly, of resolution 46/151 (December 1991), which established the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) as a successor recovery programme. ECA, since 1986, has chaired, and provided a small permanent secretariat to, the Inter-Agency Task Force on Africa's Economic Recovery and Development (IATF). This mechanism was set up to coordinate interventions by UN system agencies, including BWIs, as well as regional organizations under UN-PAAERD. The same coordination arrangement continued under UN-NADAF.

15. Many African countries have made tremendous efforts to create conditions for economic turn-around, sustainable development, social progress, peace and stability. Across the region, however, countries have continued to face formidable economic, social and political problems. Poverty has continued to deepen, affecting over 40 percent of the African population. Indeed, it is generally acknowledged that Africa is the only region in the world where poverty continues to spread. And, while in recent years there has been a surge in international trade and private capital transfers to the developing world, which have driven sustained rapid economic transformation and high growth rates of economic output in Asia and Latin America, Africa has been largely by-passed by this wave. African countries have not been able to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by globalization to boost trade and attract much needed foreign investment.

16. African Heads of State and Government, concerned that the socio-economic situation in Africa had remained precarious despite the efforts of many countries, and alarmed at the inexorable marginalization of the continent in the global economic and political arenas, in 1995, adopted the strategy document, "Relaunching Africa's Economic and Social Recovery and Development : The Cairo Agenda for Action" (AHG/Res. 236 (XXXI)). This re-affirmed the primary responsibility of the African people and Governments for their countries' development. It also identified priority issues to be addressed urgently. These included : democracy, governance, peace, security, stability and sustainable development; food security; capacity building and human resources development; structural transformation of African

economies, including economic diversification, infrastructural development, and the environment; effective mobilization and efficient utilization of resources; and regional economic cooperation and integration. The Cairo Agenda for Action called for international support and assistance in the areas of trade, investment, and external debt.

17. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, together with heads of agencies and organizations of the UN system represented in the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), responded to Africa's continuing development problems and the call by Africa's leaders. They put together the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa (UN-SIA), which was launched in March 1996. This initiative, intended to complement and reinforce UN-NADAF, had two objectives : to carry out the best supportive actions congruent with Africa's priorities to stimulate an added push for development in Africa; and to mobilize the political support needed to ensure timely action is taken to remove some of the obstacles to the region's development. The UN-SIA action programme will be implemented over 10 years, focusing on select priorities of a strategic nature. ECA, in its capacity as co-chair of the ACC Steering Committee, has played a key role in the formulation and planning of the UN-SIA, and in its launching and implementation in the African countries.

18. The importance that the international community places on the development of Africa has been expressed as well in other forums beyond the General Assembly. Platforms and programmes of action adopted at each of the global conferences of this decade -- the International Conference on Children (New York, 1990), Earth Summit (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), Population (Cairo, 1994), the Social Summit (Copenhagen, 1995), Women (Beijing, 1995), Shelter (Istanbul, 1996), and Food (Rome, 1996) -- all have paid special attention to the development problems faced by Africa. In recognition of its importance, the development of Africa has been identified as one of the eight priority areas of the United Nations' medium-term plan for 1998-2001.

B. ECA's dual role in Africa

19. The institutional architecture arrayed against Africa's development challenges has four principal pillars. The Governments of Member States, acting individually and collectively through the fora and machinery of intergovernmental organizations, are the first pillar. The second pillar is composed of the regional and subregional inter-governmental organizations. The three senior regional organizations -- the OAU, ECA and AfDB -- collaborate closely within the framework of their Joint Secretariat. A fourth regional organization, the African Export-Import Bank (AfreximBank), was established by African States in 1993. Regional economic communities (RECs) in each of Africa's five geographical subregions -- Northern, Western, Central, Eastern, and Southern -- AMU, COMESA, ECOWAS, and SADC, are also part of the second pillar. ECA, established 40 years ago, is the oldest member of the second pillar. The third pillar is provided by the United Nations system acting as a collective entity. ECA is a central member of this pillar, too. The fourth pillar, but by no means the least important, is provided by African civil society and private sector organizations. If the four pillars hold together, they have the capacity to provide a powerful, resourceful, and most effective instrumentality for working towards Africa's development objectives. ECA, through its interactions with each of the entities in this institutional system, plays an important role.

C. ECA's functions and activities

20. ECA's functions and services in support of Africa's development are founded on strong and unique comparative advantages. It is at once an integral part of the United Nations system and a pivotal player in Africa's regional intergovernmental institutional architecture. Its multidisciplinary approach to problem-solving is a distinct comparative strength among the United Nations family for promoting and supporting socio-economic development in Africa. The Commission is well placed to assist member States articulate common positions on Africa's development. It has privileged convening powers and ready access to policy makers and opinion leaders for effective policy advocacy on critical development issues. Its critical

partnerships with OAU, AfDB and the subregional economic communities allows the collective identification and execution of comprehensive strategies for Africa and bring about solutions and actions at the highest political levels. Building on these attributes and following the extensive consultations and reviews that have been undertaken to reform and renew the Commission, the services that it renders have now been more clearly identified and have been differentiated into six distinct functional product lines. These are briefly outlined in the next few paragraphs.

1. Advocacy and policy analysis

21. Analytical activities are at the core of the overall work of ECA in fulfillment of its mandate, as it is in the other RCs. Services include research on, and analysis of, the economic and social situation in Africa. In performing this role, the Commission in future will draw to a greater extent upon the work of other sources of knowledge and expertise in the area of economic and social development -- for example, African national and regional research centres. ECA's work will synthesize and help to disseminate the findings that are being generated by African researchers and development professionals.

22. Advocacy is closely linked to ECA's analytical and norm-setting functions. As carried out by ECA, advocacy is a function with two dimensions : internal and external. Within Africa, it involves the promotion of sound policies and the popularization of best practices in economic and social development. Externally, ECA's advocacy is geared to promoting increased understanding of the complexity of Africa's development situation, and appreciation for the efforts and sacrifices being made by the African people and Governments to lift themselves up. In the late 1980s, ECA, alongside UNICEF and ILO, was instrumental in drawing attention to the social impacts of macro-economic adjustment policies. At the request of the General Assembly in 1988, ECA conducted a study on structural adjustments in Africa, culminating in the "African Alternative Framework for Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Development" (AAF-SAP). This contributed to improvements in subsequent design of economic reforms. ECA's advocacy is also aimed at informing or sensitizing Africa's external partners in development about the region's need for sustained inflow of external resources supplementary and complementary to the resources and efforts mobilized by Africans on their own.

23. Fostering regional cooperation and integration has been an important part of ECA's advocacy work. ECA's activities in this area have entailed a two prong strategy: helping member States in strengthening intra-African linkages especially through infrastructure development and assisting them to establish or strengthen subregional organizations.

2. Setting standards and norms

24. ECA's work in this area is closely related to its analytical and advocacy work. Regional cooperation and economic integration calls for standards and norms to be set relating to intra-regional free flow of production factors, goods and services. This involves the convergence and harmonization of trade, investment, micro- and macro-economic policy and the standardization of instruments and management practices among countries. It also requires liberalization and harmonization of cross-border transport regulations. Without accepted common standards and norms, it is impossible to sustain progress towards closer cooperation and integration among countries. In the area of transport development, ECA has been involved in setting standards for road safety.

25. Looking to the future, in view of the importance of technology transfer and adaptation to underpin the acceleration of Africa's development, there will be need to set and oversee standards governing such transfer and adaptation -- covering aspects such as personal safety, environmental impacts, compatibility of hardware and software from different suppliers, performance ratings, user documentation, guarantees and product liability, copy rights and patents, etc.

3. Data and information dissemination

26. ECA's publications, regional and international conferences on specific themes, policy seminars and workshops, and statements of its Executive Secretary are the instruments by which it disseminates essential information and statistics on Africa's development. These are also the means through which it popularizes norms, standards, and best practices for equitable and sustainable human-centred development. And, these are the media and platforms for its internal and external advocacy for Africa's development.

27. It is for this reason that, in ECA's on-going reforms, careful attention has been given to designing a new publications programme and dissemination strategy. The hallmarks of this strategy are : the consolidation of the Commission's publications within a few distinct series; strict guidelines to maintain editorial consistency and high standards of analytical rigour, accuracy, linguistic expression, graphic presentation and packaging; routine use of internal and external peer reviews to safeguard quality standards and elicit value-added; and the use of multi-media facilities to reach the widest audience possible within Africa and in the rest of the world. In future, ECA will use low-cost multi-media, such as syndicated radio and television programming, newspaper analytical feature articles, audio and video cassettes, CD-ROM, and the Internet to leverage wider access to key development actors, especially within Africa.

28. Analytical work that is solid, authoritative, and original requires information and statistical data bases that are comprehensive, up-to-date, accurate and reliable, internally consistent, original and authoritative. The functions of systematically gathering, screening, archiving, up-dating, analyzing and synthesizing information and statistical data are essential activities underlying analytical work. ECA, therefore, has in its work programme the development of a comprehensive regional information and statistical data base. In addition to underpinning the Commission's analytical work, the dissemination or provision of high quality information and statistics, in its own right, is a service much valued by economic and social operators working or interested in Africa. ECA's 'flagship' publications have comprehensive statistical annexes. The Commission also publishes, annually, "Africa in Figures", a reference pocket booklet on key development indicators.

4. Convening stakeholders and building consensus

29. Conferences, seminars, workshops, and ad-hoc meetings of groups of experts are the most important medium through which ECA disseminates its analytical work, publicizes desired norms, standards and best practices, or carries out its advocacy. But, convening stakeholders with a view to building consensus is an important service in its own right. In a continent of immense diversity, acute problems and challenges, numerous opportunities for disagreement among States or among socio-political and economic interest groups, as well as numerous grounds on which to agree, and development objectives on which cooperation would be immensely beneficial for all involved, there is a premium on consensus building.

30. There are a number of recent examples of ECA's convening power. The Conference on "Reviving Investment in Africa : Partnerships for Growth and Development" organized by ECA in Accra, Ghana, in June 1996, brought together African Governments, African and international business people to discuss investment opportunities in Africa and the necessary conditions to draw private capital to the region. ECA, in collaboration with UNDP within the UN-SIA programme, organized a forum on governance, in Addis Ababa in July 1997, which brought together Government representatives, bilateral agencies, and representatives of civil society to discuss progress made. To mark its Fortieth Anniversary, at the end of April 1998, the Commission's African Centre for Women has organized a major international conference on the theme, "African Women and Economic Development : Investing in Our Future". Its purpose was to highlight the crucial contributions of African women to this continent's development and well-being, and to build regional coalitions across the gender divide in support of removing all the remaining obstacles to the advancement of women and enhancing their participation in the economy and society.

31. The Commission's inter-governmental institutional machinery which provides for annual or biennial meetings of senior policy-makers and African Ministers in key sectors to deliberate on thematic issues of importance to Africa's development also offers a built-in opportunity for convening stakeholders and consensus building. ECA puts this machinery to good use through careful selection of agenda issues, preparation of thematic discussion papers, selection of lead discussants and other key participants, design of discussion formats and special events, and dissemination of consensus positions ensuing from the discussions. The Conference of Ministers responsible for economic and social development and planning, in May 1997, for example, issued a "Declaration on Accelerating Trade and Investment in Africa" which was hailed as a landmark pronouncement by African countries on their collective intent to open up to globalization. The Conference of African Ministers of Finance and Governors of African Central Banks, which took place in March 1997, deliberated and shared experiences on financial sector reforms, effective regulatory oversight and sound financial sector management. The next meeting of the Ministers of Finance, later this year, will draw upon the recent experience of the South-East Asian economies.

32. ECA, in close collaboration with OAU, has provided technical advice and fora for African countries to analyze issues and forge common positions on issues involved in global negotiation processes. Regional conferences to prepare the African common position on environment and development, before Earth Summit (Rio, 1992) galvanized the African contribution to the global deliberations -- that abject poverty and environmental degradation are linked together by a vicious circle which must be broken somehow in order to ensure environmental sustainability. Deliberations in preparation for the Social Summit (Copenhagen, 1995) produced the "African Common Position on Human-Centred Development". Similarly, in 1994, ECA organized the Dakar-Ngor Conference towards the "Regional Platform on Population and Development", preparatory to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) (Cairo, 1994); and, in 1995, it organized a regional conference in Dakar which adopted the "African Platform for Action : African Common Position for the Advancement of Women", preparatory for Beijing.

5. Launching networks and providing connectivity

33. ECA is also now engaged in a new, Information-Age approach to convening stakeholders : building and launching networks of specific, mostly self-selected, experts and interest groups linked by electronic communications networks. These groups will be able to share knowledge, information and data and cross-fertilize each others' ideas on how to overcome this region's complex problems and stimulate its sustainable and accelerated development. A recent example of the practical application of this approach has been the pre-conference dialogue on the Internet by "virtual" participants from all over the world on the themes and subthemes of the international Conference on African women and economic development which ECA is organizing on the occasion of its 40th Anniversary. ECA will occupy an important node point in these networks and will tap into the expertise and knowledge that will be available on-line. But it will only be their facilitator rather than the driving force. ECA will benefit by being able to draw upon the work of African policy research institutes. The networks will provide a platform for sharing research findings and latest thinking on practical solutions to development problems in Africa. ECA is one of the sponsors of the African Information Society Initiative (AISII) to launch Africa into the new Information Age. ECA technical assistance in the area of information, communications, building networks, and use of the Internet, is much sought after by Member States.

6. Technical Cooperation/Operational activities

34. Technical Cooperation is the main vehicle by which the Commission lends a hand to member states in implementing their development policies and objectives. If one conceives of the Commission's advocacy role as prescriptive, then its technical cooperation function involves supporting member states to implement their established priorities and programmes of development. ECA's technical cooperation, by definition, does not involve disbursement of resources. It is free standing in nature. It takes the form of short-term

advisory services rendered to member states and their intergovernmental organizations at their request; training, workshops, seminars and fellowships; institution building; and, field projects.

35. Advisory Services. Advisory services are provided by a team of regional advisors whose members are deployed in the various substantive divisions of the Commission. The Commission's advisory services currently are the principal vehicle for the delivery of its support at the country level. As the resources provided to the Commission for advisory services have increased, so has the scope of the services rendered to member states. However, to ensure impact, the services are being refocused to address only pointed and sharply defined policy and technical problems facing member States and for which they lack the required specialized expertise.

36. Training, Workshops, Seminars and Fellowships. ECA's training, seminars, workshops and fellowship programmes are designed to increase and improve skilled manpower capacity required for the socioeconomic development of member states. The Commission organizes over 40 group training, workshops and seminars every year. These exclude those that are organized jointly with or separately by the ECA-sponsored Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP).

37. Institution Building. ECA has been instrumental in the building of various regional technical institutions to buttress the socioeconomic development of Africa. The range of institutions encompasses such fields as science and technology, banking and finance, minerals and remote sensing, and planning and management. There are at present a total of 30 ECA-sponsored technical institutions operating in these fields. In addition, ECA has played a catalytic role in the formation of the various subregional economic groupings which are the building blocks of the African Economic Community, as well as such professional associations as the Association of Tax Administrators of Africa, and the African Federation of Women Entrepreneurs. ECA continues to provide essential management and operational support to most of these institutions.

38. Field Projects. These operational projects are supported by funding partners on the basis of established project documents which the Commission implements for the benefit of its member states. The Commission has field projects in most of its subprogrammes. There has been concern that activities under these field projects may overlap or duplicate the operational activities of the global agencies of the multilateral system. However, ECA's activities like those of the other regional commissions are quite different. First, these field projects generally have a regional and subregional orientation as opposed to the country-base orientation of the operational activities of the agencies. Moreover, the operational activities of the regional commissions are essentially of a catalytic nature and of a short-term duration while those of the agencies have heavy investment outlays and tend to be of long-term duration, in many cases spanning a programme cycle of about 5 years and beyond.

39. Except for advisory services which are funded wholly by the regular budget of the United Nations, all the other forms of technical cooperation activities are largely supported by extrabudgetary resources which the Commission is able to mobilize from bilateral and multilateral sources, as well as, from the Funds and Programmes of the United Nations System. The UNDG agencies, particularly UNDP and UNFPA, have traditionally been the most important sources of extra-budgetary resources. But, in recent years, ECA, along with other RCs, has suffered a significant reduction in the extra-budgetary resources available for implementing subregional and regional programmes and projects. UNDP and UNFPA resources channelled through ECA fell from US\$28.8 million and \$8.6 million, respectively, (a total of \$37.4 million) in 1990-91, to \$3.6 million and \$4.1 million, respectively, (a total of \$7.7 million) in 1996-97. There are a number of reasons for this sharp decline.

40. The UNDG agencies have experienced difficulties in mobilizing increased resources for operational activities. But, a major reason has been the decision to reduce regional funding in favour of country programmes implemented under national execution, and in favour of subregional programmes under

execution by subregional intergovernmental organizations. Another important factor has been the growing trend towards own execution of regional and subregional projects by UNDG agencies themselves. These trends have been bolstered by General Assembly directives in resolutions 44/211, 47/199 and 50/120, under the triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the UN system. The last resolution called for “ways of enhancing the coordination of United Nations development activities at the regional and subregional levels, including ways of enhancing the role of the regional commissions ...”. But it did not go far enough in clarifying how this could be done.

IV. ECA PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICA

41. Forging effective partnerships is one of the guiding principles that has underpinned ECA’s reform and renewal. This reflects the recognition that ECA could be even a greater facilitator for Africa’s development, if it worked not as a self contained or sole player, but in close collaboration and coordination with other key actors in Africa. ECA has a well-established history of collaboration with UN agencies and African regional and subregional organizations.

A. Partnerships in the United Nations system

42. As a regional arm of an integrated United Nations programme in the area of economic and social development, like other RCs, ECA carries the responsibility to provide regional policy input in the work of the entire UN system, including the Secretariat, ECOSOC, the specialized agencies, and the funds and programmes. Its dual role as an African intergovernmental organization as well as an agency of the UN system places it in a position of knowledge concerning the perspective and objectives of African countries as clients of other agencies of the UN system. It is thus in a good position to work in partnership with those agencies in ensuring that their programmes meet the needs of the African countries.

1. Patterns and potentials of cooperation

43. As part of its reform and renewal exercise, and building on past relationships, ECA has entered into constructive dialogue with a number of agencies to deepen its cooperation with UN-System partners. Some concrete partnership activities have already been agreed with several of the agencies including especially the Bretton-woods Institutions, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNCTAD. Abundant opportunities for collaborative work with other agencies exist in the Commission’s work programme to enhance UN programmes and help avoid duplication. These will be exploited increasingly.

44. Cooperation with Bretton Woods Institutions: In recent years, there has been considerable convergence in ECA and World Bank perspectives on the reform agenda that African countries should implement in order to stimulate growth and reduce poverty. The groundwork has been laid for collaboration and the two organizations are committed to working together closely in a variety to areas where ECA can provide value-added services, particularly in poverty monitoring, assessment, and analyses; these services would then be followed up by policy advocacy, a special comparative advantage for the Commission, which is well placed to promote African ‘ownership’ of economic and social reforms. To enable ECA’s work, the Bank will collaborate on research issues of population, food security, environment, and infrastructure development, as well as share its comprehensive African household survey database.

45. In addition, ECA and the Bank’s Economic Development Institute are forging a strong relationship for collaborating on training and capacity-building through seminars and workshops on poverty analysis, gender advocacy, and knowledge management. The International Monetary Fund has indicated interest in helping ECA strengthen its capacities in policy analysis, research and data processing, and the collection of fiscal, monetary, and balance-of-payment statistics. These efforts would be facilitated through training at the IMF Institute and through visitor programmes at the IMF for ECA staff.

46. UNDP: UNDP's strong country presence and mandate to support and coordinate UN activities at the national level are highly complementary to the Commission's responsibility for promoting economic and social development. Through strengthened collaboration between ECA and UNDP at the country level, both organizations can provide effective support for the development of African countries. One area of growing opportunity for joint action is assisting Member States to formulate and implement Country Strategy Notes, a major tool for guiding the development efforts in Member States. UNDP utilization of ECA's multi-disciplinary professional staff, especially the regional advisors, will be another major area for collaboration. Working together to provide technical support at the country level will help to ensure the best-targeted and most cost-effective assistance.

47. At the regional level, the convergence between ECA's new strategic directions for 1997-2001 and UNDP's fifth inter-country programme for 1997-2001 has provided the basis for collaborative activities especially in the areas of gender equity, private-sector development information technology, trade promotion, and issues of governance.

48. ECA expects to collaborate with UNFPA, FAO, and UNEP to integrate and bring the nexus issues of food security, population, and the environment to the forefront of regional and national planning. UNFPA and ECA already cooperate in the management and operations of the Country Support Teams. UNFPA is supporting ECA's major operational programme on reproductive health and advocacy. It has also indicated readiness to support ECA's programmes of activities in the areas of gender, poverty, informatics, and the role of civil society in the management of population dynamics.

49. In similar fashion, ECA expects to continue working with FAO to build a regional framework, including the promotion of intra-African and world trade to ensure food security and nutritional sufficiency in line with the Rome Declaration adopted in October 1996. Toward this end, ECA and FAO are now planning a follow-up meeting in Africa to implement the goals of the World Food Summit, which include addressing issues that affect food security such as agriculture and rural development policies and priorities, food reserves, political stability and governance, and stabilization of populations. In addition, ECA and FAO will collaborate to develop a consolidated database on African agriculture and natural resources that will be made available to support those entities working on regional food security.

50. With UNEP, ECA will collaborate on integrating environmental concerns into development policies, providing a forum for discussing transboundary issues related to sustainable development such as pollution and environmental degradation, and keeping the critical concerns of the Rio Conference and Agenda 21 in the forefront of development planning. Specific activities will include joint studies, organization of policy seminars and workshops, and advocacy of environmentally sound development.

51. With UNICEF, the Commission plans to collaborate in the collection and analyses of social and economic data as a tool for monitoring poverty, particularly as it pertains to the socio-economic situation of African children. In addition, ECA will continue to promote the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys initiative and assist with publishing the Annual Report on the State of Africa's Children.

52. In the post-Uruguay Round of trade liberalization and the integration of factor and product markets, Africa faces the challenge of becoming an integral part of the world economy through trade, investment, industrial development, and a balanced relationship with transnational corporations. ECA will collaborate closely with UNCTAD and WTO to assist African countries in developing and adopting policies to increase regional and external trade, with emphasis on viable strategies for diversifying export products and markets. ECA has signed a memorandum of understanding on collaboration with UNCTAD.

53. The Commission and ILO, who share responsibilities as lead UN agencies in poverty reduction for the UN Special System-wide Initiative on Africa, will collaborate to promote informal sector and employment-generating strategies.

54. ECA and WHO will work together by putting forward fiscal policies that benefit health sector development in Africa. They will also strengthen past collaboration in raising awareness about the socio-economic impacts of HIV/AIDS.

55. The Commission and UNESCO will cooperate by utilizing information technology for development, promoting basic education, building the capacities of civil society to ensure good governance, and promoting science and technology exchanges, including South-South cooperation.

56. The Commission's work with UNIDO will centre on private sector and industrial development, as well as devising programmes at the regional level to strengthen the capacities of Member States for trade negotiation and development.

57. Much more still needs to be done to exploit the full synergistic potentials offered by the strong complementarities that exist between ECA and the global agencies at work in Africa. For example, there is no need for global agencies to create new capacity to do multi-disciplinary normative functions at the regional and subregional level in Africa -- while ECA has recognized competencies and comparative advantages in this line of work. In the same way, ECA, compared to UNDP or UNICEF, has limited competence in implementing operational activities for development at the country level, even though it is only through these activities that regional development strategies are finally translated into action. But here lies the basis for complementarity between ECA and UNDP and UNICEF. ECA can describe the overall normative developmental context at the regional, subregional and national levels. The specialized agencies, funds and programmes can describe, mobilize resources for, and implement the operational interventions needed at the sectoral level to achieve the normative objectives of development. ECA's functions in advocacy and policy analysis, convening of stakeholders, data and information dissemination, and launching networks all can be brought to bear for the benefit of the entire UN system.

58. This pattern of collaboration will make the UN agencies respond to the pressing needs of Member States, by operating an efficient 'internal market' for intermediate inputs. In such a market, ECA's normative output will be utilized as input in the operational activities of specialized agencies, funds and programmes in support of national and regional development. On the other hand, ECA will obtain from the agencies such as UNDP and UNICEF that are active at the country level, much of its data and information on the state of Africa's development and its changing economic and social situation which is a pertinent input into the Commission's normative work. The trading of intermediate inputs within the UN system-wide internal market may include provisions for inter-agency budgetary transfers to pay for the production costs of traded services, data and information. The shift away from 'self sufficiency' to 'collective sufficiency' via the internal market will put a premium on the attributes of high quality work -- timeliness, reliability, accuracy, clarity, pertinence, low unit cost, etc.

2. Some problems in coordination

59. As the preceding review reveals, there is collaboration between ECA and other agencies of the UN system working in Africa. There is also much scope for deepening the scope and impact of that collaboration. Nonetheless, there are a number of notable shortcomings in the current coordinating and collaborating arrangements in Africa.

60. In recent years, contrary to the spirit of General Assembly resolution 32/197, there has been progressive encroachment by the UNDG agencies into regional and subregional activities. This has taken the form of involvement in the normative side of regional development activities, the establishment of regional and subregional presence, and the virtual exclusion of ECA (as has also been the experience of other RCs) from their regional development programmes. This, in effect, has paved the way for the emergence of two parallel UN systems at the regional and subregional levels duplicating each other in the normative functions and resulting, no doubt, in cost inefficiencies in the system.

61. As agencies of the global multilateral system have embarked on institutional and programme reforms, a number have opted for a course towards decentralization of substantial operational resources and increased administrative responsibilities to the subregional level. Notable among them are ILO, FAO, the World Bank, and UNDP. Each of these agencies has re-organized (or is in the process of re-organizing) its regional operations within new subregional structures, involving the transfer of staff resources to new subregional centres, variously named by different organizations. UNDP, for example, recently established its Subregional Resource Facilities (SURFs). While the establishment of the subregional offices/facilities may be justified on the grounds of decentralization to increase and improve institutional responsiveness to needs of member States; they pose problems of coordination; without which some of the perceived needs could be lost.

B. Partnerships with African organizations

62. ECA is one of three premier African regional intergovernmental organizations. The other two are the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and the African Development Bank (AfDB). As their names indicate, there is an implicit specialization and division of labour among the continental organizations. The OAU, is pre-eminent among all African organizations because it provides the Summit forum for African Heads of State and Government -- the highest collective decision-making organ on the continent. Among African organizations, therefore, OAU provides leadership on the political dimension of Africa's development. This role was strengthened by African Leaders, in June 1993, when they established the OAU Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution Mechanism. The AfDB has traditionally been responsible for external financial resource mobilization and management of investment projects; but it is reinforcing its capacity for an expanded role in internal financial mobilization and to promote private sector development, as well. The AfreximBank, was established to develop African capacity in international trade finance. ECA, the oldest of Africa's intergovernmental organizations, provides leadership, research, and technical advice on integrated, multi-sectoral, economic and social development in the region.

1. The Joint Secretariat of OAU, ECA and AfDB

63. The Joint Secretariat of OAU, ECA and AfDB provides the framework within which Chief Executives of Africa's premier organizations maintain communications, hold regular consultations, collaborate, and forge common positions on issues in Africa's development. The Joint Secretariat was established by African Heads of State and Government under resolution AHG/Res.179 (XXV) (July 1989), calling upon the three organizations "to coordinate and pool their efforts and resources so as to provide, a Joint Secretariat, the required logistic and technical support to the Permanent Steering Committee in the process of establishing the African Economic Community".

64. At subsequent Summits, African Leaders have assigned specific functions and tasks to be performed. Initially, the Joint Secretariat was instrumental in overseeing the preparation of the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community and its protocols. After the signing of this Treaty at Abuja in June 1991, and its entry into force in May 1994, the new task of the Joint Secretariat switched to overseeing the implementation of the provisions of the Treaty. The first stage has centred on strengthening the regional economic communities (RECs) in each of Africa's five subregions, and launching the Economic and Social Commission of the African Economic Community (AEC-ECOSOC) and its subsidiary sectoral technical committees. At their most recent meeting, in Abidjan in January 1998, the Chief Executives of OAU, ECA and AfDB emphasized "the importance of improving the functioning of the Joint Secretariat with a view to avoiding duplication and enhancing effectiveness."

65. ECA collaborates closely with OAU and AfDB in other areas in addition to the establishment of the AEC. The three institutions work together on advocacy for a lasting solution to Africa's external debt, for example. Their Member States have mandated them to provide technical support to strengthen Africa's participation in multilateral trade negotiations under the WTO.

66. ECA and OAU have always jointly provided a forum to African States to forge African common positions to take to major global conferences or international negotiations. Over the years, a division of labour has been established between the two organizations. ECA provides analytical and technical support to the Member States. OAU provides the political leadership and authority. ECA and OAU have worked together successfully under this division of labour for decades. In 1980, the two organizations, under instructions from the Heads of State and Government, jointly drafted the "Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa, 1980-2000". In 1986, they collaborated in bringing the deepening economic and social crisis in Africa to the attention of the international community, culminating in a special session of the UN General Assembly which adopted a Programme of Action for Africa's Economic Recovery and Development. The three continental organizations, under the Joint Secretariat, have agreed to collaborate, along their lines of specialization, in the area of peace and development, particularly in support of post-conflict peace-building in African subregions making the transition from war to normally.

67. It is clear, therefore, that, at the continental level, among the premier intergovernmental organizations, there is great potential for enhanced partnership. They, however, need to further streamline their work programmes along their lines of specialization, and plan in close collaboration, to eliminate any existing duplications. They need to strengthen communications and networking at all staff levels, and not just at the Chief Executives' level, and they need to develop a stronger ethos of complementarity and collaboration at the operational level. It may also be necessary to establish closer linkage among their governing bodies, to harmonize the instructions under which they operate. These necessary reforms are pertinent to strengthening the Joint Secretariat which, after all, was set up by the Member States with a view to creating significant synergies among the continental organizations.

2. Regional Economic Communities

68. The second tier of intergovernmental organizations in Africa are the regional economic communities (RECs) at the subregional level. The most important of these AMU, COMESA, ECCAS, ECOWAS, and SADC. These five are recognized under the Abuja Treaty as the subregional building blocks of the African Economic Community. In each subregion, however, there are additional strong cooperation arrangements for smaller groupings of countries (for example, CEMAC, EAC, IGAD, UDEAC and UEMOA) which are overlapped by the RECs. Besides being instrumental in the establishment of some of the RECs, ECA has supported the RECs in two important ways. First, by offering technical assistance in capacity building to strengthen the effectiveness and functioning of these institutions. And secondly, ECA, through its subregional development centres, has developed extensive programme of collaboration with the RECs in fostering subregional cooperation on a wide range of issues.

69. ECA, as part of the Joint Secretariat, is required to provide technical support towards strengthening the RECs. The Commission's substantive support for RECs and other subregional intergovernmental organizations is channelled through its SRDCs, which have been mandated by Member States to provide advisory services to these institutions and to facilitate subregional economic cooperation, integration and development.

3. Sponsored institutions

70. The third tier of intergovernmental organizations are technical institutions established by African States at the regional and subregional levels. There are about thirty of these institutions. Under the instructions of Member States, they were 'sponsored' by OAU or ECA. They provide mostly training and research in areas ranging from economic and social policy, to science and technology, cartography and remote sensing, and metallurgical engineering. These institutions, over the last decade, have faced chronic problems due to inadequate and erratic funding and concomitant under-utilization by the Member States.

71. ECA has submitted to Member States a framework proposal to sort these institutions into three categories. In the first, selected technical institutions would be strengthened and integrated more closely into the Commission's work programme. In the second, would be institutions not highly relevant to ECA's work programme and medium-term orientation, but which the Member States wish to maintain. Member States would be expected to find the resources required to run these institutions, possibly with assistance from external development partners. The third group of institutions would be those judged to be unnecessary, which would therefore have to be wound down and their assets liquidated. Among the institutions to be retained, some would have to be merged and streamlined.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

72. The United Nations system-wide reforms, hold much promise for increasing the impact of the collective operational activities of the UN system agencies on the development of Africa. ECA, through wide-ranging reforms that it has already implemented, is well positioned to participate in the UN system-wide reforms.

73. For forty years, the Economic Commission for Africa has served its Member States well, responding to their needs of the time, performing a number of essential functions, notably, coordination, analytical services, norm-setting, advocacy, convening stakeholders and building consensus, and technical cooperation. Over the years, it has developed acknowledged competencies and comparative advantages, and it has carved out niches in line with its dual mandate as an agency in the United Nations system as well as a regional intergovernmental organization. As an African organization, it works in close partnership with sister institutions in the framework of their Joint Secretariat. As the regional arm of the United Nations in Africa, ECA has forged important strategic partnerships with sister agencies, and it has offered coordination services at the regional level.

74. It is true, however, that in recent years while the UN agencies working in Africa have acknowledged the importance of working together, the level of coordination still fall short of the needs for better support to African states. At the same time, African States, by adopting the Abuja Treaty and the Cairo Agenda for Action, have made it clear that they continue to value regional and subregional strategies for development as essential preconditions for sustained development at the national level. The ECOSOC review of the Regional Commissions and subsequent system-wide reforms under the second track offer an opportunity to establish balance, clarify and strengthen the role of the regional Commissions, including Economic Commission for Africa. It is towards this goal that the following recommendations are offered in the first instance for the consideration of the legislative organ of ECA which has a better appreciation of its role in relation to other UN agencies in Africa and the other African regional and subregional organizations.

Recommendation 1: Reaffirm and support existing coordination mechanisms at the regional level

United Nations General Assembly resolution 32/197 provided that the regional commissions exercise team leadership and responsibility for coordination of the UN system at the regional level. The national counterpart to the regional coordinating role of the RCs, provided in the same resolution 32/197, is the Resident coordinator system. Today, while the Resident Coordinator System is widely accepted and is being reinforced, the regional cooperations of the entities of the UN in the economic and social sector are marked by selective and fragmented coordinating arrangements, resulting in less use of the team leadership role of the RCs. Yet, as more and more organizations of the UN increase the scope of their regional level activities, the need for inter-agency coordination will increase. An important first step in enhancing collaboration between ECA and the UN agencies is to reaffirm and support the coordinating role assigned to ECA in resolution 32/197. The agencies should use the mechanism of Regional Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) first suggested in 1994 by the Secretary General and already in operation in virtually all the other regions. The regional ACC would be useful in addressing several regional issues, including, of course, questions such as follow-up to the global conferences, and various programmes on post conflict reconstruction developments in Africa.

Recommendation 2: Adopt some principles for regional coordination

In contemplating the issue of regional level coordination among the UN agencies, it is important to recognize the premise and goal of what such coordination would achieve. The key premise is that all agencies have regional or subregional level programmes, as distinct from country-level operations. The agencies should endeavour to foster regional co-ordination on the basis of promoting greater exchange of information on planned and ongoing work; improve complementarities among the programmes; draw on each other competencies; and bring the pool of resources -financial and human - at the disposal of agencies to bear on policy issues of common interest.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen Coordination at subregional level

Increasingly, as noted earlier, many agencies of the UN are also operating at the subregional level. This presents opportunities for greater collaboration as well as coordination at that level. Indeed, because the subregional level is a notch closer to the member States, coordination or collaboration at this level should take the form of development of joint ventures to support the specific activities of countries in a subregional framework. In this way, the complementarities and harmony sought at the regional level is given greater impact and impetus. Given that the opportunities of linking subregional programmes to CSN and UNDAF is greater at subregional level, ECA's Subregional Development Centres for example, would serve as the bridge for involvement on those two processes.

Recommendation 4: The role of ECA in normative and operational functions

In reviewing the role of ECA, as a UN regional Commission and as part of the landscape of regional institutions in service of Africa's development, we have found that provisions of its normative services (analysis, advocacy, norm-setting) and operational activities have been mutually complementary and supportive to the member States of the region. Obviously, the balance of its work should remain tilted towards normative functions, but its technical assistance should be maintained, because of its catalytic role in translating their normative work into concrete support for the development efforts of member States.

Recommendation 5: Enhanced cooperation among African organizations

At the regional level, there is already an implicit specialization and division of labour among Africa's four premier intergovernmental organizations : OAU, ECA, and AfDB. Still, there is now a need to promote a more clear-cut division of responsibilities, and to rationalize and strengthen complementarities among the three organizations more strictly along their mandates and competencies as a means to increasing their combined effectiveness, impact and efficiency in their collective mandate -- to oversee the overall development of Africa at the regional level. This calls for African organizations to strengthen their Joint Secretariat by implementing among themselves similar strategies as outlined above for the UN system. In particular, they should:

- (a) Strengthen coordination, including collaboration in programme development, planning of activities, monitoring and evaluation, geared to building upon and exploiting complementarities;
- (b) Improve networking and communications at all staff levels, and not only at the level of the Chief Executives;
- (c) Work to establish a common ethos among their staff, based on a common perspective of Africa's political, social and economic development challenges and opportunities, and a common zeal to move Africa forward;

(d) Streamline and coordinate their intergovernmental machineries: The governing bodies of all African organizations could be required to summarize, in a joint report, their main decisions for submission to the Summit of the African Heads of State and Government, which is the supreme organ of the African Economic Community.

B. Action recommended to Member States

75. The recommendations above offer a framework for a more coherent, integrated, effective and efficient system focused on the goals of Africa's development agenda. They also provide a basis for reaffirming the role of ECA fostering Africa's development, in particular through a strong complementary relationships with United Nations agencies and regional and subregional organizations. The member States as represented in the Ministerial Follow-up Committee are requested to review and provide guidance on these recommendations for streamlining and strengthening the operations of the development agencies of the United Nations system in Africa as well as African regional organizations.