



UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Distr.: GENERAL

E/ECA/COE/29/14
18 March 2010

Original: ENGLISH

Twenty-ninth Meeting of the Committee of Experts

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

**Meeting of the Committee of Experts of the 3rd Joint
Annual Meetings of the AU Conference of Ministers of
Economy and Finance and the ECA Conference of
African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic
Development**

Lilongwe, Malawi
25 – 28 March 2010

**Recent organizational changes in the ECA secretariat
Note by the Executive Secretary**

A. Background

1. In 2006, ECA embarked on a major reform programme to reposition itself to serve Africa better in the context of the changes taking place within and outside the continent. In this regard, the Executive Secretary presented a note (E/ECA/CM.39/7) to the thirty-ninth session of the Commission/Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development which articulated the rationale for the repositioning as well as its main elements.
2. The repositioning exercise was guided by the principles of excellence, cost-effectiveness and enhanced partnerships to improve delivery at the programme, managerial, organizational and intergovernmental levels. It was anchored around the two key pillars of promoting regional integration and helping Africa to meet its special needs. These two pillars were supplemented by two other salient thrusts focused on efforts to enhance the role of ECA's subregional offices and to leverage of partnerships to scale up impact. Organizational changes were introduced to accompany the new strategic direction and programme priorities.
3. As a result of the repositioning exercise, ECA has become a stronger, relevant and better-focused organization, able to deliver more effectively on its mandate. Its credentials both as a regional forum for policy dialogue and as an advocate for Africa's development have never been better.

B. Rationale

4. After three years of implementing the reform programme, ECA was able to draw some useful lessons, which necessitated a review and assessment of the progress made in meeting the major objectives of the repositioning exercise in order to identify continuing challenges and make the necessary adjustments to scale up impact. To this end, the Executive Secretary commissioned a high-level international consultant to undertake a comprehensive review and assessment of ECA's programmes and make recommendations to strengthen and realign them to match the changing needs and priorities of member States. The consultant's report was presented to senior ECA managers at a Programme Performance and Management Review in September 2009. The report also benefited from discussions within the Senior Management Team and among a cross-section of ECA staff, as well as inputs from a Task Force established by the Executive Secretary.
5. The purpose of this brief note is to inform the annual session of the Commission/Conference of Ministers about the outcome of the review undertaken, the rationale behind it and the minor organizational changes effected as a result.

C. Review

6. The review found that ECA has made remarkable progress in programme implementation, including in reintroduced subprogrammes like statistics and emerging priority areas not anticipated during the ECA repositioning, especially climate change and the global economic and financial crisis. Partnerships with other organizations, especially the African

Union Commission and the African Development Bank, have been strengthened; and bilateral partners demonstrated their support with significant additional resources to implement the priorities of the ECA Business Plan 2007-2009, which reflected the new strategic orientation of the Commission. Commitments in support of the Business Plan reached \$72 million by the end of 2009. In addition, the subregional offices have all signed multi-year programmes of work with their respective regional economic communities and have received more resources and better support from ECA headquarters.

7. However, the review found that several challenges remained in achieving the objectives of the ECA repositioning. There was fragmentation of responsibility for some key areas of work such as trade and the environment, as well as for important development frameworks such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Brussels Programme of Action (BPOA) and for Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The knowledge management initiative had not lived up to its potential after some initial successes, while the functioning of management support processes had been patchy. Bottlenecks were identified in many parts of the system - including organizational areas where improvements were envisaged in the repositioning exercise, such as planning, budgeting, utilization of resources and recruitment of staff - all of which impacted negatively on efficient and effective programme delivery.

D. Highlights of the organizational changes

8. In the light of the consultant's recommendations and the extensive consultations conducted with staff, some minor organizational changes were effected, which are briefly highlighted below.

9. The former NEPAD and Regional Integration Division (NRID) was reconfigured as the Regional Integration and Trade Division (RITD) incorporating the regional integration, infrastructure and trade sections. This should help overcome the fragmentation of the trade sector, which was split across two divisions, with one handling intra-African trade and the other international trade.

10. The former Trade, Finance and Economic Development Division (TFED) was reconfigured to become the Economic Development and NEPAD Division, comprising the macroeconomic analysis, NEPAD, finance and investment, and MDGs/LDCs sections. Bringing NEPAD and the MDGs/BPOA together in one division is expected to promote coherence across the various global and African development frameworks.

11. Other minor changes in programme structure included the movement of water-related functions back to the Food Security and Sustainable Development Division (FSSD) from the former NRID. The ECA Library was moved back to the ICT and Science and Technology Division to enable it to undertake programme-related work while boosting its links to ICTs. ISTD is to expand the scope of its work in various e-applications, including geo-information. A database coordination function was established in the African Centre for Statistics to deepen its role in this area.

12. To reduce the load on the Office of Strategic Planning and Programme Management and overcome observed bottlenecks, the Budget Section was moved back to the Division of Administration, while a Partnerships and Technical Cooperation Office (PATCO) was established in the Office of the Executive Secretary to manage significantly scaled-up extrabudgetary support. PATCO will serve as the secretariat of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Matters, which was established under the ECA repositioning with tasks including that of managing extrabudgetary resources in a transparent, accountable and efficient manner.

13. It should be noted that the changes were implemented without any budget or staffing implications. All the affected staff were redeployed with their sections and within the existing budget.

E. Conclusion and next steps

14. As reform is a continuous process, the ECA secretariat will continue to review and reorient its work programme to enable it to respond more effectively to the changing needs and priorities of its member States, taking into account new and emerging issues and challenges. ECA will also continue to strengthen its collaboration with other organizations, including the AU, AfDB and various United Nations agencies in order to ensure synergies, avoid duplication and maximize the impact of its work. The approved programme budget for the 2010-2011 biennium will be revised to reflect the outcome of the review and the resulting organizational changes.