



PRESS RELEASE

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THE AFRICAN MINISTERS OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS CONCLUDED THEIR TENTH MEETING IN ADDIS-ABABA, ETHIOPIA

- The Ministers launched a special appeal to the World Bank not to disengage from UNTACDA II activities, but to maintain high level of involvement in and contribution to its programme.

A two-day meeting of the Conference of African Ministers in charge of Transport and Communications took place at Africa Hall, ECA's Headquarters on 20-21 March 1995.

The purpose of this meeting was mainly to assess the progress so far achieved after four years of implementation of the Second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade for Africa (UNTACDA II).

It is worth mentioning that the UNTACDA II programme was officially launched by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 1991 by its Resolution No. 46/456 of 20 December 1991.

The Second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade for Africa is a programme whose main goal is to assist in setting up an integrated Transport and Communications system as a basis for the physical integration of the African continent, and facilitate national and international traffic so as to foster trade and Economic Development.

The programme of UNTACDA II was designed to mobilize all African Governments, Intergovernmental Organizations, the United Nations system and external support agencies for a coherent action in the development of Transport and Communications services in Africa.

The second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade for Africa, which, as its name implies, is a continuation of the first UNTACDA that covered the period 1978-1988, was requested by the Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning at its 6th meeting held in Kinshasa in March 1988.

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Indeed, having considered the evaluation report of the first decade, which clearly showed that despite the fact that not all the set objectives for the decade were achieved, the first decade had the merit of raising awareness on the need and importance of developing transport and communications in Africa, the conference has concluded to the necessity of a second decade in order to consolidate the achievements of the first one.

The 10th meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Transport and Communications was preceded and prepared by the meetings of technical organs such as the Resources Mobilization Committee (RMC) of the Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee (IACC) as well as the meeting of the Intergovernmental Experts of Transport and Communications held from 15 to 18 March 1995 to prepare the Ministerial Conference.

As stated earlier, the 10th meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Transport and Communications had to consider the report of the mid-term evaluation of UNTACDA II programme implementation.

The meeting was formally opened by H.E. Mr. Tamrat Layne, Prime Minister of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia who informed the meeting that UNTACDA II was necessitated by the continued existence of gross infrastructural deficiencies which threatened the achievement of the objectives of the Abuja Treaty establishing the PanAfrican Economic Community and stressed the linkages between adequate Transport and Communications services and agricultural production in the rural areas where most people live.

Noting the fact that the programme had encountered serious shortcomings partly because of external factors but also because African countries had failed to internalize the programme, the Prime Minister of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia urged that resources be pooled and concentrated on a few realistic priorities for better results. He furthermore suggested the reformulation of the programme where necessary and urged African countries for innovative individual and collective resource mobilization strategies as well as the creation of effective national project implementation and monitoring bodies for the Decade programme.

The 10th meeting of African Ministers of Transport and Communications was marked by a massive participation of African countries: 41 out of the 53 African countries members of ECA. This represents more than 77%. In general, the numerous declarations made during this meeting by various delegations stressed the firm commitment of African countries to support the Decade programme and to do everything possible to allow the Decade achieve its objectives.

After its deliberations, the tenth meeting of the African Ministers of Transport and Communications adopted five resolutions aimed at reinforcing support to the UNTACDA II and specifying the measures to be undertaken to ensure more chance of success to the Decade programme. These are : i) Resolution on the implementation of phase II of the programme of the UNTACDA II; ii) Resolution on the reactivation of the Trans-African Highway bureau; iii) Resolution on the implementation of Regional programmes of UNTACDA II on Human Resources and Institutional Development, and Transport Data Base; iv) Resolution on the Yamoussoukro Declaration on a new African Air Transport Policy; and v) a Resolution on UNCTAD's contribution to the implementation of phase II of UNTACDA II.

Since, it was agreed to concentrate efforts to regional projects to give more chance to the regional integration, the Conference adopted a programme of action to be implemented on regional level during the period 1995 - 1997 more specifically. This action programme also covers activities to be undertaken at the sub-regional as well as the national levels. In this connection, the Conference has clearly entrusted the Sub-regional Organizations with the task of supervision of all national projects. These IGOs will report to the Decade lead agency, which is the ECA.

Specifically, since it was found that the great responsibility of low results of the implementation of the Decade programme mainly lay on African member States most of which seemed not to promote the same priorities vis-a-vis the donors, the Conference of African Ministers of transport and communications launched through the resolution on the implementation of phase II of the programme of the UNTACDA II, a strong appeal to member States to: i) accord priority to national projects which contribute to the achievement of the Decade objectives; ii) coordinate and strengthen national efforts in fund-raising so as to be able to access regional IPFs from such sources as the Lomé Convention for the implementation of the Decade programme; iii) facilitate and encourage National Coordinating Committees (NCC) activities by providing them with the necessary human and financial resources to enable them to accomplish their assigned tasks. The Ministers have also requested inter-governmental organizations to take active part in the UNTACDA II programme by carrying out in their regular work programme activities listed in the UNTACDA II programme with priority given to those that make for regional integration. Furthermore, the Conference has requested all the funding institutions and specifically the Executive Board of UNDP to increase the level of its support to UNTACDA II by funding part of the regional action programme for the implementation of the second phase of the UNTACDA II programme. In addition, following its willingness to disengage from the UNTACDA II activities, a special appeal was also made to

the World Bank to maintain a high level of involvement in and contribution to the implementation of the UNTACDA II programme.

The next (11th) meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Transport and Communications will take place during the first quarter of 1997. During that meeting, a thorough assessment of accomplishments of the Decade will again be made. From now up to 1997, ECA, the IACC, all the working groups and, of course, the member States themselves are urgently requested to do their utmost to implement the activities of the Decade.

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