



PRESS RELEASE

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A MEETING ON NEW STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR ECA OPENED TODAY IN ADDIS ABABA (22 JANUARY 1996)

- The Ethiopian Minister of Planning and Economic Development, H.E. Ato Girma Birru, paid tribute to ECA and its Executive Head, Dr. K.Y. Amoako for mapping out a good future for ECA

- The new ECA Head made a forceful plea to a special meeting of experts from all over Africa in Addis Ababa today for their help in the process of renewing ECA "to serve Africa better"

A three-day meeting of a group of experts to review the background paper on the new strategic directions for the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) begun today, Monday, 22 January 1996, in Addis Ababa with the participation of more than forty African experts.

Opening the meeting, the Ethiopian Minister of Planning and Economic Development, Ato Girma Birru, praised the renewal process now undertaken at ECA under the leadership of Dr. K.Y. Amoako, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

The Minister emphasized that this process is the right thing to be done at this crucial time for our continent, and Ethiopia is proud to be part of this ongoing process which will map out the future of ECA and equip the organization to serve Africa better.

ECA is, continued the Minister, an organization uniquely positioned to make a positive impact on Africa's economic and human growth at this critical time. And we are impressed by the initiatives and the impact of the Executive Secretary of the Commission, Dr. K.Y. Amoako.

Ato Girma Birru concluded his speech by saying: "We look forward to this eminent group of African thinkers helping ECA to sharpen their focus within the main themes they have identified and strategic areas they have chosen."

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Dr. K.Y. Amoako, Executive Head of ECA, made from the outset a forceful plea to this special meeting of high-level of experts for their help in the process of renewing ECA "to serve Africa better".

He pointed out that his task, since he had joined ECA last year, is to lead in launching a process of change and reform that will prepare ECA to help Africa achieve its vision of the future. And for this we have to buck up and to buckle up, he emphasized, because we are at the dawn of the 21st century with only 3 or 4 years to prepare ourselves for the new era.

He recalled that ECA was instrumental in establishing the African Development Bank (ADB) in the 1960s and it did as well facilitate the setting up of many subregional economic groupings such as the ECOWAS, the PTA, the ECCAS in the 1970s.

ECA has also made a big contribution to the articulation of such landmark strategies as the Lagos Plan of Action, added Dr. Amoako.

But now, what do we want ECA to be by the year 2000? asked the new head of the Commission.

He underlined that since many months a lot of soul-searching and assessment is being conducted at the Commission. Nevertheless, since the Commission is here for Member States, it is important to get their perspectives and through you, some of our leading policy makers and development thinkers and activists, to help us chart the future based presently on three guiding principles such as:

- Need for strategic focus;
- Cost effectiveness and
- Effective partnership.

The strategic focus is basically set up on five programme directions as follows:

- a) Facilitating economic and social policy analysis and implementation,
- b) Ensuring food security and sustainable development,
- c) Strengthening development management,
- d) Harnessing information for development,
- e) Promoting regional cooperation.

It is within each of the above five programme areas that we need your inputs, your thinking... We have our ideas, but we don't have all the answers in terms of where we should plant our flag, within those areas concluded Dr. K.Y. Amoako.

During the two first days the experts will discuss many items among which are: perspectives on the role of ECA in Africa's development, economic and social analysis, economic cooperation and integration, gender development, information for development, food security and sustainable development and development management.

All items on the agenda will be taken at simultaneous roundtable levels by the participants.

The third day of this gathering is going to be devoted to a meeting of the bureau of the Commission whose composition is as follows:

Chairman: Ethiopian Minister of Planning and Economic Cooperation and Development

First Vice-Chairman: Minister of Planning and Territorial Administration of Gabon

Second Vice-Chairman: Minister of Planning of Algeria

Rapporteur: H.E. Ambassador of the Republic of Sierra Leone to Ethiopia.
