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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Eighth Conference of Chief Executives
of ECA-sponsored Regional and
Subregional Institutions

Tangiers, Morocco, 15-17 March 1988

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE ON HARMONIZATION AND STANDARDIZATION OF DOCUMENTATION AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS AT ECA-SPONSORED REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL INSTITUTIONS

ORGANIZATION_OF_THE_MEETING

INTRODUCTION

PART I

1. In pursuance of the recommendation made by the Conference of Chief Executives of ECA-sponsored regional and subregional institutions at its seventh meeting in Tripoli, the first meeting of the Standing Committee on the Harmonization and Standardization of Documentation and Information Systems was held at the UNECA Headquarters in Addis Ababa on 9 -10 February 1988.

2. The present report contains an account of the meeting.

ATTENDANCE

3. Representatives of the following ECA-sponsored regional and subregional institutions attended the meeting: Association of African Trade Promotion Organization (AATPO), African Regional Center for Engineering Design and Manufacturing (ARCEDEM), African Regional Center for Technology (ARCT), African Regional Industrial Property Organization (ARIPO), African Regional Standardization Organization (ARSO); Institut de Formation et de Recherche De 'mographiques (IFORD) Regional Training in Aerial Survey (RECTAS).

The Regional Center for Solar Energy Research and Development (CRES) attended the meeting as an observer.

OPENING_OF_THE_MEETING

4. The Special Assistant to the Executive Secretary of UNECA welcomed the members of the Committee on behalf of the Executive Secretary of UNECA. After pointing out the role of the Standing Committee in promoting harmonization and standardization of ECA-sponsored institutions, he expressed his confidence that the meeting would have a successful outcome.

5. In his opening address on behalf of the Deputy Executive Secretary, the Director of PADIS outlined the background to the convening of the First Standing Committee meeting. He stressed the need to overcome the variety of obstacles that were hindering the flow of information within ECA-sponsored institutions. He further outlined the progress achieved so far with regard to the implementation of the PADIS project and noted the major activities carried out during the years 1986-1987.

1

6. He indicated that the meeting would examine, among other things, the role and functions of the Standing Committee as well as the modalities for cooperation within the PADIS network and noted that the report would be communicated to the Eighth Conference of Chief Executives of ECA-sponsored Institutions. Finally he stressed the importance of the work of the Standing Committee in formulating strategies for future cooperation at the institutions level and expressed the readiness of the Secretariat to assist in all possible ways in the pursuance of this work.

Agenda Item 1:

ELECTION_OF_OFFICERS

7. The following officers were elected:

Chairperson	ECA/PADIS
Vice Chairperson	ARSO
Rapporteur	ARCEDEM

Agenda Item 2:

ADOPTION_OF_THE_AGENDA_AND_PROGRAMME_OF_WORK

8. The agenda adopted was as follows:

1. Election of Officers.

2. Adoption of the Agenda and organization of work.

3. Report on the status of the PADIS project.

4. Terms of reference, organization and function of the Committee on the Harmonization and Standardization of Documentation and Information Systems.

5. Report on the survey of information systems and services at ECA-sponsored regional and subregional institutions.

6. Report on information needs of users in the region.

7. Modalities for co-operation and efficient exchange of information.

8. Other business.

9. Adoption of the report.

9. The Standing Committee adopted the draft programme of work with the proviso that Committee members visit PADIS facilities on the morning of 10 February 1988.

PART II

Agenda Item 3:

Report on the Status of the PADIS Project
(ECA/PADIS/SCH/8.1(iii)/1/2)

10. The Secretariat presented the report on the activities
relating to the PADIS project during the 1986-1987 period.
During this period PADIS expanded its data bases related to
socio-economic development in Africa, provided advisory services
in the establishment of information systems to a number of member
States, and organized training and seminars for staff of national
documentation centres as well as regional institutions. The
Secretariat also informed the meeting of three products, namely
the PADIS newsletter, the SDI (Selective Dissemination of
Information) and Question/Answer Services. Other activities
relating to the probable linkages of ECA and UN headquarters com-
puters as well as the progress on the establishment of sub-
regional centres were also described.

11. In the ensuing discussions a member of the Committee wanted
to have further information on participating centres including
their names and locations; another member inquired about the
availability of funds for ECA sponsored institutions for training
purposes. In response, the representative of PADIS reported that
the PADIS network was composed of the Central Coordinating
Office, four PADIS subregional centres, national focal points and
regional and sub-regional institutions such as the ECA-sponsored
institutions and elaborated on their present status. He indicated
that so far Algeria, Benin, Botswana, Cape Verde, Central African
Republic, Ethiopia, Guinea, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco,
Seychelles, Sudan, Togo and Zaire have designated their focal
points.

12. As regards the PADIS training programs, it was noted that
regular information was provided in the PADIS Newsletter. In view
of limited financial resources, the Secretariat indicated that
training funds were primarily directed for use by member States.
It nevertheless indicated that it had, in the past, assisted in-
stitutions in training their staff and reaffirmed its support for
providing training funds to ECA Sponsored institutions whenever
possible. On this issue Committee members urged PADIS to increase
its assistance to ECA-sponsored institutions.

Agenda Item 4:

Terms of reference, organization and function of the
Committee on the Harmonization and Standardization of
Documentation and Information Systems (ECA/PADIS/SCH/8.1(iii)/1/3

13. The Secretariat presented the draft terms of reference and rules of procedures of the Standing Committee prepared by a working group which met in September in Addis Ababa and which was composed of ARSO, ARCT and ACARSOD. The meeting considered issues such as membership, functions, organization and working languages of the Standing Committee and made amendments to the text as incorporated in annex 1 of the report.

14. Some members of the Committee were of the opinion that non-ECA sponsored institutions active in information and documentation activities could also be considered for full membership, other members however, pointed out that the Standing Committee establihed by the Conference of Chief Executive concerns only ECA sponsored institutions and ECOWAS and argued that modifying its composition would require a decision by the Conference of Chief Executives and would imply a change of the official title of the Standing Committee.

15. A good deal of discussion centered on the question of membership. It was finally agreed that in the mean time membership should be limited to the ECA sponsored institutions and ECOWAS and other institutions be invited as observers in accordance with the terms of reference in setting up the Committee. It was also agreed that the second opinion namely that non-ECA sponsored institutions should become members of the Committee be put before the Conference of Chief Executives for its consideration.

16. The Standing Committee regretted the low level of attendance at the meeting and urged ECA sponsored institutions to designate their representative to the Committee and make all possible efforts to ensure their regular participation in the annual meetings. It also emphasized the need to maintain some kind of continuity in the work of the Standing Committee and decided that PADIS carry the chair and the Secretariat responsibilities. With regard to the other bureau members the Committee decided that their terms of office would be one calendar year. The meeting also agreed to hold the Standing Committee meeting at the ECA headquarters in Addis Ababa unless there is an invitation by another institution which would agree to provide full secretarial services.

Agenda Item 5:

Report_on_the_survey_of_information_systems_and_services_at
ECA-sponsored_regional_and_subregional_institutions
(ECA/PADIS/SCH/8.1(iii)/I/4

17. A questionnaire has been sent out by PADIS to all ECA sponsored Institutions to assess the status of documentation and information systems of ECA sponsored institutions. Out of 30

4

questionnaires sent-out, only 8 were received. The secretariat
informed the meeting that because of the poor response to the
questionnaire that was circulated, it was not possible to make an
exhaustive analysis of the status of the information systems of
the ECA sponsored institutions. The Committee accepted the
proposal of the secretariat to circulate the questionnaire once
again among those institutions which had not responded to the
questionnaire already circulated. The Committee observed that
the current response rate did not allow an objective analysis of
the situation.

Agenda Item 6:

Report on information needs of users in the region
(ECA/PADIS/SCH/8.1(iii)/1/5

18. In accordance with the request of the working group which
met in September in Addis Ababa, to prepare the working documents
and the draft agenda for the First meeting of the Standing
Committee, the representative of ARSO introduced a paper on this
agenda item. The paper elaborated upon the objectives of the
proposed study: the main themes to be addressed and the manner in
which the study would be conducted. The aim of the proposed study
would be to provide ECA-sponsored institutions with the means of
defining a medium term strategy for the development of their ac-
tivities on the basis of data and experience already available in
the institutions.

19. The main themes to be addressed would be: (a) the needs to
be met and the services and products that should be generated to
meet them; (b) the potential agents (outlets) that could be used
to market information products and services; (c) identification
of potential clientele for such services and products as well as
the terms of sale. The paper proposed the following steps to be
taken to realize the study: the formation of a working group;
commissioning of a consultancy; compilation of existing studies;
field missions and convening of a roundtable to discuss the
results.

20. In ensuing discussions, Committee members indicated their
interest in such a study and their support for the aims, themes
and modalities proposed by ARSO. A member of the Committee in-
dicated that user studies were carried out on a continous basis
at his institution and indicated that user studies were in prin-
ciple specialized studies, each institution managed information
pertinent to its own field of work since it had clientele whose
needs differ from those of other institutions.

21. Lately, donors and parent institutions have been demanding
that information services should generate income. This had added
emphasis on identifying potential customers that would be inter-
ested to pay for services. As a result it had become necessary
for information services to identify needs of the private sector
as well.

22. Committee members enquired whether the establishment of PADIS was preceeded by a user survey; whether such a survey would be useful for the proposed exercise and if PADIS was prepared to fund such a study. The Secretariat explained that a feasibility study was undertaken in 1979 to assess, _inter_alia_, potential users of the system. At present PADIS was conducting a study on information utilization problems amongst African planners and policy makers. As regards funding of the proposed study the Secretariat said that PADIS could approach prospective donors.

23. Several Committee members indicated that they had results of user studies in their respective areas of work and recommended that reports of on-going as well as completed studies be compiled. In this connection, the meeting recommended that PADIS approach all ECA-sponsored institutions to request copies of studies produced on user surveys for their compilation and circulation to the members of the Committee.

Agenda Item 7:

Modalities__for_co-operation_and__efficient_exchange_of_information (ECA/PADIS/SCH/8.1(iii)/1/6) and (ECA/PADIS/SCH/8.1/7)

24. The Secretariat presented a draft agreement between PADIS and ECA-sponsored institutions defining the responsibilities of each party and a supplementary report providing the basic objectives and functions of PADIS, its network structure, the main duties, activities and privileges of the network members as well as the financial and operating policies of PADIS.

25. Some Committee members felt that the role and responsibilities of the PADIS should be clarified further and suggested that the agreement as presented might not reflect their own particular needs and asked that it be flexible to incorporate particular clauses or stipulations.

26. A member of the Committee referring to the draft agreement mentioned that PADIS in addition to microforms should also investigate other types of media. The meeting proposed the addition of a new clause on the need for institutional participating centres to have access to all PADIS outputs free of charge. Reference was also made to regularize information exchange of work programmes between PADIS and ECA-sponsored institutions.

27. The Secretariat noted that the draft agreement, annexed to the report, was rather a framework which would be adapted to reflect individual requirements of institutions and pointed out that it would also be reviewed by the ECA legal advisor before being sent to institutions.

Agenda Item 8:

Other business

28. PADIS proposed that a subcommittee be established to review and recommend to the next meeting of the Standing Committee the norms and standards to be adopted for bibliographic description, numerical and non-numeric data bases, hardware and software, including for desk top publishing. The committee supported the recommendations and decided to establish a working group composed of ARSO, ARCT, ARIFO and AATPO to study this problem.

29. It was suggested that in view of the financial constraints, work be done mainly through correspondence. A member of the Committee suggested the IDRC-sponsored meeting on standardization of data bases on research projects could be an opportunity for the subcommittee to meet. It was suggested that PADIS prepare draft proposals on the subject and make it available to the subcommittee members well before the Dakar meeting.

30. The Secretariat also introduced the directory of experts at ECA sponsored regional and subregional institutions and noted that only 18 out of 30 institutions had returned the data collection forms sent to them during 1987. Some comments were made to improve the quality of the Directory. The meeting expressed its satisfaction with the Directory and requested that it be updated every year.

7

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ITEM 4:   Terms of reference, organization and function of Standing Committee on the Harmonization and Standardization of Information and Documentation Systems at ECA-Sponsored Regional and Subregional Institutions.

1. The Standing Committee proposed that the Chief Executives decide a) whether to limit full membership to the Standing Committee only to ECA-sponsored institutions and grant observer status to all other non ECA-sponsored institutions or b) to extend full fledged membership to all regional and subregional institutions with substantive information activities in the region.

2. The Standing Committee urged the Chief Executives of ECA-sponsored Institutions to designate their representatives to the Standing Committee and make all possible efforts to ensure their regular participation at the annual meetings.

ITEM 5:   Report on the survey of information systems and services at ECA-sponsored regional and subregional institutions.

3. The Standing Committee urged all ECA-sponsored institutions to send PADIS the completed questionnaire to enable it provide accurate picture of documentation and information systems at ECA sponsored regional and subregional institutions.

ITEM 6:   Report on information needs of users in the region.

4. The Standing Committee indicated the need to compile the reports of on-going and completed users needs study and asked PADIS to approach all ECA-sponsored regional and sub regional institutions to supply to it copies of the studies. PADIS will make them available to all the Committee members.

ITEM 7:   Modalities for co-operation and efficient exchange of information.

5. The Standing Committee expressed the view that it would be useful for the proposed agreement to be as flexible as possible to take into account the particulars of each institution.

6. The Standing Committee decided that PADIS and the ECA sponsored regional and subregional institutions exchange their work programmes on a regular basis.

7.   The meeting requested PADIS to make every effort in providing training, technical assistance and fellowships to ECA Sponsored institutions.

ITEM 8: Other business.

8.   The Standing Committee decided to establish a subcommittee on norms and standards. It urged the Secretariat to prepare draft proposals on the norms and standards to be considered by the Sub-committee and make it available to the members of the Sub-committee before May 1988.

9.   The Standing Committee urged all ECA-sponsored institutions to assist PADIS in the compilation of biographical information on experts working in their institutions.

10.   The meeting expressed satisfaction on the work carried out by PADIS on the Directory of experts at ECA-sponsored institutions.   .

Economic Commission for Africa

First Meeting of the Standing Committee
on the Harmonization and Standardization
of Documentation and Information Systems
at ECA-sponsored Regional and Subregional
Institutions

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 9 - 10 February 1986

Terms of Reference, Organization and Functions
of the Committee on the Harmorization and
Standarcization of Documentation and
Information Systems of ECA- sponsored
Regional and Subregional Institutions

A. Membership

1) All ECA sponsored institutions are members of the Standing
Committee on the Harmonization and Standardization of
Documentation and Information Systems hereafter referred to as
the Standing Committee. Other regional and subregional institu-
tions active in documentation and information field, which are
not among ECA sponsored institutions may send observers to all
meetings of the Standing Committee.

2. The persons selected by the institutions as their representa-
tives shall be specialists in the fields of information sciences.

B. Election of Officers

UNECA/PADIS as a coordinating agency shall chair over the meet-
ings of the Standing Committee.

The Standing Committee shall elect at its regular annual meeting
a vice chairman and a rapporteur; these shall form the Standing
Committee's Bureau for a period of one calendar year.

The members of the Bureau are eligible for reelection.

C. Organization of Meetings

1) The Standing Committee shall normally meet in regular plen-
ary session once a year.

2) The session shall be convened by the PADIS Director in ac-
cordance with the decision of the Standing Committee.

3) The meeting of the Standing Committee shall be held at UNECA
headquarters, Addis Ababa, unless an institution agrees to host
the meeting.

4) The servicing expenses of the Standing Committee shall be
covered by the institution hosting the meeting.

5) Member institutions shall bear the expenses of the participa-
tion of their representatives in meetings of the Standing
Committee.

6) All ECA sponsored and non ECA sponsored institutions shall be
informed in good time of the place and date of the meetings of
the Standing Committee.

D. Functions

Within the framework of the decisions of the Chief Executives concerning the coordination and harmonization of information systems at ECA sponsored institutions, the Standing Committee shall, among other things:

1) encourage the full participation of all regional and sub-regional ECA Sponsored institutions in the PADIS network.

2) develop and/or promote standardization procedures in information handling for adoption by member institutions.

3) promote coordination and networking of ECA sponsored institutions with a view to reducing duplication of activities, improve the sharing of information, introduce new and innovative information services and stimulate the creation of databases of importance to development.

4) establish follow up mechanisms for ensuring that standard procedures are uniformly adhered among member institutions.

5) promote the training of information specialists in collaboration with relevant international organizations.

6) encourage the allocation of adequate budget resources for each member institution to participate in the activities of the

7) promote the establishment, strengthening and development of information and documentation units within ECA Sponsored institutions.

E. Secretariat

1) The Secretariat of the Standing Committee shall be provided by the UNECA/PADIS, who shall place at the Standing Committee's disposal the staff and other means required for its operation.

2) The Secretariat shall provide the necessary services for the Standing Committee meetings, fix the date of its meetings in accordance with the Standing Committee's or the Bureau's instructions, and shall take the steps required to convene such sessions.

F. Decisions

The Standing Committee shall endeavour to arrive at its decisions by consensus. Where, however, no consersus is reached, the matter shall be referred to the Conference of Chief Excutives.

G. Working Languages

The working languages of the Standing Committee shall be French or English.

H. Reporting

The Standing Committee shall report on its activities to the Conference of Chief Executives at each of its ordinary sessions.

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

First Meeting of the Standing Committee
on the Harmonization and Standardization
of Documentation and Information Systems
at ECA-sponsored Regional and Subregional
Institutions

9-10 February 1988
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

DRAFT AGREEMENT

PAN AFRICAN DOCUMENTATION AND INFORMATION SYSTEM

Draft Agreement between the

PAN AFRICAN DOCUMENTATION AND INFORMATION SYSTEM
and

(hereafter referred to as the Institutional Participating Centre)

The above named Institutional Participating Centre (IPC) is interested in becoming a PADIS network member, accordingly the Institutional Participating Centre and PADIS agree as follows:

1. PADIS shall:

(a) maintain a regional data base (PADIS-DEV) on development information from information supplied by all participating centres including the above named Institutional Participating Centre (IPC);

(b) develop various information products and services from the regional data base and make them available to the IPC;

(c) provide training to IPCs in these areas of information processing which are essential for the smooth functioning of the system;

(d) provide to the IPC a comprehensive bibliography of the records added to the regional data base on a regular basis;

(e) promote the applications of norms and standards developed for use in the system;

(f) assist IPC develop and strengthen microform laboratory or/ and other information storage media capabilities;

(g) establish a central clearing house for documents cited in the regional data base;

(h) inform the Institutional Participating Centre of new admissions to PADIS;

2

2. The Institutional Participating Centre shall:

(a) identify, collect and transmit to PADIS/CCD information which fall within the PADIS scope using PADIS compatible worksheets or/and machine readable media;

(b) adhere to the norms and standards adopted and disseminated by the Standing Committee for use by members of the network;

(c) provide PADIS/CCD with information and assistance with a view to developing an interface to ensure compatibility within the network if it uses norms which are different from the one adopted by the Standing Committee;

(d) ensure the most effective use of the PADIS output for the benefit of their own staff and programmes;

(e) transmit primary non-conventional literature on standard hard copy, microform or other media to PADIS-CCD or otherwise ensure document delivery to other PADIS participating centres upon request;

(f) have free of charge access to all PADIS outputs.

3. This agreement will enter into force, after its approval by the Governing Council of the Institutional Participating Centre, and after signature by both parties, each one retaining one signed copy.

4. This agreement may be terminated by either party on 3 month notice.

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(signature on behalf of   (signature on behalf of
the Economic Commisssion for   the Institutional
Africa)   Participating Centre)
Date: _____   Date:_____