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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
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on Trade and Development
Geneva, 13-21 August 1970

AFRICA TRADE CENTRE
PLAN OF OPERATION
Addendum

Progress Report

This progress report is submitted for the consideration of the Fifth Joint ECA/OAU Meeting on Trade and Development. The report covers the activities of the Centre up to 1 July 1970.

Establishment of the Centre

1. Pursuant to resolution 199(IX) of the Economic Commission for Africa to establish a regional Trade Promotion Centre as soon as possible, a request was made to the International Trade Centre of UNCTAD/GATT for a short-term trade promotion organization adviser to assist in establishing the Centre.
2. The Adviser took up his assignment early October. He drafted a plan of operations which with later corrections appeared as document E/CN.14/WP.1/25. In addition, he also worked out proposals for organization and a programme of work for 1970.
3. In view of the fact that regular budget funds for the Trade Centre could not be made available for 1970, it was proposed to start operations on the basis of a skeleton staff. However, the position of a co-ordinating director being essential, the ITC was requested for an expert to serve during 1970. The expert took up his assignment early in February, and the Centre was launched by the end of March 1970. An introductory leaflet was issued and letters were sent out to member Governments to acquaint them with the aims and functions of the Centre.

Visits to member countries

4. Immediately following the establishment of the Centre, its personnel have undertaken a series of introductory, fact-finding and contact visits to member countries of the ECA. These are short missions of 2-4 days duration to each country to establish direct contact with the national bodies responsible for trade promotion and

marketing, get whatever information is available on export and trade promotion programmes and organizations, start surveys of existing products and producers, make short marketing profiles and ascertain the demand of the country for assistance. More of these visits are planned in a number of countries before the end of 1970.

Training

5. (a) The first English and French-speaking ITC/ECA courses financed by UNDP have been successfully organized. They were attended by senior executives of marketing boards, business and trade promotion organizations, as well as civil servants responsible for trade promotion. The participants were from Ethiopia, Ghana and Sudan for the English-speaking course, and from Cameroon, Madagascar, Morocco and Senegal for the French-speaking course. All parts of the work programme were geared to the specific requirements of participants, and their respective countries.
- (b) It is envisaged that, in addition to the above-mentioned courses, national or sub-regional seminars, product-oriented courses, and national training programmes will be organized in co-operation with ITC. In the main, ATC will concentrate on the supply side, intra-African trade aspects and selection of candidates etc. while ITC will deal with the international marketing side.
- (c) In co-operation with GATT, the ECA has organized English and French-speaking courses in Trade Policy and Trade Promotion. During 1969 they were held in Tunis for the French-speaking participants and in Nairobi for the English-speaking participants. Attempts are being made to up-date and modernize the content of the courses, and

to organize them in such a way as to enable the participants to take a more active part in the courses. It is planned to hold the 1970 courses in Monrovia for the English-speaking participants, and in Lome for the French-speaking participants.

- (d) As far as in-service training is concerned, a project has been submitted to UNDP through UNCTAD for 1971 onwards as outlined in Plan of Operation paragraph 10(d).

Establishment of Documentation Unit

6. Work on establishing the documentation unit - Plan of Operation 7(5), 8(i) and 9(a) - (c) has started. Member countries have been asked to supply materials for the unit. In addition, trade promotion organizations and other international sources of information have been contacted. Steps have also been taken to secure adequate financing for the unit. The information received will form a basis for efficient services of commercial information and market research.

Market Research

7. Requests for market research information are being received. Discussions are under way with ITC with a view to co-ordinating ITC and ATC's efforts in this field. Contacts have been taken with other sections of the ECA as regards questions of transport, statistics, agriculture etc. Discussions are also being held with ITC and UNCTAD on formulating requests of market studies for particular products and countries for UNDP finance (i.e. timber, plywood and veneer, livestock and meat products, leather and leather products, canned and otherwise preserved fruit and vegetables, canned and otherwise preserved fish).

Advisory services

8. Discussions are under way on how best ATC and ITC can co-ordinate efforts in their advisory services. Basic fact-finding work has started. Ways and means are being sought to finance 2-4 travelling experts who will be in constant touch with member countries on a sub-regional basis for advice on training, marketing and organizational questions. It is felt that for many African countries trade promotion organizations should also embrace investment promotion both to facilitate co-ordination between investment promotion and marketing and to enhance utilization of personnel.

Recruitment of staff members

9. As regards personnel a position for a permanent director of the Centre will be available from October. A training officer is available on bilateral finance. Efforts are being made to secure the financing of the positions of commercial officer and promotion officer. A candidate has been proposed for the position of regional trade promotion adviser and it is expected that the vacancy will soon be filled.

Publications

10. Work is progressing on a handbook for African countries with list of reference addresses, trade statistics, market, economic and possibly transport profiles, in an attempt at providing concisely the essential commercial information. The main problem will be to ensure effective distribution so that publications permeate directly to the persons interested and in need of the information.

11. In conclusion it will appear that Africa Trade Centre is evolving very much as foreseen in the plan of operation, and in some respects even faster than had been anticipated. It is however still manned by a skeleton professional staff although it is reasonable to expect an adequate number from the beginning of 1971. Secretarial staff and

office space will have to be expanded accordingly. The success of the Centre will depend mainly upon the establishment of direct, informal contacts with member countries and the extent to which it shall be able to meet their specific needs in the field of trade promotion.
