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AFRICA TRADE CENTRE  
PLAN OF OPERATION

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Establishing a Regional Trade Promotion Centre

"Africa Trade Centre"

In Addis Ababa

I. REFERENCES RELEVANT TO THE ESTABLISHMENT AND ACTIVITIES OF THE CENTRE

1. Africa Trade Centre is a regional trade promotion centre established by ECA pursuant to a proposal by the Meeting of the Executive Secretaries in Geneva in July 1967 and the Resolution 199 (IX) of the Ninth Session of the ECA, requesting:

"The Executive Secretary to take steps to establish as soon as possible, and in any case not later than the end of 1969, a regional trade promotion centre".

The Resolution further invites:

"The United Nations and its agencies to assist the Secretariat by providing the necessary resources so as to enable the regional trade promotion centre to be established and to fulfil its responsibilities in the field of trade expansion and promotion".

2. The creation of regional centres has been found essential for the practical implementation of the United Nations Programme of Export Promotion aiming at combining the knowledge, activities and resources of all the United Nations Agencies active in this field. In this context the Regional Economic Commissions are basically expected to: (Doc. E/CN.14/434)

- "(a) assist member Governments in their export promotion efforts to increase trade both among themselves and with countries outside the region;
- (b) assist in the development of deliberate and concerted export policies of the governments of their regions;
- (c) assist governments in the light of the commissions' intimate knowledge of the conditions of their regions, in formulating requests for advisory services, research, market surveys and training, these requests would be met by pooling the

resources of the regional trade promotion centres, the facilities of the joint UNCTAD/GATT International Trade Centre, and the UNDP which dispenses the financing for technical assistance;

(d) assist in arranging for training within their regions".

3. According to this, the third joint meeting of the ECA Working Party on Intra-African Trade and the OAU Supporting Committee on Trade and Development defined the objectives in the following recommendations:

(Doc. E/CN.14/449 Annex 1)

- i. that the regional trade promotion centre of the ECA be established at an early date to further activities in the field aimed at strengthening national machinery in African countries for export promotion;
- ii. that this Centre co-operate with the International Trade Centre and other UN Agencies concerned to bring to the African countries a co-ordinated programme of technical assistance and advice on questions of trade promotion;
- iii. that the Centre give special attention to the promotion of intra-African trade;
- iv. that the training of Africans in questions of trade promotion be given priority;
- v. that the UN group of agencies provide enough manpower and financial resources to enable this programme of trade promotion in Africa to make a significant impact."

4. At the fourth joint meeting it was recommended: (Doc. E/CN.14/459):

- (a) that the regional trade promotion centre established within the Economic Commission for Africa should have sufficient funds and staff to discharge effectively the responsibilities for which it was created;
- (b) that, as a co-ordinating body, it should channel the efforts of the United Nations in this field as far as they relate to Africa."

5. The Trade and Development Board at its Ninth Session noted with satisfaction the initiatives of creating regional centres i.e., in Africa. In Resolution 59 (IX) the Board:

"Urges the participating agencies and the other United Nations bodies to give more attention in the next phase of the United Nations export promotion programme to the workint out of procedures for fruitful co-operation in support of these centres, as recommended by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his report on United Nations export promotion efforts (E/4714, paragraphs 14 and 15).

Requests the Economic and Social Council, in the framework of the United Nations export promotion programme, to promote actively the participation of the specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies and to increase its support for the activities of the regional centres to enable them to discharge effectively their responsibilities under the United Nations export promotion programme as centres for the formulation, implementation and evaluation of the programme in their respective regions.

Requests the specialized agencies and the United Nations bodies participating in the United Nations export promotion programme to consider favourably the possibility of committing experts to the regional trade promotion centres.

Requests the United Nations Development Programme to give special attention to the requests which may be presented to it by member States or groups of member States for reinforcing the centres".

6. Finally, the second meeting of the Executive Committee of ECA in October 1969: (Doc. E/CN.14/ECO/17).

"took note of the progress made in the establishment of a Regional Trade Promotion Centre in ECA, as requested by the Commission at its ninth session. It endorsed the position taken by the fourth joint ECA/OAU meeting that sufficient resources

should be made available to the Centre by the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme and the specialized agencies to enable it to discharge effectively its responsibilities under the United Nations export promotion programme as a centre for formulation, implementation and evaluation of the programme in the African region. It noted with satisfaction that the UNCTAD Trade and Development Board had unanimously adopted a Resolution 59(IX) to that effect and urged African delegations at the General Assembly to stress the importance of this resolution for Africa when the report of the Trade and Development Board came up for discussion and decisions. The Committee strongly recommended that African countries should give all assistance to the efforts of the ECA to obtain resources for the Centre and, in particular, support the submission of a request to the UNDP for financial resources for the establishment and work of the Centre."

## II. AIM AND FUNCTIONS TO THE CENTRE

7. The aim of the Centre is to assist African countries to develop their foreign trade by:

developing better and more co-ordinated programme;  
strengthening national and regional procedures; and  
co-ordinating the trade promotion activities of other international bodies in intimate co-operation with the International Trade Centre.

The activities of the Centre broadly fall under five main headings:

- (1) Training of African personnel in trade promotion and management.
- (2) Market research and commercial intelligence especially as regards African countries.
- (3) Assistance on establishing and streamlining national trade (and investment) promotion organizations and programmes.
- (4) Advisory services to countries or enterprises on promotion, training and projects of trade facilitation.
- (5) The creation of an up to date documentation unit to serve the other sections and outside demand.

### III. PROGRAMME OF WORK

8. For practical reasons it is deemed preferable to establish the work programme of the Centre in three stages:

- (i) The immediate task is to get the Centre running and collect the necessary information for an efficient documentation unit (see 9).
- (ii) Then follows an initial period where the main services are being established and brought to function properly. In fact these first stages will tend to overlap (see 10).
- (iii) After a period of say two years the long term programme and a proper balance of priorities may be finally established on the basis of experience obtained.

An abstract organizational chart is given as Annex 1.

9. Immediate tasks for the Centre include:

- (a) To collect, evaluate and arrange all available information on African trade, markets, and market systems; on trade promotion programmes, and organizations in the countries of the region, and on enterprises, products, and prices etc. The information to be collected by requests to national and international sources on a continuous basis in order to be up to date. Brief study of the material with a view to establish a co-ordinated market survey for African countries.
- (b) To collect, evaluate and arrange and keep up to date a nucleus of information on markets outside the region.
- (c) In co-operation with the ITC and other bodies to start a factual study and inventory of:
  - existing enterprises and products in the countries of the region; listing turnover, sales, and capacities (production, finance, management) with possible 3-5 years projection.

- National trade promotion organizations and programmes, with indications of desirable and desired development.
- Study of national markets (with a special view to facilitate intra-African trade).

This study will form a basis for future activities and help define the policies of the centre.

In addition to providing essential material for the documentation unit it may form the basis for:

- An abstract for a trade and export directory for the region.
- An analytical study of existing promotion production organizations and programmes.
- A market survey of the region.

10. Activities in the initial period include:

- (a) Develop an advisory service that is equipped to analyze priorities and patterns for establishing or stream-lining national export and other promotional agencies and programmes, and means of stimulation of export climate, as well as advice on specific business promotion and export problems in the various countries. This includes fact-finding missions and step by step formulation of policies and priorities based on factual findings. It is to be foreseen that individual cases may necessitate prolonged action in the form of package deals to establish, train and run in different projects.
- (b) Build up an efficient service for commercial intelligence and market research information. Projects with practical possibility of augmenting intra-regional trade to be given priority. As soon as finance is secured and the necessary specialists engaged work will start on selected product market research studies within the region. Extra regional market research to be done in close co-operation with ITC where Africa Centre will act mainly as liaison.



- (c) Establish a service which may formulate a co-ordinated training programme in trade promotion and practical exporting techniques and marketing. First to investigate and co-ordinate present training facilities; then while working on the streamlining of existing facilities in close co-operation with other interested bodies to establish a co-ordinated training system. Projects to include institutional training on different levels, courses, seminars etc., in co-operation with ITC and other bodies, practical courses in the regional countries for exporters etc., courses in Europe, practical on site training etc.

The desirability of establishing an international regional institute for trade promotion and business management in co-operation with existing institutions in Africa or outside to be investigated as a priority project.

- (d) The activities of a trade centre lend themselves particularly well to on site training of future national trade promotion officers as experience from other bodies of this kind indicates; 3-6 trainee positions should be established. The trainees to serve for one year: first some months instructional training with ITC in Europe, thereafter practical work including field activities with the Africa Centre.
- (e) In co-operation with interested bodies inside and outside ECA to build up a service which will give efficient practical advice on the promotion of production, investment, and trade with special emphasis on exports.
- (f) The technical adviser to the special working party on simplification and standardization of trade documents is expected to be available for governments in the ECA region for some months in 1970 and the following years. He will be able to advice on facilitation of customs and other procedures of exports and imports as well as on documentation. The Centre will in co-operation with ITC try to arrange special training courses for civil servants as well as exporters and other persons interested in simplification of export procedures.

11. After the initial period or by 1972 the services mentioned under (10) should be working smoothly. A publication programme should be developed (in close co-operation with ITC), and systematic informational work through articles in existing publications, etc., should be starting. It would then seem appropriate to formulate a coherent publication programme, through articles, sheets of information to member countries, etc.

Both here and in the field of commercial intelligence and market research, it should be noted that important progress may be expected on automatic data processing of information. It would therefore seem appropriate for the Africa Centre to take its time before settling on a definite programme in these fields.

Another priority activity for that later stage must be investigation of regional policies for export credit and credit insurance facilities. These matters should be studied as soon as possible to see what practical assistance the Africa Centre may give, for example, in setting up a regional export credit and export credit insurance institution.

Further co-operation with national marketing bodies and international marketing councils etc., where there are strong regional interests should be investigated to see if the Centre can be of practical assistance.

Another task for the Centre is to advise on trade fairs and exhibitions, and other specific promotional matters. This would presumably also come into the operative policy stage by the end of the initial period. In the meantime requests from countries or otherwise in these fields may be met by the service of the regional trade advisers working for the Centre; or by special projects undertaken, for example, in co-operation with the ITC.

12. One aim of the Centre is to serve as a clearing house in all matters of commercial intelligence and business promotion for the region, and to co-ordinate the efforts of the United Nations export programme within this context. (see Annex 2)

In order to fulfill this aim a wide web of contacts and co-operational devices are essential. The creation of this framework must necessarily take time, and it would seem that in the interest of efficiency the policy should be that of a very elastic approach.

#### IV. ORGANIZATION

13. Africa Trade Centre is to be a special unit acting under the general directives of the Executive Secretary of the ECA, in close liaison with the different divisions of the secretariat. For practical reasons its location is in the Division of Trade, Fiscal and Monetary Affairs.

14. The activities of the Centre are to be reported to and discussed by the joint meetings of the ECA Working Party on Intra-African Trade and the OAU Expert Committee on Trade and Development.

15. A director is to be responsible for the management of the Centre. Under the overall policy directives established by the Executive Secretary he will:

- (i) submit programmes and budgets;
- (ii) carry out programmes and effect priorities of activities;
- (iii) submit to the Council annual reports and statements of accounts;
- (iv) issue an annual report of operations;
- (v) select and appoint the staff of the Centre;
- (vi) co-ordinate the activities of the Centre to obtain maximum benefit of the United Nations Programme of Export Promotion for Africa.

16. The Centre is designed to operate as a small and flexible unit. Apart from the director it should have 3-4 senior officers responsible for the services of training, commercial intelligence and market research and trade (investment) promotion organization; two junior officers and five general staff members (see Organization Chart Annex 1).

ORGANIZATION CHART - AFRICA TRADE CENTRE

Director Office  
1 Trainee  
1 Secretary

Promotion Service  
1 Officer - 1 trainee  
1 Secretary

Commercial Intelligence  
Market Research Service  
1 Officer - 1 expert  
1 trainee - 1 secretary

Documentation Unit  
1 Librarian

Training, publications  
and public Relations  
Service  
1 Officer - 1 Trainee  
1 Secretary

Regional Advisory Service  
2 or More Regional Trade Promotion Advisers  
1 - 2 Trainees  
1 Secretary

Africa Trade Centre as Part of a Co-ordinated Structure

Within the UN Export Promotion Programme

Clients

National Contacts within region

