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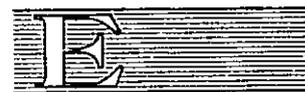
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Third Meeting of the Committee on Sustainable
Development

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
7 -10 October 2003

Aide-mémoire

Theme: Making Technology Work for the Poor

Background of CSD-3

By its Resolution 826 (XXXII) on the "Reform of the intergovernmental machinery of the Economic Commission for Africa", the Conference of African Ministers responsible for Social and Economic Development and Planning decided at its Twenty-Third meeting held in Addis Ababa in May 1997 to create, among the subsidiary bodies of the Commission, the Committee on Sustainable Development (CSD) and the Committee on Natural Resources and Science and Technology (CNRST).

The CSD was created to serve as a forum of experts that would provide advice to ECA in the interlinked areas of food security, population, environment, and human settlements. The CSD addressed specific measures to promote the protection and regeneration of the environment, enhance food security in Africa, sustainable human settlements and issues arising from increased population growth and gender, among others.

The CNRST was created to subsume the functions performed by the African Regional Conference on Science and Technology and the Conference of African Ministers responsible for the Development and Utilization of Mineral Resources and Energy. The CNRST was established to provide a forum for the promotion of cooperation among African countries in the areas of science and technology and natural resources and for providing advice to ECA in these areas.

In order to rationalize the subsidiary organs of ECA, the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development of ECA decided at its Twenty-Fifth Session held in Johannesburg in October 2002 to merge the Committee on Sustainable Development and the Committee on Natural Resources and Science and Technology to form one Committee on Sustainable Development (CSD) which subsumes the functions of the former CNRST and CSD and deals with critical and emerging issues related to sustainable development in Africa.

The CSD is a technical and political body serving as a forum of experts and policy-makers for promoting regional cooperation in various areas of sustainable development, particularly as regard science and technology, agriculture, population, habitat, environment, mining, energy and water resources development. It is expected to make policy recommendations related to these areas for use by African policy makers and their counterparts in the development co-operation community, including ECA.

Theme of the meeting

The overall theme of the CSD-3 meeting is: "**Making Technology Work for the Poor** ". This theme stems from a common observation that "technology is power" and from a recurrent concern that technology should benefit all stakeholders, including particularly the poor. Poverty alleviation and eradication cannot be achieved without progress in the appropriation of science and technology by the poor themselves. Reaching the popular masses and the farmers with science and technology in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and sustainable development is also essential. In this regard it has been observed that science and technology policies in Africa are too 'elitist', or too much centered on high-level academicians and researchers, and not enough on ordinary people and the poor. How can science and technology empower the poor for their own benefit? This is the central theme of CSD-3.

The Secretariat will present a short paper on this theme underlying the importance of extending the scientific and technological capacities of the poor, highlighting selected African and non-African experiences in science communication and technology popularization, identifying policy weaknesses and outlining a number of policy instruments that can be used to democratize science and technology for sustainable development. The Institute of Natural Resources in Africa of the United Nations University (UNU/INRA) will also provide a high profile lecture on the theme, which will set the tone of the meeting.

Issues and challenges to be discussed

1. Raising awareness and building analytical capacity to address nexus issues in Africa

'Is there sufficient awareness and analytical capacities to address the nexus issues in Africa? Following a recommendation of CSD-2, a report on Awareness Creation on the interlinkages of population, environment and agriculture (the nexus issues) will be presented. Other issues related to capacity building on PEDA (a computer simulation model that captures the long-term dynamics of these interlinkages) will also be highlighted. The Secretariat will also report on the development of electronic communications (POPIA) for promoting exchange of experiences and information sharing among African countries and institutions on the implementation of population and development policies and programmes.

2. Follow-up of major global, regional and international conferences related to sustainable development

"To which extent the recommendations of major global, international and regional conferences related to sustainable development are being implemented in Africa"? The Secretariat will present assessments of the implementation of such conferences, with a focus on the following:

a)-Dakar/Ngor Declaration and The International Conference on Population and Development (DND/ICPD)

The assessment will focus on the monitoring of population dynamics and on the review of policies and interventions in reproductive rights and reproductive health, with special reference to HIV/AIDS, for African countries. The Secretariat will report on the preparatory activities for the ten-year review and appraisal of the ICPD (ICPD+10). The work plan adopted for the preparation of national, sub-regional and regional contributions to Africa's Evaluation Report on ICPD+10, and progress made so far, will be presented.

b)-Habitat Agenda
UN General Assembly Resolution 51/77, which adopted the Habitat Agenda, also laid out the strategies for its implementation. The Secretariat will provide an analytical review of the major accomplishments and challenges faced in the African region since the holding of Habitat II in 1996. The review will focus on key elements including urbanization, shelter, infrastructure, finance and governance for human settlements, as well as on constraints experienced in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

c)-*World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)*
"How can ECA provide greater coherence and better coordination between the country-level, sub-regional, regional and global actions to ensure effective implementation of the WSSD outcomes in Africa?" The WSSD, which was held in 2002, puts sustainable development at the center of the international agenda. Governments agreed to a comprehensive range of commitments for promoting a programme for the further implementation of Agenda 21. It was agreed that the WSSD Plan of Implementation would be effectively pursued at the regional and sub-regional levels, through the Regional Commissions, as well as through other regional and sub-regional institutions. The CSD will discuss these issues and formulate recommendations that would guide the Commission in playing a leading role in the implementation of a regional agenda.

d) *World Food Summit*
The World Food Summit (WFS) held in 1996 in Rome set the global objective of reducing the number of undernourished people to half (from 800 to 400 million) no later than by 2015. Five years later, there were indications that although some progress had been made, the objective remained far from being achieved. It was against this background that the World Food Summit: five years later was held from 10 to 13 June 2002, under the theme "Mobilizing political will and resources to banish world hunger." The major outcome of the meeting was the adoption of the "Declaration of the World Food Summit: Five Years Later" that forges the "international alliance against hunger" to achieve the WFS target no later than 2015. In this regard, the Secretariat will provide an analytical review of progress towards achieving WFS targets in Africa. The review will focus on key elements including successes and constraints, issues of concern, issues relating to addressing the challenges in African agriculture development and the African Response.

e)-*African Water Vision 2025*
The Secretariat will present a briefing note on the Africa Water Vision and how science and technology can contribute to achieving the goals of the Vision. The need for Africa to manage its water resources in a visionary and integrated manner to match demand and supply both temporally and spatially in quantitative and qualitative terms will be discussed. Water availability is a major constraining factor in food production, health and industrial development. Science and technology can play an important role in meeting the challenges of achieving a blue revolution through its applications with respect to water resource assessment and forecasting, harnessing of rainfall, river flows and groundwater; improving the efficiency of water use, protecting the quality of water from pollution sources and improving the knowledge base at all levels, from river basins to household. The technologies for harnessing water sources in Africa are very basic and innovations that exist have not been widely adopted. The CSD will make recommendations on the way forward.

3. *Small-scale mining and technology challenges*

"How can small-scale mining technology help the poor?" The Secretariat will present a policy paper on small-scale mining technology for sustainable development. Small-scale mining is an activity beset with problems of sustainability stemming from the use of rudimentary and inappropriate technology, low productivity, poor returns, high incidence of environmental hazards and socio-cultural disturbances (increased smuggling, heightened land use conflicts, child labour, etc.). Notwithstanding this, small-scale mining attracts many people, in many cases lured by the prospect of quick wealth. The meeting will briefly review

the profile of small-scale mining, discuss case studies of programmes to facilitate access to technology by small-scale miners, as well as examine innovations in technology aimed at improving productivity and reducing their negative impact on the environment. The emphasis is on technologies that are robust, simple, cheap, accessible and with demonstrated practical results.

4. Renewable energy technologies (RETs) for poverty alleviation

"How can renewable energy technologies contribute to poverty alleviation?" In April 2001, the Ninth Session of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD-9) concluded that *"access to affordable energy services is a prerequisite to implement the goal accepted by the international community to halve the proportion of people living on less than US$ 1 per day by 2015"*. Thus, improving access to energy services is a critical means to achieving the goals of sustainable development, and especially the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Supplying safe drinking water would not be possible without energy for pumping and clean fuels for boiling water. Gender equity in education cannot be achieved as long as girl children are withdrawn from school to help their families fetch water and collect firewood and other fuels needed for cooking food. Access to modern energy services is therefore essential for overcoming the basic conditions of poverty that affect most of Africa's population who still rely heavily on traditional fuels for basic energy needs. The meeting will consider a paper on the potential contribution of mature renewable energy technologies, including biomass energy conversion technologies, to improve delivery of energy services to the poor, particularly in rural areas. Emphasis will be put on RETs that can be easily harnessed and adapted to local conditions and that can enable incomes to be increased through improved productivity thereby supporting fight against poverty.

5. Science and technology for sustainable development

a) Emerging issues in science and technology for food security and sustainable development

"How can science and technology contribute to food security and sustainable development?" Food insecurity affects about one African out of three and food emergency aid is distributed in more than 25 African countries. In many countries food production per capita has been decreasing since the beginning of the 1980s. The problem is expected to get worse in many areas, particularly where the environment is fragile and where the population is growing rapidly. In order to alleviate or eliminate the problem food production has to increase, mostly on land already under cultivation. That means that yields and productivity have to increase substantially, mainly through a more intense application and utilization of science and technology. ECA will present a paper analyzing the current contribution (or lack of contribution) of science and technology to sustainable development in Africa and focusing on issues related to food security – one of the major requirements of sustainable development. The paper will also propose policy options that African countries can pursue together to improve their situation, in cooperation with Africa's partners in the framework of NEPAD.

b) **Towards a Green Revolution in Africa: Harnessing science and technology for sustainable modernization of agriculture and rural transformation (SMART/AGRI)**

In order to address the problems of food insecurity and poverty elimination, CNRST-2 noted that advanced knowledge and applications in biotechnology carry particular hope for realizing a green revolution in Africa. CSD-2 more explicitly recommended that ECA starts, in collaboration with African countries, a pilot project for accelerated agricultural intensification, and ensure, through policy advocacy and capacity building measures, that African countries reflect the urgency of agricultural intensification in their policies. In February 2003 UN Secretary General Kofi Annan urged African countries and their development partners to bring about a Green Revolution in Africa. The secretariat will present a report on the scientific and technological fundamentals of the Green Revolution, why it was delayed in Africa, and how it can be designed, triggered and realized in the African context.

c) **Biotechnology for poverty alleviation**

"How can biotechnology contribute to poverty alleviation?" Africa continues to face many technological challenges in connection with its notorious poor health that is associated with HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis; degradation of environment/natural resources (water, minerals, plants, animals, soil); increasing loss of biodiversity; poor or inadequate transformation of natural resources and agricultural raw materials; low agricultural productivity and food shortage; and deep energy crisis coupled with increasing deforestation due the use of fuel wood among others. Rural people, who represent 70-80 per cent the population in Sub-Saharan Africa, are the most affected. About 60 per cent of these people live in abject poverty, with no means to meet their basic needs. The Secretariat will present a paper highlighting the contribution of modern biotechnology to poverty alleviation in the areas of food and agriculture, natural resources/biodiversity, and health and the actions necessary to realize its full potential.

d) **Science, Technology and innovation policy for sustainable development**

"What can African countries do to ensure the effectiveness of their innovation policies?" After some four decades of independence and the establishment of universities and research institutions, Africa has not benefited from science and technology. Agriculture and industry, the mainstay of the majority of Africa's poor, do not take advantage of innovations from science and technology. The Secretariat will present a study in this area and encourage African countries to carry out their own analysis on their National Science, Technology and Innovation policy in order to improve their effectiveness. The paper will provide a short review of relevant literature on the state of the art of science, technology and innovation studies and will provide a 'best practice' for assessing the strengths, weaknesses and challenges facing their innovation policies of a typical African country, including its internal and external linkages. It will draw useful lessons and formulate recommendations to strengthen the scientific, technological and innovative capacity of African countries for sustainable development in the context of regional cooperation and integration. Areas of collaboration and assistance with the industrialized countries in the framework of NEPAD will also be identified.

6. *Land Tenure and its implications for Food Security and Sustainable Development*

One of the main recommendations emanating from CSD II was that SDD should promote land tenure policies that support equity and enhance incentives for household investments in agricultural intensification. The recent food security crisis accompanied by the land policy implementation impasse in parts of Southern Africa have revived the debate on the impact of land policies on food security calling for a close examination of the prevailing failure of land reform implementation in Africa. While many African countries have embarked on land policy reform programs aimed at providing security of tenure, ensuring equity, reducing poverty, increasing economic growth and improving the stewardship of land resources, little success has been made in their implementation. SDD has been carrying out a study to evaluate the impacts of various land tenure systems on food security and natural resource management in Africa as part of its 2002-2003 work program. In addition, following recommendations of a recent meeting involving top-notch land policy experts in Africa, SDD has also embarked on a study to evaluate land policy implementation, in order to provide member states with best practices for land policy implementation. The secretariat will present a paper on this on-going effort to evaluate land tenure impacts and land policy implementation in Africa.

Expected Outcome

During CSD, participants are expected to engage in an in-depth analysis of issues on sustainable development, with emphasis on the role of science and technology, agriculture and land policy, mining, energy and water resources development in eradicating poverty in Africa. The discussions are expected to raise awareness on policies and mechanisms to facilitate appropriation of science and technology by the poor, and lead to the formulation of recommendations, which will contribute to improving the focus of ECA's future work programme and research agenda. In particular, it will be expected that:

- The role of science and technology in eradicating poverty is better defined;
- Information and best practices on science and technology for eradicating poverty are shared and disseminated;
- Opportunities for collaboration among African countries in the areas of natural resources, agriculture, population, science and technology and sustainable development are identified; and
- Priority areas for ECA's work programme are suggested.

Format of the Meeting

Simultaneous interpretation of the deliberations will be provided in English, French and Arabic. To the extent possible, meeting documents will be made available in English and French. A Bureau comprising a Chairperson, First Vice-Chairperson, Second Vice-Chairperson and Rapporteur will guide the meeting. Discussions will take place in plenary sessions and, possibly, in group discussions. A lecture will be given by a distinguished guest speaker. A team of Assistant Rapporteurs provided by ECA Secretariat will assist the Rapporteur in the production and finalization of the proceedings of each session and the meeting.

Documentation

Most of the documentation for the meeting will be accessible from ECA web site: http://www.uneca.org/sdd/csd3. Documents that participants wish to circulate should be handed to the Secretariat upon arrival for reproduction, or e-mailed to the ECA organizers at the address provided below.

Correspondence

All correspondence regarding the substantive aspects of this meeting should be directed to the ECA focal point for CSD-3: Mr. Josué Dioné, Director of the Sustainable Development Division (SDD), E-mail: jdione@uneca.org, with copy to atindimubona@uneca.org, Fax: (251-1) 51 44 16 / 51 03 50, Tel: (251-1) 433437