ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
COMMISSION ECONOMIQUE POUR L'AFRIQUE

Committee on Regional Cooperation and Integration
Second Session

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
7 March 2002
I. Introduction

1. The Second Session of the Committee on Regional Cooperation and Integration established by resolution 827 (XXXII) of the ECA Conference of Ministers was held on 7 March 2002 at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

2. The aim of the meeting was mainly to consider two studies prepared by ECA this Division on issues pertaining to the implementation of subregional trade liberalization schemes.

II. Attendance

3. The meeting was attended by the following member States: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia (the), Ghana, Guinée, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tunisia, Uganda and Zambia.

4. The following organizations and institutions participated in the meeting: the African Development Bank (ADB), the African Federation of Women Entrepreneurs (AFWE), the Association of African Universities (AAU), the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL), the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), the Niger Basin Authority (NBA), the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), Oxfam and the World Bank. The list of participants is appended as annex 1.

III. Opening of the Meeting (agenda item 1)

5. His Excellency Honorable Henry F. Chimunthu Banda, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Malawi, in his capacity as Chairman of the outgoing bureau of the Committee called the meeting to order and welcomed the participants to the meeting. He then recalled that this Committee held its first session from 27 to 29 April 1999 in Addis Ababa. That session was concurrently organized with a forum on the financing of regional integration in Africa. He indicated that at the current meeting, the ECA Secretariat will inform the participants of the steps taken to implement the recommendations adopted by the first session of the Committee and by the forum on the financing of regional integration. He added that the meeting will also consider two reports prepared by ECA on subregional trade liberalization schemes and measures for supporting them. Given the short time allowed for this session, he invited the secretariat to make some opening remarks and provide guidance for the meeting.

6. Taking the floor, Mr. Yusif Suliman, Director of the Regional Cooperation and Integration Division (RCID) of ECA welcomed and recalled that the Committee on Regional Cooperation and Integration, as part of the ECA's institutional machinery, is expected to provide guidance to the relevant activities of the Commission and constitute a
forum for in-depth discussion of key issues pertaining to economic integration. He invited the participants make proposals that can lead to a smooth harmonisation of timetables of subregional trade liberalisation schemes and their effective implementation. He concluded his remarks by emphasizing the importance of the deliberations of the Committee for the future work of the Commission on the vitally important issues pertaining to trade liberalisation programmes in Africa.

IV. Account of Proceedings

Election of Officers (agenda item 2)

7. The meeting elected the following countries to constitute its Bureau:

   Chairman: Senegal
   First Vice-Chairman: Equatorial Guinea
   Second Vice-Chairman: Kenya
   Third Vice-Chairman: Malawi
   Rapporteur: Morocco

V. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work (agenda item 3)

8. The meeting adopted the following agenda and programme of work:

   (i) Agenda

   1. Opening of the meeting;
   2. Election of Officers;
   3. Adoption of agenda and programme of work;
   4. Report on the harmonization of timetables of subregional trade liberalization schemes;
   5. Report on supporting measures for the implementation of subregional trade liberalization schemes;
   6. Report on the implementation of the recommendations of the First Session of the Committee on Regional Cooperation and Integration;
   7. Any other business;
   8. Closing of the meeting.

   (ii) Programme of work

9. The meeting took place from 3.00 pm to 6.00 pm.
VI. Presentation of Document ECA/RCID/E1/RCI2.DOC1: Harmonization of timetables of subregional trade liberalization schemes (agenda item 4)

10. A representative of ECA presented document ECA/RCID/044/01 entitled «Harmonisation of Sub-regional trade liberalisation programs». He started by saying that rapid integration was crucial for Africa’s transformation and survival. Though lost decades characterized by significant progress in integration in Africa have compromised its position in the 21st century, Africa’s integration was still alive with the underlying vision meant to set it free from persistent under-development and put the continent on a transformation path into a strong united body of nations. He said that the vision had been given profound expression in the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community (AEC) and reinforced through the African Union (AU).

11. The representative emphasised that both the AEC and AU represented the grand continental design for Africa’s integration to be anchored on robust sub-regional building blocks embodied by the RECs. He said that the concept of building blocks entailed and implied:

- Strengthening Regional Economic Communities (RECs) at the outset of the continental integration agenda; and
- An inevitable necessity for a co-ordinated and harmonised approach.

12. He recalled that the issue of co-ordination and harmonisation was a well-documented concern, as manifested in many declarations and documents relating to Africa’s integration process. He added that the Abuja Treaty and Constitutive Act of the Africa Union were both quite unequivocal about the issue and considered it of critical importance for the eventual unison of the African economies. He also mentioned that it has been institutionalised through the Protocol on Relations between the AEC and the RECs.

13. Against this background, the ECA representative mentioned that the scope and objectives of the paper was to examine the issue of co-ordination and harmonisation, focusing on the RECs’ trade liberalisation schemes as trade was a key component of the RECs’ integration and development process and also because the paper was inscribed as part of ECA/RCID biennial program for 2000-2001, meant to provide an input to the statutory meeting of the Committee on Regional Cooperation and Integration.

14. Pointing to the main objectives of the paper, he said that it helped highlight:

- Problems associated with RECs’ overlaps and multiple membership;
- Problems of lack of harmony in RECs’ trade liberalisation programs;
- Efforts at RECs’ levels to address issue themselves;
- Recommendations/proposals to reinforce co-ordination and harmonisation.
15. The ECA representative then proceeded to articulate the core substance of the paper as follows:

**Rationale of harmonization of trade liberalization**

16. He began by stating that first and foremost, apart from the political exhortations on harmonisation, it was important to appreciate some of the economic rationale for it. But, before he explained this rationale, he mentioned that it was important to appreciate a few factors that tended to complicate harmonisation rather than facilitate it. These, he said, included:

- The fact that majority of the RECs antedated the coming into force of the Abuja Treaty;
- The fact that the Abuja Treaty itself did little to take account of the realities on the ground in terms of the multiplicity of integration groupings in Africa. He said the Treaty was quite ambivalent about how many REC building blocks were required to constitute the foundation pillars for Africa's integration architecture.

17. Having said this, the ECA representative outlined some of the compelling arguments for harmonisation, besides the political pronouncements, as follows:

- One reason had to do with the multiplicity of RECs and overlapping membership, which made it absolutely necessary to give attention to harmonisation;
- The second reason concerned the overlap of commercial relations and interests, which meant that a more unified space would permit such interests to be fully exploited or realised;
- The third justification had to with trade diversion, which would not arise as an issue if the sub-regional market space was cohesive; and
- The last but not the least reason concerned increased administrative burdens and costs, which were likely to be minimised under a harmonised approach to sub-regional trade liberalisation and market integration.

18. The ECA representative cautioned that, though harmonisation was important and necessary, it was not in itself a sufficient condition to achieve wonders in the pursuit of effective trade liberalisation. He said that other complementary measures were imperative for complete success, and that such measures had been elaborated in the second ECA document (Ref. ECA/RCID/027/01) tabled before the Committee.

19. The ECA representative also pointed out that in discussing the issue of harmonisation, a lot of credit had to be given to the RECs themselves, because they were trying to grapple with it within their respective sub-region through dialogue, consultations and indeed concrete programs of action. He stated that on a sub-regional basis, the paper had tried to highlight some of the difficulties arising from lack of harmonisation, but above all attempted to pinpoint the genuine efforts being pursued by the RECs in that regard. He went
on to highlight some of the differentiated sub-regional characteristics on the harmonisation issue.

20. He said that in North Africa, the situation was a bit tenable for two reasons: The fact that the UMA trade liberalisation process had not effectively taken off the ground presented an opportunity to make a fresh start, taking into account the emergence of CENSAD, which though straddling other sub-regions and RECs, was not only headquartered within the UMA zone, but was also being actively supported by some UMA countries. He noted that apparently, some efforts were already underway to revamp the UMA trade liberalisation process, but hoped that these efforts would keep on board a process of dialogue with CENSAD in order to preempt incompatibilities and contradictions in the future.

21. The situation in West Africa, he mentioned, was also relatively less problematic because essentially, all of UEMOA countries are part of ECOWAS. He added that given the growing rapport between these two organizations to march and act in unison, there was cause for optimism for market unification across the whole of West Africa. He however pointed out that as indicated in the paper, the onus of responsibility would appear to weigh more heavily on the side of ECOWAS in terms of accelerating harmony with UEMOA, which has already attained the level of Customs Union, and is a monetary union as well.

22. In central Africa, the representative stated that a recent study commissioned by ECCAS had recommended that the now resuscitated ECCAS could not afford to misalign its proposed free trade area with the existing CEMAC customs union reality, considering that the bulk of ECCAS members constitute CEMAC. The essence of those recommendations, he said, would allow CEMAC to administer its customs and monetary union, while ECCAS concentrated on managing the proposed free trade with the non-CEMAC ECCAS members, comprising basically, Burundi, Rwanda, DRC and Angola. He said that if such a move came into fruition, there would be no or very little point for CEPGL to pursue a separate trade liberalisation identity, and that the whole central African sub-region would fare better in the spirit of harmonisation if CEPGL focused its energies on building and consolidating peace and security in the zone, while leaving trade liberalization issues to what would unfold between ECCAS and CEMAC.

23. The ECA representative emphasized that it was in Eastern and Southern Africa put together where harmonisation appeared to be a bit of a conundrum, given the quantum of RECs that dot this part of the continent and the intertwining nature of their membership. Even then, he said that there appeared to be some discernible efforts towards harmonisation as manifested, for instance, in the Memorandum of Understanding between COMESA and EAC, and by the emergence of tangible efforts of rapprochement between COMESA and SADC in the interest of harmonization. He, however, cautioned that a lot still remained to be done to reconcile the different trade liberalization identities being asserted within the two sub-regions in terms of the SADC trade protocol, the EAC proposed leapfrog into a Customs Union, and the existence of SACU, which is already a Customs Union. He said that the interlocking membership of these RECs made it imperative to put all the pieces of the puzzle together. In this regard, he proposed for instance that COMESA and EAC pursue identical regimes. He also said that considering that more than half of SADC members are in COMESA, the trade liberalisation regimes of these two blocs should be reconciled at least in
content if not in terms of sequencing. He opined that as there was a real interest between these two organisations to harmonize, one would hopefully expect to see in the near future the pieces of the puzzle gradually fitting together.

24. The ECA representative also stated that, although the paper had given due recognition to the RECs' self-motivated efforts to harmonise their trade liberalisation activities, nonetheless, certain recommendations have been offered as guidelines for strengthening such efforts. He clarified that the principal logic behind such proposals was to help sort out the intricacies occasioned by RECs' overlaps and multiple membership, and that the recommendations, should not, by any means, be construed as advocating dismemberment of any REC. The proposals were spelt out as follows:

- Sorting out the overlaps: More forceful approach;
- Customs Union members belonging to partial and incomplete Free Trade Areas (FTA) to temporarily withdraw from such FTAs and allow the non-Customs Union (CU) to strive to consolidate their own separate FTAs and later on join the CU;
- Smaller non-CU RECs within larger blocs to adopt identical regimes of the larger bloc;
- Maintaining existing arrangements, subject to:
  - Renegotiated adoption of new more unified trade regimes among all the RECs;
  - Though accommodating both fast track intentions and slow-track realities, the new arrangements should converge faster on a pre-determined commonly agreed target date and on a unified sub-regional market space;
- Option for non-starters;
- In a geographical zone of neither complete, partial Free Trade Area nor a Customs Union, a fresh start was required anchored on a real commitment to implement;
- Continental target setting and coordination;
- When all intricate overlaps are sorted out, a realistic but time conscious target setting for accomplishing all outstanding, incomplete or partial Free Trade Areas is imperative;
- Year 2004 is proposed to serve as a benchmark for:
  (i) Completing all partial FTAs
  (ii) Consolidating existing Cus,
• Year 2005 is proposed to serve as target for total market unification within each sub-region;

• Implications of such target dates for all RECs would consist of:
  • Elimination of parallelisms and duplications in approaches to FTAs and Cus;
  • Accompanying measures to ensure target dates can be met;
  • Well functioning and efficient coordination and harmonization at the continental level;
  • Vehement political commitment towards these efforts, *a sine qua non* for success.

25. In the discussion that followed the presentation, the participants generally welcomed the thrust of the papers prepared by ECA.

26. It was pointed out that UMA’s trade liberalisation scheme is now being revamped and that information on the revitalisation could be included in the paper. In particular, the Committee was informed that UMA started in the 80’s as a preferential system, which is now being replaced by a system of Free Trade Area (FTA). A specialized ministerial committee will soon discuss this project which is expected to take into account partnership commitments of UMA countries with other countries as well the relationships between UMA countries and other continents. The Committee was of the opinion that countries, which have signed agreements with European union, should coordinate their positions.

27. Some participants suggested to update information relating inter alia to CEN-SAD, ECCAS and UMA. Concerning the membership to RECs, it was pointed out that Tunisia belongs to two Regional Economic Communities instead of one as; that Zambia is not member of CEN-SAD and that the Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola should be added on the list of ECCAS members. In addition, it was stressed that the term «virtual» is not applicable to UMA: this organisation has headquarters as well as decision-making organs which meet regularly on issues of relevance to the Union.

28. As far as the recommendations are concerned, there appeared to be a general consensus on the need to harmonize and rationalize the liberalisation programs of the RECs as it would help speed up market unification within each sub-region. However, in so doing, the peculiar situation of each sub-region should be taken into account when reconciling CUs interwoven with partial FTAs. Along this line, while the urgency and importance of the rationalization of the institutional setting was duly recognized, the Committee cautioned not to downplay the role of some RECs because of their small seize.

It was agreed that any rationalization should be carried out cautiously. The Committee noted also that donors had played a role in the fragmentation of Africa’s integration efforts through their selective support and conditionalities. The Committee observed that the African Union needs to define its relationship with the RECs in a better way what has been provided for in the Protocol on Relationship between the African Economic Community
and the RECs. It was suggested by some participants that sub-regions should be redefined, based on the wishes of countries.

29. The Committee however pointed out that the coexistence between UEMOA and ECOWAS trade liberalization programmes has gained ground showing that a group of countries already enjoying a customs union can also belong to a larger trade liberalization scheme. It is also believed that ECOWAS could learn from the UEMOA experience in the domain of trade liberalization.

30. The Committee took note of the report.

VII. Presentation of Document ECA/RCID/027/01: Supporting measures for the implementation of trade liberalization schemes (agenda item 5)

31. A representative of ECA introduced document ECA/RCID/027/01 entitled “Supporting Measures for the Implementation of Trade Liberalization Schemes”. The purpose of the paper was to propose measures that can assist African countries and their Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in implementing their trade liberalization schemes. In this regard, a review of existing trade arrangements was made and the factors hindering their implementation examined.

32. The ECA representative pointed out that the objective of trade liberalization is to stimulate and expand trade. With regionalism and globalisation, trade liberalization is accepted world-wide and is being applied at the national, regional, subregional and global levels. The argument put in favour of trade liberalization is that:

- An open trade regime expands trade and investment opportunities;
- Trade barriers on imports lead to higher prices and cause economic inefficiency and distortions;
- The economic inefficiency and distortions in turn will depress real economic growth.

33. The ECA representative underscored that trade liberalization measures should therefore be introduced to:

- Remove tariff barriers (TBs), quantitative restrictions (QRs) and non-tariff barriers (NTBs);
- Reduce tariff dispersions;
- Establish a neutral/equal treatment of imported and domestic goods.

34. This is the reason why African countries are engaged in trade liberalization measures at the national level. At the subregional level, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have also introduced their own schemes to achieve integration objectives.
35. The representative of ECA described the schemes of COMESA, EAC, IGAD, SADC and SACU in the Eastern and Southern Africa; ECOWAS and UEMOA in West Africa; CEMAC and ECCAS in Central Africa and UMA in North Africa. In all these RECs programmes exist to:

- Reduce and eventually eliminate Tariff and Non-Tariff Barriers and other restrictions;
- Facilitate trade;
- Promote trade;
- Eliminate obstacles to the free movement of people, labour, capital and investments;
- Liberalize the monetary and fiscal regimes;
- Achieve macro-economic convergence;
- Ultimately establish a customs union and a monetary union.

36. The ECA representative indicated that UEMOA and CEMAC exist as a customs union and a monetary union and SACU as a customs union. She also underlined that the programmes are at different levels of implementation from REC to REC. In the case of UEMOA and to some extent of CEMAC macroeconomic policies are harmonized through a process of surveillance. Particularly UEMOA has reached some degree of supranationality by empowering its institutions. For example:

- The BCEAO (UEMOA’s Central Bank) already controls the monetary policy of the zone;
- All decisions, regulations and directives of the Commission are binding on all member countries without going through any ratification process.

37. The following nine factors were identified as hindering the implementation of trade liberalization programmes:

**Overlapping membership**

38. Considering membership to the major RECs, the ECA representative indicated that eighteen countries belong to one REC (34%), twenty-nine countries are members of two RECs (54.7%) and six countries of three RECs (11.3%).

39. The ECA representative indicated that critics of overlapping membership or the concept of “variable geometry” believe that it duplicates efforts, leads to an inefficient use of resources, creates difficulties in terms of coordination/harmonization of policies,
programmes and projects, and it is unpractical from an administrative point of view. On the other hand, she mentioned that the proponents of the concept are of the view that countries should be able to move at a faster pace without being held back by slow movers. A multi-speed approach should therefore be incorporated in the agenda of the RECs.

**Often conflicting integration schemes**

40. As a result of the overlapping membership, what are the options for two countries, which simultaneously belong to two different groupings with different trade regimes to trade between themselves? Which regime should they apply? This is one difficulty mentioned.

41. Another difficulty has to do with the design of the trade liberalization scheme itself. For example SADC and UMA introduced some flexibility in their trade protocols that may affect free trade in both subregions. The SADC Protocol provides a temporary exemption to member States whenever they invoke that a removal of tariff and NTB affects their economies. Similarly, in UMA members are allowed to ignore the protocol if they are faced with serious difficulties as a result of its implementation. Members are also enabled to have other parallel trade liberalization arrangements to co-exist with the regional one. These are reasons likely to have adverse implications for the future development of the trade liberalization process and integration.

**Lack of regional level monitoring of the implementation of decisions/ Unwillingness of governments to cede authority to the regional bodies**

42. The ECA representative underscored that there is ongoing debate regarding the institutional framework for integration. RECs with the exception of UEMOA do not have an enforcement authority as far as community decisions are concerned. Furthermore, a court of justice does not exist in all the RECs.

**Commodity composition/production structure of member countries**

43. According to the study, the production structure in African countries is characterized by:

- Similarity of the production structures across the subregion;
- Weak technical base;
- Considerable shortage of resource inflows or investment;
- Lack of linkages between the primary and manufacturing sectors.

44. Thus, a considerable amount of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is required to diversify and expand the range of products. Also sound macroeconomic policy and political stability are needed to attract investments to diversify production and exports.
45. The ECA representative acknowledged that one of the major constraints of RECs is funding. Indeed, there is lack of adequate and regular funding by member countries. RECs just depend on an uncertain and unreliable source of financing. There is no mechanism that forces member countries to pay their dues. The issue of multiple and overlapping membership contributes to this problem. The result is that RECs have difficulties to finance their integration projects and programmes. External funding could be viewed as a necessary complement but it is not forthcoming and has its own limitations. In addition, the ECA representative added that the inward-looking tendencies of each grouping are also an impediment in the sense that they create competition between one another.

**Absence of effective compensation arrangements**

46. The concern of member States that the cost and benefit generated from a regional market is not equally distributed among its members is a factor affecting the implementation of trade liberalization schemes. Some countries are also reluctant to implement the trade liberalization schemes of the RECs to which they belong because of the potential loss of customs revenue.

**Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs)**

47. The ECA representative observed that NTBs cover a wide range of trade-retarding policies and activities. Most of them are not directly identifiable and measurable. And countries keep on using them regardless of agreements and protocols.

**Peace and Security**

48. The ECA representative indicated that instability and civil conflicts have affected integration activities in many countries.

**Commitment to Ideals of Integration**

49. The absence of political will and commitment on the part of member countries has constituted a major constraint to the overall integration process.

50. In response to the nine difficulties listed above, the following measures were identified to assist the implementation of trade liberalization schemes.

**Rationalization of membership and trade liberalization schemes**

51. Multiple and overlapping membership may create confusion, dissipation of the scarce resources that African countries can afford and the fragmentation of the subregional economic space and market. The suggestion made in this regard was to enhance cohesiveness and complementarity among the various groupings within the same subregion. This could be achieved through a specialization of RECs. Furthermore, the latter should have clear guidelines, norms and standards for the conception and
implementation of their programmes and activities.

**Authority to regional bodies for regional level monitoring of the implementation of decisions**

52. The RECs and the national mechanisms should be strengthened to ensure an effective implementation of decisions and measures. RECs should be fully empowered to enforce commonly agreed decisions and impose sanctions in the case of non-compliance. A Community Court of Justice should also be established in those RECs where it does not exist.

**Commodity composition/production structure of member countries**

53. A sound diversification policy is key to address the issue of commodity composition. A sound macroeconomic policy and political stability are prerequisite to attract domestic and foreign investments. Subregional and regional dimensions should be taken into consideration in any diversification strategy to avoid situations of similar productions and to promote integrated subregional projects.

**Self-financing mechanism for RECs**

54. A self-financing mechanism is suggested to substitute the contributions made by member States to the RECs and to generate income/resources to the RECs from a community levy. This is expected to provide the necessary resources to finance RECs’ integration projects and programmes. Drawing from existing experiences in UEMOA and CEMAC and also studies carried out by ECA for COMESA, SADC and CEMAC, some principles were proposed for the community tax.

- The taxation should be broad-based and easy to quantify;
- The community tax should be specific to each institution;
- It should be totally independent from national budgets or the treasury;
- It should be predictable and sustainable;
- It should be increased periodically;
- It should be collected through the existing customs machineries in each member State without creating a parallel structure for this purpose;
- Member States should feel that their contribution to the community levy is equitable, just and fair;
- Countries should also show a sense of solidarity with one another.
Compensation arrangements

55. A compensation mechanism was considered to address real and/or apparent fears over loss of revenue, loss of economic independence, domination of one country by another, etc. It is expected that the introduction of such a mechanism will compensate losers and respond to the concerns or fear over integration arrangements. Here again, some principles are suggested taking into account the experiences of UEMOA and also studies carried out by ECA for COMESA and CEMAC:

- The compensation mechanism should have an annual budget allocation amounting to 60% of the revenue loss that member States would incur as a result of the implementation of trade liberalization schemes;

- Each member State contributes to this annual budget in proportion to its share of intra-REC exports;

- Member States’ contribution is not deductible from national budgets or the treasury. It is rather payable through the self-financing mechanism of RECs which is based on a community levy as indicated earlier;

- Resources should be transferred to member States in proportion of the recorded revenue loss incurred from importation of community products;

- The resources hence generated should not go to the national budget or the treasury. They should be used for the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) or export promotion activities in the member States.

56. In addition, other combinations could be considered such as:

- Country contributions based on “ability-to-pay” principle left to the appreciation of each country;

- Community citizens to pay a modest percentage of their incomes in the form of a “community tax”;

- A consortium of donor agencies may also be persuaded to finance the compensation mechanism, over a limited period of time;

- Self-financing and compensation mechanisms go hand in hand. Introducing one of them without the other is no solution at all.

Non-Tariff Barriers

57. NTBs are an obstacle to the effective implementation of trade liberalization schemes in almost all the RECs. They need to be clearly defined in all protocols and related documents. A sustained mechanism needs to be put in place to monitor the compliance of member countries with the provisions of their protocols and other related
decisions. The gradual identification and subsequent elimination of NTBs are essential for the successful implementation of trade liberalization schemes.

**Peace and Security**

58. Peace and security in regional integration are crucial.

**Commitment to Ideals of Integration**

59. The degree of commitment demonstrated by member States is fundamental in meeting the challenges of integration.

60. In conclusion, the presentation highlighted that the major groupings have lagged behind in the implementation of some aspects of their trade and market integration objectives. This is due to a number of constraints that need to be adequately addressed and for which the recommendations were recapitulated as follows:

- Rationalization of membership to RECs;
- Rationalization, coordination and harmonization of RECs programmes and activities;
- Diversification of the commodity composition/production structure of member countries;
- Introduction of a self-financing mechanism for the RECs;
- Introduction of a compensation arrangement;
- Removal or elimination of NTBs;
- Regional level monitoring of and authority to regional bodies for the implementation of community decisions;
- Peace and security;
- Commitment to ideals of integration and political commitment;
- And linkage between trade and other sectors.

61. Regarding this last point, it was emphasized that trade should not be seen in isolation from other sectors particularly money and finance, industry, labour and transport and communications infrastructure development. A successful integration has to do with a balanced approach that creates linkages in terms of macroeconomic and sectoral policies, programmes and activities. This linkage should be worked out not only within countries of a same REC but also between the different RECs.
62. In the discussion that followed the above presentation on supporting measures for the implementation of subregional trade liberalization schemes, the ongoing efforts by RECs to establish closer relationships among themselves were mentioned as a positive development to address the issue of overlapping membership and duplication of activities. However, it was strongly recommended that these efforts be strengthened through the vigorous implementation of the protocol between the RECs and AEC and the active leadership role to be played by the African Union.

63. The importance of intellectual property rights (TRIPs) in trade was recognized as well as the need for African countries to develop a technological innovation strategy for the whole continent, considering that production in Africa is setting back. The recommendations of the papers were broadly accepted and there was a strong view expressed as to the imperative of operationalizing them.

64. The meeting stressed also the need to strengthen the OAU/ADB/ECA Joint Secretariat in order for it to provide leadership to the RECs. In that respect, the participants expressed the wish to see ECA increase its technical assistance to RECs in order to enable the latter achieve their regional integration objectives.

65. Besides, the Committee underscored the need for the RECs to adopt recommendations that can be easily operationalized. In this respect, the Committee was informed that the ECCAS's self-financing mechanism is already adopted and is awaiting the endorsement by ECCAS Heads of State.

66. It was observed that the African Entreprises Networks should benefit from a multiform assistance from ECA and RECs. To that end, the Committee proposed that a formal framework be established to allow these networks to channel their concerns. In addition, the ill preparedness of African countries with respect to WTO issues was raised and it was proposed that measures be taken for a better preparation of African countries for the forthcoming WTO negotiations. In particular, private sector enterprises should be helped to build capacities with a view to having their concerns properly channelled to the WTO policy-making organs, like their counterparts in the developed world do. In the same vein, it was strongly emphasized that African countries should gather evidence as to the unlawful dumping practices by developed countries that export in large quantities subsidized goods to the developing world. Finally, the Committee recommended that African countries should take measures to make their economic integration agendas compatible with their external obligations.

67. The Committee took note of the report.

VIII. Presentation of Document ECA/RCID/EL/RCI2/Doc.3: Implementation of the Recommendations of the first session of the Committee (agenda item 6)

68. A representative of ECA secretariat presented the Document ECA/RCID/EL/RCI23 entitled “Implementation of the Recommendations of the first session of the Committee”. He started by recalling that the purpose of this paper is to report on how these recommendations were implemented by ECA either alone or in collaboration with its
partners.

Implementation of the recommendations of the Committee’s session

Assistance to African countries for their accession to World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreements

69. The situation of countries with regard to the agreements governing WTO is far from being homogeneous. Certain African countries took part, more or less actively, in the process of negotiations that led to the Marrakech Agreements, signed and later ratified them. Others have not signed these Marrakech Agreements but acceded to them later. A limited number of them (twelve at the last count) do still hesitate to do so in view of the constraints the accession might impose on their foreign trade. ECA’s assistance to African countries has tried to provide answers to these diverse cases.

(i) Assistance to countries wishing to join WTO

- Technical publications

70. Of the African countries that are not yet members of WTO, some are considering the possibility of joining this organization. In order to help these countries (about twelve in number at our last count) and others that are WTO members familiarize themselves with the problems and stakes of international negotiations, ECA has started publishing a series of newsletters addressing a wide range of issues. Among them are labour standards, questions on the General Agreement on Services including transports and financial services, harmonization of programmes of activities on economic integration in Africa and WTO Agreements, access to external markets etc. These publications have been widely circulated among potential users, namely member States and Regional Economic Communities.

- Seminar on the harmonization of Abuja and WTO programme of activities

71. With a view to take an in-depth look at Africa’s integration and WTO Agreements, ECA organized a seminar on this theme in November 1999. The seminar brought together officials responsible for these issues, representatives of Regional Economic Communities, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and ECA Sub-regional Development Centres. The deliberations focussed particularly on special dispensations Africa could solicit and obtain in application of article 24 of GATT 1994. At that seminar, participants expressed regret about the slow pace at which Africa was moving to get WTO recognize these regional agreements.

(ii) Assistance to ensure Africa’s effective participation in WTO negotiations

72. Apart from the above-mentioned newsletters, ECA has taken other initiatives to help Africa participate more effectively in international negotiations.

- Workshop on international negotiations

73. ECA organized also in November 1999 a training workshop on international
negotiation techniques. This workshop was held in collaboration with WTO officials who drew on Uruguay Round experience to offer advice on how African countries could better participate in future negotiations. Resource persons covered a wide range of subjects while underscoring specific aspects of each field.

- **Brochure on negotiations of the millennium**

74. In anticipation of the round of negotiations that were scheduled to start in Seattle in November 1999, ECA has prepared a brochure for African delegates. Although the round of negotiations did not come on as envisaged, the brochure turned out to be very useful for African delegates. It is being updated for the next meeting of WTO Conference in Qatar.

- **Joint Advisory Group**

75. Lastly, in collaboration with OAU and the African Development Bank, ECA set up a multidisciplinary advisory group on international negotiations that took part, alongside African countries, in discussions in the margin of negotiations on the renewal of the Lome Convention (Cotonou Agreement) and offered support to the African Group in Geneva. The advisory group is being reconstituted to carry out a series of studies that might be necessary as a follow-up to the Conference to be held in Doha, Qatar.

76. To sum up, ECA has implemented most of the recommendations of the first session of the Committee, going sometimes beyond what the Commission was required to do.

**Implementation of the Forums' Recommendations**

77. The first recommendation made by the Forum concerned the reduction in the number of economic groupings and the diversity of activities they undertake with a view to limiting financing needs. This question stems from the often-expressed concern to rationalize the institutional framework of integration in Africa. Of course, it is not the responsibility of ECA to take the initiative in a decision to curtail the number of economic groupings in Africa. It continues, however, discussions on the issue especially within the context of the Annual Report on Integration in Africa whose first issue will come out soon.

78. Another recommendation was on reducing the number of studies to those that are essential and have good prospects of being implemented. Obviously, this recommendation went to economic groupings and their member States.

79. The main recommendation dealt with the establishment of a regional integration financing facility to be put in place with the assistance of financial institutions. This facility should help finance activities that will promote integration, including the drawing up of multinational projects, building of capacities, holding of consultative forums, meetings of partners etc. ECA has been requested to prepare a note on the establishment of this facility in collaboration with financial institutions, but it has not yet found time to do so. One of the reasons for this is that ECA has had to respond to requests from Regional Economic Communities to conduct studies on their own financing needs. Furthermore, the birth of the African Union has modified the prospects of financing requirements as a result
of the putting in place mechanisms, including the African Investment Bank. The note requested by the Forum can only be prepared in close collaboration with the African Union.

80. The meeting took note of the report.

IX. Any other business (agenda item 10)

81. No issue was raised under this agenda item.

X. Closing of the meeting (agenda item 12)

82. In his concluding remarks, the Chairman summarised the discussions as follows:

- Although the relationship between the African Union and the RECs has not been clearly spelled out in the Constitutive Act of the AU, there is a pressing need for close relationship. Therefore, it is important to delineate the responsibilities of the AU and of REC on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity;

- It is vital to operationalize the process of rationalization of RECs;

- There is a pressing need to address the issue of loss of revenue by putting in place efficient compensation mechanisms taking into account the experience of UEMOA;

- There is a need for a strong political will; such a will should be sustained by more tangible achievements by RECs;

- The dismantling of NTBs should be given high priority;

- Without stable environment based on peace and security, there is little chance to achieve any economic development objective.

83. The chairman of the Committee concluded by expressing his conviction that on the important issues discussed, the outcome of the meeting constituted headway in many respects.

84. On his part, Mr. Yousif Suliman, Director of the Regional Cooperation and Integration Division stated that the meeting had lived up to the expectations and had benefited from the wide experience of participants. He indicated also that interaction between ECA and its partners was considered an important means of testing the relevance of its products. Finally, he thanked all the participants for their active involvement in the fruitful deliberations of the meeting.

85. The meeting was then formally declared closed.
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