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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

ANNUAL REPORT

9 MAY 1997 - 28 APRIL 1998

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACARTSOD	African Centre for Applied Research and Training in Social Development	CSO	Civil society organization
ACC	Administrative Committee on Co-ordination	EAC	East African cooperation
ACCS	African Centre for Civil Society	ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ADB	African Development Bank	ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
AERC	African Economic Research Consortium	ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
AISI	African Information Society Initiative	ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
ARAC	African Accreditation Committee	ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ARCT	African Regional Centre for Technology	EIS	Environment information systems
CAMRDC	Central African Mineral Resources Development Centre	ESAMI	Eastern and Southern African Management Institute
CASD	Committee on African Statistical Development	ESAMRDC	Eastern and Southern African Mineral Resources Development Centre
CEBVIRHA	Communauté économique du bétail, de la viande et des ressources halieutiques	ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
CEMAC	Communauté économique et monétaire de l'Afrique centrale	ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
CEPGL	Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries	FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
CILSS	Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel	GCA	Global Coalition for Africa
CODESRIA	Council for the Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa	GIS	Geographical information systems
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa	GTZ	German technical cooperation
CPC	Committee for Programme Co-ordination	IACC	Inter-agency Coordinating Committee
		IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
		IGOs	Intergovernmental organizations
		ILO	International Labour Organisation

IMF	International Monetary Fund	SRDC	Subregional Development Centre
IOC	Indian Ocean Commission	UDEAC	Central African Customs and Economic Union
MIGA	Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency	UEMOA	Union économique et monétaire ouest-africaine
MULPOC	Multinational Programming and Operational Centre	UNCSTD	United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations		
OAU	Organization of African Unity	UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
OSSREA	Organization for Social Science Research in East Africa	UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
PMAESA	Port Management Association for Eastern and Southern Africa	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
RCSSMRS	Regional Centre for Services in Surveying, Mapping and Remote Sensing	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
RECTAS	Regional Centre for Training in Aerospace Surveys	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
RIPS	Regional Institute for Population Studies	UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
ROADSIP	Road Sector Investment Programme	UN-NADAF	United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s
SACCAR	Southern Africa Centre for Co-ordination in Agricultural Research	UNOPS	United Nations Office of Project Services
SADC	Southern African Development Community	UNTACDA	United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa
SATCC	Southern Africa Transport and Communications Commission	WHO	World Health Organization
SIA	United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa	WMO	World Meteorological Organization
SNA	System of National Accounts	WTO	World Trade Organization

INTRODUCTION

1. The present annual report of the Economic Commission for Africa covers the period 9 May 1997 to 28 April 1998. It has been prepared in accordance with paragraph 18 of the Commission's terms of reference and was adopted by the Commission on 28 April 1998.

CHAPTER I

MATTERS CALLING FOR ACTION BY THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Economic Commission for Africa

2. At the first meeting of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Economic and Social Development and Planning, held in Addis Ababa on 28 April 1998, the Commission adopted one resolution which calls for action by the Council.

Resolution calling for action by the Council

3. The following resolution calls for action by the Council:

DRAFT RESOLUTION

830(MFC.1) Reform of the regional commissions

A. Relationships between the Economic Commission for Africa, United Nations agencies, regional and subregional organizations in Africa.

The Ministerial Follow-up Committee,

Recalling the terms of reference of the Commission as adopted by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 671A (XXV) of 29 April 1958 and amended by its resolutions 974 D.1 (XXXVI) of 5 July 1963, 1343 (XLV) of 18 July 1968 and 1978/68 of 4 August 1978,

Recalling further the various resolutions that have implications on the mandate and operations of the Commission including, in particular, General Assembly resolution 32/197 of 20 December 1977 on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system, 33/202 of 29 January 1979, 44/211 of 21 December 1989 and 50/120 of 20 December 1995,

Noting with appreciation the endorsement by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 718 (XXVI) of 12 May 1991 on the revitalization of the mandate and operational framework of the regional economic commissions, Commission resolution 726 (XXVII) of 22 April 1992 on strengthening the Economic Commission for Africa to face Africa's development challenges in the 1990s, 779 (XXIX) of 4 May 1994 on strengthening the operational capacity of the Economic Commission for Africa, and 809 (XXXI) of 8 May 1996 on the New directions for the Economic Commission for Africa,

Bearing in mind General Assembly resolutions 44/177 of 19 December 1990, 45/264 of 13 May 1991 and 46/235 of 13 April 1992 on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, in which the call was made for the regional commissions to be enabled fully to play their role under the authority of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, and that for those located in developing countries to be strengthened in the context of the overall objectives of the ongoing restructuring and revitalization process,

Taking into account General Assembly resolution 52/12B of 19 December 1997 on Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform which invited the Economic and Social Council, in consultation with Member States and appropriate intergovernmental regional bodies, to conduct a general review of the regional commissions at its substantive session of 1998, bearing in mind the relevant provisions of resolution 50/227 of 24 May 1996 and the individual reviews each commission has already carried out, in order to consider the competencies of the regional commissions, taking into account the competencies of global bodies and other regional and subregional intergovernmental bodies,

Having examined in-depth document E/ECA/MFC.1/2 entitled "Reforms of the regional commissions: Relationships between the Economic Commission for Africa, United Nations agencies, regional and subregional organizations in Africa - A note by the secretariat",

1. Welcomes the note by the secretariat;¹
2. Expresses its appreciation for the observations and analyses contained in the note;
3. Decides to recommend as follows:

Recommendation 1: Reaffirm and support existing coordination mechanisms at the regional level

An important first step in enhancing collaboration between the Economic Commission for Africa and the United Nations agencies is to reaffirm and support the team leadership role assigned to the regional commissions in General Assembly resolution 32/197. The agencies should use the mechanism of a regional administrative committee on coordination first suggested by the Secretary-General in 1994. The Economic and Social Council should consider providing a legislative directive to this effect. The regional administrative committee on coordination would be useful in addressing several regional issues, including questions such as follow-up to the global conferences, and various programmes on post-conflict reconstruction developments in Africa. In this regard, the next meeting of the Conference of Ministers to be held in 1999 should consider in-depth coordination and collaboration among United Nations agencies operating at the subregional and regional levels in Africa.

¹ Document E/ECA/MFC.1/2 of 21 April 1998.

Recommendation 2: Adopt some principles for regional coordination

The United Nations agencies in Africa should adopt some principles for regional coordination. The agencies should endeavour to foster regional coordination on the basis of promoting greater exchange of information on planned and ongoing work; improve complementarities among the programmes; draw on each other's competencies; and bring the pool of resources - financial and human - at their disposal to bear on policy issues of common interest.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen coordination at subregional level

Coordination or collaboration among United Nations agencies in Africa should also be enhanced at the subregional level. This should take the form of development of joint ventures to support the specific activities of countries in a subregional framework. In this way, the complementarities and harmony sought at the regional level will be given greater impact and impetus. The Commission's Subregional Development Centres should be used as important vehicles for coordination at the subregional level.

Recommendation 4: The role of the Economic Commission for Africa in normative and operational functions

The Economic Commission for Africa, as a United Nations regional commission and as part of the landscape of regional institutions in service of Africa's development, has carried out valuable normative (analysis, advocacy, norm-setting) and operational activities which have been mutually complementary and supportive to the member States of the region. It should continue to undertake both categories of activities, it being recognized that its technical assistance plays a catalytic role in translating its normative work into concrete support for the development efforts of member States.

Recommendation 5: Enhanced cooperation among African organizations

At the regional level, there is already an implicit specialization and division of labour among Africa's three premier intergovernmental organizations: the Organization of African Unity, the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank. Still, there remains a need to promote a more clear-cut division of responsibilities, and to rationalize and strengthen complementarities among the three organizations more strictly according to their mandates and competencies as a means of increasing their combined effectiveness, impact and efficiency in their collective mandate - to oversee the overall development of Africa at the regional level. This calls for these African organizations to strengthen their Joint Secretariat by implementing among themselves similar strategies as outlined above for the United Nations system. In particular, they should:

(a) Strengthen coordination, including collaboration in programme development, planning of activities, monitoring and evaluation, geared to building upon and exploiting complementarities;

(b) Improve networking and communications at all staff levels, and not only at the level of the chief executives;

(c) Work to establish a common ethos among their staff, based on a common perspective of Africa's political, social and economic development challenges and opportunities, and a common zeal to move Africa forward; and,

(d) Streamline and coordinate their intergovernmental machineries: the governing bodies of all African organizations could be required to summarize, in a joint report, their main decisions for submission to the Summit of the African Heads of State and Government, which is the supreme organ of the African Economic Community.

B. Revision to the Economic Commission for Africa's Medium-term Plan, 1998-2001

The Ministerial Follow-up Committee,

Having considered document E/ECA/MFC.1/3 entitled "First revision to the Medium-term Plan, 1998-2001: Note by the secretariat",

Recalling Commission resolution 809 (XXI) of 8 May 1996 in which the Commission endorsed the Medium-term Plan, 1998-2001 in the context of new directions for the Economic Commission for Africa,

Further recalling Commission resolutions 810 (XXXI) of 8 May 1996 and 828 (XXXII) of 8 May 1997 which respectively called for the strengthening of the former Multinational Programming and Operational Centres and their transformation to Subregional Development Centres with an extended programme and policy orientation, as well as Commission resolution 824 (XXXI) of 8 May 1996 on the Follow-up to the Dakar and Beijing Conferences: Implementation of the Global and Regional Platforms of Action for the Advancement of Women,

Endorses the revision to the Medium-term Plan, 1998-2001 involving the establishment of two new subprogrammes: Promoting the advancement of women and Supporting subregional activities for development.

CHAPTER II

WORK OF THE COMMISSION DURING THE PERIOD 9 MAY 1997 TO 28 APRIL 1998

A. Activities of subsidiary bodies

4. During the period under review, the secretariat prepared for and serviced meetings of various intergovernmental bodies of the Commission. The list of these meetings is given in annex II of this report.

B. Other activities

Facilitating economic and social policy analysis

5. During the period under review, this subprogramme placed emphasis on economic policy analysis for sustained growth and macroeconomic stability, trade and investment promotion, debt sustainability, and social policy and poverty reduction. Under the substantive research activities, the secretariat prepared ten studies on various issues. The topics covered by the studies were as follows: trade and competition policy in the framework of African countries; trade and investment policy in Africa; practices and procedures of government procurement in Africa; incidence of selected government subsidy programmes in Africa; the role of institutions in fiscal reform; informal savings arrangements in African countries; formal and non-formal education in Ethiopia; and gender characteristics of poverty with emphasis on the rural sector. The Economic Report on Africa, 1998 was also published.

6. In addition, the secretariat also produced three reports on topical issues relating to Africa's development. The first report, entitled "Towards the twenty-first century: An African agenda for development under the second Tokyo International Conference on Africa's Development (TICAD-II)", discussed the various development strategies proposed for the region, assessed the current policy paradigms and explored the opportunities for the future in the context of a globalized world. The second report, concerning Africa and the Multilateral Investment Agreement, critically examined the draft documents on the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)-proposed agreement and suggested options for African countries. The report was submitted to the Ad hoc Expert Group meeting on appropriate follow-up mechanisms to the first World Trade Organization (WTO) ministerial conference and modalities to facilitate Africa's effective participation in the second WTO Ministerial Conference. The third publication focused on poverty measurement and analysis.

7. The secretariat also organized, and participated in, a number of meetings. The Forum on cost sharing in the social sectors in Africa (10-20 June 1997), organized in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank, was attended by 60 participants from 17 African countries, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and bilateral and multilateral donors. The Forum adopted the Addis Ababa Consensus on Basic Education and Basic Health. ECA participated in the meeting of the Interim Governing Council of the African Capital Markets Forum, held in Nairobi, Kenya in March 1998. The main objective of the Forum, established with the strong support of the Commission, is to promote the

development of effective capital markets in Africa. In this respect, ECA funded the preparation of a technical and capacity building project on the promotion of capital markets in Africa, which is designed for fund raising for the Forum. The secretariat also participated in the first meeting of the Organization of African Unity/African Economic Community (OAU/AEC) ministers of trade held on 8 and 9 April 1998 in Harare, Zimbabwe and attended by 31 African countries and 11 regional, international and non-governmental organizations. ECA contributed substantially to the meeting of the Economic Committee of the Global Coalition for Africa (GCA), organized to discuss issues pertaining to enhancing the investment environment in Africa.

8. Building the capacity of member States to facilitate economic and social policy analysis constitutes an important component of the Commission's activities. Group training, workshops and seminars were organized for member States in the areas of poverty analysis and monitoring. The secretariat worked closely with various United Nations agencies and other organizations such as WTO, UNICEF, OAU, ADB, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Council for the Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the Organization for Social Science Research in East Africa (OSSREA) and the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC). The areas of collaboration included attending meetings, mounting joint missions, planning joint publications and exploring future cooperation in the service of Africa. Collaboration with the GCA and the OECD involved attending meetings and exchanging views on the state of progress made in the region.

9. Technical assistance missions were sent to some member States. Two missions were sent to Malawi and Uganda, and they addressed broad development issues as well as specific issues such as economic diplomacy, information technology and regional economic cooperation. In addition, the secretariat mounted several other missions with a view to providing advisory services to member States on debt rescheduling, macroeconomics and WTO issues and trade relations and poverty issues.

Ensuring food security and sustainable development

10. Activities in support of food security and sustainable development put particular emphasis on issues related to transition from high to low population growth rate, transition from low to high productivity agriculture and transition from poor to better stewardship of the environment, as well as science and technology for sustainable development. The secretariat produced eight policy reports, participated in eight workshops, serviced and/or attended a total of about 13 meetings and collaborated with various United Nations agencies and organizations. The policy reports included the following: (a) dynamics of food security, population and environment in Africa: A survey of issues; (b) study on promoting sustainable development of rural settlements for reducing rural to urban migration and strengthening employment opportunity in impoverished rural areas; (c) policy brief on food security, population and sustainable development in Africa; (d) facilitating demographic transition in Africa: Issues and challenges; (e) integrated management of water resources from a regional perspective of the African continent; (f) water resources management – rainwater harvesting technologies; (g) the role of biotechnology in increasing agricultural yields in Africa; and (h) a strategic framework for ECA intervention in science and technology in Africa.

11. The objectives of these various policy reports included: developing a conceptual framework for analyzing the linkages between agriculture, population and environment (i.e., the nexus issues) for use as an advocacy tool on the nexus approach; assisting decision makers and planners to formulate policies and programmes for sustainable development of rural areas that integrate rural regions into the national economy; identifying and promoting best practices in rural settlements development planning and management; enhancing awareness and understanding of the interrelated issues of water resources in the context of the nexus of population, environment and development; identifying, analyzing and assessing the factors and issues (economic, demographic, social, cultural and biological) delaying or facilitating significant mortality, fertility and population growth declines in selected countries in Africa with a view to recommending policies and strategies for facilitating the demographic transition and hence the achievement of food security and sustainable development in the region; fostering the adoption of a new strategy for the development and the application of technology in general and biotechnology in particular; and reformulating ECA's intervention strategy in light of the new strategic directions of the Commission. The reports were produced for a large audience including: national, sectoral and district level officials involved in the formulation and implementation of the national population policy as an integral part of the national development plan; planners, policy makers, researchers, decision makers, experts, NGOs, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and academics, in the field of population, environment and agriculture. The research undertaken in this subprogramme should contribute to improving expertise at the national, sectoral and district levels regarding the integration of population, environment and agriculture factors in development planning in the ECA member States; improvement of the food security policies and strategies as well as the implementation of plans of action; increase in awareness of the needs of science and technology in African countries; and advocacy of the need to focus on the "nexus technologies" for food security and sustainable development in Africa.

12. A number of operational activities were undertaken in the areas of population, environment and agriculture at the national and sectoral levels, and in collaboration with international research institutions and donors. These operational activities took mainly the form of workshops aimed at: enhancing skills in the development of indicators for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of policies and programmes related to the nexus issues; fostering the understanding of the modalities of the PEDDA (population, environment, development, agriculture) model; developing a better understanding of the causal linkages and relationship between food security and environment; identifying regional food security issues, needs, initiatives and the principal stakeholders; identifying priority options and possible approaches to address food security and environmental concerns in the Greater Horn of Africa; sharing experiences in soil fertility research; and preparing a soil fertility management project and a project concept document for Ethiopia. These included: workshop on capacity building in developing and implementing indicators of sustainable development in Africa, Accra, Ghana, from 3 to 6 June 1997; national fertilizer workshop, Addis Ababa, from 1 to 3 October 1997; regional stakeholders workshop on food security and environmental linkages in the Greater Horn of Africa, organized with the World Resources Institute and the East African Office of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, Nairobi, Kenya, from 4 to 6 February 1998; intercountry training workshop on population and development planning, Pretoria, South Africa, from 23 to 27 March 1998; post-Habitat African NGOs workshop, Addis Ababa, from 23 to 25 March 1998; and soil fertility management workshop, Addis Ababa, from 21 to 23 April 1998.

13. The secretariat participated in a number of meetings and contributed to the work of the various inter-agency committees and task forces, including the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (UNCSTD); the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II); the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development; expert group meeting on development of non-conventional water resources and appropriate technology for groundwater management in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) region; Governing Council of the United Nations Regional Institute for Population Studies (RIPS); first meeting of the ad hoc group of experts on science and technology for food security and sustainable development; and the meeting of the governing organ of the African Regional Centre for Technology (ARCT). The secretariat was engaged in a number of other collaboration and coordination activities with United Nations agencies and organizations as well as with regional and subregional IGOs involving change of data and information and attendance at conferences, meetings and workshops.

Strengthening development management

14. The broadening of perspectives on development management issues occupied a significant part of the secretariat's work. In this respect, emphasis was placed on research, sharing of experience and documentation on the status of development management in Africa, with focus on the impact of various reform measures for improvements in both the public and private sectors and civil society organizations as well as the policy response to globalization and market liberalization.

15. Activities in public sector management focused on promoting effective development management practices, systems and institutions in Africa. The major concerns in this regard were assistance in the analysis and documentation of public sector reform strategies, and best practices for enhancing institutional, organizational and administrative capacities. Emphasis was also placed on providing insights on measures for accelerating devolutionary decentralization to strengthen local government structures, investment in human capital and creation of enabling environment for investment promotion. To this end, the secretariat undertook a number of research activities. Most notable among those activities were studies on: (a) public sector reforms: retrenchment trends and the creation of alternative employment opportunities; (b) trends in the management of human resources in public administration in Africa; and (c) reform of tax regimes for the promotion of investment in Africa.

16. The study on public sector reforms: retrenchment trends and the creation of alternative employment opportunities in Africa reviewed the general employment situation in the region and, in particular, the public sector reform strategies in selected African countries and the reintegration of the retrenched employees into productive employment sectors. It also provided an overview of the types of post-retrenchment programmes adopted by some African countries and their impact on generating alternative employment opportunities as well as the role of the government, private sector and the international community on such programmes.

17. As micro- and small enterprises assume a greater role in Africa's private sector development, the secretariat has concentrated its efforts on defining programmes that allow access of formal and informal micro-operators to financial schemes and practices as a way

of acquiring resources and services to increase capital. Credit for micro projects was analyzed through a study carried out to find solutions to improve access to small loans by making effective use of the formal and informal micro-financing systems. The study reviewed ongoing practices and programmes of micro financing in selected African countries, assessed policies and strategies as well as main constraints related to the issue. The study made appropriate recommendations to governments, financial institutions, NGOs, informal sector associations and micro- and small entrepreneurs. It also outlined the needed partnerships for harmonizing the informal and formal micro-financing systems.

18. Other activities in support of private sector development centred on the promotion of the informal sector in Africa. This was pursued primarily through the implementation of a project on enhancing the role of the informal sector in the process of socio-economic development and also for contributing to the alleviation of poverty among the poorest segment of the urban population. The project, funded by the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), operates not only through a participatory process in which the informal sector operators consult among themselves to find solutions to their problems, formulate and implement action plans, but also build linkages with partners who provide assistance in improving their enabling environment.

19. In response to the strong demand for enhancing the capacity of civil society organizations, a number of seminars and workshops were held focusing on different aspects of capacity development. Some were national-based and targeted at addressing the policy analysis and advocacy capacity of NGOs to effectively participate and contribute to policy and program formulation and implementation. Other workshops were subregional and regional in scope and used as outlets for developing, publishing and disseminating series of guidelines, technical manuals on critical issues aimed at strengthening the operational capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs). A major initiative in enhancing the potential contributions and synergies of CSOs was the establishment of the African Centre for Civil Society (ACCS) in October 1997 with the fundamental task of serving as a resource centre for the institutional development and capacity building of African CSOs.

20. Under the regular programme of technical cooperation, advisory and training services were provided in response to requests by member States, subregional economic groups and their IGOs. As part of that effort, studies were undertaken on restructuring studies of the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The restructuring studies, apart from designing organizational structures to enable the subregional economic groups to effectively implement their integration objectives, highlighted the importance of the private sector in the drive towards the establishment of the respective common markets. They made recommendations on how to involve the private sector in the integration process. A number of training services were rendered to member States in enhancing civil service capacity for development management, monitoring and evaluating performance of services provided including public enterprises. Assistance was also given to member States in defining benchmarks for monitoring ethics, accountability and improved service delivery as well as measures to enhance motivation and productivity improvement and decentralization.

21. The need to find solutions to the inadequacies of the public health systems and services in Africa was the motivation behind the World Health Organization (WHO)/ECA joint workshop on the role of local government in health. Some of the problems facing the public

health sector could be traced not only to the economics and financing of health care, but also to the structure and institutional arrangements of health care systems. In addressing these issues, the workshop focused on two crucial questions, namely what role should be assigned to local government in the delivery of basic health care services and how primary health care responsibilities could be divided between the central and local government organs and the community.

22. The secretariat continued to foster its inter-agency cooperation in the area of development management, mainly through joint activities aimed at promoting good governance and democracy as ingredients for sustainable development. In this respect, the secretariat worked closely with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in organizing the first annual Africa Governance Forum, as a vehicle for sharing experiences and identifying best practices on governance in Africa. ECA, in collaboration with the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs, organized in the first quarter of 1998 the Conference on Governance in Africa focusing on a wide range of issues relevant to the consolidation of the institutional foundations for good governance.

Promoting regional cooperation and integration

23. The activities of the secretariat revolved around the following cluster of objectives: facilitating and enhancing the process of regional integration; promoting the coordinated building and effective utilization of regional networks of transport and communication infrastructures; promoting capacity building for the exploration and rational utilization of mineral and energy resources through intraregional cooperation; and promoting cooperation for the management, development and utilization of trans-border water resources, including river/lake basins.

24. The activities carried out under each of the foregoing areas were as follows:

(a) Facilitating the implementation of existing cooperative arrangements: The following studies were produced: Magnitude of physical impediments, tariff and non-tariff barriers, their impact on intra-African trade and their effect on regional development patterns; and degree of convergence of micro- and macroeconomic policies among African countries: proposal of institutional framework for greater harmonization;

(b) Building capacities to support the integration process: The following studies were undertaken: study on the establishment of a self-financing mechanism within COMESA; the strengthening of regional economic communities; and building critical capacities for regional integration. Moreover, subsequent to the Commission resolution on the rationalization of ECA-sponsored institutions, the Regional Cooperation and Integration Division, along with relevant substantive divisions, brought to the attention of the governing bodies of most institutions concerned the need to take the necessary steps towards the implementation of the related decision and recommendation of the 1997 Conference of African Ministers responsible for Economic and Social Development and Planning. This will culminate in a policy paper to be prepared by ECA at the end of 1998 for consideration by the ECA Conference of Ministers in 1999. Finally, the secretariat participated in February 1998 in the meetings of the policy organs of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) that adopted a programme for re-launching this organization which has been

of acquiring resources and services to increase capital. Credit for micro projects was analyzed through a study carried out to find solutions to improve access to small loans by making effective use of the formal and informal micro-financing systems. The study reviewed ongoing practices and programmes of micro financing in selected African countries, assessed policies and strategies as well as main constraints related to the issue. The study made appropriate recommendations to governments, financial institutions, NGOs, informal sector associations and micro- and small entrepreneurs. It also outlined the needed partnerships for harmonizing the informal and formal micro-financing systems.

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23. The activities of the secretariat revolved around the following cluster of objectives: facilitating and enhancing the process of regional integration; promoting the coordinated building and effective utilization of regional networks of transport and communication infrastructures; promoting capacity building for the exploration and rational utilization of mineral and energy resources through intraregional cooperation; and promoting cooperation for the management, development and utilization of trans-border water resources, including river/lake basins.

24. The activities carried out under each of the foregoing areas were as follows:

(a) Facilitating the implementation of existing cooperative arrangements: The following studies were produced: Magnitude of physical impediments, tariff and non-tariff barriers, their impact on intra-African trade and their effect on regional development patterns; and degree of convergence of micro- and macroeconomic policies among African countries: proposal of institutional framework for greater harmonization;

(b) Building capacities to support the integration process: The following studies were undertaken: study on the establishment of a self-financing mechanism within COMESA; the strengthening of regional economic communities; and building critical capacities for regional integration. Moreover, subsequent to the Commission resolution on the rationalization of ECA-sponsored institutions, the Regional Cooperation and Integration Division, along with relevant substantive divisions, brought to the attention of the governing bodies of most institutions concerned the need to take the necessary steps towards the implementation of the related decision and recommendation of the 1997 Conference of African Ministers responsible for Economic and Social Development and Planning. This will culminate in a policy paper to be prepared by ECA at the end of 1998 for consideration by the ECA Conference of Ministers in 1999. Finally, the secretariat participated in February 1998 in the meetings of the policy organs of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) that adopted a programme for re-launching this organization which has been

dormant since 1993. The secretariat will also take part in the implementation of this programme;

(c) Strengthening Africa's role in the world economy: The following technical publications were produced: liberalization of world trade, globalization and African economic integration: a re-assessment of the time frame of the Abuja Treaty processes for establishing the African Economic Community; regional economic integration in Africa and the multilateral trading system; globalization and market liberalization: prospects for African exports. In summary, the work of the secretariat in this area related mainly to strengthening the viability of existing regional cooperation arrangements and the harmonization of the WTO-led trade liberalization programme and Africa's economic integration agenda as well as the rationalization and strengthening of existing institutional framework for regional cooperation and integration;

(d) Promoting the coordinated building and effective utilization of networks of transport and communication infrastructure: The major activities consisted of addressing the following four areas of concentration: building management capacities for infrastructure development and operations; improving transport linkages and facilitation of traffic; building transport data systems; and developing intellectual partnership and strategic alliances.

25. With regard to building management capacities for infrastructure development and operations, ECA undertook three major activities, namely the preparation of policy framework reports; the organization of policy meetings to increase awareness and build consensus on various issues aimed at promoting the development of transport and communications in Africa; and advisory services to member States. As part of preparations for the eleventh Conference of African Ministers of Transport and Communications, ECA carried out, from June to September 1997, the second mid-term evaluation of the second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade programme in Africa (UNTACDA II). The second mid-term evaluation report on UNTACDA II assessed the progress made in programme implementation as well as the impact of the programme on the development of transport and communications in Africa. Building on the findings and recommendations of the first mid-term evaluation conducted by ECA in 1994, the second evaluation report placed special emphasis on implementation of projects at all levels, namely national, subregional and regional. As the lead agency for the coordination of the Decade programme, ECA prepared the report of the Advisory Committee on Promotion of the programme of the second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa (UNTACDA II) and that of the Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee for the Decade (IACC). A report on issues arising from the IACC meeting together with the revised version of the evaluation report and other relevant parliamentary documentation were considered by the eleventh Conference of African Ministers of Transport and Communications for adoption.

26. ECA, in collaboration with ECLAC and the Port Management Association for Eastern and Southern Africa (PMAESA), organized in Dar-es-Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, from 16 to 18 July 1997, a workshop on port commercialization issues. The workshop drew participants from both the public and private sectors, specifically from the various national ports authorities. It brought all the concerned stakeholders to openly discuss the issue of commercialization. ECA and ECLAC also conducted two additional workshops – one in Maputo, Mozambique, from 22 to 24 April 1998 and one in Mombasa, Kenya, from 28 to 30 April 1998 - the objectives and format of which were the same as the one for the

United Republic of Tanzania. Mozambique with three primary and nine secondary ports has benefitted from the workshop by preparing ground for developing an institutional and regulatory framework for the management of privatized ports. The workshop also enabled Mozambique to prepare a programme for setting up the pace for the gradual privatization of their ports. Given the success of the three workshops, ECA intends to continue its collaboration with ECLAC and other port management associations in the delivery, on request, of more workshops on port commercialization.

27. The secretariat organized the eleventh meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Transport and Communications in Cairo, Egypt, from 22 to 27 November 1997. Forty-six countries were represented and observers from 25 regional and international institutions attended.

28. The Conference reviewed the transport and communications situation in Africa and examined the report on the second mid-term evaluation of UNTACDA II and adopted a framework for action for accelerating the implementation of the Decade programme between 1998 and 2000 and building strong and efficient transport and communication systems in Africa for the twenty-first century. Ministerial deliberations led to the adoption of a resolution on the framework for action for accelerated implementation of UNTACDA II and another on the re-structuring and development of railways in Africa.

29. In conjunction with the Conference, the secretariat organized the first African Transport Forum which was also attended by the ministers. In order to create greater awareness on emerging issues, the forum focused on such thematic topics as the financing of infrastructure, capacity building for the development of transport and communications, transport safety, transport-related environmental issues as well as several policy-related issues. The forum proved to be useful for exchange of information among partners and sharing of experiences, which greatly assisted the ministers in their deliberations. The ministers have reaffirmed their firm commitment to regional cooperation and the fulfillment of the objectives of the Decade programme. Consequently, ECA intends to strengthen its cooperation with development partners in order to ensure successful implementation of the framework for action.

30. Technical advisory services were provided to several member States in the areas of transport and energy. Mali and the Comoros benefitted from advisory services related to the development of policy reforms in the field of transport and communications. Assistance was provided to Benin in promoting the use of solar energy technology in rural areas. The main objectives of the pilot project were: (a) to assist Benin in the implementation of its national programme for the electrification of 36 rural villages with photovoltaic solar systems; and (b) to demonstrate the technical and social viability of using photovoltaic solar energy for rural electrification and improvement of living conditions of the rural population. In implementing its rural electrification programme, the Government has abolished the monopoly in supply and installation of solar equipment and is now proceeding through competitive bidding. The rural community has been sensitized and is participating in the implementation of the project. The assistance is considered as a model to be extended to villages in Benin as well as in the subregion.

31. At the request of the Rwandese Government, a mission was fielded to Kigali from 10 to 14 March 1998 in order to: (a) assess the status of the mineral sector in Rwanda; (b)

evaluate the needs and requirements for assistance in the field of mineral resources development; and (c) identify the potential roles that ECA, the Eastern and Southern African Mineral Resources Development Centre (ESAMRDC), the Rwandese Government and other parties can play in the development of the sector. The outcome of the mission was the establishment of an action plan which included: (a) the institutional and regulatory framework; (b) the establishment of a data bank; (c) the development of regional cooperation including the accession of Rwanda to the ESAMRDC; and (d) the support to the privatization process in the area of the mineral sector.

32. In the area of improving regional transport linkages and facilitation of traffic, the major activity undertaken by ECA during the period under review related to the coordination of the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Declaration on a new African air transport policy aimed at creating an enabling environment for cooperation and coordination among African air transport operators and for gradual liberalization of traffic rights within Africa. As lead agency for the coordination of the implementation of the Declaration, ECA kept policy makers regularly informed about the status of the implementation of the Declaration and provided technical backstopping to the Southern African Transport and Communications Commission (SATCC) in preparing its technical meeting on civil aviation.

33. The regional Conference of African Ministers responsible for the Development and Utilization of Mineral Resources and Energy was held under the theme of "Strengthening cooperation among development actors in the sustainable development and utilization of mineral and energy resources in Africa", organized in Durban, South Africa, from 17 to 22 November 1997. Its main objectives were to: (a) work out practical modalities for effective and efficient cooperation among African countries in the field of mineral and energy resources development and utilization; and (b) facilitate the establishment of a constructive dialogue between government policy makers and the private sector. About 240 participants including 25 ministers attended the meeting. The major outcome of the Conference was the Durban Declaration, which embodies commitment by member States to integrate energy and mineral development strategies through enhanced cooperation. In addition to the Declaration, two sets of recommendations, one on the mineral sector and another on the energy sector were made.

34. A study on "Policy, legal and regulatory frameworks for sustainable development of mineral resources: a comparative study of selected African and developing countries" was undertaken. It reviewed the legal and regulatory frameworks governing mineral resources development in nine African countries. The flow of investments into the sub-Saharan mining industry remains insufficient in spite of the fact that it is now generally accepted that the majority of African countries mining investment policies; regulations and laws have become more favorable to the private sector. Consequently, Africa still has to intensify efforts in order to enhance the benefits that can accrue from liberalization and privatization.

35. In the area of coordination and collaboration with United Nations agencies, the secretariat contributed to the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) Expert Group meeting on "Introducing new technologies for abatement of global mercury pollution from artisanal gold mining: Socio-economic aspects and gender issues related to artisanal gold mining in Africa", organized at Vienna from 1 to 3 June 1997. Its outcome was the decision taken to reinforce partnership between UNIDO, ECA, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World

Bank in the search of solutions to the constraints faced by artisanal gold miners in general and women in particular.

36. A representative of the secretariat attended the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) Symposium on investments in the African mining sector. The main objective of the mission was to participate in, and contribute to, the symposium which aimed at promoting a meeting of minds among North American mining operators and high-level officials in the African mining industry, so as to create business opportunities that could lead to increased investment in the mining sector. The symposium, which took place in Denver, Colorado, from 3 to 5 June 1997, was well attended by participants including several African ministers responsible for mining, high officials from the African mining sector, North American companies and mining equipment manufacturers.

37. The secretariat initiated consultations with OAU with a view to strengthening mineral resources and energy cooperation within the subregional economic groupings. Along with those consultations, a number of measures for strengthening subregional and regional cooperation in mineral resources development and utilization were taken. In that connection, resources have been redeployed to the former Multinational Programming and Operational Centres (MULPOCs), now known as Subregional Development Centres (SRDCs). One mineral resource expert has been assigned to the Central African SRDC and another to the Eastern African SRDC.

38. A representative of the secretariat participated in the third UNCTAD African Oil Trade Conference and contributed a paper on intra-African cooperation in petroleum products trade with a view to reinforcing the contributions of hydrocarbons to the economic development in the region. One of the major outcomes of the Conference was the reinforced collaboration between ECA and UNCTAD. The two organizations will undertake cooperative follow-up action to prepare the global conference to be held in Lyon, France, in November 1998.

Promoting women in development

39. The work of the secretariat in this subprogramme centred on ensuring a better understanding of women's concerns through research, follow-up to major conferences on women, and providing advisory services in economic and legal matters.

40. In pursuance of the first objective, surveys were carried out in six countries, namely Burkina Faso, Guinea, Kenya, Senegal, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania and focused on: "Access to and control over resources, especially land and agricultural technologies"; and "The status of women's human and legal rights within the family". The two areas were selected because they address issues in which significant changes are needed to achieve equality, equity and sustainable development.

41. Some follow-up actions to the surveys have already been initiated in East Africa. A high-level policy seminar on social and economic empowerment of women, organized in Lusaka, Zambia in April 1998, adopted strategies for enhancing a favourable legal environment to promote access to productive resources within the family.

42. As part of its mandate to monitor the implementation of recommendations from the Regional and World Conferences on Women, the secretariat organized the West African subregional follow-up meeting on the implementation of the Regional and Global Platforms for Action in Dakar, Senegal, in November 1997. The meeting examined and adopted two kits, one for assessing the relevance of national plans of action and the second for monitoring the implementation of these plans. Similar meetings will be organized in May and July for the Central African and the North African subregions respectively.

43. In addition, the secretariat prepared the International Conference on African Women and Economic Development: Investing in our future, held in Addis Ababa from 28 April to 1 May 1998. The Conference was a forum for dialogue among men and women policy makers, professionals, the youth, essential grass roots women and partners on the key issues related to the economic role of women, participation of women in achieving good governance, and the new generation. The strategic actions and partnerships that emanated from the Conference should contribute to accelerating the implementation of the Platforms for Action. UNDP, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Bank provided financial support for the conference and participated effectively in the preparation for and in the conference itself.

44. The secretariat provided technical advisory services to a number of countries and institutions and substantive inputs to various technical meetings such as the summit on micro credit, held in Lusaka, the Expert Group meeting on adolescent girls and their rights and the gender and law conference in Eastern Africa. Inputs were also made for the drafting of the protocol on the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); gender-biased persecution and the African Declaration on Violence against Women. Other activities included mainstreaming gender into the economic development initiative, especially micro credit programmes; enhancing capacity of women's NGOs to respond to the growing poverty; and strengthening political and economic empowerment. Countries that benefitted from these advisory services during the period under review were Benin, the Niger, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia.

45. Partnerships for more efficiency and cost-effectiveness guided the secretariat during this period. The following meetings were organized jointly with United Nations sister organizations: adolescent girls and their rights, organized with the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the gender and law conference, with the World Bank.

Harnessing information for development

46. Activities focusing on harnessing information for development covered the following areas: statistics, geographical information systems and information technology for development. Major activities under the statistics component included: further expansion, maintenance, networking and dissemination of the ECA multi-sectoral regional database; compilation and distribution of integrated national and subregional economic, social and environment indicators in the form of computer printouts or diskettes; preparation and dissemination of publications and indicators for African socio-economic and environmental development; policy coordination and standardization of statistical information systems, concepts and methods; and, capacity building for data collection, processing, analysis and dissemination in the region.

47. The following were among the main publications issued during the period under review: African Statistical Yearbook 1996; Compendium of intra-African trade and related foreign trade statistics 1997; a technical report on best practices in the formulation of statistical development plans; and a Directory of the Committee on African Statistical Development (CASD) internet communications and related constraints. The secretariat provided advisory services to member States on the implementation of the 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA) and on the development of basic economic statistics. The Commission also conducted three regional workshops which dealt with issues related to public sector accounts within the framework of the 1993 SNA, environment statistics indicators and accounting and, the application of new technologies for database management and data dissemination respectively.

48. The secretariat assisted relevant African IGOs in strengthening their geographical information systems. These IGOs included the Regional Centre for Training in Aerospace Surveys (RECTAS) and the Regional Centre for Services in Surveying, Mapping and Remote Sensing (RCSSMRS). The secretariat provided assistance to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to establish and maintain its Web site. In addition, a database and a critical study on the status of base-line spatial information coverage and programmes was carried out, comprising, *inter alia*, extent of coverage, physical and human resources, data sources, and major constraints.

49. In the area of promoting information and communication technologies for development and implementing the African Information Society Initiative (AISI), a number of operational activities were undertaken, including advisory services and training activities related to AISI and electronic technology. The secretariat also participated in and jointly sponsored and organized a certain number of major meetings such as the Global Knowledge 97 Conference, organized by the World Bank and the Government of Canada; the first meeting of the African Technical Advisory Committee on AISI; the meeting of partnership for information and communication technologies in Africa; and the preparation of the gender and information and communications theme of the African women and economic development fortieth anniversary conference of ECA.

Supporting development activities at the subregional level

50. The SRDC programme focused on the following areas: (a) providing technical support to and cooperation with the regional economic communities; (b) facilitating networking and information exchange among governments, civil society and the private sector at the SRDC level; (c) providing coordination services for operational programmes of the United Nations system and specialized agencies, in collaboration with UNDP and the United Nations Coordinator system at the national level; and (d) strengthening ECA's outreach in the subregions.

(a) East African SRDC

51. In the area of technical support to and cooperation with the regional economic communities, the East African SRDC carried out technical consultations with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the East African Cooperation (EAC), the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL) and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) in order to identify development priorities and areas of support and

cooperation. For example, the Centre rendered technical assistance in the preparation of IGAD's documents on industrial and trading strategies and collected field data for a transport strategy for the IGAD subregion. The EAC requested and was provided technical assistance to initiate studies on the assessment of the status of Lake Victoria ports. The IOC and the Centre agreed to develop partnership in the industry sector; and the CEPGL requested assistance in the promotion of investment in integration projects; food security; energy; and other forms of integration programmes, especially transport and communication in the Great Lakes subregion.

52. Activities on facilitating networking and information exchange included a survey of economic and social conditions in the subregion; a survey and documentation of macroeconomic coordination and harmonization among countries of the East African subregion; publication of two issues of the Eastern Africa Development Bulletin; and the organization of a high-level seminar on equity and the economic empowerment of women in the subregion.

53. Regarding the provision of coordination services for the operational programmes of the United Nations and specialized agencies, the Centre prepared briefing notes on a quarterly basis to provide the countries and development partners with information on economic, social and political developments in the subregion. The briefing notes focused on the socio-economic characteristics of the 13 countries of the East African SRDC; industrial and trading strategies of the IGAD subregion; transport for subregional integration; and strengthening of partnership with the East Africa Cooperation and the United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS). The organization of meetings, exchange and sharing of information and experience on subregional economic cooperation and integration as well as the issues related to the economic empowerment of women with United Nations agencies and other partners in the subregion ensured a common understanding of the development priorities of the subregion.

54. The Centre also collaborated with OAU, UNOPS and UNDP in various activities. It participated in a joint OAU-ECA mission to IGAD under the OAU/UNDP project to strengthen the African Economic Community-regional economic communities relationship. The Centre contributed to the preparation of the OAU/African Economic Community report on the strengthening of the regional economic communities and their relationship with the African Economic Community.

55. The Centre and UNDP, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, organized a joint high-level workshop on the economic empowerment of Congolese women. UNDP, Kinshasa, provided most of the financial resources for the workshop. Lessons from the workshop are being extrapolated for similar gender initiatives in the East African subregion. There is overwhelming demand but inadequate availability of budgetary resources for these initiatives.

(b) North African SRDC

56. The North African SRDC carried out a number of collaborative activities within and outside the region. It participated in two workshops organized by Spain on desertification in North Africa and on the impact of the Euro. It co-sponsored/participated in three important regional meetings on science and technology, namely science and technology for African development: partnerships in a global economy (Harare, Zimbabwe); the second

meeting of the African Accreditation Committee (ARAC) in Nairobi, Kenya; and science and technology in development: sharing experiences among developing countries (Trieste, Italy). The participation of the Centre contributed to the sharing of experiences and strengthening of cooperation with relevant international organizations. Active cooperation in the expert meeting on regional long-term perspective studies (Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire) led to an initiative by the Centre on long-term perspective studies in North Africa with the possible collaboration of UNDP.

57. The Centre prepared background and synthesis papers on: (a) the nexus of food security, population and environment: towards subregional policy framework; (b) external debt monitoring and management in North African countries: exchange of views and sharing of experiences among countries of the subregion; (c) survey of economic and social conditions in North Africa; (d) summary of projects for mobilization of resources for the Centre's operational programmes and projects.

58. Being an arid area, the North African subregion is subject to land degradation and deforestation, trends that are intensified by fast population growth. As a result, the subregion faces the challenges of food security and a fragile vegetation cover. The Centre's objective is to sensitize decision makers on these issues, and to make appropriate recommendations based on best practices. It is expected that sharing of views and experiences on the nexus issues will contribute to a better knowledge of the interaction between population, environment and food security. This will, in turn, lead to the formulation and adoption of sound and more effective population, science and technology and environment policies as well as strategies for increasing production and agricultural productivity to ensure food security.

59. Three main regular information papers were published during the period under review: (a) the North African SRDC Development Bulletin (No. 1, 1997); (b) the Quarterly Information Newsletter (three issues); and (c) annual subregional and country reports on economic and social trends (Algeria, Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco, the Sudan and Tunisia). These publications are means of dissemination and exchange of information on development and current economic and social trends to the government, civil society and the private sector. The positive reactions received from readers are clear indication that these publications contribute to strengthen ECA's outreach in the subregion.

60. The Centre, for the first time, contributed to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for various inter-agency meetings organized by the UNDP Resident Co-ordinator. The Centre fully participated in the following meetings in the subregion: meeting of the Governing Board of the African Centre for Administrative Training and Research for Development (CAFRAD), and UNCTAD symposium on foreign direct investment.

(c) Central African SRDC

61. During the period under review, the Central African SRDC concentrated its efforts on such topical issues as liberalization and privatization; Uruguay Round; CFA franc and the European single currency; and integration and cooperation in the subregion. Reports and policy brief notes on these issues were produced and disseminated to member States and to the public at large. The Centre also provided technical assistance to some IGOs, namely

the Central African Customs and Economic Union/*Communauté économique et monétaire de l'Afrique centrale* (UDEAC/CEMAC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the *Communauté économique du bétail, de la viande et des ressources halieutiques* (CEBEVHIRA). In this context, it is worth noting the mandate entrusted to the Centre by the Heads of State and Government of ECCAS to develop a relaunching programme of that institution and audit its accounts.

62. Partnership memoranda were signed with UDEAC/CEMAC and the University of Purdue of the United States of America. Similar arrangements are being made with the University of Laval, Canada on capacity building in food security, policy analysis and programming and trade analysis in support of integration in Central Africa.

63. The Centre also produced reports for MIGA for its annual session on investment in African mining, held in Denver, Colorado in May 1997 and the regional Conference of African Ministers responsible for the Development and Utilization of Mineral Resources and Energy, held in Durban, South Africa in June 1997. The Centre attended a number of meetings organized by UDEAC, ECCAS, the World Bank and other national and subregional organizations. The Centre has been very active within the United Nations system agencies in Yaounde, especially as a team leader for regional integration and cooperation in the subregion and Internet connectivity.

(d) Southern African SRDC

64. The Southern African SRDC undertook several activities in accordance with its mandate as the operational arm of ECA to promote sustainable social and economic development in the subregion, including regional cooperation and integration.

65. Promoting women's economic empowerment is one of the major areas of focus. A high-level policy seminar on gender equity, social and economic empowerment of women was organized jointly with the African Centre for Women (ECA/ACW) and in partnership with the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) in April 1998. The seminar, under the theme "Women's access to and control of productive resources", provided a forum for policy makers and main stakeholders to address issues such as the impact of globalization and regional integration on women enterprises; strategies for enhancing a favourable legal environment to promote women's access to and control of productive resources within the family framework; and land reform in Southern Africa. The seminar also sought to build partnerships and establish gender networking among women organizations and ministries in the subregion. Strategies and recommendations for policy formulation were adopted in addition to sharing experiences on best practices.

66. The Centre undertook a number of operational activities. Lectures were provided on some of the modules in the Eastern and Southern Africa Management Institute (ESAMI)-sponsored seminars on rural transport planning and road and traffic safety management. The Centre also assisted the Zambian Government in undertaking a study to assess the road safety situation and select priority areas to be addressed in the implementation of the Road Sector Investment Programme (ROADSIP) which is funded by several donors. The study reviewed the road accident situation and selected key issues for which detailed action plans for implementation were drawn. It also identified technical assistance input requirements and modalities for funding the road safety programme on a sustainable basis. The Centre

also participated in the Zambia Dissemination Seminar on the results of the 1996 Demographic and Health Survey. Some of ECA's publications related to issues addressed by the seminar were disseminated.

67. To promote the secretariat's informal sector project in Zambia, the Centre organized a national workshop of the project at which the follow-up phase of the project was launched. The workshop enabled the assumption of "ownership" of the project by Zambian organizations, thus ensuring its sustainability.

68. The Centre also initiated collaborative and partnership arrangements with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNEP, UNFPA, the United Nations Training Programme on Population and Development at the University of Botswana, the World Bank, SADC, COMESA and the Southern Africa Centre for Coordination in Agricultural Research (SACCAR) on the convening of an ad hoc expert group meeting on the management of the nexus issues of population, food and environment. Preparatory activities are underway and the meeting will be held in September 1998. The expected outcome will be a Southern Africa regional policy framework dealing with population, food and environmental issues.

69. The Centre actively participated in the work of the United Nations Country Team in Zambia, the forum for coordinating the activities of all agencies in the country. It also participated in the various joint programmes implemented by the United Nations agencies in Zambia.

70. The Centre collected information/data on women in power and decision making for publication purposes; participated in several seminars and workshops relative to gender and economic development; participated in a series of training in gender mainstreaming; and had consultations with subregional economic communities such as COMESA and SADC as well as with development partners for exchange of information, strengthening and building partnerships and networking on gender issues.

71. The Centre prepared two issues of the Southern Africa Development Bulletin, which constitutes one of the modalities for disseminating social and economic development information to member States and organizations as well as to inform the development partners of key development issues in the subregion. The first issue focused on "Strengthening ECA's presence in Southern Africa". It presented an historical evolution and perspectives of ECA's activities at subregional level. The Bulletin also presented issues on population and development of concern in Southern Africa. The second issue covered articles on poverty and development in Southern Africa, gender activities of the SRDC, ECA's support to the Zambia Informal Sector Pilot Project and an ECA study on management of family planning programmes.

72. Consultative missions were undertaken to SATCC, SADC and COMESA, as well as to some of its member States to discuss the work programme and identify areas of possible cooperation.

73. The Centre was invited to present a proposal for an African road safety initiative to the annual Transport Forum in South Africa. The initiative is drawn from the recommendations made during the third African Road Safety Congress held in South Africa

in 1997 and focuses on assisting African member States in improving the road safety situation through the development of a unified action plan for the implementation of short-, medium- and long-term targeted programmes in an integrated and coordinated manner. The SATCC Committee on Road Infrastructure, Road Transport and Road Traffic endorsed the proposal as a framework for implementing the road safety programmes in the subregion.

74. The Centre took the initiative to disseminate to the end-users, mostly in Southern Africa, a study entitled "Comparative study on management of family planning programmes in selected African Countries", which was published by ECA in the African Population Studies Series as number 15. The study covered Botswana, Kenya, Tunisia and Zimbabwe. ECA headquarters and the Centre participated in and made contributions to the outcome of the meeting of the OAU Labour and Social Affairs Commission which took place at Pretoria, South Africa, from 13 to 17 April 1998. The meeting focused on various social and economic issues of interest to ECA and its recommendations on globalization and its impact in African countries, gender issues, population and development with regard to poverty alleviation were adopted by the Commission.

(e) West African SRDC

75. The West African SRDC implemented two food security projects with regional and subregional dimensions. The projects are financed by the governments of the Netherlands and Japan and related to the composite flour and xanthan gum production and utilization for technological development. The objectives of these projects are to: (a) provide member States, national planners and civil society with a model pre-feasibility study for proper formulation and implementation of projects related to indigenous food staples transformation into modern food products; (b) bring to the attention of food research institutes, latest world-wide technological research and development results in the field of composite flours production and utilization for strengthening food security programmes in the subregion; (c) provide national standards organizations and food processing enterprises with guidelines on composite flour standards in order to respond to the growing awareness of the need for national and international standardization of processed local cereals and tubers into high-quality products. These guidelines are intended to serve as a basis for the elaboration of national standards based on local conditions such as consumer acceptability; provide concerned vocational schools and flour-based industrial sector with a trainer's manual on composite flour technology and management; and monitor the implementation of the xanthan gum project, the objective of which is to use local tropical gluten-less flours.

76. The Centre undertook several activities relating to facilitating information exchange and networking. It assisted in the development and sound management of databases in member States and IGOs. It gave significant attention to the use of the new information and communications technology and accessibility to the Internet. ECOWAS, the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and the *Union économique et monétaire ouest-africaine* (UEMOA) are carrying out notable efforts through their focal points at the national level in feeding their data banks with information, using electronic communications to manage it. There is increased use of geographic and environmental information systems (GIS and EIS) for development management in the subregion, which is receiving support from the programmes for environmental information systems in sub-Saharan Africa. These constitute important activities in support of subregional integration and AISI in which the SRDC is involved.

77. In the area of water resources management, the implementation of a project on "Information exchange network on small-scale dams" has attracted the support of the Centre. The objective of this project is to provide member States with sound information and best practices on the building, maintenance and utilization of small-scale dams in order to control available water resources and increase food production.

78. The Centre was also active in promoting coordination services for operational activities of the United Nations system and specialized agencies as well as subregional IGOs. Systematic cooperation was maintained with the UNDP Resident Coordinator in programme harmonization, particularly in the preparation of missions and follow-up activities. For example, the Centre collaborated with the UNDP Resident Coordinator for the Niger in the elaboration of the country strategic note for the country. This experience revealed the importance of joint programming exercises among United Nations agencies in support of subregional development efforts. The Centre provided assistance to UEMOA and the Liptako-Gourma Development Authority through participation in the meetings of their respective legislative organs. Joint programming exercises in various areas are also planned with ECOWAS in view of the fact that it covers the same member States as the Centre.

United Nations System-Wide Special Initiative

79. In support of the implementation of the United Nations System-Wide Special Initiative on Africa (UN-SIA), the secretariat focused mainly on the following five priority areas: education, health, governance, population and information technology. In the area of harnessing information technology for development (HITD), the secretariat prepared training modules for planners and decision makers on the importance of the African Information Society Initiative (AISII); case studies of best policy practices providing an enabling environment for development information and communication infrastructure; and participated in the symposium on HITD/AISII for global knowledge conference. The secretariat co-organized with the World Bank a global connectivity conference to build capacities of African member States to plan and negotiate new connectivity technologies. ECA and UNDP, under UN-SIA, have a mandate to lead consultations on governance reform, coordinate programme for implementation and mobilize resources and political support for good governance. Thus, UN-SIA was closely associated with the first Africa governance forum mentioned above. Under the joint leadership of the World Bank, UNESCO and ECA, UN-SIA has demonstrated substantial progress in the education sector. A high-level meeting convened by UNESCO discussed the Mozambique education sector strategy. ECA/SIA secretariat team convened a consultation meeting on redressing the image of Africa problem, a key focus of the communication strategy for Africa. The secretariat has reinforced its collaborative arrangements with WHO in the context of its new strategic directions and of UN-SIA. In this connection, an ECA/WHO joint project on the role of local government in health is being prepared.

80. The secretariat is rationalizing the process of coordination between the UN-SIA and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF). In this connection, it participated in the work of the thirty-seventh session of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) on the implementation of the System-Wide Plan of Action and System-Wide Special Initiative on Africa in New York.

CHAPTER III

FIRST MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL FOLLOW-UP COMMITTEE OF THE CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
27 April 1998

A. Attendance and organization of work

81. The first meeting of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of the Conference of Ministers responsible for economic and social development and planning was held at the United Nations Conference Centre, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 27 April 1998.

82. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following member States of the Follow-up Committee, which is composed of members of both the current and outgoing Bureaux of the Conference of Ministers:

Current Bureau

Chairman:	Uganda
First vice-Chairman:	Tunisia
Second Vice-Chairman:	Burkina Faso
Third Vice-Chairman:	Congo
Rapporteur:	South Africa

Outgoing Bureau

Chairman:	Malawi
First Vice-Chairman:	Ghana
Second Vice-Chairman:	Cameroon
Rapporteur:	Algeria

B. Agenda

83. The meeting adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Consideration of the report of the first Preparatory Meeting of Experts of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee.
3. Any other business.
4. Closure of the meeting.

C. Account of proceedings

Opening of the meeting

84. In his opening remarks, Mr. K.Y. Amoako, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, welcomed and thanked the ministers and plenipotentiaries participating in the meeting. He noted that the agenda was straightforward and consisted of one main item, namely the consideration of the report of the first Preparatory Meeting of Experts of the Follow-up Committee. He particularly invited the Ministerial Follow-up Committee to endorse the resolution on the reform of the regional commissions and the recommendations contained therein. He welcomed the proposal of including a major item on the agenda of the next meeting of the Conference of Ministers in 1999, dealing with the issue of coordination and collaboration among United Nations agencies operating at the subregional and regional levels in Africa.

Consideration of the report of the First Preparatory Meeting of Experts of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee (agenda item 2)

85. The Chairperson of the first Preparatory Meeting of Experts of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee presented the report of the experts as well as the draft resolution recommended by the experts for adoption by the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of the Conference of Ministers as contained in document E/ECA/MFC.1/4. The Ministerial Follow-up Committee took note of the presentation, examined in detail the report of the experts as well as the draft resolution and adopted them as recommended. The report of the Preparatory Meeting of Experts is annexed to this report.

Any other business (agenda item 3)

86. Under this item, the representative of Malawi, whose country served as the chairman of the Bureau of the twenty-second meeting of the Conference of Ministers, congratulated the current bureau for the excellent work they had accomplished since the beginning of their tenure and for the able manner the Chairman had conducted the work of the first meeting of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of the Conference of Ministers responsible for economic and social development and planning.

Closure of meeting (agenda item 4)

87. The Chairman thanked participants for their support. He urged the secretariat and member States to ensure the full implementation of the resolution and its recommendations contained therein by taking the necessary action to enhance ECA's role at the subregional and regional levels.

88. He then declared the meeting closed.

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Closure of meeting (agenda item 4)

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CHAPTER IV

RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE FIRST MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL FOLLOW-UP COMMITTEE OF THE CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

830(MFC.1) Reform of the regional commissions

A. Relationships between the Economic Commission for Africa, United Nations agencies, regional and subregional organizations in Africa.

The Ministerial Follow-up Committee,

Recalling the terms of reference of the Commission as adopted by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 671A (XXV) of 29 April 1958 and amended by its resolutions 974 D.1 (XXXVI) of 5 July 1963, 1343 (XLV) of 18 July 1968 and 1978/68 of 4 August 1978,

Recalling further the various resolutions that have implications on the mandate and operations of the Commission including, in particular, General Assembly resolution 32/197 of 20 December 1977 on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system, 33/202 of 29 January 1979, 44/211 of 21 December 1989 and 50/120 of 20 December 1995,

Noting with appreciation the endorsement by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 718 (XXVI) of 12 May 1991 on the revitalization of the mandate and operational framework of the regional economic commissions, Commission resolution 726 (XXVII) of 22 April 1992 on strengthening the Economic Commission for Africa to face Africa's development challenges in the 1990s, 779 (XXIX) of 4 May 1994 on strengthening the operational capacity of the Economic Commission for Africa, and 809 (XXXI) of 8 May 1996 on the New directions for the Economic Commission for Africa,

Bearing in mind General Assembly resolutions 44/177 of 19 December 1990, 45/264 of 13 May 1991 and 46/235 of 13 April 1992 on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, in which the call was made for the regional commissions to be enabled fully to play their role under the authority of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, and that for those located in developing countries to be strengthened in the context of the overall objectives of the ongoing restructuring and revitalization process,

Taking into account General Assembly resolution 52/12B of 19 December 1997 on Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform which invited the Economic and Social Council, in consultation with Member States and appropriate intergovernmental regional bodies, to conduct a general review of the regional commissions at its substantive session of 1998, bearing in mind the relevant provisions of resolution 50/227 of 24 May 1996 and the individual reviews each commission has already carried out, in order to consider the competencies of the regional commissions, taking into account the competencies of global bodies and other regional and subregional intergovernmental bodies,

Having examined in-depth document E/ECA/MFC.1/2 entitled "Reforms of the regional commissions: Relationships between the Economic Commission for Africa, United Nations agencies, regional and subregional organizations in Africa - A note by the secretariat",

1. Welcomes the note by the secretariat;
2. Expresses its appreciation for the observations and analyses contained in the note;
3. Decides to recommend as follows:

Recommendation 1: Reaffirm and support existing coordination mechanisms at the regional level

An important first step in enhancing collaboration between the Economic Commission for Africa and the United Nations agencies is to reaffirm and support the team leadership role assigned to the regional commissions in General Assembly resolution 32/197. The agencies should use the mechanism of a regional administrative committee on coordination first suggested by the Secretary-General in 1994. The Economic and Social Council should consider providing a legislative directive to this effect. The regional administrative committee on coordination would be useful in addressing several regional issues, including questions such as follow-up to the global conferences, and various programmes on post-conflict reconstruction developments in Africa. In this regard, the next meeting of the Conference of Ministers to be held in 1999 should consider in-depth coordination and collaboration among United Nations agencies operating at the subregional and regional levels in Africa.

Recommendation 2: Adopt some principles for regional coordination

The United Nations agencies in Africa should adopt some principles for regional coordination. The agencies should endeavour to foster regional coordination on the basis of promoting greater exchange of information on planned and ongoing work; improve complementarities among the programmes; draw on each other's competencies; and bring the pool of resources - financial and human - at their disposal to bear on policy issues of common interest.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen coordination at subregional level

Coordination or collaboration among United Nations agencies in Africa should also be enhanced at the subregional level. At this level, this should take the form of development of joint ventures to support the specific activities of countries in a subregional framework. In this way, the complementarities and harmony sought at the regional level will be given greater impact and impetus. The Commission's Subregional Development Centres should be used as important vehicles for coordination at the subregional level.

Recommendation 4: The role of the Economic Commission for Africa in normative and operational functions

The Economic Commission for Africa, as a United Nations regional commission and as part of the landscape of regional institutions in service of Africa's development, has carried out valuable normative (analysis, advocacy, norm-setting) and operational activities which have been mutually complementary and supportive to the member States of the region. It should continue to undertake both categories of activities, it being recognized that its technical assistance plays a catalytic role in translating its normative work into concrete support for the development efforts of member States.

Recommendation 5: Enhanced cooperation among African organizations

At the regional level, there is already an implicit specialization and division of labour among Africa's three premier intergovernmental organizations: the Organization of African Unity, the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank. Still, there remains a need to promote a more clear-cut division of responsibilities, and to rationalize and strengthen complementarities among the three organizations more strictly according to their mandates and competencies as a means of increasing their combined effectiveness, impact and efficiency in their collective mandate - to oversee the overall development of Africa at the regional level. This calls for these African organizations to strengthen their Joint Secretariat by implementing among themselves similar strategies as outlined above for the United Nations system. In particular, they should:

(a) Strengthen coordination, including collaboration in programme development, planning of activities, monitoring and evaluation, geared to building upon and exploiting complementarities;

(b) Improve networking and communications at all staff levels, and not only at the level of the chief executives;

(c) Work to establish a common ethos among their staff, based on a common perspective of Africa's political, social and economic development challenges and opportunities, and a common zeal to move Africa forward; and,

(d) Streamline and coordinate their intergovernmental machineries: the governing bodies of all African organizations could be required to summarize, in a joint report, their main decisions for submission to the Summit of the African Heads of State and Government, which is the supreme organ of the African Economic Community.

B. Revision to the Economic Commission for Africa's Medium-term Plan, 1998-2001

The Ministerial Follow-up Committee,

Having considered document E/ECA/MFC.1/3 entitled "First revision to the Medium-term Plan, 1998-2001: Note by the secretariat",

Recalling Commission resolution 809 (XXI) of 8 May 1996 in which the Commission endorsed the Medium-term Plan, 1998-2001 in the context of new directions for the Economic Commission for Africa,

Further recalling Commission resolutions 810 (XXXI) of 8 May 1996 and 828 (XXXII) of 8 May 1997 which respectively called for the strengthening of the former Multinational Programming and Operational Centres and their transformation to Subregional Development Centres with an extended programme and policy orientation, as well as Commission resolution 824 (XXXI) of 8 May 1996 on the Follow-up to the Dakar and Beijing Conferences: Implementation of the Global and Regional Platforms of Action for the Advancement of Women,

Endorses the revision to the Medium-term Plan, 1998-2001 involving the establishment of two new subprogrammes: Promoting the advancement of women and Supporting subregional activities for development.

303rd meeting,
27 April 1998.

Annex I

REPORT OF THE FIRST PREPARATORY MEETING OF EXPERTS OF THE MINISTERIAL FOLLOW-UP COMMITTEE OF THE CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
23 to 25 April 1998**

A. Attendance and organization of work

1. The first Preparatory Meeting of Experts of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of the Conference of Ministers responsible for economic and social development and planning was held at the United Nations Conference Centre, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 23 to 25 April 1998. The meeting was formally opened by Mr. K.Y. Amoako, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa.
2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following member States of the Follow-up Committee, which is composed of members of both the current and outgoing Bureaux of the Conference of Ministers:

Current Bureau

Chairman:	Uganda
First Vice-Chairman:	Tunisia
Second Vice-Chairman:	Burkina Faso
Third Vice-Chairman	Congo
Rapporteur:	South Africa

Outgoing Bureau

Chairman:	Malawi
First Vice-Chairman:	Ghana
Second Vice-Chairman:	Cameroon
Rapporteur:	Algeria

3. An observer from Morocco attended the meeting.

B. Agenda

4. On 23 April 1998, during its informal discussions, the meeting adopted the following agenda:
 1. Opening of the meeting.
 2. Reform of the regional commissions: Relationships between ECA, United Nations agencies, regional and subregional organizations in Africa.
 3. Proposed revisions to the Medium-term Plan, 1998-2001.

4. Any other business.
5. Adoption of the report.
6. Closure of the meeting.

C. Account of proceedings

Opening of the meeting

5. In his opening remarks, the Executive Secretary, Mr. K.Y. Amoako, welcomed participants to the meeting. He recalled that the Follow-up Committee was meeting in compliance with Commission resolution 826 (XXXII) of 8 May 1997 which had decided that since the Conference of Ministers now meets on biennial basis, the Follow-up Committee meet in inter-sessional years to review Commission affairs. The next ordinary meeting of the Conference will be held in 1999.

6. Referring to the agenda of this meeting, the Executive Secretary said that it consisted of two main items, namely the relationships between ECA, United Nations agencies, regional and subregional organizations in Africa; and the first revision to the Medium-term Plan, 1998-2001. He indicated that the report on the relationships between ECA and other organizations had been prepared for the consideration of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee, to enable it make an input into the review of the regional commissions by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) that was required by General Assembly resolution 52/12B of 19 December 1997, on renewing the United Nations: A programme for reform. The Executive Secretary said that following the internal reforms ECA had undertaken, it was important to review the external context in which the Commission was operating in general and to examine ECA's relationships with other organizations in particular. He reviewed ECA's partnerships in African development and highlighted the patterns and potentials of cooperation between ECA, United Nations agencies and African regional and subregional organizations. He said that since forging effective partnerships was one of the guiding principles of ECA's reforms, the Commission was well positioned to develop fruitful collaborative relationships with other organizations.

7. He informed the meeting that the revisions to the Commission's Medium-term Plan were intended to bring ECA's programme structure in line with mandates that the Conference of Ministers had given to ECA when the Plan was adopted in 1996. The creation of two new subprogrammes, one dealing with gender issues and the other supporting subregional activities for development, would further enhance the organizational and managerial effectiveness of the Commission in the delivery of services to member States.

8. The Executive Secretary looked forward to the views and recommendations of the Committee on these two items on its agenda.

Reform of the regional commissions: Relationships between ECA, United Nations agencies, regional and subregional organizations in Africa (agenda item 2)

9. The Committee considered the document (E/ECA/MFC.1/2), "Reform of the regional commissions: Relations between ECA, United Nations agencies, regional and subregional organizations in Africa - A note by the secretariat". The deliberations on this item covered a number of points, the main ones of which were: the purpose and format of the meetings of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee; the need to strengthen coordination among United Nations agencies operating in Africa, as well as, between them and African intergovernmental organizations at the regional and subregional levels; the need to take African priorities and specific circumstances fully into account in the ongoing review of the regional commissions; the recognition that Africa's development problems, are in part, due to endogenous factors and that reform measures should address Africa's own responsibilities; and the role of ECA's Subregional Development Centres (SRDCs) in strengthening the performance of the United Nations system in Africa at the subregional level.

10. Regarding the purpose and format of the meetings of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee, an observation was made as to whether the Follow-up Committee would be expected to undertake assessments of the work of the Commission since the previous session of the Conference of Ministers. It was noted, however, that under the terms by which the Ministerial Follow-up Committee was established, the main purpose of its meetings was to address special issues arising between the biennial sessions of the Conference of Ministers as identified by the Executive Secretary for its attention. In deliberating and reaching decisions on these issues, the Follow-up Committee had the authority to speak on behalf of the Conference of Ministers, which is the governing body of the Commission. On this occasion, it was observed that there were only two main issues calling for the attention of the Follow-up Committee. These were the review of the role of the regional commissions by ECOSOC under General Assembly resolution 52/12B of 19 December 1997 and the proposed first revision of the Medium-term Plan, 1998-2001.

11. On the issue of the review of the role of the regional commissions by ECOSOC in the context of the second track of United Nations system-wide reforms, the consensus among the members of the Follow-up Committee was that emphasis should be placed on strengthening inter-agency and inter-organizational coordination at the national, subregional and regional levels in Africa. It was proposed that coordination and collaboration among United Nations agencies operating at the subregional and regional levels in Africa should be a major item on the agenda of the next meeting of the Conference of Ministers in 1999.

12. It was noted that, under General Assembly resolutions 32/197 of 20 December 1977 and 50/120 of 20 December 1995, the regional commissions, including ECA, were given a clear mandate to provide team-leadership to United Nations agencies operating in their regions and enhance coordination of United Nations development activities at the regional and subregional levels. It was noted, at the same time, that under General Assembly resolutions 44/211 of 22 December 1989, 47/199 of 22 December 1992, and 50/120, the Resident Coordinator system had been set up at the national level to provide coordination to United Nations system operational activities, eliminate unnecessary duplication and focus on the development objectives and priorities identified by the member States themselves under the leadership of national governments.

13. In considering what form the strengthened United Nations inter-agency coordination might take at the regional and subregional levels, the Committee questioned the effective functioning of the national Resident Coordinator system. It was observed that the national Resident Coordinator system was still far from functioning as intended. Questions were raised regarding continuing weaknesses in inter-agency collaboration at the national level, as well as inadequate exercise of ownership by member States in operational activities. It was proposed, therefore, that greater consideration needed to be given to an appropriate holistic model for strengthening inter-agency coordination under African conditions and that such consideration should also include coordination arrangements at the regional and subregional levels.

14. With regard to strengthening coordination at the regional level, the Committee expressed strong support for the operationalization in Africa of the regional version of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (regional ACC), chaired by ECA. It was observed that proposals to this effect had been presented by the United Nations Secretary-General in 1994. It was further observed that regional ACCs had been established in other regions (such as East Asia and the Pacific).

15. The Committee emphasized that the ECOSOC review of the regional commissions and the reform of United Nations activities in Africa that should follow from this must take into account Africa's specific circumstances, constraints and development needs in the context of globalization and Africa's continuing sense of marginalization. In this regard, the consensus of the Committee was that the role of ECA in providing various forms of assistance to African States, individually as well as collectively at the regional and subregional levels in addressing these problems, continued to be as important as ever. The Committee took note that, prior to undertaking wide-ranging programmatic and institutional reforms in 1995, the Commission had carried out a review of Africa's strategic development objectives and priorities at the threshold of the twenty-first century. It was also noted that the Commission is in the process of consulting member States and leading subregional Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) with a view to identifying specific subregional development priorities in each of Africa's five subregions. The Committee observed that member States wished to exercise greater ownership over the operational activities of the agencies of the United Nations system, including those of the specialized agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization.

16. The Committee placed considerable emphasis on the primary role that should be played by the SRDCs in strengthening the coordination and overall performance of the United Nations system in Africa. It was observed that the Conference of Ministers had directed that SRDCs be strengthened by transferring substantial resources to them and by broadening their mandate to include serving as facilitators of the integration activities of the United Nations system operating within the subregions. The Committee noted that the Commission was on track to implementing the decisions of the Conference of Ministers on strengthening SRDCs. These Centres therefore had the capacity to provide effective coordination and team-leadership for United Nations operational activities at the subregional level.

First revision to the Medium-term Plan, 1998-2001 [agenda item 3]

17. The Committee, under this agenda item, considered the document (E/ECA/MFC.1/3), "First revision to the Medium-term Plan, 1998-2001 - A note by the secretariat".

18. It was recalled that when the Medium-term Plan, 1998-2001 was adopted by the General Assembly in 1997, ECA's work programme was organized under five subprogrammes, as defined under the Commission's new strategic directions, which identified five areas of focus and two cross-cutting issues. After commencing the implementation of this work programme structure, it had quickly become clear that the effectiveness of the Commission's work programme would be greatly enhanced by separating two programme concentrations - promoting the advancement of women, and supporting subregional activities for development, from the subprogrammes under which they had been approved.

19. The first had been approved as part of the existing subprogramme on facilitating economic and social policy analysis. The new subprogramme would be implemented by the African Centre for Women. It was noted that even after the creation of the new subprogramme on promoting the advancement of women, gender issues would continue to be treated as cutting across the entire work programme of the Commission.

20. The second area of concentration had been approved as part of the subprogramme on promoting regional cooperation and integration. The new subprogramme supporting the subregional activities for development will comprise the work programmes and activities of the five SRDCs. It was observed that the Centres would serve as platforms for strengthening ECA's outreach at the subregional and country levels and that they would work in close partnership with and in technical support of, African subregional economic communities and intergovernmental organizations on development priorities specific to their subregions and identified in consultation with their member States.

21. The Committee observed that the separation of these two concentrations and the creation of two new subprogrammes for them would be instrumental in sharpening focus on the issues of concern, strengthening resource mobilization and decentralizing decision-making in these areas, while strengthening accountability. It was further noted that the proposed revision did not have additional resource implications, as it was aimed only at bringing about greater clarification of the previously approved Medium-term Plan without any addition or reduction of activities.

22. The Committee also noted that the creation of the new subprogramme on subregional activities was to reflect the expanded mandate of SRDCs which went beyond promoting regional cooperation and integration at the subregional level to the provision of essential support and services across the development spectrum to member States.

23. The Committee endorsed the proposed revisions to the Medium-term Plan to create the two new subprogrammes. The Committee noted, however, that the creation of the new subprogrammes was a reversal in the trend of reducing the number of subprogrammes and cautioned that care should be taken to maintain programme focus.

Any other business (agenda item 4)

24. Under this item, it was pointed out that the meeting of the Economic and Social Commission of the African Economic Community (AEC-ECOSOC) had been scheduled to take place in Cairo on the same dates as the meeting of the ECA Ministerial Follow-up Committee. Since the same ministers and experts were expected to attend both meetings,

the Committee urged the African premier intergovernmental organizations - the Organization of African Unity (OAU), ECA and the African Development Bank (ADB) - within the framework of their Joint Secretariat, to greatly improve the level of coordination among themselves, to ensure that their major events do not conflict as had been the case on this occasion.

Adoption of the report (agenda item 5)

25. The Committee considered the report as well as the draft resolution and adopted them.

Closure of meeting (agenda item 6)

26. The Deputy Executive Secretary thanked the bureau members of the Committee and the secretariat for a job well done.

27. The Chairperson also thanked the members of the Committee for their active participation and declared the meeting closed.

Annex II

**MEETINGS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES HELD DURING
THE PERIOD UNDER REVIEW**

(9 MAY 1997 TO 28 APRIL 1998)

Title of the meeting	Name and place	Document symbol
Regional Conference of African Ministers responsible for the Development and Utilization of Mineral Resources and Energy	Second meeting 21-22 November 1997 Durban, South Africa	ECA/RCIB/DUMER/MIN.12/RTP/97
Conference of African Ministers of Transport and Communications	Eleventh meeting 25-27 November 1997 Cairo, Egypt	ECA/TPTCOM/MIN.11/RTP/97
Ministerial Follow-up Committee of the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Economic and Social Development and Planning	First meeting 28 April 1998 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	E/ECA/MFC.1/5