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**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA**

**Public Administration, Human Resources
and Social Development Division**

**REPORT OF THE SIXTH MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL FOLLOW-UP
COMMITTEE OF TEN OF THE CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS
RESPONSIBLE FOR HUMAN RESOURCES PLANNING,
DEVELOPMENT AND UTILIZATION**

(Africa Hall, Addis Ababa, 21 November 1991)

I. ORGANIZATION

1. The Sixth meeting of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of Ten of the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Human Resources Planning, Development and Utilization was held at Africa Hall, Addis Ababa on 21 November 1991.

II. ATTENDANCE

2. The meeting was attended by the following Committee members:

- Sudan - Chairman
- Senegal- First Vice-Chairman
- Uganda - Second Vice-Chairman
- Togo - Third Vice-Chairman
- Burkina Faso
- Chad
- Ethiopia
- Morocco

3. Also participating in the meeting were observers from the following member States: Algeria, Burundi, Congo, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mauritania, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe; and observers from the following international, regional and subregional organizations also attended the meeting: OAU, WHO, IDRC, ILO, World Bank, AALAE, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP, Commonwealth Secretariat, ESAMI, FAO, ACARTSOD, ILO/JASPA.

III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

4. The Committee adopted the following agenda:

- Opening
- Election of the Bureau
- Adoption of the Agenda and Organization of Work
- Consideration of the Report on the Status, Policies and Programmes of Human Resources Development and Utilization in Africa
- Any Other Business
- Consideration and Adoption of the Report of the Meeting

IV. OPENING OF THE MEETING

5. In his introductory remarks to the Sixth Meeting of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of Ten of the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Human Resources Planning, Development and Utilization, the outgoing Chairman, H.E. Dr. Hussein S. Abusalih of the Republic of Sudan, expressed his gratitude to the Transitional Government of Ethiopia for hosting the Conference and for the warm welcome accorded to the delegates. He also paid tribute to the ECA for all the efforts deployed in organizing the meeting and for the excellent quality of the document, which had been presented to the Committee.

6. The Honourable Minister then reminded the delegates that since the Conference last met in March 1988 in Khartoum, the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of Ten had met twice, in Addis Ababa in 1989 and in Tripoli in 1990. These two meetings assessed the status of human resources planning, development and utilization in Africa.
7. Those who followed post-Khartoum Declaration developments, he said, must have witnessed the emergence of a new thinking among African countries, emphasizing the human dimension of development. One could refer, in this regard, to the serious efforts that had been made to establish and improve on institutions for human resources development planning and utilization and to enhance and improve the participation of women in national development activities. Commitments were also made by member States to get other strata of society, such as the handicapped, to participate in national development activities and, in so doing, increase their productivity and income as well as their status in society.
8. The Committee, which had been assessing these developments, hoped that solutions would be found to the pernicious problems of illiteracy, poverty, hunger, malnutrition etc. It was, therefore, important for member States to accord high priority to the effective development and utilization of the continent's human resources.
9. The Honourable Minister expressed the gratitude of African countries to the international and regional organizations and UN agencies, particularly the ECA, for their efforts and co-operation in helping the African countries to surmount their problems and achieve their objectives in the field of human resources planning, development and utilization.
10. Such collaborative efforts had resulted in the production of the Regional Framework for Human Resources Development and Utilization by the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Human Resources in Africa, under the chairmanship of ECA. The Framework, he felt, provided a guideline for the co-ordination of the activities of the UN in support of human resources development and utilization in Africa. Such support was much needed to make the post-Khartoum Declaration spirit a reality. Prosperity and development would not be possible without the effective development and utilization of Africa's human resources.
11. In an address to the Sixth Meeting of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of Ten of the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Human Resources Planning, Development and Utilization, Mr. Issa B.Y. Diallo, the UN Assistant Secretary-General and Acting Executive Secretary of ECA, welcomed the delegates and expressed at the opportunity given to him to address them for the first time since assuming office in August this year.
12. He told the delegates that the proposals and comments they had made at their Fifth Meeting in Tripoli in 1990 in a joint session with the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Human Resources Development and Utilization on the latter's draft "Regional Framework for Human Resources Development and Utilization in Africa" had been very useful and had been taken into consideration in the finalization of the

text. He said that the Framework had been endorsed by Technical Committee of Experts for presentation to the Conference of Ministers at this Fourth Meeting. He hoped that the Framework would provide guidance to member States for the much needed policy actions in human resources, development and utilization.

13. Turning to the agenda of the Sixth Meeting of the Committee, Mr. Diallo said that their main activity would focus on a report placed before the Committee on "The status, policies and programmes of Human Resources Planning Development and Utilization in Africa." He drew the Committee's attention to the grim picture painted by the report as regards the deteriorating and worsening conditions in education, employment, productivity, incomes, health and nutrition and the levels of poverty as well as a weakening of the skills base through the withdrawal of resources from the education and health sectors. He pointed out that unless Africa applied an integrated approach to human resources planning, development and utilization and ensured a judicious and unfaltering implementation of this integrated approach, it would find it impossible to face the challenge of development and socio-economic transformation with the required vigour.

14. To this effect, it was important that Africa should be asking some very searching questions about the seriousness and commitment to the implementation of this integrated approach viz: the relevance of our education to development needs; the way we manage our resources; and whether we accord the high priority demanded by human resources development.

15. The UN Assistant Secretary General and Acting Executive Secretary of ECA concluded his address by urging the Committee to consider these issues in depth as they deliberated on the report and to come up with some concrete recommendations for consideration by the Ministers Conference.

16. He then wished the Committee all success in their deliberations.

V. ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS

Report to the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of Ten of the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Human Resources Planning, Development and Utilization on the Status, Policies and Programmes of Human Resources Planning, Development and Utilization in Africa

17. In presenting the document: "Report to the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of Ten of the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Human Resources Planning, Development and Utilization on the Status, Policies and Programmes of Human Resources Planning, Development and Utilization in Africa, E/ECA/PHSD/MFC/91/WP.1[6.3(i)(b)]", the representative of the ECA Secretariat started by saying that as a consequence of the economic crises, which engulfed the African continent in the 1980s, many African countries had come to appreciate the importance of human resources in socio-economic recovery and long-term development. Many governments had realized the need for integrating human resources development components, such as education, training and employment,

public health and sanitation, social welfare and services, etc. in the national development and planning processes. However, despite this realization the problems of human resources development planning and utilization continued to affect many countries in Africa. These problems included reduced investment in human capital due to financial constraints, inability to retain nationals at home (brain-drain), rising unemployment rates, lack of clear-cut manpower policies, limited access to health and other sanitary services; increased food dependency, etc.

18. On reviewing the status of human resources in Africa, the ECA representative looked at manpower planning, education and training, and the health and food situation in the late 1980s and 1990. On manpower planning, he cited evidence from ILO/JASPA studies which showed that many countries in Africa had no clearly thought-out manpower policy. Instead of focusing on important issues such as how to integrate employment and income distribution objectives in the agricultural development, industrialization, incomes and fiscal policies, manpower planning in Africa continued to be preoccupied with the outmoded demand and long-term skill forecasts.

19. The ECA representative then listed the factors which undermined human resources planning in Africa. These included the lack of clearly defined long-term policy objectives; lack of integration of human resources development with the national development and planning systems; inadequate institutional machinery which was in many cases un-coordinated and suffered operational problems such as financial and manpower constraints; and rapid changes in the socio-economic environment which made planning difficult.

20. On education and training, the ECA representative said that due to the economic crisis of the 1980s, enrollment in the educational system registered an overall negative growth. He also said that the educational system in Africa was still primary based -- primary education accounted for 76 per cent of total enrolment; secondary education 22 per cent and higher education a mere 2 per cent. When compared to other regions of the world, Africa's educational structure was the poorest: Access to secondary and higher education was very low -- a factor which constrained the deepening and widening of the skilled manpower base necessary for recovery and socio-economic transformation. As a result of this limited access and the rapid population growth rates, over half of the adult population in Africa were illiterate and the level of illiteracy was higher among women than men.

21. The educational system, in terms of course offerings, was not reflective of Africa's socio-economic needs. Enrollment in technical and scientific subjects was very low when compared to liberal arts subjects. In the late 1980s, liberal arts subjects accounted for 60 per cent of total enrolment in higher education. This was about the same as in the 1960s when the demand for government administrators was high. As a consequence, Africa's stock of scientists and engineers was the lowest in the world.

22. Concerning health and the food situation, the ECA representative cited statistical data which showed that over half of the population in sub-Saharan Africa had no access to modern health facilities. In 1990, a third or more of the population

had no access to safe drinking water and proper sanitary facilities. Africa's under 5 mortality rate was among the highest in the world. The irony of the situation was that many countries in Africa spent on defence at least 8 times (rising to over 200 times in some countries) more than their combined expenditure on education and health. On the food situation, he cited evidence which showed that food production in per-capita and in absolute terms had been on the decline. As such many African countries were dependent on food imports, while the daily calorie supply as a percentage of requirements was inadequate in many African countries.

23. Regarding wages and employment, the ECA representative said that the 1980s registered drastic falls in employment, real wages and the standards of living. While the labour force grew at an average annual rate of 3 per cent between 1980 and 1990, the share of the labour force in wage employment fell from an average of 10 per cent in 1980 to less than 8 per cent in 1990. Thus, the rate of unemployment rose from about 10 per cent in the 1970s to about 20 per cent in the late 1980s. Real wages, on the other hand, fell at an annual average of about 10 per cent between 1980 and 1990. The causes of these range from contraction in economic activity due to external factors, adoption of structural adjustment programmes, higher rates of inflation, etc., to the lack of productive domestic linkages between industry and the natural resource base. Due to increased rates of unemployment and the fall in real wages, the incidence and spread of poverty increased on the continent. While the informal sector acted as a major sponge in absorbing the unemployed, its low productivity meant that the incomes generated were not so high as to cushion the region from increased poverty.

24. In the context of the above dismal human resources situation in Africa, the ECA representative then suggested a blend of policies which should be implemented to improve human resources development and utilization. The thrust of the policies suggested included making education, especially higher education, relevant by re-orienting it to problem-solving and changing its structure to bias it more towards scientific training; increasing investment in basic education, health and food security; making human resources planning an integral part of the national development planning process; promoting integration of the agricultural sector with other sectors of the economy with a view to increasing the utilization of human resources; and redirecting resources from the low priority areas such as the military to the crucial ones such as human resources development.

25. The ECA representative concluded his paper by emphasizing that unless policies implemented along these directions, the prospects for improving the human condition in Africa would be minimal.

26. The Chairman then opened the floor for discussions. The Committee commended the Secretariat for the quality of the document and the presentation, and the soundness of the analysis, with which it concurred. It noted with regret, the serious and continued deterioration of conditions of human development on the continent and the unacceptable negative performance, over the years, of the human development indicators.

27. Committee members regretted the delay in making the human dimension the focus of development and in integrating human resources development and utilization into overall national socio-economic development planning. They attributed this state of affairs, in large part, to the shortage of resources, which made the process of achieving such an integration difficult to complete.

28. The Committee acknowledged the tremendous difficulties of reconciling long-term planning with structural adjustment which most African countries were undergoing. The main difficulty was in the identification or creation of the instruments required to make the reconciliation. An example of this difficulty was the efforts to develop the agricultural sector (which was consistent with long-term planning for development) without providing the necessary subsidies that would more rapidly transform the sector (a requirement of structural adjustment programmes). The situation was further compounded by the difficulty of choice as to whether one should, or should not provide subsidies. In the affirmative, another difficulty would emerge, especially with the present resource crunch in African countries, namely, how and from what source to generate the resources to provide the subsidies.

29. The interventions recommended in the document, for improving all the areas of human resources development and utilization, were all circumscribed by dilemmas such as these. It was pointed out that although there was need to accord greater attention to the expansion of higher education, the realities of demand for higher education in a situation of diminishing private returns to it, created another dilemma for resource allocation policy: where people were foregoing more formal education, withdrawing from formal sector labour markets and moving increasingly towards the informal sector, would the returns on public investments on education not be higher if they were directed towards those educational levels and areas that would foster higher productivity in the informal sector? And how would one reconcile the need to finance, at least at a constant level, the growing demand for human development services, when resources were actually dwindling? These questions highlighted the dilemma of how to maintain standards with a shrinking resource base.

30. Still on the question of financing human resources development and utilization, the Committee cautioned against attempts to add yet another tax in the form of a training levy. Corporations in the organized private sector were the main victims of increased taxation. They might meet any such attempt with some amount of resistance if not hostility, especially as they would have no say in the way their taxes were being used.

31. The Committee noted that although a greater infusion of resources would increase efficiency in developing and utilizing human resources, internal reforms within the education sector itself, could contribute to such an effect. Measures such as reducing drop-out rates and improving progression rates should be considered towards this end.

32. Regarding the issue of course offering biases, it was pointed out that the resource constraints encouraged the dominance of liberal arts subjects in school curricula, by virtue of their being cheaper to finance. For this same reason, even

vocational and technical education had a preference for the "softer" areas of study - secretarial courses, management - over the "harder" areas of science and technology.

33. If technical and vocational education should be enriched by on-the-job practical experience, there was need for a stronger partnership to be forged between educational institutions and industry. This could be achieved by involving industry at the very early stage of curriculum design. If they were made to feel involved in the drawing up of vocational and technical education curricula, they would be more disposed to accepting students for on-the-job training. And with regard to out-of-region training, the committee agreed that although it was preferable to have Africans undergo training in Africa where trainees would be on familiar ground, with greater chances of relevance in their training, African countries should also encourage out-of-region training, for the new experiences and technologies trainees would be exposed to, and particularly in areas in which African countries were deficient.

34. Turning to the question of educational reform for increasing quality, relevance and employability, it was pointed out that implementing the proposals made could be caught up in a vicious cycle of resource inadequacy, weakness of structures to undertake the reforms, absence of the requisite back-up from research etc. A start could be made with a reform of secondary and primary education curricula as a means of creating the base for influencing the changes desired at the tertiary level. The new curriculum could be made practical and job-oriented with built-in elements for attitudinal change in favour of scientific and technological subjects. While such a strategy would be aiming at causing positive changes on the quality and relevance of higher education, pursuing it should not detract attention from the fundamental aims of basic and primary education, especially their being an important vehicle for the eradication of illiteracy and the democratization of education.

35. On the issue of expatriate hiring, the Committee was of the view that the preponderance of expatriates in technical assistance posts in African countries was due mainly to the insistence by donors that their nationals be hired on these posts. It was recommended, therefore, that African governments should, in future, insist that to the extent possible, technical assistance posts should be filled by Africans.

36. The Committee noted that although it may be true that policy-makers did not seek the views of manpower planners on the economy's human resources development needs to guide policy formulation, it was, nonetheless, incumbent on manpower planners to supply policy-makers with human resources development and utilization scenarios for planning purposes. It was felt that a more likely reason for the absence of the dialogue between the manpower planner and the policy-maker in this area, was that the manpower planner probably had no scenarios to offer, since he lacked the requisite information and data to build them. What, instead manpower planning in Africa should seek to do, is to try to influence a change more away from planning for GDP growth to planning for the attainment of measurable human development targets such as child survival, increased life-expectancy etc.

37. It was recommended that the questions of population control and military spending should be approached with caution. Regarding the former, each country should be left to decide on its population policy in light of its cultural realities and its resource endowment. As concerns the latter, African countries should be free to determine the level of their military spending within the context of their perceived security and defence needs.

38. Finally, the Committee urged ECA to endeavour in future, to use more regional and country-produced data for the preparation of its report. To this end, it should consider fielding a questionnaire to all African countries to elicit the required information. While on the question of statistics, three delegates questioned some data referring to their countries.

39. In conclusion, the United Nations Assistant Secretary General and the Acting Executive Secretary of ECA concurred with the observations made on the data sources used in the report to analyse the performance of the human development indicators. He agreed on the need for ECA to strengthen its data generation capabilities, although he acknowledge the existence of constraints such as resources for data collection both at the level of member States and at the level of the Secretariat. He undertook to endeavour to accede to the Committee's needs and to have this so reflected in the next report to the Committee.

VI. DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

40. A representative of the Secretariat informed the Committee that its next meeting would be held alongside the next meeting of the ECA Conference of Ministers of Planning (the Commission). Members would be informed in good time of the dates and venue of that meeting.

VII. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

41. There was no other business to discuss.

VIII. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

42. The Committee considered its draft report and adopted it without amendments.

IX. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

43. The Chairman thanked the delegates for their co-operation and declared the meeting closed.