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UNITED NATIONS TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS DECADE IN AFRICA
(1978-1988)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The ECA conference of Ministers held at Kinshasa from 24 February to 3 March 1977 determined to do all within its power to give decisive impetus to the development of the African continent and to the establishment of a new international economic order, adopted resolution 291 (XIII) on the Transport and Communications Decade in Africa for the years 1978-1988.
2. Resolution 291 (XIII) recommended that the international community, the Paris Conference on International Economic Co-operation and the relevant United Nations bodies should proclaim a Transport and Communications Decade in Africa.
3. The United Nations Economic and Social Council gave a most favourable response to this resolution. Thus, at its sixty-third session, it adopted resolution 2097 (LXIII) supporting ECA Conference of Ministers resolution 291 (XIII).
4. Finally, at its thirty-second regular session, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 32/160 endorsing the recommendations contained in the resolution of the ECA Conference of Ministers and proclaiming the years 1978-1988 the United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa.
5. The main points in the resolutions adopted by those three organs can be summarized as follows:
 - (a) Proposing and actively supporting a global strategy for the development of transport and communications for the continent as a whole focusing on harmonization, co-ordination, modernization and development;
 - (b) Mobilizing the technical and financial resources required for that purpose.
6. Within that context, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa undertook:
 - to define the basis and components of a strategy for the establishment of an integrated transport and communications network in Africa;
 - to prepare the development programmes and plans for each mode of transport and communications for Africa, with a view to promoting the key sectors of industry, agriculture and trade during the Decade. Studies envisaged in the framework relate to the following fields:
 - (a) Transport
 - road transport
 - maritime and river transport
 - air transport
 - rail transport

(b) Communications

telecommunications, radio broadcasting, television and postal services.

II. ACTION TARGETS

A. Inter-agency Meeting

7. The first inter-agency meeting on the Transport and Communications Decade in Africa was held at Addis Ababa on 22 and 23 March 1978 at the invitation of OCA. It was attended by representative of all the organizations involved in transport and communications activities.

8. The meeting discussed the strategy and the various objectives set for the Decade. To that end, it adopted document E/CN.14/SCO/138/Rev.1 entitled "Global strategy for the implementation of the Programme of United Nations Decade of Transport and Communications during the years 1978-1988." The meeting decided that, in order to co-ordinate the activities planned for the Decade, it was necessary to establish a mechanism which might be a co-ordinating committee for which OCA would act as secretariat. The committee should comprise experts from various organizations, agencies and specialists in the various modes of transport and communications.

B. Meeting of the OCA Executive Committee

9. The OCA Executive Committee, which met in Khartoum from 1 to 4 May 1978, examined document E/CN.14/CO/138/Rev.1 relating to the strategy which prepared by the inter-agency meeting.

10. The Executive Committee noted that African countries should take an active part in the implementation of the programme for the Decade and that the Organization of African Unity should proclaim the Decade at the African level with a view to making African states aware of the programme. The Executive Committee also stressed the need for Africa to assure its own development, first by stimulating thought at the national level and then by taking national development options with consideration at the regional level.

11. The OCA Executive Secretary was asked to transmit the strategy document to African states to enable them to study it and derive from it their own strategy which takes into account their national requirements.

12. The OCA Executive Committee adopted resolution SCO (XVIII) /Res. 2 which, inter alia, calls for a thorough study to be carried out on the specific situation of African land-locked countries and for the elaboration of concrete measures which will enable that group of countries to profit more effectively from the work programmes envisaged in the Decade.

C. Meeting of the Economic and Social Council

13. Document E/CN.14/SCO/138/Rev. 1 on the strategy was also presented to the meeting of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) which

was held in London in March/April 1978. The document was approved by the meeting which forwarded it to the Economic and Social Council for study at its Geneva meeting in July 1978. Resolution 1978/59 summed up the salient points in the Economic and Social Council's debates on the Decade. In fact, by that resolution, the Economic and Social Council requested the United Nations Secretary-General to provide the Economic Commission for Africa, as the "lead agency" for the Decade, with the necessary financial and staff resources that would enable it to make all preparatory arrangements for the Decade, including the preparations for, and the convening of a meeting of African Ministers concerned with matters relating to transport and communications.

D. OAU Assembly of Heads of State

14. In order that ECA might secure the commitment it required from African countries for the preparation and implementation of the programme for the Decade, ECA brought this issue to the attention of African Heads of State during the OAU summit held at Khartoum in July 1978. The Heads of State adopted resolution CN/675 (B) (XXXI) by which the Assembly

"1. Appeals to all the member States to

- (a) Proclaim the Decade at the national and sub-regional levels so as to make African States aware of its goals;
- (b) Assume an active role in the implementation of the programme for the Decade;
- (c) Join their efforts to mobilize international resources for the implementation of various transportation and communications projects with a view to opening up the various regions of African countries completely, due attention being paid to the special case of the semi-land-locked countries, and to facilitate the strengthening of intra-African co-operation.

5. Requests the Administrative Secretary General of the Organisation of African Unity and the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa to convene jointly by early 1979, a meeting of African Ministers concerned with matters relating to transport and communications work and planning to define Africa's global strategy for the development of Transport and communications including telecommunications in the region and to prepare a detailed programme of action for the implementation of the Decade."

E. Preparation of the Programme of the Decade

15. ECA has already begun to prepare the programme of operations to be implemented during the Decade. Since this programme should contain regional and national elements, the Executive Secretary of ECA has written to African States asking them to inform the ECA about their needs and national projects.

16. To ensure adequate follow-up, it has been decided that the preparation and implementation of the operations falling within programme of the Decade be carried out in several phases. For the preparation of the first phase, which will cover the first three to four years, a group of 20 consultants working closely with officials in the Transport, Communication and Tourism Division has been set up and placed under the direct supervision of the Chief of Division.

17. These group of consultants began its work on 1 October 1978 and will visit African countries to discuss with the various officials the projects they have identified and then establish the programmes for the Decade. The final report of the group of experts will be ready at the end of March 1979. This first report will contain projects to be implemented during the first phase which should be presented in a form acceptable to financing agencies.

18. UNDP contributed \$US 850,000 and ECA regular budget \$US 170,600 towards the establishment of this group of experts.

19. This group is composed of the following experts:

- one co-ordinator
- two maritime transport experts
- two port experts
- one multimodal transport expert
- one transport management expert
- one road transport economist
- one road engineer
- one rail transport economist
- one railway engineer
- one air transport economist
- one air freight economist
- one river and lake transport economist
- one financial analyst
- one telecommunications engineer (tel, tg, tx)
- one satellite communications engineer
- two radio and television experts
- two postal services experts

III. FUTURE ACTIONS

A. Co-ordinating Committee for the Decade

20. The preparation of the programme for the first phase of the Decade will be completed in March 1979. The report will be presented for consideration, in the first instance, at a meeting of the Co-ordinating Committee for the Decade to be held at Addis Ababa from 16 to 21 April 1979. This Committee comprises United Nations organizations and all international bodies with activities in the field of transport and communications.

B. Conference of African Ministers

21. As ECA Executive Committee and the OAU Assembly of Heads of State called on the ECA Executive Secretary and the OAU Administrative Secretary

General to prepare and convene by early 1979, a meeting of Ministers responsible for transport, communications, public works and planning in order to define Africa's global strategy for the development of transport and communications including telecommunications in the region and to prepare a detailed programme of action on the basis of the objectives of the Decade, the programme of the first phase of the Decade will be submitted for consideration and adoption at the above mentioned conference of Ministers which will be held, for this purpose in Monrovia (Liberia) from 7 to 12 May 1979.

C. Conference of Plenipotentiaries

22. The implementation of the programmes and projects under the strategy will require substantial resources which should be sought first and foremost at the national and regional levels. However, considering the current difficulties facing African countries, it is evident that without considerable help from the international community in the form of services, equipment, capital and technology, the programmes of the Decade can not be properly implemented. It is therefore to mobilize extra-African resources that the Secretary General of the United Nations was asked to convene a meeting of plenipotentiaries of donors in 1979. The sectoral programmes adopted by the African Ministers will be submitted to this meeting of plenipotentiaries.

23. It should be possible to hold the Conference of the Plenipotentiaries in September 1979.