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Note on
New ECA Intergovernmental Machinery:
The Conference of African Ministers Responsible for the Development and Utilization of Mineral Resources and Energy

New ECA Intergovernmental machinery: the Conference of African Ministers responsible for the development and utilization of mineral resources and energy

I. Introduction

At the twenty-seventh session of the Commission/eighteenth meeting of the Conference of Ministers held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 20 to 23 April 1992, the ECA Conference of Ministers adopted resolution 726 (XXVII) on strengthening the Economic Commission for Africa to face Africa's development challenges in the 1990s. It particularly recommended in operative paragraph 6, the "establishment, within existing resources, of a consultative mechanism that would advise the Executive Secretary on the grouping of conferences along specific themes, including scheduling and the preparation of conferences, meetings, seminars, and workshops, taking into account the need to harmonize them with those of the Organization of African Unity and the African Development Bank, to avoid duplication and achieve greater efficiency."

The operative paragraph, therefore, implicitly called for a rationalization of the intergovernmental bodies of the Commission. Indeed, a streamlined and more effective intergovernmental machinery would be able to respond better to the crucial and changing needs of the member States in the light of the restructuring exercise of the ECA secretariat and the revised Medium-term Plan, as well as to utilize fully the multidisciplinary advantage of the Commission and benefit from the synergetic effects deriving from the new ECA priority areas which resulted from the thematic clustering of subprogrammes and divisions.

In the past structure of the Intergovernmental machinery of the Commission there was a sectoral Conference of the African Ministers responsible for mineral development, exploration and utilization supported by their Technical Committee of experts who met biennially to discuss issues related to minerals.

II. Historic background

The first regional conference on the development and utilization of mineral resources was convened in Arusha in February 1981 and the mandate for this conference was the Lagos Plan of Action (Chapter III, para. 80(a). The second conference was held in Lusaka in 1985 and it was there African member States have decided to hold the conference ~~one in~~ EVERY two years.

The major objectives of the conference were formulated as follows:

(a) to improve and diversify the production of basic minerals in Africa;

(b) to make the African minerals to contribute to the development and growth of the continent and its economic, industrial, agricultural and other sectors;

(c) to increase the export income from basic minerals and by-products of their development;

(d) to expand the intra-african trade in basic minerals and their by-products;

(e) to increase the consumption of minerals in the continent;

(f) to make minerals have the maximum possible impact on socio-economic progress in life of the African people;

(g) to foster share and exchange of information and experience among the African countries with a view to developing policies and strategies for sustainable development of mineral resources ~~and strategies for sustainable development of mineral resources~~ taking into account environmental protection of the region;

(h) to bring African countries to coordinate their policies and strategies for the development, marketing and consumption of mineral resources at the subregional and regional levels.

Unfortunately the regularity of the conferences was not observed however participation remained relatively stable as could be seen from the following table:

	1981 Arusha	1985 Lusaka	1988 Kampala	1991 Ouaga
Member States	20	17	22	22
Observers	22	12	6	11
Total	42	29	28	33

The next fifth conference is scheduled for November 1993 in Addis Ababa.

In preparation of the conference of Ministers, the Committee of experts have met and discussed the technical programme. At the end of each conference they normally organized a field trip or study tour to familiarize the participants with the mining sector of the host country.

In the new ECA intergovernmental machinery, they proposed the Conference of African Ministers responsible for the development and utilization of mineral resources and energy. This conference will be a forum for the exchange of issues and information on recent trends in mining industry and energy sector in Africa as well as on the present status of knowledge, development and applications of the two fields in the region. It will also offer senior African government officials an opportunity to interact with their counterparts from different countries and other regional and international organizations.

UNECA considers this conference as having a special dimension. It is an African conference which means it has common elements of shared problems in mining and energy

sector, and the conference is basically a convention of government representatives interested in problems of minerals and energy development.

The terms of reference of the conference are as follows:

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE AFRICAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND UTILIZATION OF MINERAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY

The basic objective of the African Regional conference on the Development and Utilization of Mineral Resources and Energy is to promote cooperation by African countries through their development activities so that:

(a) The production of mineral raw materials and energy in Africa can be expanded and diversified;

(b) African mineral raw materials and energy can contribute towards the development and growth of the continent in the industrial, agricultural and other economic sectors;

(c) Export earnings of African countries from mineral and energy raw materials and mineral-based products may increase;

(d) Intra-African trade in mineral and energy raw materials as well as in energy and mineral based products can expand;

(e) Consumption of mineral and energy in the continent may improve;

(f) Mineral and energy can have the maximum possible impact on the socio-economic advancement of the African people;

(g) African countries can intensify the sharing and exchange of information and experiences on the objectives, policies and strategies for lasting development of mineral resources, taking the environmental protection aspects fully into account;

(h) African countries can harmonize their policies and strategies for the development, marketing and consumption of mineral resources and energy at the subregional and regional levels;

(i) African countries can draw up multi-year work programmes on the development of mineral resources and energy, on regular basis, taking into account the need for coordination and close cooperation with the main subsidiary organs concerned and submit biannual evaluations on these programmes to the Commission for approval; and

(j) African countries can find ways and means of promoting the development of African commercial system for energy and mineral resources and ensure their integration in the world market systems.

It would be useful to brief the participants of this Ad Hoc meeting on the preparatory work done to establish an African energy commission.

Back in 1982, UNECA and OAU contemplated joint implementation of the Project on the establishment of an African Energy Commission. For the first time, the issue of the establishment of this Commission was raised at the Second African meeting on Energy held in Accra in November 1976 and organized by UNECA. At that time, among the participants of the Accra meeting, two member States expressed their reservations concerning necessity of having such a commission.

Later on namely during the preparatory phase of the Lagos Plan of Action, the idea have been revived and the need for establishing such a commission was introduced into the energy chapter of the Lagos Plan of Action.

Eventually, OAU succeeded in mobilization of financial support from UNDP and in light of the recommendation of the Lagos Plan of Action for the establishment of an African Energy Commission embarked on the implementation of the UNDP/OAU Project RAF/81/035.

One of the two consultancy reports, prepared as the outcome of this project, presented the structure of the commission, outlined its projected activities and proposed the draft constitution. There is also a chapter on financial resources that should be provided by both the member States and international and bilateral donor agencies.

The text of this report is reproduced in part for the benefit of the participants.

PROPOSED NEW STRUCTURE OF THE ECA INTERGOVERNMENTAL MACHINERY