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IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS ON DECENTRALIZATION OF UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES AND STRENGTHENING OF  
REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMISSIONS

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY ON STEPS TAKEN  
BY THE  
SECRETARY-GENERAL TO IMPLEMENT RESOLUTION 50(IV)

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1. The Economic Commission for Africa, at its fourth session, examined a note by the Secretary-General to the thirty-second session of ECOSOC on "Decentralization of the United Nations economic and social activities and strengthening of the regional economic commissions" (E/3522) and a report of the Secretary-General to the sixteenth session of the General Assembly on the same subject (A/4911); and adopted resolution 50(IV) which, inter alia, recommended to the Secretary-General "that he take the necessary measures to endow the Commission's secretariat with the requisite authority and sufficient technical personnel to enable it to fulfil its functions effectively with regard to the services required of it by governments of Member States, in particular by transferring progressively substantive and operational functions so that the Commission's secretariat may play an increasing part in assisting governments of Member States in the formulation, evaluation and execution of technical assistance projects throughout the region and in associating these projects more closely with the Commission's work programme".

2. The report of the fourth session of the Commission containing this resolution was considered by the Economic and Social Council at its thirty-fourth session, together with a report of the Secretary-General (E/3643) on the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Council and the General Assembly.<sup>1/</sup> Subsequently, the Secretary-General submitted to the

<sup>1/</sup> Council resolution 793(XXX), General Assembly resolutions 1518(XV) and 1709(XVI).

seventeenth session of the General Assembly a report (A/5196) in which he reviewed further steps that have been taken, or are being envisaged, towards the decentralization of the economic and social activities and the strengthening of the regional economic commissions.

3. During the thirty-fourth session of the Council, held in June 1962 in Geneva, the Executive Secretaries of the regional economic commissions met with the Under-Secretary for Economic and Social Affairs and discussed decentralization in terms of possibilities and requirements for increased action at the regional level. During the same session of the Council, the newly-appointed Commissioner for Industrial Development also consulted with the Executive Secretaries and responsible officials of all four regional economic commissions. Following these consultations, the Commissioner set forth in a memorandum (E/3656/Add.1) to the Council the regional requirements for a strengthening of advisory services, supplementing the Secretary-General's report (E/3656) to the Council on the Headquarters requirements for such strengthening.

4. The present report attempts to give an account of the action taken in 1962, with reference to the Economic Commission for Africa on the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, the Council and the Commission.

5. Since reporting to the fourth session of the Commission, continuing efforts have been made to strengthen the professional staff of the ECA secretariat, either through reassignment or by appointment of new staff. While in early 1961 the secretariat had forty-six professional staff, in December 1962 this figure was increased to sixty-one, not including the professional officers attached to the Office of the Executive Secretary and of the Division of Administration.

6. The manning table for 1963 provides for a total of ninety professional officers for the substantive divisions.

7. In addition to the regular staff, a number of regional advisers were provided under the technical assistance programme to work with ECA. Thus, twelve regional advisers were on assignment in 1962. Eleven additional posts are being provided for 1963, making a total of twenty-three.

8. Another major step taken by the Secretary-General in the implementation of the resolutions on decentralization was the decentralization of the technical assistance operational personnel to the regional commissions. Experienced programme officers from the Bureau of Technical Assistance Operations (BTAO) were reassigned to regional secretariats to set up technical assistance coordination units. Thus, a Technical Assistance Coordination Unit was set up within the secretariat of ECA and went into operation in August 1962. In its initial stage the Coordination Unit is provided with two professional posts, one of which remains to be filled. The Coordination Unit serves, on matters of technical assistance, as liaison between ECA and Headquarters as well as UN experts in the Africa region. It coordinates, within the ECA secretariat, all matters relating to programming and administration of technical assistance projects and, thus, fulfills the functions of the "infrastructure" for technical assistance operations in Africa.

9. This important development in the continuing process of decentralization is in harmony with the Commission's recommendation to transfer progressively substantive and operational functions to the Commission's secretariat. Parallel to the technical services to be rendered by substantive officers and experts, problems relating to programming, financing, budgeting, recruitment of experts, administration of fellowships, follow-up of the projects, and all matters dealing with the operation should be handled by sufficient experienced staff to ensure the efficient implementation of the technical cooperation programme. The creation of the Technical Assistance Coordination Unit strengthens the secretariat in this connection and paves the way for further decentralization.

10. With regard to the operation of the 1962 programme, decentralization of the regional projects has made significant progress. A total of twenty-three regional projects have been decentralized to ECA in 1962 against thirteen in 1961. Their respective costs were \$812,725 and \$423,959. Decentralization implies the delegation of the substantive, financial and administrative authority to ECA. The secretariat of ECA initiates the projects either in compliance with the Commission's work programme or at the governments' request and formulates a plan of activities and budgetary requirements for each project. During this planning period, full cooperation is maintained between the ECA secretariat and the governments as well as between the ECA secretariat and BTAO and the substantive services at Headquarters. Once the projects are planned and budgeted, and an agreement is reached with Headquarters for their decentralization, the ECA secretariat receives delegation of authority for their implementation. This involves the full range of technical and administrative activities, for example, in the case of a seminar, from the writing and issuance of technical studies, preparation of the work programme, invitations to participants, selection of technical consultants or lecturers, organization, in cooperation with the host government, of the seminar activities, financial administration and the preparation of the final report.

11. A list of regional projects administered by the ECA secretariat in 1962 is annexed to this report. An account of the activities of each project, regional as well as country projects, is contained in a TAB report (E/CN.14/210) to the Commission.

12. Although, up to the present, country programmes continue to be administered by Headquarters, the ECA secretariat is taking a more active part in their planning and programming and is providing increasing substantive support to Headquarters. During 1962, more ECA staff members and regional advisers visited African countries than in the previous year.

They provided the government with technical services in various fields, assisted in assessing the needs of the countries, and helped in the formulation of requests for assistance either under the Expanded or Regular Programmes or to the Special Fund.

13. One of the main tasks of the secretariat in the field of technical cooperation is to follow up the work of the experts in the field and to provide them with "backstopping". This is being done in the following ways:

- (a) arrangements have been made with Headquarters that, to the greatest extent possible, experts appointed to serve in African countries should be briefed by the ECA secretariat;
- (b) during their assignments in the field, the experts are requested to send copies of their progress reports to the ECA secretariat for comments at the same time that they address their reports to Headquarters;
- (c) when an ECA secretariat staff member or regional adviser visits a country, he will discuss with the interested expert or experts technical problems relating to his or their assignments; and
- (d) upon completion of their assignments, experts are asked to discuss with the ECA headquarters their final recommendations.

14. The above-mentioned services which the secretariat has been able to render were limited to those fields where sufficient technical staff was available. It is felt, however, that the progress so far made in decentralization has already developed a closer tie between the governments and the ECA secretariat and given the latter opportunities to know more precisely the plans and wishes of the governments. The filling of the additional professional posts provided for 1963 will enable the secretariat to cope with those fields which have not, as yet, been covered. As the 1963-1964 biennial technical cooperation programme enters into effect, further efforts are being made with a view to achieving maximum implementation of this programme.

ANNEX

LIST OF THE 1962 REGIONAL PROJECTS, THE ADMINISTRATION  
OF WHICH WAS DELEGATED TO THE ECA SECRETARIAT

ED219	Regional Statistical Advisers
ED275	Study Tour of Statisticians
ED279	Statistical Training Centre (Addis Ababa)
ED327	Natural Resources Survey
ED393	Seminar on Industrial Statistics
ED402	Regional Fiscal Advisers
ED425	Statistical Training Centre, Achimota (Accra)
ED426	Statistical Training Centre, Yaoundé
ED427	Rabat Statistical Training Centre (University Level)
ED430	Summer Course for African Economists
ED431	ECA/GATT Course on Commercial Policy, Dar-es-Salaam, (English-speaking countries)
ED434	Pre-Institute Activities (African Institute for Economic Development and Planning)
	Regional Cartographic Adviser
SW277	Self-Help Housing Survey
SW370	Training Course for Community Development Personnel
SW372	Workshop on Urbanization
SW405	Regional Technical Advisers in Social Field
SW412	Seminar on Organization and Administration of Social Services (Abidjan)
SW414	Seminar on Population Problems in Africa
SW438	Demographic Training Centres
PA118	Seminar on Urgent Administrative Problems of African Governments
PA136	Regional Advisers in Public Administration
PA149	Training Course in Customs Administration

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