

# UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL



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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA  
Fifth session  
Leopoldville, February-March 1963

## COMMITTEE II

### PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE THIRD MEETING

held at the Palais de la Nation, Leopoldville,  
on Tuesday, 26 February 1963, at 3.30 p.m.

<u>Chairman:</u>	Mr. Kando (Senegal)
<u>Executive Secretary:</u>	Mr. Gardiner
<u>Secretary:</u>	Miss Ragheb

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Implementation of decisions on decentralization of United Nations economic and social activities and strengthening of regional economic commissions (continued).

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IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS ON DECENTRALIZATION OF UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES AND STRENGTHENING OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC  
COMMISSIONS (continued) (E/CN.14/227, 228)

The EXECUTIVE SECRETARY reminded the Committee that at the previous meeting the secretariat had given an account of the situation regarding the proposals for setting up ECA sub-regional offices. The Committee now awaited proposals concerning the establishment of a sub-regional office in North Africa.

Mr. YAKER (Algeria) said that in ECA resolution 64(V), adopted at the fourth session, the office in question was referred to as a sub-regional office for Africa North of the Sahara. It would be very helpful if the Committee were to specify which countries were included in the sub-region. The Algerian delegation supported the proposal that the office's headquarters should be in Morocco.

The EXECUTIVE SECRETARY pointed out that the boundaries of North Africa had never been officially defined. It was for the Countries which considered themselves to belong to that sub-region to indicate the fact themselves.

Mr. YAKER (Algeria) said that in his opinion the countries North of the Sahara were the United Arab Republic, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. He asked the secretariat for its opinion.

The EXECUTIVE SECRETARY said that any other countries which considered they ought to be included in the list given by the Algerian representative should say so. In the absence of objections, the list might serve as a basis for discussion.

Mr. BAKRI (Sudan) remarked that Sudan did not feel itself to belong to any of the various sub-divisions of the continent: North Africa, Eastern Africa, South Africa etc. It only felt itself involved in matters concerning Africa as a whole.

Mr. YAKER (Algeria) repeated his request that the secretariat should say which countries it considered to belong to the group of countries north of the Sahara.

Mr. ZENTAR (Morocco) thanked the Algerian representative for supporting his country's candidature. It was essential, in his opinion, that the boundaries of the sub-region north of the Sahara should be defined; the division was, however, a fairly technical one.

The EXECUTIVE SECRETARY requested the countries which considered themselves to belong to North Africa to indicate the fact by supporting the proposal for establishing the sub-regional office. It was not a question of imposing arbitrary boundaries; the door was open to countries other than those which had been mentioned.

Mr. ZENTAR (Morocco) suggested that consideration of the matter be deferred till the end of the meeting, in order to give the countries concerned an opportunity to discuss it among themselves. He pointed out that the representative of Tunisia was absent.

The EXECUTIVE SECRETARY said that he was rather afraid that deferring consideration of the question would hold up the Committee's proceedings, since the other item to be dealt with at the present meeting also concerned the representatives who were not present.

Mr. BAKRI (Sudan) said he had read with great interest document E/CN.14/227 on steps taken by the Secretary-General to implement resolution 50(IV). He was pleased with the progress towards decentralization which had been made since the last session. The Sudanese delegation fully supported the principle of decentralization, since its effect would be to increase the secretariat's efficiency and to simplify its work. A greater measure of co-ordination between ECA and FAO, also the other specialized agencies, was desirable. The establishment of services responsible for the co-ordination of technical assistance was a step in the right direction. The Executive Secretary's powers in connexion with regional and country projects ought to be extended. He welcomed the increase in the number of regional advisers;

however, the increase meant that the technical staff of the secretariat would have to be strengthened. From that point of view decentralization came under item 15 of the agenda (Staffing problems). Most certainly ECA ought to have a larger number of African staff, but the governments of the African countries would have to be persuaded to release people for the posts.

The EXECUTIVE SECRETARY suggested that the Committee should first of all adopt the principle of establishing a sub-regional office for North Africa, and then decide upon the office's site and draw up a list of the countries which regarded themselves as belonging to the sub-region.

Mr. ZENTAR (Morocco) considered that the principle of establishing the sub-regional office had already been adopted in resolution 64/(IV); now the principle must be given flesh.

Mr. DIARRA (Mali) pointed out that the Commission had agreed, at its fourth session, that the countries concerned should discuss the matter among themselves and decide where the headquarters should be. The simplest course would be to say that the countries which had taken part in those discussions belonged to North Africa.

Mr. BAKRI (Sudan) said he was not, and never had been, opposed to the setting up of a sub-regional office in North Africa. The Sudan had taken part in the discussions, but it had done so simply as an African country.

The CHAIRMAN noted the fact that there was a desire to set up a sub-regional office in North Africa; all that remained was to decide upon the office's headquarters.

Mr. YAKER (Algeria), Mr. HAJERI (Tunisia) and Mr. ANIS (United Arab Republic) strongly supported the candidature of Morocco.

Mr. DIARRA (Mali) believed that all that remained to be done was to confirm the agreement reached the previous year between the countries concerned. It was accordingly for those countries to make their views known.

Mr. ACQUAH (Ghana) considered that it was essential to ascertain which countries regarded themselves as belonging to North Africa, and asked the secretariat to find out which they were.

Mr. HAJERI (Tunisia) observed that resolution 64(IV) did not specify which countries belonged to Africa North; however, following unofficial discussions, it had been understood that the sub-region comprised the following countries: the United Arab Republic, Sudan, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.

Mr. YAKER (Algeria) pointed out that the Commission had decided, by operative sub-paragraph 2 (b) of the resolution, to set up a sub-regional office "for Africa North of the Sahara".

It was accordingly desirable that the Committee should decide which countries were included in the North African sub-region.

Mr. BAKRI (Sudan) did not accept the geographical divisions of Africa into Africa north, and Africa south of the Sahara; they were divisions made by the imperialists. The sub-region comprising the countries listed by the Tunisian representative was "North Africa".

Mr. DIARRA (Mali) shared the opinion of the Sudanese representative.

He drew the Committee's attention to the fact the two sub-regional offices provided for by resolution 64(IV) would be required to cover the whole of Africa, since United Nations resources did not as yet permit of the establishment of a sub-regional office for West and for Central Africa. There was therefore no point, in his opinion, in going on debating which countries belonged to North Africa.

Mr. OTHMAN (Libya) supported the Algerian representative's proposal that the headquarters of the sub-regional office for North Africa should be in Morocco.

Mr. M'KHAITIRAT (Mauretania) and Mr. HORTON (Liberia) considered that it was for the countries concerned themselves to decide which sub-region they belonged to.

The CHAIRMAN declared that the Committee considered that the sub-region of North Africa consisted of the following countries: Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia and the United Arab Republic, and that the headquarters of the sub-regional office should be in Morocco.

Mr. ZENTAR (Morocco) cordially thanked the delegations which had supported his country's candidature. As to the city for the office's headquarters, His Government proposed Tangiers. Tangiers possessed the necessary facilities, and excellent transport and telecommunication services.

#### ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA STAFFING PROBLEM

THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY reminded the Commission that at its last session it had adopted resolution 51(IV) establishing a Committee on Staff Recruitment and Training, which was to assist the Executive Secretary in establishing and implementing a long-range programme of Africanization of staff, especially at the policy-making level. He also recalled the message in which the Secretary General had mentioned that he hoped to see an increase in African staff at all levels of the secretariat, in particular through efforts to organize training facilities for African staff and to obtain all assistance likely to promote that policy in accordance with Article 101 of the Charter.

The Committee established under the resolution had not been able to meet, but various aspects of the problem had been discussed with representatives of African countries. During the previous year there had been considerable developments, and the proportion of African officials at the intermediate and higher levels of the secretariat, which was at present 51 per cent, would probably be 60 per cent in 1963. In line with paragraph 4 of the resolution, some officials were at present being trained with the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East and the Economic Commission for Europe; moreover, new specializations had been created in the secretariat, including the mechanical processing of statistical data, and locally recruited staff were receiving regular training. Steps were also being taken to ensure that the secretariat was bilingual, in order to meet the needs of African representation.

He stressed that the main difficulty consisted in persuading the Governments concerned to release officials to serve on the secretariat of the Commission. The United Nations recruitment services had made recommendations on that point, and some governments had agreed to make sacrifices. Progress has been made in that connexion, and it could be assumed it was leading to an improvement of the position as to the availability of competent African staff. Nevertheless he again asked all the African governments to help the secretariat to carry out its mandate.

Mr. WRIGHT (Sierra Leone) said that he was satisfied with the account of the position which the Executive Secretary had just given. While his delegation did not wish to question the principle of geographical distribution as applied by the United Nations to staff recruitment, it had some reservations as to its application to the regional economic commissions. It was not asking for the secretariat to be completely Africanized, but for the higher grades at least to be Africanized. He believed that this criterion was applied in the secretariats of the other regional economic commissions. His delegation was satisfied with the good work done by the non-African members of the secretariat, and the Commission should of course be able to obtain the services of competent officials from all over the world.

With regard to the African Institute of Economic Development and Planning, he thought that its staff should also be mainly Africa, provided that the range of ability and talent needed for satisfactory operation was not restricted.

His delegation had noted that the Africanization of staff had taken place mainly at the junior level, but it did not doubt that the Executive Secretary would follow the question closely and take into account the comments just made, which were supported by several other delegations.

THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY stated that six senior posts out of eight would most probably be occupied by Africans the following year. He again stressed that the main difficulty was that very often the governments did not wish to release the candidates concerned.

Mr. SHIFFERAW (Ethiopia) noted that the Executive Secretary had done a good deal to Africanize the secretariat although the Committee established for that purpose had not met. He hoped that it would meet soon, and he urged the African governments to do everything in their power to supply capable officials to the Commission, even at the cost of some sacrifice. From its part, the Ethiopian Government would do everything it could to that end. He welcomed the fact that six senior posts out of eight would be held by Africans in the course of the year.



Mr. ADANDE (Dahomey) said that he welcomed the efforts made by the Executive Secretary and endorsed the comments of the representative of Sierra Leone, with no mental reservation against experts from other continents. He further stressed the need for recruiting senior staff whose mother tongue was French.

THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY said that the secretariat had spared no effort in connexion with the latter point. He hoped that the comment made by the representative of Dahomey would encourage the French-speaking African countries to supply the secretariat with the skills it needed.

Mr. DIARRA (Mali) agreed with those who had paid a tribute to the Executive Secretary, but he was disappointed that the Committee on Staff Recruitment and Training had not yet met. He hoped that in future it would be able to hold the scheduled two meetings a year. He noted that out of the six major divisions of the secretariat, only three were headed by Africans, and two of those were South Africans, whereas the Commission had condemned the attitude of the Republic of South Africa. Hence the Executive Secretary ought to redouble his efforts to Africanize the senior grades. For that purpose it would be preferable not to demand too much of the candidates in the way of diplomas, but rather to have confidence in their knowledge of African affairs and their loyalty in the service of Africa. If necessary they might be assisted by European technical advisers. Further, he believed that none of the non-Africans occupying important posts in the secretariat belonged to a country having a great experience of Africa, such as France for example. He reminded the Commission that when it had adopted resolution 42(IV) it had intended to retain the collaboration of the European countries with responsibilities in Africa. He therefore hoped that officials from those countries would collaborate in the secretariat's work. As to the question of the Commission's official languages, he thought that it would be advisable to balance the volume of work in each language, particularly with regard to translation. It seemed that the secretariat did not have enough French-speaking staff to meet the needs of the delegations and an effort must be made to improve that

situation. In the same connexion he had noted some delays in the circulation of documents, which prevented the delegations from studying the documentation in time. The reason why he was drawing the attention of the Commission members to these matters was so that they could contribute to the solution of the difficulties, which were, in essence, a staffing problem.

Mr. PARKET (Liberia) supported the delegations which had paid a tribute to the work of the Executive Secretary. He greatly hoped that the Committee on Staff Recruitment and Training would meet without delay and that the Africanization of the secretariat would be pushed forward.

Mr. M'HALEMIRAT (Mauritania) also congratulated the Executive Secretary and hoped that African staff would continue to be actively initiated into the secretariat's work. His Government was proposing to submit the candidature of a senior government official for a high-level post. He agreed with the representative of Mali that it would be advisable not to apply university criteria to the recruitment of Africans.

Mr. OUKO (Kenya and Zanzibar) said that all delegations were aware of the difficulties of the problem. He merely hoped that the comments made to the Commission would be duly taken into consideration and that the secretariat would do its best to give effect to them.

Mr. SAMI (Congo, Leopoldville) wholeheartedly supported the comments of Mali concerning languages, and also the suggestion made by the representative of Dahomey.

Mr. ANYIA (Nigeria) congratulated the Executive Secretary and his collaborators for the progress made in Africanization. He was fully aware of the difficulties of the problem. Moreover, Africa certainly did not want to cut itself off from the rest of the world, and it was in its interest to take advantage of the experience of other countries. It must be recognized that the non-African staff of the secretariat had proved its competence and had a sense of responsibility towards Africa. That fact should be duly acknowledged.

THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY said that he wished to reassure the representative of Nigeria as to the fate of the non-African personnel. The process of transfers among the different United Nations bodies, the expiration of short-term contracts, and retirements might in fact leave more posts vacant than Africans could fill. It would indeed probably be increasingly difficult to obtain competent officials from African governments, in view of the growing need to have their talents available on the spot for the national development programmes.

With regard to the balance between the two working languages, he pointed out that the published figures did not exactly reflect the real situation; the secretariat entirely agreed with the view of the representatives who had raised the matter.

As for the Committee on Recruitment and Training, all possible steps would be taken to see that it met, but he warned delegations against excessive hopes, in view of the factors in the situation which he had already explained.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.