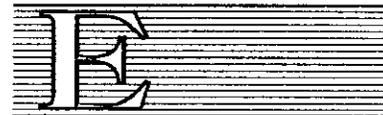




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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Nineteenth meeting of the Technical
Preparatory Committee of the
Whole/Seventh Intergovernmental
Group of Experts

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
30 April-4 May 1999

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Thirty-third session of the Commission/
twenty-fourth meeting of the Conference
of Ministers/Seventh session of the
African Ministers of Finance

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
6-8 May 1999

**FIRST MEETING OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE
OF EXPERTS OF THE SUBREGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTRE
FOR WEST AFRICA
NIAMEY, THE NIGER, 25-29 MAY 1998**

HIGHLIGHTS

First meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts of the Subregional Development Centre (SRDC) for West Africa

Niamey, in Niger Republic from 25th to 29th May 1998

I: INTRODUCTION¹⁾

1. The first meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts of the subregional Development Centre for West Africa (CDSR/AO) of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) was held in Niamey, the Niger Republic from 25th to 29th May 1998 in order to examine the progress made in the execution of the Work Programme for the year 1997 in order to give greater focus to the implementation of the 1998.

II: PARTICIPATION

2. The meeting was attended by the following eight of the fifteen member States of the SRDC, namely, Benin, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Togo.

3. Eleven Intergovernmental Organisations also participated in the meeting.

4. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Funds for Population Activities (UNFPA), the Company for the Collect, the Promotion and the Sale of Agricultural and Pastoral Produce (SOCOPAP) were also represented at the meeting.

III: ORGANISATION OF THE MEETING

5. The Bureau of for the meeting was constituted as follows:

Chairman:	Niger
Vice-Chairman:	Ghana
Rapporteur:	Mali.

6. Statements were made to the meeting by, the representative of the Togolese Minister of Planning, the out-going Chairman and the Officer-in-Charge of the SRDC (full text attached) and His Excellency, Mr. Yacouba NABASSOUA, the Minister of Planning opened the meeting.

IV: ORGANIZATION OF WORK

7. The following agenda was adopted:

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Election of the Bureau
3. Presentation of technical reports:
 - (i) Report of director on progress made in the implementation of the 1997-work programme.
 - (ii) Report on technological policy options for enhancing food security in West Africa.

1 _/ The recommendations of the meeting as well as the motions of thanks are also attached

- (iii) Report on the economic and social conditions in West Africa in 1997.
 - (iv) Report on the progress made in developing databases for sustainable development management in West Africa.
 - (v) Report on progress Made in Promoting Gender Perspective in Sustainable Development Management in the West Africa Subregion.
 - (vi) Report on the assessment of the Implementation of the Dakar/Ngor Declaration and the Programme of Work of the International Conference on Population and Development in SRDC/WA.
4. Date and venue of next meeting.
 5. Any other matters.
 6. Adoption of report and closure of the meeting.

IV: Highlights

8. In the discussion of the Directors report as well as the technical reports, the following reactions were noted:

(a) Report of Director on progress made in the implementation of the 1997-work programme.

9. It was noted that under the framework of technical support to and cooperation with the subregional economic communities on key development issues several missions were carried out to sensitize and build consensus on the strategic direction of the Commission and the identification of development priorities within the areas of the professional expertise currently available to the Centre, namely the nexus of environment, population and food security; gender mainstreaming; macro economics; water resource development, transport and infrastructure.

10. In the debate that followed, among other things, the issue of a mechanism for collaboration between intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) and the SRDC was raised. The meeting was informed about past activities of the SRDC on this matter. The Association of IGOs, which was serviced by the Centre up to 1993 and it, was suggested that the work of this Association should be revitalized. Attention was also drawn to the work of the Centre in collaborating with IGOs such as ECOWAS and UEMOA on subregional integration matters such as harmonization of tariffs. It was recommended that consultations for the preparation of the work programme for 200-2001 should start as soon as possible and the focal points kept informed.

(b) Report on the economic and social conditions in West Africa in 1997.

11. The meeting pointed out that the next report should be more analytical and be presented in two parts, namely,

- (i) the general situation of the economic and social conditions in the sub-region during the period under review; and
- (ii) the detailed analysis of some areas of concentration.

12. There was also the issue of the reliability of data. The Centre was encouraged to consult more with the focal points and build up a database. Against this understanding the meeting examined, amended and completed the recommendations suggested in the report.

(c) Report on technological policy options for enhancing food security in West Africa.

13. The Committee noted that the document was the first part of a manual, the second part of that highlighted the latest world-wide technological research developments in matters of the use of tropical flours

in baking industry as well as in the preparation of traditional products. Among the advantages of a composite flour programme (CFP), it were the creation of new and stable market outlets to sustain food production and enhance the welfare of people in the rural areas, thereby increasing food security at the national and subregional levels, the strengthening of industrial capacities of processing local products and the fight against poverty.

14. The Committee observed that the CFP was late in taking off in Africa and that the constraints to its development were numerous among which it were the lack of political will, the difficulties in the additional production of maize, sorghum, millet and cassava, the resistance of the concerned professionals, the education of the consumers and additional investments. The Committee took a note of the Xanthane gum project, which was being carried out in Senegal. This would permit in the future the baking of 100 % of tropical flours.

15. Concerning the publication of the technical handbook on composite flours, reserves were expressed on certain aspects of the content of the manual where wheat was considered as the biggest nuisance among cereals in Africa, and where agricultural subsidies and experiences in composite flours were developed.

16. Finally, it was proposed to continue the efforts for a total mastery of Xanthane gum production technology in Africa; the creation of a bulletin such as "S&T Newsletter" in West Africa, in cooperation with IGOs, Universities and Research Centres; to serve as support for dissemination of technology research findings; the modeling of a CFP aiming at quick evaluation of its impact on the national economy and the study of the reasons for the composite flour programme in Africa.

(d) Report on the progress made in developing databases for sustainable development management in West Africa.

17. The Committee recognized the efforts made by the SRDC in implementing the recommendations of its last meeting on the issue, more specifically the questionnaires that had prepared and the contacts already made in order to sensitize focal points and identifying existing viable databases. The investment being made by some of member States and their IGOs in investing in the new information and communications technologies, particularly Internet, as well as those of the NGOs was encouraging.

18. The meeting recognized that the way ahead lay pulling resources together. The options lay in the major IGOs of the subregion working together with the SRDC and in collaboration with UNDP, the other United Nations agencies and other partners to promote the use of the new information and communications technologies to access the existing development information databases. This would be cost effective and avoid duplication. To enhance these initiative the Committee endorsed the project ideas as contained in the annex to the report and requested the SRDC to finalize it submit it to interested partners.

19. Further discussion underscored the necessity to harmonize the understanding of the various indicators approaches to data collection as suggested in the annexes to the report. It was also emphasized that there was the need to use such terminology in questionnaires should be of common usage to avoid ambiguity in interpretation. There was also the need to use such parameters that will make sense at the local level rather than insist on measurements that are difficult to quantify locally. The issue of dealing with the development of information technology as a policy issue. This was important for the promotion of relevant local technology initiatives and capacities.

20. The Committee recommended as a matter of priority, and in addition to further developing the project document, a planning meeting of the major subregional IGOs should be convened by the SRDC to examine the modalities for the harmonization of approaches to data generation, storage and dissemination; and regrouping of database custodians.

(e) Report on progress made in promoting gender perspective in sustainable development management in the West Africa subregion.

21. The Committee noted that over the last year there has been an effort to translate international and regional action platforms and programmes on gender mainstreaming into activities at the subregional level by initiating databases and identifying focal points at the nation level and in IGOs. This would ensure that the guidelines and strategies recommended in the Beijing Platform and the regional programme frameworks from the Kampala to the Dakar Declarations are implemented.

22. The meeting also recognized that the way ahead would involve increased action on the part of government to formulate and implement policies to facilitate gender sensitive development programme formulation and implementation. Governments should also provide the needed resources for gender empowerment and capacity building.

23. In further discussion the Committee appreciated the initiatives and underscored the urgency for gender mainstreaming in sustainable development particularly in the areas of data collection, fund mobilization and training. It was recommended that the participants should assist in building the database development on gender issues. It further recommended that clear roles, structures, policies and budgets should be exclusively accorded to implementation of gender issues. Each country should have a targeted programme to enhance gender in education, health, agriculture, food preservation, storage and marketing. A greater attention should be paid to religions and other traditional practices that inhibit the advancement of different groups in gender. To strengthen and promote all gender sensitive initiatives in the subregion, the committee recommended the formation of an advisory committee on gender in the subregion. This Advisory Committee would provide a forum for regular discussion of the orientation and strategies for the effective implementation of the international and regional programmes on gender mainstreaming

(f) Report on the assessment of the Implementation of the Dakar/Ngor Declaration and the Programme of Work of the International Conference on Population and Development in SRDC/WA.

24. The meeting noted that the paper assesses progress member States were making in moderating their population profiles against the quantitative targets contained in two population-development frameworks; namely, the Dakar-Ngor Declaration (DND) and the International Conference on Population and Development. It was also noted that the periodic monitoring of the levels and trends of population dynamics in the subregion was important as it provided an opportunity to assess the progress was being made in the implementation of population policies and population development frameworks, as well as identify experiences, achievements and problems.

25. At the subregional level, comparison of selected demographic parameters-population growth and infant mortality-rates - indicate that the DND targets would not be achieved in 2000 and 2010 by the Subregion as well as the Eastern and Middle Africa Subregions. At the country level, it was noted that only very few countries were likely to achieve all the goals in 2010.

26. On the determinants of the current high levels of fertility in the subregion, the factors identified included: early age of first union or marriage as well as age at first birth, the universality of marriage, traditional society and religion putting high premium on having many children; modernization trends eroding social pressure and taboos relating to the traditional long breast feeding periods; and political upheavals. Changes in the aforementioned variables were necessary to bring down the current high levels of fertility in the subregion. The meeting noted that some of the main factors responsible for high levels of mortality in the

subregion were poverty poor medical technology; public health facilities.

27. The feasibility of the attainment of the DND targets was also debated. It was remarked that the levels of the targets were set relatively high and the time frames for their achievements were short. However, the meeting recognised that these targets were set to galvanize member States to start irreversible declines in fertility and mortality. The importance of implementing the recommendations of the Dakar/Ngor Declaration especially the quantitative targets was underlined by the meeting.

4. Date and venue of next meeting.

28. Regarding the venue and date of the next meeting, the meeting noted that the meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts in Lome 1997 had accepted the offer of the Republic of Guinea to host the 1999 Meeting. This would probably be in March and would be communicated to all member States as soon as possible.

Workshop on Trade Policy Management in West Africa

29. Concurrently with the ICE meeting, a workshop on trade policy management in the subregion was conducted. It reviewed trade policy management at the national and multinational levels and its implications at the international level.

RECOMMENDATION

The First meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts of the Subregional Development Centre (SRDC) for West African:

Recalling ECA resolution 809(XXXI) and 810(XXXI) of May 1996 on the new strategic directions of ECA and the strengthening of the MULPOCs respectively;

Aware of ECA resolution 812(XXXI) of May 1996 on the implementation of the African Information Society Initiative (AISI) to facilitate the dissemination of reliable information on African development processes as well as improve intra-African information networking;

Also recalling ECA resolution 826(XXXII) of May 1997 on the reform of the intergovernmental machinery of the Economic Commission for Africa and its annex detailing the terms of reference of the organs of the proposed new structure of the intergovernmental machinery of the Economic Commission for Africa;

Mindful of ECA resolution 828(XXXII) of May 1997 on the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres: Strengthening the Economic Commission for Africa's subregional presence which also renamed the MULPOCs as the "subregional Development Centres (SRDCs)";

Having examined the various reports presented to the Committee on the programme of work of the SRDC, particularly the assessment of the social and economic conditions of the subregion and the progress reports on the progress made in the development of databases for sustainable development management in West Africa and on gender perspectives respectively;

Recognizing the effort being made by the countries of West Africa in improving the various approaches to data/information generation, database management, utilization, dissemination and the needed networking with subregional and national structures, using the new information and communications technologies as well as the need to strengthen the mechanisms for data collection, categorization and analysis;

Appreciating the need for a forum for the exchange of information and experiences in order to enhance the exercise of strengthening the SRDCs and its relations with the intergovernmental organs as perceived in the various resolutions of the ECA Conference of Ministers;

Anxious to involve all parties concerned including the non-government sector, particularly NGOs, the private sector, business and industry in all development activities in the subregion;

Recommends that:

I: Institutional matters

1. The SRDC should revive the institutional mechanisms for regular consultations with the IGOs of the subregion.
2. The SRDC national focal points should increasingly be involved in outreach activities of the Centre, including the coordination of missions to the respective countries so as to increase coordination with the UNDP Resident Coordinator on the Centre's programme at the national level; they should also participate in the revived IGO association with the SRDC.

II. Programme matters

3. The proposed draft project document for the development of environmental management databases in the West Africa subregion and recommends its further development and submission to partners for funding;
4. Member States should continue promoting food production/processing so as to encourage the replacement of imported food by local in order to increase food security.
5. Member States should contribute both in the provision of counterpart resources for the project, including investment in the new information and communications technologies.
6. Member States should also consider treating the new information and communications technologies as a policy issues, not only at the level of management and capacity building, but also as concerns the promotion of the equipment industry at the local level.
7. The SRDC should inform all focal point of the orientation and draft content for the programme of work to cover the next biennium, 2000-2001.

III Gender mainstreaming

8. Member States should assist in building the database development on gender issues as a basis for the effective implementation of the various international and regional Platforms and agreements on gender mainstreaming.
9. Member States should adopt such policies that would define clear roles, structures and budgetary provisions for the implementation of gender programmes: within this context each country should have a targeted programme to enhance gender in education, health, agriculture, food preservation, storage and marketing.
10. A greater attention should be paid to religions and other traditional practices that inhibit the advancement of different vulnerable groups.
11. An advisory committee on gender should be established in the subregion to enhance interaction among countries and to serve as a forum for regular discussion of the orientation and strategies for the effective implementation of the international and regional programmes on gender mainstreaming.

IV: Final provision

Requests the Director of the West African SRDC to report to the next meeting of the Committee on the implementation of this recommendation.

SPECIAL VOTE OF THANKS

The first meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts of the Subregional Development Centre (SRDC) for West Africa held in Niamey, Republic of Niger from 25 to 29 May 1998.

Noting with appreciation the importance that the Economic Commission for Africa gives to gender issue specifically the integration of women in the sustainable development process ;

Having Again recognised th enormons put into the organization of the 40th anniversary of the Commission under the theme on women in development ;

Recalling that all these actions reinforce the participation of women in Africa Development ;

Congratulate Madam **LALA BEN BARKA** of the Republic of Mali, who is from our West African subregion, for her nomination, as the first women to the post of Deputy Executives Secretary ;

Thanks Mr. **K. Y. Amoako** UN under Secretary General on Executives Secretary of ECA for his effort in promoting gender balance.

Done in Niamey, 29th May 1998

The meeting

VOTE OF THANKS

The participants of the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts of the Sub-regional Development Centre for West Africa held in Niamey (Niger Republic) from 25th to 29th May 1998.

Express their profound gratitude to the people and the Government of Niger Republic for the hospitality, their preparedness and the excellent facilities of works which were made available to them throughout their stay in Niger,

And:

Send to His Excellency Brigade General IBRAHIM MAINASSARA BARE, the Head of State and President of the Republic of Niger, the expression of their profound gratitude.

Delivered in Niamey, 29th May 1998

The meeting