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**INFORMATION NOTE ON MAJOR REGIONAL  
TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS  
PROGRAMMES FOR AFRICA**

## **MAJOR REGIONAL TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAMMES FOR AFRICA**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. Although following independence in Africa considerable efforts have been made to expand and diversify the transport and communications networks of the continent, they did not seem to have brought about a substantial change in putting in place a strong and efficient transport and communications system necessary for the development of trade within and outside Africa.

2. Since the early sixties the ECA has been involved in the development of the pan-African transport and communications systems as a means to foster regional integration and cooperation. Various initiatives were launched including the Trans-African Highways project, the Pan-African Telecommunications Network (PANAFTEL) project, regional seminars and workshops and more recently two Decade programmes on transport and communications.

### **II. THE FIRST UNITED NATIONS TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS DECADE IN AFRICA (UNTACDA)**

#### **1. Justification and background**

3. In recognition of the important role that the transport and communications sector plays in the socio-economic integration of the continent, the African Ministers of Planning recommended in 1977 that measures be taken to improve the performance of the sector. As a result, the idea of a Decade programme on transport and communications started to blossom. This idea received a further push when the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) endorsed the United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa programme (UNTACDA) in July 1977 charting the way for the United Nations General Assembly to officially proclaim in its resolution 32/160 the UNTACDA programme for the period 1978-1988.

4. It is important to note that UNTACDA was an unprecedented and unique experiment. Never before had the United Nations ever launched a decade for a single region. The fact that this happened illustrates the seriousness with which the problem posed by Africa's disjointed transport and communications networks was viewed and the concern of the international community to remedy it.

5. ECA was designated "lead agency" by the General Assembly and entrusted with general responsibility for the implementation of the programme while UN specialized agencies and African intergovernmental organizations were called upon to assist in its planning and execution. Laying down the main policy

guidelines for UNTACDA was the responsibility of African governments. For the purposes of bringing together at the regional level the relevant governmental institutions dealing with transport and communications to set policy and agree on the content of the programme, ECA convened in May 1979 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the first meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning, which approved the global objectives, strategies and plan of action for the Decade.

## **2. Objectives of UNTACDA I**

6. The following ten objectives were identified to sustain the implementation of the Decade programme:

1. Promote integration of transport communication infrastructure with a view to increasing intra-African trade.
2. Ensure the coordination of various transport systems in order to increase their efficiency.
3. Open land-locked countries and isolated regions
4. Harmonize national regulations and eliminate physical and non-physical barriers with the aim of facilitating the movement of persons and goods.
5. Stimulate the use of local human and material resources.
6. Standardize networks and equipment.
7. Undertake research and disseminate techniques in transport and communications appropriate to the African States' context.
8. Promote African industry, particularly the manufacture of transportation and communications equipment.
9. Mobilize technical and financial resources for the development and modernization of transport and communications.
10. Restructure the transport and communications sectors to ensure that African trade with the rest of the world takes place under conditions most favourable for the continent.

7. The use of terms such as "integration", "coordination", "harmonization" and "standardization" point to the desire to have a common approach in finding solutions appropriate to the African situation.

8. Based on the above objectives, guidelines for the preparation of projects were introduced for the two sectors of transport and communications with particular emphasis on : training of manpower; establishment of infrastructure; establishment of industries; harmonization of disparate national legislation; development of training centres; and establishment of coordination systems.

### **3. Findings of the evaluations of UNTACDA**

9. UNTACDA was a very ambitious international undertaking designed to achieve the integration of transport and communications systems of an entire continent. It called for an investment of great magnitude – great in the sense that it could not be afforded by the beneficiary African countries by themselves, and therefore needed to be provided in the form of partnerships. UNTACDA I, in its totality, comprised 2,139 projects to be implemented between 1978 and 1988. A task of that magnitude required 33.6 billion dollars of which only 12.8 billion or 38 per cent was raised.

10. The final evaluation report of the Decade programme revealed that the results fell short of the hopes raised because it proved difficult to fund, and because of deficiencies of organizational nature. In addition, there was a serious problem of lack of information from African countries to the ECA which contributed to the general dearth of evidence of UNTACDA's progress on the ground.

11. It is not however easy to evaluate the impact of so vast a programme as UNTACDA, not only in one sector, but in the sub-sectors as well. While it is true that without UNTACDA progress would have still been made, it is equally true that the Decade increased the awareness of African governments for the importance of transport and communications and the need to accord them a higher priority ranking in national plans. In short, the Decade programme made a mark in placing Africa further down the road of cooperation and joint action. It galvanized political awareness, through the Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning at the operational and technical levels, through the meetings of the Inter-Agencies Coordinating Committee.

## **III. SSATP PROGRAMME INITIATIVE**

### **1. Justification and objectives**

12. In recognition of the need to maintain the momentum gained from the UNTACDA programme, a set of recommendations emerged from the evaluation report regarding the development of transport and communications in Africa, and the idea of 1989-1990 to be devoted to preparatory work for the 1991-2000 UNTACDA II, has been accepted in principle. However, in the absence of a clear indication on the possible continuation of the first Decade programme, the World Bank and ECA prepared and launched in 1987 the Sub-Sahara Africa Transport

Policy (SSATP) programme to serve as an interim programme in order to address issues identified during the implementation of UNTACDA. This programme supported by various institutions and organizations aim at:

- (i) improving transport efficiency in Sub-Sahara African countries through the setting up and adoption of appropriate policies; and
- (ii) reinforcing local capacity in analyzing and undertaking reforms at national as well as at regional levels.

13. The activities of the programme which were initially guided by an International Advisory Committee chaired by the Executive Secretary of the ECA are now been overseen by a Business Meeting chaired by the World Bank. Various bilateral donors and institutions including the ECA participate in the annual business meeting of the programme.

## **2. Achievements of the SSATP**

14. The SSATP is being implemented through the following components: Road management initiative (RMI); Rural travel and transport programme (RRTP); Urban transport; Trade and transport; and railways restructuring. The programme has made considerable progress in policy formulation and assistance to countries. The first phase was devoted to research activities, organization of seminars and workshops, advocacy and building consensus. One of the major accomplishments of the programme is the establishment of dedicated road funds in Africa. The programme has also assisted a number of pilot countries in railways concession, urban transport development and formulation of appropriate rural transport policy. As a result, many countries are still expressing their desire to be considered as pilot countries for some of the components of the programme.

15. Given the sub-saharan nature of the SSATP and the persistence of inadequacies in the development of transport and communications sectors in Africa, the United Nations General Assembly accepted, still at the behest of the African States, to declare a second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa for the period 1991-2000.

## **THE SECOND UNTACDA (UNTACDA II)**

### **1. Justification and objectives**

16. The programme of the Second Decade seeks to establish an efficient integrated transport and communications system as a basis for the physical integration of Africa and to facilitate national and international traffic so as to foster trade and the achievement of self-sustaining economic development as called for in African regional and sub-regional economic restructuring and development

programmes, in particular, the Lagos Plan of Action. As such, it is designed as a cooperation programme meant to mobilize all African governments, intergovernmental organizations, the United Nations system and external support agencies for a coherent action in the development of transport and communications infrastructure and services in Africa, and to coordinate transport and communications development activities in Africa at the national, subregional, regional and international levels in order to optimize the integration process and avoid duplication of efforts.

17. To attain the above long-term goal, ten global objectives and eleven sectoral objectives were identified to sustain the implementation of the Second Decade programme. These global objectives are as follows:

Objective 1: Implementation of phased and balanced programme of development and management of transport and communications infrastructure, taking particularly into account the needs and requirements of island and land-locked countries;

Objective 2: Rehabilitation, upgrading and maintenance of the most critical elements of the existing infrastructure and equipment so as to improve the efficiency, capacity and utilization, as well as prolong their economic life;

Objective 3: Improvement of human resources planning, development and utilization in order to enhance the quality and availability of personnel at all levels for efficient management and operation of transport and communications systems;

Objective 4: Improvement of operational efficiency, service quality and availability in transport and communications by implementing appropriate policies and administrative measures that will increase their competitiveness, productivity and profitability, while at the same, time ensuring social and economic development;

Objective 5: Establishment of information systems on transport and communications as a basis for analysis and for better planning and management of investments;

Objective 6: Development of manufacturing capabilities in order to cope with the rapid changes in technology and conditions in the transport and communications market and to reduce cost and requirements for foreign exchange by local manufacture of some spare parts, components and equipment;

Objective 7: Improvement of transport safety and security as well as strengthening transport-related environmental protection measures;

Objective 8: Improvement of transport and communications in rural areas where the majority of the people live and the largest percentage of economic production takes place;

Objective 9: Improvement of urban transport to meet the needs of the rapidly growing urban population; and

Objective 10: Establishment and strengthening of interregional liaisons in the field of transport and communications.

## **2. UNTACDA II programmes and projects**

18. The list of UNTACDA II programmes and projects and their status of implementation is attached to the present note as annex.

## **3. Findings of recent evaluations of UNTACDA II**

19. The first mid-term assessment of the programme conducted in 1994, concluded, notably, that the Decade objectives were indeed relevant, and that there was a need to implement the Decade programme taking into account the available resources and the revision of the terms of reference of the resource mobilization committee. These conclusions formed the subject of recommendations adopted by the tenth Conference of African Ministers of Transport and Communications meeting in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), on 20 and 21 March 1995 (Resolution ECA/UNTACDA/Res.95/92).

20. The second mid-term assessment, which was carried out in September 1997 focused on the progress made in the implementation of UNTACDA II by laying emphasis, on the one hand, on project execution at all levels, in particular, at the national, subregional and regional levels and, on the other hand, on the programme's impact on the development of transport and communications.

21. The findings of the second mid-term evaluation led to the preparation of a framework for action for the last three years of the Decade and beyond in order to accelerate the programme implementation and establish strengthened and efficient systems in Africa for the 21st century.

## **4. Framework for action : 1998-2000 and beyond**

22. Further to the review of the situation of transport and communications in Africa and to the examination of the second mid-term assessment report, the Conference of African Ministers of Transport and Communications adopted during its eleventh meeting held in November 1997 in Cairo, a framework for action for accelerating the implementation of UNTACDA II in the years 1998 to 2000 and building strong and efficient transport and communications systems in Africa for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This framework for action calls upon all UNTACDA II partners to:

- (a) Assist Africa in developing and implementing activities covering the following four cross-cutting areas of focus:

- (i) continuation of on-going economic reforms in general and reforms of the transport and communications sector in particular;
  - (ii) Promotion of an adequate technological base for development of efficient transport and communication systems and efficient operation of the latter;
  - (iii) Building of critical human, institutional and entrepreneurial capacities in the area of transport and communications; and
  - (iv) Strengthening of the transport and communications sector by reconciling the required rapid development of the sector and the need for a balanced environment with due regard to security and safety.
- (b) Pursue and intensify intra-African as well as international cooperation to allow for the achievement of rapid results; and
  - (c) Focus sectoral efforts on activities aimed at addressing problems identified in the approved framework for action.

23. While remaining an African programme, and its success indeed depends on that, the Decade must be an effective cooperation framework which makes it possible, through dialogue and consultation among all partners, to direct all efforts towards the harmonious development of the transport and communications sector and particularly towards the attainment of its objectives.