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PROGRESS REPORT ON  
THE AFRICAN INSTITUTE FOR HIGHER TECHNICAL TRAINING  
AND RESEARCH, NAIROBI

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TECHNICAL TRAINING AND RESEARCH, NAIROBI

I. Introduction

Paragraph 5(h) of resolution 348(XIV), adopted in Rabat, on 27 March 1979 by the ECA Conference of Ministers requested the Executive Secretary to submit to each meeting of the Conference of Ministers, progress reports on the operations of the African Institute for Higher Technical Training and Research. It will be recalled that by that same resolution, the Institute had been established and based in Nairobi (Kenya).

A report on the Institute which was submitted to the Sixteenth Session of the Commission - Seventh Meeting of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Economic Planning/Development, Freetown (Sierra Leone), 6-11 April 1981, had brought to the attention of the Ministers a number of difficulties inhibiting the full establishment of the Institute. These were in the main:

- (i) insufficient membership;
- (ii) inadequate contributions to the budget of the Institute; and
- (iii) the generally lukewarm response received from member States on the question of signature of the Constitution and payment of contributions.

The option the report offered the Conference was either to close down the Institute or urge member States to give effective support for the survival of the Institute.

After considering the report the Conference of Ministers had called on member States as a matter of urgency to "give full and effective political, moral and financial support to the Institute and to sustain its establishment and development in every way". The Conference also requested the Executive Secretary to "convene as soon as possible, an extraordinary meeting of the Governing Council of the Institute in order to resolve the difficulties facing the Institute and consider ways to make the management machinery of the Institute operate effectively".

II. Extraordinary Meeting of the Governing Council

On 15 and 16 June 1981, an extraordinary meeting of the Governing Council of the Institute that had been requested by the Conference of Ministers, was held in Addis Ababa.

The meeting was attended by 39 persons with delegations from Cameroon, Chad, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Niger, Nigeria and Zaire as well as by ECA and OAU as ex-officio members. There were also in attendance, invited observers from ILO, WHO, UNIDO and UNDP. Cabled apologies were received from Central African Republic, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Upper Volta and Uganda.

The meeting conducted its deliberations with seriousness and sense of commitment and its approach to the problems facing the Institute were reasonable and practical. Among the important decisions taken by the meeting were the following:

- (i) ECA and OAU were made ex-officio voting member of Council and of the Executive Committee.
- (ii) Chad was elected Chairman of Council and Egypt, Vice-Chairman.
- (iii) The following countries were elected to represent their subregions in the Executive Committee:

East Africa:	Djibouti
Southern Africa:	Lesotho
Central Africa:	Cameroon
North Africa:	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
West Africa:	Liberia
- (iv) The Master Plan which contained an elaboration of the mission, objectives, programmes and design of the Institute, was adopted for implementation.
- (v) The technical co-operation project for soliciting financial support for erection of buildings, purchase of equipment and development of programmes was adopted for action.
- (vi) A special fundraising mission was authorized to be launched to African and other countries, with mission consisting of the following members:
  - the Chairman of Council (Leader);
  - a minister from the host Government (Kenya);
  - a representative from ECA;
  - a representative from OAU; and
  - the Director-General of the Institute.
- (vii) Member States were urged to second staff to the Institute at their own expense and that the cost of such secondment be considered as part advance payment of their contribution to the budget of the Institute.
- (viii) Member States were further urged to consider establishing national committees on the affairs of the Institute.

Copies of the report of the above meeting were circulated to all member States with a further call by the Executive Secretary for member States to support the Institute and make it operational without further delay.

### III. Membership and Financial Support

Since the last report to the Conference of Ministers, membership in the Institute has increased by only four countries. These are Chad, Lesotho, Liberia and Zaire. Member States that had previously subscribed to the Constitution were Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Upper Volta, thus bringing the total as of 1 January 1982 to twelve. In spite of several missions undertaken both by the Director-General of the Institute and by ECA, and numerous appeals and reminders by letters and cables to many member States, the record on membership has not been encouraging. Even more disappointing has been the lack of member States' contribution to the budget of the Institute. To date only two countries (Nigeria and Kenya) have contributed their 1980-1981 assessment to fulfil their financial obligations.

It must be mentioned that three countries, namely Botswana, Madagascar and Mauritius have indicated for the moment that they are not disposed to joining the Institute. This does not imply any lack of interest in the type of technology conscious and innovative technical manpower that the Institute is designed to produce.

### IV. Headquarters Agreement

Since the last report to the Conference of Ministers, the headquarters agreement to host the Institute has been finally agreed upon and signed by the Government of Kenya and the Institute. This has provided added support to the Institute, and a legal recognition of its existence in the host country.

### V. Financing the Institute

In 1981, UNDP had reduced its grant to the Institute from US\$1 million to US\$675,000 simply because the Institute was not yet operational to be able to utilize the amount and partly for the inadequate demonstration of support by African Governments. In 1982, because of a worsening situation in this regard, UNDP has decided to withdraw completely its assistance to the Institute during 1982-1986 Programming Cycle. This was really a devastating blow to the cause of African search for technological self-reliance. Unless funds are forthcoming from elsewhere and particularly from African Governments themselves, the Institute will be faced with a grave financial crisis. Meanwhile, the United Nations Trust Fund for African Development (UNIFAD) through grants made by the Nigerian Government, has allocated US\$99,358 for training at the Institute for 1982. Grants were also provided by ECA and the Commonwealth Secretariat through fellowships for Africans to attend the Institute initial courses.

It goes without saying that the UNIFAD grant and the contributions from the two member States will not by any means sustain the Institute. Buildings cannot be erected, equipment cannot be purchased and the staff needed to develop and run programmes cannot be recruited.

Already, the recruitment of the Institute's Chief Technical Adviser and its Administrative Assistant who should have been funded through the UNDP grant in 1981 had been stopped due to UNDP review of its support and subsequent withdrawal of financial contributions. The indications received by the Secretariat from several donor organizations does show that the Institute is not one that they will readily want to support without much persuasion and firm stand and sacrifice by African Governments themselves.

#### VI. Missions

As stated earlier several promotional and consultation missions were undertaken by the Director-General of the Institute and by ECA officials to a number of countries in all the subregions to discuss membership in and contributions to the budget of the Institute. Although these missions were all well-received and were invariably assured of support of the Institute, no positive country action have resulted.

The fund-raising mission is still being planned and has been postponed twice partly due to the difficult political situation in Chad which makes the harmonization of the mission programme a rather difficult task.

#### VII. Training Activities

An initial three-month special diploma course for practising technicians in communications technology was organized by the Institute from October to December 1981. A number of countries sent participants to the course and the teaching personnel was recruited locally on a consultancy basis.

The opening of the course was an occasion for a ceremony, inaugurating the Institute's training programmes. In attendance at the ceremony were representatives from the Diplomatic Corps, the OAU and the ECA.

Follow-up short courses are envisaged in 1982 with plan to initiate by October this year full diploma and degree courses if membership and funding will make it possible to hire and bring on board the staff for developing and executing the Institute's training programmes.

#### VIII. Political Support

ECA has maintained close collaboration with the OAU Secretariat on the affairs of the Institute. The Organization has been forthcoming and has participated in the meetings of the Executive Committee and the Governing Council of the Institute. The Director-General of the Institute has also maintained close consultations with the OAU. It is reliably learnt that OAU on its part plans to draw the attention of the Council of Ministers at its 1982 February session in Addis Ababa to the difficulties facing the Institute with a view to mobilizing political and material support for the Institute. ECA and OAU Secretariats are determined to continue working together in support of the Institute.

IX. Ministers of Industry recognized the role of the Institute

The Sixth Conference of African Ministers of Industry which was held in Addis Ababa in November 1981 to consider guidelines for the implementation of the Industrial Development Decade for Africa, gave due consideration to the question of the development of industrial manpower, particularly technical and managerial manpower. It was in this connection that attention was drawn to the significant role that the Institute, together with other regional institutions in the technological fields, could play to ensure that Africa develops the much needed institutional base for achieving self-sufficiency in technical manpower. Viewed in this context the survival of the Institute becomes critical in any sustained effort to achieve the objectives and specific targets of the Industrial Development Decade for Africa.

X. Unresolved Constraints to the Operational Development of the Institute

The major factors still preventing the full take-off of the Institute have remained virtually unchanged during the last year. These are:

- (i) The Institute still lacks one last signature required by its Constitution to give it a full legal status. This is probably the most fundamental problem plaguing the Institute's development. It is also probably the major reason for loss of financial support from donor agencies.
- (ii) Contributions to the Institute's budget are still so meagre that the Institute is still unable to recruit and bring on board qualified potential staff short-listed in 1980, let alone embark upon its building and equipment programmes. Unless the situation improves, further delays in taking action on these activities would greatly undermine the survival of the Institute.
- (iii) Sustained moral, political and financial support from member States now seem to be the only lifesaver for the Institute. Unless African Governments show more concrete proof of their need for the Institute and of their willingness to make it succeed, Africa may stand to lose a unique opportunity to produce locally the men and women she needs for the mastery, development and application of technology that will use African natural resource endowment to make the continent a happier place for all to live in.

Action Required

Finally, the requirement is the resolve to act in concert, to make the sacrifice in the interest of Africa's collective self-reliance and to give to the Institute the membership, funds and qualified Africans that will enable the Institute to live up to its design and mission.