

49312



**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

Distr.
LIMITED

E/ECA/OAU/TRADE/CM/4
11 March 1983

Original: ENGLISH

ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Conference of African Ministers
of Trade Preparatory to UNCTAD VI

24-26 February 1983
Libreville, Gabon

REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS
PREPARATORY TO THE SIXTH SESSION OF UNCTAD
(Libreville, 24-26 February 1983)

A. ORGANIZATION AND ATTENDANCE

1. The Conference of African Ministers of Trade preparatory to the sixth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD VI) was held in Libreville, Gabon, from 24 to 26 February 1983. The Conference, which was preceded by an Extraordinary Intergovernmental Expert Group Meeting, was formally opened by His Excellency Leon MBA, Prime Minister of the Republic of Gabon.

2. The Conference was attended by representatives of the following countries: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Comoros, Congo, the Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, the Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, the Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, the Sudan, the United Republic of Cameroon, the United Republic of Tanzania, the Togo, Tunisia, Upper Volta, Zaire and Zimbabwe.

3. The following organizations were represented as observers: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Association of African Trade Promotion Organizations (AATPO), African Caribbean and Pacific Group (ACP), International Trade Centre (ITC), Central African Customs and Economic Union (UDEAC), African Centre for Monetary Studies (ACMS), African Maritime and Shippers Organization (AMCO) and African Development Bank (ADB).

4. The Conference decided to retain the bureau which was elected at the seventh session of the Conference of African Ministers of Trade. Since the third Vice-Chairman (Swaziland) and the Rapporteur (Uganda) were absent, the meeting elected Zimbabwe and Kenya to fill the respective positions.

5. The following officers were therefore elected:

Chairman	- Gabon
First Vice-Chairman	- Algeria
Second Vice-Chairman	- Liberia
Third Vice-Chairman	- Zimbabwe
Rapporteur	- Kenya

B. AGENDA

6. The following agenda was adopted:

1. Opening ceremonies
2. Election of officers
3. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
4. Consideration and adoption of the report of the Extraordinary Expert Group Meeting Preceding the Conference of African Ministers Preparatory to the sixth session of UNCTAD
5. Any other business
6. Closure of the Conference

C. ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS

Opening ceremonies (item)

7. In his opening address, His Excellency Leon M'Ba the Prime Minister of the Republic of Gabon welcomed participants, indicating that his country was honoured to host the Conference of African Ministers of Trade preparatory to UNCTAD VI. In that respect, he thanked the Governments, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) for having accepted the Gabonese offer to host the Conference during which Ministers would map out a common African position before the Group of 77 meeting in Buenos Aires and UNCTAD VI in Belgrade.

8. He underlined the importance of the African preparatory Conference particularly in view of the current distortions in the world economic system, the lack of rational organization of international markets, the unequal trade practices imposed by the minority on the majority, world-wide inflation, fluctuating exchange rates and unemployment as well as protectionism. He called on the Ministers to address themselves to these issues for the benefit of the most disadvantaged nations in order to work out equitable solutions for the creation of the new international economic order.

9. In spite of the fact that Africa was endowed with vast natural resources, the paradox remained that Africa had 26 least developed countries precisely because the continent had been subjected to exploitation by external forces. In seeking possible solutions, it was therefore necessary to take stock of existing national, subregional and regional opportunities for agricultural and industrial development with a view to ensuring self-sufficiency in food. As for commodities, appropriate steps which should be taken as a matter of urgency, included the conclusion of commodity agreements under the Integrated Programme for Commodities (IPC) as well as signing and ratifying the Common Fund Agreement.

10. The Prime Minister underlined the relevance of the guidelines enshrined in the Lagos Plan of Action for subregional and regional co-operation, the Arusha Programme for Collective Self-Reliance and the intensification of intra-African trade. He referred to the Algiers Charter of Non-Aligned Countries as Africa's main guideline in order to get access to industrialized countries' markets for manufactured and semi-manufactured products. In that respect, solutions to tariff and non-tariff barriers should be found.

11. With regard to the transfer of technology, he urged that there was need to find appropriate links between external inputs and local resources and entrepreneurial initiatives in order to enhance development.

12. Finally the Prime Minister recalled that after the failure by CANCEL and the recent GATT Ministerial meeting, it was clearly important for Africa to firmly defend its interests in international negotiations.

13. In his speech, Mr. Edem Kodjo, Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity, reminded the Conference of African Ministers that the world economic situation was gloomier now than it had been in 1979 when UNCTAD V was held. He warned that the recession of the world economy was degenerating into a state of depression not experienced since 1929. On the upsurge of new and old forms of protectionism, he reminded the Conference that Africa was hardest hit as it was still plagued by the consequences of the oil shock, inflation, stagnation of growth rates, malnutrition, unemployment, deteriorating terms of trade and balance-of payments disequilibria.

14. He noted that achievements since UNCTAD V within the context of the North-South Dialogue had been negligible. In that connexion, he recalled the disillusionment and frustration of the developing countries at meetings of Cancun, Helsinki and Tokyo, held on commodity issues and the reform of the international monetary system with a view to creating a new international economic order. That despair had been compounded by the fact that even some African countries had refused to sign and ratify the Common Fund Agreement.

15. On Africa's endeavours to create the new international economic order so that the continent could become a master of its own destiny, he reminded the African Ministers of the development strategy spelt out in the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos for establishing their course of action, priority programmes and support measures and formulating their negotiating positions in UNCTAD VI negotiations.

16. Furthermore, on the issues to press for at the UNCTAD VI negotiations, the Conference should establish an interim emergency programme to increase the availability of real resources, taking into account the dimensions of the financial liquidity problem and structural adjustment needs facing African countries. He urged that Africa should fight for measures to ensure improved terms of trade, the development of indigenous African technology, and assistance for economic co-operation among developing countries.

17. Finally, the Secretary General called for the setting up of an African negotiating team which would speak on Africa's behalf for contact purposes during the Buenos Aires and Belgrade meetings.

18. Mr. Adebayo Adedeji, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, welcomed the Ministers and other participants to Libreville and thanked the Chairman of the Conference and through him the President and the people of Gabon Republic for the facilities and hospitality extended to all participants.

19. In his analysis of Africa's economic situation since UNCTAD V, he pointed out that all indications were that it had been and still continued to be bleak. Africa, he reminded the Conference, remained committed to the Lagos Plan of Action as the benchmark for the forthcoming negotiations in Buenos Aires and ultimately in Belgrade.

20. He also stressed the desirability of reviewing and deciding on matters relating to negotiating techniques and tactics. He stressed the need for shifting issues and separating primary from secondary objectives so as to focus clearly on the basic targets during the forthcoming negotiations. There should also be a clear understanding that Africa had a strong bargaining position which could be exploited to advantage in determining its strategy and tradeoffs.
21. To achieve the best negotiation strategy it would be useful at the present stage to select two African spokesmen for each agenda item to serve for both Buenos Aires and Belgrade; such spokesmen should report to the African Group periodically to ensure the necessary dialogue and consultations.
22. Stressing the disappointing results achieved since UNCTAD V, apart from the conclusion of the Common Fund Agreement, the Executive Secretary pointed out that there had been little that was worthwhile in terms of developments in the economic field. On the African continent, however, and in line with the Lagos Plan of Action in the field of economic co-operation, there were some positive developments. In that respect he singled out the Treaty establishing the Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern African States (PTA) which had been signed in December 1981 in Lusaka, Zambia, with the protocols relating to co-operation in other fields, such as agriculture, industry, etc. He also recalled another Declaration of Libreville which had been signed by 11 Heads of States and Governments in December 1981 aimed at creating the Central African Economic Community. These developments be emphasized, are complementary to the measures sought at the international level such as the forthcoming UNCTAD VI and are essential for improving the socio-economic situation of Africa.
23. In his statement, Mr. Camani Correa, Secretary General of United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), underscored the worsening international economic situation and the consequences of the recession in the industrialized countries for the world and indicated that UNCTAD VI was being convened at a time when the economic crisis was afflicting both developed and developing countries. Thus, within this context, the main and immediate task at UNCTAD VI should stress development and recovery, in addition to the identification and proposals for guidelines and orientation with respect to longer-term global economic issues for the 1980s and beyond.
24. Although failures in the economies of industrialized countries had been a major cause of the problems experienced by developing countries, an upturn in the former's internal economic activities would not suffice to revitalize or accelerate the development of the world economy as a whole. It was essential that the complementary role of developing countries be increasingly felt on the world economic scene. As important markets, major sources of essential materials and even finance for the industrialized countries, the developing countries were an integral part of the world economy and any world programme for recovery should include, as a major dimension, measures to reactivate or accelerate the process of development in the latter.

25. While expanding at length on the elements of a new programme of action, the Secretary General of UNCTAD felt that in the immediate context and during the forthcoming UNCTAD VI negotiations, action had to be taken in three particular areas. The first was the urgent need of the developing countries for finance to cope with their difficult balance-of-payments situations and to sustain the minimum level of imports needed for development. Towards that end, not only should quotas of the International Monetary Fund and the resources of the World Bank and regional banks be increased but also SDRs should be reactivated as a means of making resources available relatively quickly to countries in need. He called for doubling of aid to the least developed countries by the year 1975. The second area was the collapse of commodity prices which had affected African countries particularly seriously. He proposed interim action to bring strength and stability to commodity markets but stressed the role the ratification of the Common Fund agreement must play. The third area was international trade and the growth of protectionism, which had been considered in November 1962 by the GATT ministerial meeting. In that area, he called for a binding commitment to put a stop to the proliferation of protectionism, and in particular, to dismantle barriers which were impeding especially the flow of exports from developing countries.

26. Finally, he called upon GAO and ECA to strengthen co-operative arrangements among African developing countries as stipulated in the Final Act of Lagos.

D. DECISIONS OF THE CONFERENCE

27. At the end of the Conference, the Ministers adopted the following decisions:

- (a) Libreville Memorandum on Trade and Development¹¹ which outlined specifically Africa's position during the forthcoming negotiations meetings of the Group of 77 in Buenos Aires and UNCTAD VI in Belgrade. The Libreville Memorandum was in two parts. Part I constituted the Declaration and Part II consisted of policy issues and proposals relating to items 9 to 13 of the provisional agenda for UNCTAD VI.
- (b) The Conference reviewed the role of economic co-operation among developing countries (ECOC) as an important aspect of collective self-reliance envisaged in the Lagos Plan of Action, and decided to call upon African developing countries and African subregional economic groupings which had not yet done so, to indicate without further delay to the UNCTAD secretariat their willingness to participate in the Global System of Trade Preferences (GSTP) among Developing Countries as required in the Ministerial Declaration. (The text of the resolution is attached as annex 1).
- (c) On the Fourth All-African Trade Fair to be held in Ghana, the Ministers decided that the organizing committee should be composed of 15 member States, the breakdown of which was as follows:

- (i) Ghana - Chairman/convenor
 - (ii) Sudan - Member
 - (iii) North Africa - 3 countries to be nominated
 - (iv) Eastern Africa - 2 countries to be nominated
 - (v) West Africa - 2 countries to be nominated
 - (vi) Central Africa - 3 countries to be nominated
 - (vii) Southern Africa - 3 countries to be nominated
- (d) The rules of procedure and the agenda for the Meeting of the Ministers of the Group of 77 in Buenos Aires were adopted;
- (e) The Conference of Ministers reviewed the application of the People's Republic of China for observer status at the Sixth Ministerial Conference of the Group of 77 in Buenos Aires and decided to support the application;
- (f) In order to ensure effective presentation of Africa's position in Buenos Aires and in Belgrade, the Conference decided that there should be two spokesmen for each agenda item to be made up of the spokesmen who were elected in Manila and additional countries based on individual country interests for example in issues such as land-locked or least developed countries.

28. The OAU/ECA joint secretariat were requested to expand the list of African regional and subregional organizations to be invited to attend the Buenos Aires ministerial meeting.

CLOSURE OF THE MEETING (item 6)

29. During the closing ceremony, a representative of the Algerian delegation read out the full text of the Libreville Memorandum on Trade and Development which was adopted by acclamation. The Kenyan delegation submitted a vote of thanks on behalf of the Ministers to the President and Government and people of The Gabonese Republic. (The text is attached as annex II). His Excellency Leon M'Ba the First Vice-Prime Minister of the Republic of Gabon in closing the Conference, congratulated the Ministers on a job so well done.

Resolution on ECDC

We, the African Ministers meeting in Libreville to consider issues relating to trade and development within the framework of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development,

Recognizing the importance of economic co-operation among developing countries as a means of achieving collective self-reliance as called for in Lagos Plan of Action,

Noting that many developing countries, especially those in Africa, have yet to indicate their willingness to participate in negotiations as stipulated in paragraph 5 of the Ministerial Declaration on the Global System of Trade Preferences among Developing Countries.

Conscious of the support given to these initiatives in the Lagos Plan of Action and the support extended to African delegations by the secretariats of both OAU and ECA and the need for closer involvement of African economic subregional groupings in the negotiations,

1. Hereby call upon African developing countries and African sub-regional economic groupings which have not yet indicated to the UNCTAD secretariat their willingness to participate to do so without delay,
2. Reiterate the directive in the Lagos Plan of Action to the OAU Secretary General to act, in collaboration with the Executive Secretary of ECA, to lend appropriate logistic and technical support to the participants of the African Group with a view to assisting them to identify their specific negotiating interests as well as evaluating the results of the negotiations.

Vote of thanks to the Government and people of the Republic of Gabon

The African Ministers of Trade,

Having met in the friendly capital city of Libreville from 24 to 26 February 1983 and benefited from the excellent arrangements made for the holding the Conference of African Ministers of Trade and the generous African hospitality extended by the Government and people of the Gabonese Republic,

1. Wish to express their sincere individual and collective appreciation to the Government and people of the Gabonese Republic for their sacrifice in ensuring the success of the Ministerial Conference and the comfort of participants at the Conference;
2. Request the President of the Conference of African Ministers of Trade to convey these sentiments to His Excellency President El Hadj Omar Bongo, Head of State of the Gabonese Republic.