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REPORT OF THE THIRD MEETING OF THE INTER-GOVERNMENTAL REGIONAL COMMITTEE
ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS AND FIRST MEETING OF THE JOINT INTER-GOVERNMENTAL
REGIONAL COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS AND ENVIRONMENT

Executive summary*

* The complete version of this report is contained in document E/ECA/HUS/ENV/1.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. It may be recalled that the Conference of Ministers of the Commission decided by resolution 408 (XVI) adopted at its seventh meeting held in Freetown, Sierra Leone from 6 to 10 April 1981 to enlarge terms of reference of the Inter-governmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements so as to include environment in its scope and redesignated the Committee as the Joint Inter-governmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and Environment. Accordingly, the third meeting of the Inter-governmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements became the first meeting of the Joint Inter-governmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and Environment.
2. This first meeting of the Inter-governmental Regional Committee took place at ECA headquarters from 28 June to 2 July 1982 and was attended by representatives of the 27 States members of the Economic Commission for Africa; in addition, eight other countries were represented at the meeting as observers. Also 10 United Nations organs, organizations and bodies and five inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations were represented in an observer capacity.
3. Document E/ECA/HUS/ENV/1, entitled "Report of the third meeting of the Inter-governmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and first meeting of the Joint Inter-governmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and Environment constitutes the record of the discussions which took place during the meeting and the recommendations and resolutions adopted.

II. HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

4. The following documents submitted to the committee by the secretariat formed the basis of its discussions and recommendations/resolutions: (a) Progress report of activities since the second meeting implementation of resolutions adopted by the Committee (E/ECA/HUS/4); (b) Spatial planning within the framework of the Monrovia Strategy for the Economic Development of Africa (E/ECA/HUS/3); (c) A framework of strategy for the development of the construction industry in the African region (E/ECA/HUS/2); (d) Human settlements financing institutions (E/ECA/HUS/1).
5. The document on the spatial implications of the implementation of the Monrovia Strategy analysed the physical planning problem in the Africa region and highlighted the priority areas requiring the attention of Governments. The Committee discussed the significant importance of human settlements in the socio-economic process for achieving the goals assigned in the Lagos Plan of Action and indicated the priority considerations on regional ways and means to provide necessary technical assistance in this field to member States and particularly to those not technically in a position to develop national physical plans in the foreseeable future. The necessity

of forming a cadre of African experts to assist countries and setting up and strengthening schools of architecture and planning, where necessary converting some of them into subregional institutions, was also suggested. Recommendations were made on the design of a regional approach to this matter.

6. The document on the strategy for the development of the construction industry analysed the existing situation and constraints in the region which hampered the development of regional construction capacities which in turn affected human settlements development, and the priority areas of attention for strengthening construction. Measures were recommended concerning the establishment of a regional strategy and actions.

7. The document on human settlements financing mechanisms drew attention to the crucial role which sound financing mechanisms can play in the field of construction, the difficulties in setting up and operating such mechanisms, the multidisciplinary character and impact of the construction sector and its close relationship to the decisions of a number of ministries like housing, public works, lands, industry, employment, finance, etc. Supporting the approach, the representative of the African Development Bank reported on the progress of establishment of "Shelter-Afrique", an institution for financing housing programmes in African countries. The discussions on the various issues led to recommendations and particularly on specific actions to be implemented by the secretariat of the Commission.

8. The gist of the recommendations and resolutions adopted by the Committee is as follows.

Resolution 4(I) on spatial planning within the framework of the Monrovia Strategy for the Economic Development of Africa recognizes the absolute need to integrate physical planning effectively with socio-economic planning within an organizational and structural framework and designs a regional approach aiming at developing the regional capacities through development of training facilities and operational co-operation among United Nations agencies, inter-governmental and international organizations.

Resolution 5(I) on building materials and construction industries development commends the secretariat of the Commission on the successful results already achieved in programme so far undertaken with assistance from the United Nations Development Programme; welcomes the launching of the second phase (1982-1983) involving new dimensions of activities of vital interest to the countries; expresses satisfaction over the inclusion of building materials and construction industries in the list of core industries identified by the Commission, the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations Industrial Development Organizations for the Industrial Development Decade for Africa; and designs new operational approaches at the national, subregional and regional levels with a view to ensuring that this vital human settlements sub-sector develops along the desired lines.

Resolutions 6(I) on human settlements financing mechanisms recognizes the vital role of financing mechanisms in human settlements development and the present inadequacies and the possibilities of augmenting the availability of finance through other innovative approaches and designs an effective approach to initiate a new regional policy in this regard.

III. ENVIRONMENT

9. The environmental components of the meeting dealt with various topics listed in the agenda (items 7-12), ranging from a review of the implementation of the Stockholm Action Plan in the ECA region, to environmental perspectives for a regional programme up to the year 2000. The work programme for 1982-1983 and the medium-term plan for 1984-1985 as approved by the ECA Conference of Ministers were presented for information. Detailed discussions were held on special papers prepared on (i) An environmental education and training programme for Africa; (ii) Follow-up action on the development of environmental protection legislation in the ECA region; and (iii) Combating desertification in Africa.

10. On the review of achievements in the protection of the African environment during the decade after the adoption of the Stockholm Action Plan in 1972, the Commission highlighted the complex nature of the environment programme within the framework of the new international economic order and the Lagos Plan of Action for the implementation of the Monrovia Strategy during this third United Nations Development Decade. To help to solve their environmental problems, various African Governments have established national secretariats and/or interministerial co-ordinating committees for environmental management. Some are also signatories to regional conventions for the protection of the environment, particularly the coastal and marine environment in the regional seas programme.

11. On the future trends in environmental perspectives during the next decade for the African region, the attention of member States was drawn to the environmental priorities in the Lagos Plan of Action in connection with the improvement of agricultural performance for self-sufficiency in food production and in the promotion of rapid industrialization to change the patterns of production, consumption and trade in goods and services for the masses. It was noted that to improve agricultural performance and economic productivity, mass poverty resulting from underdevelopment in Africa should be reduced by government-sponsored social services to meet the basic human needs of the mass of the population, in providing nutritious food, drinking water, primary health and sanitation, shelter and basic education to eliminate illiteracy. Since Africa is endowed with a latent wealth of natural resources which form the basis for industrialization, the member States can cope with the environmental dimensions of the United Nations Industrial Development Decade for Africa (IDDA, 1980-1990) by learning from the experience of the developed countries on cost-benefit analysis for pollution control measures in industries.

12. The report also dealt with the co-operative efforts of ECA and UNEP in promoting an environmental education and training programme for Africa under mandate of several UNEP Governing Council decisions at its eighth (1980) and ninth (1981) sessions. This programme recognizes the need for manpower development for the management and protection of the African environment.

13. With regard to follow-up action on ECA Conference of Ministers resolution 412 (XVI) on the development of environmental protection legislation in the ECA region, the attention of the meeting was drawn to the need to review national legislation for environmental protection in the various sectors of development as indicated in the end-of-project report (F/CN.14/ECU/5 of October 1980). ARSO expressed interest in developing building codes for the improvement of urban slums and shanty towns and in the establishment of standards for food quality, pollution control and other environmental problems.

14. On the discussion of Conference of Ministers resolution 446 (XVII) on combating desertification in Africa, the meeting supported the establishment of a Regional Inter-governmental Committee to Combat Desertification in Africa and the need for an UNSO-type machinery for the eastern and southern African subregion.

15. The meeting adopted three resolutions on environmental matters dealing with (i) Strengthening of environment co-ordination capabilities at ECA; (ii) Strengthening environmental capabilities in the African region for the IDDA and (iii) Environmental education and training in Africa.

IV. CONCLUSION

16. The Joint Inter-governmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and Environment, in its deliberations and decisions, has placed strong emphasis on the promotion of increased intra-African co-operation through experimental activities and projects jointly planned and carried out and by sharing national expertise and resources to enhance regional capacities. It has also particularly emphasized that:

In the field of human settlements:

(a) Governments should set up national mechanisms and methodologies for spatial planning and their effective incorporation with socio-economic planning and ECA should assist them in this regard if required;

(b) Governments having benefited greatly from service provided by ECA through its development programme for building materials and construction industries, the programme should be continued beyond its expiry date of December 1983; ECA, UNDP, African Governments and concerned organizations should take steps to ensure this;

(c) Governments should promote mechanisms and methodologies for innovative housing financing in order to mobilize more effectively all possible internal resources for human settlements development and for this purpose set up and try model systems with ECA assistance.

In the field of environment:

(a) Governments should, through appropriate policies, programmes and institutional machinery, strengthen environmental capabilities in the African region, particularly in the context of the Industrial Development Decade for Africa; towards this end, environmental education and training facilities and programmes should also be set up or expanded.

(b) ECA's capacity for rendering assistance to countries should be further augmented through the strengthening of its environment co-ordination office.