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REPORT ON THE ACP/EEC NEGOTIATIONS
FOR THE RENEWAL OF THE LOME CONVENTION



INTRODUCTION

For over a year, the negotiations for the renewal of the ACP/EEC Lome Convention received the attention of African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, the European Economic Community and its Member States. These negotiations focussed on and generated a lot of heated discussions relating at varying degrees to most countries of the Third World. Similarly, the other industrialised countries did not seem in any way indifferent to what was going on in Brussels. This was especially because the renegotiation of the Lome Convention was a real test for the future of the North-South Dialogue and economic relations between developed and developing countries.

The negotiations which were commenced on 24 July 1978 by the ACP/EEC Council of Ministers, saw moments of high tensions and even crisis. They were especially rather long and rough and were most of the time conducted in Brussels. An ACP/EEC Council of Ministers was however held in March 1979 in Freeport, Bahamas. The negotiations were concluded on 31 October in Lome, Togo.

1. AFRICAN POSITION

The Organization of African Unity has always taken a great interest in the relations of co-operation between developed and developing countries in general, and those with direct bearing especially to Africa.

This interest became more pronounced during the recent negotiations between the European Economic Community and the Group of African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries, for the renewal of the Lome Convention. In this respect, it is propitious to recall in particular Resolution 673(XXXI) adopted by the Fifteenth OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Khartoum in July 1978, and the relevant resolution endorsed by the Sixteenth Summit in Monrovia in July 1979, relating to the negotiation of the ACP/EEC Lome Convention. By these two important resolutions, the OAU clearly stated its positions and preoccupations aimed at safeguarding the vital interests of the African countries.

The Organization consequently provided guidelines and political directives for the plenipotentiaries of the ACP countries to follow during the negotiations with the Community.

It is interesting to note that the above-mentioned resolution adopted in Khartoum, was to some extent the framework of the common platform of the ACP Group vis-a-vis the European partners. It was often referred to because it clearly translates the option and political will of the African countries in particular and the ACP countries in general to maintain and develop good relations of co-operation with the European Economic Community.

Needless to recall that Africa's position was brilliantly and plainly reaffirmed by the Secretary-General of the OAU, who personally came to Brussels in May 1979 to give OAU's support and encouragement to the ACP Group which during its serious discussions with the EEC continued to exert relentless efforts while desperately trying to secure further advantages and concessions from the Community.

Mr. Edem KODJO's presence and contributions were highly appreciated.

2. END OF THE NEGOTIATIONS

The ACP/EEC negotiations were long, difficult and exhalting. Though on the EEC side it was being said that the negotiations had ended in June 1979, in the ACP camp, one was less optimistic. Indeed, the ACP countries rightly felt that in view of the interest at stake, the negotiations should continue to their final conclusion, on a clear-cut basis without leaving anything in the dark for misinterpretation in the future. Consequently, the ACP Council of Ministers had to meet once again in September in Brussels and on 30 October in Lome to take a final decision.

Furthermore, another ACP/EEC Ministerial Meeting was held under the chairmanship of Togo's Head of State, shortly before the official Signing Ceremony of the new Lome Convention. It must be pointed out that on this occasion all the participants were in great suspense.

Having gone through this stage, the signing conference was held in a great atmosphere of pomp and joy.

All the delegations warmly congratulated Togo for the reception and hospitality in Lome and for the impeccable and careful organization of the Signing Ceremony.

3. THE LOME CONVENTION

It is no exaggeration that its shortcomings notwithstanding, the Lome Convention represents a step forward and development over the previous Convention. On this score, one can say that the overall agreement concluded between ACP and EEC is quite significant. Undoubtedly, it constitutes a practical hope for the Third World within the context of its renewed economic relations with the industrial countries. This is even more so, when one thinks of the failure of the 5th Session of UNCTAD as well as the bitterness and frustration of the countries of the Group of 77 in Manila. The Lome Convention is an original model of co-operation between 58 African, Caribbean and Pacific developing countries on the one hand, and the European Economic Community and its nine Member States on the other.

The originality of the Lome Convention is based on four important basic principles:-

- security for relations of co-operation based on a legal instrument resulting from a freely negotiated contract between equal partners;
- establishment between two groups of countries of a unique contract free from any manipulation or discrimination from unilateral appreciations of sovereign economic systems, political options and the partners' models of development. Co-operation has thus been placed within the context of non-interference in the internal affairs of the States concerned and the respect for national and cultural identities;
- the overall approach defining and harmonizing all the instruments of co-operation and their diversity enabling a positive and balanced response to be given to the varied needs according to economic structures and levels of development, in relation to the priorities defined by the Sovereign ACP States;
- co-operation based on a permanent dialogue provided by the institutional structure mainly taken from the present Lome Convention, but which, with the intensification of consultations, will provide a wider scope of action

The Lome II Convention covers a wide area of concrete actions and programmes regarding trade and customs co-operation, Export Earning Stabilisation System (STABEX), System for Minerals (SYSMIN), industrial cooperation, financial and technical cooperation, agricultural cooperation and regional cooperation.

Furthermore, provision has been made for a series of actions and measures in favour of the least developed land-locked and island countries. New areas of cooperation have been adopted with regard to energy, shipping, sea fishing, treatment of community investments in ACP countries and the protection of nationals of the contracting parties residing and engaged in gainful employment in an ACP country or in a member state of the community.

The institutional framework is a definite improvement over that of Lome I Convention as a result of the experience acquired.

Considering the report presented to the 33rd Session of the Council of Ministers in Monrovia, there is no need to refer to the details of the new Convention. If necessary and for further information a reference could be made to document 966(XXXIII) Add 7.

4. RATIFICATION OF THE CONVENTION

The Lome I Convention expires on 1st March 1980. The Lome II Convention will only come into force after the nine EEC member states and at least two-thirds of ACP countries deposit their instruments of ratification with Brussels. It is hoped that this quorum could be attained early, if on the part of the ACP Group, the African countries which number 45 out of the 58 ACP countries, took the necessary measures to speed up their national procedures for the ratification of the new Convention. Consequently, the Council of Ministers is being requested to urgently call upon the countries concerned, to show diligence and deposit their instruments of ratification as early as possible.

5. TRANSITIONAL MEASURES

Pending the entry into force of Lome II, the Community and the ACP Countries have agreed to adopt a series of transitional measures to avoid a break between the two Conventions. These interim measures applicable from 1 March to 31 December, 1980, concern mainly certain provisions relating to Trade Cooperation, Export Earning Stabilization System, industrial cooperation, institutions as well as provisions relating to their establishment, services, payments and capital.

They also deal with certain studies to be conducted within the framework of the new Convention, so as to save time. However, it may be noted that these transitional measures shall not enjoy any financial support from the EDF V before the implementation of Lome II.

It must be recalled however that the ACP projects and programmes initiated and studied under the Fourth European Development Fund, will be followed up and financed after the expiration of Lome I on 1 March 1980. The same thing will apply to the multi-annual training programme, as well as scholarships for studies and training courses will also follow suit. Consequently EDF IV will continue to be utilised until it is exhausted, and its management will carefully be ensured by the ACP/EEC Council of Ministers.

6. PROGRAMME MISSIONS

In order to accelerate the preparation of dossiers, the European Economic Community has already embarked upon programme missions to the ACP countries so as to obtain the priority needs of the Governments.

The Community and the countries' Authorities, are studying together the economic and social development programmes and projects which the ACP country concerned would like to have financed by the next EDF. As stipulated in the Convention, the choice of projects and the definition of priorities are exclusively the responsibility of the Government of the beneficiary country.

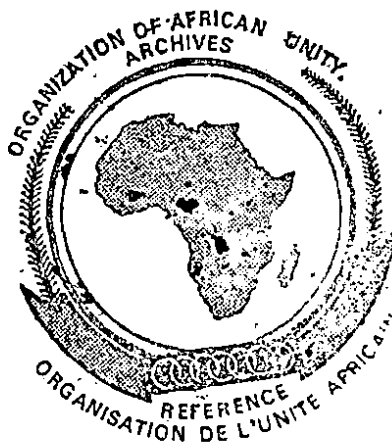
Generally speaking, the ACP countries have welcomed the EEC decision concerning the organization of programme missions, and appreciated the diligence and cooperation of the Community in this area. It is understood that the study of the dossiers will be conducted by stages after the final identification of the approved projects and programmes.

7. CONCLUSION

The ACP/EEC Lome II Convention signed on 31 October 1979, greatly took into consideration the directives and guidelines defined by the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government.

Despite its inadequacies, this Convention is an improvement over the previous one, because of the new areas of cooperation accepted by the contracting parties.

Considering the present world economic crisis, one can say that the Lome II Convention is a step forward to the establishment of the New International Economic Order. It demonstrates the political will of the ACP countries and EEC Member States to strengthen and sustain close cooperation between them within a spirit of international solidarity, on the basis of equality among the partners and in their mutual interest.



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