

CM/255

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

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ESTABLISHMENT OF TRAINING AND RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS  
(OR CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE) IN AFRICA

PROGRESS REPORT



ESTABLISHMENT OF TRAINING AND RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS  
(OR CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE) IN AFRICA

P R O G R E S S   R E P O R T  
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Introduction:

1. The development of higher education, and the growth of science and technology in Africa, are very closely linked with the development of Centres of Excellence in Africa. The OAU has decided to establish Centres of Excellence in Africa, but, the extent, complexity, cost and ramifications of this undertaking require foresight, concerted effort and the will to achieve the required goals. There is no doubt that the extent of the programme is wide and continues to be expanded on paper. This is a reflection of the crying needs by Member States, for highly qualified personnel and for the means with which to exploit their natural resources in the service of increasing standards of living of their citizens.

2. This crying need for these Centres of excellence, has been amply expressed by Member States on several occasions, but especially during the last two important meetings. The first of these meetings was the joint OAU/UNESCO Conference on Education and Scientific and Technical Training in Relation to Development in Africa, which was held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 16th to 27th July, 1968. After congratulating the OAU on the initiative taken in this connection, the Conference recommended to the OAU, among other things, that "the initial fields of study mentioned in OAU resolution CM/Res.116(IX)<sup>1</sup> should include the basic sciences, documentation, teaching and research in social sciences, and such other disciplines as it may deem appropriate<sup>2</sup>."

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1. Resolution CM/Res.116(IX)
  2. Recommendation 2(d) on Centres of Excellence

3. ~~The second meeting was the Eleventh Ordinary Session of the Council~~ of Ministers, which was held in Algiers, Algeria, from the 4th to 12th September, 1968. The Council not only adopted<sup>3</sup> all the recommendations of the said Nairobi Conference, including those on Centres of Excellence, but also re-emphasized in operative paragraph 3(b) of resolution CM/Res.171(XI) that the Administrative Secretary General should take into account "the views of Member States expressed at this session, especially concerning the establishment of additional Centres of Excellence".

4. Ministers of Education and Ministers of Foreign Affairs have re-voiced a common concern of most knowledgeable Africans on this subject: Africa needs many Centres of Excellence in several disciplines, to satisfy its manpower requirements, to solve its development problems and to add to useful knowledge accessible to it.

5. The complexity of the programme arises from several angles, some of which are the varying priority accorded to it by individual Member States, the involvement of extra-African interests and the small but increasing contribution that Africa herself can give to the undertaking at the early stages.

6. The financial load of the programme is big, but in itself, this load should not be frightening, as Africa, with the help of friends, is ready to give the programme a fair trial.

7. The ramifications stem from the fact that the development, execution and sustainance of the programme affect not only national educational and economic, social and political development, but also impinge significantly on the relationship between individual Member States and non-African countries and organizations.

8. It is because of these that it is necessary to repeat once again that the programme to establish Centres of Excellence in Africa requires of Member States, foresight, concerted effort and the steadfast will to achieve the desired goals.

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9. Those Centres of Excellence will be institutions at which "Africans would be given the highest and the best training possible, and at which staff and equipment would be provided to undertake the highest research possible in Africa and to search for new knowledge, in the service of development needs of Member States. The term "Excellence" stems from the fact that it is planned to provide the best African teachers, the best and highest training, the best African research workers that can be secured and the best facilities, equipment, methodology, and services possible<sup>4</sup>". This covers post-graduate level of training and research. Once established, and at an appropriate time, these Centres of Excellence are also expected to undertake the training of middle-grade personnel<sup>5</sup> whose support of the professional personnel leads to balanced, effective and maximum results.

10. While accepting the need to establish Centres of Excellence in Africa, some people have indicated that there are problems, such as the inadequacy of financial and human resources, the efficient division of work and of resources between existing Universities and the proposed Centres, and the assured tying of the role and of activities of the proposed Centres to the changing needs of Member States. Some of these problems were mentioned at the recent joint OAU/UNESCO Conference on Education and Scientific and Technical Training in Africa last July and during the Eleventh Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers. These and similar problems connected with the proposed Centres of Excellence could be tackled by the Implementation Committee to be set up, and which is referred to in paragraph 12 below. In any case, they would be discussed and acceptable solutions worked out in other forums of the OAU.

11. In establishing Centres of Excellence for training and research, Africa is not pioneering into any new field: it is merely following into the footsteps of other developing countries such as India and Brazil, and developed ones such as the United States of America, United Kingdom and Russia.

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4. Document CM/232 Part 3 paragraph 1

5. Report of the Nairobi Conference - paragraph 3  
"Problems to be faced in creating them".

Like the developing countries which have established Centres of Excellence, Africa has expressed the desire to co-operate with organizations which are able to help in any way in this programme. Contacts have already been established with ECA, FAO and ADB, and discussions have been held with UNESCO and IAEA in this connection. In particular, the OAU has agreed that this programme should now become a Joint OAU/ECA programme<sup>6</sup>. A formal letter conveying this request, has already been sent to the ECA which is considering the matter.

Next Steps to be taken:

Implementation Committee

12. The OAU decided to "establish an OAU Committee responsible for follow up implementation of the programme to set up 'Centres of Excellence' in Africa"<sup>7</sup>. This was in line with one of the recommendations of the Nairobi Conference on this subject which called on the OAU to "establish a permanent Committee to review and co-ordinate the activities and promote the expansion of the latter". Financial provisions are to be placed before this Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers to enable this Committee to function when it is constituted. Its composition and constitution has yet to be agreed upon. For reasons of economy, it is suggested that five persons should compose the Committee. The Eleventh Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers directed that the "experts should be Africans". It would appear logical that the Committee should have the power to co-opt other persons who may at one time or another be in a position to contribute to any aspect under discussion. It is also suggested that the persons to serve on the Committee should be selected in their individual capacity, taking into account their qualifications, experience and knowledge of Africa, and devotion to the cause of African Unity. If this is accepted, the Secretariat may be permitted to submit a list of names from which the Council may select the Members of the Committee.

The Council of Ministers is asked to name the Members of that Implementation Committee.

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6. Operative paragraph 1 of resolution CM/Res.171(XI)

7. Operative paragraph 2 of resolution CM/Res.171(XI)

13. As for the terms of reference of the ~~Implementation Committee~~, the Council is ~~invited to consider approving the following as the main ones:~~

The functions of the Implementation Committee for the programme of the Centres of Excellence shall be:-

- (1) To review, evaluate and co-ordinate the actions taken to promote, establish and develop Centres of Excellence in Africa, so as to ensure that these are in accordance with approved directives of the OAU, and that they serve the development needs of Member States.
- (2) To make recommendations to the OAU through the Educational, Scientific, Cultural and Health Commission on any desirable changes in the programme.
- (3) To receive, evaluate and co-ordinate any proposal from the OAU appertaining to Centres of Excellence, and to give advice to the OAU on it.
- (4) To report bi-annually to the OAU through the Educational, Scientific, Cultural and Health Commission on its work.

14. Talking about the implementation of the programme to establish Centres of Excellence in Africa, it is recalled that the General Secretariat had reported previously to the Council of Ministers that it was continuing with the gathering of relevant information, but that "The Organization of this information and the clarification and exposition of concepts and procedure regarding the centres should now be placed before groups of experts, who ..... will draw up project-plans for individual institutions for the consideration of OAU"<sup>8</sup>. It went on to state that "The consultations made so far with Member States, international organizations, and with knowledgeable Africans and non-Africans, indicate that the stage has now been reached for groups of experts to examine all aspects of the individual institutions to be created, and to offer general advice to and draw up project-plans for the OAU on these"<sup>8</sup>.

15. It is therefore to be noted that the Implementation Committee may have nothing to do, unless this step of commissioning at least one team of experts to draw up a blue-print for at least one of the Centres is taken. It is because of this inter-connection that the General Secretariat has included in the draft budget, a request for funds for one team of experts to draw up a project-plan for the Centres of Excellence for Geology, Geophysics and Mineralogy (included under Earth Science).

8. Document CM/232/(Part 3) paragraph 11 and 12.

16. ~~Discussions have been initiated with one of the UN Specialized Agencies to see how far early action could be taken on any one of the Centres of Excellence in the field of food and agriculture. Any positive results arising from these discussions will be reported to the Council of Ministers. Besides these, those which were included among the initial eight Centres, as well as those which have been added on recently by the Council of Ministers and the joint OAU/UNESCO Conference on Education and Training, continue to be discussed with UN Specialized Agencies which may be in a position to support them.~~

17. However, it should be emphasized again and again, that Member States have to lay the first brick of the programme, so as to encourage those who are willing to support it to emulate their action. It is therefore strongly recommended that the money requested for one team of experts to draw up a project-plan for the pilot Centre to be established - the one on Geology, Geophysics and Mineralogy - should be approved. The stage has now been reached for project-plans to be drawn up for each one of these, and, the proposal in the draft budget, to establish one team for the first Centre, would start the ball rolling for this important stage. It is only when such project-plans are available for scrutiny, that possible sources of finance for each Centre can be canvassed. Few or no organization will agree to give financial aid to a project whose entirety has not been defined and whose financial and other implications have not been identified and assessed. This is why it is important that the request for funds for one team of experts should be approved, so that the Secretariat may have the background details with which to discuss financial and technical aid from outside sources.

18. The Council is therefore invited:

- (1) (a) To elect Members of the Implementation Committee for the programme of establishing Centres of Excellence in Africa,
- (b) To approve the Committee's terms of reference, and
- (c) To approve funds for its functioning;
- (2) To approve the request for funds for a team of experts to draw up a project-plan for the Centre of Excellence for Geology, Geophysics and Mineralogy.

NB. Financial estimates are included in the draft budget for 1969/70 to which attention is invited.



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# Establishment of training and research institutions (Or Center of excellence) in Africa

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