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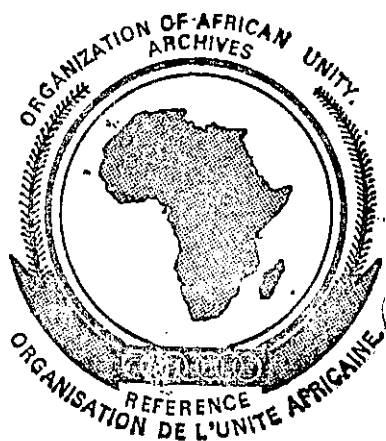
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REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY-GENERAL
ON THE O.A.U. ACTIVITIES IN ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, TRANSPORT
AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS MATTERS



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The economic and social activities of the O.A.U. General Secretariat would have been best presented and fully summarized in the report and the resolutions of the first ordinary session of the Economic and Social Commission. This Commission, which came into being after the merger of the former Economic and Social Commission and the former Transport and Communications Commission, should in fact have, held its first ordinary session in Addis Ababa from 19 to 24 January 1970.

Although, in spite of the efforts of the General Secretariat, the two-thirds quorum required for holding the session was not reached a week prior to the date scheduled for the opening, thereby resulting in the postponement of the meeting to a later date, note should be taken of the importance of the preparatory work done by the General Secretariat to provide Africans responsible for economic and social affairs with working papers covering problems in various fields of activity that fall within the Commission's purview.

These working papers deal with basic and pressing current problems such as the preparation of the United Nations Second Development Decade, terms and conditions for evolving a general system of preferences as proposed by the OECD countries and the establishment of a United Nations Special Fund for African Development.

The list of documents also contains reports on recurrent problems such as multinational co-operation between African States, trade union unity, the harmonizing of social and labour legislation in Africa, and inter-African technical assistance. On the whole, the General Secretariat has endeavoured, by means of these documents, to assess the results achieved through the concerted efforts of the Governments and peoples of the continent with a view to improving their economic and social wellbeing.

Among these international meetings in which the General Secretariat has taken part, note should be taken of a few which were of particular importance to the overall action of co-operation undertaken by the African countries in the field of economic and social development.

In this respect, special mention should be made of the preliminary meeting organized by ECA and OAU with a view to harmonizing African viewpoints at the ninth ordinary session of the Trade and Development Board (UNCTAD). The same holds good in respect of the Board's ninth session during which the joint action of African Governments, planned during the preparatory meeting and on the basis of working papers submitted by the ECA and OAU Secretariats, made it possible to state precisely African viewpoints on problems relating to the improvement of the various aspects of international trade conceived as development aid. In so doing, the African delegates contributed considerably to determining the objectives of the United Nations Second Development Decade, with particular reference to special measures in favour of the least developed of the countries of the Third World.

The third meeting of the UNIDO Board (April - May 1969) was the first time that the General Secretariat of OAU was able to organize the African Group on the Board, thus constituting in this institution a united front of the nine African countries serving on the Board.

The special aspects of the work of UNCTAD and UNIDO, together with the formulation of the objectives of the United Nations Second Development Decade, served as a basis for the African Group at the United Nations General Assembly in the last preparatory phase of the decade. The African Governors in the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had worked together beforehand to secure greater support from these two financial institutions in the overall action of development assistance that this Second Decade is meant to be.

These working papers also highlight the problems and difficulties encountered over the past years and put forward suggestions for increasing the operational efficiency of inter-African co-operation in economic and social matters so as to accelerate the development of all the peoples of Africa.

Above all, the suggestions embodied in the conclusions of the various reports have been made in such a way as to underscore the specific role of the OAU in the vital field of economic and social co-operation, in the light of the activities of various international organizations such as ECA, UNCTAD, ILO, etc. whose "Programmes for Africa" are being increasingly integrated with the essential resources of the struggle of Africans for economic independence and social advancement.

The importance of the preparatory work of this session of the OAU Economic and Social Commission is such that the Secretary-General considers it his duty to invite the Council of Ministers to examine practical ways and means of convening a meeting grouping African officials responsible for economic and social affairs, thereby affording them the opportunity of studying these working documents before the fifteenth ordinary session of the Council of Ministers and the seventh ordinary session of the Heads of State and Government.

One of the surest ways of ensuring that this meeting is held would be for the Council of Ministers, at its current session, to fix the date for the meeting, and possibly to obtain the consent of the majority of Member States to participate in the meeting. In any case, there is an urgent need to convene this first session of the Economic and Social Commission in order to re-define the role of OAU in the important field of economic and social development, to draw up a minimum number of programmes for the future and to specify, in the light of practical experience, the ways and means of OAU action with a view to accelerating the co-ordinated development of the African continent.

It is a well-known fact that the international organizations working in Africa whose activities (meetings, seminars, conferences, etc.) are ever increasing, expect OAU to specify the general programmes for strengthening co-operation between the peoples of the continent. To do this, the OAU General Secretariat needs such programmes in order to give more meaning to its active participation in the many meetings with which it is associated and where its assistance in all forms is required.

This is how the measures for creating a link between the special drawing rights (contemplated for liberalizing new liquidities) and development aid should be understood; that is how the appeal to the two financial institutions as well as to the big powers, to guarantee replenishment of IDA's resources or to adapt the average rate of interest on loans from IBRD to specific conditions prevailing in the developing countries, should be understood.

The Pearson Report, which the IBRD authorities requested a group of international experts to prepare so as to be more adequately acquainted with the situation regarding assistance to developing countries, and thus to formulate a ten-year general policy on that subject, should also be studied in this light.

The special report submitted by the OAU General Secretariat to the Washington meeting of the financial institutions tackles in greater detail the problems briefly dealt with here; similarly, it stresses the need for a better organization of the African Group within these two institutions which are being increasingly called upon to play a decisive role in improving conditions and terms of aid.

At the United Nations General Assembly, while rounding off the preparation of the Second Decade, the African Group also undertook to have the resolutions of the ninth session of ECA adopted. It should be recalled that, through these resolutions, Africans responsible for economic affairs expressed the desire to give the African Branch of ECOSOC new structures and adequate working methods, to enable it to grasp more fully the many problems that the continent will be facing in the nineteen seventies.

Above all, these resolutions give the African leaders and OAU a more important role in defining, controlling and implementing ECA programmes.

With regard to economic activities, special mention should be made of the conference organized in Addis Ababa in November 1969 by a group of businessmen (Business International) for a better understanding of African development problems and to determine better ways and means of increasing their investments in our continent. The special feature of this meeting

was that it afforded foreign investors and those in charge of economic and social development in most of the African countries an opportunity to engage in frank discussions. The two groups of partners were therefore able to discuss the reasons for the extremely low level of international private investment in African countries compared with investment in Latin America, Asia, or Europe. African officials were able to give their international trading partners assurances regarding the security and profitability of their investments, and also mutual respect for their partners' interests.

It was a meeting which should be held regularly in future because it gave Africans the opportunity to combat certain prejudices and to acquaint investors of private capital with the immense potentialities of the African economy and the reasons why they should increase their investments in Africa in the near future.

As regards social development, the regional meeting on Rural Development Policy in Africa should be noted. Inter-African co-operation in community development was studied by the delegates who met in Zambia in November 1969; there is every reason to hope that the resolutions adopted at that meeting will help increase the operational efficiency of ECA/OAU joint action in this complementary sector of economic development.

Viewed from the overall angle of the development of the African continent, the results of the Third African Regional Labour Conference, held in Ghana in December 1969, should be considered. The theme of the meeting: "African Employment Policy", provided African labour officials with the opportunity to harmonize their future employment plans so as to fulfil the requirements at national level and gradually at the level of other countries within the continent. Note should be taken of the desire expressed by all delegates to link educational policy and the training of cadres more closely with the planning of employment as projected in the various aspects of national development.

With regard to transport and communications, it would be appropriate to mention the holding of the First All-Africa Highway Conference in Addis Ababa in October 1969 as an important event. This Conference, which was sponsored by the Imperial Ethiopian Government and the International Highway Federation, received full assistance from the OAU General Secretariat. It made it possible to set up, inter alia, an Interim

Committee of Eight African States to study working conditions and methods of establishing an All-African Highway Association. ECA and OAU, which have been asked to convene the first meeting of the Interim Committee, have already set the date for 9 to 13 March 1970, and sent out invitations to the States concerned.

Transport and communications in general featured prominently in the discussions between the States of Central and East Africa during the meeting of the Committee of Experts which met in Addis Ababa from 11 to 16 December 1969. These experts were able to adopt various recommendations, the application of which would ensure better co-ordination of the infrastructure as well as of road, rail, sea and air transport facilities and telecommunication systems between the States of the two sub-regions.

Speaking of sub-regions, it should be pointed out that during the period covering September 1969 to February 1970, various groupings held meetings the most outstanding result of which have been the strengthening of co-ordination of the economic and social activities between States. It is worth mentioning the Council of Ministers of East and Central African States, the Summit Conference of those States, the ordinary session of the ECA Central African sub-region States, the OCAM Council of Ministers and the Summit Conference, as some of the many forward-looking undertakings leading to the desired and necessary rapprochement between the peoples of the continent with a view to promoting better living conditions in Africa.



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