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REGIONAL SECRETARIAT OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION FOR
AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR



SECRETARIAT REGIONAL DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT CATHOLIQUE POUR L'AFRIQUE
ET MADAGASCAR (S.R.A.M.)

REGIONAL SECRETARIAT OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION FOR AFRICA AND MADA-
GASCAR (R. S. A. M.)

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE PREPARED
BY WAY OF CLARIFICATION
FOR THE DEBATES ON THE REQUEST
FOR THE STATUS OF OBSERVER
MADE BY S.R.A.M.
TO THE
ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE ON THE AFRICAN ORGANIZATION KNOWN
AS "THE REGIONAL SECRETARIAT OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION
FOR AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR" (S.R.A.M.)

I. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

The "Regional Secretariat of Catholic Education for Africa and Madagascar" (S.R.A.M.), a non-governmental African organization which has formally presented to the "ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY" on March 9, 1970, its request to be accorded the Status of Observer, is taking advantage of the 16th Session of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in order to submit to the Member-Delegates of the O.A.U. this more ample information on its organization.

In the course of the debates of Commission B at the time of the 15th Regular Session of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the O.A.U., discussions on this request dealt almost exclusively with two problems :

- that of knowing whether S.R.A.M. was requesting of OAU Observer Status or Consultative Status;
- that of knowing whether S.R.A.M. is an African extension of an international organization, or an autonomous African organization concerned with education.

With respect to the first question, the answer is simple : the members of the Regional Secretariat of Catholic Education for Africa and Madagascar have requested the possibility of participating in the Pan-African action of the Organization of African Unity within the existing structure of this organization.

If an inaccurate term was used in the text of the original request, this error must be attributed to insufficient information on their part. Any formula other than that of "Observer Status" should be suppressed in the texts, for the O.A.U. has never organized any other status than that of observer.

S.R.A.M. is requesting the Status of Observer in order to bring its contribution to the edifice of the O.A.U., in order to integrate its activities along the lines set by the leaders of our modern Africa. Further on, we shall develop these essential motives at greater length. As to the second question raised in August 1970, it was implied that S.R.A.M. receives orders from another non-African international organization, that is, from the International Organization of Catholic Education (O.I.E.C.), and that, consequently, to accord Observer Statut to S.R.A.M. would amount to according this same status to the O.I.E.C., that is to say, to a non-African organization, an action which would be contrary to the policy of the O.A.U.

It is important to bring to the attention of the Member States and Delegates here present that this argument does not in the least correspond with reality.

The Regional Secretariat of Catholic Education for Africa and Madagascar is an autonomous African organization which, without doubt, participates in the activities of the O.I.E.C. on a world-wide scale, but which, nevertheless, is not dependent upon this institution.

In order to illustrate the African autonomy of S.R.A.M., it seems necessary to present to the Member-Delegates of the O.A.U. some supplementary information concerning this organization, its structure, its objectives, and its activities. This is our purpose in calling to the attention of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs assembled in Council at Addis Ababa the present documentary material.

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II. S T R U C T U R E O F S. R. A. M.

1. REGIONAL

At the world level, there are five large "regions," corresponding roughly to the five continents which today have a Secretariat of Catholic Education, with headquarters established within the radius of activities of the Region whose direction is effectively assumed by citizens of the nations constituting the Region.

Various historical factors have been involved in the erection of these five secretariats throughout the world. The countries are grouped in "regions" in virtue of certain affinities and in order to answer to the needs of cooperation which were not always circumscribed by continental boundaries. When the various secretariats wished to be set up within a federal structure, it was necessary to define the limits of these groups, and at this time the term "regional" was given to S.R.A.M. as well as to each of the other Secretariats. This "regional" character of S.R.A.M. does not imply any allegiance of S.R.A.M. vis-à-vis an ~~extra-African~~ organization from which it receives directives in matters of education or in any other domain whatsoever. Rather, it expresses the federal character of a structure which is very flexible with respect to the autonomy of its particular components. The General Secretariat of the O.I.E.C. has the responsibility of coordinating these individual components for any question which exceeds the limits of a region.

The documents are specific on this point : "The O.I.E.C. is a service; it does not control its members, nor does it intervene in their internal affairs. The O.I.E.C. seeks to affirm the role of Catholic education on the international level."

2. SUB-SAHARAN

The history of the progressive erection of these organizations likewise explains the "Sub-Saharan" character of S.R.A.M. Since the Regional Secretariat of Catholic Education of the Near - and Middle-East-- a foundation preceding that of S.R.A.M.-- already included a certain number of African countries in the North, the other independent countries of Africa and Madagascar, by reason of this historic evolution, were constituted into one "region" which was to be defined as truly African without, however, suggesting anything derogatory to their sister-organization operating to the North of the Sahara. In this context, the word "Sub-Saharan" seems suitable.

3. AFRICAN

The structures of Catholic education in the independent countries of Africa and of Madagascar considered it to their interest to group themselves in the organization of S.R.A.M., whose Africanity no longer needs any proof since, on 26 August 1964, the African and Malgachian Directors of National Secretariats demanded the erection in Africa of an Inter-African Secretariat and insisted, furthermore, that the direction of this Secretariat be entrusted to an African elected by themselves. It is important to point out that it is precisely because these Africans no longer wished questions in the field of education, a capital domain for the future of the Continent, to be left to the decisions of a third party that they claimed their most legitimate rights in 1964 : that is, the right to assume for themselves full responsibility in order to guarantee the Africanity of the interests of S.R.A.M.

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4. AUTONOMY

This action assured to Africa the same autonomous status enjoyed by the other regional secretariats throughout the world.

Thanks to this autonomy of structure and of function, S.R.A.M. receives its directives in matters of education exclusively from those who are responsible for Catholic education in the independent countries of Africa and Madagascar. Thus, it exerts its efforts in the service of Africa through the channels of the National Secretariats of its member-countries. It is they who trace for it the directions to follow and the positions to defend when, in the name of Africa it is called upon to take its place in international assemblies of Catholic education.

In what concerns the financial situation of S.R.A.M.-- another significant aspect by which one can judge the nature of organizations-- it is important to note that the funds are provided through gifts and private contributions, and not through a stable financial structure managed by a guardian institution. This situation--while scarcely conducive to comfort-- confers upon the Regional Secretariat for Africa and Madagascar an incontestable financial autonomy. The Secretary General of the O.I.E.C. does not intervene in this domain as a financial director; each Regional Secretariat is responsible for its own ways and means, insofar as it is a member of the O.I.E.C. it can request that this office direct it to cultural foundations, but it is not financed by a fund of the office.

An African organ of coordination and of action whose competence is defined by the field of teaching and of education, S.R.A.M. intends to contribute its share to the appeal of the African masses in search of better conditions of existence and to offer on its part an essential contribution to African unity.

5. OPEN TO THE WORLD

As to the relations between S.R.A.M. and the world movement of the International Organization of Catholic Education (O.I.E.C.), it is opportune to call to the attention of the Delegates of the O.A.U. that in this there is question of international relations resembling exactly those existing between many national African organizations and international movements.

The majority of the Member-States of the O.A.U. organize syndicates on their national territory, and, as a rule, while these syndicates are affiliated to world organizations this affiliation in no way modifies the strictly national character of each of them. The argument which maintains that S.R.A.M. may not benefit from the Status of Observer with O.A.U. because it is affiliated with the O.I.E.C., even though it is autonomous and does not receive directives from this organism, is an argument which cannot be sustained for the good reason that there exist analogous cases which have already been received into the structures of the O.A.U. :

- the "High Council of African Sports" (C.S.S.A.) has obtained Observed Status, however, this body is affiliated with the International Olympic Organization of Sports. (O.O.I.S.)
- the "Association of African Universities" (A.U.A.) has obtained Observer Status with the O.A.U. However many A.U.A. member universities are directly affiliated with other non-African international organizations, such as the Association of Catholic Universities.

It is not because the C.S.S.A. is a member of the O.O.I.S. that it becomes an executive agent of this group; nor is it because S.R.A.M. is a member of the O.I.E.C. that it becomes its executive agent. The O.I.E.C. is only a center for information and for the exchange of various experiences in the field of Catholic education throughout the

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world, its own statutes accord it neither juridical superiority nor administrative superiority vis-à-vis its affiliates.

III. OBJECTIVES OF S.R.A.M.

There are two areas in particular which claim the services of S.R.A.M. : that of education properly so called and that of inter-African assistance in the whole academic domain.

1. EDUCATIONAL SERVICE

S.R.A.M. is eager to offer to the national offices of its members all that is of value in the field of education both in actual teaching and in the centers of educational research.

This includes :

- to collect information;
- to turn to account those possibilities which often remain unutilized;
- to exchange and diffuse experiences and information gathered together and studied;
- to study the specific problems of the various sections and to seek appropriate solutions in order to promote education, to improve the quality of teaching and to adapt the content and the end of education to the interests and the needs of Africa.

2. A SERVICE OF ASSISTANCE

S.R.A.M. desires to place at the disposal of education all possible aid, including that of multi-lateral origin.

This includes :

- to study the needs and the existing sources of aid;
- to coordinate international means of assistance and to

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- point out concrete ways for their utilization;
- to employ every means of exchange and of inter-African contact-- bulletins, meetings, conferences, etc.
- to assist national directors in their educational planning;
- to sponsor collaboration with a view to initiating joint actions for the solution of common problems;
- to coordinate efforts at the regional and sub-regional level in order to augment the effectiveness of the struggle against illiteracy.

3. RELATIONS WITH THE OBJECTIVES OF THE O.A.U.

As coordinator of the educational activities of the Catholic teaching of its member-countries, S.R.A.M. obviously is working in the spirit of the objectives proclaimed by the Charter of the O.A.U. :

- To reinforce the unity and the solidarity of the states of Africa and Madagascar;
- To coordinate and intensify their cooperation and their efforts to offer better conditions of existence to the peoples of Africa. Useful in every domain, cooperation is an urgent necessity in the field of education, for the States expect the school to play its role in the awakening of a national consciousness, in the civic formation of the young, in the formation of competent cadres, conscientious and honest.

In response to these desires of the States, S.R.A.M. seeks to develop among the young, in addition to their professional preparation, a love of country, a desire to serve it, a sense of work, of responsibility, and of disinterestedness. Thus the school, wholly ordered

to the service of man and of society, will bring to the nations its total assistance in the preparation of youth for its accomplishment of its civic and social duties.

6. APPLICATION OF THESE VALUES WITHIN AN AFRICAN CONTEXT

If education is an essential factor in development, it can be so only on condition that it is adapted to the economic, political, and social realities of our countries in rapid mutation. This means, for example, that the programs of study must be rooted in an African context.

S.R.A.M. has not hesitated to respond to this demand. That is why, at the First Pan-African Conference held in 1965 under the aegis of S.R.A.M., the very first resolution voted by the delegates stipulated : "THAT CATHOLIC EDUCATION EXTOL AFRICAN CULTURE."

Another resolution demanded : "THAT CATHOLIC EDUCATION PARTICIPATE IN THE REVISION OF EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURES AND CURRICULA ALONG THE LINES LAID DOWN BY THE CONFERENCES OF ADDIS ABABA, BRAZZAVILLE, AND TANANARIVE."

In short, THE INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES OF S.R.A.M. FOR THE EDUCATION OF YOUNG AFRICANS FULLY COINCIDE WITH THE OBJECTIVES OF THE O.A.U.

IV. ACTIVITIES OF S.R.A.M.

1. ADAPTATION OF THE SCHOOL

The activity of S.R.A.M. is not limited within a structure belonging to the past. What characterizes all its efforts in the academic plan of today is, without doubt, its desire to adapt to the special circumstances in which it is living.

2. EFFECTIVENESS IN DEVELOPMENT

In order to determine the contribution of S.R.A.M. to the work of education in Africa, it is important to note that S.R.A.M.

has in its schools more than 5 million children, the majority of whom are not Catholic. This means that S.R.A.M., within its area of competence, is making a positive contribution to the development of culture in general and of human solidarity in the service of Africa.

3. INTEGRATION INTO A POLITICS OF UNITY

In a pluralistic society-- and such is the case with ours-- it is normal that various individual initiatives develop. It is the responsibility of the leaders, while looking after the development of these different groups, to unify, to orient, and to channel these initiatives in order to assure the general progress of their peoples, an objective which is affirmed in the Preamble of the Charter of the O.A.U. :

Our responsibility is to place the human resources of our continent at the service of the general progress of our people in every domain of human activity.

S.R.A.M. seeks to integrate its action into the very framework of the O.A.U., a contribution that Africa cannot reject at this hour in which, on the contrary, African leaders have an obligation to channel all available energies on the continent for the realization of African hopes.

V. CONCLUSION

In summation, the fact is that S.R.A.M. does not receive directives from an international organization because it is in itself an autonomous, inter-African organization and because the orientations of its activity in the field of education are defined exclusively by the African leaders of its member-countries in Africa and Madagascar.

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The end pursued by S.R.A.M. and the activities sponsored to attain this end are in a direct line with the objectives and the activities of the O.A.U. Of this there can be no doubt. It is understandable, therefore, that S.R.A.M. desires to work for the realization of the program of African cooperation recommended by the Charter of Addis Ababa. It is thus that S.R.A.M. wishes to devote all its efforts to collaborate in the struggle against illiteracy and against every kind of discrimination. It intends to make its contribution in bringing African cultures into play for the development of science and for the human and social promotion of Africa.

In the field of education at the Pan-African level, how can it attain this end without knowing the intentions, the options, and the initiatives of those who have the power of decision ? Who can it integrate itself into the general evolution without being informed of the plans of development and of the aims of those responsible leaders in the cadre of the Organization of African Unity ?

These are the motives upon which is based the request for the Status of Observer introduced in the Organization of African Unity by the Regional Secretariat of Catholic Education for Africa and Madagascar.

Kinshasa, January 1971



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