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ADDIS ABABA

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
Seventeenth Ordinary Session
Addis Ababa - June 1971

CM/393

REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY GENERAL
ON OAU ACTIVITIES IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL,
TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS FIELDS



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ON OAU ACTIVITIES IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL,
TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS FIELDS

1. Owing to the fact that during the Session of February 1971, the Council of Ministers had not been able to consider the general report on economic and social activities nor the documents submitted by the Secretariat on African economic co-operation problems which required urgent directives, the report on the Secretariat's activities in the economic and social fields for the period from September 1970 to February 1971, remains fully valid. The same applied to the sectoral reports which should have been considered by the Sixteenth Session in February.

2. In addition to these documents, there are the reports and conclusions of the Tenth Session of the Economic Commission for Africa which was, in fact, the First Session of the ECA Conference of Ministers, as well as the reports on the work of two important meetings held in Addis Ababa in April and May 1971 respectively under the auspices of the OAU and ECA Secretariats. Furthermore, the Council should be informed about the progress made in the preparations of two major events which will require the co-operation and the harmonization of policies and efforts of the African Governments in the economic and social fields during the next few months.

3. The conclusions and recommendations of the First Session of the ECA Conference of Ministers held in Tunis in February 1971, will be transmitted to the policy-making bodies of the Organization of African Unity through the good offices of the ECA Executive Committee, in pursuance of ECA resolution 190(IX) and OAU Resolution CM/Res.191(XIII). It should suffice to simply call the Council's attention to the recommendations made in Tunis concerning the rationalization of relations between the Technical Committee of Experts and the Executive Committee since the latter

now has the clearly defined responsibility to supervise and submit its views on the work of the former to the ECA Conference of Ministers. There is also the need to stress the importance of the discussions and recommendations aimed at strengthening the ECA sub-regional structures with a view to making the Executive Secretariat the technical adviser of Governments or regional groupings on field activities. Extending the competence of the Commission to include the over-all and gradual harmonization of the activities of United Nations Specialized Agencies in Africa as a possible means of strengthening the practical effectiveness of the aid that the United Nations intends to give to the African continent, was a matter which also engaged the attention of the Ministers. Finally, special mention should be made of the resolution wherein the Commission supported the struggle of African Liberation Movements and, requested the Executive Secretariat to intensify its assistance to the said movements so as to prepare, under the best conditions, for their accession to national sovereignty by supplying them here and now with the means of training qualified staff.

4. The African oilseeds meeting held in Addis Ababa from 20 to 23 April 1971 under the auspices of OAU, ECA, and the African Groundnut Council (AGC) examined, in accordance with an earlier decision of the General Assembly of the African Groundnut Council, endorsed by OAU, the possibilities of extending the activities of the Council to other vegetable oils. After a week of serious discussion on the activities and past experience of AGC, and on the problems posed by the harmonization of the production and marketing of other oilseeds, the participants thought it wise, because of the limited number of African States present, to postpone another meeting till early in 1972 when it is hoped that a larger number of vegetable oil-producing countries will take part and thereby ensure the adoption of valid and equitable decisions on this matter. Already, the next Conference will have the advantage of studies prepared jointly by OAU, ECA and AGC and of the information stemming from the discussions on them at Addis Ababa.

5. The Conference of African Ministers of Industry, examined the current situation and problems of industrialization in Africa, in order to define an African strategy in that sector of activities at the beginning of the Second United Nations Development Decade. The Conference of African Ministers of Industry which met in Addis Ababa from 3 to 8 May 1971 was the result of the growing co-operation between the OAU and ECA Secretariats in their common desire to help African leaders keep closer track of economic and social development in Africa, so that they may take quicker and more effective action to speed up co-operation among the African Governments and peoples. The Addis Ababa Conference on industrialization provided an opportunity for African officials responsible for the industrial sector to prepare a common defence of African interests at the extraordinary meeting of UNIDO scheduled to take place in Vienna in mid-June 1971.

6. The progress anticipated in both industrialization and agriculture, calls for better organization of intra-African trade and the access of African products to external markets. The first of these preoccupations will be met by the All-African Trade Fair to be held in Nairobi (Kenya) from 23 February to 5 March 1972. The Fair, which is the first of its kind, is designed to offer OAU Member States an opportunity to acquaint themselves with the variety, quality, and prospects of economic production in Africa, with a view to promoting intra-African trade. A feature of the Nairobi Fair will be a symposium on the role of trade in economic development, organized under the auspices of OAU and ECA.

7. The report of the OAU General Secretariat to the Council of Ministers outlines the progress made in physical and technical preparations for the Fair by the nine-Member Committee set up by OAU and, particularly, by the authorities of the host country. However, although this report stresses the great sacrifices made by the Kenya Government to ensure the success of

this pan-African venture, it places particular emphasis on the legitimate anxieties felt for any possible failure so far to ensure the participation of all Member States to make the success of the Fair a foregone conclusion, and for the shortcomings of the Preparatory Committee, barely half of whose members are actually participating in the activities aimed at making it possible for OAU to supervise the preparations for the Fair. The present Session should therefore make a point of examining and defining practical ways and means of ensuring the effective participation of all OAU Member States in both the Trade Fair and symposium of Nairobi. For, without such mass participation, the proposed undertaking might fail to attain its target and thereby worsen the present shortcomings in intra-African trade.

8. The access of African products to the markets of the developed countries will be in the forefront of the general activities of UNCTAD, especially the discussions on the general scheme of preferences to be established shortly in favour of developing countries, without discrimination or reciprocity. This is why the OAU General Secretariat is submitting to the Council of Ministers a detailed report on the more important activities of UNCTAD, in other words, those activities which in the coming year will require not only the attention and spirit of solidarity of the African officials, but also co-operation between ECA and OAU Secretariats. The aim of the studies now in preparation by both Secretariats is to ensure joint decisions by the African officials, prior to the meeting in Latin America of the Group of 77 (November-December 1971) and the third session of UNCTAD, (March to April 1972). This report, like the one on the African Trade Fair, draws the attention of African officials to the minimum financial sacrifices OAU must be prepared to make in its 1971/72 Budget in order that the Secretariat may be in a position to give all the necessary assistance to African leaders in the preparation and during the holding of these events of African and international solidarity.

9. In the field of co-operation in labour and social matters, note should be taken of the fact that because the 10th session of the Conference of African Labour Ministers was not held, the Secretariat is not in a position to submit any detailed report on the development of the situation regarding these vital activity sectors. It should, however, mention that the 10th session of the Conference of African Labour Ministers which should have been held in Kampala (Uganda) from 15 to 20 March 1971, was postponed to be held in Geneva from 27 May to 1 June 1971, on a proposal made by the current Chairman (Zambia), because ten days before the scheduled opening in Kampala, only twelve countries had sent in positive replies to the invitation to participate in the meeting. This was very far below the necessary quorum of 22 acceptances required by the Rules of Procedure of the Conference and OAU practices.



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Report of the Administrative Secretary General on the OAU activities in the economic, social, transport and communications fields

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