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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
ON EURO-AFRO-ARAB CO-OPERATION KNOWN AS "TRIALOGUE"



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Introduction

At the Seventeenth OAU Summit held in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in July 1980, several delegations expressed the desire of obtaining adequate information on Euro-Afro-Arab Co-operation known as "Trialogue" and hoped the OAU Secretary-General would initiate the necessary measures and consultations with all the partners concerned so as to gather further information regarding the concept, the extent and the scope of the project.

Pursuant to the resolutions and decisions of the OAU and in line with the policy and in the interest of Africa, the Secretary-General established contacts and consultations with distinguished personalities in the political, economic or financial fields both in European and Arab worlds, the two regions which are together with, for Africa, from the components of the "Trialogue" concept.

The Secretary-General summarises, in this document, the opinion, views concepts and the philosophy of the originators of the concept, as well as the observation made thereon in the Arab world and on the African continent.

Birth and Evolution of the idea of the "Trialogue"

In January, 1974 and February 1979, the French Government, considering the present economic difficulties, took two actions on the international plane.

- a) First, it introduced the idea of a North-South Conference between the Industrialised and Developing countries, aimed at readjusting their mutual interests.

This Conference, however, did not produce the desired results.

- b) In February 1979, President V.G. d'Estaing proposed the concept of triangular co-operation between Africa, Europe and the Arab World.

Thus, in addition to the international search for solutions to world problems (North-South Dialogue, UNCTAD etc....), France was convinced that a major contribution could be made within a more limited but appropriate regional framework, because of proximity and various kinds of ties existing between the States concerned.

It was especially in May 1979, at Kigali and later in Khartoum, that the President of France developed and elaborated on major theme the proposed co-operation by stating that permanent geographical, historical and cultural bonds of solidarity were the basic factors which should be better strengthened and developed within the frame of wider entities.

To this end, the French Head of State observed that the three regions had already undertaken several collective actions at various levels; namely, the Lome Convention, Afro-Arab Co-operation, Euro-Ara Dialogue.

The "Triologue" concept would therefore not be an entirely new idea but an initiative aimed at achieving complementarities. It would not be an alternative measure to the North-South Dialogue either, or the global negotiations to which the African Continent would remain

attached but a net attempt at and practical method of introducing this dialogue through the transformation of the noted interdependence of states within active and organised solidarities.

The parties to the system of triangular co-operation involving Africa, Europe and the Arab World quoted, developed and elaborated on the ideas of President Giscard D'Estaing by adding or identifying the following areas :

a) The "Triialogue" exists at an embryo state. (because it has been conceived as a system aimed at combining European technology, Arab capital and African development projects). Here, it was remarked that a de facto triangular co-operation had been in existence in this field since 4 years, thanks, especially, to the European Communities, Commission, European Investment Bank, Central Co-operation Bank, etc... What was needed was a more coherent and more efficient framework and mechanism for concentration.

b) The "Triialogue" provides for a global approach integrating the various fields (economic, technical, cultural and political). To this end, three measures were proposed as a first step:

i) Economic and Financial measures : In this area, the traditional triangular co-operation would strengthen i.e.

African projects would be co-financed with the help from the Central Bank for economic development, the European Investment Bank and the Arab Funds; the "Triialogue" would facilitate the preparation of projects which are better studied and technically sound etc..

ii) Cultural measures : To ensure the promotion of cultural dialogue, there the need for the exchange of cultural information and, on a wider scale, to take into account the role culture plays in international relations.

iii) Measures regarding practical projects : The "Trialogue" could serve as a real "laboratory of ideas" on vital topics such as reform of the international monetary system, joint preparation or consideration of questions included in the global negotiations, assistance to the least developed countries (LDC), transfer of technology, training, new energies etc....

c) The "Trialogue" is not only an economic venture, it is also an attempt at identifying and strengthening the basic ties of solidarity existing between Africa, Europe and the Arab World. For the purpose of this paper, three stages are envisaged for the realization of the "Trialogue"

i) The "Trialogue" concept would be introduced at a Cultural Conference and not through the resumption, in another form, of one of those major economic conferences the outcome of which has still always left the developing countries in their state of poverty.

ii) A particularly close tie of economic solidarity would be one of the objective basis for the "Trialogue". Member countries of the "Trialogue", united by geography, history and mutual cultural values, are so interdependent that their development, progress and control of their economic destiny depend on the future of their relations.

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iii) Solidarity among the 3 regions is demonstrated in the complementarity between their energy, technology, human and natural resources as revealed by all analysts. In this context, it has been recognized that economic dialogues should not be conceived as speeches on oil or Arab capital, but as an approach aimed at closely knit network better organised and lasting economic exchanges, considered, from the point of view of bilateral trade flow from the point of view of multiple projects for triangular co-operation or from the point of view of interdependence of the economies of the three regions, taking into account the commercial transactions among them. (the relation between the domestic trade of the "Trialogue" zone and the total trade of the countries of the zone is 58 per cent).

In this vain, it has been remarked rightly that in the case of Africa, all the components of this network have not yet attained their own regional levels. Intra-African trade is very low (5 per cent of Africa's total trade in 1978). This justifies the strategy defined in the Lagos Plan of Action the ultimate objective of which is to focus Africa's economy on itself and its own needs. Consequently, the "Trialogue" is capable of providing the framework for reflection, within which the economic partners of Africa would be informed of the specific plans of this continent about its future and the effects of these plans on the relations among the countries concerned within the three entities.

- d) In this global perspective, the "Trialogue" could offer each of the partners the opportunity to define the common principles and mutual interests on which should be built the New International Economic Order which the restricted international negotiations have so far been financing difficult to achieve. It was particularly stressed that the "Trialogue" could contribute to the development of the North-South dialogue internationally economic co-operation among the countries of the 3 regions, placed within a wider perspective of permanent ties based on history, geography and cultural exchanges could contribute significantly to bringing about understanding and solution of North-South problems.

Reactions to the "Trialogue" idea and concept (Especially in Africa and the Arab World.)

The position of all those who, in Africa and the Arab World, discussed the concept after a careful study, may be summed up as follows, particularly with regard to the steps to be taken:

- a) Any project for the definition of a new framework of co-operation, collaboration and consultations among the 3 communities and the three regions concerned in the "Trialogue" needs to be explored and studied in detail;
- b) The project of triangular co-operation system cannot in any way, be substituted for either the global negotiations or Afro-Arab co-operation; it can only be conceived and developed within the complementary framework of these two approaches;

- c) The "Trialogue" cannot be conceived as a political association, but rather as a means of negotiations and co-operation for concrete economic and cultural achievements;
- d) The interests of each member of the "Trialogue" should be clearly defined.
- e) With regard to Africa in particular, there are specific problems to be resolved; these are hunger and under development in all aspects. In the search for the ways and means of solving these problems, Africa is ready to undertake discussions at the level of the "Trialogue" North-South Dialogue, Euro-Africa Dialogue or Afro-Arab Co-operation. The Lagos Plan of Action presents a very wide programme; the "Trialogue" project can be appropriate in so far as it constitutes a framework for reflection, a basis for expansion and realisation of the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act;
- f) The "Trialogue" should be conceived within a wider and global framework, and not only within the context of co-financing of projects, it should cover economic, technical, political and cultural problems;
- g) The "Trialogue" should not be limited to a mere recycling of Arab capital or aim at perpetuating the traditional triangular trade according to a division of labour which the Third World and Africa had abandoned long ago. It should be placed within a more global framework and should deal with development problems while serving as basis for a fruitful dialogue among peoples and civilisations, based on equality and respect for the identities and sovereignty of states.

In a general manner, it should be emphasised that the project can be realised to the satisfaction of all the parties concerned and in their mutual interests only if the following facts and guiding principles are adequately taken into consideration :

- a) The main object of the "Trialogue" should be development. This means a co-operation aimed at total, integrated, and harmonious development of all the partners. This should be its philosophy and its final goal. It seems this is the case. The notion of development should be at the basis of the project. And development means actions should be taken to provide the structures, ensure production, transfer and exchange of technology, human progress, access to markets of the developed partners, access by the poor partner to the resources for its own development, etc.... And if there should be a division of labour, this should be made dynamic and undertaken with the prime aim of ensuring the development of the partners.
- b) This co-operation should incorporate partners which are responsible and equal, and not paying parties, recipient parties and exporting parties.
- c) This co-operation should remain open to the outside world; it should therefore be a method a means of encouraging North-South Dialogue and a step towards the establishment of the New International Economic Order; in short, it should serve as a test which can usefully prepare the grounds for the solution of North-South problems.

- d) Once these four points have been jointly and adequately studied by all the parties the project will be ready for implementation and will be meaningful to the African European and the Arab partners.

C O N C L U S I O N

At this stage, it is necessary to emphasise that the "Trialogue" is a major project which cannot be realised by means of a few speeches; it calls for joint and active efforts researches and consultations. The Secrétary-General will have to undertake consultations, fact finding and co-operation actions with all the partners concerned, especially with the Secretariat of the Arab League so as to find out the impacts and implications of this concept bearing in mind the policy of the OAU, its interests and the achievement of the primary objectives of the Lagos Plan of Action especially those relating to the individual and collective self-reliance of the independent Africa. He should permanently keep the Council of Ministers and the Assembly of Heads of State and Government informed of the development in this question.



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