



SOUTHERN AFRICA REGIONAL OFFICE

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REPORT
ON THE
ACTIVITIES OF AU-SARO
June to December 2007

I. Introduction

The mandate of the AU-SARO underscores the maintenance of constructive and productive relations between the AU and the Member States in Southern Africa, as well as with SADC and COMESA. The implementation of the mandate during this period in the region had occurred in peaceful political and social environment and stable economic growth and development. The activities of the Office with the Member States, SADC, COMESA, and regional organizations were in varying integration and development issues.

II. Political and Socio-Economic Situations of the Region

During the period in view, the Southern Africa region continued to maintain peaceful political environment which was an asset to the continuation in economic growth and development for most of the countries. Generally, governments continue to take measures to foster political stability and to promote better external relations. Economic growth rate for Southern Africa, as a whole, stood at an average of about 6 percent. It is expected that this should be sustained and improved in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals target of 7 percent. The region places emphasis on trade and infrastructure development. Other important areas of priority are the health sector, refugees, immigration and food security. Improvement in this sector is seen as fundamental to capacity-building and sustainable economic growth and development in Southern Africa region.

Health: Regional leaders continue to accord priority to health matters while the region remains more affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the continent. Some countries during this period continue to sustain the positive progress made in containing new infections. But there are concerns as the epidemic is linked to tuberculosis.

Refugees/Migration: Refugee/migration issues remain important matters in the political, economic and social life of the region during this period. The movement of people essentially from East Africa towards South Africa posed some difficulties to a number of countries; the transit countries and the countries of destination. Transit

countries are confronted with difficulties distinguishing between refugees and genuine migrants. Substantial part of those cared for at the refugee camps by the transit countries and UNHCR turn out to be migrants. They create economic and social problems to transit countries when they fail to get through or decide not to go to intended countries of destination. Their presence in transit countries generally culminate in job losses and depression in labor market. AU-SARO worked with the UNHCR in the attempt to find solutions to the refugee problems at the Dzaleka Refugee Camp in Malawi. Also, the countries of destination are confronted with difficulties in the absence of social and economic infrastructure to absorb them.

Food: The food situation in most countries remains satisfactory during this period with Malawi and Zambia in the position to export maize surplus to other countries in the region. It is anticipated food security in the region could be sustained in the coming months with adequate inputs and rains.

III. **Integration in SADC and COMESA**

Integration and development continued to advance during this period with both organizations engaged in efforts to deepen integration and enhance the achievements in economic growth and development with appropriate reference to AU integration agenda. Integration in SADC continues to focus on trade expansion, infrastructure development and the promotion of foreign direct investment. In the deepening of integration, the Lusaka Summit of 16 to 17 August 2007 inter alia, urged rapid completion of the work of the Ministerial Task Force on the Road Map for SADC Customs Union. The range of rate of growth of economies of the Member States of COMESA was from 2.8 percent in Swaziland to 8 percent for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The critical areas of integration are trade, infrastructure, agriculture, investment and peace & security. The Member States agreed at the Summit of Nairobi, Kenya, in May 2007 to the establishment of Customs Union in 2010.

IV. **Activities with AU Departments, RECs and Regional Organizations**

AU-SARO worked with AU Departments, RECs and a number of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in the execution of its mandate. Collaborations were broadly in the areas of integration and development in Southern Africa.

AU Economic Affairs Department

The Office participated in the Second Ministerial Meeting on African Integration held from 26 to 27 July 2007, in Kigali, Rwanda, organized by the Department. This meeting discussed further the road map on the rationalization and harmonization of RECs, following up the previous Ouagadougou Declaration on the same subject. The Office also, with support of the department, represented the AUC at the Workshop on *Good Governance and Sustainable Management of Petroleum and Mineral Resources*, organized by the World Bank, African Development Bank and the African Union, held on 10 December 2007 in Lusaka, Zambia. The Workshop discussed ways to improve on key governance issues in order to ascertain more meaningful contribution of mineral resources to economic growth and development of producing countries.

AU Social Affairs Department

The Department of Social Affairs engaged the Office in a number of activities on continental integration and development in the region. The Office participated at the 6th

General Assembly Session of the African Population Commission, held from 16 to 17 July 2007, in Johannesburg, South Africa, that discussed new approaches to address population and development issues in Africa. The Office, with the support of the Social Affairs Department, organized brainstorm event on 1 December 2007, the World AIDS Day at the Guidance, Counseling and Youth Development Center for Africa in Lilongwe, Malawi. The Minister of Health, Hon. Marjorie Ngaunje, M.P., Regional Representatives of the UNFPA, WHO, the High Commissioner for South Africa, representative of the youth, and the AU Regional Delegate to SADC addressed the gathering. The gathering included the youth, representatives of government ministries, members of the diplomatic corps, as well as members of the private sector and the civil society. The event refocused attention on the urgent need to fight HIV/AIDS epidemic.

AU Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture

The Department of Rural Economy is working on key important developmental issues and engaging the active support of the Office in the implementation of its programs. The Office led the AU team to the Regional Consultative Workshop on Land Policy in Southern Africa, Windhoek, Namibia, 29 to 31 August 2007. The Office participated in the Regional Technical Appraisal Workshop for four countries (Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe) to develop a Joint Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis Eradication Project, held in Maputo, Mozambique, 12 to 16 November 2007. The curtailment of the incidence of the tsetse and trypanosomiasis on livestock is important towards improvement in nutrition and higher agricultural output.

RECs

The RECs are the building blocs for the AU. The Office participated at the Summit of COMESA. The Office worked with the RECs at regional meetings organized by the UNECA-SA. The Office disseminated information about the activities of the AUC and AU-SARO to the RECs and the Member States.

Regional Organizations

UNECA-SA: The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa Southern Africa Regional Office provides technical support to the RECs and countries in Southern Africa (*UNECA-SA*) for the promotion of integration and economic development. During this period, the Office worked closely with *UNECA-SA* in integration and development activities in the region. The Office participated in the meeting arranged by the *UNECA-SA* in Johannesburg South Africa, 4 – 5 September 2007 on macroeconomic convergence in SADC. The main purpose of the meeting was to discuss the progress the SADC Member States have made in macroeconomic convergence criteria and targets as stipulated in the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Member States in August 2002 and as further reiterated in the draft of SADC Finance and Investment Protocol. The debate was intensive and fruitful influenced by the prevalence of strong spirit of determination to find solutions to the identified problems. Notably, there was the general view that the primary and the secondary targets should be retained for now. The later in particular were perceived as critical to economic growth and job creation. It was agreed that the institutions on macroeconomic convergence should be strengthened as appropriate to ensure sustained process. More importantly, there was agreement on the necessity to speedily address the issues relating to the harmonization of statistics that is vital to meaningful comparison on convergence.

Also, on 7 December 2007, the Office attended the Meeting on Joint AUC-AfDB-ECA Prospectus on Regional Integration in SADC, held in Maputo, Mozambique. The meeting was convened with aim to implement UN Secretary's General proposal in his 2006 Report that called for a joint sub-regional prospectus on regional integration. The meeting had set up the task force to address the recommendation.

Guidance, Counseling and Youth Development Center for Africa: The AU-SARO worked closely with the Guidance, Counseling and Youth Development Center for Africa in Lilongwe. The Youth Center was established in Lilongwe following the Ministerial decision of the OAU in 1979. In addition to these, the AU-SARO worked closely with the Center for Ticks and Tick-Borne Diseases (CTTBD) in the consummation of its objectives during this period. In particular, the Office offered appropriate political support to its training programs.

Non-Governmental Organizations: Also, the Office worked with non-governmental organizations such as SAPRN and FANRPAN, very important networking Southern Africa NGOs on poverty and agriculture, to promote integration and development agenda of the AU.

V. Coordination of African Group

The African Group in Lilongwe is organized to have monthly meetings to exchange views on current issues in the members, the region, continent and the international community. The Office at these meetings elaborated on the outcome of the COMESA Summit, Nairobi, May 2007 and AU Summit, Accra July 2007. The AU Regional Delegate at these meetings elaborated the main declarations and decisions of the RECs and AU Summits and exchanged ideas on actions to be taken at national or regional levels for their implementation.

VI. Conclusion

The Office is actively promoting good relations and engaging the member states, RECs, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations in Southern Africa. African integration and development issues are increasingly brought into the forefront of discussions as priorities for sustainable development.

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