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**ECA Office for North Africa**

Twentieth Meeting of the Intergovernmental  
Committee of Experts (ICE)

Tangier, Morocco  
13-15 April 2005

**ACTIVITY REPORT  
(April 2004 - April 2005)**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The report presents the main activities undertaken by the Office during the period April 2004-April 2005. These activities were implemented in collaboration with member States, sub-regional organizations and institutions from the United Nations system. They include publications, meetings, seminars and advisory services.

2. The paper reports also on the main activities undertaken by ECA-Headquarters during the period under review.

## **II. MAIN ACTIVITIES<sup>1</sup>**

### **2.1 Expert Group Meetings/Seminars/Workshops**

#### **(i) Ad-Hoc Expert Meeting on Long Term Perspective of Telecommunication Infrastructure Development in North Africa, 18-19 June 2004, Casablanca, Morocco**

3. The meeting enabled the gathering of over 20 telecommunications experts from the sub-region as well as from Europe. The achievements of this meeting included the sharing of experiences and best practices (such as Tunisia's TRADENET), the elaboration of important conclusions for North Africa's integration process and the role that telecommunications have to play in the development of the sub-region.

4. The meeting adopted three recommendations aimed at giving new impetus to integration of the sub-region: (a) creation of a cooperation platform; (b) human capacity building in telecommunications; and (c) harmonization of telecommunications policies.

#### **(ii) Seminar on the Ending of the Multifibre Agreement and its Impact on UMA Countries, 14-15 February 2005, Tunis, Tunisia**

5. The Seminar was co-organized with the Trade and Regional Integration Division (TRID) of ECA and the UMA Secretariat.

6. In preparation of the Seminar, the Office undertook missions in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia to discuss the challenges facing the textile and clothing industries after the elimination of the remaining WTO quotas on 1 January 2005.

7. The Office also undertook a study on the implications of the post-WTO ATC on producing and exporting UMA countries, based mainly on the findings of the above preparatory missions. The study served as background document to the Seminar.

8. The Seminar which gathered about 50 participants/professionals in the field of textile and clothing came up with a set of strategic recommendations on actions required to face this new challenge.

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*1 Visit the website of the Office at <http://www.uneca-na.org> for more information about the activities reported below including the parliamentary documents, the publications and the reports of the meetings.*

**(iii) Seminar on New Information and Communication Technologies and Development of E-commerce among UMA Countries, 1 -3 March 2005, Tangier, Morocco**

9. The Seminar was co-organized with the UMA Secretariat, the Development Information Services Division (DISD) of ECA and UNDP's Regional Programme for Information and Communication Technologies for Development in Arab Region (ICTDAR)

10. The three-day seminar held under the theme "ICT and development of trade exchange in Maghreb Arab Union" was an opportunity to share views and experiences on the challenges facing E-Commerce among UMA countries. A Declaration issued at the end of the seminar, calls for a revival of the Free Trade Area Project and mainstreaming e-commerce activities in trade exchange and economic policies in the region. The document highlights among others, the need to:

- Revive the Arab bank of trade and investment to finance key projects in the region;
- Build private/public sector partnerships to focus on the development of human resources and face the brain-drain challenge in the ICT sector;
- Harmonize the legal frameworks applying to e-transactions via the web in the region;
- Undertake studies on the potential of e-commerce and devise strategies on how to harness ICT for e-tourism and e-services; and
- Set up a follow up committee and a Commission of North African experts responsible for the promotion of e-commerce.

**(iv) Expert Workshop on "Women: Source of Wealth and Job Opportunities", 11-12 April 2005, Tangier, Morocco**

11. The Workshop has been organized as a pre-ICE event. It provided the opportunity to gather experts on women entrepreneurship promotion in North Africa, including in innovative sectors, such as indigenous/traditional knowledge, social services, ICT. Experts shared experiences and perspectives, highlighting constraints and opportunities.

12. Recommendations of the Workshop will be submitted to the XXth Session of the ICE meeting.

**2.2 XXth Session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE), 13-15 April, Tangier, Morocco**

13. The XXth Session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE) is planned to take place in Tangiers, Morocco on 13-15 April 2005.

14. The meeting is to examine the main parliamentary documents presented below, discuss the recommendations of the pre-ICE Expert Workshop on "Women: Source of Wealth and Job Opportunities" and review the activities undertaken by the Office in 2004-2005 as well as the proposed programme of work for the biennium 2006-2007.

**(i) Economic and Social Conditions in 2004**

15. The report to be presented to the ICE meeting has the following three parts:
- The current economic situation in North Africa;
  - Preliminary analysis of the changes in the structure of the economies of North Africa; and,
  - Women's economic participation in North Africa.
16. The report presents a structural analysis of the economies especially in a sub-regional context. It will be finalized after the ICE meeting, to include member States comments.

**(ii) Attainment of the MDGs and the Implementation of NEPAD: Progress and Prospects**

17. The report reviews North Africa's performances towards achieving the MDGs and implementing the NEPAD. It constitutes a logical follow-up to the first reviews on the MDGs drawn up by the North Africa Office in 2002 and 2003. The novelty of its approach lies in its provision of a more thorough examination accompanied by proposals for monitoring the strategies to be followed by the governmental institutions.
18. The report evaluates the progress of the countries with regard to the achievement of each of the eight millennium goals, identifies the major challenges facing these countries. The document then reports on the progress achieved at the national level in the implementation of NEPAD and the impact at the sub-regional level.
19. As for future prospect for the full realisation of the MDGs and the effective implementation of NEPAD, the report calls upon countries of the sub-region to take stock of the progress achieved and together examine the steps to be taken in order to advance the development agenda.

**(iii) Water Resources Development**

20. The report, while also making use of other sources, summarises the main findings and conclusions of the preliminary version of the Sub-regional Water Development Report in North Africa.
21. The summary report assesses the water situation in the countries of the sub-region, with regard to potentialities and extraction; identifies the critical problems posed by the competing needs, demands and uses and by water management; presents the successes that have been achieved and the constraints and difficulties encountered in implementing the African Water Vision for 2025; and, formulates the recommendations for the way forward.

**(iv) Progress report on the Status of Information for Development Activities**

22. The report evaluates the progress of the countries in the sub-region with regard to the formulation of policies, plans and strategies for the establishment of information societies in North Africa. It then draws lessons from the sub-regional initiatives in ICTs for development and formulates relevant recommendations for the way forward.

## **2.3 Publications**

### **(i) Report on Economic and Social Conditions in 2003 in North Africa**

23. The Report has been published with the following two parts:

- Part I: Analysis of the economic and social situation in North Africa in 2003; and,
- Part II: Special theme on economic reforms and competitiveness in Northern Africa countries.

### **(ii) Draft Sub-regional Water Development Report**

24. The draft report has just been produced in close collaboration with country experts and UN-Water/Africa Project of the Sustainable Development Division (SDD) of ECA. The draft Report addresses the interlinked issues of water resource development, competing water needs and environmental degradation. The preparatory processes involved a number of water experts of countries of the sub-region and led to the production of seven draft National Water Development Reports and to the establishment of a sub-regional network of water development experts.

25. The draft Sub-regional report is to be reviewed at a special review meeting (Cairo, 17 April 2005) together with the seven draft national reports. The review panel will include external reviewers selected by UN-Water/Africa and the drafters of the draft national and Sub-regional reports. Thereafter, the Sub-regional report and the seven national reports will be finalized and disseminated. They will constitute the contribution of the sub-region to the African Water Development Report.

26. The sub-regional report will be produced on a bi-annual basis to provide a durable mechanism of monitoring progress in the water sector

## **2.4 Partnerships**

27. The Office strengthened partnerships with the member States, the Regional Economic Communities (including the UMA Secretariat) and with institutions of the UN system including (UNDP, UNCTAD, UNIDO, UNFPA).

28. Undergoing consultations are expected to extend our partnership with other development actors including the civil society (private sector, NGO) , academia and other institutions of the UN system.

## **2.5 Other activities and events**

### **(i) Self - evaluation**

- *Staff retreat, 30 September-1<sup>st</sup> October 2004, Tangier*

29. A staff retreat was organized from 30 September to 1 October 2004 in Tangier with the participation of all staff of the Office (professionals and support staff). The retreat gave the opportunity to discuss the relevance of role, objectives and activities of the SRO-NA; follow-up, feedback and evaluation mechanism; communication and publication strategies; and partnerships.

30. Accordingly, the strengths and weaknesses were identified and a number of recommendations were adopted aimed at identifying a niche and defining future working strategy for the office, given our comparative advantage. Consequently, as for future prospects for the full realisation of the mandate of the Office, the retreat concluded that the Office should focus its activities on the development of an “Observatory of Regional Integration” to monitor and promote Regional integration. The process will have to include the following:

- (b) Publish long terms perspectives studies;
- (c) Document and disseminate studies, reports and best practices in integration in Africa and other regions; and
- (d) Promote and assist in the creation of links and networks among key development actors (member States, private sector, civil society and academia).

31. In addition, the retreat recommended to strengthen the Office relation with the member States:

- (a) Use the Observatory as a means to create more links with the sectoral departments;
- (b) Invite the official national focal points to facilitate communication between the office and the various departments;
- (c) Establish a more regular consultation mechanism with members of the ICE Bureau in the period between to ICE meetings.

- *Improving the work of the ECA Sub-regional Offices*

32. The United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) visited the five ECA Sub-regional Offices (SROs) in March 2005 including the SRO-NA to review and assess the implementation of the Sub-regional Offices mandate as prescribed by the ECA in its Resolution 828 (XXXII) of 8 May 1997 and ascertain whether effective coordination mechanisms exist between the SROs, ECA Headquarters and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs).

33. The evaluation processes included consultations with key partners and stakeholders; The use of questionnaires to Governments, regional and sub-regional organizations, NGOs, and beneficiaries, and the interview of key respondents; Interviews with the Directors and staff at each SRO and key staff and managers at the ECA Headquarters.

34. A report will be issued shortly with recommendations on how to improve the contribution of ECA/SROs to the development agenda of their sub-region. Its conclusions will be shared with ICE members.

**(ii) Visit of the Executive Secretary and the Deputy Executive Secretary**

35. The Deputy Executive Secretary came to the Office in October 2004 to present the progress of the Institutional Strengthening Programme activities and to review the implementation of our programme of work.

36. The Executive Secretary also paid a visit to the Office in January 2005 to discuss our work, vision, programme and working environment. He had meetings with high level officials of the Moroccan Government as well as of the UN system.

37. By these visits, the ECA management expressed its support to the Office.

**(iii) Visits of the Director**

38. It is in the context of her consultative missions to the member States that the Director has visited Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. A mission to Egypt is planned in May, to be followed by visits in Mauritania and Sudan. Moreover, various consultative missions have taken place in the host country.

**(iv) Internship programme for young scholars**

39. In application of its new policy to promote research activities in the sub-region, the SRO-NA has initiated a short-term internship programme.

40. A present, two young graduated from the Cocody University (Abidjan) are on board to work on issues of sub-regional integration during their three-months internship.

**III. MAIN ECA's ACTIVITIES<sup>2</sup>**

**(i) 37th Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, 21-22 May 2004, Kampala, Uganda**

41. The theme of the Conference was "Mainstreaming trade policy in national development strategies": The Conference discussed the type of social safety nets to protect from trade liberalization, appropriate fiscal response to declining trade taxes, the need for African countries to improve trade competitiveness. The Conference adopted a Ministerial Statement demanding, among others, that rich countries remove obstacles holding up international trade negotiations by July.

**(ii) Regional Ministerial Review Conference on Implementation of the Dakar/Ngor Declaration and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development – ICPD at 10, , 7-11 June 2004, Dakar, Senegal**

42. The Conference was organized by ECA in close collaboration with UNFPA with a view to presenting a ten-year review of the cumulative experience of African countries in the implementation of the DND/ICPD-PA and ICPD+5 Key Actions. The Conference was attended by African Ministers responsible for population issues. Most countries of the sub-region were represented at the Conference.

43. The Conference reviewed the African Regional Report on ICPD+10, identified the emerging issues and adopted relevant conclusions and recommendations in the following nine priority areas: Population, poverty and environment; Gender equality, equity and empowerment of women ; The family, its roles, rights, composition and structure; Children and youth ; Reproductive rights and reproductive health ; HIV/AIDS ; Population distribution, urbanization, migration ; Crisis situation and population consequences; Resources mobilization for the implementation of population policies and programmes.

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<sup>2</sup> Visit the ECA website at <http://www.uneca.org> for more information about the meetings reported below including the working papers, the background papers, the reports of the meetings and also about other ECA's activities.



**(iii) Fourth African Development Forum, 11-15 October 2004, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

44. The Fourth African Development Forum (ADFIV) was organized by ECA in partnership with the African Development Bank (ADB) and the African Union (AU), on the theme of "Governance for a Progressing Africa". The Forum was attended by about one thousand delegates from all over Africa including Heads of States or Governments, development experts, civil society, private sector, media and academia.

45. The Forum was preceded by regional preparatory workshops aiming to derive regional action plans. Representatives from North Africa attended the North Africa pre-ADFIV workshop meeting held in Cairo, Egypt (9-10 December 2003) to discuss and define the Sub-regional perspectives on governance in North Africa.

46. The Consensus Statement adopted by the Forum identifies the following seven key challenges to good governance in Africa: (i) Lack of effective checks and balances in African countries; (ii) Weak institutions created through political rather than normative processes; (iii) Need to accommodate traditional systems of governance into modern statehood; (iv) Corruption; (v) Need to use the potential of the private sector; (vi) HIV/AIDS; and, (vii) Need to reflect normative gains in substantial changes in women's lives.

47. The Consensus Statement also includes an Agenda for Action which stresses the need for urgent and coordinated action to address capacity deficits in key areas of good governance.

**(iv) 7th Regional Conference on Women « Decade Review of the implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action, 7-14 October 2004, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

48. African Ministers in charge of gender and women affairs met at the Seventh African Regional Conference on Women (Beijing+10) to review the status of implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action (DBPFA). All North African countries were represented at the Conference.

49. The "Outcome and the Way Forward" document adopted by the Conference identified the main changes that have taken place, at the international and regional levels, since the adoption of the two platforms as well as the achievements made and the remaining challenges. The outcome document contained also a Programme of Action that defined the key actions required to accelerate the implementation of the DBPFA as well as the institutional measures required for effective gender mainstreaming. The outcome document is Africa's contribution to the global review process on Beijing +10 that was held in New York, from 28 February to 11 March 2005

**(v) Big Table Meeting, 16-17 October 2004, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

50. The theme of this Big Table was "Stimulating Private Investment in Africa". The event brought together selected African Finance and Planning Ministers, development partners from OECD countries and representatives from key development institutions and African private sector bodies

51. The 34 participants reviewed constraints to domestic and foreign investment in Africa, and talked about approaches and mechanisms that could help scale up private investment in the continent.

52. Since its establishment by the Economic Commission for Africa in 2000, the Big Table has convened three meetings and a special session in October 2003. Earlier Big Table meetings considered growth and poverty reduction, the critical importance of African leadership and commitment, debt sustainability, and the Africa-donor partnerships and securing financing for development.

**(vi) Africa Regional Preparatory Conference to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), 2-4 February 2005, Accra, Ghana**

53. The theme of the Conference was “Access: Africa’s key to an inclusive information society”. Participants in the Conference were representatives of the African countries, delegates from many other countries and representatives from African and international organizations, the private sector and civil society.

54. The Conference reviewed progress made in implementing the Plan of Action adopted at the first phase of the WSIS in Geneva in December 2003. It debated methods of financing information and communication technologies in Africa and various aspects of internet governance. The Conference came up with concrete recommendations aimed at reducing poverty, broadening access to health care, education and bridging the technology gap between Africa and the developed nations.

55. The Conference adopted a Declaration: “Accra Commitments for WSIS” that will be presented as the African position during the second phase of the WSIS, to be held on 16-18 November 2005, in Tunis, Tunisia.

#### **IV. REMAINING ACTIVITIES FOR 2005**

56. During the coming months, SRO-NA will continue to collaborate with its partners on the implementation of the remaining activities for the year 2005 i.e.:

- Organize with Headquarters the Interactive meeting of the Commission on HIV/AIDS and Governance in Africa (CHGA), 22-23 April 2005, Casablanca, Morocco;
- Participate in the 38th session of ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Development, 14-15 May, Abuja, Nigeria;
- Finalize the Report on Economic and Social Conditions in North Africa ;
- Finalise the Sub-regional Water Development Report;
- Prepare of a study on the impact of HIV/AIDS on selected North African economies ;
- Organize group-training workshops for senior policy makers and major stakeholders in the areas of modeling medium-term projections, engendering national accounts and national budgets and economic and corporate governance and accountability;
- Organize a seminar on the challenge of water and environment in North Africa;
- Organize a preparatory seminar for the Fifth African Development Forum to be held on theme “*Youth and Leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*”;
- Convene a special event on North African development ;
- Organize a round table on the economic structures in North Africa;
- Participate in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), Tunis, 16-18 November 2005;
- Etc...