



**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
Office for North Africa**

Distr.: GENERAL

ECA-NA/ICE/XXVII/4
March 2012

Original: FRENCH

Twenty seventh meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee
of Experts (ICE)

Rabat (Morocco)
6-9 March 2012

Annual report on ECA Activities in North Africa
(March 2011 – February 2012)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction	1
II. The main accomplishments of the work programme in 2011	2
A – Social development	3
B- Managing development	5
C – Sustainable development	5
D – Support for RECs	7
E – Managing knowledge	9
F – Cooperation and partnership	9
G – Advisory services	10
III. Challenges, lessons learned and prospects for 2012	11

I. Introduction

1. This report deals with the main activities undertaken by the Sub-Regional Office in North Africa (SRO-NA) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) during the period from March 2011 to February 2012. These activities were implemented in accordance with the strategic framework of the work programme for the period 2011-2012, validated by the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE) at its 23rd session in March 2008 and were carried out in collaboration with Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) sub-regional organisations and institutions of the United Nations system. They include publications, meetings, seminars and consultation services. As well as the main accomplishments and results achieved, the report describes the difficulties encountered and lessons learned during the programme's implementation.
2. The main goal of the work programme was to "Strengthen the capacities of Member States for regional integration by placing particular importance on the specific priorities of the sub-region of North Africa, in the general framework of NEPAD and of development goals agreed at an international level, notably the MDGs".
3. The goal pursued was achieved in the form of three major results: (i) better capacity of the administrations of Member States, of the General Secretariat of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) and of other intergovernmental organisations to formulate and implement harmonised macroeconomic and sectoral policies and programmes aimed at responding to the main sub-regional development priorities in North Africa. This involved supporting Member States to jointly formulate and adopt strategies and plans for policymaking in priority areas; (ii) a strengthened capacity of the AMU to implement multi-year programmes thanks to improved partnerships with the main stakeholders, notably other intergovernmental organisations, United Nations bodies, the AfDB and the secretariat of NEPAD, in reference to the number of actions, programmes and projects undertaken jointly with the RECs concerned and other partners, and achieved at the levels of the sub-region and of countries; (iii) an extensive network of information and knowledge with key partners engaged in sub-regional development, including governments, the private sector, civil society, the AMU and United Nations bodies, the specific goal being to increase the number of communities of practice participating in the knowledge sharing structure set up by SRO-NA.

II. The main accomplishments of the work programme in 2011

4. The activities that formed the Office's work programme were implemented in the aim of producing results in line with the priorities defined by the strategic framework for 2010-2011, ECA business plan for 2010-2012 and multi-year programme of cooperation with the AMU for 2010-2012.
5. Recommendations resulting from meetings of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE) and contributions made by Member States, the AMU and other partners also contributed to marking out the Office's framework of intervention throughout the period under review.
6. By 31st December 2011, the level of implementation of the work programme for the biennium 2010-2011 was 96% and should reach 100% by the end of March 2012.
7. 2011 was used to consolidate the achievements of the biennium 2010-2011 in the area of policy formulation and advocacy activities. The 26th session of the ICE was held in Rabat (Morocco) from 22nd to 25th February 2011 and consisted of a forum that enabled a consensus to be reached on the main priorities for sub-regional integration in North Africa. During this meeting, the implementation of the work programme was reviewed by experts from the States of North Africa, as well as embassies based in Rabat, the General Secretariat of the AMU, international and regional organisations, universities, NGOs and the private sector. The programme's quality was recognised through the "Final Statement" adopted by the Committee.
8. The results of the ICE were presented at the 4th Joint AU-ECA Conference of African ministers of finance, planning and economic development.
9. The Office also contributed to policy formulation through ad hoc meetings of experts and publications in the following fields: worker mobility in the Maghreb, climate change and sustainable development in North Africa, challenges and opportunities of renewable energy in North Africa, and the youth as actors of development.
10. Details relating to the implementation of the work programme are expressed below in terms of main sectors of activity, results and difficulties encountered in 2011:

A – Social development

Social policies

11. During the period under review, Member States recognised the importance of the social aspect of economic development by adopting several policies and recommendations promoting social development, and by implementing or strengthening institutions tasked with applying social policies such as economic and social advice and observatories of social policy.

Gender

12. The economic participation of women is now recognised as a key factor for development in the Maghreb thanks to the systematisation of gender-related issues in the Office's main activities. This was demonstrated by the organisation of a symposium on the Role of female entrepreneurs in the economic development of the countries of the Arab Maghreb in 2010, followed by a working group to remove reservations and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in North Africa in March 2011.

Employment

13. An ad hoc meeting of high-level experts was organised in September 2011 in Rabat (Morocco) for an in-depth examination of the problem of worker mobility in the context of the process of regional integration of the AMU. The overall goal of the meeting was to support the efforts of the sub-region's States towards greater mobilisation of available human resources and synergistic optimisation in terms of any complementarity between States or between sectors of economic activities.

14. The meeting was attended by approximately 30 experts representing national administrations and agencies for employment, research institutions, trade union confederations and employers' associations of the sub-region's States, the General Secretariat of the AMU, the ECOWAS Commission, the ILO, teachers/researchers and business leaders.

15. Its recommendations notably concern ways and means to make existing agreements operational, the implementation of a regional observatory on training, employment and migration, and the creation of a Maghreb agency for employment.

16. These recommendations will be submitted to the legislative bodies of the AMU for validation, and will then be the subject of an implementation plan by the General Secretariat of the AMU with the support of its partners, including ECA.

17. A publication has been produced on the issue, for purposes of a detailed analysis of migration between the States of North Africa in a global context in which spatial and social mobility has become a vehicle for development. The study proposes a regional strategy to promote worker mobility in the Maghreb and identifies instruments to be implemented in order to create, stimulate and manage a regional work market in North Africa, as well as the pre-conditions for migratory movements to be integrated harmoniously into national development strategies.

Youth

18. In the context of the International Year of Youth, the Office organised a regional forum entitled "Youth, actors of development" from 8th to 10th December 2011 in Tunis, in collaboration with UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, ISESCO, UNESCO, UNIDO and AMU.

19. The goal of the forum was to contribute to improving and deepening inter-generational dialogue in order to enable young people to play a more active role in the process of sustainable development in North Africa. Participation, employment, sustainable development, regional integration and health were the main themes around which the forum's programme was structured. Issues of gender and youth vulnerability were also dealt with across the board.

20. The forum brought together almost 150 young people and other participants, including figures and experts from a variety of backgrounds from the region's seven countries (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Sudan and Tunisia), young people from social organisations and private sector organisations, young entrepreneurs, academics, members of the diaspora, decision-makers and representatives of the media. Representatives and experts from the field of international cooperation also took part, notably from the United Nations system, international and regional organisations, and organisations for bilateral and multilateral cooperation, including the Arab Maghreb Union, African Union Commission, League of Arab States and ISESCO.

21. At the end of the discussions, a Final Declaration was adopted, which was the fruit of the combined work of the youth themselves. The Tunis Declaration calls for a strengthening of youth leadership, without distinction of gender, and promoting its effective participation in politics, economics and society. The Tunis Declaration emphasises the need to strengthen the capacities of the various participants in order to optimise and improve the effectiveness of their action to promote the role and rights of adolescents and young people, and calls for the creation of more opportunities for dialogue and meetings between the region's youth and politicians.

22. Youth employment was one of the major aspects stressed by the Tunis Declaration, which added that extra efforts were expected of governments and the private sector to adapt educational programmes to the needs of the labour market and create more opportunities for young people, at the same time as promoting green and sustainable jobs.

23. Other areas on which the Tunis Declaration made statements included young people's sexual and reproductive health, their participation in sustainable development and regional integration, as well as networking between youth associations and the role of the media as a vehicle for awareness raising and change.

24. It should also be noted that several discussion pages were set up by the youth themselves on social networks, with a view to continuing to exchange information and knowledge beyond Tunis.

B – Managing development

The role of the State

25. A round table on the role of the State in economic and social transformation was held in the framework of the discussions of ICE 2011. The round table emphasised three major issues connected to the role of the State: i) transforming the economy; ii) financing development; iii) social development. The sessions of which it comprised were structured around talks by international and national experts. The talks and debates enabled participants to exchange experiences and perspectives on the role of the State in a context marked by issues such as the financial and economic crisis, the emergence of new actors including the private sector and civil society, climate change, and changes in demographic dynamics and the labour market.

26. Two regional seminars were also organised in October 2011 on demographic governance in North Africa. The first was organised jointly with the ECA's Governance and Public Administration Division, while the second with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in coordination with the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco. Both brought together over 100 regional and international experts, including senior government officials and representatives of the region's different Economic and Social Councils, international and social organisations, research centres, women's associations, youth associations and the media.

27. Organised in a context of decisive political and social change, these two seminars, which benefited from sustained media coverage, provided the occasion for participants to reflect together on the ins and outs of the social movements experienced by the sub-region's countries and to identify potential ways to help political decision-makers to adapt their public policies better and apply a logic of listening to citizens and their expectations. At the end of these seminars, a set of strong, targeted recommendations was proposed, the implementation of which will contribute to giving better concrete expression to the institutionalisation of citizen participation and establishing the bases of an effective and sustainable form of participative democracy in North Africa.

C – Sustainable development

Climate change

28. ECA-NA, in collaboration with the African Climate Policy Centre and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), launched a study aimed at developing a regional framework for action and cooperation towards targeted strengthening of AMU member countries' capacities for adapting to climate change. This activity is in response to recommendations made by Member States at ICE 2010 and aims to promote better coordination and improved regional cooperation through sharing of relevant knowledge acquired and national and regional scientific resources and through the development of joint initiatives with a view to strengthening the capacities of countries and of the AMU. It follows on directly from the goals of the new Cancun Adaptation Framework, which aims to support the implementation of adaptation projects in developing countries.

29. With a view to discussing issues such as this framework of action and cooperation, a seminar for exchanging and sharing experiences regarding climate change and sustainable development in North Africa was held in Rabat on 27th and 28th September 2011, bringing

together experts from research centres from the Arab region and specialist organisations from civil society.

30. The meeting was the fruit of collaboration with the AMU and the African Climate Policy Centre, and provided the opportunity to (i) engage in dialogue on the development of policies, knowledge and research with regard to adaptation to climate change in the Maghreb region; (ii) identify priority areas for cooperation in order to promote sharing of knowledge and capacities in the Maghreb region on the basis of the comparative benefits for the countries and institutions.

31. It also highlighted initiatives carried out by several national and regional institutions that specialise in areas such as: the territorial approach, meteorological information, degradation of land, water resource management, adaptation of cereal crops, adaptation of coastal areas and disaster risk management.

32. The seminar also emphasised the need to develop unified sub-regional initiatives and programmes in the areas of forecasting, climate modelling, observatories for early drought warnings, water management, climate-related natural disaster risk management, and training and management of knowledge relating to the climate and sustainable development.

Rio+20

33. This involved supporting Member States in the process of preparing for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, also called "Rio+20", which will take place from 20th to 22nd June 2012 in Rio, Brazil. For this purpose, the Office gave technical assistance to Mauritania in organising national consultations for Rio+20 in collaboration with the UNDP in December 2011.

34. In addition, the Office provided technical support to the AMU, as well as support for the mobilisation of financial resources in the framework of the sub-regional process of preparations for Rio+20 initiated by ECA in collaboration with the AfDB. This support led to a review of progress made in the implementation of sustainable development in North Africa and the holding of a consultation meeting in Rabat, organised by the Office (4th to 5th October 2011), during which the participants were able to debate the region's priority sustainable development issues and make recommendations.

35. The Office also facilitated the participation of experts from the AMU in several events organised by ECA relating to food security (July 2011) and Rio+20 (October 2011).

New and renewable energies

36. In the framework of its work programme (2010-2011), the Office collaborated with the AMU to launch a two-year project regarding innovative mechanisms for financing renewable energies (RE) in North Africa. The overall goal of this project is to support efforts to develop the existing potential of renewable energy in the region in order to strengthen energy security, improve socio-economic conditions and fight against climate change.

37. The project got off the ground with a study to establish a benchmark situation for the development of RE and energy efficiency (EE) in North Africa. This study analysed the potential, opportunities in the medium and long term, lessons learned from past and present initiatives, as well as current barriers and prospects. Particular attention was paid to making use of expertise and lessons drawn from programmes and initiatives carried out by development partners and international and regional networks dealing with issues linked to renewable energy development and the promotion of an integrated regional market.

38. In order to inform actors from the energy sector about the project and to share the results of the benchmark study, the ECA Office for North Africa organised a first meeting of experts in Rabat (Morocco) on 12th and 13th January 2012.

D – Support for RECs

39. During the period under review, the partnership with the AMU improved markedly. Many joint activities were organised in the framework of the multi-year programme for 2010-2012, including a youth forum, a conference on the role of women in development, a workshop on cybercriminality in North Africa and a meeting on collaboration between the AMU and African RECs. Officials and experts from the AMU actively participated in the Office's activities, including the ICE meeting, during which a specific session on regional integration was organised.

40. SRO-NA continued its efforts to set up a Sub-Regional Coordination Mechanism (SRCM) in the framework of the United Nations system's support for the AU and its NEPAD programme and for RECs in North Africa. In this context, a meeting about monitoring and evaluating the multi-year SRO-NA-AMU programme was organised under the heading "Partnership for the Maghreb" in December 2010. This brought together the main contributors involved in North African development to discuss activities planned in the second multi-year programme 2011-2013 and to exchange information with the AMU and the Office about activities that could be implemented jointly. This year, the same meeting was organised for 14th December 2011. However, unlike the 2010 meeting, it was limited to the participation of the AMU and the Office, bearing in mind its goals. This is because, having successfully tried to widen the AMU's partnership base in Africa, the immediate goal was an evaluation of the implementation of the programme of cooperation (MYP) 2010-2012. This one-day meeting enabled the partners to achieve this goal and lay the foundations for building the next programme of cooperation between the two partners. The strategy of following recommendations from previous activities was also discussed. The detailed conclusions of this meeting appear in the report on the implementation of the ECA/NA-AMU programme of cooperation.

41. An ad hoc meeting of experts on the subject of Improving exchanges of experience and information between Regional Economic Communities was organised by the Office in collaboration with the African Maghreb Union (AMU) and African Development Bank (AfDB) in Tunis (Tunisia) on 7th and 8th July 2011.

42. The meeting was organised within the general framework of new South-South cooperation trends. New developments in international cooperation observed in recent years show the importance of organised groups (multinational companies, coalitions of countries, regional

economic groupings, etc.) for the development of exchanges goods and services and the circulation of capital around the world.

43. While globalisation has in recent years been characterised by the regrouping of States into areas of integration, to the extent that the question of the connections between regionalisation and globalisation is often asked, it has to be recognised that RECs are playing an increasingly important role in implementing world order, whether economic or otherwise. This role is called upon to grow with the emergence of certain developing countries and their offensive in global economic relations, notably towards other countries in the South. In this new configuration, RECs and other International Organisations have in recent years launched cooperation initiatives through the quasi-institutional organisation of summits between emerging countries in the South and developing countries in Africa.

44. The meeting was also marked by exchanging and sharing of experiences, both past and still to come. Indeed, as well as these new roles in the facilitation of South-South cooperation, RECs with different levels of integration will benefit from accelerating their collaboration, both on a global basis and by sector and theme.

45. In this spirit, two days of discussions took place organised into five main sessions: Improving the exchange of experience and cooperation between RECs: the challenges and main areas of cooperation; Concepts and approaches for increasing cooperation among RECs; Data consistency and exchange; Management of knowledge and strategy for sharing; How to increase cooperation between the AMU and other RECs.

46. The meeting involved the participation of experts from Regional Economic Communities, notably the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU). International, regional and private-sector organisations, namely COMESA-RIA, the Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FEWACCI) and the North African Office of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), were also present.

47. One of the meeting's recommendations was for the AfDB and ECA to continue their efforts to facilitate cooperation between RECs in parallel with the joint processes of harmonisation with the African Union that these efforts must strengthen. They were consequently asked to continue their efforts to share their strength with the African Union in order to place the AfDB's database work, ECA's observatory of regional integration, and other initiatives towards statistical harmonisation, in a common context of optimising and seeking synergy in their actions.

48. The meeting recommended the AMU to continue its efforts towards accelerating regional integration in North Africa, which, despite good intentions, remains the least integrated part of the continent. Welcoming its new approach and the AfDB and ECA's efforts to support the AMU in its steps, the meeting recommended the AMU to capitalise on the experiences of other RECs in all areas of interest to it. The implementation of a platform for the management and sharing of knowledge should play an important role in this. A publication showing current trends in South-South cooperation and the role of Regional Economic Communities was also produced as a result of this meeting's reflections.

E – Managing knowledge

49. In the area of knowledge management, the Office continued its efforts to engage in partnership with academia by organising the fifth edition of the International Mediterranean Symposium on the topic of "the liberalisation of trade and the dynamics of inequalities". This edition was organised jointly with the WTO, University Lyon II, and Mohamed VI Souissi University. It benefited from the participation of about 100 experts from 15 countries and provided the opportunity for high-level scientific discussions on the basis of about 60 papers.

50. The symposium contributed, like previous editions, to knowledge sharing and better understanding of the dynamics of inequalities in relation to international trade. After several years, and on the recommendation of Member States, the Symposium has become an annual event and a "Meeting" for distinguished experts interested in the sub-region's development and its interaction with other sub-regions. The symposium has also contributed to strengthening SRO-NA's relations with universities and academia in North Africa. As a result, a network of experts has been created and meets on an annual basis. The members of this network are also involved in SRO-NA activities, acting as experts, consultants and sources of reference or as external assessors of the quality of our work. Three books of selected contributions from the first three editions have also been published and distributed.

F – Cooperation and partnership

51. During the period under review, the Office strengthened its partnership with other actors, notably United Nations bodies and in particular the United Nations country teams in Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia. The Office made significant progress as an active member of these teams.

52. SRO-NA played a major role in implementing several key joint activities. This role was also essential for ensuring that regional integration issues are taken into account in the programmes run by country teams and are consequently expressed in the UNDAF's declaration of results.

53. In the framework of the second meeting of the Committee on Development Information Science and Technology (CODIST II), the Office collaborated with the ISTD to organise a workshop on legal and regulatory frameworks for the economy of knowledge on 2nd May 2011 in Addis Ababa.

54. The workshop benefited from the participation of member countries and Regional Economic Communities (RECs), including the AMU, and provided the opportunity to present the draft regional convention on cybersecurity, for which ECA is supporting the Commission of the African Union, and to launch consultations to be undertaken in relation to this subject at the sub-regional level with RECs. The workshop that the Office is organising with the AMU for 19th-21st March 2012 in Rabat fits into this framework.

55. The Office took part in the second meeting of the steering committee for the regional project of ESCWA and in the workshop on harmonisation of cyberlegislation for promotion of the society of knowledge in the Arab world, which took place in Beirut, Lebanon, on 13th, 14th and 15th September 2011.

56. ECA's experience and actions towards harmonisation of the legal framework of TICs in Africa were presented in order to create better synergy between ECA and ESCWA's actions in this area, notably with regard to the countries of North Africa.

G – Advisory services

57. During the period under review, the Office responded to a request from Algeria and Mauritania. In addition to these formal requests, the Office, through its Director, met on several occasions with the authorities of the host country (Morocco) and had meetings with the transitional authorities in Tunisia, notably in order to prepare for the "Youth" forum.

58. The meetings with Morocco, which took place at various levels, generally fit into the framework of cooperation between the United Nations System and the Kingdom of Morocco. The Office's experts are members of various themed groups for the implementation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

59. In Algeria, the mission enabled the identification of possible areas for collaboration between ECA and Algeria. Particular attention was paid to work on implementing the System of National Accounts 2008 and to the wishes of the Ministry responsible for the long term to carry out long-term studies into the Algerian economy.

60. The mission in Mauritania was carried out in response to a request by the Mauritanian Ministry of Finance to the Executive Secretary of ECA. It comprised the Food Security and Sustainable Development Division, the Economic Development and NEPAD Division, the African Centre for Statistics, and the Office for North Africa. This exploratory mission provided an up-to-date insight into the socioeconomic and environmental context of Mauritania. It enabled the delegation to better determine the challenges faced by Mauritania, as well as the priority areas for action by the country's authorities. This resulted in the identification of potential areas for cooperation and the expression of the need for a memorandum on cooperation between ECA and Mauritania. Following this mission, the Office gave technical assistance to Mauritania in organising national consultations for Rio+20 in collaboration with the UNDP in December 2011.

61. In addition to these missions and contacts, this year the Office organised data collection missions in all its Member States, in order to obtain up-to-date data about the economic and social situation in 2011 and forecasts for 2012. These missions also enabled the collection of additional information in questionnaires sent through the diplomatic channels in each of the States.

III. Challenges, lessons learned and prospects for 2012

62. 2011 constituted a very decisive period of the Member States' history. The scale of social demand, particularly young people's demand for better governance and reduction of inequalities, leads to the need for both a review of the States' policies and programmes, and also a refinement of the tools and methods for evaluating economic performance. The Office and other partners need to give more support to Member States in their efforts to reformulate strategies of development and assessment of the mechanisms thus far implemented to ensure better distribution of the fruits of growth, promotion of employment, and governance that is more inclusive, particularly of young people. In this respect, it is particularly notable that the Office, the General Secretariat of the AMU and its other partners from the UNS decided to make 2012 a year in which youth is a central theme of their collaboration.

63. On the other hand, the slow pace of the process of regional integration in North Africa remains a major challenge that still does not favour the full implementation of the Office's activities and greater effectiveness of its actions. The Office is still hopeful that the political and social transformations that began in 2011 will also result in improved links of cooperation between North African states and more effective economic integration with appropriate mechanisms.

64. More specifically, in 2012 the Office will organise an ICE session and ad hoc meetings of experts on three main themes, namely: sustainable development (Evaluation of the implications of Rio+20 for North Africa), economic development (Financial integration and regional governance in North Africa) and social development (Strengthening social protection in North Africa). The results of the discussions at each meeting of experts will be published. Other plans for 2012 include three training seminars: i) on SNC 2008, ii) on tools for assessing the impact of common policies for regional integration in the Maghreb and iii) on the sub-regional aspects of the knowledge society; an operational project on TICs for energy efficiency in Maghreb countries; and 10 advisory services requested by Member States. See the document ECA-NA/ICE/XXVII/5 for further details.