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provisional agenda*

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provisional agenda*

TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

1. Very strong historical evidence shows that economic development and growth are positively correlated to the development of adequate, efficient and reliable transport and communications services. Over the past twenty years, there has been no significant economic growth in Africa and in the past few years, Africa's economic conditions have actually deteriorated. A critical review reveals that Africa's transport and communications infrastructures are inadequate and that services are generally inefficient and unreliable. Indeed, all economic activities including development of rural areas, location and expansion of industries, creation of employment opportunities and better prices for products and services, depend on efficient transport systems.

2. While the major causes of the lack of development of the transport and communications sectors can be traced to Africa's colonial past, the important question and current challenge which Africa faces, is how best to physically integrate the continent and therefore improve the general well-being of the people through economic development and growth.

MAJOR PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

3. The major problems of Africa's transport and communications are both primary and secondary in that some of the problems directly result from other causes, for example: the general inefficiency in the construction of infrastructure and facilities or in the management of services is a direct result of the lack of trained and experienced personnel, which in turn is a direct result from the lack of or the inadequacy of training institutions. Similarly, poor, inadequate and neglected maintenance partly results from inadequate resources allocation, which in turn is a result of the lack of foreign exchange or the failure to develop locally some supporting industries for domestic production of certain materials, equipment or components thereof, etc. Therefore in essence, Africa's transport and communications problems fit the classical economic definition of a "vicious circle".

4. A partial list of Africa's transport and communications problems includes the following:

- (i) inadequate and low standard infrastructure and facilities;
- (ii) inadequate and obsolete equipment;
- (iii) poor, inadequate and occasionally neglected maintenance;
- (iv) lack of standardization;
- (v) unharmonized and unco-ordinated infrastructure and services;
- (vi) scarcity or lack of spare parts;
- (vii) lack or scarcity of trained and experienced personnel at all levels of construction, management and operations;
- (viii) lack or inadequacy of proper training institutions;
- (ix) absence of harmonized transport/communications policies and legislation at the subregional/regional levels;
- (x) absence of transport/communications industries in Africa;
- (xi) scarcity of foreign exchange due to low export earnings and tight international lending;
- (xii) inadequate budgetary allocations for maintenance and rehabilitation and;
- (xiii) general inefficiency in infrastructure/facilities construction and in the management/operations of services.

Proposed solutions

5. These and other problems which frustrate Africa's efforts to provide efficient, reliable and reasonably priced transport and communications services have been exhaustively analyzed and documented in the first and second phase programmes of the United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa^{1/} (UNTACDA), whose main objectives are to enable the physical integration of the continent through a collective regional effort with emphasis on improving, harmonizing, co-ordinating and integrating existing and future transport and communications infrastructure and services, which would not only eliminate or

^{1/} Documents E/CN.14/726 E/CN.14/TRANS/147, E/ECA/TCD16 and 17.

solve the numerous problems listed above, but foster and facilitate economic and social co-operation, intra-African trade and internal collective self-reliance. In essence, the programme is an integral part of and conforms to, the central objective of the Lagos Plan of Action (IPA) and Final Act of Lagos (FAL).

6. The second phase programme which was approved by the ECA Conference of Ministers resolution 287 (XIX) of 26 May 1984 and constitutes the only valid transport and communications component of the IPA and FAL, is quite comprehensive and is estimated to cost about US\$18.3 billion over the next three and half years. The programme however recognizes and lays strong emphasis on the development of certain major inter-state transport and communications links, which have the greatest potential and impact in efforts to physically integrate the continent, namely: (a) existing and potential transit transport corridors, mostly serving the numerous land-locked African countries; (b) the Trans-African Highway network, which is designed to enable inter-connection of all mainland African countries by appropriately designed highway and feeder road networks, and (c) inter-African air transport links, similarly designed to enable, regular, frequent and reliable air connections among African countries.

7. In the programme as a whole, including the above mentioned areas, the strongest emphasis is given to the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing transport and communications infrastructures and facilities because most of them are in disrepair and the drive to construct new infrastructure at the expense or neglect of existing ones will not add to the total usable infrastructure or enable the physical integration of the continent, but may actually add to the existing transport and communications problems in Africa. From the economic and financial view, the cost of rehabilitation and reconstruction of seriously deteriorated infrastructure/facilities is as much as, if not more than, the cost of new construction and the operating costs on such facilities are abnormally high and constitute a major constraint on economic development.

8. Training and technical assistance figure prominently in the programme and special projects dealing exclusively with the expansion of existing and the establishment of new regional/subregional training centres and the effective utilization of foreign technical assistance, are contained in it. The objective is to harmonize, standardize and concentrate the training of African transport and communications personnel in a few well-managed and intensively utilized regional/subregional training institutions. These institutions would also enable the efficient and effective utilization of foreign technical assistance in the form of trainers.

9. The programme clearly recognizes the fact that inter-state links are but inevitable extensions of national networks and therefore contains several key national projects which either form parts of, or are crucial for, the inter-state links.

10. There are also a few regional/subregional projects in the programme dealing with special issues or projects in which the region as a whole, or an entire subregion, must fully co-operate for effective implementation.

11. Below is a summary^{2/} of all the second phase transport projects by nature in both financial terms and by percentages. The table among other things reveals that the critical elements of the programme (inter-state links, regional/subregional projects) directly dealing with the physical integration of the continent constitute only 30.81 per cent of the total cost, while national projects alone constitute about 41.50 per cent. Of the total local and external financing already received, only 36.94 per cent is for the crucial regional/subregional and inter-state link projects, which clearly shows their inability to attract substantial funding, in spite of their importance.

^{2/} Source: E/ECA/TCTD/16. page 25.

Projects by nature: All transport modes

Nature of projects	No. of projects	Total cost	Financing External	\$ Million	
				Received Local	Financing to be sought
Maintenance and rehabilitation	133	3,092.32	124.24	640.07	2,328.00
Training and technical assistance	75	286.83	26.86	80.68	179.29
Inter-State links:	200	4,103.67	342.73	1,370.02	2,381.92
Transport corridors	105	2,354.12	174.88	927.97	1,251.27
Trans-African Highways and feeder roads	82	1,695.39	162.35	437.39	1,095.65
Intra-African air-links	13	54.16	5.50	13.66	35.00
Regional/subregional projects	33	750.39	32.70	310.09	407.60
National priority projects	140	6,195.95	562.54	1,876.42	3,756.99
Total	581	14,429.15	1,089.07	4,286.28	9,053.80

Nature of projects	No. of projects	Total cost	Financing External	Percentage	
				Received Local	Financing to be sought
Maintenance and rehabilitation	22.89	21.43	11.41	14.93	25.71
Training and technical assistance	12.91	1.99	2.47	1.88	1.98
Inter-State Links	34.42	28.44	31.47	32.17	26.31
Regional/subregional projects	5.68	5.20	3.00	7.24	4.50
National priority projects	24.10	42.94	51.65	43.78	41.50
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

12. A similar analysis below for the communication sector^{3/} shows that the crucial regional projects constitute only 17.2 per cent of the total cost.

The table also reveals that out of the total local and external funds so far secured, only 6.05 per cent is for the crucial regional communications projects, similarly confirming to a greater degree, the observations in the transport sector (see paragraph 11 above).

PROJECTS BY NATURE ALL COMMUNICATIONS SUBSECTORS

Project category	Subsector						Total		Percentage of total cost
	TEP		BRP		POP		A	B	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	
Rehabilitation and maintenance	15	100.15	8	24.73	3	4.34	26	129.22	3.3
Technical assistance	5	9.64	9	18.96	10	5.11	24	33.71	0.9
Training	22	164.79	14	33.52	16	46.06	52	244.37	6.2
Other regional	75	505.30	3	2.54	17	168.05	95	675.39	17.2
Other national	99	1,912.32	87	635.82	89	299.39	275	2,847.53	72.4
Total	216	2,690.20	121	715.57	135	522.95	472	3,930.72	100.00

A: Number of projects

B. Cost in millions of dollars

^{3/} Source: E/ECA/TCID/17, page 78.

Summary details of financing secured, committed or
locally earmarked (in millions of dollars)

Project grouping	TEP		BRP		POF		Total
	External	Local	External	Local	External	Local	
Rehabilitation/ maintenance	7.58	5.10	0.66	2.11	-	1.45	16.90
Training	-	30.34	-	3.77	0.30	23.80	58.21
Technical assistance	-	-	0.56	-	0.49	-	1.05
Other regional	54.68	55.44	-	-	-	-	110.12
Other national	43.23	1,383.08	73.50	65.85	0.10	68.16	1,633.92
Total	105.49	1,473.97	74.72	71.73	0.89	93.41	1,820.20

13. While the approved second phase programme remains the viable means by which the objectives of the LPA and FAL can be achieved in the transport and communications sectors, it recognizes and gives priority to the implementation of certain categories which are both critical and provide the greatest impact to the physical integration of the continent, i.e. inter-state link projects comprising of (a) existing and potential transit transport corridors; (b) the trans-African highway network and its feeder roads; and (c) inter-African air connection. The strongest emphasis in the entire programme is given to the maintenance and rehabilitation of seriously deteriorated infrastructure and facilities and to manpower training. However, it should be pointed out that important as inter-state link projects are, they tend to attract lower funding than say, national projects. Therefore unless the trend is reversed, it would be very difficult to achieve the primary objectives of the LPA or the Decade itself.

14. Indeed national projects are an indispensable element of the programme and so are new construction projects, but given the scarcity of internal and external resources, a deliberate and logical choice must be made in giving emphasis to those projects that enhance physical integration of the continent, including also projects on maintenance and rehabilitation of existing infrastructure/facilities and training which are crucial not only for the construction/rehabilitation of the systems but for their efficient operations and maintenance. In order to attain a minimum degree of self-reliance in these sectors, African countries must actively promote the establishment of industries in the field of transport and communications equipment manufacture in order to reduce dependence on imports, which require massive foreign exchange expenditures which most African countries cannot afford.

15. In conclusion, progress in the productive and service sectors, and indeed in the rate of economic recovery in Africa, could crucially depend on how effectively the transport and communications problems have been tackled or resolved through the implementation of the second phase programme of the United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa.