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CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND
THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

Report of the Secretary-General

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* A/36/50.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 10 December 1980, the General Assembly adopted resolution 35/117 on co-operation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), part of which read as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"...

"Noting with satisfaction the high-level meeting held at Nairobi from 5 to 7 June 1980 between representatives of the General Secretariat of the Organization of African Unity and the secretariats of the United Nations and other organizations within the United Nations system, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 34/21 on co-operation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity,

"...

"5. Approves the decisions, recommendations, proposals and arrangements contained in the conclusions of the Nairobi meeting of representatives of the General Secretariat of the Organization of African Unity and the secretariats of the United Nations and other organizations within the United Nations system, in particular the decision to hold periodic consultations to discuss matters of mutual concern and to follow up decisions of the Nairobi meeting;

"6. Requests the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity, to arrange for the meeting between representatives of the General Secretariat of the Organization of African Unity and the secretariats of the United Nations and other organizations within the United Nations system to be held at Geneva in April 1981, as called for in the conclusions of the Nairobi meeting;

"...

"19. Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution and on the development of co-operation between the Organization of African Unity and the organizations concerned within the United Nations system."

2. The present document gives an account of the Meeting between Representatives of the General Secretariat of OAU and the Secretariats of the United Nations and Other Organizations within the United Nations System, as called for in paragraph 6 of resolution 35/117.

3. Further information on the implementation of resolution 35/117, as called for in paragraph 19 of that resolution, will appear as an addendum to this document.

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II. PREPARATORY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE MEETING

4. The Secretary-General, in consultation with the Secretary-General of OAU, convened the Meeting between representatives of OAU and the secretariats of the United Nations system, which was held from 13 to 16 April 1981 at the Palais des Nations at Geneva. It was agreed that the meetings would be chaired alternately by representatives of the United Nations system and the General Secretariat of OAU.

5. The United Nations system was represented by 37 officials from the following parts of the United Nations Secretariat, the specialized agencies and several other organizations and bodies within the United Nations system:

United Nations

Office of the Director-General for Development and
International Economic Co-operation

Office for Special Political Questions

Office of Legal Affairs

Department of Political and Security Council Affairs

Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Namibia

Office of Personnel Services

Department of Conference Services

Department of Public Information

Centre for Science and Technology for Development

Division of Human Rights

United Nations Office at Geneva

Economic Commission for Africa

Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator

World Food Council

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

United Nations Environment Programme

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)

United Nations Development Programme

World Food Programme of the United Nations and FAO

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

United Nations Institute on Training and Research

Joint Inspection Unit

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International Labour Organisation
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
International Civil Aviation Organization
World Health Organization
World Bank
International Monetary Fund
Universal Postal Union
International Telecommunications Union
Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization
World Intellectual Property Organization
International Fund for Agricultural Development
International Atomic Energy Agency
General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

6. The General Secretariat of OAU was represented by the Assistant Secretaries-General for Political Affairs and for Economic Development and Co-operation, and senior officials from its General Secretariat and regional bureaux. Representatives of the African Civil Aviation Commission, the African Union of Railways, the Pan African Postal Union and the Pan African Telecommunications Union were also present.

7. The working document of the Meeting consisted of extracts containing information provided by various components of the United Nations system on the action taken by them in pursuance of matters discussed at the meeting held at Nairobi from 5 to 7 June 1980 between representatives of OAU and the United Nations. OAU distributed copies of the Lagos Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Monrovia Strategy for the Economic Development of Africa (A/S-11/14, annex I), and a document setting out the operational work programme for 1982-1983 for the implementation of the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos. Documents were also made available by the Pan African Telecommunications Union.

III. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

8. The agenda for the meetings held from 13 to 15 April covered the following main areas: information, training and research, including a discussion of proposals for increasing exchanges of information, training and research programmes for the General Secretariat of OAU and dissemination of information on African questions; personnel policies, including introductory statements by representatives of the secretariats of the United Nations system on their respective personnel policies as these affected Africa, and a general discussion of the subject; social and economic assistance to Africa, including the African refugee situation, special

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economic assistance programmes of the United Nations and emergency humanitarian assistance; co-operation with regard to the situation in southern Africa, including assistance to liberation movements, and dissemination of information relating to the liberation struggle of the peoples of southern Africa.

9. On the basis of these discussions, views were exchanged on the draft conclusions and the way in which the statements made by the participants were to be reflected in the final report. Agreement on substance was reached.

10. The meeting of 16 April was devoted to the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Secretary-General of OAU and the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation participated in the meeting.

11. In his statement, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kurt Waldheim, expressed the view that co-operation between the General Secretariat of OAU and the secretariats of the United Nations was vital for the social and economic development of Africa. He was pleased that co-operation had broadened over the years and looked forward to its increasing still further. He found the meeting opportune in affording an occasion for the various secretariats to examine the Lagos Plan of Action and to define their respective roles in its implementation. The Plan, which was an integral part of the international development strategy, contained elements vital to the medium- and long-term interests of Africa. When fully implemented, it would lay the foundation for achieving much greater national and collective self-reliance. Implementation of the Plan would also test the ability of all parts of the United Nations system to work constructively under the lead of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), as instructed by various resolutions of the General Assembly, and the Secretary-General felt certain that such co-operation would be forthcoming. Full realization of the objectives of the Lagos Plan depended on success in launching a global round of negotiations for the new international economic order and here, unfortunately, there remained obstacles which could only be overcome by the necessary political will.

12. He believed that the maintenance of economic and social order was indispensable to international political stability and he hoped that the summit meeting to be held at Mexico City in October 1981 between leaders from north and south would contribute to the solution of outstanding problems. Meanwhile, the uncertainties of the world economy inevitably exacerbated the problems of African countries and reduced their development prospects. The International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, which had just been successfully concluded (see A/36/316), was a striking testimony to valuable co-operation and could be expected to contribute to the solution of the problems of African refugees.

13. In conclusion, the Secretary-General referred to the collaboration between the United Nations and OAU in tackling political, social and economic questions relating to Africa. He reiterated his commitment to provide African Member States with every support in implementing the Lagos Plan of Action, stressing that success depended, firstly, on total commitment by the African States themselves, secondly, on an appropriate climate in the international economy and in international economic relations and, thirdly, close day-to-day co-operation between ECA and OAU.

14. In his address, the Secretary-General of OAU, Mr. Edem Kodjo, referred to the special summit meeting of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of OAU at which the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos had been adopted. The Organization had subsequently developed a programme of work for implementing these decisions, based on long and arduous negotiations with all concerned, in particular with ECA. Consultations had shown that in implementing the decisions contained in the Lagos documents, 80 per cent of the work would be at the national level. The programme of OAU, therefore, related to projects which had subregional or regional impact or to sectors concerning the continent as a whole. The central part of the document, setting out the operational programme of work for the biennium 1982-1983 of OAU, dealt with the 11 component sectors. The programme included mostly studies, surveys, training workshops and meetings.

15. He said that the General Secretariat of OAU would have to keep itself constantly informed of the economic situation in Africa, to create and maintain information and consultation mechanisms with States Members and organizations and to undertake programmes for extensive training of Africans in the economic, social and cultural fields. The Lagos summit meeting had further called for the revival of the Economic, Social and Cultural Commission of OAU, whose main function would be to act as the technical organ for the co-ordination at the continental level of all activities in these sectors. Since economic, social and cultural activities were a particular responsibility of ECA, OAU considered that co-operation at all levels between the two organizations was imperative. The main responsibility within the General Secretariat of OAU devolved upon the Department of Economic Development and Co-operation and the Department of Education, Culture and Science. Both those departments would have to adjust their internal structures and undertake staff training programmes. Furthermore, since the Secretariat of OAU was increasingly involved in operational work, it was proposed to set up a programme committee within the General Secretariat of OAU to issue directives and to assist the Secretary-General in carrying out specific tasks in the programme of work. The massive programme of studies, meetings and other activities envisaged in the report was estimated to cost over \$US 32 million. Since OAU's own contribution was only \$US 7 million, the Secretariat relied on the financial help of the agencies, in particular the United Nations Development Programme. OAU was endeavouring to fill all vacant posts in its staff, but would not be in a position to create any new posts before the end of the 1982-1983 financial period and would depend, therefore, on the services of foreign experts and consultants, which, it was hoped, the agencies would make available.

16. Finally, the Secretary-General of OAU stressed the importance which the General Secretariat of OAU attached to co-operation with all the organizations of the United Nations system in implementing the Lagos Plan of Action. Given the limited capacity of OAU, the financial and human resources and experience of ECA and other United Nations organizations would be of the greatest significance to OAU in enabling it to carry out its task.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

17. On completion of the agenda and on the proposal of the Chairman, the Meeting took note of the conclusions and recommendations set forth below:

A. Information

18. It was felt that the United Nations and the other organizations of the United Nations system, particularly the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), should continue their assistance to the Pan African News Agency in the exchange of information and training. The Agency should consider posting permanent correspondents to New York, Geneva and Washington and the Agency should become the functional mechanism for relaying information of interest to Africa to Member States and to the international community as a whole.

19. OAU was invited to make its views known at meetings of the Joint United Nations Information Committee in an effort to mobilize media outlets in the United Nations system on questions of interest to Africa. This would also contribute to mobilizing the activities of the United Nations information services on African questions.

20. As a follow-up to the recommendations of the Nairobi meeting, OAU was invited, by virtue of its observer status at the United Nations, to seek participation as an observer in the work of the Committee on Information.

21. OAU was invited to make efforts to encourage African correspondents to make their presence felt at the United Nations. For its part, the United Nations would extend all possible assistance and co-operation in facilitating their work.

22. It was agreed that OAU should:

(a) Make available to the United Nations and to the specialized agencies as soon as possible information on its activities and all press releases issued by OAU;

(b) Invite heads of missions and delegations and representatives of agencies to press conferences to be organized by OAU;

(c) Welcome the publishing of articles on questions of interest to Africa in journals published by the United Nations and other organizations.

23. It was also agreed that, when a radio service of OAU was established, there should be a regular exchange of programme material with the United Nations radio service and other offices of the United Nations system producing radio programmes. It was agreed that the United Nations should be in close association and co-operation with the OAU radio.

24. It was suggested that OAU should strengthen its own information machinery, enabling it to take the lead in providing publicity for and about Africa, rather

than relying on others for its public relations. The collaboration of the United Nations system should be regarded as complementary to the information activities of OAU on questions relevant to Africa.

B. Research

25. It was important to co-ordinate research relating to development and science and technology within the United Nations system and to facilitate the access of OAU to the results. It was necessary to consider the Lagos Plan of Action as a framework for selecting relevant studies, which should be brought to the attention of the General Secretariat of OAU. It would be useful to exchange visits, pin-point the most pertinent studies and agree on lines of research.

26. New research and, in particular, applied research was needed in such fields as agriculture, food, industry, energy, trade and technology, to be undertaken in the light of research already existing and in consultation with the General Secretariat of OAU and of its relevant specialized commissions.

27. Existing research and training institutions required to be strengthened and certain national institutions needed to be reorganized at the subregional and regional levels. African research programmes and research centres - both regional and subregional - needed to be strengthened through bilateral and multilateral assistance with the help of the pertinent organs and agencies of the United Nations. The endorsement by OAU of African programmes would also be helpful in efforts to raise funds from voluntary contributions.

C. Training

28. The United Nations and the other organizations of the United Nations system should continue to orient their training programmes to the needs of African countries and should link them to existing studies on important topics and to international negotiations. In this respect, there was need to emphasize the concept of training in manpower development programmes with regard to determined priorities and to the complementarity of training activities in the African region. Training was an important channel for disseminating research findings and might assist delegates and others concerned with international negotiations.

29. United Nations organizations were asked to make available information about training efforts in the United Nations system in sufficient time to facilitate nominations.

30. It was agreed that it would be useful for the General Secretariat of OAU to draw up training priorities in the light of its work so that United Nations organizations might see where they could best contribute with regard to the training both of national officials and diplomats and of officials of the General Secretariat of OAU. In this connexion, OAU pointed out that experts had just completed a comprehensive study on training at the headquarters and the regional offices of OAU and that it would be communicated to the United Nations and to all the other organizations of the United Nations system as soon as it was published. It was

hoped that the organizations of the United Nations system would then be in a position to make concrete offers of assistance in this field.

31. OAU requested international organizations to consider assisting in training the cadres of liberation movements in the various fields, according to their needs. UNESCO confirmed its readiness to help in this connexion, within the strategy already laid down for the development of the manpower potential of the liberation movements.

D. Personnel

32. There were certain conclusions to be drawn from the information regarding the employment of African nationals in the United Nations system. Firstly, the contribution factor in establishing desirable ranges and, secondly, the claim from certain quarters to control personnel on the grounds that they paid a major share of the budget both worked against African interests. Africa's nationals, therefore, were fewer in number and lower in seniority than they might expect.

33. It was mentioned that there had been occasions when African Governments had expressed reluctance to accept African experts and, in this context, African Governments were urged to accept African experts where these were proposed. Were situations to arise where other regions would not accept Africans as experts or heads of missions, African countries might decide to refuse to accept experts from those regions. It was of paramount importance that African experts and heads of missions be protected from harassment by other staff where such cases arose.

34. Were African countries to provide associate experts, this would enhance their opportunities for access to United Nations organizations.

35. In order to meet the objections of some African Governments to releasing their nationals to serve in the United Nations system because of the "brain drain", the General Secretariat of OAU should help to persuade African Governments to join the Tokten Programme (Transfer of Know-how through Expatriate Nationals) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Through such a programme, United Nations experts could go back to serve in their own country for a short period of about three to six months under the auspices of the United Nations.

36. OAU expressed the wish that quotas and ranges would be established not only for countries and regions, but also at the policy-making levels from P-5 to D-2 so as to achieve an equitable representation for the different regions represented in the United Nations.

E. Refugee situation

37. OAU suggested that an interagency meeting should be held within the United Nations system as soon as possible as a follow-up to the successful conclusion of the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa to co-ordinate the input of the various agencies and to re-examine their roles, policies and programmes in favour of refugees in Africa. OAU also indicated the intention to organize in the near future a workshop involving all the non-governmental organizations and

voluntary agencies which played an important role in refugee assistance programmes in Africa in order to maximize the efforts on behalf of refugees in Africa.

38. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees announced that arrangements were under way for the holding of a meeting at Geneva in May 1981 of non-governmental organizations from all over the world which were active in the refugee field; the High Commissioner undertook to transmit the request of OAU to participate in that meeting. The High Commissioner informed the Meeting of the close co-operation and practical consultations between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and all the agencies involved in refugee work. He stated that this co-operation would be continued and, in response to a proposal to hold annual meetings of all the agencies involved, he said that co-operation should be enhanced as required with a view to maximizing the efforts of voluntary agencies on behalf of refugees in Africa.

39. It was agreed that, while an interagency meeting on refugees was advisable in the near future to consider co-ordinating the inputs of the various agencies, follow-up consultations on the Conference by the three sponsors were a prerequisite for the appropriate use of the funds contributed to refugee assistance. It was, therefore, recommended that tripartite consultations between the United Nations, OAU and UNHCR at all appropriate levels should be resumed and maintained.

F. Assistance to liberation movements

40. While appreciation was expressed for the role played by the various agencies in assisting the liberation movements, it was felt that more could be done, particularly in view of the fact that agencies appeared to depend on UNDP for the financing of their projects. In particular, invitations to attend meetings and conferences organized by the agencies should always be accompanied by tickets and the necessary per diem to enable representatives of the liberation movements to participate. Advance information by the United Nations system on the schedule of meetings should be submitted to the Liberation Committee of OAU at the beginning of each year and OAU should be requested to indicate, within the budgetary allocations available, the priority meetings to be supported to enable representatives of the national liberation movements to participate.

41. On the question of developing assistance projects to national liberation movements, OAU expressed the wish that the project officers of the agencies concerned would assist the liberation movements in the preparation of first draft documents to ensure conformity with United Nations requirements and meet the needs of the movements.

42. Where assistance in kind was extended to the liberation movements, it was imperative that provision be made to enable such assistance to reach its destination rather than leaving this responsibility to the front-line States concerned. It was also important that the authorities concerned be alerted well in advance before the arrival of such assistance to enable them to make the necessary arrangements for its clearance.

G. Other measures

43. It was pointed out that sound financial management was necessary as a means for countries to take full advantage of the structural changes required to implement the Lagos Plan of Action.

44. Pragmatic policies were necessary to adjust the terms of trade between urban and rural sectors in favour of the latter as an important basis for increasing agricultural output.

45. Existing restrictions impeding greater intraregional trade should be reduced or removed.

46. Given the persistent adverse external factors affecting the African economy, priority should be accorded to the early adoption of corrective measures.

47. Since the International Monetary Fund had extended the time of adjustment to three years and members could now draw on fund resources at least four times the size of their quota, it seemed prudent to make greater use of the Fund than in the past.

H. Next meeting

48. It was agreed that the next meeting of the General Secretariat of OAU and the secretariats of the United Nations system should take place a few days before the spring meeting of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination in 1982. The precise date was to be decided in due course.

49. The Meeting took note of the proposal by the co-chairmen that future meetings between the General Secretariat of OAU and the secretariats of the United Nations system should have an agenda consisting of a few selected items. This would ensure greater in-depth examination and a more extensive exchange of views. Participants would be invited to suggest items for inclusion in the agenda. After a selection of the items, arrangements would be made to circulate them to all participants, well in advance of the meeting, together with a brief explanatory note.
