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ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

NOVEMBER 1980

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CHAPTER I.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

PROGRAMME OF THE COMMUNITY FOR THE PERIOD 1980/1981

The first three years of our Community's effective operations, March 1977 to May 1980, have rightly been utilised:

- i) to plan and establish the functional structures of various institutions;
- ii) to carry out studies so as to gather the necessary data for the formulation of policies, programmes and instruments capable of providing a coherent and realistic contract to the co-operation structures defined in the Treaty and Protocols of the Community;
- iii) to have the decisions relating to these policies, programmes and instruments approved by the competent authorities.

The meeting of the Authority of Heads of State and Government held in May 1980 in Lomé marked the end of this first phase of the life of our Community. It was then possible to realise that ECOWAS has henceforth become an outstanding reality of our Sub-Region. At the same time and for that matter, it became clear that an ever permanent vigilance is needed to consolidate the efforts of this beginning which is full of promise and turn them into a sustained progress without however losing sight of the already visible signs of short-comings both in our structures and in our procedures.

A frank retrospective examination of the life of our Organisation to date, reveals an excessively slow implementation of Community decisions by Member States. The problem is important enough for the future of our Community and calls for the immediate attention it deserves.

We therefore envisage, during the coming year, to give the necessary consideration to how best to deal with this problem once and for all.

Meanwhile, since it is of no use accumulating with great difficulty Community decisions which are not followed up by Member States, we feel that the over-riding idea which should underline our Programme for the period extending from May 1980 to May 1981, should be :

the consolidation of the achievements of the Community
and the timely implementation of actions undertaken
within the context of the Priority Activity Programme

This, in practice, means that for the period in question, the objective of the Activity Programme of the Community will be:

- i) To do everything possible so that Member States scrupulously implement decisions already taken by the Community and to discharge without further delay, their obligations towards the Community.
- ii) To strengthen the administrative infrastructure of the Institutions by recruiting from Member States qualified and competent middle level manpower and senior staff for the service of the Community, and thereby fill all the vacant posts;
- iii) To carry out in line with the proposed scheme, on-going activities within the framework of the Priority Activity Programme.
- iv) To undertake new activities only in cases where particularly difficult international economic situations make such activities indispensable.

In operational terms and with regard to the various organs of the Community, these objectives can be summarised as follows :

A. ECONOMIC PROGRAMME:

- i) Trade, Customs, Immigration, Monetary and Payment matters :

B. IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE FIELD :

Consolidation of structures and procedures, recruitment of the necessary remaining staff (middle level and senior level manpower).

C. IN THE FINANCIAL FIELD :

- i) Strict measures to be taken so that payment of contributions can be effected by Member States (to the operational budgets of the Institutions and the capital of the Fund .
- ii) Study of ways and means of helping the Community to obtain its own resources to ensure that it is financially self-reliant and thereby non-dependent on the budgets of Member States or at least self-reliant with regard to the operational budgets of the Institutions.
- iii) Mobilisation of the necessary funds for the implementation of the Telecommunications Programme.

These, in a nutshell, are the main outlines of our activities for the coming year.

CHAPTER II

RUNNING OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY SINCE THE LAST SESSION OF COUNCIL

The different institutions of the Community have since the last session of Council, been occupied with the execution of their relevant portions of the Community Priority Work Programme especially the implementation of the objectives of this programme for the period May 1980 - May 1981. In what follows, the current phase of each of the programmes will be outlined, the specific action undertaken during the period under review will be reported, together with whatever results that have been achieved and problems encountered and lastly, the required follow-up action or the next phase of the specific programme will be indicated. For ease of presentation and subsequent consideration by Council, these activities will be treated under the main Community institutions responsible for them; this is because details of these activities are to be found in the reports of the relevant institutions.

A. TRADE, CUSTOMS, IMMIGRATION, MONEY AND PAYMENTS COMMISSION

1. Trade and Customs Programme

Since this forms the central part of the whole Priority Work Programme of the Community, a lot of the work of the institutions and especially this Commission, continues to revolve round the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation and Promotion Programme. Since the approval of the Trade Liberalisation in May, 1980 by the Authority of Heads of State and Government, most of the work done in this field is related to the mandate to the institutions of ensuring the smooth implementation of the Programme. The activities are geared towards the application of the Authority's decisions concerning the commencement

of the tariff and non-tariff barrier elimination as from 28th May, 1981.

(a) Harmonised Customs Documents: The Secretariat has taken steps to ensure the printing of these documents. This entailed the transcription of national tariffs into the ECOWAS Common Customs and Statistical Nomenclature as well as the completion by Member States of the "Free Disposal" boxes of the Common Declaration Forms with the relevant national items. The Extraordinary Meeting of the Commission acquainted the appropriate officials with the Programme and afforded a discussion of the problems (and their solutions) of putting these documents into use. Some of these solutions will constitute the follow-up action in this area: reconciliation of the legislative, regulatory and administrative measures of Member States in customs matters; drafting a Convention of Mutual Assistance in Customs matters; need for conducting national seminars and workshops for purposes of familiarisation and the planning of a Customs Training Institute for the development of professional skills.

(b) Trade Liberalisation Scheme: The Scheme for the liberalisation of trade in industrial products was adopted in May, 1980 by the Authority subject to the finalisation of certain issues. The Secretariat has since then been studying these issues, namely: what constitutes a priority list of industrial products, the definition of a Community enterprise (see Section on Industrial Programme below) and the classification of Duties and Taxes applied by Member States. It should be possible to put firm proposals on these issues to the next session of Council.

In so far as the trade liberalisation programme for handicraft products is concerned, the Ad Hoc Committee on Trade Liberalisation has met and recommended a scheme for the liberalisation of these products. It is proposed that the handicraft products be liberalised on the same basis as the unprocessed products (produits du cru). That recommendation is on the Agenda of the Trade Commission meeting.

In addition to the liberalisation programme for the handicraft products, it was felt that a programme should be worked out with a view to making the handicraft industry a significant factor in the social and economic development of Member States. A study is under way on this subject and a meeting of the Heads of Handicraft development programmes of Member States is scheduled to take place as soon as the report of the study is available.

(c) Computerization of Data: The collection, processing, analysis, storage, utilisation and dissemination of data are vital to the programmes of an organisation such as ECOWAS. The urgency of the problem can be traced to the implementation of both the trade liberalisation programme and the ECOWAS Compensation Scheme that were adopted in May this year by the Authority. As a first step, the Community has harmonised its Customs Nomenclature and adopted Common Statistical Standards and Definitions, including an accepted country code, for purposes of trade reporting. The immediate objective of the ECOWAS Data Programme is to develop an efficient system for trade data reporting and analysis - this will be extended to data collection in other sectors relevant to the work programmes of the Community with the passage of time. The study is under way to look into the possibility and the means of establishing a computerized data system for the use of the Community and its Member States.

The format for the data required is being prepared and will be sent to Member States in due course. Meanwhile, experts of Member States have been convened to discuss these Customs and Statistics issues during the meeting of Director of Statistics in October 1980 in Lome.

(d) Trade Promotion: The Secretariat has continued with its activities in the field of trade promotion. A comprehensive trade promotion programme is being drafted and the avenues for the publication of an ECOWAS Trade Newsletter and the establishment of a Trade Information and Promotion Centre are being explored. The results of these efforts will be presented to Council at its next sitting.

(e) Inter-State Road Transit Convention: The Convention which has been drafted and presented to the Commission on Transport, Telecommunications and Energy seeks to harmonise procedures and facilitate the movement of vehicles and goods across borders. The work of the Ad Hoc Committee was based on existing conventions in use both within and outside the sub-region. The draft Convention will be presented to Council and later to the Authority for approval after which steps will be taken to ensure its effective adoption and application by Member States.

2. Immigration Programme

It will be recalled that the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, the Right of Residence and Establishment which was signed by the Authority in May 1979, was divided into three phases. It is understood that the first phase - abolition of tourist visa - would be implemented and its effects studied in order to see how best to structure the two remaining

phases, right of residence and establishment. The slow rate of ratification and application of the Protocol has not only made the monitoring difficult but also rendered any meaningful assessment of its effects impossible. However, the Secretariat has set in motion the machinery for undertaking this important assignment. In addition, there has begun the related study of immigration documents, procedures and practices with a view to streamlining and harmonising these at the Community level. Meanwhile, it is expected that a new proposal on the definition of Community citizenship will be approved by the Commission and passed on to the Council for consideration.

3. Monetary Cooperation

In line with the decision of Council taken in November, 1979 to the effect that the problems of inconvertibility of Member States currencies should be studied as a follow-up of the findings of the study relating to Financial and Monetary Obstacles to Trade Expansion - the Secretariat has been assisted by the International Monetary Fund to study and make the necessary proposals. The work involved in this phase of the project is almost completed and will be presented to Council at its next session for consideration. Considering the complex issues that are involved in currency matters, the indications are that a well-thought out monetary programme will need to be drawn up and would have to be supported by coordinated programmes in the other sectors.

Industry, Agriculture and Natural Resources Commission

1. Industrial Cooperation Programme

A meeting of the above Commission was organised in July

1980 by the Secretariat in line with the decision of Council on the subject. The Commission approved the general outline of the Industrial Programme and established a time-table for the execution of its first and second phases which are geared towards the definition and formulation of :

1. A legal framework for the Community Enterprises and Regional Industries
2. An Industrial Programme for the Community.

In view of the time-table adopted and also in line with the Council directive that work on the Programme should continue subject to the relevant Commission's approval some of the actions defined in the programme have been undertaken. These actions relate to the taking of an inventory of industrial plans, programmes and policies of Member States or Organisations operating in West Africa and the identification of the major industrial sectors and projects that could constitute part of the Community Industrial Programme. In addition, work has begun on the preparation of a legal framework required for defining and regulating a Community enterprise and a regional industry.

The results of these studies will be presented to the next session of Council through the above Commission.

2. Agricultural Programme

The main thrust of the Community Agricultural Programme at this stage of the evolution of the organisation - as conceived and approved at the last session of Council, is to

respond to the pressing food problems of the sub-region and also support the trade liberalisation and expansion programme already adopted. During the period under review, a start was made on undertaking the studies into food crops, livestock, fisheries and forestry and wildlife.

Equally concerned with the poor state of the West African agricultural sector, the Chairman of the Authority, His Excellency General Gnassingbe EYADEMA requested that the Executive Secretary should contact Ministers of Agriculture of ECOWAS Member States for the purpose of drafting an ECOWAS Common Agricultural policy and Programme that would fully meet both the short-term and long-term development strategy needs of the sub-region. The outcome of this exercise will be presented to a meeting of Agricultural Ministers for their consideration and recommendations to the Authority.

Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Commission

The Community has adopted two major programmes of this Commission, namely, the Transport Development Programme and the Telecommunications Programme; these are aimed at modernising the West African Transport and Communications systems in order to ensure the efficient movement of persons, goods and services.

1. Transport Programme

Since the last session of Council, the above Commission has met to consider specific aspects of the implementation of the Transport Programme.

This called for the prior study of the following :

- Management, maintenance and financing of the road system;
- feasibility/economic and engineering studies of unfinished road sections
- the creation of free zones at sea ports for use of land-locked countries
- economic feasibility study of proposed railway links
- market potential of ECOWAS export by air; and
- harmonisation of road transport legislation.

Action on the above studies has progressed satisfactorily and a favourable report should be possible for the next session of Council.

The Commission considered and approved a Draft Agreement Establishing the ECOWAS Insurance Certificate and a Draft Agreement regulating Inter-State Road Transport. It would be appreciated that these are important elements in the improvement of the functioning of this sector and Council is urged to consider the two Draft Agreements favourably.

2. Telecommunications Programme

Some considerable progress has been made on the implementation of the above programme since Council met six months ago.

At the time of that meeting, it was urged that all Member States involved should indicate their choice of technical options. This has now been done. The work on the preparation of Tender Documents has been completed. Similarly the Tenders for Technical buildings have been prepared.

A meeting of ECOWAS Ministers of Telecommunications was held in October, 1980 to consider a number of points included in the above Programme. The outcome of the meeting included the adoption of the recommendation for the imposition of a telephone tariff and its implementation as from 1st January 1981. The idea of a Special Telecommunication Fund was endorsed with the proposal that the ECOWAS Fund should contribute \$5 million to it while Member States contribute \$3.5 million, on the basis of the formula applied for contributions to the Community Budget. However, the Statutes of the Special Fund have yet to be considered by the relevant expert group. The Ministerial meeting drew attention to the need to extend the scope of the programme beyond the use of microwave links and radio relays. It was recommended that, in the light of technological developments, the utilisation of Telecommunications Satellite be considered. The Ministers urged that the cooperation of international organisations in this field should be sought to improve the viability of the ECOWAS Telecommunications Programme.

3. ECOWAS Postal Services Programme

To complete the programme for the Communications sector, part of the report of the study - commissioned into the Coordination of Transport and Communications - relating to

Postal Services was presented to Directors of Postal Services of Member States. The meeting of the Directors approved the programme recommended in the Report and whose main six objectives include the improvement of the mail distribution system through an efficient and regular routing, the progressive assimilation of the ECOWAS territory as a single postal zone and the training of officials of Postal Services.

It is expected that the programme will be executed between 1981 and 1985. The total cost is estimated at \$3,630,000.

In view of the grossly inefficient sub-regional postal service that the Community is saddled with and the important role that the mail system plays in modern business and government work, ECOWAS should endeavour to take all the necessary steps to improve this service.

CHAPTER III

RELATIONS OF THE COMMUNITY WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD

Within the Framework of the implementation of our priority programme, and in accordance with its imperatives, we have maintained and re-inforced our relations with organisations with which we have established co-operation.

At the level of the sub-region, a number of meetings were held at Ouagadougou and Freetown between officials of ECOWAS and those of CEAO and Mano River Union with a view to examining the different fields in which the harmonization of programmes and policy measures was necessary. Another meeting this time at the level of the Chief Executives of the two organizations will take place on the 24th and 25th of November 1980 in Lomé. Other Organizations such as the Mano River Union will be in attendance. The relations between these three Organizations, ECOWAS, CEAO, MRU have been excellent as manifested by the presence of the representatives of each of these Organizations at the meetings organised by others. We shall do all our possible best to consolidate these relations in the interest of our respective Organizations.

On the specialised agencies of the family of the United Nations, we are happy to mention the important and constant support they are giving us. The UNCTAD aid programme was sustained and enlarged to ensure the coordination of the important programme relating to the computerisation of the customs and statistical data of the foreign trade of Member States. UNCTAD has also accepted to print all the harmonised customs documents in order to allow for their entry into force within the scheduled period. All the activities undertaken with the cooperation of UNCTAD within the framework of our priority programme are being pursued under satisfactory conditions.

UNIDO has also extended its support to us in the implementation of our industrial programme. The assistance given by both UNIDO and UNCTAD was financed by the UNDP from funds granted directly for the programmes concerned.

CONCLUSIONS:

Since the last meeting of the Council, our activities have generally been carried out under satisfactory conditions. We shall however never over-emphasise the difficulties encountered in the implementation of our programmes, difficulties arising from the tardiness in the payment of contributions by Member States, should such long delays persist. The precarious status of the finances of the institutions seriously affect our recruitment programme, not to mention other programmes as well.

The complexity of our undertaking is not new to any of us; needless then to insist for sustained progress on the necessity to conceive solid and coherent policies, programme and instrument for their implementation. This is why we opted for systematic and comprehensive in-depth actions for the construction of our Community as opposed to "White elephant" projects. This long and exalting task necessitates from everyone of us a constant determination to succeed.

Day after day, the International audience of ECOWAS is fast increasing; the Organization will always require concrete and meaningful support. We believe that we can always rely on the commitment of all our Member States for the success of the Organization.