



# **Report on the Economic Commission for Africa:**

**Regional Programming, Operations,  
Restructuring and Decentralization Issues**

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## I. THE REGIONAL SETTING

1. Africa is a region endowed with immense natural resources, a young resilient population of some 470 million, and a rich diversity of cultures. However, 21 of the 31 "least developed" countries in the world are in Africa, and economic and social development is still fragile. Almost half of the world's refugees are in Africa, and about half the African land area is subject to drought and desertification. African economies still depend heavily on the present international economic system for their development needs, and African nations have not yet shifted from past colonial systems to new structures needed for collective self-reliance and joint efforts.
2. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has been a catalyst of development since its establishment in 1958, a decade after the regional commissions for Europe (ECE), Asia and the Far East (now ESCAP), and Latin America (ECLA), and 15 years before the commission for West Africa (ECWA). It has sought to provide a base of analyses and research into African problems, assist information flows among countries, advise its constituents, and initiate and participate in co-ordinated policies and actions for African economic and social development.
3. In the 1960s ECA became an exclusively African organization as the number of African Member States increased and the original non-African members withdrew as their territorial responsibilities waned. Common interests also crystallized in the creation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, which gave impetus to decolonization, worked for African political unity, and provided a political complement to ECA's efforts in the economic and social field.
4. ECA has established or sponsored a diversified group of more than 20 regional and sub-regional institutions to foster co-operation and provide a basic foundation for socio-economic development in Africa, such as the African Development Bank (ADB). While some of these institutions have become independent and self-sustaining, ECA is still working to strengthen others which have been hampered by limited financial support from participating countries and limited technical support from ECA. These institutions are only a part of the more than 100 inter-governmental bodies which have emerged in Africa in the last 20 years. ECA attempts to assist them as part of its mandate to support co-operation and integration efforts, particularly through its sub-regional offices. The OAU also has a network of sub-regional offices and has taken an increasing interest in economic and social matters. The two organizations, both with headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, have, since 1965, had a co-operation agreement to facilitate joint action in the economic and social sectors.
5. ECA's role in African development has been reinforced by a series of General Assembly and Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolutions since 1960 which have urged that United Nations economic and social activities be decentralized, that regional commissions become operational and execute projects and that the commissions be given resources for these tasks. These prescriptions culminated in the "restructuring resolution" (32/197 of 20 December 1977), and resolution 33/202 of 29 January 1979, which together provide a comprehensive policy framework for wider responsibilities for the commission in the United Nations development system (see Chapter V).
6. In addition, the ECA Secretariat, as part of its development strategy activities and in accord with the Declaration and Programme of Action for the establishment of a new international economic order, laid the ground work for a development strategy for Africa 1976-1986. This strategy was elaborated and amplified in close consultation with the OAU. It was adopted in April 1980 by the first economic summit of OAU heads of state and governments as the "Lagos Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Monrovia Strategy for the Economic Development of Africa".
7. The Lagos Plan, subsequently supported by General Assembly resolutions such as resolution 35/64 on special measures for the social and economic development of Africa, emphasizes the need for a restructuring and integration of the economies of the African countries to achieve self-reliance and self-sustaining

growth. The plan's main areas stress indigenous capabilities and domestic production, and 90 per cent of implementation is to be at the national level. The plan foresees unified national efforts combining, first at the sub-regional level, then regionally to form a self-sustaining African development system. Its ultimate aim is an African Economic Community. It is thus a blue-print for sovereign control by African countries of the pace, direction and value content of their development.

8. The Final Act of Lagos gives ECA, in co-operation with OAU, a central role in the implementation of the Lagos Plan. The restructuring resolution itself envisaged the regional commissions as "the main general economic and social development centres within the United Nations system for their respective regions", exercising "team leadership and responsibility for co-ordination and co-operation at the regional level". ECA therefore must work more closely with its partners in the United Nations system under the Lagos Plan, and with governments to help improve their operational capacities. These responsibilities confront ECA with a greater challenge to effective leadership and performance than it has ever faced.

9. The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) has studied regional commissions in the past, including reports on ECA (JIU/REP/68/3); ECAFE (now ESCAP) (69/6); ECLA (70/3); the commissions' capacity for a unified approach to development (73/1); decentralization to the commissions (74/5); United Nations system regional structures (75/2); and ECLA sub-regional offices (80/3). Many of the issues raised in these reports remain unresolved. JIU is currently making studies of progress in implementing the restructuring resolution. This study of ECA is the first of a new series on the regional commissions, with others to follow. However, the Inspectors believe the discussions of regional programming, restructuring and decentralization in this report are issues of importance for all the commissions (see Chapters III.E., V and VI).

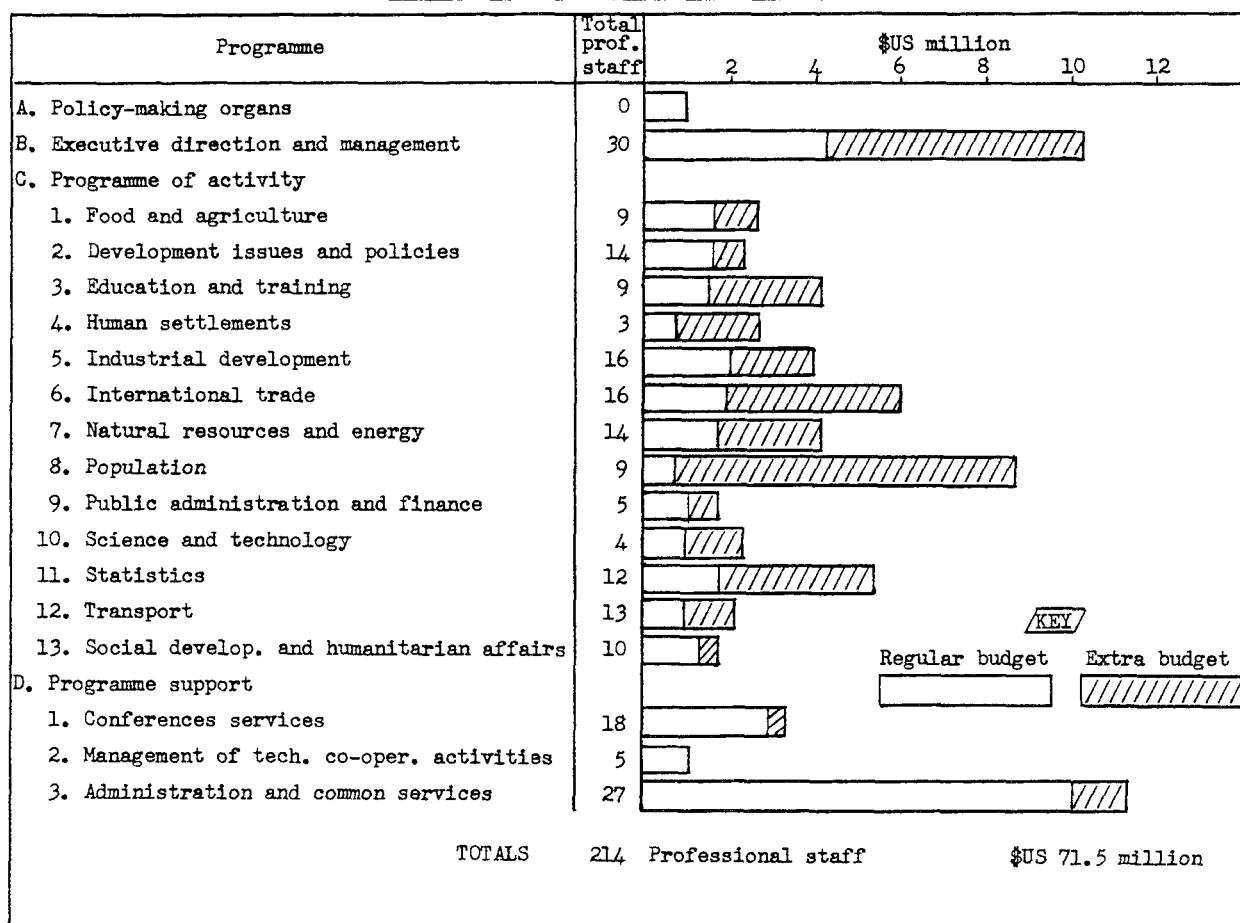
10. The Inspectors visited United Nations Headquarters in New York, ECA headquarters in Addis Ababa, four of the five ECA sub-regional offices, various African governments and government missions, as well as inter-governmental organizations and United Nations system officials in Africa during this study. They also sent a brief questionnaire to all Member States of ECA, to United Nations system agencies and to the United Nations system Resident Representatives/Co-ordinators in Africa. The ideas, observations and suggestions provided from these many sources were most valuable. The Inspectors express their sincere appreciation to all who assisted.

## II. THE OVERALL PROGRAMME

11. ECA has come a long way since it began in 1958 with nine African Member States and an annual budget of only US\$0.5 million. For the 1982-83 biennium the ECA proposed programme budget is US\$71.5 million. The chart of the proposed 1982-83 programme budget on the following page, as well as past programme budget data since 1974-75, reflects a number of important underlying elements and developments.

12. Diversity and scope. With its 13 basic programmes of activity and other significant functions such as the African Training and Research Centre for Women and the Environment Co-ordination Unit, ECA is active in almost all the diverse major programme activities of the United Nations system. This diversity spreads ECA staff and financial resources rather thinly across a broad spectrum of programmes. However, while some observers have suggested that ECA should cut back to a smaller number of priority programme areas, this multi-sectoral breadth of operations is an important element of ECA's "development centre" functions and its continental perspective.

ECA PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET 1982-1983



13. Overall budgetary growth. During the decade from 1974-83, the total ECA programme budget direct costs have grown steadily from about US\$18.3 million in 1974-75 to US\$71.5 million for 1982-83. This represents a 290 per cent expansion, but much of this is due to sharp inflationary increases. In fact, regular budget direct costs have increased only about 1.7 per cent annually in real terms.

14. Growth of extra-budgetary funds. While regular budget funding has risen by about 160 per cent from US\$13.9 million for 1974-75 to about US\$36 million for 1982-83, extra-budgetary funding has increased about 700 per cent, or more than four times as fast. It has grown from US\$4.4 million for 1974-75 to some US\$35.5 million estimated for 1982-83, and represents a fundamental shift in the nature of ECA funding. In 1974-75 less than one-quarter of the ECA biennial budget came from extra-budgetary sources, but for 1982-83 half the total budget is expected to be financed from extra-budgetary sources.

15. Funding sources. The patterns of extra-budgetary funding have changed as well. During the mid-1970s most of ECA's modest extra-budgetary funds came from bilateral sources. However, as ECA has become more operational, UNDP has become the dominant outside funding source. UNFPA also provides a substantial contribution, and a new Trust Fund for African Development financed by African Member States has been established, which it is hoped will provide increasing direct financial support to ECA operations in the future. For 1982-83, roughly 50 per cent of the total expected US\$35.5 million extra-budgetary funding is to come from UNDP, 25 per cent from UNFPA, 10 per cent from bilateral donors, 10 per cent from the Trust Fund and 5 per cent from other sources. The Inspectors believe that bilateral donors or ECA Member States who could provide funds would be making a useful contribution to African development.

16. Funding priorities. ECA regular budget funding priorities have remained fairly constant over the 1974-83 period. Development issues, transportation, statistics, industrial development, food and agriculture, and international trade have been the major programmes. Based on total funds, however, the priorities

among programmes are considerably different. A programme such as population jumps from last to first place when extra-budgetary funds are added. Food and agriculture, although probably the most critical development sector in Africa, ranks only seventh on a total-funds basis. However, (a) ECA inputs are only one element among many on an African-wide basis in a particular sector, (b) fund donors to ECA may well have their own preferred sectors which they will fund, and (c) the ECA programmes may vary in their ability to attract extra-budgetary funds. Thus, assessment of ECA funding "priorities" is complicated by whether they are measured by regular budget funds, extra-budgetary funds, total funds, or as a part of total Africa-wide funds for development in any given sector.

17. Staffing. Although the programme budget data for extra-budgetary posts are not considered very accurate (see paragraph 121), they indicate that ECA's major resource - its total established professional posts - has declined during the 1974-83 period. In 1974-75 ECA had 226 professional posts (of which 62 were extra-budgetary), but for 1982-83 ECA has only 214 professional posts (of which 18 are extra-budgetary). Local level posts during the same period grew from 294 to 427, but almost 100 of these posts were common service posts added in 1976-77, with little growth since.

18. Programme support. General ECA programme support funding and staff growth has been very restricted. From the 1974-75 biennium to 1982-83 funding has grown from US\$5.2 million to US\$15.0 million (up 190 per cent) and professional staffing from 35 to 50 (up 43 per cent). Programme support has thus fallen behind the 290 per cent total budget growth during this period, and even more drastically behind the 700 per cent growth in extra-budgetary funds and the many new ECA operational responsibilities (see Chapter IV on operations).

19. Executive direction and management. The area which has grown most rapidly in ECA in the past decade is executive direction and management, which has moved from US\$0.6 million in 1974-75 to US\$10.8 million for 1982-83, and has become the second largest single programme element. The growth has primarily been due to the addition of major policy, programming, co-ordinating and sub-regional (MULPOC) functions to the Cabinet Office of the Executive Secretary. These general functions relate to important responsibilities placed on ECA by restructuring, which are discussed in the following Chapters.

20. Other regional commissions. Many of the trends in ECA activities are visible in the other regional commissions. ECE differs in that it has a region of developed rather than developing countries, and ECWA as the newest commission and smallest region has a smaller scale programme. However, the four developing-country commissions all have the same basic programme structure, similar patterns of budgetary growth and generally similar budget sizes (again except for ECWA) over the last decade. Current comparative programme budget funding and staffing data, both regular budget (RB) and extra-budgetary (XB), are as follows:

|       | <u>1980-81</u>           |           |              | <u>Prof. staff</u> |           |              | <u>1982-83</u>           |           |              | <u>Prof. staff</u> |           |              |
|-------|--------------------------|-----------|--------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------|--------------------------|-----------|--------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------|
|       | <u>Budgets (US\$ m.)</u> |           |              |                    |           |              | <u>Budgets (US\$ m.)</u> |           |              |                    |           |              |
|       | <u>RB</u>                | <u>XB</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>RB</u>          | <u>XB</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>RB</u>                | <u>XB</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>RB</u>          | <u>XB</u> | <u>Total</u> |
| ECA   | 29.7                     | 30.1      | 59.8         | 194                | 21        | 215          | 36.0                     | 35.4      | 71.4         | 196                | 18        | 214          |
| ECLA  | 42.2                     | 20.9      | 63.1         | 187                | 50        | 237          | 61.2                     | 17.5      | 78.7         | 188                | 35        | 223          |
| ECWA  | 14.5                     | 7.5       | 22.0         | 98                 | 15        | 113          | 16.8                     | 5.6       | 22.4         | 99                 | 13        | 112          |
| ESCAP | 26.1                     | 33.3      | 59.4         | 177                | 43        | 220          | 32.4                     | 59.7      | 92.1         | 191                | 37        | 228          |

21. The most important change in ECA's programme, however, interrelated with its research, data gathering and analytical activities, is a greater concern with programming activities and a more direct operational role. ECA has been given formal "executing agency" status to carry out technical co-operation projects on behalf of UNDP. In the light of this major change of emphasis, the Inspectors

Have concentrated on the key programme and operational aspects of ECA's new responsibilities. ECA's past achievements and problems are extensively covered in several ECA review documents, past JIU reports and other sources 1/.

### III. THE PROGRAMMING PROCESS

22. The restructuring resolution calls for the regional commissions to, among other things: serve as the main general economic and social development centres within the United Nations system and exercise team leadership and responsibility for co-ordination and co-operation at the regional level; strengthen relations with United Nations system organizations; strengthen and enlarge economic co-operation and execute projects at the sub-regional, regional and inter-regional levels; and provide inputs to global United Nations policy processes and participate fully in policy implementation. These new functions all require a strengthened programming effort by ECA.

23. ECA is well situated to perform this co-ordinative programming role. It has accumulated more than 20 years of experience with African economic and social development problems, and has become the primary source of basic socio-economic data on Africa. Its research, conference and seminar activities, together with its institution-building work throughout Africa, have given it an intimate knowledge of the requirements and potential for African development. Its emphasis on regional co-operation and integration is strengthened by its activity in all major development sectors. It has a predominantly African staff schooled in the problems of the continent. All these factors argue for a strong, catalytic ECA role in the formulation and development of co-ordinated policies to promote regional economic, social and technological development in Africa.

#### A. Programming environment and the Lagos Plan

24. The environment for the programming of international development assistance has become more and more complex over the years, in Africa and elsewhere. Differences and discrepancies in development rates and needs between many countries and sub-regions have emerged, requiring different strategies and measures. As sectors of assistance have increased in number, policies and approaches such as the New International Economic Order, the unified approach to development, technical and economic co-operation among developing countries (TCDC and ECDC), and integrated rural development have aimed to bring more logic to the activities undertaken. The sheer number of nations in Africa has steadily increased to over 50, and the assistance activities of the United Nations system and other multilateral and bilateral aid agencies have increased in overall volume, number of donors and scope of activities. Under these circumstances, co-ordinated programming is difficult.

25. There has been growing concern in Africa in recent years that its countries are overwhelmed by an increasing number of multilateral and bilateral organizations "selling" projects in their various areas of interest which do not add up to an integrated set of development activities. The current difficult international economic situation and the constrained aid flows from developed to developing countries argue strongly for more effective programming to eliminate waste and duplication, ensure that scarce resources go to the areas where they can do the most good, and to make aid efforts mutually supportive.

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1/ Adebayo Adedeji, "The ECA: Its origin, development, problems and prospects", United Nations, ECA, 1980; "Biennial report of the Executive Secretary, 1979-1980", E/CN/14/798, ECA, 1981; "ECA and institution building in Africa", E/CN/14/INF/118, ECA, 1981. For JIU reports see paragraph 9. Berhanyku Andemicael, "The OAU and the United Nations", UNITAR, 1976, and "Regionalism and the United Nations", UNITAR, 1979.

26. Fortunately for the African region and thanks to much hard preparatory work and discussion, the Lagos Plan (see Chapter I) represents a comprehensive programming framework for future development. It provides not only a sense of direction, but a set of "marching orders" for the ECA and the OAU through their central technical co-ordination roles in their implementation. To promote implementation of the plan and to carry out its "main development centre" and "team leader" responsibilities for the African region under the restructuring resolution, ECA has four major programming functions: (a) identification and development of regional, sub-regional and inter-regional projects; (b) co-operation and advisory assistance for intersectoral and country-level development projects in Africa; (c) assistance to Member States in developing projects and co-operative programmes; (d) acting as an executing agency for projects in its own right. ECA's role is therefore a central one in the programming environment.

#### B. Joint programming

27. To develop these programming functions and serve as an effective regional focal point for African development, ECA must have programming mechanisms that allow it to work closely with the many other participants in African development.

28. Organization of African Unity. Both OAU and ECA are heavily involved with the implementation of the Lagos Plan. For this purpose, they have undertaken further joint activities and developed new programme linkages between their headquarters' secretariats in Addis Ababa. OAU is itself becoming more operational: it has its own network of field offices, is seeking to strengthen the technical expertise of its staff and has its own technical co-operation programme. It also held meetings with organizations of the United Nations system in 1980 and 1981 to establish closer co-operation under the Lagos Plan. During their study, the Inspectors heard comments on the OAU-ECA relationship, some expressing concern about past and present competition and frictions, and others feeling that such fears were exaggerated. Many, however, emphasized the importance of combining OAU's political strength and commitment with ECA's technical skills and resources in a collaborative and complementary relationship. They observed that the two groups working closely together could be a very potent leadership force for future African development.

29. Member States. ECA has programming links with Member States through its Conference of Ministers, which meets annually and reviews ECA's work programmes. It also has many programme development contacts through the extensive series of conferences, meetings, workshops and seminars it holds each year (about 80 per year from 1979-81). While there was some criticism that ECA holds too many such meetings, it was also observed that African inter-country collaboration is still only 10-20 years old and is a process of interaction which needs to be further encouraged and nurtured. Most important, however, is the recent ECA effort to decentralize its programming processes and operations nearer to Member States at the sub-regional level, through its multinational programming and operational centres (MULPOCs), each of which has its own policy organs. This development is discussed more fully in Chapter IV.

30. African institutions. During the last two decades, ECA has initiated and supported many regional and sub-regional economic, research and intergovernmental organizations now spread across Africa. They differ greatly in their strength, scope and activities, and the degree of ECA technical co-operation and programming activity with them varies correspondingly. Some of these institutions now have the potential to either complement or duplicate ECA activities. Because of this, and because these institutions can be very substantial catalysts for co-operative inter-country activity to further the aims of the Lagos Plan, closer ECA programming ties with them could be very fruitful.

31. UNDP. The restructuring resolution states that the UNDP country programming process should be a frame of reference for operational activities of the United Nations system, and UNDP Resident Representatives usually serve as the Resident Co-ordinators responsible for team leadership in the United Nations system at the country level. In addition, ECOSOC has recently reaffirmed the

central funding and co-ordinating role of UNDP in the field of technical co-operation in the United Nations system (E/1981/59 of 22 July 1981). It is therefore particularly important to harmonize UNDP's roles with ECA's responsibilities as the "main development centre" and "team leader" at the regional level, especially since UNDP is responsible for funding a large volume of regional projects (\$109 million for the 1977-81 period in Africa).

32. To date, UNDP co-operation with ECA in implementing the restructuring resolution has been perhaps the closest of any agency. UNDP has provided more extra-budgetary support to ECA than any other source (\$22 million of \$47 million for the 1978-81 period), including technical training and assistance specifically intended to help develop ECA's programming, project management, and operational capabilities, and most of the funding for the sub-regional MULPOCs.

33. ECA project execution for UNDP has amounted to some \$22 million for the four-year period 1978-81 and is expected to rise to about \$15 million for 1982-83. In addition, in view of their central roles in promoting collective self-reliance in their regions, ECA and the other regional commissions have been made full members of the UNDP/UNCTAD Standing Committee as of 1981 for the promotion of TCDC and ECDC by the United Nations system. Perhaps most importantly, the conference to discuss the draft African regional programme of UNDP for the 1982-86 cycle was sponsored jointly by UNDP, ECA and OAU and held in Addis Ababa.

34. United Nations Headquarters departments. Thus far, joint programming activities between ECA and the various entities at United Nations Headquarters appear to have been limited to sporadic exchanges of information and ECA inputs into central programming processes without corresponding feedback. Relations have not been formalized in any specific procedures, although a general rationale is provided by the restructuring resolution. The slow progress in many of these areas is discussed more fully in Chapter V.

35. Other UN and UN system organizations. ECA has several joint units with FAO, UNIDO and UNCTC and has established formal working relationships with WHO, UNESCO, ITC, UNFPA and others. WHO and UNDP have liaison offices located in Addis Ababa. Consultations, information exchanges and contacts exist with these and with the other United Nations system organizations. In general, however, the United Nations system agencies are still awaiting full development of the new ECA operational and co-ordinating role and capacities under the restructuring resolution to determine the changes required in existing relationships. Some promising joint initiatives are underway, such as those with UNIDO for the Industrial Development Decade in Africa, with FAO in preparing the African Regional Food Plan, with ICAO, IMCO, ITU and UPU concerning the Transport and Communications Decade for Africa, and with UNCHS (Habitat) in the area of human settlements, but the processes for joint work programming are still limited (see Chapter V.A). In addition, there appears to be considerable potential for further joint programming work between ECA and ECWA, since the Arab world spreads across their two regions.

36. Other multilateral and bilateral programmes. While programming links between ECA and other multilateral and bilateral programmes can never be highly formalized, there is still considerable potential for informal consultations and information exchange. For instance, the ECA Pan-African Documentation and Information System (PADIS) project will offer, by 1990, ready access to a computerized data base for all participants in the African development process. This will provide a significant new development information and programming base in Africa. Over the years, ECA has developed with these organizations an extensive set of contacts, co-operative work, and extra-budgetary funding relationships, which will serve as a basis for improved co-ordinating work in the future as the ECA "development centre" and "team leadership" roles expand.

#### C. Internal programming

37. If ECA programming activities with other organizations have progressed rather slowly, its own internal programming processes have evolved more rapidly. The ECA Programme of Work and Priorities for 1980-81, as revised in December 1980,

was designed to highlight the general, regional, sub-regional and inter-regional elements of its programme, reflect a more realistic approach to the prospects of attaining funds, include a "hard core" of priorities from the Lagos Plan, and take account of bottle-necks (such as slow consultant recruitment) beyond secretariat control.

38. The 1982-83 Programme of Work and Priorities and the 1982-83 Programme Budget attempt two things: to further realign the ECA programme with the key elements of the Lagos Plan while adhering to the zero-growth policy for the United Nations budget as a whole, and to add new performance and structural improvements in line with the ongoing development of the programme planning and budgeting system of the United Nations. Most significantly, the proposed medium-term plan for 1984-89 seeks to integrate the Lagos Plan and the new International Development Strategy into an orderly and detailed planning framework which will guide ECA's work for that coming six-year period.

39. The primary co-ordinating responsibilities for ECA programmes fall on three groups in the Cabinet of the Executive Secretary. The Policy and Programme Co-ordination Office (PPCO) is responsible for overseeing, co-ordinating and assisting in the preparation and implementation of the work programme by the ECA divisions. In addition, the PPCO has important responsibilities for formulating basic policies and strategies in the light of socio-economic changes and trends in the African region - i.e. acting as a focal point and "think tank" for the "main development centre" and "team leader" roles of ECA under the restructuring process.

40. The Technical Assistance Co-ordination and Operations Office (TACO) also has important formulation and co-ordination responsibilities with ECA divisions, other United Nations system agencies, African institutions and extra-budgetary funding sources for carrying out technical co-operation policies and programmes and other co-operative arrangements. In addition, the Economic Co-operation Office (ECO) has responsibilities for the promotion, co-ordination and appraisal of economic and technical co-operation overall and in specific areas, TCDC activities and for overseeing the operations of the ECA MULPOCs.

41. During the past few years, the ECA divisions have developed a number of promising new approaches to their operational role; these include the following examples:

(a) Detailed sectoral analysis to identify critical gaps that can be filled by new regional and sub-regional projects.

(b) Development of specific socio-economic data that African institutions and Member States can use to highlight development needs and attract donor project funds.

(c) Assistance to Member States in developing and exchanging project-oriented information and developing codes and protocols for co-operation at the sub-regional level.

(d) Work with Member States to analyze the most difficult areas and bottle-necks in key projects and then provide assistance in locating needed funding or expertise to solve the problems.

(e) Development of new rosters of African and non-African consultants, "trouble-shooters", and specialists to deal individually or in special teams with implementation problems of Member States' projects.

(f) Working groups and inter-divisional committees within ECA to blend subject and technical skills, identify joint projects, conduct joint missions, and co-ordinate work efforts.

(g) Assistance to Member State ministries and inter-governmental groups in formulating new longer-range programming strategies at regional and sub-regional levels, to encourage a unified approach to planning.

(h) Realignment of programmes and approaches to meet the changing development needs of the 1980s and 1990s.

(i) Transfer of programming, project development, training and advisory services and responsibilities to staff and Member State groups at the sub-regional level, with ECA headquarters concentrating on overall future programme development.

(j) Dissemination of information on development project identification, proposal-writing, donor sources and project management processes for use at the sub-regional and country levels.

42. While ECA has thus shown some vitality in addressing its new programming and operational roles, major programming problems do exist. The programming initiatives listed above have largely been confined to individual divisions, without a systematic programming process and mechanism to ensure that promising new approaches are shared and that overall programming is orderly and well co-ordinated. Supervision of the ECA programming process is at present spread uncertainly between the three staff groups - the PPCO, TACO and ECO. Further, the small staffs of these three groups are hard pressed to meet their many programme co-ordination responsibilities within ECA, those concerning joint programming initiatives and efforts with other agencies, and the critically important function of assessing overall development trends and changes in Africa. The ECA divisions themselves are often very small (see chart in Chapter II), and they are also heavily burdened by the new programming responsibilities and the attention they require. In addition, the MULPOCs have not yet been really integrated into ECA's work programming (see Chapter IV.C).

#### D. Monitoring and evaluation

43. The 1984-89 proposed medium-term plan for ECA provides for each sub-programme a statement of objectives to be attained, the problems addressed, the strategy to be followed, and the evaluation activities to be undertaken, including a structure of reviews, self-evaluations of programme elements, assessments of indicators of impact and other information on programme results. This detailed emphasis on the outputs, results and effectiveness of ECA programmes is part of the ongoing development of the overall project planning and budgeting system of the United Nations, which includes programme performance, monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

44. At present, there is no formal monitoring system in ECA. Monitoring responsibilities have been given to TACO for technical co-operation activities, to the PPCO for the general ECA programme, to the ECO for MULPOC operations, and to division heads to oversee implementation of their programmes. Because of the newness of the ECA operational role, other work burdens and tight staffing, however, these monitoring activities seem to be a very informal and ad hoc process. The only systematic monitoring of programme implementation occurs in the preparation of the required United Nations programme performance reports, the first of which indicated that implementation of programmes as scheduled in ECA during 1978-79 varied from as low as 13 per cent to as high as 78 per cent. A primary barrier to such systematic progress monitoring and status information, however, is the lack of basic programme information and programme management plans, as discussed further in Chapter IV.A.

45. Evaluation processes are also lacking. Some general responsibilities for evaluation are assigned to PPCO and TACO, but ECA evaluation activity has essentially been confined to modest participation in UNDP or other agency evaluation efforts. To provide systematic feedback on programme performance and improve future project and programme formulation, ECA must assign specific evaluation and monitoring system development, co-ordination, training and oversight responsibilities to a staff member or small unit among the staff groups in the Executive Secretary's cabinet office. A programme information system will greatly facilitate this process, and it should eventually become a built-in part of the project and programme management cycle. However, this is another element of the ECA programming process in which strengthening is very much needed.

E. New regional programming approaches

46. The Inspectors believe that ECA has made progress in developing its programming functions, but much more work will be required to institutionalize and co-ordinate development programming in the African region, particularly in the light of the many tasks and linkages outlined in Section B. They also believe that firm application of new policy approaches to the programming of regional projects is needed to facilitate the role of ECA and the other regional commissions. Such projects receive significant resources: UNDP alone will spend an estimated \$730 million on regional projects during the 1982-86 programming cycle, and at least as much (primarily extra-budgetary) may be provided from other United Nations system organizations.

47. Since these regional project resources are still small relative to needs, they must be carefully programmed and executed to meet the countries' priority requirements. In a 1980 report on Assistance by the United Nations System to Regional Inter-Country Technical Co-operation Institutions (JIU/REP/80/10), however, JIU found that many regional projects seemed to elicit only passive support and participation by the countries concerned. This is illustrated by the persistent operational problems of many regional institutions once United Nations system financial assistance has ceased.

48. The concept of self-reliance is the key to current development policy. It is a dominant theme of the Lagos Plan, a key objective of the policies of economic and technical co-operation among developing countries (ECDC and TCDC), and an important component of the new international development strategy. UNDP has also recently sought to increase the collective involvement of developing countries and the regional commissions in formulating programmes, as in its 1980-81 inter-governmental meetings held in collaboration with the commissions to discuss priorities for the 1982-86 programming cycle in each region.

49. Recent resolutions from ECOSOC (such as 1978/74 and 1979/64) and the General Assembly (including 33/202 and 34/206) have stressed the importance of regional co-operation and development; the advantageous position of the commissions to promote and strengthen sub-regional, regional and inter-regional co-operation and programme co-ordination; and the importance of enhancing collective self-reliance in the developing countries and ensuring their equitable, full and effective participation in the formulation and application of all United Nations system decisions in the field of development and international economic co-operation. Reports by the Secretary-General (E/1979/81, A/35/546 and A/36/577) have also stressed the significant potentials for greater Member State involvement and regional commission support as critical factors in building more effective regional co-operation and co-ordination.

50. While there has been some progress in building self-reliance at the country level through the country programming process, however, it has scarcely begun to be applied to regional programmes. The Inspectors believe a reversal of roles is needed for regional projects, with governments increasingly taking over responsibility for programming, managing and evaluating regional projects and the United Nations system moving from a central role to one of supportive involvement. They believe that the principles JIU proposed to further self-reliance in its 1978 report on the Role of Experts in Development Co-operation (JIU/REP/78/3) for country programmes and projects are just as valid for regional programmes and projects.

51. In his comprehensive policy review of operational activities in 1980 (A/35/224), the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation joined the Administrator and Governing Council of UNDP in noting the limited progress in implementing the "new dimensions" of technical co-operation, with their emphasis on promoting self-reliance and government execution of projects. He concluded that a progressive and relatively rapid assumption by governments of responsibility for executing projects supported by the United Nations system would help develop the governments' managerial capabilities and self-reliance, help reduce United Nations system administrative burdens, and turn

specialized agency work towards its true vocation of technical advice and monitoring and global policy and analytical functions. He also emphasized the need to enhance United Nations system responsiveness to the priorities and objectives of governments at the inter-country level, and cited the regional economic commissions as a "vital component" of system support to the efforts of the developing countries to promote collective self-reliance.

52. In its comments on the JIU report on assistance to regional institutions (A/36/101/Add. 1 of 30 June 1981) the ACC agreed that the regional resources of the United Nations system would be most effectively utilized to strengthen inter-country collaboration and self-reliant capability and to encourage participating countries to exercise their fundamental responsibilities for the direction and management of the institutions concerned. The ACC also agreed that the regional commissions and other United Nations system components could do much to assist governments to achieve coherence of action among regional institutions and translate global and regional objectives into action at the country level - a goal of utmost importance.

53. While the United Nations system as a whole is thus in the early stages of reconsidering regional programming needs, WHO provides a concrete example of an approach which emphasizes the development of collective self-reliance. As summarized in its Executive Board document, "Formulating strategies for health for all by the year 2000" (Geneva, 1979), WHO emphasizes that health for all is to be obtained within countries. Strategies should be formulated first and foremost by countries themselves, with regional and global strategies then developed collectively on the basis and in support of national strategies and plans of action. The WHO regional committees have a crucial role in formulating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating regional strategies and ensuring support to national plans. The WHO secretariat provides relevant information, support of technical co-operation among countries, and technical and managerial support for these efforts. Although the United Nations system is constitutionally different from WHO and requires a multi-sectoral approach, the basic WHO policies, processes and experience offer a useful guide.

54. The executive secretaries of the commissions have emphasized during the past few years that their first concern under restructuring is to strengthen their capacity to build inter-agency co-operation at the regional level and expand regional co-ordination. The importance of such strengthening is discussed in Chapter V. Further action, however, is also very important to work towards the goals of collective self-reliance and economic and technical co-operation among developing countries at the sub-regional and regional levels.

55. The Inspectors recommend that the Director-General investigate new approaches for the programming and management of United Nations system inter-country projects. WHO should in particular be consulted concerning its experience, and the specialized agencies, UNDP and the regional commissions should be closely associated with the review. The result should be a first report to the appropriate inter-governmental bodies of these organizations, to be followed by a final report to ECOSOC which would take account of the inter-governmental bodies' views. The Inspectors suggest that the following questions be given careful consideration.

(a) Programming. The objective should be to find the best way to ensure that inter-country programmes emanate from and respond to the priority needs of the participating countries. The role of the regional commissions, which should be guided by resolution 32/197, Annex sections IV and V, might include co-ordinating the efforts of the United Nations system in assisting governments to prepare their regional programmes. This should involve the seeking of the views of governments on priority problems (when these are not already available in documents such as the Lagos Plan) and programmes and projects to attenuate these problems, and consulting the specialized agencies on matters coming under their mandates. Finally, the commissions, with the co-operation of the specialized agencies and UNDP, could assist governments in preparing a draft regional programme covering activities which might be assisted and financed in part by UNDP or any other United Nations system organization.

(b) Programme approval. Once the draft inter-country programme is prepared it could be submitted to the appropriate inter-governmental organs of the regional commission concerned (for ECA the MULPOC policy organs and the Conference of Ministers), and then, with any resultant changes, be submitted to the legislative bodies of UNDP and the specialized agencies for approval of the parts of concern to them.

(c) Programme execution. The management of projects should eventually become the full responsibility of the participating governments, who should make all decisions during the life of the project. The execution of the projects could be assisted by the appropriate "executing agency" of the United Nations system or the mode of execution could be "government execution". Government execution is just as feasible for regional projects as for national projects.

(d) Evaluation. In a separate report JIU is examining the role of governments in the evaluation of their development projects assisted by the United Nations system. The recommendations of this separate JIU report should be taken into account in developing approaches for the evaluation of inter-country projects.

#### IV. OPERATIONS

56. The new ECA responsibilities created by the restructuring resolution have already had a great impact on the nature, volume and complexity of its operations. This Chapter surveys the management, personnel and sub-regional office challenges and problems which have arisen.

##### A. Management

57. The transition process from a primarily research- and conference-oriented organization to one equally concerned with the programming and implementation of development projects in the field is a difficult one, which requires many changes in management systems, procedures and attitudes. Most of the organizations of the United Nations system have gone through this complex process, or are still undergoing it. The Inspectors believe, and some knowledgeable observers concurred, that thus far ECA is making relatively good progress in this complicated transition.

58. ECA faced some major difficulties even before the transition began. A 1976 AMS report on ECA operations revealed "serious problems" in administration and conference and general services and called for urgent management attention to appropriate staffing of the administrative area. However, the Secretary-General decided in 1977 not to request any new staff posts, but to make a complete review of ECA staffing requirements for the 1978-1979 budget period.

59. When a review of grade levels finally arrived in 1979, (resulting in a considerable upgrading of posts despite a growing climate of budgetary austerity), the ECA management and administrative system had been overtaken by the major new programming and operational responsibilities of the restructuring resolution and had become an executing agency in its own right. The sub-regional MULPOC offices were launched as a major decentralization of ECA operations, and the total programme budget and activities had grown substantially. Yet despite all these changes, and an administrative system that was deficient to begin with, programme support staffing has scarcely changed. In 1972-1973, ECA had 35 established Professional staff posts providing programme support, but only 15 posts have been added since: 12 (about 1 a year) for administration and common services, 3 for conference services and none for management of technical co-operation activities.

60. The result, not surprisingly, has been many management problems. ECA staff felt that management support systems have fallen far behind operational needs, are hamstrung by rigid bureaucratic procedures, are conducted on an ad hoc and last minute basis, and are not responsive to changing requirements. Member State and

African institution officials mentioned examples of duplication, inefficiency, rigidity and confusion which they had observed to be hampering ECA activities. While ECA administrative officials themselves acknowledged their inability to meet operational support requirements, they cited the basic difficulties of coping with a greatly expanded workload with unchanged staff resources and procedures.

61. The major management problem areas which exist include the following:

(a) Programme status data. Reports on financial and personnel status are often quite late. Computerized reporting is not yet effective, with uneven and sometimes conflicting data, and data is not aggregated on a programme or sub-programme basis. These factors greatly complicate basic monitoring of project and programme implementation, as well as the crucial process of assembling an effective "package" of project components to begin with.

(b) Extra-budgetary fund information. Although extra-budgetary funds now comprise half the ECA budget, only a handful of ECA staff are responsible for extra-budgetary finances and reporting is only on an ad hoc and slow basis. This not only complicates general programme implementation, but severely restricts accountability to extra-budgetary sources on the status and use of their funds.

(c) Programme support work. The many new programming and operational responsibilities have put heavy paperwork and monitoring burdens on the usually small operating divisions, particularly on the Division directors themselves. They expressed the need for lower-level staff help to keep up with day-to-day operations.

(d) Travel and missions. Despite restricted travel funds, much concern was expressed about missions from ECA headquarters which are inadequately planned in advance and which seem to be overlapping or duplicative. Determining the status of travel funds is difficult, arrangements are often made at the last minute, and the reimbursement process can take a very long time.

(e) Conferences and documentation. Conference, translation and reproduction services have tight staffing, limited equipment and considerable work backlogs. A documents control unit is only now being established. Although some ECA officials still felt these services were functioning well, the pressures cited above and below often mean that the divisions submit their work late. As a result, documentation is not always ready when needed nor in good form. The situation is exacerbated by limited possibilities for contracting work out.

(f) Personnel and recruitment. Vacancies, slow and restrictive recruitment practices, limited consultant rosters and complications in administering many extra-budgetary posts of various categories greatly hamper operations, as discussed in the following section.

(g) Sub-regional offices. The MULPOCs have certain operational problems arising from weakness in administrative support provided from ECA headquarters, outmoded financial and personnel procedures, and uneven relationships with operating divisions in Addis Ababa. These difficulties are discussed in Section C below.

(h) Equipment. ECA has not as yet made much progress in developing and utilizing computer systems for the conduct of its operations. Equipment for document processing and reproduction is also quite limited. Communications in the vast expanse of the African continent are also a problem.

(i) Support (overhead) fund use. ECA's extra-budgetary funds normally include support costs for backstopping projects. In 1981 a formal support cost budget was prepared for the first time, but the pressure generated by the many administrative problems appears to have led to a "gap-filling" use of these funds rather than to their more systematic application.

62. There appear to be four major reasons for these management problems. First, considerable programming and management responsibility has been decentralized to ECA, but without the "adequate budgetary and financial resources" called for in the restructuring resolution. ECA has had to try to do much more work and much more complex and demanding work with essentially the same resources.

63. Second, the decentralization of responsibilities has not been accompanied by adequate authority. Programming has been decentralized, but management controls remain largely at United Nations Headquarters in New York. This creates fundamental operating tensions. In particular, in many areas, it imposes bureaucratic procedures (much criticized to the Inspectors by various officials inside and outside the United Nations system) which are not really appropriate for field level development operations. It also results in considerable delays and disruptions, rather than the responsiveness and flexibility that an operating agency needs.

64. Third, within ECA itself there appears to be a management development vacuum. The Executive Secretary must travel extensively to meet the many calls for co-operative action on the continent, keep up with current needs and problems, attend required intergovernmental meetings, and consult with other development organizations. It is therefore impossible for him to give daily attention to the problems of management development within ECA. The Deputy Executive Secretary has been assigned certain specific duties and is Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Matters. A staff member of the Cabinet has contributed some analyses aimed at improving certain administrative processes, but follow-up seems slow.

65. The ECA "management gap" appears in large part due to a very inadequate number of senior staff: one Under-Secretary-General and one D-2 are not sufficient to manage a US\$ 71 million biennial programme with continental scope and complex new restructuring and team leadership responsibilities. The Inspectors believe that, given the importance and extent of the duties which the Executive Secretary must discharge away from Headquarters, explicit arrangements and delegation of authority must be made to ensure effective action. There also needs to be a special thrust within ECA for management improvement and training and the development of management skills and systems on a steady basis, since AMS in New York is too overburdened to give ECA the continuous attention it now needs.

66. The final factor, related to the second and third, is that a "service" attitude seems to be missing from present ECA management and administrative processes. Procedures are followed as required, but in a very mechanical and bureaucratic way. Rather than an aggressive desire to provide the best and fastest possible support to operations and streamline and improve the management system, the present administrative processes too often seem to be only a series of obstacles which line staff must overcome to carry out their tasks.

67. The Inspectors conclude that improved management must be a top priority as ECA moves further into its new operating role. The decentralization issues of resources and authority are discussed further in the following sections and chapters. It should be observed here, however, that ECA operational management capacity is a newly emerging process and as such it should be carefully nurtured and supported with appropriate resources, assistance and adaptation to ECA operating needs.

68. Much concern was expressed to the Inspectors by staff at UN Headquarters about maintaining proper control over ECA operations, as a component of broader UN programmes. But the restructuring resolution emphasizes the provision of needed additional resources and assistance. This should mean that UN Headquarters sets reasonable (but not excessively restrictive) guidelines, procedures and controls to do the job, and then leaves ECA alone with accountability for performance. UN Headquarters should not serve in a line function on behalf of ECA, but should rely on monitoring and reporting which allows ECA to develop effective, appropriate (and self-reliant) management. ECA is now an executing agency. To be a good one, it must have sufficient authority and resources to carry out its programmes on an equal footing with other executing agencies of the UN system.

#### B. Personnel

69. Staff is the major resource, strength and cost element of ECA, but many factors presently make personnel administration difficult. The most basic constraint is the limited number of budget posts. In the 1968 JIU report on ECA

(JIU/REP/68/10 of October 1968), the Inspectors concluded that the 137 Professional staff were not enough to deal with ECA research, advisory and planning responsibilities. ECA total established staff posts in the programme budgets subsequently grew to 620 in 1976-77 and have since increased slightly to 641 proposed for 1982-83. But while Professional staff posts grew to 228 in 1976-77, they seem actually to have declined steadily since that time to only 214 for 1982-83 (however, see paragraph 121).

70. The effort to meet ECA's major new responsibilities under this constraint has led to a "patchwork" ECA personnel structure. The following ECA figures show the changes in total budget and non-budget staff composition from January 1977 to January 1981 (in parentheses): 721 (943) total posts, with 535 (578) regular budget; 33 (50) temporary assistance; 75 (118) consultants, regional advisers and experts; 47 (48) funded by other agencies; 17 (112) funded by projects, extra-budgetary overheads and grants; and 16 (37) sub-regional staff. Thus, ECA grew by some 222 total posts during the four-year period, but the bulk of the increase (80 per cent) was in project and other extra-budgetary funded posts (which now comprise some 40 per cent of the ECA staff).

71. This complex system has hampered ECA's work considerably. The increasing short-term nature of many posts creates much insecurity and disruption for the staff members involved, and severe difficulties for many ECA managers, who must continually worry that key posts and related work may be abruptly terminated, and must devote considerable attention to a never-ending process of recruitment, re-assignment and extensions of staff. The short-term nature and uncertainties of these posts also make them unattractive to potential staff; and the many categories and frequent renewals create considerable extra burdens for the ECA Personnel Section.

72. The ECA personnel situation is complicated by other major problems, the first being turnover. ECA personnel records indicate that Professional staff turnover in regular budget posts for 1977-1980 averaged about 15 per cent: i.e., about one-seventh of this staff group leaves ECA each year. This is not as serious a rate as some observers perceived in ECA, but it does exceed the United Nations system average (13 per cent for 1976-1979) and thus is a cause for concern. There is probably an even greater rate of turnover in the various types of extra-budgetary posts. In addition, while transfers out of ECA to other UN organizations amounted to almost half of the separations during the 1977-1978 period, there appeared to be very few transfers, secondments, or assignments of other UN staff into ECA, except for some translators. This suggests serious difficulties in rotating other UN staff to field assignments in ECA.

73. Second, ECA staff recruitment and retention are hampered by a modest grade structure. The 1968 JIU report on ECA found that ECA had fewer staff at P-4 and above levels than the other regional commissions. A 1979 post classification survey by the Office of Personnel Services (OPS) appears to have belatedly confirmed this problem of under-graded staff, since it recommended the unusually high number of 27 post upgradings and only 3 downgradings. About half these changes are included in the 1982-83 proposed programme budget, with the rest not yet implemented.

74. At present, ECA seems to have reached approximate grade-level parity with the other commissions, but still falls far short of UN Headquarters. The 1982-83 proposed programme budget showed 8.6 per cent of the total budgeted professional staff of the five regional commissions at D-1 or above, 25.1 per cent at P-5 and above and 54 per cent at P-4 and above. DIESA and DTCD, for example and in contrast, had figures of 16.7, 36.5 and 64 per cent respectively. Moreover, DIESA and DTCD are currently growing with a net gain of 21 posts in the 1982-83 budget, mostly for extra-budgetary P-3 and P-4 posts, while the regional commissions actually have a net loss of 8 posts, primarily extra-budgetary P-5 posts (however, see also paragraph 121). The Headquarters figures of course reflect global responsibilities, but the disparity does work against regional commission recruitment of high calibre and career-oriented candidates.

75. A third important personnel constraint is the slow and complicated recruiting process. ECA has been given authority to recruit professional project personnel through the L-5 level, provided they reside in the African region, general service staff and certain other short-term staff. All other recruitment, appointments, extensions, promotions and classifications are made by or shared with United Nations Headquarters in New York. Observers outside and inside ECA were quite critical of the very slow and rigid United Nations TARS recruitment procedures and rules in light of ECA's field operational needs. It was informally estimated that recruitment of regular and expert staff currently takes 6 to 9 months, rather than a more reasonable 3 or 4. About half the time is incurred in Addis Ababa and half in New York, with considerable time spent in consultations back and forth on such things as approval of medical examination results.

76. ECA personnel data from 1975 to early 1981 indicate an average vacancy rate in regular budget Professional posts of about 15 per cent, and an average of about 8 per cent of staff were encumbering posts at a grade level higher than their own. Thus, at any given time, almost one of every four ECA regular budget professional posts is either vacant or filled by a lower-graded staff member. The situation may be more serious for extra-budgetary positions. The slow recruitment process thus places another heavy burden on ECA staffing efforts, a burden which is particularly sensitive because ECA is now an executing agency with increased needs for flexibility and responsiveness. ECA needs to fill its vacant posts much more rapidly to help strengthen its operations.

77. The fourth problem is that of geographic distribution. ECA has an "Africanization policy" under which about 75 per cent of staff are expected to be from African Member States. In recent years, the figure has actually been about 70-75 per cent for ECA professional and expert staff, and 86 per cent when vacant posts set aside for identified African candidates are included. Of the 196 regular budget professional staff posts, 169 were occupied or reserved for Africans in 1981, and ECA professional staff came from 40 different African states. This policy has been strongly emphasized by the ECA Conference of Ministers and endorsed by the General Assembly for all regional commissions. It aids ECA and African development by intertwining national interests with regional interests, training Africans for development work and making ECA the most widely representative international civil service in Africa.

78. As a recent JIU report on geographical distribution (JIU/REP/81/10 of July 1981, Annex I) illustrates, however, Africanization also presents some problems for ECA. Even with expanded desirable ranges for the geographic distribution of posts which began in 1981, 10 of the 50 African Member States (versus 21 in 1980) are still over-represented in the United Nations Secretariat. ECA has found that many of its best potential candidates come from these over-represented countries and thus should not properly be recruited. This is a problem for all the regional commissions. The JIU report (Annex III) shows that from mid-1978 to mid-1980 about 52 per cent of ECA regular staff professional recruitments were from over-represented countries and the same figure for the other regional commissions varied from 19 to 71 per cent. Attracting staff from un- or under-represented countries, however, has proved quite difficult for ECA.

79. A 1981 secretariat report (A/36/495) also shows that in June 1981 one-third (132) of the African staff members in professional posts subject to geographic distribution were clustered in the 196 total ECA posts in Addis Ababa, while the remaining two-thirds (268) were thinly scattered across the remaining 2,700 comparable United Nations posts. Similarly (JIU report, Annex IV), more than one-third (17) of the 47 Africans in posts at D-1 and above in the United Nations were in ECA in Addis Ababa, with the remaining 30 also thinly spread elsewhere.

80. The Inspectors believe that the ECA Africanization policy should not be made an end in itself. Current urgent personnel needs and the continuing difficulties of recruitment from un- and under-represented African Member States suggest that ECA should also consider more ready recruitment possibilities from other, non-African United Nations Member States. A slight modification of the existing policy could not only allow ECA to fill some vacant posts, but could also facilitate the

placement of African nationals more widely throughout the United Nations Secretariat.

81. Finally, ECA has some other personnel difficulties. Its recruitment picture is changing from the researchers of the past toward operational and technical expert staff and programme managers. Continuing training programmes are needed to ensure that professional and local staff are fully capable of handling the new operating responsibilities and to strengthen English and French language training for ECA's predominantly Ethiopian secretaries. The ECA Personnel Section has, however, not been able to provide effective services, support and counselling to ECA staff.

82. The Inspectors conclude that the declining regular budget posts, patchwork personnel structure, excessive staff turnover, modest grade levels, slow recruitment, resulting vacancies, geographic distribution constraints and other personnel problems seriously jeopardize the strengthening of ECA which the General Assembly mandated. In light of these hindrances, it is commendable that ECA has moved as far forward as it has. To consolidate and extend the progress made, ECA needs greater authority and operational flexibility, particularly in recruitment, for personnel matters as for management in general. It needs staff increases to meet its new responsibilities, greater continuity through more stable staffing arrangements and more rotations, secondments, reassignments and Headquarters missions to reinforce its work. This decentralizing and strengthening process would place it on a comparable basis with other executing agencies for operational work.

#### C. Multinational Programming and Operational Centres (MULPOCs)

83. In 1962, ECA established four sub-regional offices in Africa to decentralize Commission activities and improve effectiveness. The centres, financed by the ECA regular budget, had some individual successes in providing advice and launching projects, but they were hampered by manpower and financial shortages and did not contribute much to the slow and complex process of sub-regional co-operation and integration. The 1968 JIU report on ECA urged a reassessment of the need for the offices. The 1975 JIU report described their resources as "patently inadequate", since the four offices combined had only nine professional staff, and observed that they seemed to have no work programme of their own and were unable to undertake substantive studies, which remained the responsibility of ECA headquarters.

84. In the early 1970s, the sub-regional offices were gradually eclipsed by United Nations Multinational Interdisciplinary Development Advisory Teams (UNDATs), created by a 1969 General Assembly resolution. Three of the seven UNDATs were established in Africa, with funding initially provided by the United Nations budget and later primarily by UNDP, to provide services at the sub-regional level. ECA policy organs, however, sought to re-orient them toward a policy and operational role more relevant to pragmatic Member State needs for development and economic integration. A joint ECA/UNDP evaluation mission in 1975 endorsed this change in emphasis and cited inadequate personnel and financial resources as the most serious constraint on UNDAT operations.

85. In light of these difficulties, the ECA Conference of Ministers decided in 1977 to replace the sub-regional offices and UNDATs with ECA MULPOCs, with work programmes to be integrated with the ECA work programme and with their own policy organs and to develop and supervise the activities of each centre. Accordingly, in 1977-78, five MULPOCs were established: Lusaka (Zambia) for eighteen countries of eastern and southern Africa; Gisenyi (Rwanda) for three countries of the Great Lakes Community; Yaoundé (Cameroon) for seven countries of central Africa and adjacent islands; Niamey (Niger) for sixteen countries of West Africa (ECOWAS member states); and Tangier (Morocco) for six countries of North Africa. The first four centres each have a supreme policy organ composed of development ministers and a technical committee of secretaries of planning ministries, which meet annually to formulate, oversee and mobilize resources and political support for centre operations. The North African MULPOC is to be governed by a council of plenipotentiaries which, because of political problems, has never met.

86. A 1978 ECA progress report on MULPOCs described their establishment as "an important step towards the transformation of ECA into an operational institution". The MULPOCs are considered the principal ECA mechanism for fostering economic and technical co-operation at the sub-regional and regional levels in Africa. As the multidisciplinary and multisectoral arms of ECA, they are intended to be the focal points for activities of all specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations, and are to play a catalytic role in the economic development of their respective sub-regions.

87. The MULPOC structure places particular emphasis on "grassroots" programming. Their policy organs have been delegated full responsibility for establishing MULPOC work programmes and supervising their implementation. These work programmes also contribute to ECA's work programme, to ensure that ECA programming activities are attuned to felt sub-regional needs and are not stereotyped responses to regional problems. This programming approach has now been generally institutionalized and has made some considerable progress, perhaps most notably in actions to establish a Preferential Trade Area for eastern and southern Africa through the Lusaka MULPOC and in the very active and participative women's programmes centered at the sub-regional level. The MULPOC policy organs, expert groups and meetings and seminars have produced some very positive participation, although the North African MULPOC is still largely dormant. A wide variety of co-operative initiatives and specific sub-regional projects are now underway.

88. There have, however, been programming problems, including the following:

(a) The multiple needs, limited resources, many organizations involved (33 sub-regional intergovernmental organizations in one MULPOC area alone), and competition between national and sub-regional priorities inhibit cohesive programming. The MULPOCs' most effective programme linkages thus far have been with Member States, either through the policy organs' expert groups or through key sub-regional organizations.

(b) Programme linkages and co-ordination with United Nations system agencies are still rather haphazard, with information exchanges mostly informal and co-operation hampered by different agency sub-regional structures. UNDP Resident Co-ordinators focus closely on individual country issues and thereby may tend to neglect the inter-country dimensions.

(c) The integrated ECA work programme has made definite progress but is still not easy to harmonize. While some Headquarters divisions are very active with the MULPOCs, others have not yet established effective links and technical support is sometimes erratic. There are also occasional frictions between the project desires of MULPOC policy organs and available resources and technical servicing capacity at ECA Headquarters.

(d) Finally, Member State and United Nations system agency officials expressed considerable concern that the MULPOCs are spread too thinly in their desire to encompass all ECA headquarters activities. They felt that the MULPOCs needed more technical specialists with practical competence, who can become involved in fewer but better-planned activities which address critical sub-regional development problems in more depth. The MULPOCs have already filled an important political role in encouraging greater sub-regional co-operation, but it was felt they now needed to move to a stronger programming and monitoring role for project implementation.

89. A major cause of these programming problems is that the MULPOCs, like the old sub-regional offices and UNDATs before them, lack the personnel and resources needed to carry out their functions. Since the MULPOCs began operation, UNDP has paid about US \$6 million of their cost, with ECA providing considerable support through substantive and administrative activities at headquarters. The short-term nature of most of the MULPOC project posts greatly hampers recruitment, since a sequence of one-year assignments with uncertain renewals is not very attractive. It also discourages staff stability (one MULPOC has had 5 different directors in a two-year period), and makes it difficult for the MULPOC staff to attune themselves to the sub-regional situation.

90. A second major problem is administrative deficiencies. Communication in Africa is frequently difficult and information-sharing and co-ordination between ECA headquarters, MULPOCs and other agencies has often been a serious problem. MULPOC operations were criticized by some observers as ineffectively organized. Travel missions from ECA headquarters were sometimes uncoordinated and ill-prepared. MULPOC personnel problems have been exacerbated by delays in recruitment and extension of contracts, expenditures are occasionally fixed on a month-to-month basis and paychecks have been late in arriving. United Nations bureaucratic procedures seem to be even more of a burden at the sub-regional level than at ECA headquarters, and clear-cut resource needs, such as French-speaking experts and French documents for French-speaking areas, have not been provided.

91. During 1981, UNDP and ECA undertook a joint evaluation of the four MULPOCs south of the Sahara (the Tangier MULPOC is financed by the ECA regular budget), in response to an ECA Conference of Ministers' request to assess present and future ECA/UNDP co-operative programmes in Africa. The studies, however, were not completed during 1981.

92. For 20 years ECA has been attempting to establish an effective network of sub-regional offices. The new MULPOC emphases on sub-regional work programming and sub-regional policy organs, the new overall operational role given to ECA, and the substantial ECA progress in decentralizing authority and activities to the MULPOCs, hold out significant promise that this objective might finally be realized. The MULPOCs could greatly aid African development and ECA operations as a decentralized network to facilitate collective self-reliance under the Lagos Plan, fill critical development gaps, and provide support for co-operative planning and project execution. Many government officials commented very favourably on the MULPOCs as a welcome "outreach" which brings ECA programmes closer and makes them more relevant to Member State needs. ECA itself recognizes the critical value of Member State "grassroots" involvement that is not possible in a programme run solely from Addis Ababa.

93. Now that the MULPOCs have created high expectations, however, they must deliver effective programme activities. This process has begun, but present MULPOC staffing and resources appear too weak, unstable and thinly spread to sustain the momentum generated. It is difficult for African Member States to provide the needed voluntary funds given their urgent resource shortages, and they look to ECA and to the United Nations itself to show their support for the MULPOCs through the provision of firm funding. A 1981 ECA Conference of Ministers resolution (418(XVI)) urged further strengthening of the MULPOCs, and particularly that the Secretary-General take needed steps to ensure that the operational staff of the MULPOCs would be covered by the regular budget of the United Nations. The General Assembly, in resolution 36/178, endorsed the importance of the MULPOCs and requested the Secretary-General to report to ECOSOC in 1982 on their financing on an established basis.

94. The Inspectors conclude that, as JIU found in 1968 and 1975, resources for the ECA sub-regional offices are inadequate. ECA has stated (A/35/546) that the MULPOCs are to be its principal mechanisms for fostering economic co-operation at the sub-regional and regional levels, for playing a catalytic role in sub-regional economic development, and for promoting interagency coordination and co-operation at the sub-regional level. Without solid support, however, the MULPOCs will not be able to fulfil these essential responsibilities entrusted to ECA by the restructuring resolution.

95. ECA can take some steps to strengthen the MULPOCs by improving its own administrative systems and attuning them to MULPOC support needs, working to overcome programme linkage problems, encouraging more sharply-focused and pragmatic sub-regional work programmes, and decentralizing the 5 MULPOC liaison officer posts presently placed in its Economic Co-operation Office at headquarters.

96. Ultimately, however, each MULPOC needs a small core group of programme and administrative professionals, with specific project people attached to this core as required. Although extra-budgetary resources from the United Nations, UNDP and other organizations would be most welcome, the Inspectors believe that the

core group should be funded from the United Nations regular budget, as were the sub-regional offices and UNDATs before them. Without this stability, it appears that not only the operational effectiveness of the MULPOCs will be in jeopardy, but also their very existence.

## V. IMPLEMENTATION OF RESTRUCTURING AND DECENTRALIZATION MANDATES

97. The restructuring resolution of 1977 was intended to make the United Nations and the United Nations system more fully capable of dealing with problems of international economic co-operation and development in a comprehensive and effective manner. This Chapter first summarizes the progress ECA has made to date in carrying out the nine basic restructuring tasks given it under the restructuring resolution (32/197, Annex, Section IV, paragraphs 19-27). The other regional commissions have had many of the same difficulties, as discussed in the Secretary-General's 1980 report (A/35/546). The second section discusses the slow progress made, particularly since 1977, in providing the commissions with adequate resources and authority to carry out their restructuring responsibilities and in implementing the many decentralization resolutions of the General Assembly and ECOSOC.

### A. Restructuring

98. "Main general economic and social development centres" for the region (paragraph 19). ECA is expected to exercise a central role with due regard for the responsibilities of other United Nations system organizations in specific sectors and for UNDP's responsibilities for technical co-operation activities. By its very nature, this particular task can never be perfectly clear-cut. However, as discussed in Chapters I-III, ECA is well-qualified to serve as the main centre and catalyst because of its 20 years of experience with African development problems in almost all sectors; its activities in the research, conference, data gathering and data distribution fields; its extensive regional co-operation experience; and its widely-representative African staff. The new executing agency functions, operational role, and sub-regional office structure of ECA reinforce this "main centre" status, but its full exercise is constrained by the other factors noted below.

99. "Team leadership and responsibility for co-ordination and co-operation" at the regional level (paragraph 20). ECA's years of involvement in regional and sub-regional development, co-operation, institution-building, and integrative efforts in Africa provide a sound basis for a leadership and coordinating function. Particularly through its role in the development of the Lagos Plan and its responsibility with OAU for technical co-ordination in the implementation of this Plan, ECA has shown some capacity to assume the new leadership responsibility. It has also co-sponsored with UNDP and OAU the meeting on the 1982-86 cycle of African regional projects, has refashioned its links with the sub-regions through its MULPOCs and has achieved joint programming with other United Nations agencies in the industrial, transport, food, and human settlements areas. Yet it remains true, as JIU concluded in 1975 (JIU/REP/75/2), that regional co-ordination and co-operation do not yet reflect an integrated view of regional development problems. ECA is not yet regarded as the team leader in the complex regional developmental scene.

100. Joint programming procedures are still haphazard in the crowded African development assistance environment, with many linkages still to be established, including the most effective sharing of responsibilities between ECA and OAU (Chapter III, A. and B.). The Inspectors found that various United Nations system officials are still sceptical that ECA can serve as team leader without increased capabilities and improved operating performance, and ECA's internal programming itself needs strengthening (Chapter III.C.). The Inspectors believe, however, that there is great potential for advances in joint regional programming (see Chapter III.E.).

101. "Inputs for global policy-making processes of the competent United Nations organs" and participation in the implementation of decisions (paragraph 21). Over the years, ECA has provided many inputs to United Nations global policy organs, most notably through its regional strategies and contributions to special sessions and conferences. However, the Inspectors strongly concur with the observations of a recent Secretary-General's report (A/35/546, paragraph 36) that these inputs do not have much impact on global deliberations relative to the considerable time and effort required to prepare them. The recently-established meetings of the executive secretaries of the commissions under the Director-General are most useful. As the Director-General focuses his attention increasingly on operational problems and needs at the field level, this mechanism could be made stronger.

102. At present, the executive secretaries do not participate in the ACC machinery, whose activities and decisions have considerable implications for development co-operation at the regional level. They do not appear regularly before the Second and Fifth Committees of the General Assembly or CPC. The small regional commissions liaison office in New York at present handles mostly document requests rather than more substantive policy and programme matters or such key potential linkages as those with UNDP regional bureaus in New York. The increasing operational role of the regional commissions argues for more direct access to these fora, so that they may make more substantial inputs rather than merely carry out decisions from above.

103. "Common definition of regions and sub-regions" and identical location of offices (paragraph 22). In its 1975 report on regional structures (JIU/REP/75/2), JIU found that United Nations system regional and sub-regional offices in Africa were in 14 different cities (twice as many as in Asia or Latin America), and only ILO's regional office was co-located with ECA and OAU in Addis Ababa. The situation has scarcely changed and a common definition of regions and sub-regions, although much discussed, has not been achieved. When combined with the vastness of the African continent, difficulties of intra-African communication, differences in authority, policy and programme responsibilities, technical and operational factors in the location of the various regional offices, and continuing emphasis on the global approach in many programmes, these factors create general problems of co-ordination and co-operation. They also hamper ECA's exercise of its leadership and co-ordinative roles, especially since the ECA membership and regional jurisdiction do not correspond with the regional structures and jurisdictions of such major partners as UNDP, FAO, WHO, UNESCO and UNICEF. Until a satisfactory solution can be found, the ECA MULPOCs seem to be useful strategic locations for developing more systematic relationships with other United Nations system regional offices in Africa.

104. Strengthened relations with other United Nations system organizations and UNDP in operational activities, including preparation of inter-country programmes, and acting as executing agency for projects (paragraph 23). UNDP co-operation with ECA in developing its operational role has been quite close and extensive, as discussed in Chapter III.B. ECA had already been a de facto executing agency for several years in institution-building work before ECOSOC gave it formal status in 1979, but project execution for UNDP is expected to rise from about US \$22 million during the four-year period 1978-81 to some US \$15 million for 1982-83 alone. As discussed in Chapter IV, ECA has made some progress in filling its new role, but considerable managerial, personnel and sub-regional office problems still need to be dealt with.

105. ECA intends its MULPOCs to play a key role in advancing interagency co-ordination and co-operation at the sub-regional level, but they have been hampered by resource and operating problems (Chapter IV.C.). It also has certain responsibilities for executing intersectoral, sub-regional, regional and inter-regional projects. Effective consultation and co-ordination arrangements have not yet progressed very far. This process will involve finding a proper balance between ECA's team leader responsibilities and the specialized knowledge and expertise of the other United Nations system entities in their sectors.

106. ECA has recognized the critical importance of strengthening its abilities to perform its challenging co-ordination and co-operation roles (see paragraph 118). While there is some concern about overlaps and duplication of functions and about the relationships between national and sub-regional responsibilities, there also appears to be considerable willingness to work to achieve better co-ordination. In view of the enormous development problems in Africa, the many organizations involved, and the unified character of the Lagos Plan, genuine partnership at all operational stages is needed.

107. Assist countries to identify co-operative projects, and strengthen sub-regional, regional and inter-regional economic co-operation activities (paragraph 24). ECA activities in this area have always been extensive (Chapter I). They have been facilitated by new programme co-ordination and internal programming activities (Chapter III.B. and C.), and the concept and establishment of the MULPOCs (Chapter IV.C.) responds directly to this preoccupation of Member States. However, strengthening of ECA capabilities and capacities is also needed here, as discussed in the preceding paragraphs.

108. Expand arrangements for continuous exchange of information and experience between the commissions to strengthen inter-regional co-operation (paragraph 25). Relations between ECA and the other commissions are growing stronger. Several projects have been undertaken jointly with the other commissions, such as the ECA/ECLA projects in inter-regional trade promotion and industrial co-operation. ECA participates in the twice-yearly meetings of the executive secretaries of the commissions. However, inter-regional co-operation could be further improved by more frequent and widespread information exchanges between staff members of the commissions and by the exchange of technical staff members themselves.

109. Delegation of necessary authority, and "adequate budgetary and financial provision" for regional commission activities (paragraph 26). This is presently the "Achilles heel" in the implementation of the restructuring mandate, as discussed in detail in Chapter IV. The importance of these authority and resources issues is discussed further in section B below.

110. Rationalization of commission structures, inter alia, by streamlining subsidiary machinery (paragraph 27). ECA has abolished its Executive Committee and its Technical Committee of Experts, which have been replaced by a Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole. The Commission's plenary sessions are now held annually rather than biennially on an experimental basis. The three former conferences of African demographers, statisticians and planners have been merged into a Joint Conference. Not much progress has yet been made to rationalize internal structures (Chapters III and IV), but such progress is again closely tied to the issue of adequate resources.

#### B. Decentralization

111. The legislative basis for decentralization from United Nations headquarters to the regional commissions was set by ECOSOC resolution 793 (XXX) of August 1960, which urged a change in emphasis from headquarters work to field work, utilizing the regional commissions' services to plan and execute development programmes. General Assembly resolution 1709 (XVI) of December 1961 called for immediate steps to strengthen the regional commissions through increasing delegation of substantive and operational functions and responsibilities and needed resources, while maintaining the central substantive functions. This policy trend was reaffirmed and enlarged in subsequent ECOSOC and General Assembly resolutions from 1962 through 1976.

112. In 1963, the Secretary-General reported (E/3786) that the proximity of the commissions to development problems should be fully utilized and provided with certain new operational posts and project resources. A 1974 JIU report on decentralization, (74/5), however, concluded that hardly any subsequent progress had been made. Despite continuing governing body resolutions, the commissions had only a marginal role. The report found a reluctance in headquarters offices to divest themselves of resources, resulting in little or no redeployment of headquarters staff to the field. Ninety per cent of new posts from 1970-74 went to

headquarters offices, with the commissions forced to rely largely on the uncertainties and instability of short-term staff and very modest extra-budgetary funds. The report concluded that the commissions had done well when given adequate funds, but that the withholding of needed resources, followed by assertions that the commissions had a "lack of capacity" to handle new responsibilities, simply meant that centralized control would continue for ever.

113. The Secretary-General's 1975 comments on this report (E/5607/Add. 1) concurred in the need to decentralize certain substantive and administrative responsibilities, improve programme co-ordination, strengthen regional advisory services, decentralize regional and sub-regional projects and perhaps certain multi-disciplinary country projects, partially reallocate headquarters staff to the commissions through secondment or rotation, and improve the slow recruitment performance of TARS in the regions. In a 1976 report (A/C.5/31/18) he cited several actions taken to establish programme co-ordination offices; decentralize certain personnel, procurement and contracting authorities; and exchange and train some staff members. However, he advised that further action would have to await deliberations by the ad hoc committee on restructuring.

114. The restructuring resolution of December 1977 considerably expanded the role and functions of the regional commissions, as discussed in section A. above. It also stated that they should be delegated the necessary authority and adequate budgetary and financial provision for their work (Annex, paragraph 26), and that the possibility of deploying appropriate elements to them should be considered in restructuring, rationalizing and streamlining the Headquarters economic and social entities (Annex, paragraph 63). In his initial statement of administrative and financial implications (A/AC.5/32/86), the Secretary-General stated that the recommendations of Section IV of the Annex would eventually require additional resources for the regional commissions, but that an estimate of such resources could only be made at a later stage, after a phased plan for implementation had been developed.

115. Restructuring thus began with a first phase at headquarters, to allow the new entities to begin functioning as quickly as possible. This process went rather quickly, as indicated by the following capsule summary of actions.

March 1978: The Secretary-General appointed the Director-General, and established the Departments of International Economic and Social Affairs (DIESA) and Technical Co-operation for Development (DTCD) and the Office of Secretariat Services for Economic and Social Matters (OSSECS) as successors to the former Department of Economic and Social Affairs and certain other units.

July 1978: report E/1978/118 discussed the proposed functions, posts and credits to be transferred to the new units, including 596 professional posts and US \$58 million. ACABQ did not object to the proposals, but had expressed concern that they did not seem to fully represent the rationalization and streamlining called for, did not indicate how appropriate elements could be transferred to the commissions in the future, and did not present entirely adequate justifications for staff posts. The report noted, however, that the proposals were subject to later revision, and stressed that the arrangements made should not in any way prejudice measures of decentralization to the commissions.

January 1979: report A/33/410/Rev. 1 stated that the redeployment of resources at headquarters was largely completed, without as yet generating extensive supplemental requests for new posts or additional resources.

116. The second phase of restructuring then began with consultations between the heads of the commissions and the Headquarters units to develop an overall framework for restructuring the regional commissions. In contrast to the first phase, however, this process has run on and on at a very slow pace, as shown by the following summary of intergovernmental body resolutions alternating with Secretariat reports.

August 1978: ECOSOC resolution 1978/74 emphasized and encouraged the "particularly advantageous position" of the regional commissions for sub-regional, region-

al and interregional co-operation; reaffirmed their role as executing agencies; and requested intensified consultations and arrangements to enable them to promote more effective co-operation.

January 1979: report A/33/410/Rev. 1 stated that consultations on restructuring of the commissions were continuing, to identify immediate opportunities for decentralization and resource redeployment, comprehensively examine the new commission functions, and to develop appropriate programme measures for the 1980/81 biennium.

January 1979: General Assembly resolution 33/202 confirmed the status of the commissions as executing agencies and requested the Secretary-General to "proceed expeditiously" with comprehensive proposals for decentralization of appropriate research and analytical activities and technical co-operation projects, the strengthening of co-operative arrangements, and other activities to allow the commissions to effectively exercise their responsibilities for co-ordination at the regional level.

July 1979: report E/1979/76 stated general agreement that decentralization should: cover both research and analysis and technical co-operation projects; strengthen entity relationships; distinguish between redeployment of resources and the broader issue of decentralization; be governed by a framework of broad policy criteria (geographic scope, effectiveness and efficiency, density of information, and multi-sectoral capabilities and capacities); and proceed initially in seven sectoral areas. Expanded commission responsibilities would call for added resources beyond those resulting from redeployment.

July 1979: report E/1979/81 discussed briefly the potential role of the commissions in regional co-ordination and co-operation, global policy making, and in programming and planning processes. The executive secretaries of the commissions had emphasized that decentralization and strengthening should serve the objective of maximizing the capacity of the commissions to promote and support co-operation in their regions. A statement of administrative and financial implications of restructuring for regional co-operation and strengthening of the commissions would be submitted to the 34th session of the General Assembly.

July 1979: ECOSOC resolution 1979/64 emphasized the need to strengthen the capacity of the commissions and better co-ordinate tasks between Headquarters and the commissions. It urged that decentralization of activities be expedited, welcomed the provision of a comprehensive statement of administrative and financial implications for decentralization and strengthening, and invited the CPC to undertake a "full review" of issues in the distribution of tasks and responsibilities between the commissions and other organizations in 1980.

November 1979: report A/34/649 stated that DIESA and DTCD were each re-deploying a professional post to each of the commissions, that DTCD would soon have decentralized some US \$11 million of its regional and sub-regional projects, and that other units were ready to consult on decentralization possibilities. The commissions had identified priority programme areas, which could be viewed as a "first phase" of decentralization and strengthening, with the CPC review in 1980 to provide a "second phase".

December 1979: Assembly resolution 34/206 emphasized the "need for more vigorous action" to allow the commissions to become the main general economic and social development centres for their regions. It requested intensified development and application of decentralization measures, including redeployment of existing posts from Headquarters, with the Secretary-General to report to the 36th session on implementation of these measures.

April 1980: report E/AC.51/1980/6 provided CPC with some policy and programme issues for discussion. It noted that, beyond redeployment of Headquarters resources, an examination of additional functions for the regional commissions had not been completed. In a properly decentralized structure, each region should have its own mandate, field of activities, responsibilities and delegation of authority. It concentrated on an analysis of functions done simultaneously

at the global and regional levels, briefly reviewed the distribution of tasks in eleven programmes, and suggested that a detailed Secretariat review of programme tasks and responsibilities might be made part of the formulation of the medium-term plan for 1984-89.

June 1980: CPC began its review (report A/35/38). Commission representatives cited resource problems and the need for analysis and action. CPC decided that the documentation in the above report was not adequate. It concluded that the Secretariat should immediately analyze the areas of human settlements (later excluded by ECOSOC), environment and water resources for its 1981 session, so that any programme proposals for transfers of tasks could be included in the proposed programme budget for 1982-83 and the draft medium-term plan for 1984-89. It also recommended that the General Assembly examine the progress made in implementing the restructuring resolution.

June 1980: report A/35/224 stated that the transfer of DTCD projects to the commissions was proceeding as agreed, taking into account the commissions' assessments of their capacities. It was recognized that adequate budgetary and financial resources would be needed if the commissions were to handle these functions effectively.

October 1980: report A/35/546 made a "first attempt" to analyze the overall importance of restructuring for the commissions and indicate the immediate programme requirements to be met. It analyzed in considerable detail the expanded restructuring functions envisaged for the commissions, but was very vague about specific resource needs and where funding might be found.

December 1980: Assembly resolution 35/523 included a request to JIU, as requested by CPC, to co-operate in a study of the impact on the Secretariat of the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system.

May 1981: CPC observed (A/36/38) that the Secretariat had not reached agreement on an appropriate distribution of tasks in either the environment or water resources areas. It concluded that the data provided by the Secretary-General (E/AC.51/1981/3) was a "poor response" to its 1980 request, which did not seriously attempt to analyze the division of tasks and responsibilities as the basis for substantive recommendations by CPC. It agreed to review the matter further in those two areas in 1982, based on a detailed analytical report by the Secretariat.

July 1981: The executive secretaries of the commissions observed (E/1981/80/Add. 1) that the numerous reports and reviews of possibilities for decentralization of activities and an improved distribution of tasks and responsibilities had not resulted in provision or redeployment of significant resources, which was hampering implementation of restructuring at the regional level.

July 1981: ECOSOC resolution 1981/66 recognized the need to "intensify and expedite" decentralization efforts to the commissions, and the desirability of decentralizing administrative and management responsibility along with substantive activities. It recommended that the General Assembly request all intergovernmental and Secretariat bodies to speed up decentralization and to consider redeployment to the commissions of staff and financial resources commensurate with the substantive activities being transferred to them.

October 1981: report A/36/577 (in response to Assembly resolution 34/206 for a report on implementation of decentralization) analyzed the role and functions of the four commissions in developing regions, and their debates in 1981 on the implications of restructuring. The commissions had endorsed the restructuring roles given them and the importance of sufficient budgetary resources to fulfil these roles. The report acknowledged, however, that a full analysis of long-term budgetary implications of the restructuring resolution had not been made. It suggested that some special funding arrangements might be explored.

December 1981: Assembly resolution 36/187 decided to return to the implications of the restructuring resolution for the commissions at its thirteenth session and in light of further observations of CPC and ECOSOC.

117. The Inspectors recognize that the restructuring and decentralization processes for the regional commissions are complex undertakings. Nevertheless, the result of the laborious process outlined above is that "phase one" at Headquarters was largely completed in a year, while "phase two" for the commissions has hardly begun. Moreover, while the Headquarters resources have been redeployed and in place since 1978, the "necessary" resources for the commissions have not yet been provided or even estimated and, in the four years that have elapsed, the commissions have now become trapped in a "zero-growth" period of severe budgetary constraints.

118. ECA, for its part, estimated for ECOSOC in July 1981 (E/1981/80/Add. 2) that it would need about US \$3.5 million a year to implement restructuring, beyond the modest posts and project funds already redeployed from Headquarters. The Secretariat suggested, however, that ECOSOC await the 1981 report of the Secretary-General on implementation of restructuring and decentralization (see above). ECA would use the new funds for 83 professional and above and general service posts, and for associated travel funds. They would permit actions to fulfil the mandated regional team leadership functions and strengthening of United Nations system coordinative relationships (particularly through regular budget funding for core staff in the MULPOCs), and aid to African countries in developing projects and for executing projects (particularly through a core staff of technical specialists for feasibility studies and technical support for ECA programme management). Other restructuring responsibilities would be absorbed in current staff resources, but any additional responsibilities, especially operational, would necessitate substantial new funds.

119. The question is where to find these resources. ECA should speed up recruitment to fill vacant posts and should improve its management systems to provide some of this strengthening, as discussed in Chapter IV. Overhead support costs for technical co-operation projects and the little-used possibilities of staff rotation and secondments from United Nations and specialized agencies can also help. But new regular budget resources, the most stable and direct source, are constrained by "zero growth" and increased extra-budgetary resources are similarly difficult to obtain. Of all these options, redeployment of resources in the broader context of decentralization seems to have the most untapped potential.

120. Analyses of specific decentralization progress in the United Nations have been very infrequent - primarily only those by the Secretariat in 1965 and the JIU in 1974. Such analyses are difficult, but are important to determine if decentralization is actually taking place. To obtain an approximate idea of the current situation, the Inspectors used United Nations programme budget data for 1978-1983 to compare funds and established professional staff posts of the five regional commissions with the Headquarters programmes of DIESA, DTCD and the regular programme of technical co-operation (i.e., excluding other United Nations agencies). They also compared the five commissions' programme support funds and professional posts with those of the above Headquarters programmes plus the general Headquarters support programmes in the Departments of Administration, Finance and Management; Public Information; and Conference Services and Library (all including only New York but not Geneva or Vienna). Even these limited comparisons suggest that decentralization has made little progress, as in the following items.

a. Regular budget funds for both groups have grown little in real terms, but while commission extra-budgetary funding has grown by 59 per cent to US \$121.9 million for 1982-83, Headquarters extra-budgetary funding has increased by 68 per cent to US \$342.6 million in the same period.

b. Sixty per cent of total funds are still at Headquarters, with DTCD alone, because of its responsibility for national projects, having more operational extra-budgetary funds for 1982-83 (US \$301 million) than all the funds of all five regional commissions combined (US \$295.2 million).

c. The commissions' share of the total resources has grown only .9 per cent from 1978-79 to 1982-83, to 39.4 per cent: at this pace there would not even be, for example, a 50/50 balance between the three headquarters programmes and the five regional commissions until the biennium 2026/2027.

d. The commissions' share of total established professional posts between the two groups has fallen from 62 to 60.1 per cent, with regular budget gains offset by extra-budgetary declines: for 1982-83 alone, the Headquarters posts were to increase by 21, while commission posts would decline by 8.

e. When general New York programme support figures are added to programme support for the two groups, the commissions have only about 15 per cent (US \$ 74.4 million and 207 professional support posts) and the New York groups 85 per cent (US \$364.7 million and 1260). Even though New York has national projects and many other important additional functions to support, this 5:1 ratio does not indicate much progress toward decentralization of administrative responsibility, resources and authority.

121. These comparisons are very rough, and raise more questions than they answer. Headquarters officials pointed out that extra-budgetary post forecasts are not always accurate, and that, for example, ECA and others had unfortunately included some non-budgetary expert posts in their programme budgets for the three biennia from 1976-81. The Inspectors used the programme budget data, of course, because it is the only common published data available to compare Headquarters and commission programmes and because it is the data submitted to intergovernmental bodies for their decisions on programmes and priorities. What is important is that a definitive and accurate analysis should be made.

122. Proper decentralization involves not only the transfer of responsibilities for activities from Headquarters to the regions, but also the necessary resources and authority to carry out these activities effectively. It must balance Headquarters global activities and monitoring and control with increased commission responsibility for effective operations at the regional level, in a harmonious total programme. It should deal with both regular budget and extra-budgetary funds and with basic policies and procedures. It should also cover the functions of substantive research and analysis (especially where Headquarters and the commissions now share tasks and responsibilities), operational activities (especially to address the issue of how best to handle country projects, now conducted from New York), and administration.

123. In the mid-1970s, it was anticipated that restructuring would solve the long-delayed efforts to decentralize United Nations operations. Instead, it has seemed to slow the process even more and to create stresses and strains where new responsibilities have been established without corresponding resources and authority. The General Assembly and ECOSOC have passed many resolutions over the past two decades urging improved development co-operation and greater responsiveness to the differing requirements and needs at the sub-regional and regional levels around the world. Yet not much progress has been made.

124. Secretariat officials informed the Inspectors that in the preparation of the medium-term plan for 1984-1989 special attention would be given to improvement of the distribution of tasks and responsibilities and to a strengthening of co-ordination between the regional commissions and Headquarters units, but that no other major decentralization initiatives were presently envisaged in connection with the plan. The Secretariat has also noted that decentralization is a very complex matter which requires extra effort and study to establish and implement.

125. Unless firm steps are taken now, however, the process will continue to drag along as in the past. If the greater responsiveness and effectiveness expected from the many restructuring and decentralization resolutions are ever to be achieved, the time has come clearly, comprehensively and specifically to determine what "restructuring" and "decentralization" mean for the United Nations and its regional commissions, and to take action.

126. The Inspectors recommend that the Director-General undertake a comprehensive examination of restructuring of and decentralization to the regional commissions. This examination should take into account the many past resolutions and reports on these subjects, as well as the special development needs of each region. It should involve the participation of all concerned United Nations organizations, and be integrated with preparation of the 1984-89 draft medium-term plan and

1984-85 draft programme budget insofar as is still possible. The result should be a report to CPC and ECOSOC within two years, which would state:

(a) the specific administrative, budgetary and financial implications of the restructuring resolution for the regional commissions;

(b) the specific authorities, responsibilities, activities and resources to be decentralized and the reasons why;

(c) a specific time schedule for completing these transfers;

(d) specific authorities, responsibilities, activities and resources which will not be decentralized and the reasons why.

127. In their 1975 report on regional structures of the United Nations system (JIU/REP/75/2), the Inspectors noted that WHO since its inception had adopted the policy of decentralizing its activities to the maximum extent possible. They concluded that it was no mere coincidence that WHO, with its highly decentralized structure, is among the organizations most understanding of and responsive to regional objectives. WHO is presently engaged in an extensive effort to re-examine and strengthen its structures in light of its functions, including decentralization issues. The Inspectors believe that experience has confirmed the merits of the WHO approach, and that its past and present efforts provide a useful guide for similar United Nations efforts. They believe that WHO should be specifically consulted during the Director-General's study.

128. Without prejudice to this study, but in order to avoid stopping the decentralization process in its tracks for several more years, the Inspectors also believe that interim action is urgently needed. Taking into account the General Assembly's endorsement of the Lagos Plan as the blueprint for Africa's economic and social development and the need for action to implement it, the Secretary-General, the Director-General and the Executive Secretary of ECA should consider what interim measures could properly be taken to advance the decentralization process. These measures could include, in addition to the transfer of any new responsibilities and resources, the transfer of authority to make decisions on personnel and financial matters where such transfers would improve ECA's capacity to implement its programmes expeditiously. Similar measures should be taken for other regional commissions in light of their individual needs and objectives.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

129. Over the past 24 years ECA has gradually and painstakingly attempted to carve out a proper role for itself in African development. It appears to have had a wide variety of significant if unobtrusive successes in its research, advisory and institution-building efforts. At the same time, it has encountered difficulties in trying to meet the many urgent African needs which African countries and the many other inter-governmental, bilateral and multilateral agencies engaged in African development have also sought to address.

130. Recent events give promise of clarifying and strengthening the ECA role. In the restructuring resolution of 1977, the General Assembly designated the regional commissions as "main general economic and social development centres" and gave them "team leadership and responsibility for co-ordination and co-operation" of United Nations system activities in their regions. They were designated as "executing agencies" for certain projects in the field, and the many decentralization resolutions indicated that they would become important field operational arms of the United Nations development programmes.

131. However, ECA must earn its new leadership role through high-quality performance. Five years after the restructuring resolution, it has made recognizable progress in increasing extra-budgetary resources, expanding operational and pro-

gramming efforts, and decentralizing programming and operational authority and responsibility to its sub-regional MULPOCs. These actions have raised African Member States' expectations and their demands on ECA to a much higher level.

132. Despite these efforts, the Inspectors conclude that ECA activities are now at a critical stage. With OAU, ECA has served as an inter-governmental forum and secretariat resource to launch the Lagos Plan as the basic framework for future African economic and social development. However, the necessary authority and "adequate budgetary and financial resources" which the restructuring resolution called for have not yet been provided. This jeopardizes the important role which ECA is expected to play in implementation of the Lagos Plan. There is much potential for greater United Nations system co-operation and co-ordination and for greater participation by African Member States in regional programming, but ECA has not been able to fully assume its "team leader" role in this area (see Chapter III). The many new responsibilities have strained existing resources and capabilities at ECA headquarters and in its sub-regional offices (Chapter IV). Delays in implementing the many restructuring and decentralization mandates have seriously hampered appropriate ECA actions (Chapter V).

133. The Inspectors propose below measures needed to allow ECA to maintain its present positive momentum, and to realize its potential for responsive and effective team leadership of United Nations system development efforts in Africa. Some of these recommendations concern the organizations of the United Nations system, others could be applied to all the regional commissions of the United Nations, and still others concern ECA itself.

#### A. Organizations of the United Nations system

134. Recent resolutions of the General Assembly and ECOSOC have stressed the importance of regional co-operation and development, the advantageous position of the regional commissions to promote and strengthen subregional, regional and inter-regional co-operation and programme co-ordination, and the importance of enhancing collective self-reliance in developing countries and ensuring their full participation in United Nations system development decisions. The concept of self-reliance is a key element of the Lagos Plan, the policies of economic and technical co-operation among developing countries (ECDC and TCDC), and the new international development strategy.

135. While the concept of self-reliance is making headway at the country level, however, it has scarcely begun to be used at the regional level. New policy approaches are needed to work toward a more rapid assumption by governments of responsibility for executing regional and sub-regional projects supported by the United Nations system.

136. ACC has recently noted that the United Nations system can do much to strengthen inter-country collaboration and encourage participating countries to develop their self-reliant capability. WHO, with its work on regional strategies and the development of collective self-reliance, provides a concrete example of activities in this area. ECA, with its extensive experience in Africa and its new restructuring responsibilities, is well-placed to help overcome the existing problems of regional programming through this new approach, and the Inspectors believe that there is great potential for its use by other regional commissions as well (paragraphs 46-55).

#### RECOMMENDATION 1

The Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation should investigate new approaches to regional and sub-regional programming and management of United Nations system inter-country projects, working closely with the organizations of the system. This should lead to a report to the inter-governmental bodies of the organizations, followed by a final report to ECOSOC incorporating all views. Certain questions of programming, programme approval, execution and evaluation, particularly as they affect the role of the regional commissions, should be given careful consideration in this analysis (as discussed in paragraph 55).

137. The many development problems in Africa, coupled with the current deterioration in the international economic situation and the resultant pressure on resource flows from developed to developing countries, argue strongly for imaginative adjustments in the United Nations system's technical co-operation approaches. More effective collaborative mechanisms are needed to achieve a cohesive and integrated response to the development needs in the Africa region. The many United Nations system organizations working in the crowded African technical co-operation process need to work more closely together to support ECA's technical co-ordinating role with OAU for implementing the Lagos Plan and to achieve the Plan's objectives (paragraphs 24-36, 98-107).

#### RECOMMENDATION 2

(a) Regional, subject-oriented, high-level interagency meetings should be instituted under the aegis of ECA to discuss common issues, and firm guidelines should be developed for co-ordinated action aimed at the objectives of the Lagos Plan of Action.

(b) All organizations should assist African governments within the framework of the country programming process in incorporating the Lagos Plan goals and objectives into their sectoral country programmes and projects, and adapting them to sub-regional and regional priorities. The Resident Co-ordinators in Africa should also assist in achieving such conformity in their respective countries of assignment.

(c) All organizations should report periodically to ECOSOC and their respective governing bodies on their contributions to the implementation of the Lagos Plan of Action, as recommended by General Assembly resolution 35/64 on special measures for the economic and social development of Africa.

(d) All organizations should consider the possibility of seconding experienced and competent staff to ECA and/or its MULPOCs to assist in specific tasks related to the Lagos Plan, and to other regional commissions as well.

(e) The ECA secretariat and Resident Co-ordinators/Representatives in Africa should meet periodically to discuss country and regional co-ordination matters.

#### B. United Nations

138. ECA has made some progress in carrying out the new responsibilities given to it by the restructuring resolutions, but this progress has been seriously constrained by lack of the "necessary authority" and "adequate budgetary and financial resources" which were to accompany these functions. Similarly, despite more than 20 years of resolutions from ECOSOC and the General Assembly calling for decentralization from Headquarters to the regional commissions, progress has continued to be very slow. Decentralization should involve a closely-related combination of authority, responsibility, and resources, but a rough analysis of current programme budget data indicates both the slow progress made and the need for more precision as to what "appropriate" decentralization really means.

139. The present "piecemeal" approach towards decentralization should not continue in the future, because it creates considerable stress and strain where authority and resources are no longer commensurate with responsibilities, as in ECA, and considerable uncertainty among all concerned United Nations staff who wonder when - or how - decentralization will ever be carried out. If the many decentralization and restructuring resolutions are to be given concrete meaning and enactment for the regional commissions, the Inspectors believe the time has come clearly, comprehensively and specifically to determine what "restructuring" and "decentralization" mean for the regional commissions, and to take action (paragraphs 97-128).

#### RECOMMENDATION 3

The Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, in consultation with all concerned United Nations organizations, should examine the progress made in decentralization of United Nations activities and report thereon to CPC and ECOSOC. This examination (as discussed in paragraphs 126-128) should determine what specific authorities, responsibilities and resources will or will

not be decentralized, why and when; take account of the WHO experience with highly decentralized operations; and consider interim actions for ECA and perhaps for the other regional commissions to advance the decentralization process.

140. The Inspectors also believe that the following measures would strengthen the work of the regional commissions in their general efforts to effectively fulfill the new functions given them by the restructuring resolutions (paragraphs 75-76, 97-110, 113).

#### RECOMMENDATION 4

(a) ECOSOC might consider devoting a regular agenda item to United Nations system co-ordination problems and needs at the regional level, to replace the present oral presentations of the executive secretaries of the commissions.

(b) The commissions should increase their exchanges of staff, whenever possible, as part of the broader scheme of inter-regional co-operation urged by the restructuring resolutions.

(c) Immediate arrangements should be made to simplify and expedite TARS recruitment procedures for the commissions. Such arrangements should include the possibility of decentralizing some recruitment functions to the regions, subject to the special requirements of each commission.

(d) The status and functions of the Regional Commissions Liaison Office at UN Headquarters should be strengthened to better carry out its representation responsibilities, without increasing staff. For example, it could represent the commissions at meetings of the UNDP/Inter-Agency Task Force.

141. The ECA MULPOCs have considerable potential as an important element in African development, and have been welcomed by African governments as an "outreach" of ECA programmes to better meet member State needs at the sub-regional level. But MULPOC resources, now primarily provided by UNDP, are not yet adequate or stable, and various programming and operational problems exist. With a firm foundation and a basic core staff, the MULPOCs can move forward, but without such support their future existence will be in jeopardy (paragraphs 83-96).

#### RECOMMENDATION 5

Each MULPOC should have a small core group of programme and administrative professionals financed by the United Nations regular budget. The five MULPOC liaison officer posts at ECA headquarters should be redeployed to the MULPOCs as a first step toward these core groups.

#### C. Economic Commission for Africa

142. Programming functions will be critical if ECA is to exercise the "main development centre" and "team leadership" functions given it by the restructuring resolution. While a considerable amount has already been accomplished within ECA, there is a need for a strengthened and more systematic programming, monitoring and evaluation process to ensure that ECA's own work is orderly and well co-ordinated and that its broader joint programming and development centre responsibilities are effectively carried out (paragraphs 37-45).

#### RECOMMENDATION 6

(a) ECA should divide the duties and responsibilities at the level immediately below the Executive Secretary so that the two areas of "programming" and "administration and management" would each be supervised by a D.2 with the necessary experience and capability in that field.

(b) The capabilities of the Policy and Programme Co-ordination Office (PPCO) should be strengthened. It should serve as the primary catalyst and co-ordinator of programme and development ideas in ECA, and formalize and oversee the internal programming system to ensure that innovative approaches and ideas spread throughout ECA.

(c) A small unit should be urgently established to develop a monitoring and evaluation system to meet ECA's rapidly emerging responsibilities in this area.

(d) Programme assistants should be trained or assigned in the divisions and MULPOCs wherever possible to help with the many new programming tasks.

(e) ECA should report each year to its Conference of Ministers on specific progress towards joint programming with each of the categories of development participants in Africa, using the framework of Chapter III.

(f) ECA and ECWA should increase joint programming efforts for the Arab countries which spread across their two regions.

143. The development of operational capacity is always difficult, but has been even more so for ECA because management posts and resources have not expanded to match the very rapid growth in programmes and responsibilities. As a result, a "management gap" and various management problems exist in ECA which must be overcome (paragraphs 57-68).

#### RECOMMENDATION 7

To ensure continuing attention to establishment of an effective management system for its new operational responsibilities, ECA should take the following actions.

(a) As an urgent priority, a management services unit should be provisionally established in ECA for a three-year period, toward the end of which a review of the need for further action could be made. It should report directly to top management, have strong top management support, and have authority to exert a dynamic management systems influence. It should contain full-time staff skilled in management systems and in co-operative efforts to enlist staff participation in developing responsive management processes.

(b) The unit should immediately undertake analyses of current management and administration to identify performance responsibilities and flows in all parts of the secretariat, including the MULPOCs. In this and the following steps, use could be made of consultants and other UN system resources.

(c) These analyses should lead to firm information on workloads, backlogs, performance times, and constraints in each area, which would be assessed on a monthly basis. The most serious problems should be highlighted and reported to top management each month for corrective action.

(d) The unit should concurrently undertake a review and re-organization of management and administrative processes to develop a co-ordinated and streamlined system. Where necessary, this should involve work with UN Headquarters to develop systems which still meet headquarters requirements but are adapted as fully as possible to ECA operating needs. It should also involve appropriate re-assignments of support staff and their responsibilities, and incorporation of management technologies and hardware available through the PADIS and other systems.

(e) Continuing attention should be given to management training for administrative staff who will handle the new management system responsibilities, and for line staff who must become well-versed in all phases of the project management and programming cycle.

(f) The unit should subsequently monitor and adapt ECA management operations and systems to meet changing programme requirements.

144. Finally, the Inspectors noted weaknesses in several specific areas of ECA operations, which they believe can be corrected through appropriate internal measures (paragraphs 56-96).

#### RECOMMENDATION 8

(a) ECA missions to member countries should make greater use of the position of the MULPOCs and of the office of the Resident Co-ordinator or Resident Representative who is also ECA's representative at the country level. All missions should be planned well in advance through these offices and with the government(s) concerned.

(b) Despatches and distribution of documentation to member governments should be timed to reach governments at least six weeks in advance of activities to which they relate. The Resident Co-ordinators/Representatives might assist in the distribution process if the governments agree.

(c) Relationship agreements with other UN system organizations should be revised and updated to reflect the provisions of section IV of the annex to resolution 32/197 and section V of resolution 33/202. This would include the agreements establishing ECA/UNIDO and ECA/FAO joint divisions, to permit among other things their increased involvement in regional operational activities.

(d) ECA should take appropriate steps to improve and expand language training (English and French) for all locally recruited staff.

(e) Translation arrangements should be made for the Niamey MULPOC which serves English and French-speaking countries, and for the Lusaka MULPOC which serves English and Portuguese-speaking countries. The staffing and assignment of experts to these two MULPOCs should take into account the bilingual character of their respective sub-regions.

(f) The MULPOCs should make full use of UNDP country offices and co-ordinate their country-level activities with the Resident Co-ordinators/Representatives. Working relationships between Resident Co-ordinators/Representatives and the MULPOCs should be made more systematic, and should include attendance at each other's meetings when practicable.

(g) ECA backstopping of the MULPOCs should allow for direct contacts between MULPOC experts and substantive divisions at ECA headquarters.

(h) MULPOC directors should meet at least annually and assess their common experiences to improve the ECA programming and administrative systems.

