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on Development Information (CODI)

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**REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC FOR AFRICA TO THE SUB-
COMMITTEE ON GEO-INFORMATION AT THE SECOND MEETING OF THE
COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION (CODI-2)**

Addis Ababa, 4-7 September 2001

Mr. Chairman,

This report presents the activities carried out by the Commission in the field of Geoinformation, since the first meeting of the Committee on Development Information (CODI), held in Addis Ababa from 28 June - 2 July 1999.

Harmonization of ECA Sponsored Institutions.

1. As you are well aware of, in May 1997 the ECA Conference of Ministers adopted resolution 827 (XXXII) as the final recommendations on the long standing issue of rationalization and harmonization of ECA-sponsored institutions and called for their implementation by the member States in close cooperation with ECA. Among the recommendations concerning the area of geoinformation, the merging of the Regional Centre for Training in Aerospace Survey (RECTAS) with her sister institution (in full at first usage) CRTO was proposed. However, such merge never materialized. Now, the decision to dissolve CRTO was taken and implemented by the Government of Burkina Faso and Chairman of her governing Council. ECA has agreed to fund a financial audit of the Centre as part of the actions that will facilitate the closing of the institution, in particular through the African Organization for Cartography and Remote Sensing (AOCRS), which has been requested by Burkina Faso to assist in this endeavour.

2. As part of the decisions associated with above exercise, the secretariat implemented new relationships with its regional sponsored institutions. In this regard, ECA ceased to be the Chairman of the Governing Council of both the Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD) and RECTAS. Their constitutions were modified accordingly whereby ECA is now an ex-officio member of the Governing Council. ECA is also a member of the External Consultative Committee of RCMRD created by the Governing Council in 1998 and implemented this year.

Advisory services and support to regional institutions.

3. The secretariat provided advice and support on a continuous basis to the Regional Centre for Services in Surveying, Mapping and Remote Sensing (RCSSMRS), now RCMRD and RECTAS. As mandated by the constitution of the Centres, ECA advised, as and when necessary on several matters regarding policies, technical, financial and administrative issues. This advisory role is also in accordance with its own mandate, to provide advisory services and support, upon request, to regional and sub-regional organizations. In particular, the secretariat was instrumental in initiating the reengineering of RCMRD, whose implementation was launched in December 2000 at the Centre's 34th Governing Council meeting.

Inter-agency cooperation

4. Inter-agency coordination and cooperation between ECA and other UN bodies and specialized agencies are important vehicles for pooling financial and technical resources in support of Africa's development. In this regard, the Commission has accorded great importance to the inter-agency annual meetings on Outer Space Activities, to which it has always contributed and participated. Its participation has been instrumental in securing cooperation with sister agencies in a number of projects and activities.

Study on the future orientation of Geoinformation activities in Africa

5. In compliance with its programme of work for 2000, the secretariat commissioned a study on the "future of GI activities in Africa". The main purpose of the exercise is to review the status of GI

development in Africa, looking at the extent to which on-going or planned GI approaches and applications are practical and useful to assist decision-makers and other stakeholders of socio-economic development. This study is part of coordinated activities by DISD to “raise awareness of African governments and other sectors of society on the importance of geographic information in socio-economic development and to identify practical mechanisms to facilitate spatial data collection, access and use in the decision-making process, both nationally and regionally, through a participatory approach.” The study is the basis for a position paper that is being developed.

6. Emphasis was therefore placed on the whole structure for the acquisition, management and use of spatial data, and not only on the technology. Modern concepts and trends of spatial data management, such as Spatial Data Infrastructures (SDIs) and their development in Africa were explored as the means to have the required information accessible to decision-makers, in governments and the society at large.

7. In this regard, the study explored emerging and modern concepts for managing geographic data that take into account the development of nation-wide spatial information networks, and reflect a stronger civil society and private participation. An underlying theme of the discussion addressed the sharing of geographic data among countries, as important issues of sustainable development are not confined within a country, but span across borders (e.g., water basin management and the environment).

8. ECA organized in Addis Ababa from 6-10 November 2000 an Ad-hoc experts group meeting to review and improve the basic document. The Meeting was attended by high-level experts on geoinformation drawn from the public sector, academia, research institutions, the private sector, from Africa and abroad. During the Meeting the experts reviewed in detailed the background study on the status of geoinformation activities in Africa. Copies of the report of the expert group meeting are available at this meeting.

9. A second version, incorporating the findings of the experts, was circulated to them for additional comments and improvements before it was sent for additional external review.

Meeting of the Standing Preparatory Working Group of the sub-Committee on Geoinformation (CODI-Geo) of the Committee on Development Information (CODI)

10. The first meeting of the Standing Preparatory Working Group of the sub-Committee on Geoinformation (CODI-Geo) was held concurrently with the above meeting of experts held from 6 to 10 November 2000. It was attended by the following substantive members: Cote d’Ivoire (Chair, representing Western Africa), Tanzania (Eastern Africa), South Africa (Southern Africa), RCMRD, RECTAS, Environmental Information Systems Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa (EIS-Africa), AOCRS, and experts drawn from the group of experts as Scientific Advisors. The Working Group deliberated on format, themes and agenda for this meeting.

Substantive participation in conferences, seminars and workshops.

11. Further to the coordination and cooperation between ECA and other national, regional and international organizations and UN bodies ECA participated, in different capacities, to a number of regional and global events related to the field of geoinformation. The following are worth noting:

12. As resource person in the two workshops on “EIS Best Practices” and “Education and Training for EIS” organized in September 1999 in Nairobi, Kenya, by the EIS-Africa Programme. This Programme, which deals with important aspects and components of Geoinformation, including policies, methodologies and project design and implementation, was until recently a programme of the World Bank. It is now an NGO hosted by South Africa, but still under the auspices of the World Bank.
13. Following: (i) the Ad-Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Cadastre and Land Information Systems for African Decision Makers, organized by ECA in Addis Ababa in November 1999, where a technical study on the issue prepared by the secretariat was reviewed and finalized; and (ii) the CODI meeting, where land information systems were discussed with the participation of international relevant associations; ECA was invited to submit the study and participate as an expert to a Workshop on “Land Tenure and Cadastral Infrastructures for Sustainable Development”, held in Bathurst, 18-22 October 1999, and to the subsequent UN-FIG International Conference on the same subject, held in Melbourne, 24-27 October 1999. The Workshop developed a declaration called the “Bathurst Declaration on Land administration for Sustainable Development”. The International Conference received and launched the Declaration on the 25 October 1999.
14. As a follow up of the Bathurst declaration, and building on it, ECA was invited to join the group of experts that developed the Workshop on Capacity Building for Land Administration held in Enschede, Holland, from 13 to 15 November 2000, sponsored by the ITC, the Netherlands Cadastre, and the University of New Brunswick and FIG.
15. As a consequence of the deliberations and recommendations of the first meeting of CODI, ECA was invited, in addition to participating in the discussions and working groups, to make a keynote presentation on its own role as well as the role of CODI, in the establishment of national and regional spatial data infrastructures in Africa, at the Fourth Global Spatial Data Infrastructure Conference held in Cape Town, from 13 to 15 March 2000.
16. ECA was invited to participate as keynote speaker and resource person to the Marisy 2000 Conference, held in Rabat, Morocco, from 26 to 27 October 2000. This forum was dedicated to the African and Middle East regions to serve as a link between satellite operators, data distributors and service providers, decision makers and users of space technologies for resources management and sustainable development.
17. ECA continued to maintain its databases on the “status of mapping coverage and programmes in Africa” and on “education and training facilities in Africa in the area of geoinformation”. These activities are implemented in response to recommendations made by the previous United Nations Regional Conferences for Africa.

Information Technology Centre for Africa (ITCA)

18. ECA launched the Information Technology Centre for Africa (ITCA) project on the occasion of the first meeting of the African Development Forum (ADF '99) held in October 1999 in Addis Ababa. ITCA aims at raising awareness of African policy and decision-makers on the importance of building the

Information Society in Africa and providing focused training for both policy makers and implementers on new information technologies. ITCA has already started organizing tailored exhibitions related to the themes of major conferences and meetings at ECA and will soon serve as a year-round standard exhibition centre, which will focus on a demonstration of the general use of ICT and sector applications.

19. ITCA is mainly an exhibition and learning centre focussed on information and communication, to demonstrate to African leaders the value of Information Technology for African development. Partners are academic and research institutions, government and private sector companies in the area of information, which include manufactures, suppliers, application developers and service providers. I attach a brief aide-mémoire for your information. More information can be obtained in our Website <http://www.uneca.org> and more precisely at <http://www.un.org/Depts/eca/tca/>. In 2001 a particular effort is being made to incorporate systems and applications in the area of Geoinformation as a realization that it is a main component of information for development. It is intended to provide an understanding of the benefits of GI to understand and address most of the problems associated with the various sectors of socio-economic development, such as natural resources, environment, food security, land reform, transport and communications, human settlements, health and education, physical planning, energy and tourism. Demos and other relevant packages on the above applications are welcome by ITCA.

Provision of advisory services

20. At the request of the Government of Rwanda of (GoR), the secretariat advised GoR on the formulation of a national geoinformation component within a broader national information policy for Rwanda, during the last part of 1999 and the beginning of 2000. The final report was successfully submitted to and received by GoR. In a nutshell, the report:

- formulated a vision for Geoinformation and a set of goals and related principles associated with the realization of the vision,
- proposed an implementation scheme, through a Plan of Action that includes the functions of a National Steering Body on Geomatics and the elements of a National Spatial Data Infrastructure,
- outlines concrete actions that should be taken as immediate first steps.

21. Mr. Chairman, at this juncture, I would like to reiterate to the members States of AOCRS that the secretariat is mandated by its Conference of Ministers and by the UN General Assembly, to provide advisory services, upon request, to member States and regional groupings. If you identify needs for these services in any of the fields of cartography, remote sensing and other types of geographic information, and

22.

a request is made, ECA will try to respond to it, through its own staff, through the AOCRS, the regional centres, or, when necessary, through the recruitment of consultants and special advisers, depending on the expertise required and resources available.

Reinforcement of the capacities of the secretariat in the area of Geoinformation.

23. I am pleased to inform you that ECA has reinforced its capacities in the area of Geoinformation. A new staff member, Dr. Chukwudozie Ezigbalike, a national of Nigeria, joined the Geoinformation team, as a P-4 official, in July 2001.

Pending activities for 2001

24. During the year 2001 ECA will undertake the following activities:

(a) Concerning capacity building we will organize and service the following workshops and seminar:

- A workshop on new database development technologies and on organization and management of development information, including dissemination on the web and use of geo-information in statistical offices (October/November 2001);
- Will cosponsor the International Conference organized by Habitat, International Federation of Surveyors and Institution of Surveyors of Kenya with the support of ISPRS, ICA, the University of Nairobi and ECA, to be held at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, Kenya, from 3 to 5 October 2001. The workshop/conference is envisaged as a contribution to the international community's efforts to develop and support improved and integrated land management by, among others, "developing and implementing integrated land information and mapping systems and practices for managing land and seek to ensure that such information is available ". The Conference is also expected to contribute to the implementation of important elements of Chapters 7, 10 and 40 of Agenda 21, all of which address the need for the generation, strengthening and promotion of relevant data and information, including spatial information, for more effective decision-making, and the need for ready availability and easier access to this information by users;
- ECA will continue to provide, upon request, advisory services to member States and to regional and sub-regional institutions on issues related to remote sensing and geographic information systems.

(b) Concerning policy analysis ECA will carry out the following studies:

- A technical study comprising success stories on implementation of GIS for decision-making and a critical evaluation of the impact of geo-information, its costs and benefits (fourth quarter, 2001); and

- A study on the use of GIS in national statistical offices in selected African countries (October 2001).
- (c) *On dissemination of technological information*
- ECA will continue enhancing its efforts in the use of electronic media for the dissemination of information and results of studies on geoinformation in development.
 - ECA will further consolidate the contents of the database on geo-information in Africa, which includes GIS applications, mapping coverage and educational training facilities.

Vision, medium term plan and strategies for the period 2002-2003 and beyond.

30. In finalizing this report, I deem worth mentioning the medium term plan for the period 2002-2005 in the area of Geoinformation, which reads as follows:

VISION:

- Appropriate geospatial data will be available, accessible, used and transformed into useful information for decision-making, to contribute locally and nationally to social and economic development.
- African countries view geospatial infrastructures as important national assets which are given the same level of support as other elements of the national infrastructure.

MEDIUM TERM PLAN 2002-05:

Attention will be concentrated on raising awareness of the importance of geographic information systems to encourage African governments and societies to invest in the production, maintenance and management of geospatial data and information; as well as promoting the development of integrated datasets and data standards in order to make relevant information available to governments and the public. In this context, assistance will be provided to member States in developing national geographic information infrastructures that respond effectively to the needs of the various sectors of development.

31. Under this medium term plan the programme of work of the Commission will focus on promoting the development of national/regional geographic information infrastructure policies and plans (NGIIs).

32. As the main strategy, Geoinformation activities will be developed as part of the overall AISI implementing strategies and will be developed jointly with activities in the area of ICT. In particular, modern concepts of NGIIs will be incorporated within—or will complement—the formulation and development of National Information and Communication Infrastructures (NICIs) as important components of National Information Infrastructures at large. Extensions to regional infrastructures will be considered to address regional spatial data needs and to enforce regional co-operation and integration.

OUTPUTS

- (a) Servicing of intergovernmental/experts bodies
- Reports to the ECA Conference of Ministers and to CODI-III on GIIs status in Africa, to be included in overall report on IT for development. Servicing CODI
 - Ad-hoc expert group meeting on framework for establishing RGII for Africa.
- (b) Other substantive activities
- One publication on GI development and applications in Africa (inventory/country profiles) including success stories, drawn from database.
 - Establish a Web page on GI for Africa.
 - One database on GI activities in Africa: *status of technology, infrastructures, clients, impact, success stories, etc. (GI observatory)*
- (c) Technical cooperation
- (i) Advisory services: Two advisory services on spatial Geoinformation management and developing NGII Plans;
 - (ii) Group training: One stake holder's forum on awareness raising and on Geoinformation policies and strategies.
 - (iii) Field projects: promoting pilot projects on GIIs (e.g. country at a glance)

Thank you very much