



**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA**

Distr.: GENERAL

ECA-NA/RABAT/ICE/XXI/6
April 2006

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

ECA Office for North Africa

Twenty First Meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of
Experts (ICE)

Rabat, Morocco
4-6 April 2006

NORTH AFRICA AND THE INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDAS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
II.	STATUS OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION: SLOW PROGRESS.....	1
III.	TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT: ACCOMPLISHMENTS, CONSTRAINTS, PERSPECTIVES	2
	3.1 Barcelona: A mixed bag	2
	3.2 End of agreement on textiles and clothing: What are the strategies of response?.....	3
	3.3 From Cancun to Hong Kong: What outlook for multilateral trade WTO negotiations?	4
IV.	DEBT AND DEVELOPMENT: FORGIVENESS OF HEAVILY INDEBTED POOR COUNTRIES.....	5
V.	GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT	6
	5.1 African project for governance.....	6
	5.2 The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM): Algeria adheres to APRM	6
	5.3 Commission on HIV/AIDS and Governance in Africa (CHGA)	7
VI.	SOCIAL PROGRESS	8
	6.1 The World Summit to Assess Progress in the Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals	8
	6.2 International Year of Micro Credit: Building Inclusive Financial Services to Achieve the MDGs.....	9
	6.3. Follow up to the Implementation of the Beijing +10 “Outcome Document” in Africa	9
VII.	AFRICA AND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE	10
	7.1 Accra Regional Conference for WSIS 2	10
	7.2 WSIS2	11
VIII.	CONCLUSION	11
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	12

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The economic results reported by the countries of North Africa appear to be largely dependent on the international economic context and climatic conditions, both exogenous factors begging the question of sustainable growth in the future. (ECA-NA, 2004, 2005).

2. However, assessment of the progress achieved has often been preceded by per sector approach for follow-up of application of the recommendations formulated by conferences, programs and international plans, taken individually as they deal with specific aspects such as the environment (Agenda 21), gender (Beijing+10), population (ICPD+10), trade (WTO), regional cooperation (Barcelona+10), and governance (NEPAD).

3. To take due account of the effects and synergetic specificities of the objectives of these conferences, plans and programs, the ECA Office for North Africa (ECA-NA) has taken the initiative to prepare and submit this report to the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE) to:

- (i) Promote a global development approach giving due notice to the interactions between sectors and interdependency between national, regional and world objectives.
- (ii) Pose and discuss current issues at the regional and international level and place the positions of the countries of the region in respect of the debate.
- (iii) Present results in terms of consideration of regional outlooks in the proposed solutions. The role of the ECA and in particular that of the ECA-NA.

4. This initial edition of the report will attempt to review the principal questions in terms of the progress accomplished and prevailing issues in the areas regional integrations, trade and WTO agreements, the debt, governance, Millennium Objectives for Development (MOD) as well as information and communication technologies will also be dealt with.

II. STATUS OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION: SLOW PROGRESS

5. Progress leading to integration has been extremely slow in North Africa, and this affects the competitiveness of the region's countries and the position thereof in the world economic system.

6. To contribute to lifting the various constraints to the regional integration process, the ECA initiated a continuous reflection on the integration that led to a review of successful experiments and assessment of the fallout engendered by integration.

7. The Status of Integration (L'Etat de l'intégration) -ARIA1 (2004)¹, the first publication of a series of works dealing with this subject, proposes innovative performance indices giving a clearer image of integration at the regional and continental level. ARIA1 analyzes from a quality standpoint the content and impact the various policies, plans and interventions. In addition to the institutional aspects, this assessment covered important sectors such as trade, currency and finance, infrastructures, natural resources and inter sector issues.

¹ ECA (2004), *Status of Regional Integration in Africa / Etat de l'intégration régionale en Afrique*. Produced by a joint ECA/AU/ADB with support from the European Union (EU) and World Bank.

8. ARIA 2 (2005) speaks about the necessary rationalization of regional economic communities (RECs). This publication firstly deals with the problems caused by the multiplicity and interference of several RECs in Africa, before proceeding to a technical analysis by means of a questionnaire designed to produce recommendations on rationalization policies for helping member states optimize the use of limited resources.

9. ARIA3, slated for publication in 2006, will be devoted to macroeconomic policies for regional integration. Indeed, many RECs encourage their members to improve the macroeconomic framework in order to promote more thorough integration. However, the criteria of convergence differ from one REC to another, due to the different levels of development. Therefore, a certain number of questions remain outstanding, such as a better approach favoring convergence of policies among the members of integration groups, making it possible to respect joint decisions or guarantee the coherence of national economic reform programs and regional policy objectives.

10. To move hand in hand with the regional integration process, one year ago the ECA-NA initiated the integration observatory project that, after becoming operational, will provide a means of follow-up, analysis of integration potential and prospection of new spheres of cooperation and trade between the countries of the region. The Observatory will also enable all parties concerned with integration to possess pertinent and updated information in the fields inscribed on the Observatory program, i.e. country profiles and statistics, bilateral, regional, multilateral and international agreements, major international conventions, prospective and thematic studies, reports of experts, university and civil society researchers, partnerships between countries and partners in development.

III. TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT: ACCOMPLISHMENTS, CONSTRAINTS, PERSPECTIVES

3.1 Barcelona: A mixed bag

11. The meeting of external affairs ministers in 1995 at Barcelona marked the beginning of a partnership between the European Union (EU) and the countries to the south and east of the Mediterranean, known as the Barcelona process. The objective was to build a regional grouping via economic measures (establishment of a free trade zone or EuroMed FTZ)), precise policies (maintaining of conditions of stability for effective implementation of reforms) and social policies (alleviation of the social cost of the reforms initiated in the framework of the FTZ)). This was the only forum joining together all the players of the region.

12. Over the last decade, the Barcelona process enabled certain achievements, in particular, the gradual lifting of trade and non trade barriers, the entry into force of the Pan European Protocol regarding rules of origin approved by the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Trade Ministers in July 2003 at Palermo, normative convergence of countries to the south of the Mediterranean and the European Union, in particular with regard to industrial technical standardization, an increase in investment and the presence of European corporations on the southern flank thanks to economic reforms initiated with financial support of the European Union.

13. However, ten years after, the results are somewhat of a mixed bag, taking for example, the degree of liberalization of agricultural products between the EU and its Mediterranean partners. Barcelona 2005, which was expecting the beginnings of a new stage in Euro-Mediterranean relations, the advent of which is indispensable given the important changes taking place in the international context and the European Union itself, has not really come up to expectations. Furthermore, the meeting on 27-28 November 2005 saw the participation of only the heads of state of the EU without attendance with the Turkish Prime Minister and the Chairman of the Palestinian Authority. The general absence of leaders from the south, testifies to a dual reality: lack of satisfaction with the results obtained over ten years, and lack of understanding of European objectives for the future. In addition, the countries to the south fear, and not without reason, more favorable treatment granted at their expense to Eastern Europe nations (Ukraine, Belarus, Moldavia, Russia and the Caucasus).

3.2 End of agreement on textiles and clothing: What are the strategies of response?

14. The textile and garment industry is still a key sector in all countries and is currently undergoing major upheavals further to the dismantling of Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC) since January 1st, 2005. Indeed, the textile and clothing sector represents the leading export industry of Tunisia (45% in 2001) and Morocco (32% in 2001) who are respectively the 4th and 6th leading suppliers to Europe. This sector employs a good share of the working population (48% of manufacturing labor in Tunisia)².

15. With the end of the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing, textile exporting countries not only have to face growing competition from nations such as Bangladesh, China, India, and Romania, but also increasingly restrictive conditions regarding rules of origin and standards. However, it is especially the threat posed by China that is worrying the countries of the region. The world's leading producer, China is already the front ranking supplier to Europe. With a market share of 20% for clothing imports (vs. 5.5% for Tunisia), it may account for 40% by 2010, which would destabilize the industrial, social and political equilibrium of the Euro-Mediterranean zone³.

16. According to a World Bank report, the dismantling of the Multi Fiber Agreement should lead to the loss in Tunisia of 100,000 jobs out of the 250,000 provided by this sector. For the first quarter of 2005, 3,000 job losses were reported. National sources tell us that in 2005, there was a drop of only 0.9% in textile and clothing exports⁴. Exports from Morocco also fell by 5.5% after the first six months of 2005, according to the monthly bulletin of the Exchange Office. The fallback in sales of manufactured clothing and hosiery led to a drop representing 82.7% of the overall drop in Moroccan exports.

17. Textiles remain a mainstay of the Tunisian and Moroccan economies. The efforts deployed for modernization and the arrival of foreign investors can be considered positive signs. In addition, the process of accumulation of pan European and Mediterranean origin

² *ECA-NA/TRID, 2005*

³ *Leseécho.fr, 2004.*

⁴ *Central Bank of Tunisia (2005), Paper on Economic and Financial Situation*

makes it possible to consider Tunisian and Moroccan products made from cloth directly imported from Turkey or through an EU member country, as being of Tunisian or Moroccan origin.

18. The future outlook clearly indicates that the response heretofore entailing international insertion based on low labor costs is no longer valid as the said insertion is becoming increasingly less competitive in face of the opening up of international markets⁵. The biggest challenge for the countries of North Africa is to have to think anew about insertion making better exploitation of the region's competitive advantages in terms of new technologies and competitiveness, taking due account of the development and evolution of the relevant economies.

3.3 From Cancun to Hong Kong: What outlook for multilateral trade WTO negotiations?

19. The Hong Kong Ministerial Conference (December 13 – 18, 2005) was organized after the failure at Cancun and thanks to the Agreement entered into at Geneva by the WTO member states in July 2004. The said Agreement made it possible to propose the methods and framework for negotiation. An encouraging point is that, as opposed to Cancun, the attending trade ministers managed to adopt a joint ministerial declaration. Even if some remained skeptical about the outcome of the conference, it is important to note that the commitment expressed to complete the Doha program in 2006, clearly signifies political decisiveness on the part of all parties participating in the negotiations.

20. The most important decision made by the member states that may impact the economies of North Africa concern the following sectors:

Agriculture

21. The agricultural aspect consists of three main points, i.e. subsidies for exports, internal support for production, and the opening up of markets. With regard to export subsidies, an agreement was reached to ensure the gradual elimination of all forms of export subsidy for agricultural products, expected to be completed by the end of 2013. This should have an important impact on the economies of North Africa, most of which still depend on agriculture. However, a certain number of issues persist in connection with the implementation of the Agreement, such as the lack of clear-cut modalities, the condition that certain types of discipline should be established with regard to export credits, export credit guarantees, insurance programs, and integration into the agreement on specific products for which developed countries require exemptions, in particular regarding market access.

22. Concerning the other aspects, the declaration stipulated a formula for the lowering of customs tariffs and an agreement on the modalities of domestic support to agriculture. For all these issues, specific solutions were introduced in favor of developing countries.

⁵ *Daguzan, J-F., 2005*

Cotton

23. The Hong Kong Declaration stipulated that all forms of export subsidies for cotton be eliminated by the developed countries in 2006. With regard to access to markets, the developed countries will grant access free of duty and without quotas to cotton exports from the least advanced countries, from the beginning of the implementation period.

24. Yet this decision will not relieve the cotton producing nations of Africa given that the measures for reducing internal subsidies for cotton production (in developed countries) will be agreed only in the global framework of negotiations on agriculture. Moreover, the issue financial compensation for lost income in African countries, due to the drop in world prices, was not resolved. The second limiting aspect of the agreement is in connection with access to markets, granted solely to the least advanced countries, thereby setting aside nations such as Egypt.

NAMA

25. With regard to negotiations on market access for non-agricultural products (NAMA), the declaration agrees, according to case, to waive customs duty, including tariff peaks, and high and progressive rates, and to take full account of the needs and special interests of developing countries.

26. The declaration therefore tended toward larger opening of the markets of developing countries which are the ones practicing the highest tariffs on industrial products. This decision will also cause a lower margin of maneuver in the free devising of industrial policies.

Services:

27. With regard to services, the declaration emphasizes intensification of negotiations to procure progressive liberalization in the service trade, a suitable degree of flexibility having been foreseen by developing countries. On the other hand, the issue of free circulation of labor was not accorded the attention desired by developing countries who also criticized the collective nature of the supply and demand for liberalization of this sector.

IV. DEBT AND DEVELOPMENT: FORGIVENESS OF HEAVILY INDEBTED POOR COUNTRIES

28. The principle of debt forgiveness of heavily indebted countries (HIPC) was decided on June 11, 2005 at the London meeting of G7 Finance Ministers, upon proposal by the Blair Commission for Africa. This was further confirmed by the Heads of State and Government at the G8 Conference at Gleneagles, Scotland, on July 6-8, 2005.

29. The proposal of debt forgiveness of heavily indebted poor countries was approved by the member states of the World Bank at the annual meeting of September 24 and 25, 2005 in Washington. Eighteen African countries in the region, including Mauritania, will be firstly concerned with a debt estimated at 40 billion dollars. Twenty other countries (including ten African ones) representing a debt of 17 billion dollars are expected to agree to meeting all the conditions imposed the HPCs (or "point of achievement"). The debt of these 38 countries amounts to nearly 57 billion US dollars.

30. The sums released shall be devoted to health, education and poverty alleviation. Seventy per cent (70 %) remain payable to the World Bank and the remainder to the IMF and the African Development Bank (ADB). The total contribution of the European Commission, upon the initiative of the HIPC's, is currently of more than 1.6 billion Euros.

31. Several creditors of the Paris Club announced that they would also grant debt forgiveness beyond the levels decided upon the initiative of the HIPC's, in particular with regard to the XXXX debt.

V. GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

5.1 African project for governance

32. Aware of the importance of governance in or the development of Africa, and with an eye to support for African countries in efforts undertaken to implement the NEPAD, the ECA initiated a project for the creation of a mechanism for follow-up of the successes registered for undertakings aiming to support States ready to move toward general growth, ensure sustainable development, alleviate poverty and promote widespread consensus on the nature of a capable State.

33. In 2005, the project led to the production of a report on the status of governance in Africa (RGA)⁶ which poses pertinent questions and speaks about the priorities of each of the regions, deals with the manner of creating a capable State, different forms of power and different ways of management. Four positive trends were identified with regard to the move toward the creation of capable States in Africa, in other words, democratic transition, political overture, freedom of expression and accounting obligations, in addition to economic management. Several spheres still remain sensitive, in particular, the struggle against corruption.

5.2 The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM): Algeria adheres to APRM

34. The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is a NEPAD instrument voluntarily adhered to by States as an African mechanism for self-evaluation. The APRM mandate consists of ensuring that the policies and practices of the member states comply with the values specified the areas of governance, politics, economics and enterprises.

35. Sixteen African countries including Algeria adhered to the APRM, thereby agreeing to accept periodic evaluations. Egypt expressed its intention to join the mechanism. Self-evaluation is a participative process implicating all the concerned parties, in particular the government, high officials, political parties, members of parliament, and the representatives of civil society (media, intellectuals, trade unions, enterprises and professional associations).

36. ECA-NA actively participated in the support mission⁷ of the APRM organized in Algeria and constituted by representatives of the APRM Secretariat, NEPAD and the three strategic partners consisting of the ECA, the DBA and the UNDP. Algeria launched the self-evaluation process with the establishment of the coordination mechanisms and adoption of a work plan for preparation of the national self-evaluation report along with the Action Program publication of which is slated for April 2006.

⁶ ECA 2005, *Report on the state of governance in Africa*

⁷ *In July and November 2005*

37. A hearing of Government ministers by the National Evaluation Commission in November 2005, saw the establishment of a dialogue between the executive branch and the members of the national committee on on-going policies, programs and projects in the framework of implementation of the program for support to medium term growth (2001-2004) and (2005-2009), i.e. a 50 billion dollar program funded by the State budget. The national evaluation commission will thus be able to integrate these policies, programs and projects via the Action Program to be developed.

38. The support mission had the honor of being received by the President of the Republic, His Excellency Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA who reiterated his support and personal implication in the preparation of the evaluation process in his country in order to carry it out in the best of conditions in the interest of Africa in general and Algeria in particular.

5.3. Commission on HIV/AIDS and Governance in Africa (CHGA)

39. The Commission on HIV/AIDS and Governance in Africa (CHGA)⁸ is a UN system-wide initiative, launched in February 2003 by the United Nations Secretary-General to deepen the research on HIV/AIDS and governance in Africa. CHGA represents the first occasion on which the continent most affected by HIV/AIDS will lead an effort to examine the epidemic in all its aspects and likely future implications. Indeed, across the African continent, there is very little understanding of the long term development challenges posed by the HIV/AIDS, lack of appropriate policies and programs for effective mitigation and lack of adequate resources to support these policies and programs.

40. The challenge of CHGA is therefore to provide data and help consolidate the design and implementation of policies and programs that can help contain the pandemic in order to support development and foster good governance. Accordingly, CHGA focuses are the challenges of governing a country – including maintaining essential public services, keeping economic development on track, maintaining rural livelihoods, mitigating the gender dimension on the pandemic, and ensuring national security – despite the fact that a large number of the population is living with HIV/AIDS⁹.

41. Within its two-year life span, CHGA organized 5 interactive meetings. The fifth CHGA Interactive meeting called “Interactive Morocco” was organized in collaboration with the Government of Morocco in Casablanca, on 22 and 23 April 2005, around the theme of “Addressing the Socio-Economic Impact of HIV/AIDS”. This meeting examined the critical policy challenges HIV/AIDS poses to African States, with a view to delineate specific policy recommendations for the Commission’s final report. While acknowledging that HIV/AIDS prevalence in North Africa was still low by international and regional standards, prevention measures needed to be taken to avoid a rise in the epidemic, including by increasing awareness among the youth and increasing women’s economic autonomy and decision-making.

42. The final meeting of CHGA, closing its two-year mandate, was held in Washington, D.C. (USA, October 2005) to review the final report, which offers policy advice and action points on how to reinforce prevention efforts; strengthen health systems and treatment; protect more effectively vulnerable groups, including women, young girls and orphans; and achieve more sustainable and coordinated funding, among other challenges. The final report of CHGA will be presented to the coming ECA Conference of Ministers (May 2006).

⁸ www.uneca.org

⁹ ECA (2003) CHGA - Africa: The Socio-Economic Impact of HIV/AIDS

VI. SOCIAL PROGRESS

6.1 The World Summit to Assess Progress in the Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals

43. At the 60th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations (World Summit), member States met in New York (14-16 September 2005) to review the report of the Secretary General of the United Nations on progress made in the implementation of the MDGs and to decide on what further steps were needed. The Outcome Document¹⁰ that was adopted calls on Member States, *inter-alia*, to adopt, by 2006, and implement comprehensive national development strategies to achieve the internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including the MDGs¹¹.

44. To assist Member States in the process of preparing MDG-based national development strategies, the United Nations “Millennium Project” prepared a Handbook to develop an effective national strategy to meet the Goals¹². As stressed by the Project, no new development processes are needed. Rather, current processes can and should be aligned with the MDGs—by shifting development practice from planning for modest incremental expansion of social services and infrastructure to bold and long-term strategies aimed at achieving quantitative targets and goals. The key principle of MDG-based planning is that it works backward from the MDG targets to define the policies and investments needed between 2005 and 2015—followed by the design of a supportive macroeconomic framework, including a viable financing strategy that includes more development assistance, as necessary.

45. All North African countries made a contribution to the overall review process with at least one national report on progress achieved and remaining challenges. The reports show that most NA countries have high level of probability of reaching many objectives by 2015 and that, new challenges were emerging much more related to middle income countries going through demographic and sanitary transitions. For that reason, the Outcome Document calls on including MDGs/plus objectives in the 2006 national development strategies.

46. Moreover, in 2005, efforts to reduce monetary and human poverty got a higher priority in national agendas by the adoption and implementation of national strategies targeting the multidimensional nature of poverty, with increased resources in selected rural and peri - urban areas. Among these strategies, mention should be made of the Moroccan National Initiative for Human Development (2006-2010)¹³, which seeks with a budget of 10 billions of Dirhams and in 5 years, at strengthening the efforts made to reduce rural poverty, urban exclusion and vulnerability of selected social groups.

¹⁰ General Assembly Resolution A/RES/60/1 or Summit Outcome.

¹¹ A/RES/60/1 Paragraph 22 (a).

¹² <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/policy/handbook.htm>

¹³ Discours du 18 mai 2005. www.maec.gov.ma/fr.defautl.asp

6.2 International Year of Micro Credit: Building Inclusive Financial Services to Achieve the MDGs

47. At the 1997 first Micro Credit Summit, a nine-year Campaign was launched to reach 100 million of the world's poorest families, especially the women of those families, with credit for self-employment and other financial and business services by the end of 2005. In 1998, within the context of the UN Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006), the United Nations General Assembly designated the year 2005 as the International Year of Micro Credit. In Resolution 58/221 of 23 December 2003, the Secretary General of the United Nations, *inter-alia*, called on Member States to consider establishing national coordinating committees or focal points with responsibility for promoting the activities related to the Year.

48. In 2005, the celebration focused on themes related to overcoming constraints impeding the growth and sustainability of the micro-finance sector, and on establishing effective strategies to develop inclusive pro - poor financial sectors that can contribute to the achievement of the MDGs. The 2005 State of the Micro-credit Summit Campaign Report was released on December 2005¹⁴ and shows that as of December 31, 2004, 3,164 micro-credit institutions have reported reaching 92,270,289 clients, 66,614,871 of whom were among the poorest when they took their first loan. Of these poorest clients, 83.5 percent, or 55,622,406 million, are women. The second World Micro Credit Summit would be held in Canada (November 12-15, 2006) to assess progress made toward the Campaign's goal and to launch the second phase of the Campaign.

49. In North Africa, the International Year of Micro Credit was celebrated by the organization of several events, showing the increased place the micro credit is getting among the strategies for poverty reduction. In some cases, national committees were established with representatives from the government, bank associations, nonprofits/NGOs, and multilateral agencies. Launching ceremonies of the year were also organized with media coverage, posters, postage stamps, documentaries and conferences.

50. The year was also the opportunity to assess the impact of micro credit schemes on employment and income and to discuss the new challenges faced by the growth, sometimes exponential, of micro credit loans and beneficiaries in terms of regulatory framework, governance, sustainability, and development of new financial services. Awards were also distributed to high achievers in the field of micro-credit.

6.3 Follow up to the Implementation of the Beijing +10 “Outcome Document” in Africa

51. In 2004, within the Beijing+10 framework, Africa evaluated the state of implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platform for Action, resulting in the “Outcome and the Way Forward”¹⁵, which articulates Africa’ priorities for the next decade regarding gender equality and the empowerment of women.

¹⁴ <http://www.microcreditsummit.org>

¹⁵ www.uneca.org

52. To support the implementation and monitoring of the “Outcome and the Way Forward” document, in accordance to its mandate, the ECA, through the African Centre for Gender and Development (ECA/ACGD), has developed a Strategy that was presented for review and adoption by the 10th Meeting of the Committee on Women and Development in Dakar, Senegal, October 2005. At this Meeting, the CWD adopted ECA/ACGD’s Strategy and 2006-2007 Work-Program, and renewed its membership as follows: The new Bureau Members from North Africa include: Tunisia (also the Rapporteur of the CWD), Sudan and Algeria. Two non-governmental organizations from North Africa namely the “Collectif 95 Maghreb Egalité” and the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR) were invited to integrate the Committee.

53. In 2006, meetings will be organized to define sub regional frameworks for implementation of the “Outcome and the Way Forward” document for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The workshops will assist member States to develop and make operational implementation strategies in line with their national priorities.

VII. AFRICA AND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

54. At a global level and particularly for the last decade, the international community has been pushing forward the digital divide agenda by adopting a number of regional and international initiatives aiming at promoting the use of ICTs for sustainable socio-economic development. The World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) planned in two phases (Geneva 2003 and Tunis 2005) initiated a process whereby ICT for development (ICT4D) issues are being debated worldwide.

55. The first World Summit (WSIS1) in Geneva adopted a Declaration of Principles and a Plan of Action, setting the stage for international cooperation to close the existing digital divide between developing and developed countries while involving all stakeholders in building an inclusive information society.

7.1 Accra Regional Conference for WSIS 2

56. Held in Accra, Ghana in February 2005, the African Regional Preparatory Conference for WSIS2, whose theme is “*Access – Africa’s key to an inclusive Information Society*”, was coordinated by ECA under the framework of the African Information Society Initiative (AISI). The Conference was convened as part of the Infrastructure cluster of the NEPAD. The meeting prepared for Africa’s effective participation in WSIS2 to ensure a strategic and interdependent digital partnership that will promote economic growth and human development of the continent.

57. The Conference has come up with a Common Position and a Regional Action Plan on major ICT issues of relevance to the continent, including the remaining two unsolved issues of the Geneva phase, namely Internet Governance and Financing the information society.

7.2 WSIS2

58. Held in Tunis from 16 to 18 November 2005, WSIS2 objective was to put Geneva's Plan of Action into motion as well as to find solutions and reach agreements in the fields of Internet governance, financing mechanisms, and follow-up and implementation of the Geneva and Tunis documents¹⁶.

59. About 21,200 participants from governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector have attended the event, in addition to 36 heads of states and governments, 197 Ministers from 174 countries as well as high-level representatives from international organizations, private sectors and civil society. 333 exponents from 64 countries had taken part in the event, which also witnessed the participation of 60,000 visitors. The event was covered by 1,100 Tunisian and international journalists from all the media¹⁷. It is for the first time in the history of the UN Summits that, the civil society and the private sector have been considered as effective partners in the same way as governments and international organizations.

60. More than one hundred parallel events consisting in meetings, panels, discussions, workshops and gatherings of a global nature and relevant to the Summit theme have been held.

61. Two major documents have been adopted: Tunis Commitment and Tunis Agenda.

62. The contribution of North African Countries in this Summit has been tremendous: four Heads of State, one Prime Minister and two Ministers; six countries were part of exhibitors¹⁸. In term of commitment, all the countries have pledged to reinforce enabling environment for the development of ICT in order to sustain economic and social development in their respective country. Libya has committed itself to apply the Tunis Agenda and to respect the Tunis Commitment; Mauritania is committed to push forward the Telecommunications sector reform started recently; Egypt will continue with its national, regional, and global efforts to follow up on the implementation of the agreements made at both phases of the summit. Just to mention few examples.

VIII. CONCLUSION

63. In 2005 the countries of the region actively took part in the international debate on the great issues of the day and better defended their economic and commercial interests thanks to strengthening of the level of participation in international negotiations. The ECA and more particularly the ECA-NA have initiated several activities for the promotion of regional integration, the emergence of consensus and plea for common positions.

64. However, the countries and partners in development must position themselves with respect to the rest of the world to increase the possibility of integrating regional perspectives in the responses to the major issues still under negotiation such as those connected to the Barcelona process (cross-border migration, energy, transportation), international trade negotiations (Internet governance, information society financing) or the convergence of policies between member of regional integration groups (NEPAD).

¹⁶ <http://www.itu.int/wsis/basic/about.html>

¹⁷ Tunisia's Minister of Communication technologies, Press Conference, 18 November 2005

¹⁸ Algeria, Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. ECA (2005), Economic Report on Africa 2005.
2. CEA-TRID/ECA-NA (2005), Comment sauver le textile maghrébin? , étude présentée au Séminaire UMA/CEA (TRID / BSR-AN), Tunis, 14-15 Feb. 2005.
3. ECA (2005), African Governance Report 2005.
4. ECA (2005), Governance for a Progressing Africa – Report of the Fourth African Development Forum (ADF IV).
5. ECA (2005), Strategies for Promoting Effective Stakeholder Participation in the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), Third Meeting of the Committee on Human Development and Civil Society, 4-6 May 2005, Addis Ababa.
6. ECA, Geneva Interregional Advisory Services (2005), A Briefing Note on Doha Trade Round: Uncertainty Surrounds Outcome for the Hong Kong WTO Ministerial Conference.
7. ECA Annual Report 2005
8. ECA (2004), Economic Report on Africa 2004
9. ECA (2004), Assessing Regional Integration in Africa
10. ECA (2005), Assessing Regional Integration in Africa
11. ECA (2004), Solving Africa's External Debt Problem to Finance Development: A Progress Report , Twenty-third meeting of the Committee of Experts of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Kampala, Uganda, 18-20 May 2004
12. ECA (2003) CHGA - Africa: The Socio-Economic Impact of HIV/AIDS, Index No CHGA-B-110003
13. ECA (2003), Striving for Good Governance in Africa - Synopsis of the African Governance Report 2005
14. ECA-NA (2006), La situation économique et sociale en Afrique du Nord en 2005, Vingt et unième réunion du Comité intergouvernemental d'experts
15. ECA-NA (2005) – Analyse préliminaire de l'évolution des structures économiques en Afrique du Nord: 2000-2004, Vingtième réunion du Comité Intergouvernemental d'Experts
16. CEA-TRID/ECA-AN (2005), Comment sauver les textile maghrébin, Séminaire UMA/CEA (TRID / ECA-NA) sur la fin de l'ATV et son impact sur les pays de l'UMA, Tunis, 14 and 15 Feb.; 2005
17. ECA-NA (2005), Réalisation des OMD et mise en oeuvre du NEPAD dans les pays d'Afrique du Nord: Progrès et perspectives, Vingtième réunion du Comité Intergouvernemental d'Experts
18. ECA-NA (2005), La participation économique des femmes en Afrique du Nord, Vingtième réunion du Comité Intergouvernemental d'Experts
19. ECA-NA (2005), Etat de l'information pour les activités de développement en Afrique du nord, Vingtième réunion du Comité Intergouvernemental d'Experts
20. AISI Briefing Paper, No. 1, January 2003, Towards an Information Society in Africa: The Case for National Policies
21. AISI Briefing Paper, No. 2, October 2004. Government with an e - The potential of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) in the African Public Sector
22. Union Africaine/ NEPAD (2003), Directives aux pays en vue de leur préparation et de leur participation au mécanisme africain d'évaluation par les Pairs.
23. General Assembly Resolution A/RES/60/1 or Summit Outcome.
24. WTO Ministerial Conference, Sixth session (Hong Kong 13-18 December 2005). Ministerial Declaration of 18 December 2005
25. Daguzan, J-F., (2005), Barcelona 2005 : quel avenir pour un demi-partenariat?, Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique (FRS)
26. Hugon, P. (2005), Les accords de libre échange entre l'Union européenne ont-ils favorisé un développement et un partenariat durables conformes au projet de Barcelone ? Communication at the Cairo colloquium May 2005.
27. Miller R., Mishriff A., (2005), The Barcelona Process and Euro-Arab Economic Relations : 1995-2005. The Middle East Review of International Affairs. Published by the Gloria Center, Interdisciplinary Center.
28. Moisseron, J-Y., (2005), Le Bilan Mitigé des Accords de Barcelone, présentation à la Conférence Internationale, «Le partenariat euro-méditerranéen, dix ans après Barcelone », Cairo, , 19-20 April 2005.
29. Andrew Mold (2005), Trade Preferences in Africa: The State of Play and the Issue at Stake in Stake
30. Tunisia's Minister of Communication technologies, Press Conference, 18 November 2005
31. Africa Trade Policy Centre No 6 (2004), Trade Liberalization and Development: Lessons for Africa
32. African Trade Policy Centre (2004), Trade Liberalization under the Doha Development Agenda: Options and Consequences for Africa
33. Centre africain pour la politique commerciale, Note d'information No 2 (2004) Financement de l'intégration régionale
34. <http://www.uneca.org>
35. <http://www.uneca.org>
36. <http://www.smistunis2005.tn>
37. <http://www.frstrategie.org>
38. <http://www.eg.ird.f>
39. <http://www.itu.net>
40. <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org>
41. <http://www.microcreditsummit.org>
42. <http://www.itu.int>