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SUB-REGIONAL OFFICE FOR WEST AFRICA (ECA-WA)

**Twelfth session of the Intergovernmental Committee
of Experts (ICE)
Niamey, Niger**

**REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SUB-REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE
PERIOD FROM JULY 2008 TO JULY 2009**

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1 INTRODUCTION

1. The Twelfth Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE 12) is directly in line with consolidation of the achievements of ICE 11. Thus, since the eleventh meeting of the ICE, which was held in June 2008 in Niamey, Niger, the Sub-regional office has been involved in implementing the recommendations of ICE 11, as well as its 2008-2009 programme of activities.
2. During the period covered by this report, the Sub-regional office continued its cooperation with Inter-Governmental Organisations (IGOs), with the aim of enhancing the synergy of their activities. These efforts are a continuation of a process that began in Ouagadougou in December 2007 and which was welcomed at the meeting of IGOs, organised as a prelude to the June 2008 ICE 11. Implementation of joint activities thus continued with West African Regional Integration Institutions.
3. This period, which marks the end of the first year of the 2008-2009 biennium, was also used to sketch the outline of the 2010-2011 programme of activities. Pending its approval by the General Assembly, an overview of this programme will be provided in this report.
4. It must be recalled that the background to programming and implementation of the Sub-regional office's activities remains the reform of the United Nations System and the repositioning of the ECA that led to the selection of two fundamental axes for its interventions, namely, (1) enhancing regional integration in support of the vision and priorities of the African Union and Member States, and (2) taking into account the special needs of Africa and the emerging challenges on the international scene. Repositioning of the ECA has continued in the sub-regions, with the strengthening of its sub-regional offices, which are now the main partners of the regional economic communities, United Nations System country teams, and other partners on the ground. It is within this context that the SRO-WA signed a multiannual cooperation agreement with ECOWAS on August 17 2007 in Abuja, Nigeria and has organised several meetings aimed at setting up the Forum of IGOs and enhancing the synergy among regional integration institutions. The cooperation agreement between ECOWAS and the Office has recorded remarkable progress through the implementation of joint activities throughout the period under review.
5. The present report takes stock of the activities of the Sub-regional office since the end of the Eleventh session of the ICE in June 2008 and gives an overview of the 2010-2011 programme of work.

2 ACTIVITIES OF THE SUB-REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE PERIOD FROM JUNE 2008 TO JANUARY 2009

6. Activities carried out during the period are described according to the following three axes:
- (i) Follow-up of recommendations of ICE 11
 - (ii) Preparation of working documents for the twelfth session of the ICE
 - (iii) Implementation of other components of the 2008-2009 work programme

2.1 Follow-up of recommendations of the Eleventh ICE

7. The eleventh session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts made a number of recommendations to Member States, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and the ECA. This section on the recommendations made to the ECA takes stock of their implementation. They relate to the question of mechanisms for financing IGO activities; the rationalisation of these activities; financing of efforts to refocus agriculture in the sub region, and the effective implementation of the African Wealth Creation and Retention Strategy (AWCRS).
8. Concerning the financing of IGOs through the single community levy, although the experts welcomed the principle, they recommended that a study be carried out to determine its feasibility. The study was to examine its scope, the rate, the method of distribution among IGOs, its use in terms of operating costs and investments, and its macroeconomic impact, in the light of the existing community levies in ECOWAS and UEMOA. They asked the ECA to support this study under the leadership of ECOWAS and UEMOA. The Sub-regional office therefore conducted a preliminary study whose results were discussed at a meeting of high level officials and experts from IGOs organised by the MRU in partnership with the Sub-regional office on 6th December 2008 in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The various conclusions of the study and a summary of discussions at the high level meeting are presented in this report.
9. Participants in the Eleventh ICE had also noted that there remained a lot to be done to rationalise IGOs, and recommended that the ECA help to enhance the debate on practical steps to be taken in this direction in the West African sub-region. The Sub-regional office considers that the effective establishment of the IGO forum, with the lead agencies of specialised groups of IGOs identified would certainly be a step on the way toward real synergy in interventions by IGOs, under the leadership of the ECOWAS Commission. Efforts to institutionalise the framework will continue under the leadership of ECOWAS and UEMOA with technical support from the Sub-regional office.

10. Experts at ICE 11 had also proposed that the Sub-regional office conduct a thorough examination of the modalities of (private/public) funding of efforts to refocus on agriculture and agro-industry as contained in the reports to ICE Pending a more in-depth study, the issue has been considered within the Sub-regional office. It would appear from that exercise that one of the best options available to countries in the West African sub-region, in a difficult situation that has been further exacerbated by the different crises, is the establishment of joint ventures focusing on strategic sectors.
11. As far as the AWCRS is concerned, participants at the public closing session of ICE 11 called for its implementation, to bring about a rapid transformation of African potential into beneficial wealth for its population. They also proposed ways to increase its chances of success, namely, a broad dissemination of the strategy among the sub-region's agents of development and parliaments, as well as lobbying to include this approach in school curricula in Member States. In line with these recommendations, the Sub-regional office organised a number of visits to carry out the broad dissemination of the strategy. Furthermore, at the end of an expert group meeting held in Segou, in the heart of the rice growing region of Mali, documents initiating the first joint venture under the AWCRS were initialled by a group of potential investors.

2.2 Preparation of statutory documents to be submitted to the Twelfth session of the ICE

12. In line with the programme of work approved for the 2008-2009 period, the Sub-regional office undertook to prepare two major statutory reports to be examined at the twelfth session of the ICE. These are (i) the Report on economic and social conditions in West Africa in 2008 and prospects for 2009; (ii) the study on food security, which is the thematic part of the report, and (iii) the report on implementation of regional and international development agendas.

Report on economic and social conditions in 2008 and prospects for 2009

13. The report on economic and social conditions in West Africa is a statutory publication that the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa's Sub-regional Office for West Africa submits annually to the sub-regional Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE) for review. It analyses and assesses recent economic developments and the prospects for the sub-region and its countries. In particular, it provides basic data and information about recent development policies, with a view to generating broad debate among member countries, intergovernmental organisations and other development agents. It also includes

recommendations that are discussed and supplemented by the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts before being disseminated to Member States and sub-regional organisations, with the aim of improving the effectiveness of development policies and programmes.

14. This year's report is in line with the process of seeking concrete options to maximise the effects of development efforts in the countries of the sub-region. It analyses and assesses recent economic developments and the prospects for the sub-region and its countries in 2009. It ends with recommendations that will be discussed and supplemented by the main partners in the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts, the IGO Forum (WAIGO), the Business Forum, and the Forum of civil society organisations, with a view to identifying investment opportunities, as well as the risks, and the improvements to be made in the development policies and programmes of countries and the sub-region.
15. The report is divided into two parts; the first part, which deals with recent economic developments in West Africa and prospects for 2009, and the second part which relates to food security in West Africa. The first part was drafted using data obtained from ECOWAS, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the African Development Bank (AfDB), and Member States. It is subdivided into two chapters, namely: (i) the international climate, which reviews the recent performance of the world economy to deduce its impact on sub-regional economies, and (ii) recent developments in the economic situation of West Africa and prospects for 2009.
16. The choice of food security as the theme for the second part of the report derives from the Sub-regional office's efforts to raise awareness among decision-makers in the sub-region on the need to coordinate their action to mitigate the consequences of the current international crisis. In particular, it must be noted that the food crisis, following the sharp rise in the prices of foodstuffs under the combined effect of climate change, increased global consumption, changes in consumption patterns, and the decline in world stocks, has sorely tried the economies of West African countries. To contain the ensuing economic and social consequences, governments resorted to tax and control prices measures that are not sustainable and which very quickly revealed their limitations. This is why analysts are calling increasingly for optimum use of regional resources through refocusing on measures to be adopted by countries in the sub-region in order to ensure their individual and collective food security.

17. The general objective of the second part of the report is to explore solutions that could enable West Africa to achieve an adequate level of food self-sufficiency and ensure its food security by increasing food production through applying the African Wealth Creation and Retention Strategy (AWCRS) to agriculture to harness investment opportunities in Africa for improved exploitation of resources (water and land) and markets in the region.
18. In addition to the introduction and conclusion, this second part is divided into three chapters. The first describes the status of production and imports of food products in West Africa. The second chapter analyses the determinants of food security in West Africa and identifies the shortcomings. The third chapter shows how implementation of the AWCRS can in the long run make it possible to ensure food security in West Africa.

Report on the implementation of regional and international agendas: review of the Global Partnership for Development in West Africa

19. This report provides an overview of the achievement of MDG 8 in West Africa. It draws on the observation of the Working Group on the MDGs set up by the Secretary General of the United Nations, which has established that despite the progress noted, there is still a wide gap between the commitments of the international community and achievements in the fields of aid, international trade, reducing the debt burden, access to essential drugs, and technology. Even more worrying is the fact that the recent financial crisis and the recession that it has induced in several industrialised countries could undermine the few achievements.
20. The present report therefore aims to take stock of the Global Partnership for Development in West Africa as stipulated in the various components of MDG 8 and to draw lessons and recommendations for both recipient countries and donors, in order to accelerate the concretisation of international commitments for achieving the MDGs. To do this, it focuses firstly on the nature of the global partnership, provides an overview of achievement of the MDGs in West Africa, and then takes stock of the achievement of MDG 8 in its various components in the sub-region.

2.3 Implementation of other components of the 2008-2009 Work Programme

(i) *Business Forum on Rice*

21. The first Business Forum on Rice, jointly organised by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa's Sub-regional Office for West Africa (ECA-SRO/WA), the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and Mali, was held between 27th and 30th October 2008 in Segou, Mali. The Forum coincided with

the launch of the first rice harvest under the Rice Initiative, a project resolutely aimed at giving new impetus to rice production in Mali.

22. The aim of the forum was to reposition West Africa so that it produces a surplus and becomes a net exporter of rice to other sub-regions of Africa and the world. More specifically, the objective was to bring together economic operators in the sub-region, governments, and inter-governmental as well as non-governmental organisations, to focus on the rice sector; to approve the African Wealth Creation and Retention Strategy; to draw up a road map for its implementation for rice, and to establish the first West African rice joint venture.
23. The Forum was attended by representatives of government, chambers of commerce, industry, and agriculture, employers' organisations, the NEPAD Business Groups, agricultural professional organisations, research centres, investors and financing bodies. Participants came from Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Guinea, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo.
24. The Forum participants joined the delegation of His Excellency the Prime Minister to take part in the ceremonies launching the first rice harvest of the Mali Rice Initiative in Niono and Dioro.
25. The working sessions of the Forum focused essentially on (1) Facilitating the public-private partnership in national, regional, and international trade and investment management, and (2) Securing agricultural investments.
26. The Forum defined a road map and a memorandum for the establishment of the first rice joint venture, for the purpose of obtaining operational results and ensuring follow-up of the outcomes.
27. The Forum designated the following participants to be in charge of making proposals concerning the drafting of a road map for establishing joint ventures in the rice sector: Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Nigeria, ECOWAS, ECA, NEPAD Business Group, ECOBANK, and the Ivorian coalition for youth enterprise.
28. Following the tour of the Markala rice growing area, participants discussed and adopted a report including a memorandum on the creation of a trans-African joint venture on rice. The road map shows the stages that will lead to creating the first joint venture focusing on rice, with the specific deadlines for implementation. The pilot project, which is to be located in the Office du Niger zone, will thus be developed in four phases: the concept ownership phase, project structuring phase, start-up phase, and monitoring and evaluation.

(ii) *High-level meeting on independent funding mechanisms for regional integration institutions*

29. In collaboration with the Mano River Union, the host institution, the ECA Sub-regional Office for West Africa organised a high-level meeting on independent funding mechanisms for regional integration institutions in Freetown, Sierra Leone on 6 December 2008. The meeting was aimed at considering further the issue of independent funding mechanisms for regional integration organisations, harmonising the positions of inter-governmental organisations (IGOs), and drafting recommendations to be submitted to the Mano River Union and to ECOWAS.
30. This high-level meeting was a follow-up to the recommendation of the meeting of the Forum of West African Inter-governmental Organisations (IGOs) held in Niamey in conjunction with the 11th Inter-governmental Committee of Experts of the ECA Sub-regional Office for West Africa, calling for a study to be carried out to determine the feasibility of a single community levy in the West African zone.
31. The following regional integration institutions took part in the high-level meeting: the host, the Mano River Union (MRU), the *Autorité du Liptako Gourma* (ALG), the Permanent Inter-State Committee for drought control in the Sahel (CILSS), the African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development (ACMAD), the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP), and the nascent West African Institute for Regional Integration, based in Cape Verde.
32. Senior level officials represented the Commissions of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA). Niger was represented at the meeting in its capacity as current chair of the West African Inter-governmental Committee of Experts (ICE). Sierra Leone, the host country, also participated in the meeting. The Sub-regional Office for West Africa served as the meeting secretariat.
33. The presentations focused on the issue of financing regional integration in West Africa, the experience of financing through the ECOWAS and UEMOA single community levies, and the advantages and disadvantages of the different options for extending independent funding for regional integration.
34. The presentation on financing regional integration in West Africa began by focusing on the exhaustion of conventional funding for integration in the form of Member States' contributions and contributions by donors, and the consequences that this derives for integration institutions and programmes. As a result of the fall in these modes of funding,

certain IGOs that are left adrift tend to ensure the survival of the institution, to the detriment of programmes. It went on to indicate that the solution to the situation resided in establishing an independent funding mechanism whose effectiveness has been demonstrated by the experience of UEMOA and ECOWAS.

35. After having described the conditions and performance criteria for an independent funding mechanism, the speaker concluded by stating that establishing the mechanism would require that IGOs demonstrate their relevance and efficiency, as well as that of their programmes. This is to avoid them becoming lethargic once permanent funding is obtained.
36. The presentations by the two institutions focused on their experience in the area of independent funding. They centred on the assessment of implementation of the community levy, highlighting the sources of funding, the Protocol on the Community Levy, management of integration resources, the difficulties in implementing the Protocol, and future prospects.
37. The different options for extending independent funding of regional integration were also presented. The possible options in seeking independent funding for integration institutions, namely, the development foundation, the capitalisation fund, funding through reallocation of expected resources of regional funds, funding through “bundling” with UEMOA and ECOWAS levies, and a levy with an additive tax on value added tax (VAT). A presentation was also made on the single community levy as an optimal option that could garner the approval of IGOs.

(iii) *Prospectus on integration in West Africa*

38. The second edition of the prospectus on the state of integration in West Africa focuses on programme coordination and cooperation between West African regional integration institutions. The underlying idea is to encourage division of labour based on optimum utilisation of the comparative advantages and complementarities of sub-regional institutions, in the light of the on-going experiment of the formal framework for dialogue and cooperation between ECOWAS and UEMOA, and the partnership agreement signed in 2007 between the ECA and ECOWAS.
39. Coordination and harmonisation of strategies, programmes, sectoral projects, and instruments of cooperation is one of the rationalisation scenarios put forward in the second edition of the joint report of the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union, on the state of regional integration in Africa II (ARIA II).

40. The prospectus emphasises the initiatives to revitalise the Association of West African Intergovernmental Organisations, which had existed in the 1980s. It recalled the main recommendations of meetings of regional organisations aimed at setting up the Forum of West African Regional Integration Institutions. It includes a database of regional integration organisations, their objectives, and main activities of these IGOs in 2008.
- (iv) *Report on the use of development research to transform agricultural institutions and the development of agro-industries in West Africa*².
41. This report describes the situation of the rice sector in the fifteen (15) ECOWAS countries and Mauritania. It shows the strong dependence of the sub-region on imports (1.7 billion dollars in 2006) for nearly half of its requirements. This constitutes a real problem of food security in the light of the constantly growing demand in the sub-region.
42. In light of the available potential in water and arable land, the report through various simulations, shows that if appropriate policies are put in place, the sub-region could become self-sufficient in rice and produce a substantial surplus for export. To do this, effective ownership by the main stakeholders (public and private) of the African Wealth Creation and Retention Strategy (AWCRS) advocated by the ECA Sub-regional office for West Africa, is an essential step in the right direction. This strategy, which is based on a regional approach to development, aims to eliminate the gap between an Africa that is rich in natural resources and Africans who are poor. It is particularly important to establish a strategic partnership with domestic, sub-regional, and international investors, to increase the participation and involvement of African promoters in value added activities related to exploiting the technological, natural, mineral, and agriculture resources of the continent, as well as its markets.
43. The report considers that modernising rice growing in the West African sub-region requires a public-private partnership in national, regional and international trade and investment management, and securing agricultural investments. This should enable the emergence of highly capitalised joint ventures that are capable of undertaking commercial agriculture. To this end, it is necessary to remove the constraints related to (i) access to land and security of investments; (ii) access to seed, water and fertilizer; (iii) the availability of funding for the rice sector, and (iv) knowledge management and market integration. More specifically, there is the question of access to land and securing investments.

² Report subtitled “Prospects for the rice sector in West Africa: Harnessing investment opportunities to develop regional land and water resources and regional markets”.

(v) *Assessment of the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision in West Africa: air transport security issues*

44. The political will to accelerate the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision, with particular emphasis on its security/safety component was recently reaffirmed by ECOWAS and UEMOA Ministers responsible for transport during their joint meeting held on 4th September 2008 in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, with the adoption of two important resolutions (Nos. 5 and 6 of 04/09/2008). This commitment is directly in line with that of the ECA's Sub-regional office for West Africa, which had already planned to carry out a study on "Evaluation of the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision" in its 2008 programme of activities.
45. This study assessed the degree of implementation of this Decision in West Africa, specifically in relation to its air transport security/safety component, which could reflect the extent to which international civil aviation standards are complied with. This is a necessary requirement that goes hand in hand with commercial liberalisation of air transport.
46. This study allows Member States to assess progress made and to envisage the necessary corrections. In terms of impact, the study aims to re-mobilise and reaffirm the collective will not only to accelerate air transport liberalisation in West Africa, but also to raise it to the level of international standards, thus enabling it to play its role fully in regional integration and contribute to integrating the continent in the global economy. In its conclusion, the study proposes that future evaluations of implementation of the decision be reoriented in order to accord the rightful importance to the related security and safety measures.

2.4 Presentation of the draft 2010-2011 programme of activity

47. The objective of the programme of activity for this biennium is to strengthen the capacity of member countries for regional integration, by carrying out targeted, specific and priority activities for sub-regional development, within the general context of NEPAD and the Millennium Development Goals.
48. More specifically, the intention is to assist Member States, ECOWAS, UEMOA, the Mano River Union, and other intergovernmental organisations, as well as civil society organisations in drafting and implementing policies and programmes in areas relating to food security, the environment and sustainable development, private sector development,

investment promotion, employment, poverty reduction, and post-conflict reconstruction. At the same time, the regional partnership and partnership with Member States will be enhanced.

49. The organic structure of the programme includes analytical work that is aimed at supporting policy advocacy and drafting documents for the ICE, the deliberation body, in order to foster policy dialogue in its meetings. The analytical work will be supplemented and reinforced with operational activities aimed at consolidating the technical cooperation with Member States and regional economic communities (RECs) and at strengthening national capacities by organising training sessions, expert group meetings, and special projects and events related to the current socio-economic needs of Member States. Among the specific activities included in the programme are the drafting of six parliamentary reports and five non-recurring documents, four training workshops, about ten advisory services, and four field projects. Two meetings of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts will be held (one per year), as well as four expert group meetings, two in each year.
50. A report on the state of progress in implementation of international and regional integration agendas, including NEPAD, the MDGs, and other sub-regional initiatives is expected to be published in 2010 and in 2011.
51. Four ad hoc expert group meetings will be organised during this biennium. The first of these, to be held in 2010, will focus on new trends in South-South triangular cooperation and their implications on the development of West African States. The second meeting in 2010 will be a report on strengthening the public-private partnership in the electricity sector in West Africa. The third ad hoc meeting of the group of experts will be devoted to the issue of youth employment in West Africa, with particular emphasis on self employment. The fourth meeting will be devoted to assessing the relationship between State fragility and Development.
52. Each of these meetings will lead to the validation of a working document that will give rise to a non-recurrent publication. In addition to these four non-recurrent publications arising out of the expert group meetings, a fifth document will be published on issues of harmonising methods for collecting data and economic forecasting in West Africa.
53. In addition to these activities, it is planned to organise a forum in 2011 on facilitating trade between landlocked States and port States in the West African sub-region.
54. In the area of training, four workshops have been scheduled. The first will target about a dozen experts from Member States and will focus on climate change. A second workshop

will address issues related to public-private partnership in agro-industry and agri-business. The third training workshop will focus on governance indicators in West Africa, while the fourth will address issues related to harmonising data collection and forecasting methods.

55. The Sub-regional office has also obtained funding for a project submitted to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) this year for the 2010-2011 biennium. This is a capacity building project on climate change, intended for smallholders, intergovernmental organisations such as CILSS and ACMAD, and river basin management organisations such as the ABN.
56. Implementation of this project is expected to improve the ability of policymakers to take climate change into account in national and sub-regional agricultural policies aimed at food security and poverty reduction. It should also increase the ability of researchers working on the climate to translate the results of their research into suitable information to assist decision-makers to act in a well-informed manner on issues related to adapting to climate change.

2.5 Country-level missions and activities

57. Two main missions may be mentioned:

i. Post-conflict reconstruction and development needs assessment in Sierra Leone and Liberia

58. Upon the request of the African Union, the Sub-regional office represented the ECA in a multidisciplinary mission that visited these two countries between 30th January and 20th February 2009. The objective of the mission was to carry out an assessment of the needs of the two countries in the area of post-conflict reconstruction, and to make recommendations on the assistance that the African Union and its Member States could provide.
59. This mission represents the implementation of a decision of the African Union's Peace and Security Council which, at its sixtieth session, requested that the African Union Commission send a multidisciplinary mission to Liberia in collaboration with the ECA, ECOWAS and the African Development Bank (AfDB). Upon the request of Sierra Leone, the mission was extended to include this country. The representative of the Sub-regional office in the multidisciplinary team led the socio-economic cluster of the Mission.
60. During its investigations, the mission held discussions with the various socio-professional categories and the political classes of both countries. The team also held consultations with the Heads of State of both countries, parliamentarians, ministers, judges, heads of bodies

such as the anti-corruption commissions, the commissions in charge of reforming the public sector, representatives of the donor community, and civil society organizations. The team also used existing reports and literature on the current situation in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

61. The mission noted that remarkable efforts were underway for post-conflict reconstruction and development in both countries, thanks to support from the donor community. Nevertheless, the experts were of the view that more needed to be done to maintain these achievements and place these countries on the path to sustainable development. The needs identified in this regard range from logistic support for agricultural extension and micro-credit schemes for youth employment, to administrative and financial assistance for parliament and governmental institutions.
62. Overall, the mission highlighted two categories of challenges in all the sectors covered by the survey. These are mainly financial constraints and constraints in terms of capacity. In addition, both countries face security threats that must be tackled at both national and sub-regional levels.
63. In the area of financial constraints, the mission identified the mobilisation of internal and external resources as a critical factor for post-conflict reconstruction and support of development efforts in both countries. The experts noted the willingness of both governments to undertake bold reforms aimed at increasing domestic resources through improved management of mining concessions; revenue collection and reduction of capital flight; efficacy in public spending and debt management, and strengthening the market controls, among other things. The two countries also pledged to create conditions to enable an increase in the contribution of their diasporas to the socioeconomic development of the nation. Nevertheless, as countries emerging from a conflict, Liberia and Sierra Leone will have to depend to a large extent on external assistance, which should be up to expectations, to bring about successful post-conflict reconstruction. It is for this reason that the mission recommended that the AU should assist in mobilising resources for both countries by providing seed money for special programs. To this end, an announcement about contributions of Member States could be called up during a session of the AU Executive Council, to support post-conflict reconstruction and development efforts. The African Union should also carry out advocacy for resource mobilisation with Sierra Leone, Liberia and donors.
64. Capacity is another major challenge limiting the reconstruction and development of Liberia and Sierra Leone. Both countries have lost a good part of their human resources

who fled into exile. Governments are encouraging the return of these citizens to their countries to participate in the reconstruction effort. They have also launched a number of capacity building programmes in the fields of vocational training, adult education and primary, secondary and tertiary education, which, once completed, are expected to make up for some of the shortfall in human resources.

65. The mission recommended that the AU provide technical assistance in the form of deployments of expertise from Member States, and mobilisation of volunteers from the AU programme, to increase the capacity of the two governments to tackle the challenges of consolidating the economy.
66. The mission also identified the issue of security (external and internal) as a major concern in Liberia and Sierra Leone; both countries belong to the Mano River Union, where conflict and instability in one country have the potential to expand into neighbouring countries. The mission thus recommended a sub-regional approach for security and stability.
67. Finally, the team recommended that the African Union should establish appropriate mechanisms for monitoring and implementing the recommendations of the mission, in collaboration with the governments of Liberia and Sierra Leone, ECOWAS, the MRU, ECA and the AfDB. It is hoped that the action by the African Union will serve as a complement to mechanisms established by other donors, and which are already working of post-conflict reconstruction in the two countries.

ii. Mission to ECOWAS to prepare the second West African business forum

68. A mission of the Sub-regional office, led by its Director, visited Abuja on 14th and 15th August 2008, at the request of the ECOWAS Commissioner in charge of macro economy. This mission, which came under the framework of the partnership agreement between the ECA and ECOWAS, was aimed at assisting the ECOWAS Commission in planning the second West African Business Forum. The Sub-regional office, as a member of the coordinating committee, took this opportunity to brief the committee on the progress made in preparations for the business forum on rice.
69. The other members of the coordinating committee are ECOWAS, the NEPAD Business Group - Cote d'Ivoire, the NEPAD Business Group - Benin, the NEPAD Business Group - Nigeria, the NEPAD Business Group - West Africa, the Confederation of Chambers of Commerce of Cote d'Ivoire, the Chambers of Commerce of Burkina Faso and Ghana, and representatives of Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire.

70. During this meeting, the committee reviewed the report on the evaluation of the 2008-2009 action plan presented by ECOWAS and adopted a provisional agenda, as well as a budget for the forum. The committee stressed the importance of mobilising the private sector and the role that the NEPAD Business groups and the Chambers of Commerce must play to ensure the best preparation of the Business Forum.

71. The committee agreed on the venue, date, and topic of the second ECOWAS Business Forum. The discussions and opportunities for exchange will centre on the topic of: “Harnessing agricultural potential through partnership”.

iii. Multiple-stop mission under the framework of implementation of the AWCRS Strategic Communication Programme

72. This mission was organised between 7th and 23rd October 2008 and visited 5 countries in the sub-region: Senegal, Côte d’Ivoire, Republic of Guinea, Nigeria, and Mali. These countries were chosen because of their potential in water, land, and market opportunities.

73. The mission was organised in collaboration with a regional television channel broadcast in several African countries, with the objective of enhancing the momentum created thus far by broadening the leadership and ownership basis of the AWCRS. To this end, the Sub-regional office organised panel discussions and public fora with the media and the general public. These panel discussions and public fora were platforms for discussing the AWCRS with all stakeholders: representatives of ruling and opposition political parties, parliamentarians, academics and researchers, civil society organisations, the private sector, etc. In each country visited, the SRO-WA team met and held fruitful meetings with the national authorities. The mission thus made it possible to test the validity of the strategy. The various stakeholders agreed that the strategy was coherent and technically, economically, and politically valid.

iv. Country-level activities

74. The Sub-regional office contributed to the implementation of United Nations System activities in Niger through active participation of its staff in drafting the framework agreement on cooperation between the UNS and Niger, as well as implementation of the caravan of MDGs.

75. The ECA-SRO/WA contributed actively to the 2008 celebration of United Nations Day in Niger, with the theme: "United around the MDGs, together against poverty". The focus of the celebration was support to efforts toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), consolidating national ownership and advocacy for the MDGs, and raising

awareness in the general public on the need to accelerate their implementation. The United Nations System in Niger organised what was called a caravan of the MDGs throughout the country, in order to raise awareness in the population and among decision-makers, on the efforts to be deployed to attain the various development agendas. The highlight of events was a lecture forum on MDG 8, the Global Partnership for Development, held on 14th November 2008 in the meeting room of the Niamey urban community. The ECA was designated by the UNCT to be the main speaker. As part of the lecture forum, presentations were made by the World Bank, the Niger national institute of statistics, and the ECA.

76. As part of the preparatory activities for ADF IV, the Sub-regional office organised a press conference on 12th November 2008 in Niamey. The conference was an opportunity to inform the populations of West African countries, the press, and various technical partners of the holding of the ADF and the topics to be discussed, with a view to sharing information and stimulating discussion of ideas. The challenges of combating violence against women and girls in Member States, as well as those related to accelerating gender equality and women's empowerment were debated with the public and the press. The conference also made it possible for participants to express their concerns and make recommendations about the measures to be undertaken to accelerate the achievement of gender equality and empowerment, and combat violence against women. The press conference was chaired by the Minister for Women's Advancement and Child Protection of Niger. It was moderated by a panel of experts and personalities. Many national and foreign press agencies participated.

3 COLLABORATION WITH OTHER HEADQUARTERS DIVISIONS

3.1 ARIA mission

77. The Sub-regional offices worked in collaboration with the NEPAD and the Regional Integration divisions at Headquarters to draft the fourth edition of the assessment of regional integration in Africa whose topic was: Promoting intra-African trade. The Sub-regional office was thus represented on a team that travelled to Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso from 3rd to 5th December 2008, to collect statistical data and documentation, and organise interviews with officials of the UEMOA Commission on various topics related to intra-UEMOA trade and facilitating transit from coastal countries to landlocked countries.

3.2 African Development Forum

78. From 19th to 21st November 2008, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) organised the sixth African Development Forum (ADF) in Addis Ababa. The theme of the Forum was “Action on gender equality, women’s empowerment and ending violence against women”. The Sub-regional office contributed to organising this important event by mobilising West African stakeholders to ensure high-level participation and by collaborating in the drafting of documents for the forum.

79. The African Development Forum (ADF) is an initiative led by the UN Economic Commission to establish an African-driven development agenda in partnership with the African Union and the AfDB. It is thus a framework for exchange about the principal development challenges, which aims at initiating dialogue, seeking consensus, and mobilising partnerships to meet the objectives set by the various stakeholders. The five previous fora helped to launch new initiatives and activities, as well as major master plans that have had an impact at varying levels.

80. The theme of the Sixth Forum was “Action on gender equality, women’s empowerment and ending violence against women”. The fundamental objectives of the sixth forum were to review progress in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, and define concrete measures to accelerate the process. To this end, it brought together agents of the continent’s development to discuss the challenges related to gender equality, women’s empowerment, and ending violence against women, and to review the progress made in these areas. It was also an opportunity to share experience and good practices, identify the constraints and difficulties encountered, and define priority actions and mechanisms

needed to accelerate progress towards gender equality, women's empowerment and elimination of violence against women.

81. Many thematic areas were covered in the Forum. These include among others: violence against women; HIV and AIDS; health and reproductive rights; education, training, and vocational training; migration; governance, conflicts, and security; employment; markets and trade; food security; land and property rights; financing for gender equality, etc.
82. At the end of the conference, participants agreed to: a) an action plan containing specific recommendations addressed to Member States and development partners to end violence against women and girls and accelerate achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women; b) a consensus statement on African women that calls for universal responsibility to protect and respect women and girls, and the adoption of a comprehensive and urgent Africa-wide action plan to eliminate the violence against women and girls, and global, African and national initiatives to ensure financing for gender equality, as well as a proposal for the establishment of an African Decade of Gender Equality to ensure the implementation of these recommendations.

3.3 The SMART project

83. The Sub-regional office is involved in implementation of the Sustainable Modernisation of Agriculture and Rural Transformation project (SMART), in collaboration with the Food Security and Sustainable Development Division (FSSD) of headquarters. The first phase of this project started in 2008 and consisted of carrying out a study on the Africa's potential and preparedness for the agricultural revolution. Three sub-regions of the continent, West Africa, Southern Africa and the Centre, were targeted for these studies. The Sub-regional office is the focal point for the project in the West African sub-region.
84. The overall objective of this first phase is to highlight the prospects for sustainable modernisation of agriculture and for rural transformation, or a Green Revolution in African countries, and thus increase knowledge of these countries to enable them make decisions on policies, strategies and programmes in the field of agricultural processing.
85. A consultant was recruited to carry out the study in West Africa. A preliminary report has already been submitted and served as input, with the reports of the other sub-regions, in an experts' group meeting in December 2008 in Addis Ababa. Case studies are currently being prepared after two data collection missions to Nigeria and Senegal. The mission to Nigeria focused on the factors for success and the constraints that have hampered the cassava sector. In Senegal, the study focused on the rice and tomato sectors. On each of

these crops, a video is being prepared and will serve as material for demonstrating some of the good and bad practices that can inspire future development projects.

3.4 Implementation of the African Gender and Development Index in Africa (AGDI)

86. As part of the implementation of the African Gender and Development Index (AGDI) in countries of the sub-region, the ECA Sub-regional office for West Africa, in collaboration with the African Centre for Gender and Development of the ECA headquarters, launched the AGDI in Mali, during a mission in Bamako from 28th to 29th July 2008.
87. During the launch, the ECA worked jointly with the Malian Ministry of Women's affairs and Women's integration in Development to organise a seminar to launch AGDI. During the inaugural seminar, which was chaired by the Malian Minister for Women's affairs and Women's integration in Development, the National Advisory Council on AGDI was launched. The establishment of this council is a prerequisite for AGDI because the council is in charge of: (i) advising the team of researchers on existing data sources and facilitating their access to the required data and available documents (studies, research, reports, etc.); (ii) reviewing and approving the data collected; (iii) providing an assessment of progress in effective implementation of conventions and other commitments in the area of gender equality and women's advancement; (iv) contributing to assigning scores on the African Women's Progress Scoreboard, and (v) reviewing and adopting the report prepared by the research institution before it is forwarded to the ECA.
88. As part of the launch, the ECA made a presentation on: (i) the background to the process of drafting AGDI; (ii) the components of AGDI, namely, the Gender Status Index and the African Women's Progress Scoreboard, and (iii) the terms of reference of the National Advisory Council and the research team.
89. At the end of these presentations and their attendant discussions and questions for clarification, the ECA and the National Advisory Council of Mali agreed to proceed rapidly to collect AGDI data and rate the country's performance.

3.5 African workshop on the Economic Partnership Agreements

90. The Sub-regional office took part in the African Workshop on Economic Partnership Agreements organised by the ECA for the Regional Economic Communities, at the United Nations Conference Centre in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 8th to 10th October 2008. The main objective of this meeting was to assess the results of EPA negotiations in the various sub-regions, and the implications for the process of sub-regional and continental integration. The workshop also discussed and amended the draft platform developed by the ECA, for EPAs that are compatible with Africa's development goals.
91. ECOWAS and UEMOA represented West Africa at the workshop. The deliberations took place in plenary sessions followed by discussion groups by sub-region. In this instance, the proceedings focused on the status of EPA negotiations, and on the draft platform on EPA prepared by the ECA. The Sub-regional office served as a resource person and the rapporteur of the West Africa group.
92. The negotiation configuration in this sub-region includes the fifteen ECOWAS member countries and Mauritania. The negotiations are being conducted jointly by the ECOWAS and UEMOA commissions. It was noted that although progress has been made in the context of EPA negotiations since the adoption of the roadmap in Accra (Ghana) on 4th August 2004, West Africa was unable to conclude an EPA with the European Union by the initially scheduled deadline of 31st December 2007. The main developments that have taken place since then particularly concern the interim agreements initialled by Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire in December 2007, and the efforts made jointly by the ECOWAS and UEMOA Commissions to accompany and monitor the interim agreements initialled by both countries, with a view to a comprehensive general agreement for the region.
93. The West Africa Group also described the work underway, which bears on the ECOWAS common external tariff, with a study on the fifth band. It recalled that the region was willing to rapidly complete work on the ECOWAS CET, but it is also determined to exclude sensitive products from the regional list, and take into account the development dimension of EPAs.
94. To this end, the region's willingness to move rapidly toward concluding a general agreement to replace the interim agreements was restated. Some work has been undertaken to draft an EPA programme for development, as well as the financial evaluation of such a programme. The West Africa Group then dwelt on the progress made in negotiations with the European side, both between West Africa and the European Union, as well as between the EU and Ghana, and the EU and Côte d'Ivoire. The progress made includes the

flexibility for the setting up of an ECOWAS CET by December 2011; postponement of the date for beginning to open up the Ivorian and Ghanaian markets to 1st July 2009 instead of 1st January 2009 as initially agreed; the agreement in principle to treat the development dimension appropriately in the text of the general agreement; negotiating a single system of rules of origin for the entire region, which would also apply to the interim agreements with Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, and the agreement in principle to include in the agreement, a periodic review clause for sector negotiations on trade in services.

95. It was noted that there remain some points of divergence with the EU on the following:
The need to arrive at a compromise concerning the subtraction of the UEMOA/CSL and the ECOWAS/CL from the tariff reduction process, which would make it possible to maintain this source of financing while remaining non-discriminatory and compatible with WTO principles. The possibility for the WA region to revise the agreed timetable for liberalisation within the framework of supporting measures for developing sector-wide policies (in particular agriculture and industry). The EU's request for the removal of existing export duties and taxes in WA. Setting up a free practice system in WA to promote the circulation of goods. The MFN clause that obliges the WA region to automatically grant the EU future advantages that the former might grant to third countries, including some developing who are considered major trading partners. The need to include a provision on eliminating export subsidies and the rapid and substantial reduction of domestic support that could create distortions in trade in the WA region.
96. The Group emphasised that the major issue of the negotiation process is to ensure that the common concern of making the EPA an instrument for promoting sustainable development in the WA region is translated in concrete terms in the agreement. Other issues include the need for the region to accelerate ongoing efforts aimed, among others, at the establishment of the final outline of the ECOWAS CET, the development of its market access offer, setting its agenda on the "EPA programme for development", and drafting its proposal for the text of the comprehensive regional EPA.
97. The West Africa Group expressed their views about the various components of the draft EPA platform developed by the CEA. On regional integration, participants expressed their agreement with the provisions of the model that recommends the primacy of regional integration in the preamble to the EPA, in line with the vision of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government. On development issues, they feel these should be the focus of the EPAs, as proposed by the ECA model. It was recalled that the West African sub-region intends to define the development program under the EPA, to conduct its financial assessment, and to include its financing as an integral part of the EPA process. They proposed an explicit

reference to poverty reduction strategy, and taking into account emerging issues such as the environment and climate change. Regarding market access, the delegates agreed with the proposal to delete the MFN clause, as recommended in the model put forward by the ECA.

98. It should be noted that the workshop participants expressed appreciation for the comparative advantage of the West African sub-region in terms of the number and quality of protocols developed for implementing integration. They however indicated that African countries must redouble their efforts to apply these protocols if they hope to conclude a credible EPA. They felt that too much hope was being placed on the financial contribution of the European Union to the development dimension of EPAs, and invited States to redirect their efforts to the production and diversification capacities in their own economies, which have been major obstacles to their access to trade preferences in the past.

3.6 Second West African Business Forum: “Harnessing agricultural potential through regional partnership”

99. The second West African Business Forum took place from 12th to 14th February 2009 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The theme of the Forum was “Harnessing agricultural potential through regional partnership” It was organised by the ECOWAS Commission, in partnership with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA-SRO/WA) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Burkina Faso (CCI-BF), and with the collaboration of the European Union. It was attended by more than three hundred people. These were business leaders; representatives of chambers of commerce, employers’ organisations, and civil society; private sector support groups; professional organisations from the agricultural sectors; ECOWAS member countries; international organisations, and development partners involved in promoting the private sector in West Africa.

100. The objective of this second Forum was to continue efforts to mobilise the private sector and bring it to contribute to regional competitiveness, food security, and overall development through commercial partnerships and integration. The Forum thus reviewed the implementation of the Action Plan adopted at the 1st ECOWAS Business Forum, held in Accra from 29th to 31st October 2007. It also adopted measurable strategies and action plans and practices to ensure more active private sector participation in the implementation of integration projects and programmes, particularly those related to promoting the agro-industry sector and food security in the region.

101. The Forum enabled the adoption of modalities for strengthening associations of regional networks such as the Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of

West African Manufacturers' Associations, the ECOWAS Business Women's Association, the Federation of West African Employers' Organisation, the NEPAD Business Group for West Africa, the West Africa Road Transporters' Union (WARTU) and the West African Rice Producers' Association.

102. It produced a number of recommendations for harnessing the agricultural potential of the sub-region: (i) Establish adequate national and sub-regional infrastructure (road, river, sea, rail, air, energy), for the development of agro-business as a tool for diversifying our economies for wealth creation and retention. (ii) Strengthen public-private partnership to develop research-action and thus respond to the real needs of stakeholders in the agricultural sectors (crop production, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture, natural resources), and disseminate current research results with particular emphasis on the production of improved seeds as a key to any agricultural production sector. (iii) Strengthen South-South partnership in order to build on best practices from some emerging countries, as well as those of the SONGHAI Centre (Porto Novo, Benin), to make it a regional centre of excellence for education and training in agricultural entrepreneurship. (iv) Carry out and disseminate studies on the financial and economic profitability of different products. (v) Improve protection of the agro-industrial sector through appropriate mechanisms (common external tariff, fifth band, EPA negotiations, etc.). (vi) Implement the African Wealth Creation and Retention Strategy (AWCRS) through the creation of joint ventures in various agricultural sectors to encourage the emergence of African investors. (vii) Establish special agricultural funds in countries to finance and/or subsidise the agricultural sector. (viii) ECOWAS and ECA to support the multidisciplinary working group in the implementation of the roadmap of the Segou initiative establishing the first joint venture in the rice sector. (ix) Organise a forum on a strategic product prior to the holding of each ECOWAS Business Forum. The next edition of the forum will be devoted to energy security in West Africa.

103. During the period that is just ending, the Sub-regional office continued to implement the cooperation agreement with ECOWAS and the joint programmes with IGOs in the West African sub-region. Moves to create synergy with the interventions of the IGOs, which were started in 2007, were continued. With the assistance of the Sub-regional office, IGOs drew the attention of their governing bodies to the need to identify sustainable mechanisms for financing their activities. The Sub-regional office continues to provide assistance in this endeavour.

104. Information sessions on the African Wealth Creation and Retention Strategy have been organised in more than one third of the countries in the sub-region. This has been done through public meetings and the participation of the Sub-regional office in many activities, thus increasing the visibility of the ECA in the sub-region. Implementation of the wealth creation and retention strategy and its application to the rice sector also produced concrete results.

105. To date, major progress has been made in implementing the multiannual cooperation agreement with ECOWAS. An assessment of this cooperation programme is scheduled to take place during 2009. This will make it possible to draw the lessons for future agreements with ECOWAS and other partners of the Sub-regional office.

106. In the months ahead, other important issues will be analysed and discussed with partners and Member States. These will include in particular youth employment, the structural responses to the food crisis, climate change, energy security, development of intra-regional trade, etc. The Sub-regional office is also ready to consider any requests from member countries and from IGOs.