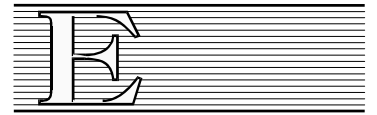




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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
Fifth Session of the Committee on Trade,
Regional Cooperation and Integration

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
8-10 October 2007

REPORT

I. Introduction

1. The Fifth Session of the Committee on Trade, Regional Cooperation and Integration (CTRCI), established by resolution 827 (XXXII) of the ECA Conference of Ministers, was held on 8 to 10 October 2007 at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

2. The main focus of the meeting was to consider matters pertaining to ECA's activities in advancing the African Union's continental agenda on economic cooperation as well as the promotion of trade within and outside Africa. In this regard the meeting examined the progress made on regional integration in Africa. The fifth session of CTRCI also reviewed developments in intra-African trade with a view of providing practical suggestions and guidance towards making discernible progress on intra-African trade in the short and medium term. In addition, the meeting also examined the latest developments in the international trade arena, in particular in the context of the WTO negotiations and the discussions on the economic partnership arrangements with Europe, and assessed Africa's realistic expectations and outcomes from these global trade talks. Given its importance in the developmental agenda of the continent, the meeting examined the progress made on the NEPAD initiatives and made suggestions on how the initiative could be strengthened. The CTRCI also further examined ECA's activities in the area of transport infrastructure and services and made recommendations on how it could be further strengthened. Finally the Committee reviewed the major activities undertaken during the current biennium and work priorities for the next biennium of 2008-2009.

II. Attendance

3. The meeting was attended by the following member States: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Cape Verde, Chad, Congo (Republic of), Democratic Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

4. Observer countries present were: Italy.

5. The following regional and international organizations and other institutions participated in the meeting: the African Union (AU), Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), Southern Africa Customs Union (SACU), West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), Manu River Union (MRU), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Bank, the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the Ethiopian Economic Association, the Ethiopian Economic Researcher Institution, and Department for

International Development (DFID-UK) . The list of participants is appended as annex.

III. Opening of the Meeting (agenda item 1)

6. The United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the ECA, His Excellency Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, opened the meeting. Opening statements were also made by His Excellency Dr. Maxwell Mkwezalamba, AU Commissioner for Economic Affairs, His Excellency Mr. Mekonnen Manyazewal, Ethiopia's State Minister of Finance and Economic Development, and Honourable Isaac Musumba, Uganda's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in charge of Regional Cooperation, and outgoing Chairman of the Bureau

7. The Executive Secretary of the ECA, Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, welcomed participants to the meeting. He pointed out that the outcomes of the biennial committees meetings are fed into the deliberations of the annual meetings of Commission's principal legislative organ, the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

8. Mr. Janneh informed participants that since the last meeting in March 2005, the ECA has undertaken a number of activities in accordance with the recommendations of the Committee. He mentioned that as a follow-up to the recommendations of the last meeting, ECA, in collaboration with the African Union, focussed the second report *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa*, on the rationalization of the RECs. The report was presented to the Assembly of African Union Heads of State in July 2006, in Banjul, the Gambia.

9. He also said that the African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC), housed in the ECA, and ECA's Geneva office, have provided technical assistance to African trade negotiators, and that the ATPC continues to train African experts on new tools and methods for conducting international trade analysis. He commended the African Union Commission for working closely with ECA in bringing together periodically senior officials from African countries to discuss major trade issues, with a view of forming a common African voice on major international trade negotiations.

10. It was the expectation of Mr. Janneh that the outcome of the fifth session of the Committee could include among others: (i) a clear guidance on ECA's work programme in the areas of trade, regional integration and infrastructure; (ii) how to use trans-boundary solutions to address the energy challenges facing many African countries in the search for and development of alternative sources of energy; (iii) how to strengthen the capacity of the regional economic communities to implement their integration programmes at the national level; and (iv) how do we ensure that the programmes of the RECs are aligned and converge to African Union continental integration agenda.

11. The Executive Secretary ended by reiterating ECA's commitment to advance the trade and regional integration agenda of the African Union and looked forward to the outcome of the meeting as it would provide guidance on how ECA's activities could strengthen the promotion of trade and regional integration on the continent.

12. On behalf the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the AU Commissioner

for Economic Affairs, H.E. Dr. Maxwell M. Mkwezalamba, extended his sincere appreciation to the ECA for associating AU Commission to this meeting.

13. The Commissioner began by recalling the *Lagos Plan of Action*, the *Abuja Treaty*, the *Sirte Declaration of 9.9.99*, the *Constitutive Act* among others, as Decisions taking by the leadership of the continent to strengthen the continental integration agenda. He pointed out that despite modest efforts, Africa continued to face huge development challenges. He emphasized the need to address a number of key issues including, promotion of peace and security, good governance, infrastructure development, the adoption and implementation of sound macroeconomic policies and the creation of a conducive atmosphere to attract both domestic and foreign direct investment.

14. Dr. Mkwezalamba commended the RECs for their effort in advancing the continental integration agenda, particularly in the areas of transport and communication; macroeconomic policy convergence; trade and customs; free movement of persons, goods, services and capital; and peace and security. Despite the encouraging progress made by the RECs, the AU Commissioner indicated that a number of significant challenges still remain on the integration front. Among them are the multiplicity of RECs; the lack of political will to implement protocols of the RECs and the African Union at the national level; and the failure of some member States to honour their financial obligation to their respective RECs and the African Union at large.

15. The Commissioner also called on the donor-partners to adhere to the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness and translate pledges made at the G8 meetings into real commitments. He ended by calling on participants to deliberate on the matters on the agenda carefully and provide concrete guidance on how the promotion of trade and integration could be strengthened on the continent.

16. His Excellency Mr. Mekonnen Manyazewal stated that there is a rise in bilateral, regional and multilateral trade agreements and that Africa still has high expectations in the successful outcome of the Doha Round and the EPAs. He, however, pointed out that the fulfilment of these expectations would depend on how quickly Africa combined its resources and acted in a collective manner to protect its interests in the trade talks. He recalled the long history of Africa's integration from the Lagos Plan of Action to the Constitutive Act of the African Union, and emphasized that while we all shared these visions, the critical issue at stake was how we worked effectively to achieve them. He touched on the problems faced by the RECs, and opined that the minimum that could be done to resolve these problems would be to come to closure on the issue of rationalizing them, which has been in abeyance over the last couple of years. He stressed the need to take action to make it happen. The Minister recognized that although there has been some progress on Africa's integration agenda, this progress has been uneven across RECs. He added that the meeting should be an opportunity for candid deliberations and soul searching on reasons for inadequate progress. In this regard, he offered the following suggestions:

- Need to review recent developments in intra-African trade
- Assess whether poor progress on regional integration is due to lack of appropriate action or lack of political commitment and whether we do have the right road

- map for action;
- Assess the EPAs negotiations and consider options in the event that countries are not able to conclude the agreement by the deadline of 31 December 2007;
 - Need to be realistic about goals and expectations and focus on actions that African countries are prepared to undertake;
 - Need for prioritization of regional projects to include infrastructure as a basis for development;
 - Need for analytical work to demonstrate the benefits accruing to member States from regional integration so that political commitment can be enhanced.

17. Honourable Isaac Musumba stated that the infinitesimal 2 percent share of Africa in world trade should compel it to accelerate the integration of Africa as a single unified economic and market space. He said that Africa has close to 800 million people with fragmented economies across different 53 states, comparable to USA made up of 50 states. In this regard, he gave the example of the Olympic Games where Africa competes as separate individual nations, compared to the USA that competes as a single nation. He also did not see why African countries should have separate visa and customs regulations and financial and monetary systems, imposing undue hindrances to free trade and free movement of people, goods and services across frontiers. He emphasized that the vitality and survival of Africa in this rapidly globalizing world lay in its unity, and that it was high time African countries came to grips with this realization and acted speedily to establish the African single market and economic community.

18. Hon. Musumba noted that as one of the pillars on which the continental integration would be built on, the East African Community is making tremendous progress in achieving economic and political integration of the sub-region. The EAC is at the stage of full customs union and the member States are working hard to achieve a common market. They are developing their infrastructure to strengthen the physical connection between the member States as well as support the economic activities in the sub-region. It is desire of member States that efforts would converge into the aspiration for a United States of Africa. Uganda is fully committed to the objectives of the EAC and the African Union on the whole. Ugandans would work hard to achieve the aspirations of the continent.

19. The out-going Chair ended with a call to the Committee to provide guidance to ECA in its work in addressing the enormous development challenges, including those of infrastructure, international trade negotiations, and climate change. Many of these challenges require trans-boundary solutions. Honourable Musumba noted that it is therefore important that we have a frank discussion on the items on the agenda so that ECA would be in a better position to place their technical capacity at our full disposal in addressing the needs in our respective countries and regions.

IV. Account of Proceedings

Election of Officers (agenda item 2)

20. The meeting elected the following countries to constitute its Bureau:

Chairman:	Sudan
First Vice-Chairman:	Rwanda
Second Vice-Chairman:	Nigeria
Third Vice-Chairman:	Chad
Rapporteur:	Malawi

V. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work (agenda item 3)

21. Next was the adoption of the following agenda and programme of work:

Monday, 8 October 2007

Morning session

09:00 - 10:00 - Registration

10:00 – 10:45 - Opening of the meeting
Statement by Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, UN Under Secretary General and Executive Secretary of ECA
Statement by Dr. Maxwell Mkwezalamba, AU Commissioner for Economic Affairs
Keynote Statement by Mr. Mekonnen Manyazewal, State Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Ethiopia
Election of Bureau
Adoption of Agenda and Programme of work

10:45 – 11:00 - Coffee break

11:00 – 12:45 - Progress in the implementation of *regional integration programmes*
By ECA Secretariat
State of Play on the Continental Integration Agenda
By African Union Commission

12:45 – 14:30 - Lunch break

Afternoon session

14:30 – 15:45 - Developments on Intra-African Trade
By ECA Secretariat

15:45 – 16:00 - Coffee break

16:00 – 17:30 - Developments in the Transport sector
By ECA secretariat

Tuesday, 9 October 2007

Morning session

9.30 - 10.45 - Developments on International Trade and WTO and EPAs negotiations
By ECA secretariat

10:45 - 11 :00 - Coffee Break

11:00 – 12:30 - Statements/Presentations/Remarks by Representatives from Regional Economic Communities (RECs) on developments and the state of integration within their respective institutions and sub-regions

13.00 – 14:30 - Lunch break

Afternoon session

14:30 – 15:45 - An Overview of ECA's/UN support on the implementation of NEPAD
By ECA secretariat

15:45 – 16:00 - Coffee Break

16:00 – 17:30 Review of *NRID's work programmes including* priorities for the next biennium 2008-2009
By ECA secretariat

Wednesday, 10 October 2007

16:00 – 17:00 Adoption of the report of the Committee Meeting.

VI. Session II: Progress on the Implementation of regional integration programmes and the State of Play on the Continental Integration Agenda (agenda item 4)

22. A representative of the ECA Secretariat made a presentation on progress at the continental, sub-regional and national levels in the implementation of regional economic programmes. He informed the Committee that since its last meeting and with the endorsement of the July 2006 Banjul AU Summit, the ECA has repositioned itself to better respond to the continent's priorities, particularly the agenda relating to regional integration. The Summit also reaffirmed the role of ECA as a key African institution to assist and facilitate the work of the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in advancing the

development agenda on the continent. The meeting was informed that the need for the reposition was because the priorities of the continent have changed with the transformation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to African Union (AU) and the adoption of the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). In this regard, ECA has had to refocus and reposition its programmes and activities in order to better respond effectively to these strategic changes.

23. The ECA representative noted that in the repositioned ECA, the promotion and strengthening of the continental regional integration agenda will be a central focus. In this regard, ECA will concentrate on fully supporting the African Union's efforts to accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent, promote and defend African common positions and establish the necessary conditions to enable the continent to play its rightful role in the global economy. Furthermore, the ECA will seek to strengthen capacity and provide technical assistance to institutions driving the regional integration agenda, including the RECs, as well as increase its involvement in trans-boundary initiatives and activities in sectors vital to the regional integration agenda. Pursuant to the Decisions of the Banjul Summit, the meeting was informed that ECA would upscale its collaboration with the African Union Commission (AUC) and the African Development Bank (ADB) in all matters that advance the continental agenda on regional integration.

24. The ECA representative further informed the meeting on recent Decisions undertaken by the eight regional economic communities. Some of the Decisions included: the transformation of the ECOWAS Secretariat from an Executive Secretariat to a Commission; the expansion of the EAC to include Burundi and Rwanda as well its transformation into a Customs Union; SADC becoming an FTA in 2008 and a Customs Union in 2010; COMESA expected to be a Customs Union in 2008; and member States of ECCAS agreeing to remove tariffs and non-tariff-barriers by 2008.

25. Despite progress made on the integration agenda, the ECA representative noted that a number of challenges still remain. Among them are: (i) the multiple memberships of countries in various RECs, and the resulting overlap and duplication of functions of the RECs (ii) the lack of a compensation mechanism for the losers of the integration; (iii) weak infrastructure; (iv) numerous roadblocks on African highways, delays at border posts, long and inappropriate customs clearance and corrupt activities engaged in by some officials; and (v) weak macroeconomic environment.

26. To address the challenges to regional integration the meeting was informed that ECA's work programme and activities in the coming year would include among others:

- ***Assessing Regional Integration in Africa***: The flag ship report, which is published jointly with the African Union monitors and tracks progress in achieving integration in key sectors at the subregional and regional levels.
- ***Review of the Abuja Treaty***: In collaboration with the AU Commission and AfDB, ECA would review the Treaty, taking into account the Sirte Declaration of September 9, 1999 (9.9.99) and the Constitutive Act, and provide a timetable for the

implementation of the various stages of integration by the RECs. The findings of the review would be presented at the January 2008 AU Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

- **Promoting intra-African Trade through stronger RECs:** With the view of facilitating trade within the continent, ECA would, through the SROs, support the regional economic communities in their transformation into either Free-trade Zones or Customs Union or Common Market. In addition, ECA would work with the RECs on: harmonization and coordination of trade policies and programmes; improving trade facilitation; and establishment of PTAs/FTAs between the RECs.
- **Technical assistance on capacity-building and cooperation:** ECA will provide technical assistance to member States, the AU and the RECs in building their capacities to implement integration programmes and activities.
- **Peer-Learning Group on natural resources management:** ECA will establish a Peer-Learning Group on natural resources management. This Peer-Learning Group will bring together natural resources development practitioners from government, the legislature, private sector, academia and civil society to sensitize them on the contribution of natural resources to long-term economic development and growth.
- **Infrastructure Initiatives:** ECA would align its programmes and activities to NEPAD's infrastructure initiatives by providing strategic support with the review of existing feasibility studies in transport, energy, water resources, and natural resources aimed at promoting regional integration. ECA would also work with the RECs to harmonize and coordinate infrastructure programmes and services in all the subregions.

27. The ECA representative stressed that ECA strongly views regional integration as a crucial strategy for accelerating the economic, social, cultural and political development of African countries. Economic synergy could be gained from economic integration since the economic advantage of a whole regional community is greater than the sum of the economic advantage of its separate member States. The need for deeper economic integration on the continent is also propelled by a new world economic order, with the formation of regional blocks across continents, borderless globalization, advances in information and communication technology and multilateral trade negotiations under the World Trade Organization (WTO) among others. Furthermore, enlargement of national markets and harmonization of regulatory frameworks would help create an environment conducive to profitability of investments in the continent.

28. Finally, ECA representative called on the Committee to support the work programme of the ECA so as to provide sound technical support to member States, RECs and the AU Commission in their efforts to advance the Continental integration agenda.

29. The ECA representative was followed by a representative of the African Union whose presentations were in three parts. The first part of his presentation focused on the role and

importance of regional integration in addressing the developmental challenges facing the continent. He then highlighted the key milestones of Africa's integration process, starting from the creation of the OAU in 1963; the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos of 1980; the Abuja Treaty of 1991, which established the African Economic Community; the Sirte Declaration of 1999 and concluded with the Constitutive Act, which established the AU in 2001.

30. The AU representative noted the serious constraints impeding the continental integration agenda. Among the challenges he highlighted were those of finance, poor leadership, cacophony and the proliferation of RECs. He further gave an overview of the current situation in the different RECs in respect of the rationalization process and pointed out some of the activities the AU Commission has been undertaking to rationalize the RECs.

31. The second part of the presentation of the AU Commission dwelled on a study the Commission carried out on the review of the six stages of integration as contained in Article 6 of the Abuja Treaty and elaboration of the Minimum Integration Programme (MIP) to be implemented by the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in order to achieve accelerated and deeper African integration.

32. The meeting was informed that two approaches were undertaken with the view to accelerating the integration process and the rationalization of the RECs, namely the revision of Article 6 of the Abuja Treaty and the definition of a minimum programme of integration. .

33. Among the recommendation arising out of the exercise was that: (i) the eight RECs should be streamlined to enhance the rationalization process; (ii) the problem of overlapping membership be urgently addressed; (iii) some key provisions of the Abuja Treaty (*including Article 6*), be revisited to make them compatible with the Constitutive Act and Sirte Declaration; (iv) harmonization of Customs Union Policies at Continental level; and (v) ratification and effective implementation of the Protocols.

34. With regards to the study on a Minimum Integration Programme (MIP) in each REC and among RECs, the AU representative noted that each REC had to formulate programmes in which all of its integration activities were spelt out. The priority sectors would then be identified from a MIP for each REC. Member States would then identify and agree to develop the necessary institutional and legal frameworks to implement agreed common programmes, in a timely manner. The study recommended among others as the starting points for developing MIPs: (i) free movement of persons, goods, services and capital; (ii) agriculture and food security; (iii) infrastructure and energy; (iv) customs and trade policies; (v) monetary harmonization, finance and banking; and (vi) peace and security.

35. The representative of the African Union ended his presentation by informing the meeting about the Decisions of the AU Summit in Accra, in July 2007 on the United States of Africa and the second Conference of African Ministers responsible for Integration. He noted that AU Commission would collaborate with the ECA and AfDB to implement the Decisions.

36. Participants commended the representatives of the ECA and the AU Commission for

their presentations. Some of the participants expressed the view that rationalization of the RECs be undertaken through the harmonization and coordination of the activities of the RECs. It was noted that a distinction be made between the economic integration and political integration. Most participants were of the view that regional integration be used as a strategy for the development of the continent. In this regard, the meeting called for efforts to remove all forms of barriers to trade within the continent as a way of strengthening intra-African trade. It was noted that SADC, EAC and COMESA have set up a tripartite taskforce at the Ministerial level to look into the harmonization and streamlining of their policies, protocols, programme and activities, with the aim of increasing trade as well as tackling trans-boundary challenges within the three communities.

37. Participants also noted that the key challenge in the regional integration is more in commitment of member States to implement integration programmes at the national level.

38. In area of regional infrastructure, the meeting reiterated the call for the upscale of infrastructure development on the continent. The meeting noted that given the enormous financial capital required to upgrade existing infrastructure and develop new ones, Africa should look to domestic mobilization of funds to complement those generated from external sources.

39. The meeting called on ECA to continue to provide technical assistance to the RECs and member States in the implementation of regional integration programme. It was also suggested that there was the need to strengthen the capacities of the secretariats of the RECs to deliver integration programmes. With respect to member States, the meeting called on ECA to assist in mainstreaming regional integration at national levels.

VII. Session III: Developments in Intra-African Trade (agenda item 5)

40. A representative of the ECA Secretariat presented document E/ECA/CTRCI/54 on developments in intra-African trade, which addressed the following issues: Why intra-African trade is important; Africa's export and import patterns; Challenges of intra-African trade; Intra-African trade potential; and ECA future in-depth research on intra-African trade in the context of the fourth edition of ARIA (Assessing Regional Integration in Africa).

41. The ECA Representative stated that through the Abuja Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community (now the African Union), Africa has a vision to create a common continental market for goods and services. This vision made sense for Africa's 53 mostly small economies as the common market would provide access to a larger trading and investment environment, induce backward and forward supply links and permit the economies of scale that make countries competitive. The common market is expected to help increase the level of trade among the member countries because more trade would generate more retention of wealth within the bloc, and enhance availability of funds to permit new investments and job creation. For this reason RECs have aimed to expand trade at the subregional level by eliminating tariff and non-tariff barriers.

42. The ECA Representative provided statistics between 2000 and 2005 to demonstrate Africa's export and import trade patterns by selected regional groupings, showing key export destinations and sources of imports. The statistics were quite instructive in terms of the average share of trade of each group within the REC itself, with the rest of Africa, and with the rest of the world, between 2000 and 2005. Intra-REC exports varied from RECs to RECs ranging from 21.5% to 0.4 per cent. Exports to the rest of Africa vis-à-vis total exports ranged from a high of 18.6 per cent to a low of 1.8%. Although, there was some growth of intra-bloc trade between 2000 and 2005, overall, the trade statistics clearly showed dominance of intra-African trade by only a few countries, in particular South Africa, a strong export reliance on fuel and mining products, and a persistently small intra-African trade, consistently hovering around 10-12%, and at any rate under 15 per cent over the last 2 decades. This contrasts with intra-regional trade within the EU of over 60%, and in Asia of over 20%.

43. The ECA Representative then went on to highlight some of the main challenges confronting intra-African trade.

- Structural, in terms of:
 - Commodity profile of exports dominated by primary commodities
 - Commodity structure of imports heavily dependent on manufactured goods
 - Product diversification hamstrung by inadequate technological progress
 - Lack of capacity to move forward on the production/supply frontier and take advantage of linkages with global production and supply chains.
- Weak implementation of liberalization schemes manifested in a complex spaghetti of trade liberalization agreements across Africa, and lack of readiness to implement tariff reduction measures against a backdrop of a fear of loss of revenue.
- Natural and man-made barriers to trade manifested in transport-related trade costs, infrastructure-induced increases in trade costs, and additional trade costs arising from inefficient red-tape and rent-seeking practices.
- Infrastructure challenges arising not so much from lack of plans and policies, but rather due to a mismatch between Africa's huge infrastructural needs and investment support.

44. These challenges notwithstanding, the ECA Representative highlighted the findings from two empirical studies based on the gravity model to demonstrate the potential for trade in North Africa and West Africa. For instance, the study in ECOWAS estimated that West Africa has a potential of achieving 25 per cent intra-trade by 2020, while simulations in North Africa showed that North African intra-trade in exports would be ten times higher than its current level. According to the model used, factors such as the economic size of countries, their per capita income level, common cultural affinities and currency have a positive influence on bilateral trade, while geographical distance and surface area have an inverse impact. Other less perceptible aspects, such as administrative, technical or informational barriers, quantitative restrictions, high-priced procedures, and exchange restrictions may also affect the trade flows

between partner countries more severely.

45. The conclusions from the gravity model estimations are that African countries remain less open to trade among themselves. However, simulated intra-bloc exports appear to be much higher than their current level. This potential should be a sign of encouragement for reforms to remove the trade obstacles.

46. The ECA Representative concluded his presentation by informing the meeting about future work of ECA to delve more deeply into the issue of intra-African trade within the framework of the ARIA series, and in the context of ECA/NRID's 2008-2009 work programme. ARIA IV would thus attempt to deepen the investigations and analysis on intra-African trade.

47. The meeting commended the representative of the ECA for his presentation. Participants made a number of observations on this agenda item. Some participants raised concerns about lack of action to address well-known challenges of intra-African trade such weak industrial base and infrastructure. In response, the ECA representative stated that as long as those obstacles remained unresolved, they would remain the subject of repeated discussions in subsequent for a. It was, therefore, imperative for member States, with the support of development partners like ECA, AU, ADB and others, to ensure that concerted efforts are made to remove the protracted impediments to intra-African trade at national, regional and continental levels.

48. There was some discussion as to what member States could do in the immediate future to address supply constraints. In that regard, serious efforts to support the private sector, upgrade infrastructure and relax rules of origin to enable domestic firms to explore linkages with global production and supply chains would help develop domestic productive and marketing capacities.

49. The Committee also noted that often domestic products lacked appropriate markets due to inadequate market information and cheaper imports. Efforts are therefore needed to improve the marketability of local manufactures in Africa's regional markets.

50. The Committee further noted that as trading interests of certain countries often went beyond their immediate REC community markets, there is a need to consider the establishment of free trade areas between and among RECs. Thus, there would be a wider trading environment for business and commercial activities.

51. Furthermore, active efforts are needed to clean up the national, subregional and regional trading environment of natural and man-made barriers to allow for freer and less restrictive movement of people, goods and services.

52. The Committee also noted that to the extent possible, efforts should be made to reflect informal sector trade in Africa's trade data to help improve the overall intra-African trade picture.

VIII. Session IV: Development in the Transport Sector,(agenda item 6)

53. Under this Agenda item, a Representative of ECA Secretariat made a presentation on “the transport situation in Africa”. She pointed out that, even though transport infrastructure and services were a key element to socio-economic development, trade promotion and regional integration, the African transport sector was still faced with serious problems. She further pointed out that, in spite of the two Transport and Communications Decades in Africa (UNCTADA I and UNCTADA II) launched by the United Nations in 1978-88 and 1991-2000, and the priority objective set in the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), the African transport infrastructure and services have not achieved notable improvements. She indicated that all transport modes (road, rail, air, maritime and inland water) were characterized by very low network density, poor infrastructure conditions resulting from lack of maintenance and/or outdated equipment, lack of interconnectivity due to missing links, lack of human and institutional capacity in the area of management of transport operations, lack of security and safety for transported goods and passengers, resulting in overall high transport costs.

54. The ECA representative then presented the major challenges facing the transport sector in Africa which can be summarized as follows: lack or inappropriate pursuit of transport policies, inadequate infrastructure network, inadequate financing, lack of human and institutional capacities, inadequate transport facilitation measures resulting in high transport costs, particularly for land-locked countries, inadequate safety and security, need for modernization of fleet used in all transport modes, inadequate consideration of environmental issues and anti-pollution measures, under-exploitation of possibilities offered by ICTs, lack of reliable transport database and the need to mainstreaming HIV/AIDS control and gender issues in transport policies and programmes.

55. The representative also indicated that a number of initiatives had been taken to help develop transport infrastructure and services. The most notable ones include: setting up regional economic communities’ Transport Coordination Committees to harmonize their transport facilitation programme and facilitate the sharing of experiences, the sub-Saharan Africa Transport Programme (SSATP) which is a joint initiative of ECA and the World Bank with the African countries participation set up to improve transport sector performance through transport policy reform and institutional changes; the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) transport infrastructure and services development; and the Almaty Action Plan initiated by the Office of the High Representative for Least-Developed Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island countries as a framework for developing efficient transport transit systems for landlocked developing and transit countries and the financial facilities put in place by the development banks.

56. The ECA representative concluded her presentation by proposing number recommendations, among which are the following:

- Demonstrate a real political will and sustained efforts in the transport sector;

- Adopt an integrated approach to the transport development policy taking into account all transport modes;
- Pursue reforms initiated in the transport sector and to in place regulatory frameworks to allow for greater private sector participation in the management and financing of infrastructure projects and promote the public-private partnership (PPP);
- Ensure greater security and safety in all transport modes;
- Reinforce human and institutional capacities and rehabilitate training institutions;
- Establish and maintain databases to facilitate the assessment of progress made in the development of the transport sector;
- Increase transport facilitation measures;
- Promote the increased utilization of ICTs in the transport sector;
- Promote the construction of the missing links of the transport infrastructure and harmonize norms and standards at the sub-regional and regional levels.

57. The meeting commended the representative of the ECA for her presentation and took note the report.

IX. Session V: Development in international trade and World Trade Organization (WTO) and Economic Agreements' (EPAs) negotiations (agenda item 7)

58. A representative of the ECA presented document ECA/CTRCI/5/2 entitled "Developments in International Trade and WTO/EPA Negotiations" that gives an update on the major trade negotiations in which Africa is engaged at both multilateral and bilateral levels.

59. The ECA's representative started by giving an update on growth in global trade, pointing out that Africa's share of global exports of merchandise remains low, representing in 2005 only 2,85 per cent. He then presented the evolution of the multilateral negotiations since the launch of the Doha Development Round in 2001, highlighting the major WTO challenges for African countries through the major events and milestones such as Cancun Ministerial Conference (2003) which ended in a deadlock; the July Framework (2004), the Hong-Kong Ministerial Conference (2005), the Pause in the negotiations (July-November 2006) and the Publication of draft modalities (July 2007).

60. The ECA representative further presented the positions and prospects in WTO negotiations on Agriculture, Non Agricultural Market Access (NAMA) and other issues such as services, trade facilitation, rules for regional integration as well as Aid for Trade Initiative. As far as EPAs negotiations are concerned, the ECA representative underscored that even though negotiations have speeded up in some sub regions to meet the deadline, there is a risk of bad deal due to rushing. In that regard, recommendations of more time and resources for negotiations went unheeded (ECOWAS, African Union Heads of State, EPA reviews, ACP declarations). The ECA representative also dealt with other developments in international trade negotiations such as Preferential trading schemes and bilateral talks.

61. During the discussions that followed the presentation, the participants first commended the quality and the insights of the presentation. The participants then raised some issues on the WTO negotiations and several concerns about the Economic Partnership Agreement negotiations. On the WTO negotiations, the participants requested some clarifications on NAMA issues and the eight African countries that need to apply the tariff reduction formula. Some questions covered the issues of the impact of export subsidies on African countries and the role of African countries in the WTO negotiations. Participants also emphasized the need for member States of the African union to support countries acceding to the WTO.

62. Regarding the EPA negotiations, participants expressed a major concern on the deadline of 31 December 2007 for the signing of the Agreement and the readiness of the countries and sub-regions to sign and implement the agreement. Some RECs such as ECCAS are willing to sign a Framework Agreement by the deadline while leaving the specific sectoral issues to be negotiated at a later stage. Other regions like West Africa are proposing to explore the possibility to seek for an extension of the waiver for one year under article 9 of the agreement and try to finalize the negotiations in the meantime before signing the EPA. Drawing on the example of AGOA, the negotiating groupings could register an official request at the WTO and keep on negotiating up to the middle of next year.

63. Participants also raised the issue of alternatives to the EPA which maintained the current advantages. The meeting was informed that the alternative may not be WTO compliant. Participants also raised the issue as to whether or not there would be disruptions in trade flows with the EU if the EPAs are not signed by the deadline, considering that the EU is traditionally one of the largest trading partners of African countries.

64. The meeting also questioned the preparedness of the sub-regions and countries embarking on negotiations on tariff cuts, agriculture, fishing, consumer protection, infrastructure, the preparation and determination of the lists of sensitive products at the country and regional levels, the development issues, the establishment of CET among others. The issue of liberalisation levels (60% or 80%) and its compatibility to the WTO agreements on the dismantling of tariff barriers were raised.

65. Related to the signing of the agreement, some participants expressed their reluctance to sign an agreement because a number of the components of the issues needed to be clarified. Some participants expressed the view that issue of the EPA would undermine and divide the ACP and the African Union member States. It was pointed out that the EPA did not cover the sugar protocol which ends in 2010.

66. The meeting asked whether the issue of market access could be revisited under the agreement. The meeting called for a clear roadmap for the transition period should the agreement be signed. The meeting further called on the African Union Commission to coordinate the WTO and the EPA negotiations.

67. In reaction to the several animated and interesting comments and questions, the AU Director for Trade and Industry, the ECA Director of the Trade Finance and Economic

Development Division and the Presenter provided the following answers

68. In response to questions raised, a representative of the AU Commission informed the meeting on the long involvement and contributions of the African Union Commission in bringing African countries together, with a view of forming consensus and common African positions on the EPA and WTO negotiations. The AU efforts were undertaken through the different meetings in Geneva and Brussels with the support of the ECA, as well as the Conferences of Ministers, and a Summit of Heads of States and Government in 2005. She recalled a Summit Decision that mandated AU Commission to coordinate the WTO and EPA trade negotiations at the continental level. Within the framework, she informed the Committee that a Ministerial meeting would take place in Cotonou, Benin, on 24 October 2007.

69. In providing further clarification on the EPA negotiations, a representative of the ECA Secretariat emphasized that the technical and sectoral issues related to the negotiations have been tackled at a very late stage. He further noted that broader issues took a lot of time as well as stressing on the importance of the asymmetry requirement in the tariff liberalisation process and the issue of not disrupting the trade between African countries and the EU. He also indicated that ECOWAS had approached EU in Brussels to seek an extension of the deadline for signing the EPAs but the request was not granted. He informed the meeting of the coordination efforts made by the AU Commission in collaboration with the ECA on the EPA and WTO negotiations. He stressed on the need to strengthen the dialogue between all the various parties involved in the negotiation processes, as well as strengthening the capacities and the preparedness of African countries to negotiate. On the role of the African group in the WTO negotiations, he informed the Committee it was fully engaged in every aspect of the Doha round. He further indicated that there was strong political solidarity existing in the group as well as having the capacity to formulate concrete and technical proposals, with the support of the AU Commission and the ECA. He took the opportunity to commend the work accomplished by the trade negotiators in Geneva.

70. The ECA representative who made the presentation also responded to questions raised by participants in their discussions. He informed the meeting that the African countries understood the questions on the table regarding the proposed tariff formulas of the WTO negotiations. On the EPA tariff dismantling process, he informed the Committee that from the mid term review, it was found that African countries should liberalize 60% of their tariff lines in order to break even. On the determination of the lists of sensitive product, he stated that it was the responsibility of the countries to choose their own criteria.

71. Concerning the issue of alternatives to the EPA, the representative emphasised that ACP countries did not exploit the opportunities they had under the Cotonou Agreement. Furthermore, he stressed on the importance of non-disrupting trade and the feasibility of requesting for an extension of the waiver. He however pointed out that more time was needed before signing the Agreement.

Finally, he informed the Committee that the Roadmap of the transition period would be drawn up during the Cotonou meeting on 24 October 2007.

X. Session VI: Interventions by Regional Economic Communities (agenda item 8)

72. Representatives of four Regional Economic Communities (RECs) made presentations at the 5th Session of the Committee on Trade, Cooperation and Regional Integration. They are the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), the Union of Arab Maghreb States (UMA), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). In addition to the presentations of the four RECs, the representative of the African Development Bank Group at the meeting also gave a brief presentation on the Group's work on country strategy papers, NEPAD regional integration and trade as well as infrastructure programme.

73. The presentation on SACU traced its existence to 1910, but with explanation that the agreement had been re-negotiated several times since then, with the latest re-negotiation done in 1994. The regional economic community having its Secretariat in Namibia was said to operate largely as a customs union with a common tariff. The current work programme focuses on consolidating SACU through the establishment of a tariff board, a tribunal, and the development of common policies in the area of industrial policy and agriculture. The presentation also highlighted some salient issues on the negotiations on the SADC-EPA, acknowledging its late take-off, and the commitment to reaching agreement on market access by end 2007. It was noted that if the negotiations were not completed by end 2007, three member States of SACU would face market access problems in the EU. SACU was identified as one of the regions that are applying the Swiss formula. It was noted that South Africa already has an agreement with the EU.

74. A representative of UMA highlighted the five member States in the sub-region, its area, and access to the sea, population, natural resources endowments and per capita income. The objectives contained in the Marrakech Declaration establishing the Union in 1989, as well as the overall governance structure for the sub-region, were presented. In 1991, UMA adopted a development strategy to be implemented in four stages: the creation of a free exchange zone, a customs union, a common market and an economic union. Existing cooperation relationships between the member States and other countries outside of the union were highlighted. Concrete achievements to date were highlighted to include the conclusion of 38 conventions, electricity inter-connection among the five member countries, establishment of a joint groundwater monitoring system for the Sahara (Albian) Aquifer System shared by three member countries (Algeria, Tunisia and Libya), establishment of a Union of Maghrebine Banks in Tunis, a website for environmental protection, among others. The presenter also enumerated the challenges facing the union to include low level of integration, very weak coordination of economic policies of member States towards external markets, volume of goods exchanged among members only 3 percent of total exchange in the sub-region, annual loss of 2 percent on the economic growth of member countries, and low attraction of FDI into the region. He enumerated ten obstacles to integration in the sub-region to include high transportation costs, multiplicity and complexity of commercial regimes, lack of harmonization standards, lack of competitiveness, among others, as well as the appropriate reforms being considered to remove the obstacles. The presenter finally highlighted seven integration

projects for the sub-region, and appealed for the support of international organizations to the sub-region in respect of four intervention areas identified for enhanced trade and regional integration in the sub-region.

75. A representative of the UEMOA highlighted five main objectives of integration of the sub-region and six objectives specifically related to trade. He presented the organogram of the union, describing the different organs in details (Conference of Heads of States and Governments, Council of Ministers, UEMOA Commission, the Central Bank of West African Countries (BCEAO), the West African Development Bank (BOAD), the Regional Consular Chamber (CCR), the Regional Council for Public Savings and Financial Markets (CREPMF), and the Regional Stock Market for West Africa (BRVM)). The presenter also described modus operandi of UEMOA, the economic policies, favourable to a stable monetary system. He emphasized the union's adoption of a common customs union considered to be the pillar for trade within the union, as well as the adoption of a common policy on trade. He underscored that the financial market of the union has had a favourable impact on the development of the trade sector, and emphasized on the sectoral policies related to trade and telecommunications, inter-connections of electricity networks within the region for improved production and trade, as well as agricultural and environmental policies for ensuring food security within the sub-region. With respect to the way forward, the presenter elaborated on the Regional Economic Programme (PER) articulated around five strategic areas, namely economic governance, infrastructures, productive and integrated instruments, human resource development, and partnership for resource mobilization and monitoring and evaluation. He provided indications on the total cost of the programme (2812 billion FCFA), funds already mobilized (829 billion FCFA), and the balance being sought (1983 billion FCFA).

76. A representative of ECCAS informed the meeting that it is made up of eleven member States, six of whom have formed a monetary union, the CEMAC. The presenter highlighted the vision for integration within the sub-region, and the achievements to-date in the areas of trade policies and other supporting measures. He indicated that the Treaty establishing ECCAS aims at promoting economic development and growth through the integration of the markets of the countries. He emphasized that among the achievements of the community are: the establishment of a free trade zone since July 2004; harmonization of the common external tariff with the CEMAC, with a view to achieving a customs union in January 2008; removal of non-tariff barriers; harmonization of customs documents; free movement of people, in particular economic operators; development of supporting infrastructures, such as the adoption of a transport master plan, creation of an energy pool for the sub-region; adoption of a food security programme; and establishment of a community tax (CCI) of 0.4% to finance regional integration. The presenter identified challenges to integration in the sub-region to include political will demonstrated by the weak realization of decisions of the community.

77. A representative of the African Development Bank also made a presentation on activities of the Bank. His presentation identified the Bank Group as the premier development-financing bank in Africa. The presenter highlighted the prominence of a NEPAD, Regional Integration and Trade Department (ONRI) established for achieving the vision of a continent

integrated regionally and into the global economy. He emphasized the reinforcement of AfDB's regional integration mandate. He highlighted the focus of the Bank's project preparation role to include managing Bank's relations with the RECs, infrastructure development, articulating and preparing the AU and NEPAD regional integrated spatial development programmes, as well as the prioritization of integrated programmes of RECs. In the area of capacity building, the focus were highlighted to include RECs, regional organizations, member States, the support for reform through policy-based lending (PBL), better mix of programme/project financing, and preparation of regional assistance strategies

78. During the discussions that followed the presentations by the representatives of the four regional economic communities, some participants sought further clarifications on the presentations of UEMOA and UMA. Highlighting some of the difficulties encountered since the creation of ECOWAS on the issue of a common currency for the West African sub-region, particularly the inability of non-UEMOA countries to team up with the UEMOA countries on how a single currency, from the very beginning, which culminated in the launching of the second monetary programme, some participants wanted to know what factors have changed on the ground that may have made a new single currency project feasible for the sub-region, as well as the time frame for achieving the objective.

79. In response to the question, the representative of UEMOA provided further clarification on how UEMOA itself commenced with only six member States, before growing to currently eight-members, citing Mali and Guinea Bissau among States that joined the union at a later stage. He explained that the main requirements for joining the UEMOA had to do with macro-economic stability and member States meeting the convergence criteria. He acknowledged that Ghana also made investigations on the possibility of using the West African CFA Franc. He also acknowledged that ECOWAS prepared a second monetary zone called the West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ) and that there were plans to merge this with UEMOA in the long run in order to have a single currency for the ECOWAS sub-region. The UEMOA representative emphasized that the union boasts of a very solid currency unit today, and expressed the view that there were no obstacles to integration within the sub-region and for merging the two currency units together. He expressed the belief that should the WAMZ become effective in 2009, there should be no more reason to have two currencies within the ECOWAS sub-region. But because WAMZ was currently having problems, it was necessary for countries to work towards facilitating the creation of a monetary union within the ECOWAS sub-region.

80. In response to a question, the representative of the UMA emphasized the importance of economic and social factors, in addition to political considerations, that promote regional integration. In this regard, he highlighted that although the problem affected the road transport linkages between the two countries directly concerned by the problem, air and maritime transport were doing quite well. The UMA representative also highlighted that the high rate of trade exchange between UMA member States and Europe, which he rated as seventy five percent of all trade exchanges within the sub-region, was one of the major impediments to regional integration within the sub-region, but that the issue was currently being addressed.

XI. Session VII: Overview of ECA's/UN's support on the implementation of NEPAD

(agenda item 9)

81. A Representative of ECA gave an overview of ECA's support to the implementation of NEPAD. He stated that NEPAD's objectives include poverty eradication, sustainable development, regional and global integration of Africa and empowerment of women, and that these objectives are underpinned by good governance, African ownership and leadership of development, and development anchored on resources and resourcefulness of Africans. He highlighted some of the priority areas of NEPAD: political, economic and corporate governance, agriculture, infrastructure, education, health, science and technology, market access, tourism, and environment. The ECA Representative pointed out that, as a strategic partner of NEPAD, ECA is mandated to provide support to NEPAD. ECA's support to NEPAD is also rooted in UN General Assembly's resolutions 57/2 and 57/7 of 2002, which recommends that NEPAD should be the framework within which the international community, including the UN system, should concentrate its efforts for Africa's development. The ECA Representative then gave an overview of the role ECA is playing in support of NEPAD: ECA has established a NEPAD Support Unit for implementing ECA's special subprogram on Regional Coordination of and Support for NEPAD. The unit is responsible for implementing the major objective of strengthening the UN system-wide support to the implementation of NEPAD at regional and sub-regional level.

82. The representative of the ECA noted that other key objectives of this Unit include promoting advocacy and communications on NEPAD, and fostering internal inter divisional coordination in ECA to promote NEPAD activities. Furthermore, ECA's mandate and work programmes, and the activities carried out through its substantive divisions and five subregional offices, support the achievement of the objectives of NEPAD in general. Several elements of ECA's work inform, and are informed by, NEPAD's agenda.

83. He further noted that as a strategic partner to the NEPAD process, ECA has responded to specific requests by NEPAD, whether through the NEPAD secretariat, the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSGIC), the African Union or associated organs and structures. In this context, ECA has implemented activities to promote and accelerate Africa's development in areas consistent with the objectives and priorities of NEPAD. These include analytical studies, advisory services, policy advocacy, capacity-building programmes and operational activities. ECA's convening power has also allowed it to mobilize stakeholders, including member States, development partners, civil society and the private sector to discuss, make decisions and implement actions in relation to NEPAD's agenda.

84. The representative pointed out that a major contribution of ECA to the NEPAD process is the strong intellectual, institutional and logistical support it has provided and continues to provide to the APRM process, which is a major distinguishing feature and milestone of NEPAD. Over the next three years, ECA intends to intensify and consolidate its support to NEPAD as a strategic coordinator of UN support to NEPAD and as a knowledge hub on NEPAD-related issues. Among the key strategies in this regard would be to maintain a strong electronic and web presence and provide an effective platform for knowledge sharing and

knowledge networking to improve on the implementation of NEPAD and develop and implement an effective process of monitoring and evaluating support to the implementation of NEPAD at various levels.

85. The meeting commended the representative for his presentation. In the ensuing discussions participants expressed concern about a mismatch between NEPAD objectives and concrete results on the ground, and wondered if there were any significant practical realizations one could point to since its inception in 2001. An observation was also made to the effect that the infrastructure programs of NEPAD tended to ignore needs at the borders in the context of cross-border trade.

86. In response to these concerns, the ECA representative pointed out that NEPAD has identified several aspects of development challenges with policy, institutional and sectoral dimensions. People want to see the roads, the railway lines, and power grids on the ground. Hence, their frustration with NEPAD would appear to be directed towards the implementation of the sectoral priority areas. However, such programs have a long gestation period from identification to actual realization whereas the softer policy and institutional aspects such as the APRM and policy dialogues seem to be moving forward. Furthermore, given the huge multifaceted development needs of Africa, it was imperative to develop partnership within countries on one hand, and with the international community, on the other, in order to address these challenges. The ECA representative emphasized that this partnership approach to Africa's development was in deed a cardinal principle behind NEPAD.

87. The representative of ECA further provided additional examples of realizations within the framework of NEPAD, such as the Yamoussoukro Decision, energy pools, integrated master plan on infrastructure and spatial development initiatives. Furthermore, he stressed on the need for African countries to do their utmost to mobilize domestic resources to fill some of the financing gaps associated with NEPAD's initiatives and projects.

88. The ADB Representative also intervened to respond to some of the misgivings surrounding NEPAD by giving examples of some NEPAD infrastructure projects in the pipeline or completed. He however emphasized that there is often a shopping list of projects some of which run into millions, if not billions of dollars. Against a backdrop of scarce and limited resources, it was imperative to prioritize. The ADB representative also observed that one of the weaknesses of NEPAD is the lack of publicity and public awareness surrounding its accomplishments, projects, and indeed the entire spectrum of what transpires under its aegis. Greater sensitization and awareness efforts are therefore imperative.

XII. Session VII: Review of work programme of ECA NEPAD and Regional Integration Division (NRID), including priorities for the next biennium(2008-2009) (agenda item 10)

89. The representative of the ECA Secretariat stated that NRID is among the new ECA divisions created as a result of the ECA repositioning exercise put in place by the current Executive Secretary of ECA to focus more closely on support to regional integration and

NEPAD. In this regard, the main objectives of the Division are to strengthen the process of regional integration in Africa, strengthen the United Nations' system support for the implementation of NEPAD at the regional and subregional levels, and provide support to the NEPAD Secretariat. In furtherance of these objectives, NRID is divided into three sections namely: Regional Integration Section; Infrastructure Section, and NEPAD Support Unit.

90. The major areas of the Division's work are:

- Promotion of Regional Integration
- Institutional Support to RECs
- Assessment of Regional Integration in Africa (ARIA)
- Support on trade issues
- Infrastructure and Natural Resources Development (Transport, energy, Water and mining)
- Support to NEPAD as a strategic Partner

91. The ECA Representative provided highlights of Major Results of the Division and priorities for 2008-2009. Among the major activities undertaken were.

- ***Assessing Regional Integration in Africa*** (ARIA series): The ARIA publication series was conceived to provide a holistic appraisal of where the continent as a whole stands on its integration agenda. To address the problem of multiplicity of RECs and overlapping membership, the second edition of ARIA II published in June 2006 and launched in July 2006 by ECA in collaboration with the African Union Commission focused on the need to rationalize the RECs. In 2007, ARIA III focuses on the important issue of macro-economic policy convergence within the RECs is programmed.
- **Capacity Support to the RECs:** To strengthen the role of the RECs as sub-regional development policy institutions, the division supported a number of RECs in their human capacity development activities, especially on the information and statistics, trade, facilitation and ICT policy development.
- **Support to the implementation of NEPAD:** In terms of support to NEPAD, the Division undertook a review of the Regional Consultations mechanism among UN system agencies in support of NEPAD particularly, the Cluster system. It revived the regional consultations meeting by convening its seventh session with strong participation from UN agencies, the AUC, ADB and the RECs. The Division also produced a major advocacy report to raise awareness of the need to enhance UN system wide support to NEPAD at regional and sub regional levels

92. The representative informed the meeting that activities planned during the 2008-2009

biennium include:

- Continuation of the ARIA series;
- A five year review of the NEPAD Short-term Action Plan;
- Tracking the status of energy and transport development in Africa;
- Tracking the status of implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision in selected countries;
- Enhancing road safety in Africa: learning from best practices; Conference on investment in infrastructure and natural resources development in Africa, and last but not the least;
- Group training, seminars, and workshops.

93. Finally the representative pointed out that in implementing its activities, the Division tries to foster partnership with UN system organizations, the AU Commission, the African Development Bank and other relevant partner institutions.

94. After a fruitful, frank and exhaustive deliberations of the items on the Agenda of the meeting the Committee made the following recommendation:

- i ECA, in collaboration with the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank, should develop a framework for the harmonization and coordination of policies and programmes of RECs as important strategies for rationalization of the RECs.
- ii ECA and AU should harmonize their meetings on trade and regional integration and support member States to mainstream regional integration into national programmes, and provide technical support to the RECs in their transformation to FTAs/Customs Union/Common Market/Monetary Unions.
- iii Future meetings of the Committee should make provision for member States to make presentations on their experiences, challenges and best practices on the items on the agenda.
- iv Future Committee meetings should also be highly focused, and tailor the agenda to in-depth discussions on one or two themes or issues/
- v
- vi ECA should continue to work closely with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and the RECs in the advancement of the continental integration agenda. In this regard, there is the need to be realistic about goals and expectation and focus on actions that countries are prepared to undertake.

- vii ECA should work with the RECs and other inter-governmental organizations to strengthen the facilitation of trade in the sub-regions. In this regard, ECA, in collaboration with the Africa Union Commission and the African Development Bank, should develop a framework for: the harmonization of rules of origin of the; the efficient management corridors; the automation and harmonization of custom documents; effective monitoring of non-tariff barriers; and the harmonization of transport policies as well as the development of in-land waterways in the sub-region
- viii ECA should develop a framework for deeper cooperation between the RECs with the view of harmonizing the trade protocols of the RECs and promoting intra-African trade and diversification of production. In this regard ECA should undertake studies on the economic cost and benefits of the inter-REC FTAs.
- ix Taking into cognisance the major concerns raised by the participants on the deadline of the 31st December 2007 for the signing of the EPAs, the imperative of an extension of the deadline, by at least one year was underlined with the view of finalizing all outstanding issues in the EPA negotiations.
- x The ECA should continue with its technical collaboration with the AU Commission, the RECs and Member States on the international trade negotiations. In this regard, the ECA should provide technical support to African Union Commission in its mandate to coordinate the WTO and EPA negotiations, with the view of ensuring a common African voice as well as ensuring that the outcome of the negotiations supports the development agenda of Africa. .
- xi The ECA should continue to provide technical support to member States in their WTO accession process.

XIII. Any other business

95. During the discussions on the adoption of the report, the representative of Benin informed the meeting that the ministerial meeting on the EPAs, which was scheduled to take place in Cotonou, Benin on 24th October 2007, has been postponed. The ministerial meeting had been scheduled on the margins of the high level meeting on the EPAs also planned to take place in Cotonou from 22 to 26 October 2007. However the high level meeting has been postponed and as result it was not practical to hold the ministerial meeting.

96. In fact the high-level meeting on the EPAs

IX. Adoption of the report of the meeting (agenda item 11)

97. The report was adopted with amendments.

X. Closure of the meeting (agenda item 10)

98. The meeting was closed by Mr. Robert M. Okello, Director of NEPAD and Regional Integration, on behalf of the Executive Secretary of the ECA. In his closing remarks he thanked the member States, the RECs, the international institutions and the development partners for effectively participating in the meeting. He assured the meeting that ECA welcomes the recommendations reached at the meeting and would ensure their implementation.

ANNEX I

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