

## News from the Commission

### AU, ADB, ECA pledge to strengthen ties

The President of the African Development (ADB) Group, Donald Kaberuka, the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission Alpha Oumar Konare, and the Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, Abdoulaye Janneh met at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, on 24th February, for a brainstorming session on how to jointly work for a more united, integrated and prosperous Africa. During their meeting they noted the need to up-scale the cooperation between the three entities (Africa's premier regional organisations) in order to pool scarce resources and avoid duplication in their mutual quest to advance the continent's development agenda. [http://www.uneca.org/eca\\_resources/news/030606oes\\_dna.htm](http://www.uneca.org/eca_resources/news/030606oes_dna.htm)

### Least developed countries face uphill challenge to reach MDG targets

ECA, along with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) held a three-day regional meeting in preparation for a global review of an action programme to help the least developed countries (LDCs). The High Representative Anwarul Chowdhury attended, along with the executive secretaries of ECA and ESCAP (UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific). Haiti – a largely African diaspora nation – was represented at the meeting, as the only LDC in Latin America. Partici-

pants reviewed the Brussels Programme of Action, a commitment undertaken in 2001 by world leaders to boost development in the LDCs. [<http://www.uneca.org/ldcs/>]

In an interview, Chowdhury pointed out it was unlikely the 50 LDCs worldwide (34 in Africa) would achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. He called for renewed focus on the Brussels programme which, he said, would put these countries on the path to growth and development. [[click here for interview: http://www.uneca.org/ldcs/interview\\_mr\\_anwarul\\_chowdhury.asp](http://www.uneca.org/ldcs/interview_mr_anwarul_chowdhury.asp)]

### Africa approves statistical framework

A regional meeting aimed at enhancing the use of statistics on the continent concluded with overwhelming approval for a comprehensive roadmap to boost data development in Africa. The second Forum on African Statistical Development (FASDEV II), held at ECA headquarters, brought together some 150 participants from African National Statistics Offices, ECA, the African Development Bank, the World Bank, the OECD Development Co-operation Directorate (DAC), and Partnership for Statistical Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21). Speakers noted the importance of reliable data to move forward with planning and development strate-

gies in Africa. The framework approved by the meeting will enable countries to share experiences, as well as monitor and evaluate the impact of decision-making. [<http://www.uneca.org/fasdev/>]

### Training workshop on trade issues

ECA launched the first in a series of training workshops aimed at providing a better understanding of the international trading system. The workshops are aimed at Addis Ababa-based diplomatic missions and international organizations. The first session focused on the WTO and the development challenges faced by Africa today. Future themes will include free trade accords, inter-Africa trade, regional integration, and economic partnership agreements with the EU.

### Abilities of regional economic communities under discussion

ECA hosted a high-level workshop to discuss the capacity needs of Africa's regional economic communities (RECs). Participants debated a report prepared the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) - jointly commissioned by African Union and the NEPAD Secretariat - to evaluate the ability of the RECs to imple-

## New Publications



New ATPC publications on research into trade-related issues.

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ment NEPAD's priority programmes. The report included a call for "acknowledging failings" and "confronting, rather seeking to circumvent them". It recommended that there should be "honest attempts at finding credible and lasting solutions" to shortcomings. The workshop came up with proposals to be incorporated into a final document, which will be available for discussion by African leaders at their next summit meeting in July.

## Warning over e-security

A workshop held at ECA heard warnings over e-security issues as African countries begin to implement e-government and e-commerce. Consultant Michael Blitz explained the dangers of cyber crime and said countries that are already implementing their national e-strategy plans will need a continuous revision of their security policies. Participants noted that Africa could learn from the experiences of emerging markets and developing countries that have embraced ICTs, such as India.

## Media training on biotechnology

A media training workshop for journalists from eastern and central Africa was held in a bid to improve media coverage

## Development Briefs

### ADB earmarks funds for Ethiopia's development

The ADB has earmarked US \$450 million for various development projects in Ethiopia over the next three years. The move came after talks in Addis Ababa between ADB President Donald Kaberuka and Ethiopian premier Meles Zenawi. According to press reports, Kaberuka said the talks focused on the effective use of funds to be made available by the Bank and consolidating bilateral cooperation. According to Ethiopian Finance Minister Sufian Ahmed, Ethiopia will use the finance for building roads, agricultural development and for providing power and water.

### Concern over spread of bird flu in Africa

Earlier, during a visit to South Africa Kaberuka expressed concern over the possible spread of avian flu in Africa. Noting that cases of the disease had been reported in Nigeria, the ADB president said the Bank would work with other development agencies to provide support for regional efforts aimed at containing disease. He called for increased vigilance on the continent "against a disease that will further burden the over-stretched health budgets of the majority of countries in the region". Outbreaks have so far been confirmed in Nigeria, Niger and Egypt.

and understanding of biotechnology issues. The training course, held at ECA headquarters, brought together experts who explained the pros and cons surrounding biotechnology and stressed the importance of journalists' role in reporting the issues. Josue Dione, director of ECA's Sustainable Development Division, noted that controversy was particularly

overwhelming in food and agriculture. He urged journalists to go deeper into the subject, and not simply report hearsay. "It will be your duty to shift the debate over genetically modified organisms to a more balanced and scientific plane, to dissipate the persisting fear about biotech and help factor modern biotechnology into Africa's development process," he stated.

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## Upcoming Events

- 5 March – AU/ECA Dialogue on Peace (New York)
- 7 March – Launch of progress report on global HIV/AIDS treatment (UNAIDS/WHO)
- 8 March – International Women's Day
- 16 March – World Water Forum, launch of World Water Report (Mexico, UNESCO)
- 16 March – Conference on World Heritage and Climate Change (France, UNESCO)
- 16-18 March – Workshop on designing codes and implementing standards for corporate governance (Arusha, Tanzania, ECA)
- 20-31 March – 8th Conference of Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (Brazil, UNEP)
- 26-28 March – African plenary on poverty reduction strategies (Cairo)