

Forging Partnerships for Africa's Development

“Since taking office, I have sought to mobilize the entire international community behind the cause of African development. To guard against the threat of Africa’s marginalization within a world of globalized trade and investment, I have also tried to enlist the vast resources of the private sector in support of Africa’s development. I have called on donor nations to reverse the disturbing trend of declining official development assistance. And I have said that my programme of reform, my ‘quiet revolution’ of change and transformation at the United Nations, should be judged in part on how well it enables the Organization to respond to the needs of the poorest people in Africa and elsewhere.” *Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General, from “Publication on the UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa for the Implementation of UN-NADAF”, New York, USA, March 1998.*

Overview

As indicated in the foreword, this publication was conceived for several reasons: in addition to providing an overview and context to the key development challenges facing Africa, it spells out ECA’s role in Africa and how the Commission is working with Member States to address these challenges. It highlights ECA’s recent, ongoing, and planned work in some detail, and it shows how ECA relates to other UN agencies and African governments and institutions.

The publication identifies poverty reduction and eradication as the overriding development challenge for Africa. Towards this goal, and bear-

ing in mind the macroeconomic, sectoral, and microeconomic dimensions of poverty, the publication highlights a number of key dimensions of the African development challenge:

- To reduce poverty in Africa by half during 1999–2015, the minimum requirement is balanced policies to enhance economic growth, reduce inequality, and achieve an average annual rate of growth of at least 7 per cent;
- Population, environment, science and technology, and agricultural productivity concerns need to be integrated into national development planning and poverty-alleviation frameworks and policies, as a key step towards the

transitions necessary for sustainable development and food security;

- Investments in the social sector that target and reach the poor—including education, health, and employment programmes—are crucial towards social development and improving the quality of life of Africa's people;
- Concerted action is needed to address the gender dimension of poverty in Africa, and to ensure that gender equality forms an integral part of the African response to the development challenge in the 21st century;
- Africa rapidly needs to develop the capacity to tap into the global system of information and knowledge, and harness it to leapfrog some key development challenges;
- Given that the integration process within Africa is essential towards achieving international competitiveness for the continent, Africa must pursue the parallel tracks of intraregional integration arrangements and active participation in the international economy;
- Aid, debt, and trade should be viewed by Africa and the donor community in a holistic and integrated framework for financing the continent's development, towards addressing the question of resource flows;
- Particular attention must be paid to solving Africa's debt problem, which is less of a technical problem than it is a question of political will on the part of creditor nations and institutions to address the crisis in full partnership with African nations;
- Good governance systems, the continent's social capital, should be established and strengthened as a fundamental step towards renewed confidence and economic recovery. Civil society's role in ensuring good governance is also key; and
- Conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction are critical preconditions to normative development, and should be stepped up.

The focus of this final chapter is partnerships, which ECA considers to be critical to improving the effectiveness and impact of development in Africa. Within this partnership framework, the emphasis is on two key areas—Resource Flows

and Advocacy and Consensus-Building. The chapter also discusses some of the strategic alliances ECA is forging with bilateral and multilateral partners to register impact on the key African development challenges. In particular, it focuses on the special relationship between ECA and its sister regional institutions, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the African Development Bank (ADB).

Resource Flows

Key Issues. Africa has manifested a high dependence on foreign aid, which has helped to bridge the resource gap and hastened the developmental process in a number of countries. In recent years, for reasons of aid fatigue and donor budget cuts, Official Development Assistance (ODA) flows have declined both in real terms and in relation to the region's GDP. Official finance now only accounts for a quarter of all finance available to developing countries. This trend is likely to continue, despite the improving overall policy and programme environment in Africa. Indeed, the evidence shows that under the right policy environment, aid can be effective. Conversely, in countries where the environment has been unfavourable, aid has not worked (see box 19).

To attain the necessary growth to reduce poverty, Africa needs external as well as internal financial resources. An overall investment rate of 25–30 per cent GDP is needed to maintain the rapid growth required. An increase of around 9 percentage points of GDP in African investment rates cannot be achieved in such a short time through increased domestic savings, which are currently low. At present rates of low investment, African countries are not likely to sustain the current growth rates for much more than a decade—and several of Africa's reformers are already well into their first decade of improved policies. Private rather than public transfers will eventually be decisive in sustaining growth. Nevertheless, public investment in infrastructure and the social sectors needs to increase rapidly in Africa over the next few years, to reduce operating costs of private enterprises so as to sustain growth with new private investment. Failure to effect such in-

Box 19. Aid Effectiveness

Aid works effectively only if it is targeted to countries with “sound” policies and institutions, according to a major report published by the World Bank in November 1998. The report, *Assessing Aid—What Works, What Doesn't, and Why*, argues that poverty reduction would be more successful if donors directed their assistance to the right countries. Aid, it asserts, is “wasted” when it is disbursed to countries with “unsound” policies and institutions.

According to the report—whose findings come at a time when overseas development assistance has fallen to an all-time low amidst donor fatigue and a debate about aid effectiveness—“an across-the-board, \$10 billion increase in aid would lift 7 million people out of poverty, while a targeted increase could lift 25 million out of poverty”.

Among other things, the report argues that there is little or no relationship between aid and per capita growth in developing countries, and that there is “surprisingly little” or no relationship between the amount of aid that countries receive and the quality of their policies.

That said, the authors conclude that:

- Aid can be an important stimulus to economic growth and lead to a faster decline in poverty in those countries with “sound economic management”. This is defined as free-market policies that aim for low inflation, low budget deficit, and openness to trade—complemented by strong institutions that discour-

age corruption and protect property rights;

- In countries with “unsound economic management”—where production incentives are weak and where institutions undermined by corruption provide inadequate protection of property rights—the report cites findings showing that “whatever the amount of aid . . . growth was minuscule, or even negative”;
- Aid flows to countries pursuing “sound” economic policies can boost private-sector confidence, thereby encouraging further inflows of private capital. The report contends that aid finance equivalent to 1 per cent of GDP attracts an additional 1.9 per cent of GDP in private investment. In countries pursuing unsound policies, aid has a “crowding out” effect on private investment; and
- The authors identify four sub-categories to better assess the relationship between aid and poverty reduction. Aid has a high impact in 32 “good policy-high poverty” countries, with poverty rates greater than 50 per cent; aid is less effective when disbursed to countries in the “poor policy, high poverty” and “good policy, low poverty” sub-categories. In the latter case, aid works, but the returns are not as high as they would be under the “good policy, high poverty” scenario because “there is less work for [aid] to do”. The report concludes that aid is least effective when it is given to countries in the “poor policy, low poverty” sub-category.

vestment could lead to deceleration in economic expansion as present installed capacity is fully utilized.

In the short to medium term, domestic resources are inadequate to finance the continent's development. Attracting more foreign flows is therefore a key challenge. To do so, African economies need to implement policies that promote competitiveness, including improved macroeconomic, financial, and trade policies, and they need to strengthen their legal, judicial, regulatory, and financial systems, enhance aid effectiveness, and lower the costs of doing business. A deliberate policy of open regionalism, which broadens economic spaces beyond the economically small nation states and facilitates efficiency gains for larger infrastructure and business investments, should be

embraced as an important part of the overall competitiveness strategy.

Not all components of private capital—foreign direct investment (FDI), private loans, and portfolio equity flows—are as active as is desirable. FDI has been the most dynamic, rising from \$2.2 billion to \$2.6 billion between 1995 and 1996. Portfolio and equity are important only in a few countries where capital and financial markets are more developed, and in any event there has been only a modest increase in portfolio flows. Private loans continue to be of minimal importance to most countries because of poor creditworthiness due to the debt overhang. Given this scenario, the challenge is to attract more flows in all categories, which requires actions not only by African countries, but also by the donor community.

The debt overhang is a critical factor in the prospects for financing Africa's development. The problem is largely that of debt to official creditors, with commercial debt constituting only a small share of the total debt of African countries. Despite several initiatives, Africa's indebtedness continues to grow, and the debt crisis for several countries is far from over.

One problem is that debt initiatives tend to look at the problem mainly as a sustainability issue, but clearly, Africa's debt problem needs to be seen in the context of the continent's development-financing needs, and the linkage needs to be made between the impact of debt relief and the objective of poverty reduction. Debt-service payments divert resources from critically needed development services. The overhang acts as a disincentive to domestic as well as foreign investment, particularly through private lending, and exacerbates capital flight. Resolving Africa's debt problem is less of a technical problem than it is a question of political will and moral courage on the part of creditor nations and institutions. In the way forward with the debt crisis, full partnership with African nations will be needed and credible third-party mediation might be necessary at the technical and negotiating levels to arrive at a fair ar-

angement, including debt moratorium options, on terms designed to enable African economies to grow.

Hand in hand with effective debt relief should be a coherent programme to facilitate proper debt management in Africa. Many countries do not have the information, administrative capacity, or political structure to manage and control public resources. Partnership with and technical support from UNCTAD, the World Bank, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Macroeconomic and Financial Management Institute (MEFMI) is important in building the debt management capacity of African countries.

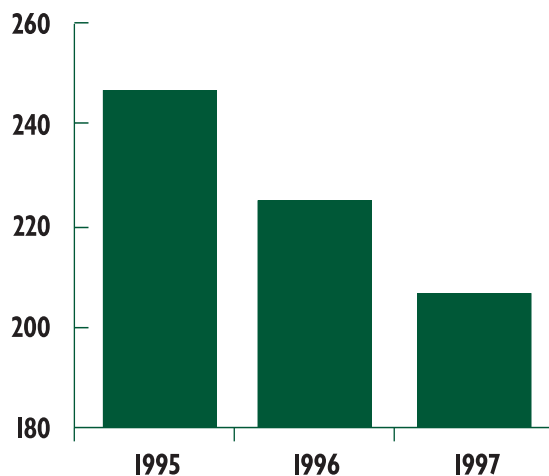
Aid, debt, and trade should thus be treated in a comprehensive framework for financing development. The challenge is to find the right mix of aid, debt, and trade measures that is efficient in attaining agreed objectives in the diverse African environment—a package of finance, policies, and programmes that promote sustainable anti-poverty development.

The ECA Response

The Commission is not a financing institution. Its mandate is to support the economic and social development of its 53 Member States, foster regional integration, and promote international cooperation for Africa's development. As such, its response to the challenge of enhancing resource flows to Africa does not reside in financing. ECA uses its convening power and its regional position as an African institution in the United Nations system to play a catalytic role in helping to understand and address the aforementioned challenges, and those that were broadly outlined in earlier chapters of this report. The Commission maintains overall regional and subregional perspectives within which activities of other UN organizations take place at the country level, and its regional vantage facilitates coordination and synergies among UN funds, programmes, and specialized agencies in support of the continent's development.

Of particular importance is ECA's role in the implementation of the UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa (SIA). SIA was launched in March 1996 to accelerate the execution of the UN's

Figure 11. External Debt as a Percentage of Exports



Source: ECA Secretariat

New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF), launched in 1991. UN-NADAF represented the emergence of a pragmatic consensus among African policy makers that sound economic policies were fundamental to reversing the downward economic trend, and achieving equitable and sustainable growth.

ECA's capacity to ensure better understanding of African perspectives among donors has been enhanced by its recent accession to full membership of the Special Programme of Assistance to Africa (SPA), initiated in 1987 to provide quick-disbursing support to low-income, debt-stressed, sub-Saharan African countries undergoing structural adjustment. Initially, 21 countries were covered under SPA. This has now increased to 31. Other SPA partners are the World Bank, IMF, ADB, European Commission, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC), UNDP, and all the major bilateral donors. To date, some US\$28 billion has been disbursed under the SPA partnership framework. ECA is drawing on the outcomes of high-level policy dialogue at major thematic ECA conferences and meetings as well as from its analytical work to provide briefings on the key development challenges facing Africa at the biannual SPA plenary meetings.

Drawing on its convening power, ECA has over the years organized high-level conferences to promote dialogue among senior African policy makers, researchers, development practitioners, and Africa's development partners on addressing the development financing needs of the continent. At a critical point in the debate, the Commission convened a major conference on resource mobilization and utilization and alleviation of the debt burden—the Sixth Session of the Conference of Ministers of Finance—which convened from 31 March to 2 April 1997 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, under the theme “Financial-Sector Reforms and Debt Manage-

ment in Africa”. This Conference provided African Ministers and Central Bank Governors an opportunity to review, with their development partners and leading experts, the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. The Conference urged the World Bank, IMF, ADB, and other multilateral institutions to exercise more flexibility in the eligibility criteria under the HIPC initiative in order to allow as many reforming African countries as possible to benefit from this facility. The key questions raised have led to general recognition of the issues in various subsequent forums. A major review of the HIPC initiative is now underway by the World Bank and IMF (see box 20). ECA will continue to contribute to the debate on the modalities to deal with the African debt problem, propose strategies for the reduction of the debt burden, and play its advocacy role for cancellation of the African debt.

The debt problem will be revisited during ECA's forthcoming Joint Conference of Ministers of Finance and Ministers of Economic Development and Planning, which will be convened in April 1999 under the theme “The Challenges of Financing Development in Africa”.



Successful partnerships involve cooperation between governments, non-governmental organizations, bilateral and multilateral institutions, and the private sector.

Box 20. An Update on the HIPC Initiative

The HIPC initiative remains the only major avenue for reduction of the debt burden of the highly indebted poorest countries. However, its achievements since its initiation in 1996 have been limited. The only African country to benefit so far is Uganda, whose debt stock was reduced by 20 per cent in 1998.

African countries consider the HIPC initiative important as a means of providing them with sorely needed relief from the debt burden that has constrained their performance. However, they want the initiative to be made more flexible and expanded, and articulated this view during the 1997 Conference of African Finance Ministers in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Since then, there have been calls to revise the conditions for eligibility and to liberalize the terms under which relief is obtained.

The following have been identified as the major issues to be addressed if the initiative is to be more responsive to the needs of the highly indebted poorest countries:

- The eligibility criteria of the current net present value (NPV) -based debt-to-export ratio of 200–250 per cent and debt service-to-export rates of 20–25 per cent—which are considered too high—need to be liberalized;
- Conditions that lead to successful completion of policy track records are currently based on IMF reform programmes, and should be revised. Instead, debt relief should be related to the country's efforts to reduce poverty;
- The time frame needs to be adjusted from the current six years—which includes three years before the “decision point” and another three years to arrive at the “completion point” at which the debt is reduced; and
- The amount by which debt is itself reduced needs to be reduced. This will require a substantial increase in the current HIPC fund, to be filled with contributions from donors.

The Conference will also discuss the effects of the Asian crisis on Africa. There are important lessons for Africa that can be learnt as the continent embraces globalization. The Conference will identify the critical lessons of the East Asian crisis, debate how best Africa can prepare to forestall a similar crisis on the continent, and discuss how best to respond to such a crisis if it occurs. Flowing out of this discussion will be a look at the weaknesses of the international financial system that have been exposed by the Asian crisis, and the reforms needed to prevent recurrences.

ECA's effort in rallying African policy makers around the key issues on the possible reform of the international financial architecture is part of a United Nations system-wide endeavour. In January 1999, for example, the Task Force of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs—whose membership includes ECA, the other four regional commissions, UNCTAD, and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs—prepared a paper that will constitute the UN position on the Asian crisis. The key questions raised include possible reforms of the oversight mechanisms and institutions, adequacy of international liquidity in times of crisis, preservation or restoration of au-

tonomy of developing and transition economies with regard to capital-account issues, the incorporation of internationally sanctioned standstill provisions into international lending, and the design of possible networks of regional and sub-regional organizations to support management of monetary and financial issues. Some of the issues raised in this paper, as they relate to financing development in Africa, will be discussed at the forthcoming Finance Ministers conference in April 1999, where the policy makers will come up with a Common African Position. The Conference will, among other things, discuss the issues of the aid dependency syndrome in Africa, improving domestic resource mobilization, and expenditure patterns and aid effectiveness. Additionally, it will discuss future prospects of aid to Africa in the evolving global economy, particularly in light of the recent financial crisis in Asia.

Consensus-Building and Advocacy

Key Issues. The policy and development experiences of Africa and her development partners have led to one emerging consensus—that successful implementation of strategies, policies,

programmes, and projects for maximum development impact requires a clear partnership between African governments, their intergovernmental organs, foreign bilateral and multilateral institutions, and private-sector interests. In a successful partnership, representative governments set objectives and priorities calling for and receiving the necessary assistance in this process. The resources of the bilateral and multilateral agencies would be used to support what are essentially home-grown policies and programmes. A consensus by key stakeholders would be built around critical programmes.

An effective process for coalescing common approaches will strengthen partnerships for Africa's development, as weaknesses of present forums for consensus-building have led, and continue to lead, to a proliferation of new individual agency initiatives towards this same objective. Experience has further shown that donor-driven forums on Africa tend to address multiple issues and set manifold goals, which become overwhelming and difficult to commit to and to follow through. Priorities are often not clear, making implementation beyond token reactions difficult. By merely reacting to external initiatives, rather than driving the process, Africa may be unwittingly negating the intended impact of aid. Consensus-building processes are likely to be more effective when driven by regional initiatives.

With this in mind, a key question arises as to how ECA and its partners can help foster a more holistic approach to development in Africa, to maximize the synergies and ensure effective outputs, with a view to Africans taking charge of their own development. Mechanisms at the regional level that facilitate consensus-building and the sharing of best practices on the key issues and challenges facing Africa are lacking. Such a process should be defined, directed, and driven by Africans, and should provide the most participatory forum possible for sustained productive dialogue.

Africa's development is hampered by a serious image problem that stymies its prospects of partnership towards sustainable development. This image problem needs to be redressed through a balanced appraisal of Africa's socioeconomic and political environment and prospects. Such an ap-

praisal can be achieved through effective communication and dissemination of news on Africa's development, and the broadening of avenues for exchange of ideas. In order to highlight Africa's achievements and outstanding challenges and to refocus development assistance, targeted and high-impact information and outreach strategies and programmes need to be put in place. Such programmes should provide avenues for multi-channel, multidirectional, interactive exchanges of ideas and should facilitate the adoption and implementation of best practices by countries and their development partners, including private-sector operators.

An informed, pluralistic, and active media industry is a requirement for all economically and politically progressive societies. Africa's media industry is poised for a take-off as a major societal force for good governance and sustainable development. Yet it remains fragile. Improved capacities in information technology, stronger grounding in key issues, and enhanced production and dissemination of media products on development issues, are all requirements for the media to fulfil their potential as a solid development partner. As a development investment, there is a significant potential return in investing in improving the media's focus on and capacity for development issues.

The ECA Response

The Secretary-General has called for a more holistic approach to Africa's development, supported by mutually reinforcing partnerships among development cooperation agencies—partnerships where African institutions and governments take the lead in defining priorities. The joint OAU/ECA/ADB Secretariat provides an important mechanism to respond to the Secretary-General's call. The three regional institutions are constituted under the Abuja Treaty as the Joint Secretariat of the African Economic Community (AEC). In the past, the three have been jointly responsible for important initiatives, such as the Lagos Plan of Action and the Cairo Agenda, which triggered special actions by the UN in support of Africa's development.

The Chief Executives of the Joint Secretariat meet once a year to review development issues

Box 21. Joint Statement of the Chief Executives of the Joint Secretariat of the African Economic Community

On 23 January 1998, the Chief Executives of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), and the African Development Bank (ADB)—the Joint Secretariat of the African Economic Community—met in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire for their 8th Consultative Meeting. At the end of the meeting they issued a joint statement expressing their views on recent developments in the region, which indicated the measures they believed African countries should consider to assure economic and social development in peace and stability. The main conclusions are as follows:

- While applauding recent political, social, and economic progress in the region and noting the strong commitment to political stability, pluralism, and democracy by an increasing number of countries, the Chief Executives expressed concern at “the continued instability and conflict in some of our countries and their cost—in human and material terms, as well as their adverse impact on economic and social progress.” They underscored the need to “take measures to avoid the recurrence of conflicts, provide humanitarian assistance, and mobilize resources for post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation”, and stressed the importance of adequate support by the international donor community to help the Great Lakes region and other regions emerging from periods of severe strife and conflict;
- The importance of promoting good governance towards sustaining progress was stressed, and African countries were urged to “continue to promote good governance, uphold the rule of law, and fight the scourge of corruption as an integral part of their efforts to promote socioeconomic progress in the continent”;
- While noting that—in comparison to the first half of this decade—the economic performance of a large number of African countries has been quite encouraging, the Chief executives urged African countries to deepen and sustain their reforms, however difficult, while at the same time pursuing policies to accelerate economic growth as essential steps towards improving the social conditions of the large number of Africans who live in absolute poverty;
- On the debt question, the Chief Executives welcomed the HIPC initiative, but urged the international community to adopt a more flexible stance, to consider additional initiatives, and to ensure that adequate resources are made available to resolve the debt problem;
- Much needs to be done to make regional cooperation and integration a reality. Accordingly, the Chief Executives renewed their commitment to jointly working together to assist African countries in the rationalization of the activities of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the harmonization of policies at the regional level, the mobilization of resources for regional integration, and the promotion of a greater role for the private sector. They agreed to establish a joint working group to coordinate the activities of the three institutions in this area; and
- On aid, the continuing important role of external concessional resources was stressed, with the Chief Executives urging the international donor community to continue to provide adequate replenishment to such funds as the African Development Fund (ADF), the International Development Association (IDA), and the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF). Recognizing the need to ensure that African countries have adequate access to existing resources, such as the European Development Fund (EDF) under the Lome Convention and the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), they also agreed that the three institutions would cooperate to provide the requisite technical assistance, as well as to initiate capacity-building measures, to enhance the negotiating capability of African countries.

facing the continent and bring them to the attention of key stakeholders. Through this annual consultative meeting, the heads of the organizations can advocate and provide leadership on key regional issues, and speak with one voice. The 8th Consultative Meeting took place on 23 January 1998 in

Abidjan, Côte D'Ivoire, and ended with a joint statement by the three chief executives (see box 21).

The 9th Consultative Meeting of the Chief Executives of OAU, ECA, and ADB took place in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, on 5 February 1999. The meeting focused on conflict management,

post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation, ownership, and governance. The full text of the Joint Statement is available from the ECA Secretariat, or on the ECA Web page at <http://www.un.org/depts/eca>.

One key mechanism for the three institutions to speak with one voice, advocate common African positions, and build regional consensus is the African Development Forum (ADF) process (see box 22), which ECA is establishing with the support of the OAU and the ADB. This forum of Africa's development stakeholders aims to facilitate the exchange of ideas, build consensus, and provide broad policy guidance to African policy makers through effective networking and knowledge sharing with researchers and practitioners from Africa and elsewhere. It is designed to facilitate African ownership of development policies and programmes, and to bring more cohesion in donor support for Africa's development. In addition, the ADF process will serve to moderate the proliferation of meetings and initiatives on Africa.

Each forum will focus on a theme to be chosen by ECA in consultation with African development stakeholders. The first forum will take place in October 1999 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and will focus on the theme: "The Challenge to Africa of Globalization and the Information Age". Among other things, the forum will showcase the partnership that has developed over the last few years among public- and private-sector interests, UN agencies, and the World Bank for the promotion of information and communication technologies in Africa under the coordination of ECA.

An example of the kind of partnership that can be pursued among African institutions and other key development actors is a major report being prepared by ECA, the OAU, ADB, the World Bank, and the African Economic Research Consortium. The rationale of the report, entitled *Can Africa Claim the 21st Century?*, is to strengthen consensus on Africa's development priorities, both within African countries and among donors.

The report, to be published in late 1999, will detail the determinants of Africa's economic performance and links with poverty reduction, outline ways of building social capital and enhancing the effectiveness of the state, discuss how pro-

ductive sectors and Africa's ability to participate in the global economy can be strengthened, and propose a new development strategy for the 21st century. It is expected that the report—which will be disseminated widely once it is published—will be the subject of the Second African Development Forum in the year 2000.

Towards the goal of presenting a more balanced image of Africa that will inform the development process, ECA is embarking on a major outreach and advocacy partnership programme, to be implemented in collaboration with sister UN agencies, the World Bank, and ADB. Private-sector partners, such as the WorldSpace Foundation and a wide spectrum of African and African-related media, have indicated support for the programme. ECA's outreach strategy is designed to make information on the research and policy work done by key development analysts available. It will ensure the timely delivery and availability of high-quality information on Africa's economic and social development. It will develop and implement effective advocacy for Africa, with particular focus on sustaining international political support for Africa and redressing the negative image of the continent, with accurate and targeted information set in its full context. It will carry out a sustained campaign to highlight partners' activities on the continent and broaden the range and impact of partners' communication services through electronic broadcast, audiovisual, and other relevant media.

Specific activities include issues-based seminars; workshops for public officials, media persons, NGOs, and private-sector representatives; and the establishment of an Electronic Media Centre (EMC), to be housed in the Commission's new United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC). The programme will also address information technology issues and will provide content-packaging training workshops for journalists, as well as focusing on radio and video production, networking and information dissemination, and the development of a database on African development.

Partnerships

Partnerships have been generally and widely accepted as a means towards more decisive

Box 22. The African Development Forum Process

The overall objective of the African Development Forum (ADF), which has been created by ECA, with the support of the African Development Bank (ADB) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), is to facilitate the exchange of ideas, build consensus, and provide broad policy guidance to African policy-makers through effective networking and knowledge-sharing with researchers and practitioners from Africa and beyond. It is designed to facilitate African ownership of development policies and programmes, and bring more cohesion in donor support for Africa's development. Some 200 to 300 key stakeholders of African development—the African governments, civil society, researchers and academics, intergovernmental organizations, and donors—are expected to participate at each forum, which will be a clearing house of ideas. The forum will result in sharply defined, time-bound actionable programmes that can be implemented within the capacity of African countries.

Another objective of the forum is to create a mechanism and process for linking African policy-decision-makers with the best possible policy advice that is rooted in state-of-the-art analytical work and relevant experiences of other decision-makers in Africa and overseas. The forum will feedback loops to facilitate demand-driven inquiry within African research networks in response to policy-makers' needs as articulated in the forum. It will identify key areas of study that are likely to contribute most to addressing urgent development policy issues. It will also facilitate the participation of expatriate African expertise in the Diaspora in shaping the African development agenda.

The forum will operate at two associated levels—regional and country—for maximum guidance to policy-makers at the two levels of decision-making. The regional forum will be organized first, and will focus on one selected theme, to be chosen through a consultative process built into the forum process. The regional forum will draw up time-bound action plans to implement its recommendations, and a work programme for the following year, which includes implementation and monitoring arrangements. A post-forum meeting of heads of state of focus countries will be organized to mobilize the highest political support for the forum's recommendations. African regional sponsoring institutions and co-sponsors for a particular theme will be invited to participate in the Heads-of-State meeting.

Organization of the country forums, on a pilot basis initially in selected countries, will follow. The Heads-of-State forum and the country forums will follow up on the implementation of the regional forum's programme, as well as aspects of national programmes that may be separate from those in the regional agenda. The relationship between the regional forum and the country forums will ensure exchange of information relevant to the country and regional agendas, as well as implementation at the country level of regionally agreed programmes. The country forums will ensure implementation and follow-up at the national level of regional action plans. As the operations of the regional forum take hold, and its interface with the country-level forums is established from the pilot trials, it is expected that a number of other countries will replicate the national forum idea.

The underlying preparatory work will be undertaken or guided by the forum's Technical Advisory Committee (ADFTAC)—comprising seasoned policy researchers, policy practitioners, and three eminent visiting scholars dedicated to these activities under the ECA multi-year Visiting Scholars' Programme.

The sharing of information and best practices with non-forum participants will be accomplished through the dissemination of conference proceedings and policy papers in the Journal of the Africa Development Forum, to be launched at the first forum.

The first ADF, whose theme will be "The Challenge to Africa of Globalization and the Information Age", will take place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, at the United Nations Conference Centre, in November 1999. The ADFTAC was constituted on February 14, 1999. Sub-themes were identified, noting those that are of interest to particular countries. Intensive analytical research in the general theme and sub-themes will follow over the next five months, culminating in policy position papers, which will be reviewed, discussed, and finalized at a workshop in August 1999 of the ADFTAC and invited researchers. The workshop will also finalize the October 1999 forum work plan.

Each forum will be followed by a post-Forum Summit Dialogue of selected African Heads of State and Government, about six weeks after the ADF itself, to ensure their full support for the country action plans and Forum recommendations as well as to underscore their endorsement of the importance of the issues considered.

development in Africa. This acceptance is borne out by recent bilateral initiatives, such as the Tokyo International Conference on Africa's Development (TICAD) process, which have helped to reaffirm support for a comprehensive approach to Africa's development. So too has the OECD/DAC, which has articulated social development and poverty reduction targets that are of particular relevance to Africa. The decade of UN global conferences—from Rio to Cairo to Copenhagen to Beijing—has also fostered and advanced consensus on this holistic approach. All these processes and initiatives have placed the emphasis squarely on collaborative partnership within the overall context of eradicating Africa's poverty.

As outlined in the foreword of this publication, the issue of partnerships has been an underlying theme in all its programmatic work since 1996, when ECA embarked on a reform and restructuring programme with the conviction that development assistance to Africa requires concerted effort and new forms of partnerships and collaboration among the stakeholders in the continent's development. ECA is uniquely qualified to serve Africa. With its multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral character, the Commission serves as a vital bridge between African countries and their development partners. Because of its regional role as a member of the United Nations family, ECA is able to gain political support, financial support, and credibility from African countries and for African countries.

What does ECA's partnership approach entail? It involves forging synergies with African inter-governmental organizations, UN bodies and spe-

cialized agencies, donor countries, African universities, research centres, and civil society groups. The partnerships vary, depending on organizational resources and areas of comparative advantage. Most of the collaborations involve research, advisory services, sponsorship of seminars and workshops, information sharing, advocacy, and assistance in capacity-building through fellowships, internships, and lectureships in support of agreed-upon research.

This approach to programme planning and implementation underlies the framework for partnership articulated in the document *Forging Partnerships for Africa's Future—A Prospectus for a Renewed ECA*, published in March 1997, and widely shared with potential partners. In the report, several project ideas were outlined as building blocks for a possible programme for partnership between ECA and Africa's other devel-

“What do we in Africa expect from our partners to improve the prospects for our development? We seek five kinds of international solidarity: We ask partners to support conflict prevention and peace processes, to foster ethical behaviour by public and private actors, and to seek the high moral ground in international discussions. Second, we invite partnerships to reinforce home-grown policies and Africa-led initiatives and to facilitate a process of consensus-building around shared goals and priorities. Third, partnership should also share reasonable risks. New leaderships are coming to the fore in Africa, and while it is easy and important to back acknowledged winners, it is even more insightful to support emerging winners. Fourth, in our bid to reduce poverty and encourage growth, Africa can learn much from partner countries where social development has been well practiced. Fifth, in mobilizing resources for Africa's development, we must exercise the most insightful and highest-quality modalities of cooperation with a continent that cannot afford mistakes.” K.Y. Amoako, from “Address at the U.S.-Africa Ministerial”, the White House, Washington, D.C., USA, 16 March 1999.

opment partners. Subsequently, ECA has developed these ideas into priority projects, emphasizing ECA's core mandate of capacity-building, around which partnerships can be developed to advance African development. They will be presented and discussed with partners that ECA has collaborated with in the past, as well as new ones, at the next round of consultations to be held in the second half of 1999. The Commission will then be able to establish the interest of partners in specific aspects of the proposals and modalities, for possible support and participation in the programme.

The proposals are in part a response to ECA's mandate from African governments to identify programme elements that can be implemented at national, regional, and subregional levels, and possible areas of support by Africa's development

partners to complement the efforts of Member States in capacity-building. This mandate is central to the whole partnerships strategy, and it is

now widely acknowledged that building sustainable institutional capacity is key to Africa's accelerated development.