

1998/5. Relationships between the Economic Commission for Africa, United Nations agencies and regional and subregional organizations in Africa

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling the terms of reference of the Economic Commission for Africa, as adopted by the Council in

¹³ General Assembly resolution 48/96, annex.

resolution 671 A (XXV) of 29 April 1958 and amended by its resolutions 974 D I (XXXVI) of 5 July 1963, 1343 (XLV) of 18 July 1968 and 1978/68 of 4 August 1978,

Recalling also the various resolutions that have implications for the mandate and operations of the Commission, including, in particular, General Assembly resolutions 32/197 of 20 December 1977 on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system, 33/202 of 29 January 1979, 44/211 of 22 December 1989 and 50/120 of 20 December 1995,

Recalling further Commission resolutions 718 (XXVI) of 12 May 1991 on the revitalization of the mandate and operational framework of the regional commission for Africa,¹⁴ 726 (XXVII) of 22 April 1992 on strengthening the Commission to face Africa's development challenges in the 1990s,¹⁵ 779 (XXIX) of 4 May 1994 on strengthening the operational capacity of the Commission¹⁶ and 809 (XXXI) of 8 May 1996 on new directions for the Commission,¹⁷

Bearing in mind General Assembly resolutions 45/177 of 19 December 1990 and 45/264 of 13 May 1991 on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, as well as resolution 46/235 of 13 April 1992, in the annex to which the Assembly stated that the regional commissions should be enabled fully to play their role under the authority of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and that those located in developing countries should be strengthened in the context of the overall objectives of the restructuring and the revitalization process,

Taking into account General Assembly resolution 52/12 B of 19 December 1997 entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform", in which the Assembly invited the Economic and Social Council, in consultation with Member States and appropriate intergovernmental regional bodies, to conduct a general review of the regional commissions at its substantive session of 1998, bearing in mind the relevant provisions of Assembly resolution 50/227 of 24 May 1996 and the individual reviews each commission had already carried out, in order to consider the competencies of the regional commissions, taking into account the competencies of global bodies and other regional and subregional intergovernmental bodies,

Having examined the note by the secretariat of the Commission entitled "Reform of the regional commissions: relationships between the Economic Commission for Africa, United Nations agencies, regional and subregional organizations in Africa",¹⁸

1. *Welcomes* the note by the secretariat of the Economic Commission for Africa entitled "Reform of the

¹⁴ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1991, Supplement No. 16 (E/1991/37)*, chap. IV.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1992, *Supplement No. 13 (E/1992/33)*, chap. IV.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1994, *Supplement No. 20 (E/1994/40)*, chap. IV.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1996, *Supplement No. 15 (E/1996/35)*, chap. IV.

¹⁸ E/ECA/MFC.1/2.

regional commissions: relationships between the Economic Commission for Africa, United Nations agencies, regional and subregional organizations in Africa”,¹⁸

2. *Expresses its appreciation* for the observations and analyses contained in the note;

3. *Decides* to adopt the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1. Reaffirm and support existing coordination mechanisms at the regional level

An important first step in enhancing collaboration between the Economic Commission for Africa and the United Nations agencies is to reaffirm and support the team leadership role assigned to the regional commissions by the General Assembly in resolution 32/197. The agencies should use the mechanism of a regional administrative committee on coordination, first suggested in 1994 by the Secretary-General. The Economic and Social Council should consider providing a legislative directive to this effect. The regional administrative committee on coordination would be a useful mechanism for addressing a number of regional issues, including follow-up to the global conferences and programmes on post-conflict reconstruction developments in Africa. In this regard, the forthcoming meeting of the Conference of Ministers, to be held in 1999, should consider in-depth coordination and collaboration among United Nations agencies operating at the subregional and regional levels in Africa;

Recommendation 2. Adopt some principles for regional coordination

The United Nations agencies in Africa should adopt some principles for regional coordination. The agencies should endeavour to foster regional coordination on the basis of promoting greater exchange of information on planned and ongoing work, improve complementarities among programmes, draw on each other's competencies and bring the pool of resources – financial and human – at their disposal to bear on policy issues of common interest;

Recommendation 3. Strengthen coordination at the subregional level

Coordination or collaboration among United Nations agencies in Africa should also be enhanced at the subregional level. This should take the form of the development of joint ventures to support the specific activities of countries in a subregional framework. In this way, the complementarities and harmony sought at the regional level will be given greater impact and impetus. The subregional development centres of the Economic Commission for Africa should be an important vehicle for coordination at the subregional level;

Recommendation 4. The role of the Economic Commission for Africa in normative and operational functions

The Economic Commission for Africa, as a United Nations regional commission and as one of the regional institutions in the service of the development of Africa, has carried out valuable normative (analysis, advocacy, norm-setting) and operational activities that have been mutually complementary and supportive to the member States of the region. The Commission should continue to undertake both

categories of activities, since it has been recognized that its technical assistance plays a catalytic role in translating its normative work into concrete support for the development efforts of member States;

Recommendation 5. Enhanced cooperation among African organizations

At the regional level, there is already implicit specialization and division of labour among the three major intergovernmental organizations in Africa, namely the Organization of African Unity, the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank. There remains, however, a need to promote a more clear-cut division of responsibilities and to rationalize and strengthen complementarities among the three organizations more strictly, according to their mandates and competencies, as a means of increasing their combined effectiveness, impact and efficiency in their collective mandate, which is to oversee the overall development of Africa at the regional level. This calls for these African organizations to strengthen their joint secretariat by implementing among themselves strategies similar to those outlined above for the United Nations system. In particular, they should:

(a) Strengthen coordination, including collaboration in programme development, planning of activities, monitoring and evaluation, with a view to building upon and exploiting complementarities;

(b) Improve networking and communication at all staff levels, not only at the level of chief executive;

(c) Work to establish a common ethos among their staff, based on a common perspective of Africa's political, social and economic development challenges and opportunities and a common zeal to move Africa forward;

(d) Streamline and coordinate their intergovernmental machineries: the governing bodies of all African organizations could be required to summarize, in a joint report, their main decisions for submission to the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, which is the supreme organ of the African Economic Community.

*35th plenary meeting
20 July 1998*