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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Thirty-fifth Session of the Commission/ Conference of
African Ministers of Finance, Planning and
Economic Development

Johannesburg, South Africa
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**MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY AND INDICATIVE
WORK PROGRAMME OF THE AFRICAN INSTITUTE FOR
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING, 2003 - 2006**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) is a Pan-African Institution created in 1962 by the General Assembly of the United Nations. Newly independent African countries felt the urgent need to build-up domestic human capital as a necessity for sustaining independence and promoting socio-economic development. IDEP was then given the mandate to train policy makers and development professionals, to provide advisory services for African governments and regional organizations, to promote original thinking and research on Africa's policy issues, to become a centre of excellence with full intellectual freedom that will lead the debate on African development issues and uphold the economic independence of African countries.

2. The major challenge facing Africa in this first decade of the twenty first century is to reverse the trend of economic decline which has afflicted the region since the 1970s and to strengthen the capacity of the economies for participation as effective partners in the global economy. The challenge of African development has in recent years been compounded by the combination of rapid changes in technology and continued liberalization of world trade in the process of globalization, coupled with the new trading environment ushered in by the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

3. African countries have recently declared their intention to exercise more ownership of their policy agenda focalized on the Washington Consensus during the last two decades. This new stance gives rise to new challenges and opportunities for IDEP, which is the only continent-wide institute that is mandated by African governments to provide the expert services described in its mission.

II. DEFINING IDEP'S STRATEGIC GOALS

4. The formulation of the Institute's strategic goals is founded in the need to operationalize the main components of its mission and to chart a course leading to the revival of its credibility and uncontested relevance. In this regard, four specific objectives will govern its action in the coming years:

(a) Organize training in order to equip African policy makers and other stakeholders with the latest skills that will enable them to respond to emerging policy challenges;

(b) Act as an interface between the research and policy-making communities;

(c) Promote original thinking and research on Africa's policy issues;

(d) Become a center of excellence with full intellectual freedom that will lead the debate on African development issues.

III. A SWOT ANALYSIS FOR IDEP

3.1 Strengths

5. IDEP is the only Pan-African institute of higher learning and is also the longest serving institution in training in the area of economic management and planning. Its Pan-African mandate gives it an opportunity to articulate positions on behalf of the entire continent.

6. IDEP benefits from a wide outreach network stemming from its many alumni in key positions throughout Africa. Over the years, IDEP has built a wide network of outstanding lecturers/researchers who contribute significantly in the Institute's activities and serve as its antennae across the continent.

7. The Institute is geographically well located with good physical facilities and state-of-the-art information and telecommunications equipment.

8. IDEP is governed by United Nations administrative and financial rules and regulations, and has a strong African presence in its governance.

9. The Institute is fully bilingual in English and French and has in-house translators. All its courses and seminars have simultaneous interpretation.

3.2 Weaknesses

10. IDEP is currently endowed with modest financial and human resources, which limits its influence in economic policy-making and lowers its capacity to attract trainees from countries that are offered alternative training opportunities by the donor community.

11. The Institute lacks adequate visibility in policy circles in some African countries. As a result, member States' financial contributions to its budget have not reached satisfactory levels.

12. The components of its mission related to advocacy, research and advisory services are not fulfilled as satisfactorily as is required by the mandate.

3.3 Opportunities

13. Africa is currently formulating a development strategy that focuses on regional integration (African Union, Regional Economic Communities, monetary union initiatives), design of a regional economic development agenda (NEPAD), enhanced role of government in the area of institutional economics and the "rediscovered" virtue of long-term planning. This gives rise to new intellectual and programming challenges that are at the core of IDEP's mandate.

14. The generally contested impact of economic programmes implemented in Africa under the auspices of the Washington Consensus, notably Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), has given way to a need for Africans to design their own economic initiatives, a move that has been well received by their development partners.

15. Donors are increasingly aware of the need to enhance the skills of African policy-makers rather than use foreign consultants. It is also generally agreed that it is more economical to train Africans in Africa than overseas.

3.4 Threats

16. The decline in its visibility may convey the perception that IDEP is confined to a subregion only and does not cover all of Africa or that it services one linguistic group only, given that it is located in a predominantly French-speaking geographical zone.

17. In spite of all its efforts to fully regain its credibility and relevance, IDEP runs the risk of losing its intellectual independence through excessive reliance on donors' project funding support as opposed to core support.

18. The effectiveness and relevance of the Institute could be jeopardized if it cannot harness the required level of financial resources and minimize their variability through diversification of its funding sources.

IV. SELECTING STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

19. The Institute will endeavour to capture potential synergies in the nexus between research, training and policy, making use of state-of-the-art knowledge, and in full cognizance of the African context.

4.1 Coverage

20. IDEP is mandated to serve all African countries. Its main target groups include middle-level and senior policy makers and public sector officials, representatives of African organizations, civil society and the private sector.

21. The areas in which the Institute will focus its activities are identified based on (a) the agenda of the regional organizations that formulate and implement Africa's continent-wide strategy for economic development and (b) the national priorities selected by African countries. To attain a high degree of effectiveness in the delivery of its mission, IDEP will concentrate mainly on three broad thematic areas, namely:

(a) Regional integration including issues on convergence, harmonization of policies and legislation, policy formulation at the regional level, regional infrastructure building, economics of peace building; etc.

(b) Trade policy and trade negotiations under WTO including formulation of trade-related incentive policies, competitiveness-enhancing policies, generic and commodity-based WTO negotiations; etc. and

(c) Economic growth and development including growth strategies, macroeconomic management, finance, human capital, HIV/AIDS, education, migration, gender, etc.

Training activities

22. Training African middle-level and senior policy makers constitutes an important component of IDEP's mission and will be guided by two specific goals:

(a) The first one is to offer African civil servants and public and private sector officials a post-graduate degree-granting programme that provides them with state-of-the-art capacity for economic analysis and management, strong policy relevance and substantial African economic content. IDEP's M.A Programme in Economic Policy and Management is designed to serve that purpose. Its emphasis on policy relevance and its target group of professional economic policy makers with several years of work experience differentiate it from the typical M.A programmes offered by universities in Africa and elsewhere;

(b) The second component of IDEP's training agenda comprises a number of demand-driven short courses that range from one to three months in duration and cover specific policy topics. The goal of the short courses is to help African policy makers and analysts enhance their skills in specific policy areas. The list of short courses was prepared taking into consideration the main policy issues that are contained in the development agenda of African regional organizations – Regional Integration, NEPAD, WTO negotiations- and national governments' policy packages.

Research and advisory activities

23. The research and advisory agenda of IDEP is based on the policy agenda of African regional organizations and African countries. Its programming supposes built-in flexibility so that the Institute can respond to new policy challenges and requests from its stakeholders. Whether research is conducted in response to immediate solicitations or to long-term visions, it will be primarily policy-oriented and will be motivated by the need to inform the policy process.

24. The three main research areas that IDEP will pursue are:

- Regional integration
- Trade policy and trade negotiations under WTO
- Economic growth and development.

Other research topics could be included in the agenda upon request by African stakeholders.

4.2 Leverage

25. In order to remedy the constraint imposed by its limited resources and to amplify the impact of its activities, IDEP will explore three main leverage channels:

- First, the Institute will seek to forge close long-term collaborative ties with Pan-African organizations such as the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Union (AU), the African Development Bank (ADB), and the Association of African Universities (AAU)
- The second leveraging strategy will consist in the establishment of a network of African economic research centres that will cooperate with IDEP in the conduct of policy-oriented research focusing primarily on the Pan-African policy agenda. IDEP will also seek collaboration with existing research networks such as the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) in Nairobi, the Economic Research Forum (ERF) in Cairo, the Organization of Social Science Research in East and Southern Africa (OSSREA) in Addis Ababa, the African Knowledge Network Forum (AKNF) in Addis Ababa and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) based in Dakar.

- Third, international scientific collaboration will also help the Institute increase its credibility and impact. This will be attained through active involvement of the Advisory Board, research visits of renowned scientific figures and collaboration with research and training centres in Africa and abroad. This collaboration will also include participation of senior or retired policy makers in the Policy Forum and in the Visiting Scholar Programme.

4.3 Marketing strategy

26. The establishment in most African countries of universities and other institutions of higher learning made it unavoidable for IDEP to redefine, not necessarily its mission, but its comparative advantage, thus its niche. The marketing strategy is organized around the following four concepts: Products, Pricing policy, Promotion and Pro-activeness.

4.3.1 Products of IDEP

27. As was mentioned in the section on coverage, the Institute will deliver three types of products namely training, research and advisory services. Considerable synergies may arise from these products and help determine the nature and degree of IDEP's comparative advantage and value-added. By-products of significant interest are also expected to result from its activities. The proposed Policy Forum and Visiting Scholar Programme fall under this category.

4.3.2 Pricing policy

28. IDEP is a not-for-profit organization and does not need to accumulate surpluses in excess of the requirements for its financial sustainability. The Institute will endeavour to provide its services either free of charge, whenever possible, or by charging rates that are significantly lower than any other comparable alternative.

4.3.3 Promotion

29. A comprehensive communication policy will be prepared to help organize its marketing activities. A communications officer will be hired to carry out IDEP's institutional communication, publication and Internet outreach. The Director of IDEP will establish and maintain close contact with African governments and regional organizations to keep them informed about the activities of IDEP and discuss its plans.

4.3.4 Pro-activeness

30. IDEP will not only undertake a wide campaign of awareness for its programmes; it will also seek the input and explore the potential needs of every African stakeholder, national government, regional organization or civil society entity. Furthermore, the Institute will try and contribute in the policy debate or policy formulation related to the main economic agenda of the continent viz. NEPAD, African Union, WTO negotiations, creation of subregional monetary or customs unions, etc. IDEP will display the same pro-active spirit in its dealings with the media, the international scientific community and donor agencies.

V. INSTITUTIONAL SETUP

5.1 Governance of IDEP

31. A Task Force commissioned in March 2000 to review the future of IDEP, focused considerably on the governance of the Institute. The changes that it proposed regarding IDEP's governance were approved by the Governing Council at its meeting held in October 2001. The new structure and composition that are described below reflect the recommendations of the Task Force.

32. The Governing Council

Its composition will be as follows:

- Ten (10) representatives of African governments, two each from the five subregions of the continent (North Africa, West Africa, East Africa, Central Africa and Southern Africa);
- One representative of each of the three (3) regional organizations, i.e. ECA, OAU/AU, ADB;
- Two (2) representatives of the private sector;
- Two (2) representatives of the civil society;
- One representative of the Government of Senegal;
- One representative of the Advisory Board;
- The Director of the Institute serving as the Secretary of the Governing Council.

The Governing Council meets once every two years to review IDEP's performance report and to approve its programmes and plans. It selects from its members an Executive Committee of five (5) persons.

33. The Executive Committee

It is a new governing body of IDEP and reports to the Governing Council. It meets twice a year to monitor the implementation of programmes and the decisions of the Governing Council. It also gives guidance to the Director in his management of the Institute. It is composed of the following:

- The Chairperson of the Governing Council
- One representative of the governments
- One representative of the three regional organizations
- One representative of the private sector
- One representative of Civil Society
- The Director of the Institute.

34. The Advisory Board

The Advisory Board is expected to provide IDEP with sound intellectual guidance with respect to its substantive programmes in research, training and advisory services and help promote and strengthen the Institute's visibility and scientific credibility. It meets at least once a year. Its new composition is as follows:

- The Director of IDEP as the Chairman
- The Deputy Director of IDEP
- One Senior Lecturer of IDEP
- Five professors appointed from the five geographical subregions of the continent
- Three professors of appropriate university disciplines from outside Africa, one from industrialized countries, one from Latin America and one from Asia.

5.2 Staffing of the Institute

35. In order to carry out its mandate and accumulate in-house expertise, IDEP needs to strengthen its professional staff by hiring several economists and, possibly, specialists in other social sciences. General support staff will also be hired to strengthen IDEP's capacity for administrative and financial management

5.3 Support services

36. IDEP has prepared a plan for the upgrade of its computing and telephone facilities, further automatization of its financial and administrative services and advanced computer training for its entire staff.

5.4 Assessment of IDEP's performance

37. The degree of adequacy of the strategy will need to be assessed at the conceptual and practical levels through constant monitoring of the Institute's evolution and occasional external evaluations. To that end, an assessment instrument that captures the main components of the strategy is designed and will also be used by IDEP's management to take corrective action if the need arises.