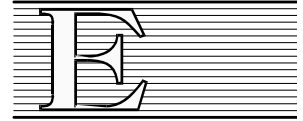




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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA**

Conference of African Ministers of Finance,  
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session of the Commission

*Twenty-sixth Meeting of the Committee of Experts*

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
29 March – 1 April 2007

**Report on the External Review of the African Institute for Economic  
Development and Planning (IDEP)**



## Background

1. At the thirty-ninth session of the Commission held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso in May 2006, the African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) considered the critical financial situation of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP). They requested the Executive Secretary of ECA to make proposals for improving IDEP and to report to the fortieth session of the Commission. Consequently, the Executive Secretary of ECA has fielded a mission, led by Mr. Peter Anyang' Nyong'o, Chairman, African Research and Resource Forum (ARRF) and Mr. Alioune Sall, Executive Director, African Futures Institute to undertake an independent review of IDEP with the view of providing ECA with recommendations that would be submitted to the African Ministers at their meeting to be held from 2 to 3 April 2007 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The report will be subsequently finalized to take into account the deliberations of the meeting. The present note responds to that request and contains the preliminary findings and recommendations of the Review Panel.

## About IDEP

2. IDEP is based in Dakar and was created in 1962 in line with United Nations General Assembly resolution 1708(XVI) of 19 December 1961 and resolution 58 (IV) of ECA of 1 March 1962, to do the following:

- (a) Give theoretical and practical training to policymakers and development professionals on development planning and provide advisory services for African governments and regional organizations on the same;
- (b) Promote original thinking and research on Africa's policy issues;
- (c) Become a centre of excellence to lead the debate on African development issues; and
- (d) Promote and defend the economic independence of African countries.

3. In carrying out its mandate, IDEP has, since its inception, had an uneven performance. Currently, the perception is that IDEP seems not to have grown, its visibility has somewhat diminished and its ability to deliver on its mandate stands in doubt. Given the changing needs and demands of member States, and given also the emergence of various centres of excellence in Africa with similar mandates to that of IDEP, ECA has had to review its work so as to refocus the mission and the mandate to make them more relevant to Africa's development challenges.

4. This note outlines the key findings and recommendations of the Review Panel. It is hoped that they will enable the Conference of Ministers to make appropriate decisions that will lead to a more focused, capable and relevant IDEP.

5. The conclusion is that IDEP has an important role to play in Africa and should be retooled to play this role effectively. In that regard, a management system should be set up so as to make more effective use of IDEP's governing organs and constituencies. Moreover, a thorough scientific needs assessment as well as a management audit would be appropriate so as to bring in new vigour, focus, management skills and commitment to fulfill the vision and

mission of the institute. Augmenting financial resources would produce positive results only if the aforementioned actions are undertaken.

## **Summary of major findings and recommendations**

### **1. *IDEP in a changing landscape and its niche***

6. While the landscape in which IDEP is currently operating has indeed changed over the years, IDEP still has a specific niche to fill in undertaking its original mandate that, in essence, is still very relevant to Africa. Many countries have similar institutions undertaking research and training programmes on development planning, but none of them does this at a Pan-African level, nor do they do it with the idea of serving the diverse interests and needs of the African Union (AU) member States.

#### **7. Recommendations include the following:**

- (a) IDEP is still needed in Africa to fulfill its original mandate as a Pan-African institution; and
- (b) IDEP needs to be retooled to offer courses in line with current demands in Africa, taking into account such initiatives as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and AU priorities.

### **2. *Role of IDEP in short-term training and present structure of training programmes***

8. IDEP's current short-term training programmes comprise a number of short courses that range from one to three months in duration on specific policy topics. The goal of these short courses is to help African policymakers and analysts enhance their skills in specific policy areas. Many African governments have benefited from these courses, especially the tailor-made and region-specific ones. Currently, most of the training is done at IDEP in Dakar where professional staff is inadequate, and library and training facilities underutilized.

9. Costs could be reduced and attendance increased were IDEP to run some of its courses, especially tailor-made ones, in collaboration with the regional economic communities (RECs), other regional institutions, national universities, governments and even non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Moreover, ECA is capable of seconding some of its own staff to teach and give training at IDEP on a short-term basis.

#### **10. Recommendations include the following:**

- (a) A scientific needs assessment, such as the one carried out in 1994, would be necessary immediately after the review on a scale commensurate with the outcome of the present exercise; and
- (b) A conference of scholars, development partners and ECA should then follow to discuss a new blueprint for IDEP.

### **3. *Possibility of linking IDEP to ECA's peer learning activities***

11. The African Learning Group on Poverty Reduction Strategies and the Millennium Development Goals (PRS-MDG-LG) focuses on sharing best practices in the implementation of PRSPs in Africa. It also examines the identification of national capacity gaps, formulates recommendations of required actions by various stakeholders and proposes plans of action that would improve the outcome of PRSPs in the development processes in various African countries. This is an area in which research, networking and stimulation of dialogue would make the work of IDEP complement the competence of ECA.

#### **12. Recommendations will include the following:**

- (a) A retooled IDEP should deliver more consciously on the PRS-MDG-LG initiative; and
- (b) The work so far done should get the political backing of member States through AU, since it will touch heavily on the political economy of public policy-making and implementation.

### **4. *Areas of collaboration between AU and IDEP through ECA's overall capacity-building programme and assistance to the AU Commission (AUC)***

13. Collaboration between AUC and ECA can be appreciated at three levels: (a) the signature of the declaration, on 16 November 2006, of a framework for the Ten-year Capacity-building Programme developed by the United Nations; (b) a revived joint AU-ECA-ADB Secretariat; and (c) bilateral agreements between AU and ECA.

14. As regards the latter, ECA has been providing substantive inputs to AU-convened ministerial meetings. Through IDEP, ECA is also supporting AU's goal of furthering economic integration in Africa. For instance, the programme on economic integration is sponsored by the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA) and hosted by IDEP. The programme aims at improving the absorptive capacity of AUC and RECs in implementation of the Abuja Treaty Establishing Africa Economic Community. The programme is intended for officials in charge of integration issues in member States, to assist them to better understand the challenges of integration and enable them to rise to the expectations of their respective administrations.

15. So far, four sessions have been organized, two in English and two in French. According to the participants, the course is very relevant and helpful, as it has significantly assisted them to improve their work performance.

16. Based on the consultations undertaken for this review, AUC has made a number of observations on the implementation of the training programme. These include:

- (a) The course is highly relevant to AU needs and, as a result, demand for it remains high. However, due to resource constraints, each session has been limited to twenty participants;

- (b) On the issue of implementation, IDEP has not adequately consulted AUC in the process of selecting appropriate resource persons for the programme. Consequently, in a number of cases, resource persons who are ill-informed about AU's ongoing integration processes have been hired; and
- (c) Based on information from participants in the training programme, problems have been encountered in securing appropriate accommodation, insurance facilities and so on. These have been blamed on administrative problems at IDEP.

17. **Recommendations include the following:**

- (a) Given its relevance and the high demand, the training programme at IDEP should continue;
- (b) There is need to enhance the consultation mechanism with AUC to ensure an appropriate selection of resource persons; and
- (c) IDEP should develop innovative financing schemes to increase the number of participants on a sustained basis.

5. ***A Plan of Action to ensure IDEP's long-term financial sustainability***

18. IDEP has, over the years, relied mainly on four sources of financing:

- (a) UN contribution, which has remained unchanged at \$US 500,000 per annum notwithstanding increases in costs of living etc;
- (b) Annual contribution from member States, which varies from time to time;
- (c) Donor support, usually targeted to specific courses and training programmes; and
- (d) Fees paid by students taking the short-term courses.

19. While reason would easily dictate that the United Nations considering the needs of IDEP and the fact that the UN itself would demand from IDEP the effective fulfillment of the mandate it was given and which has not changed, should now revise its contribution upwards, this has never been done notwithstanding annual resolutions to that effect by the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

20. **Recommendations include the following:**

- (a) IDEP's financial support is likely to improve if it shows prudent and effective use of the financial resources it already has; and
- (b) In that regard, a management audit is necessary to streamline operations and recommend more effective and productive ways of using existing resources and attracting new sources of funding.

## 6. *The management of IDEP as an institution*

21. In its *Medium-Term Strategy and Indicative Work Programme, 2007-2010*,<sup>1</sup> IDEP notes that “in order to play its continent-wide training and advisory role effectively, it needs to display a *visionary sense* in identifying future important policy challenges, raise critical questions and contribute to their resolution. One crucial responsibility of the Institute is to develop the capacity to articulate future development problems clearly and provide ways to monitor their emergence and tackle them early, using homegrown approaches. IDEP must also manage to bring these problems to the attention of policy-makers. In this regard, the concluding section of the *Indicative Work Programme* highlights that “*scientific credibility constitutes a prerequisite because the intrinsic quality of the work of IDEP must remain uncontested at all times.*”<sup>2</sup>

22. While the review subscribes to this perception on IDEP’s scientific leadership in fulfilling its mission, it notes that its current state of staffing and management, institutional leadership and effective functioning of its governance structures leave a lot to be desired.

23. First, while the **Advisory Board** should act as the **Scientific Council** for IDEP, and play a key role in discussing, recommending and approving the training programme, courses and scientific content of IDEP’s work, this body is by and large moribund. IDEP has been functioning, over the past few years, under the sole piloting of the Director, a situation which is both untenable and unsustainable.

24. Second, where the **Executive Committee** has filled the vacuum left by a moribund **Scientific Council**, this has been done ineptly and ineffectively.

25. Third, IDEP is grossly understaffed. Of the eight professional staff, only three can run courses and training programmes. Of these three, one is the Director (who is quite often on mission abroad), the other, the Deputy Director (in charge of training) and the third, a full-time professor. IDEP contracts other teaching and training staff as the need arises. This makes it very difficult to build a profile of scientific leadership as a centre of excellence from which Africa can source cutting-edge knowledge on development planning and options.

26. Fourth, a culture of management conducive to high staff morale and a productive working relationship among the professional and general staff are yet to be established. This impacts on performance negatively and undermines the possibility of profiling IDEP as a centre of excellence.

27. Five, IDEP has a very well-resourced library and data system, which could be of tremendous use to visiting scholars and writers. However, this resource is largely underutilized as it serves mainly the Masters (MA) and other training programmes. IDEP could also partner with other research institutions to use this resource, thereby encouraging collaborative scientific work and research in the area of development economics and planning.

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<sup>1</sup> IDEP (October 2006), *Medium-term and Indicative Work Programme 2007-2010*, Dakar, Senegal.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

28. Sixth, IDEP has underperformed in the area of publications. Not a single journal or academic bulletin emanates from IDEP. Over the last five years, no book has come out of IDEP's work. Hope has been built on some work in progress, which we were not able to see and evaluate.

29. **Recommendations include the following:**

- (a) The vision and mission of IDEP as originally stated are still relevant. What is needed is a paradigm shift from business as usual of undertaking a few training programmes and an MA course to an imaginative and aggressive pursuit of this vision and mission under a leadership that believes in it and can deliver;
- (b) Intellectual leadership is a critical factor for an institution such as IDEP. In that regard, IDEP needs scholars, well connected in the intellectual environment in Africa, respected for academic productivity and leadership and with the skills to deal with governments and member States;
- (c) IDEP needs to have a good working relationship with the host country;
- (d) In order for staff morale to improve, a Staff Council recognized by management should have regular meetings with the latter and chart the running of the institution on a corporate basis;
- (e) Collaboration and partnership with African institutions such as the Council for the Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA) should not only exist in writing, but it should also be evidenced in IDEP's activities such as joint seminars, publications, workshops, staff exchanges, etc.;
- (f) IDEP and ECA should work together more closely. ECA staff can spend time at IDEP as visiting and vice versa lecturers, researchers and trainers at no cost to IDEP; and
- (g) IDEP should enhance the sale and marketing of its resources such as the data centre, library and conference facilities.