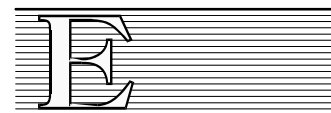




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**Repositioning the African Institute of Economic Development and
Planning for the challenges of the twenty first century**

Introduction

1. In response to resolution 858 (XLI) adopted by the forty-first session of the Economic Commission for Africa in April 2008, the Executive Secretary of the Commission took steps towards alleviating the immediate financial difficulties of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) and elaborated a plan to reposition the Institute. The present report outlines the major steps taken and the measures proposed for repositioning the Institute, as articulated by its newly recruited Director.

Resource mobilization

2. To alleviate the Institute's immediate financial difficulties and ensure its financial sustainability, the Executive Secretary embarked on a resource mobilization campaign, which included encouraging member States to pay their contributions. The campaign is beginning to yield results, as several countries have now paid their contributions and/or arrears, including some paying for the first time.

Recruitment of a new Director for IDEP

3. Following a fair and transparent selection process, a new Director was recently appointed for the Institute. He is Professor Adebayo Olukoshi, a respected scholar and former Executive Secretary of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA). Working closely with the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Africa, the new Director has made some initial proposals for repositioning IDEP to meet the challenges of the twenty first century. The proposals are summarized below.

Policy research

- The framework for development research at IDEP should be revived and efforts should be made to ensure that the research that is undertaken meets the needs of development policymakers across the continent. This will position IDEP as the foremost resource for policy research, which is one of its principal vocations.
- The policy research work that would be carried out should be inspired by the African development agenda encapsulated in the work of the African Union and should be tailored to the needs of African governments as dictated by the particular circumstances of their countries. The policy research work should be undertaken in close collaboration and partnership with the key operational divisions of the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union, the African Development Bank, and the eight regional economic communities recognized by the African Union. In addition, alliances should be forged with relevant pan-African research organizations, national universities and centres of social and economic research. Furthermore, global strategic alliances should be pursued with such institutions as WIDER, the United Nations University, and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research. Similarly, proactive steps should be taken to forge working relations with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization and other agencies of the United Nations family whose mandates include a strong development component.

Training and capacity-building

- The training activities of IDEP targeted at government officials should be consolidated further with a view to not only preserving historic gains, but also facilitating the opening of new frontiers. In this connection, it is proposed to completely revamp the current training curriculum of the Institute in order to introduce new and more diverse modules adapted to policymaking requirements. Opportunities should also be explored for extending training in development policy analyses to parliamentarians occupying key positions in Africa's new democracies, who are frequently called upon to analyse policy proposals for approval prior to implementation. Sections of African civil society could also take advantage of capacity-building opportunities offered by IDEP to strengthen their ability to engage governments effectively and constructively. Members of civil society who, in acquiring new skills or refreshing their knowledge, will be particularly well placed to train or mentor others should be among the prime beneficiaries of the Institute's capacity-building programmes.
- Presently, IDEP carries out its training and capacity-building work exclusively at its headquarters in Dakar. While retaining Dakar for all pan-African training activities, it is proposed to also phase in a decentralised system of nationwide training programmes organized in cooperation with relevant government departments and agencies, as well as with local universities and research centres. In this way, IDEP training activities will have an extended reach and will also be brought closer to those who need them the most. Subregional training arrangements should also be explored in association with the Regional Economic Communities.
- The training activities of IDEP have been based exclusively on traditional face-to-face engagement between trainer and trainee. While this method of direct interaction should be maintained on account of its many pedagogical benefits, attention should also be paid to the new opportunities offered by the ongoing revolution in information and communications technologies. The deployment of ICT tools will help extend the reach of IDEP training to people who are highly motivated, but are not able to attend the face-to-face training sessions held at the Institute or hosted elsewhere. It will also allow people who have completed the Institute's training activities to undertake their own self-supervised interactive online refresher training.

Outreach and dissemination

- The success of IDEP following its repositioning as a regional and global player will depend on the extent to which it can establish a robust outreach and dissemination programme. In this regard, it is proposed to introduce:
 - a) An IDEP policy dialogue series to be undertaken at the national, regional and global levels according to defined needs and strategic objectives;
 - b) An IDEP advanced seminar on development series that will allow for a structured engagement at the national, regional and international levels between development researchers and development practitioners;

- c) A twice-yearly or quarterly newsletter on development issues based on, but not limited, the approved work plan of IDEP;
- d) A completely revamped IDEP library and documentation centre to serve as an important pillar in the proposed outreach and dissemination strategy;
- e) An IDEP CD-Rom or DVD-based documentary series under the broad theme of **makers and shapers of African development**. Through this series, the contributions of key individuals, institutions, networks, businesses, and even communities to the positive transformation of the continent will be highlighted and packaged for radio and television broadcast within and outside Africa, and for posting on the Institute's revamped website; and
- f) An IDEP alumni programme through which the hundreds of policy personnel who have completed the Institute's training programme since its creation will be re-engaged as a veritable resource base for its further advancement.

Repositioning IDEP

- It is proposed to fine-tune the document in June and July 2009, before it is circulated for internal discussion by the staff members of the Institute. A revised document will then be produced and made available for consideration first by the Institute's Scientific Board in August 2009, and then by the Governing Council as soon as possible thereafter before it is presented to the Conference of Ministers.
- Resources to support the repositioning of the Institute will be mobilized concurrently with the development of new programme initiatives and the boosting of staff productivity. This will be done without prejudice to the implementation of the programme of activities that has already been put in place for 2009.