Ministerial Lobby Group

PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES AND MODE OF OPERATION OF THE GMAP

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Michel Leblanc, Tel. 01 45 24 17 98, E-mail: michel.leblanc@oecd.org

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1. SUMMARY OF TOPICS AND ISSUES

West Africa has undergone radical change in the last 10-15 years. Most countries have undertaken major structural reforms affecting both the organisation of government and mode of governance (democratisation of government and society, redistribution of powers between presidency, government and parliament, decentralisation, anti-corruption measures, etc.) and aimed at macro-economic stabilisation through adjustment and liberalisation of the main sectors of production. At the sub-regional level, the countries in the CFA franc zone have embarked on an intensive process of economic integration within WAEMU\(^1\), with a strategy of convergence of macro-economic and sectoral policies, a multilateral surveillance system and transfers of competence. ECOWAS\(^2\) has taken a similar approach, with the objective of creating a second currency zone in the process towards a single currency zone by 2004. Most of the countries in the region are drafting poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) to benefit from the HIPC\(^3\) initiative and to promote a systematic approach to poverty-alleviation issues. However, each country has defined its PRSP within a strictly national framework, without integrating it into a regional approach.

There is now a general consensus on the need for regional integration, based both on historical legacy and awareness that national territories are too small to implement viable economic development strategies or to manage shared resources. However, governance remains largely national or sub-national, and most public decisions are taken within a national development perspective. The many intergovernmental organisations, which cover different areas and compartmentalise technical problems according to their specific mandates, do not make it any easier to arrive at a shared, consistent, cross-sectoral regional vision, which could then guide sectoral choices.

International development cooperation also tends to have a national focus. Despite strong support for the objective of integration, the aid agencies have never managed to produce a valid, coordinated strategy on integration. Instead, they have preferred links with individual governments through bilateral agreements.

The key challenge for the GMAP\(^4\) is therefore to generate effective discussion on regional integration, a key pre-requisite for making progress towards sustainable development. This involves political action steered by high-level public figures with a strong commitment to integration. It implies organising discussion between citizens, civil society organisations and public policymakers. It means choosing common issues and enhancing discussion of them by drawing on existing knowledge and by producing cross-sectoral analyses and proposals, as opposed to the usual sectoral approaches.

There are several reasons for changing approach and seeking a new impetus for integration processes:

− As economies and trade become increasingly globalised, only a regional approach to development will enable West Africa to escape marginalisation. This strategic option requires countries to be aware of the sub-region’s collective resources and the advantages that rational, shared development of these resources will bring to all the countries involved.

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1. West African Economic and Monetary Union (Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest-Africaine).
2. Economic Community of West African States.
3. Highly Indebted Poor Countries.
4. Ministerial Lobby Group (Groupe Ministériel d'Animation et de Proposition).
Democratisation and good governance have become decisive criteria for full membership of the international community and for engaging the support of citizens and other stakeholders for reforms. Greater convergence of democratisation processes would accelerate regional integration.

Political problems—such as acute and persistent socio-political crises—are now the main brake on economic growth, without which sustainable regional integration is an illusion. There is an urgent need to remove these political obstacles, which hamper day-to-day integration processes and undermine sub-regional dialogue and the status of West Africa in international negotiations.

The cleavage between French-speakers, English-speakers and Portuguese-speakers is a major obstacle to integration processes. In addition to communication problems, the countries have inherited different traditions of organisation of powers and administrative management, which complicates regional dialogue. This division is a central issue, which the GMAP needs to take into account in order to decompartmentalise discussion, create a climate of trust and help improve regional decision-making processes. Awareness and affirmation of a common African identity, over and above colonial legacies, should facilitate communication and the assertion of African leadership. The members of the GMAP therefore position themselves above the cleavage stemming from linguistic legacies, which remains one of the main brakes on integration.

The new impetus from African leaders, reflected in various pan-African integration initiatives (MAP\(^5\), Omega\(^6\) and the Compact). These initiatives call for a unitary, rallying, harmonised approach. The GMAP has a strong interest in this and proposes engaging in dialogue with the promoters of the different programmes to arrive at the adoption of a single, consensual plan.

These issues have become a concern for all. The lack of a forum to investigate them properly prompted ministers from the region to take the initiative of setting up the GMAP. By developing partnerships and alliances with networks firmly engaged on the path to regional integration, the GMAP initiative aims to promote the collective regional interest in public policymaking.

2. **Objectives**

The GMAP initiative was a response to the current context of compartmentalised information and knowledge and lack of regional debate on the region's collective resources and assets and on sensitive issues such as population flows, management of socio-political crises, reform of modes of governance, management of common goods and other matters that are keys to making progress towards genuine integration.

*The GMAP's five objectives:*

- Create an informal discussion forum, outside diplomatic formalities, where all the important issues related to regional integration can be discussed and investigated, particularly those considered taboo in intergovernmental discussions.

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6. Omega Plan for Africa.
– Develop a collective vision and approach to globalisation and its implications for a regional approach to development.

– Form a pool of persons to lobby and advise national and regional policymakers and aid agencies.

– Assist government leaders to formulate their national and regional decisions on the basis of general and cross-sectoral issues, which frame the management of sectoral issues and which form the "key areas" of a regional development strategy, but which are too broad to be encompassed by sectoral approaches.

– Decompartmentalise North-South decision-making centres and improve the level of information by developing communication and dialogue with organised non-government stakeholders in the region, with a view to providing a better understanding of the complex processes and transformations under way in the region.

3. ORGANISATION AND MODE OF OPERATION

3.1. Institutional positioning

The GMAP is an independent group. It sets its own work agenda and priorities and way of approaching them.

Supporting the goal outlined by the heads of state, i.e. integration of countries in the ECOWAS area, which was selected as the area for economic and political integration, the GMAP is positioned as a "advisory group", a "forum for discussion, proposals and exchange" with an informal mode of operation, although it is recognised by the heads of state of ECOWAS. It acts on its own initiative, but can be called on by ECOWAS and other institutions to steer a discussion on a particular topic of concern.

3.2. Membership

The membership of the GMAP is based on the need to involve high-level figures with a clear interest in regional problems and a truly regional vision of development issues, who want to encourage energy and ideas, make proposals and identify expertise scattered across the different sectors of West African society.

On this basis, the members of the GMAP are co-opted by the group. The members are personally committed to the GMAP’s innovative approach, which means fully supporting its objectives, making time for its work, participating in coordinating the group, making personal contributions to the debates and discussions, and promoting the ideas and proposals generated by the GMAP.

Most members are ministers in office. Former ministers that were involved in the GMAP’s activities may remain members after their term of office if they so wish. The group may also co-opt other high-level policymakers (cabinet directors, secretaries-general, former high-ranking civil servants, etc.) and reputed intellectuals.

3.3. Partnerships

To make its project a success, the GMAP is developing partnerships at various levels so that:
Upstream, it can produce high-quality information by drawing on and enriching data, analyses and proposals from a broad network of expertise;

Downstream, it can put its analyses and proposals to effective use by circulating them among decision-making circles.

To this end, the GMAP has established partnerships with various types of institution:

- Regional networks: ROPPA\(^7\) (farmers’ organisations), WAEN\(^8\) and Interface (economic operators), MDP\(^9\) (local elected officials), etc.
- The main IGOs\(^{10}\): CILSS\(^{11}\), ECOWAS, WAEMU, etc.
- Aid agencies and the Club du Sahel/OECD.

In addition to these partnerships, the GMAP will mobilise a network of resource people:

- Opinion-makers and leading civil society organisations, municipal representatives and members of parliament, high-profile journalists, academics, NGOs\(^{12}\), etc.
- Secretaries-general, ministerial and presidential cabinet directors and advisors.

3.4. Chair

The GMAP is chaired by a member minister appointed by the group. The chair is assisted by a vice-chair appointed in the same way.

The posts of chair and vice-chair are for a renewable term of one year. If the chair’s ministerial mandate ends, the vice-chair will act as chair until the next group meeting, at which a new chair will be appointed.

3.5 Organisation and secretariat

The GMAP and its chair are responsible for overseeing the group’s activities. The chair is assisted by a general secretariat.

As a first priority, a secretariat needs to be set up in order to execute the activities decided, ensure communication between the ministers and group coordination, and guarantee the GMAP’s independence. However, the installation of a secretariat is not intended to compete with or supersede IGOs. And it must not lead to the creation of a new regional organisation, at a time when the ministers are supporting the rationalisation of IGOs. The structure of the secretariat will therefore be as streamlined as possible:

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10. Intergovernmental organisations.
11. Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (Comité permanent inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel).
coordinator, an administrative secretary, an accountant and a liaison officer. The specialists required by the GMAP to carry out its thematic activities related to the various issues in the work programme will be recruited for periodic consultancy assignments, the duration of which will be specified in the terms of their contracts.

These contractual specialists will be recruited on the basis of their experience in the major issues investigated by the GMAP. Their mission will be to produce summary documents to enhance the GMAP’s discussions and proposals.

The secretariat will be housed at ECOWAS, although it will operate independently.

3.6. Financial organisation

The GMAP hopes to benefit from the financial support of the ACBF13 to develop its activities and work programme. These resources will be supplemented by direct financing from aid agencies and contributions in kind. The project document will be forwarded to the ACBF in July 2001, for submission to the board of directors in November 2001. Between now and then, the members of the GMAP will lobby ACBF’s financial partners to obtain their support.

ECOWAS will open two specific accounts for the GMAP, one in convertible currency and the other in local currency. The ministerial lobby committee is the steering committee for the ACBF project and is responsible for managing funds. The GMAP coordinator is preparing a prospective half-yearly budget, which will be submitted to the ministerial coordination committee for adoption, so that the funds can be released for the operation and conduct of activities for the corresponding period. The secretary general is also in charge of the day-to-day management of funds and must report on income and expenditure to the chair and members of the GMAP. Financial management is subject to an annual external audit.

The relationship between ECOWAS and the GMAP will be set forth in an agreement.

4. WORK PROGRAMME AND SELECTED THEMES

The GMAP’s work agenda focuses on regional integration. This theme is what national leaders expect from the GMAP.

The GMAP considers that there is no longer any divergence of opinion in the region on the need for regional integration ("integration is no longer an option, it is self-evident"14). Its main mission is therefore to contribute to a regional approach to development. Its functions are to: i) foster participatory, forward-looking debate, ii) contribute to the emergence of a shared regional vision, iii) encourage governments to take a regional approach to national strategies and policies, iv) encourage aid agencies to make the necessary reforms to improve aid effectiveness, v) help to renew partnership and overall dialogue between the international community and the West Africa region.

Concentrating on a central theme must enhance the group’s consistency and cohesion and make it easier to achieve tangible results, avoiding the dispersal of discussions, energy and human and financial resources.

The themes selected by the GMAP have two main characteristics:

They are cross-sectoral issues, which have an impact on sectoral approaches, but which are not taken into account by sectoral policymakers;

They are issues that will genuinely be furthered by a regional vision and approach to development shared by the main stakeholders in the region’s political, economic and social life.

The themes are approached in four stages:

- Analysis and comprehension of complex situations and their interaction
- Forward thinking and comparison of viewpoints, organised at working groups, meetings of the group of ministers, regional conferences and workshops
- Formulation of operational proposals
- Communication and advocacy.

The members of the GMAP are interested in four main areas:

- Political aspects of regional integration
- Building a competitive, integrated regional economy
- Infrastructure development, production and trade catchment areas, management of common infrastructure
- Strategies of development cooperation agencies in relation to regional integration.

### 4.1. Political aspects of regional integration

The main focuses of regional integration in West Africa tend to be socio-political problems, economic and trade issues and currency zones. There is also the issue of communications infrastructure. However, political aspects are one of the main obstacles to the effective implementation of commitments made by governments and to the transposition into national policy of decisions taken at sub-regional level. The need to control human activity, particularly in border areas, is causing an increase in informal obstacles to trade. It therefore appears difficult to progress on economic and sectoral issues without first tackling several major political issues:

- Managing identity crises. Integration can make it easier for sub-areas and networks of people to express themselves and be taken into account, but can also be perceived as a threat to nation-states and to some social and ethnic groups. Can countries develop a common approach to these issues? How can the issue of regulatory institutions and, more generally, convergence of reform of modes of governance be approached?

- Population mobility and refugees. Under the principles of free movement of people and right of establishment throughout the West African area, people displaced by conflict are no longer necessarily considered as refugees, but as regional citizens: this poses problems of access to resources and control of trafficking and political activities. Owing to the fragility of governments and regimes, obstacles to population movement tend to be increasing in an attempt to control activities within national territories.
− Divergences in democratisation processes. Political dialogue in the sub-region is significantly weakened by some types of political regime. This inevitably affects regional discussions and decisions. There is also the problem of convergence of institutional reform (particularly decentralisation) and of the impact on management and regulation of regional public goods and shared resources.

4.2. **Building a competitive, integrated regional economy**

All the countries in the sub-region now consider inclusion in the international economy as the main engine of their development. They are involved in multiple negotiations, at regional level (within the framework of ECOWAS) and at international level (within the framework of the WTO\(^1\), the Cotonou Agreement with the European Union, environment conventions, etc.). These negotiations, which all take place in an identical international context, are conducted separately (overlapping negotiation frameworks) and do not allow countries to negotiate on the basis of a regional vision of their development strategies, even though a regional approach is the only way to resolve most of the questions at the heart of these negotiations. These include:

− What are the costs of integration and non-integration in West Africa? How can the gains and losses generated by integration processes be assessed?

− Under what conditions should the region become involved in free-trade areas, such as the Regional Economic Partnership Agreement with the EU\(^16\) and the free-trade agreement with the United States? How can the impact on key productive sectors, balances of payments and government budgets be assessed? Can export growth match import growth or are there specific risks for some sectors if they are opened too quickly to what may be unfair international competition?

− How should changing labour, environmental and health standards be integrated into the adaptation of export sectors (given that these standards are gradually becoming a much bigger constraint than conventional customs duties)? How can small firms be promoted and how can the region take advantage of the relocation of industrial activities from the North to countries where production costs are lower? What common approaches does this imply in terms of political stability, investment security, tax policy and training?

When examining different trade integration scenarios, it is important to look at the "neighbouring-area integration" occurring in ECOWAS border areas. The terms and conditions of monetary integration also merit further discussion. It would also be appropriate to focus more explicitly on actual dynamics of stakeholders, and to take industries’ mode of operation and level of competitiveness into account in negotiations on opening the region’s trade to international markets.

4.3. **Infrastructure development, production and trade catchment areas and management of common infrastructure**

Infrastructure development has been a central component in the construction of nation-states. The economic crisis has considerably slowed investment in infrastructure. At the same time, transnational production and trade catchment areas have developed. These catchment areas, which concentrate a

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15. World Trade Organisation.

growing share of the population, pose new challenges and can be seen as opportunities and factors of support for integration processes. There are several questions that need to be answered. These include:

- What type of infrastructure development should be promoted, given that existing approaches are industry-based and are not an effective response to cross-sectoral development needs? This raises the particular issue of promoting development centres (urban centres, industrial centres, agricultural production catchment areas) and interconnection within and between them.

- What common communications infrastructure should be promoted and what forms of management can guarantee sustainable, shared use? Should co-management between public sector and private operators be promoted and, if so, in what form?

- In which sectors could regional infrastructure reduce costs for each of the countries involved and enhance regional awareness and regional networks: healthcare, education (universities and other tertiary institutions), transport (ports, railways, etc.) and energy (gas pipeline project, interconnection of electricity grids, etc.)?

- How can infrastructure be financed? Is combined financing from governments, aid agencies and private investors a viable option?

4.4. Strategies of development cooperation agencies in relation to regional integration

By providing most of the financing for regional programmes and projects, aid agencies are one of the key actors in regional integration processes. Some agencies have a strategy, which they are implementing through intergovernmental organisations. Other agencies and financial institutions (such as the World Bank and the ADB\(^{17}\)) do not yet have genuine regional strategies and until now have preferred to deal with individual governments and implement investment and development programmes at country level. Poor coordination of aid and inconsistency between actions, which affect the efficiency of ODA\(^{18}\) at national level, are even more serious on a regional scale. The plethora of IGOs automatically produces a plethora of forms of cooperation. In the background, different integration projects are forming, sometimes in competition with each other, rendering more difficult the efforts of States to adopt a consistent regional strategy in response to the real challenges facing the region and under African leadership.

In this context, any regional development approach must incorporate the role played by the development agencies. Using the three previous themes as a base, the GMAP would like to be involved in organising sustained dialogue with the international community, to contribute to the agencies’ thinking on the regional aspects of their cooperation strategies and assist them in defining their priorities and forms of action. It intends to take advantage of agencies’ renewed interest in regional integration to promote this dialogue.
