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REGIONAL SEMINAR



UNIDO/COMESA Industrial Information Networking System

25-27 NOVEMBER, 1998 - LUSAKA, ZAMBIA

The Seminar Final Report

TF/RAF/96/A10

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This document has not been edited

INTRODUCTION

The regional seminar titled **UNIDO/COMESA Industrial Information Networking System**, organized by UNIDO in cooperation with COMESA secretariat with the theme of Information Networking for Technology, Investment and Business (INTIB) was held in Lusaka, Zambia from the 25-27 November, 1998.

ATTENDANCE, OPENING OF THE SEMINAR, ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND ORGANISATION OF WORK.

ATTENDANCE

Participants attended the seminar from six countries namely, Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Senegal, Sudan and Zambia. Egypt attended as an observer. The list of participants is attached as Annex I.

OPENING OF THE SEMINAR

His Excellence Mr. Yakashiro Nakamura, the Japanese Ambassador to Zambia officially opened the seminar. Mr Erastus J.O Mwencha, The Secretary general of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) made a statement. Mr Niel Biering, the UNIDO Country Representative and Mr. Alex Mwila, the Acting Chief executive of the Zambia Association of Manufacturers (ZACCI) also made statements. Dr Gogo of Ghana gave a vote of thanks on behalf of the participants.

His Excellency, Mr Yakashiro Nakamura, noted that the Japanese Government noted that events in Eastern Europe has drawn away attention from the plight of Africa, resulting into marginalisation of the continent. He observed that this prompted the Government of Japan to convene the Tokyo international conference on African Development (TICAD –II) Conference for the in Tokyo, Japan in 1992., whose primary theme was poverty alleviation through economic growth. He noted that meaningful economic growth can only be achieved through integration of African economies to the global economy.

He noted that the ultimate success of the information network depends on the formulation of comprehensive strategies for economic development coupled with a vigorous private sector which will fully utilise information for private sector driven development.

He noted that at the just ended TICAD II conference held in October 1998, Japan proposed the establishment of an Asia-Africa Investment Information Service centre. He proposed that consideration should be given to link INTIB project to this centre.

He reconfirmed his government's commitment to African development and hoped that through self help efforts and donor support Africa would develop.

The secretary general of COMESA in his statement observed that the seminar on INTIB was of considerable importance and timely. He noted that the information particularly, industrial

information is of critical importance in stimulating and facilitating national, and cross border trade and investments. More so for attracting Foreign Direct Investments, particularly in productive sectors of Agriculture, industry and the service sector such as tourism, in which have enormous potential for development.

He observed that as COMESA moves towards the realisation of a Free trade Area (FTA) by the year 2000, and Common External tariff by the year 2004 (CET). It is absolutely necessary to revamp the productive sectors in the region in order to realise the benefits of a FTA and a CET.

He pointed out that implementation of this project was long overdue and hence the need for it to be implemented expeditiously. He thanked UNIDO and the Japanese Government for making the project possible. He requested them to continue supporting the project until it is fully operational.

In his address, Mr. Niels Biering, the UNIDO country Representative to Zambia noted that as the least developed continent, Africa has the greatest potential for industrial development given its vast mineral, agricultural and untapped human resources. He pointed out that UNIDO has developed services, which would enable a client to assemble a team of expert advisors on various subjects such as industrial policy, investment promotion, quality control etc.

He observed that provision of industrial information is a pre-requisite for the successful implementation of such programmes. He noted that the variety information is vital to decision makers in government, the private sector, financial institutions and the investors. He pointed out that the existing information infrastructure in most developing countries is not adequate to meet present demands and that it was against this background that UNIDO has developed the INTIB.

Mr. Alex Mwila, the Acting chief Executive of ZACCI made a statement. He noted that UNIDOs' support to ZACCI Secretariat has resulted in the improvement in the delivery of information. He however observed that number of factors continued to hinder the development of information services in the country. These include limited cooperation and coordination between existing information collection service units, limited consideration to collection and processing of local data, particularly that relating to local raw materials, local processes, and equipment, local markets, sector specific data and the general lack of funding for technological and industrial information activities. He thanked the Japanese government for its targeted support to the private sector and hoped that the project would be a success.

Dr. Gogo in presenting his vote of thanks noted that information is power and it is therefore that all should be done to ensure that the project becomes a success, as it will provide vital information to facilitate industrial development in Africa.

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND RAPPORTEUR

The Cameroon (Byll Arkhini) was nominated as Chairman and Egypt (Mr. Tarek Abbas) as Raporteur.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANISATION OF WORK

The seminar adopted the agenda as below and the proposed organization of work with amendments and organization of work as follows:

AGENDA

The agenda was adopted as below.

1. Opening of the Seminar
2. Adoption of agenda and organisation of work
3. Network for Technology Investment and Business
4. Trade Information Network (TINET)
5. Outcome of the 2nd Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICADII)
6. Country experiences in industrial information and networking:
 - i) Ghana
 - ii) Senegal
 - iii) Sudan
 - iv) Cameroon
 - v) Zambia
7. Information products, collection, processing storage and exchange of products:
 - i) Information products for the network
 - ii) Information collection system
 - iii) Information collection instruments (Questionnaires)
 - iv) Processing, storage, and exchange of information between and among UNIDO, the National focal points and nodes
8. Marketing of Industrial information products.
 - i) Marketing of Industrial information products
 - ii) Delivering the goods.
9. Introduction to National Networks
10. National Networking Project requirements and follow-up
11. Establishment of Commercial Networking Activities, Sri-Lanka
12. Formulation of Business Plan
13. Closing

ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS

1 INTRODUCTION TO INFORMATION NETWORKING

INTRODUCTION TO INFORMATION NETWORKING

The UNIDO representative, Mr. Hans Pruim and the UNIDO consultant, Mr. Vijit Thiraviaraj Ratnarajah, presented an introduction to ITMIN as a good example for commercialisation of information services. The role of UNIDO and commercialisation actions to be taken and network options was outlined. The Sri-Lanka experience in information networks for business in developing countries was presented as well.

The main purpose of the presentation was to introduce the participants, who were of varying background to the concept of information networking in order to equip them with information necessary to enable them to understand the framework within which the concept of IRMS was expected to work. Participants were introduced to the various information networks which found all over the world which include:

- Investment and Technology networks
- National information centers which are networked together
- International technology centers
- Subcontracting exchange centers
- International referral centers
- Cleaner technology, energy and environment

The concept of national networks was discussed. It was noted that it is possible to establish national information network, which can act as one-stop shops for SMES (postal) centres for SMEs knowledge and distribution and active business information centres. The concept of establishing national networks as national solution to the provision of industrial information was discussed.

To illustrate the concept of information networking a typical example of an information network established by a company called Industrial Technology Market Information network (ITMIN) which, was established with the financial and technical support of UNIDO in Sri Lanka, was presented. ITMIN is a case illustrating the concept of networking and commercialization of network information products.

Basically the project involved funding by UNDP of start up activities such as a needs assessment study, which was carried out in 1991, a feasibility study which was implemented in 1992. It was pointed out that the feasibility recommended the participation of the private sector in Sri Lanka. And also recommended that government be involved from day one.

The company was finally established with the private sector and government taking up??? 51 and 49 percent shares respectively. UNDP provided funding amounting to US 1.2 million while the share holders put in US 400,000.00

The uniqueness of ITMIN was presented and included the following:

- it was a joint venture
- Public owned but managed by private sector
- Mission was national in nature
- Used UN start up capital and technical training
- It was a regional centre for excellency
- It was established as a one stop information shop
- The services were to be provided at a fee from day one.
- It was explained that ITMIN extended its services to provide services such as internet services, training, technology transfer broker, ITMIN alert service, Company matching, company data base and Constancy

In the discussions it was pointed out that there were some problems which were faced in the initial stage of the project. These included: SMEs could not provide information, especially up to date information, because they believed that their existence depended in the information they hold; wrong personnel was hired i.e. librarians who did not understand the business.

In the issuing discussion it was observed that the strength of ITMIN lies not in the provision of information, but rather in the provision of Internet and training which accounts for 88% of the company's income. It was noted that the commercialization option of ITMIN was rather unique both in terms of the support that the company received during its inception and the conditions, which prevailed at the time. Therefore, it is not easy to replicate in other countries, though a lot of lessons may be learned from the company's experience. The presenter pointed out that provision of information alone is not a self-sustainable business and that it was therefore important to carry out other income generating services.

The meeting also noted the commendable financial and technical support, which UNIDO, provided to ITMIN towards the establishment and strengthening of the company.

The concept of establishing national networks and their commercialization was presented and discussed as an alternative to the current programme. A brief account of how to prepare an business plan was also presented. In the issuing the participants noted that it was difficult to prepare a business plan for implementation of such a programme within the time limit available to participants. It was agreed that business plans would be prepared and presented to UNIDO for consideration.

COMESA TRADE INFORMATION NETWORK

The COMESA secretariat presented the COMESA Trade Information Network (TINET). The purpose of the presentation was to broaden the minds of participants and exposing them to real life situations regarding provision of similar information networks on a regional basis.

It was pointed that information is needed to facilitate decision making by not only the private sector but also others such as government, donors, etc. It was emphasised that since the information usually demanded by the business community it must be timely, relevant and of high quality which is guaranteed. It was pointed out that a top down approach is used in determining the type of information to be provided. The problem associated with the classification of SMEs was discussed. It was pointed out that an SME in one country might not necessarily be considered an SME in another country. It was pointed out that countries use different classification criteria, which include turnover, number of employees or level of investment. It was important that the classification used be clearly stated.

It was indicated that gathering of information is not easy but the private sector is actively involved in the provision of information for the network. The private sector provides the information because the information requested is basic information and it is information, which is intended to help the company sell its products.

Second Conference for on the Development of Africa (TICAD II)

A paper on the results of the Second Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD II) was presented. The purpose of the presentation was to demonstrate a number of initiatives which are being implemented by many of the co-operating partners concerned with the industrialisation of Africa and how they can be linked into a network in order to provide essential information to the business community and governments.

The meeting was informed that the TICAD II conference was an initiative aimed at helping African States extricate themselves from poverty and establish stable societies. The conference called for the strengthening of South – South co-operation to deepen the economic ties between Africa and Asian regions.

Most importantly the conference proposed the establishment of an Asian – Africa investment Information Service Centre, to be located in Malaysia, to promote investments in Africa by Asian countries. The conference also advocated for holding of regular forums for Asia Africa dialogue.

The seminar recommended that UNIDO and the government of Japan should provide technical and other support needed to link the Asia – Africa to the INTIB/IRMS^{PLUS}.

During the discussion, it was pointed out that regional integration is of critical importance for the development of Africa and it was suggested that consideration be given to the establishment of a regional integration centre.

COUNTRY PRESENTATIONS

The countries present, namely Ghana, Cameroon, Senegal, Sudan and Zambia made country presentations on their experience in information networking and provision of industrial information. Proceedings of the country presentations are as below.

Ghana

A representative from Ghana presented a paper on industrial networks in Ghana. The paper outlined some of the benefits which can be derived from the industrial information network which include accelerated technological and innovation and improvement in quality of service/product, improvement in efficiency of companies, would insure cost effectiveness in production/operation.

The status of industrial information in the country was also presented. It was noted that while the state of industrial information has improved much more needs to be done particularly with regard to provision of required technological information to improve efficiency and effectiveness in industries, especially in small and medium scale industries, where the information is highly inadequate or non-existent.

The origin of information was presented and it was noted that due to historical ties most of the information is from Europe while the rest of the information is obtained from local institutions such as government ministries, export boards, chambers of commerce, export promotion council, investment centre etc. It was however noted that there is need to package information particularly for the small-scale enterprises in order for its impact on these industries to be effective.

It was pointed out that although efforts were made to provide a network of information through a project called "The Ghana National Scientific and technological Information Network (GHASTINET), which expanded and brought about the Industrial and technology Information System (INSTIS) , the lack of logistics has stifled the initiative. Through the project national databases such as the High Level Manpower and the directory of ongoing projects were established. It was noted that another initiative the West African Enterprise Network (EWAEN), which is hosted in Ghana, is currently under implementation. The motive of WAEN is to link up enterprises for the purpose of improving business opportunities and increasing their accessibility to capital. Other information networks include the Intermediate Technology Transfer Units (ITTUs) for provision of technological information. Two information brokers have been set up and are providing information, these are the Ghana Classified and the Databank.

The paper noted that the country has high expectations from the project and that the project will bring about considerable improvements in the provision of industrial information. In particular, access to industrial information would improve, manpower skills, national databases would be utilised more through the IRMS^{PLUS} which would improve the inquiry service, increased capacity in the field of marketing industrial information products and an effective networking service among African countries, which has hitherto been absent.

Cameroon

A representative from Cameroon made a presentation on the country's its experience with regard to information networks and provision of industrial information in Cameroon. The purpose of the presentation was to exchange the Cameroon's experience with other participants

It was indicated that two initiatives were undertaken in an effort to establish an industrial information networks in the country in the past. The first initiative was aimed at setting databases and encouraging communication between and among institutions concerned with the provision of business information. The project, which was supported by UNIDO, was implemented within a period of 15 months. The second initiative focussed on the establishment of an information network among the 'pillars'.

It was explained that, although the intentions of the two initiatives were very good they initiatives did not achieve their intended objectives and the networks are at the moment not operational. Some of the factors, which contributed to the poor performance of the initiatives, were identified as:

- i) Support period was too short.
- ii) Marginal participation of SMEs who were to be the main suppliers and users of information. The strategy focused on large industries.
- iii) Lack of maintenance strategy for maintaining the system once donor support was withdrawn.
- iv) Outdated of information.
- v) Lack of professionalism in the provision of information.
- vi) Limited skilled manpower
- vii) Project was implemented without taking into account the expectations of the clientele
- viii) Inappropriate equipment.
- ix) Dramatic change in the environment.

The meeting was informed that earlier projects targeted large-scale industries. However, another programme, the PPP has been launched which is targeted at small-scale enterprises. It is hoped that the programme will benefit greatly from the current INTIB programme.

In the issuing discussion the meeting noted how well intended projects can be derailed if care is not take during the implementation of the project/programme. In particular, the meeting noted the effect termination of projects/programmes before the project is fully operational could have

on the project. The meeting urged UNIDO to support the implementation of the INTIB/IRMS until it is fully operational. The workshop participants emphasised that the IRMS once fully operational will be very useful in facilitating industrial development in Africa countries and will for the first time allow enable the exchange of information, between the various nodes, at country level, regional level and international level. The participants noted that it would be sad to see such a good and well intended programme become a 'white elephant', because of the withdrawal of support and therefore urged the Japanese government and UNIDO to support the programme until it was fully functional.

Senegal

The experience on information and networking Senegal was presented by one of the participants. It was reported that Senegal has developed a very comprehensive information network. About fifty questionnaires are administered to collect information, of which 10 are on a quarterly basis while the 30 are on an annual basis. The questionnaires are very comprehensive and take 2-3 hours to complete

The questionnaires are available on the Internet and are therefore not sent out. Others are sent out to the selected relevant institutions and companies. About 600 companies are linked to the network.

Senegal received support from UNIDO and the Ministry has its own servers for storage retrieval and processing of information and it was estimated that the programme will need US \$100,000.00 to continue to operate once support was withdrawn.

The meeting was informed that sensitisation and commercialisation is required to enable many clients become aware of the programme and as a way of ensuring sustainability. At the moment the information is provided free of charge.

During the discussion it was noted that Senegal's network is fairly advanced I was however, pointed out that the network does not seem to take into account the needs of SMEs who badly need the support. It was observed that the target seems to be for large companies, given the manner in which information is collected, most of who are well established and have international connections. The meeting therefore indicated that the programme should see how they could bring on board the SMEs, who badly need their services.

It was also noted that Senegal's experience illustrates how a seemingly good network can omit the most important client and that assessment of clients is critical in setting up such networks.

Concern was also raised regarding the length of questionnaires, which take too long. It was noted that this could have a serious effect on the accuracy of the data and on the response rate.

The question of sustainability of the programme after withdrawal of donor support was also discussed given that Senegal indicated that it would need US \$ 100,000.00 to run the

programme. In this respect, it was agreed that there is absolute need to commercialise information products and UNIDO should provide technical and material support to enable countries package information products as well as commercialise them.

SUDAN

The experience of Sudan in information networking and provision of industrial information was presented by a representative of Sudan. The last major undertaking to collect comprehensive industrial statistics and information was last carried out in the 1981/82 industrial survey. Later attempts to collect industrial statistics encountered difficulties. But information such as that on production is collected directly from large-scale establishments and that for smaller establishments are collected from secondary sources. The Central Bureau of statistics collects industrial information, from traditional industrial sectors. It was indicated that there was a major problem of data and time gap.

Consequently, the country embarked on a major programme to address the information gap by creating an efficient industrial information system. Thus an industrial information unit was set up with the support of UNIDO. The meeting was informed that the unit has achieved a great deal within a period of just six months. An industrial and investment unit was set up to provide industrial and investment information as industrial technology and market information. A survey was conducted for the major industrial estates. A business directory of industrial establishments was prepared. Presentation of information has improved, industrial strategy and environment policies have been reproduced, staff have been trained in the use of IRMS^{PLUS} plus package and a national seminar on Advanced technology for Globalisation of Technology information is to be held in December, 1998.

Sudan made a number of recommendations and sought for UNIDO's assistance. These included; carrying comprehensive industrial survey or census. Funding of national network using UNIDO's information products and networking, especially with regard to promotion of technology and investment. So that the newly established unit can work as a window for international and local investors, training in identification of investment opportunities as well as preparation of industrial feasibility studies; and commercialisation of information and services commercialisation.

In the discussion, the participants observed the serious lack of comprehensive industrial information and attributed it to the fact that most countries in the developing countries in Africa have not carried out industrial censuses for a long time due to limited financial resources and lack of support. The participants noted that this has contributed greatly to the availability of industrial information in most countries and created a serious gap in information, which is required by the business community, the government and the international community for their day to day decision making. The participants therefore recommended that UNIDO should seek financial assistance from the UNDP and from co-operating partners, in order to assist countries to carry out national industrial censuses. The participants noted that as sectors such as labour, population etc have received assistance, every five or ten years to carry out censuses.

Zambia

A representative from Zambia presented a paper on industrial information products and networking. It was pointed out that well developed industrial information infrastructure is one of the most important factor in determining the utility of networking facilities. In this respect it was pointed out that Zambia, like most developing countries lags behind in this area. A number of contributing factors were sighted, including poor telecommunication facilities, cost of equipment, limited technical skills, lack of appropriate information and lack of appreciation for up to date and timely information. It was re-emphasised that as a result of limited information Zambia faces a number of other challenges.

It was pointed out that the introduction of the INTIB provides hope for Zambia to explore and expose its business opportunities. Much would be achieved as a result of linking of Chambers of commerce, trade associations and other nodes relevant to the industrial sector as well as the linkage to regional and international institutions concerned with industrialisation.

It was noted that several organisations have been visited by ZACCI and are all enthusiastic about the network. They are hopeful that it will assist in creating a system for exchange and dissemination of information in Zambia which does not exist currently, as well as enable the business community get access to information available internationally. It was indicated that most of the organisations visited raised a number of issues. Such as the type of support UNIDO will provide to nodes, what controls will be put in place to avoid abuse of information and whether UNIDO would help in the upgrading of systems of nodes where they have no capacity to do so on their own.

In the discussions, which followed, the participants noted that it was important for UNIDO to provide information on what assistance can be provided to NFP and nodes at country level to make the system operational. It was pointed out that assistance is critical during the implementation of the programme.

Egypt

A member of the Egyptian delegation made a presentation on the Egyptian International trade Point (EITP). The purpose of the presentation was among other things to expose participants yet to other forms of global networking, in other fields, which have been successfully implemented in developing countries. The seminar was informed that the EITP is a one-stop shop where businessmen can receive all services related to international trade, whose objectives include increasing the participation of, mainly SMEs, in the world trade, lowering transactional costs, developing effective trade practices and disseminating information on trade and investment opportunities.

It was pointed out that EITP is linked to other trade points through the Global Trade Points Network (GTPN) and is also linked to 43 other commercial presentations through AT & T.

Several conventions bind the EITP with many trade centres such as the International Trade centre in Geneva, Business Opportunity Intelligent Service in and the Inter-Arab Trade information Network in Abu Dhabi.

The types of databases available at EITP were presented. The seminar was informed that EITP was willing to collaborate in the exchange of information with other countries and would provide technical and other assistance to those institutions which, would like to link up with EITP to facilitate closer collaboration.

INFORMATION NETWORK FOR TECHNOLOGY, INVESTMENT AND BUSINESS

The UNIDO representative, Ms. Shadia Yousif BAKHAIT, presented the information network for technology, investment and Business using the Information resource management system (IRMS^{PLUS}). The purpose of the presentation was to explain in detail how the IRMS^{PLUS} can be used as a tool for collection, processing and dissemination of industrial information as well as how it can be used to exchange information at country, regional and international levels. It was emphasised that IRMS^{PLUS} package is designed as a tool for use in the provision of industrial information to the national and international business community. It is designed to facilitate networking at country, regional and international levels, thus very ideal for information exchange at all levels. Furthermore it allows for hyper links to be made with all the relevant industrial information providers. In this way duplications have been minimised.

It was pointed out that knowledge may be the driving force of the information age and that what counts is availability of accurate information at the right place and the right time.

The IRMS^{PLUS} package was demonstrated and the manner in which it is expected to function was explained. The IRMS^{PLUS} comprises two parts, both of which are accessible through the internet, the **IRMS^{PLUS} data base** which is only accessible by use of a password for data entry and the **IRMS^{PLUS} Web site**, which requires no password and is used for viewing and searching. The IRMS data base comprises of six forms, the general business, technology, expert, process, training and database forms which are to be used during data entry, through a password which will be unique for each node. The other component, which includes general information about a country, is accessible without a password.

It was explained that in each country, a National Focal Point (NFP) would administer set up and administer national networks, which will comprise a number of selected 'nodes'. Staff at UNIDO will administer the whole package. Each node will be selected on the basis of its potential to provide industrial information products. Each node will be given a password, by the NFP to enable it enter information using the six questionnaires which have been designed to facilitate data collection. It was emphasised that for the network to be useful, it is extremely important that countries set up their national networks as soon as possible and collect information for the network. The network is only useful if it has information at the country level.

In the issuing discussion, the meeting noted the importance of the information network for the industrialisation of Africa and urged UNIDO and the government of Japan to support the project until it is fully operational, both at UNIDO and all NFPs.

The participants also proposed that the search facility should be designed so as to allow one to search information for a country, selected countries, for a region or the entire network.

In addition a facility in the IRMS^{PLUS} should be provided which would allow completion of questionnaires to be done of-line but allow the information to be sent once data entry is complete. This would considerably reduce operational cost, as one would not need to be on line while information is being inputted onto the questionnaires.

The seminar also recommended that NFP be assisted to carry out industrial information detailed needs assessment studies, to identify the specific industrial information required in each country and amend the questionnaires in the IRMS^{PLUS} to suit the overall information requirements.

During the discussion, discussion the meeting noted that Cameroon's experience is a provides good lessons as to what can happen to a well intended viable and useful programme if a number of issues are not taken into account during the implementation phase of the programme. In particular, the meeting noted that a number of good projects and programmes tend to suffer. Either because donor support is withdrawn before the programme becomes fully operational (simply because the project period has come to an end) or because measures are not put in place to ensure sustainability before the support is withdrawn.

The meeting noted that the same fate, which befell the Cameroon projects, could apply to the INTIB programme and recommended that UNIDO and the Japanese government to provide the necessary support needed until the project becomes fully operational. The bad experience of Cameroon in this field is to be avoided. Given the importance of the project and its expected positive effect on the development of industrial process in Africa, measures are to be placed to ensure sustainability of the project at both the UNIDO headquarters and the national focal points in the member countries. Particular emphasis is to be placed to the development of SMEs,

It was also observed that there is need to ensure the full participation of the clientele in the initial stages of the project and not to make any assumptions on their expectations.

The participants come up with a number of recommendations, which were categorised into general, country/regional recommendations and those for the new project. The recommendations were as follows:

RECOMMENDATIONS:

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON IRMSPLUS

1. UNIDO should continue to provide support to the NFC until the system becomes fully operational at both national focal point and UNIDO headquarter.
2. Given the importance of commercialisation of IRMS^{PLUS} information products UNIDO should provide technical/financial assistance to the NFC for preparation of feasibility study on the commercialisation of the information products.
3. UNIDO should adapt the IRMS^{PLUS} to specific situations highlighted, such as :
 - Reducing the costs of being on line for the filling of the Questionnaire;
 - Standardisation of Format of the Questionnaires
4. In order for other developing countries in Africa to benefit from this important network, UNIDO should support the establishment of the Network in these countries
5. UNIDO should explore the possibilities of linking the ASIA-AFRICA Investment Information Service Centre, which is to be established under TICAD II to enhance the exchange of information between Africa and Asia.

COMESA AND COUNTRY RECOMMENDATIONS

COMESA RECOMMENDATIONS

A Recommendation on the IRMS

- 1 UNIDO is requested to provide Technical and financial support to the COMESA Secretariat to become a regional centre for IRMS plus and to link all COMESA member States to the INTIB Network.
- 2 UNIDO is requested to provide financial and technical assistance to the COMESA Secretariat to carry out a comprehensive needs assessment of specific industrial information requirements of the business community, especially the private Sector, in the COMESA region.
- 3 UNIDO is requested to assist COMESA Secretariat to carry out a regional seminar on commercialisation of information products
- 4 Given the importance of providing industrial information to the business community in African countries, especially in the COMESA Region, and the important role information has in the industrialisation of Africa, the Japanese Government is requested to continue its support to the IRMS until the system is fully operational. In particular, the Japanese government is requested to provided financial support to UNIDO from its own resources or under TICAD II for the establishment of an IRMS Regional Centre at the COMESA Secretariat with links to all the COMESA countries.
- 5 The Japanese government is requested to provide assistance under TICAD II to link and facilitate close collaboration between the COMESA Secretariat and the Asia-Africa Investment Information Service Centre. As well as provide necessary financial and other resources for the COMESA Secretariat to establish a regional Investment Information Centre for Eastern and Southern African Countries to be linked to the centre to be established in Malaysia.
- 6 UNIDO is requested to organise a study tour for one or two COMESA staff members to UNIDO Heard Quarters in Vienna and other relevant industrial information products providers to study the operations of the IRMS^{PLUS} and UNIDO's investment promotion network. The tour would provide the participants with the necessary skills needed to provide industrial and investment information to the business community in the COMESA countries.

- 7 With regard to collection, Transmission, processing and exchange of industrial information products of the UNIDO INTIB/IRMS^{PLUS} UNIDO should do the following
- i) Prepare facility within the IRMS^{PLUS}, which would enable data, entry to be done off line and transmitted online all at once to reduce the cost of transmitting the data between UNIDIO, the National Focal Points and or Nodes.
 - ii) Provide a direct clear link between the business form and other forms on technology, institutions etc, as this is not clear at the moment.
 - iii) Provide direct access to the COMESA Secretariat to enter information on Investment Projects on-line, but preferably as in i) above.
 - iv) Re-design the data collection forms in such away as to make any client, information provider or seeker, realise that he/she can establish some business contact by providing or browsing through the network.
 - v) On the INTIB Page there should be some provision to direct the business community to the data entry part of the system.
 - vi) On the search facility, provision should be made to allow one to search for information a country, selected countries, at regional or international level.

B RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE NEW PROJECT

UNIDO to support the establishment of a company to replicate the Industrial Technology Information Network which was established in Sri Lanka in one of the COMESA Countries which would work as a model to be replicated in other COMESA countries.

CAMEROON RECOMMENDATIONS

1. UNIDO needs to give support to all the focal points in each country during the incubation period. This support might take the form of:
 - Evaluation of the information needs of the beneficiaries.
 - Identification and sensitisation of the information providers.
 - Transfer of existing data on IRMS^{PLUS} to Cameroon.

- Making the available information easily accessible and easy to use for the beneficiaries.
- 2. The implication of those responsible for the National Focal points in the planning of IRMS^{PLUS} activities in each country.
- 3. The IRMS^{PLUS} activities should not marginalize the activities already underway regarding information.
- 4. Cameroon would like the necessary I.T. equipment or arrive as soon as possible so as to allow those responsible for IRMS^{PLUS} to start their activities.
- 5. The collaboration of UNIDO with each country should be with a view to facilitating the advancement of the projects in these countries.
- 6. Each National Focal Point should submit to UNIDO a Plan of Action in which they state the means required to cover the period between now and June next year.
- 7. We also wish that the Action taken by UNIDO in favour of the countries be sufficiently integrates as to allow and even promote a synergy.
- 8. It would also be desirable in the case of a new project for UNIDO to send a Questionnaire to each country in order to facilitate the assessment of the needs of each focal point and of the various Nodes.
- 8. Equally desirable in the framework of a new project would be for UNDO to develop actions with the National Focal Points with a view to promoting the transfer of technology.

GHANA RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A modified version of IRMS should be made available at the national level to support dynamic web access, and also at the regional level.
2. Assistance should be provided to help us acquire the methodology for sourcing business information at the international level.
3. Assistance should be provided to help us acquire the methodology for technology transfer from external sources to the SMEs.
4. Assistance should be provided for holding awareness workshops for the harmonisation of data collection capabilities at nodal points.

5. Assistance is needed in equipment. A server, radio link and router for the National Focal Point, and five computers and modems for the nodal contact points.
6. Assistance should be provided for the holding of a training of trainers' workshop on the use of COMFAR.
7. Assistance should be provided for basic training in software applications for SMEs.
8. Assistance should be provided to help us initiate commercial activities by conducting a user needs assessment survey.
9. Assistance should be provided to enable us conduct a national baseline industrial survey and technology auditing of SMEs.

IRMS^{PLUS}/SENEGAL'S RECOMMENDATIONS

- CRAT as Regional focal point

OBJECTIVE:

Establishment of a sustainable operating Internet Server at ARCT with the following functions:

- a gateway to national focal points;
- a source of appropriate technology for African countries;
- hosting regional focal points
- cooperation with other institutions (COMESA, ---)
- Solve regional problems of information needs.

REQUIRED NEEDS

- Acquisition of Internet server
- Acquisition of IRMS tools
- Integration of existing Databases to other format interface with the Web (Internet.)
- Adaptation of IRMS, to solve regional and needs. (comparative Rice price in many countries.)
- Training
- Assistance for commercializing Internet Based.

SUDAN'S RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Establishment of efficient industrial information networks with the regional concept using IRMS^{PLUS} as a tool.
2. To link the activities of the information networking to be carried out by IIIU and IRCC with the investment and technology promotion activities through establishing a technology transfer unit within IRCC.

ZAMBIA'S RECOMMENDATIONS

2. There is need for technical assistance in the use of the IRMS^{PLUS} package. Apart from that UNIDO should make it a must that the National Focal Points are trained in all areas in order to make this project work.
3. Commercialization should be looked at critically especially at the forthcoming national seminars.
4. UNIDO should be more specific on the type of assistance it will give to the focal points apart from the equipment it intends to give.
5. More clarification is needed on the use of the nodes i.e. how useful will this project be to the nodes; what benefits they will derive – whether in the short, mid or long-term basis.

EGYPT'S RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Egyptian International Trade Point (EITP) to be included within Egypt's National Information Network and to be connected to Egypt's NFP (ATO).
2. The Trade Point of Egypt extended its interest to directly exchange information with similar organizations in the COMESA and other interested countries. In this regard, the EITP shows readiness to offer technical assistance to those similar organizations which, will eventually be connected to the EITP Headquarters in Cairo, Egypt.
3. Egypt's Trade Point is ready to conclude protocols of technical co-operation with similar organizations in each individual country, aiming at facilitating the exchange of information, providing technical assistance, and training.
4. To exchange information concerning investment issues such as laws, regulations, incentives, actual and potential projects, production and logistics costs, mutual promotion of investment opportunities in the participating countries... etc. In this context, it is

recommended to create a COMESA based information system for its Member States to facilitate the exchange of information on investment, technology, and other business related activities.

5. To explore further cooperation between UNIDO and the Government of Japan regarding the issues discussed and recommended during the meetings of TICAD II in Japan.

III RECOMMENDATION ON THE NEW PROPOSED PROJECT

The Seminar agreed that the proposals for the implementation of the new project for commercialisation of services, following ITMIN experience, would be prepared and submitted to UNIDO for consideration.

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