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Ad-hoc Expert Group Meeting on
Modalities to Ensure a Permanent
Flow of Information Aimed at
Strengthening Economic Co-operation
Among Developing Countries in the Field
of Building Materials and Construction
Industries

Zagreb, Yugoslavia, 2 to 4 April 1986

R E P O R T *

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C O N T E N T S

	<u>Page</u>
I. Introduction	3
II. Background	3
III. Agreed conclusions and recommendations	4 - 9

Annexes

A. Agenda	10 - 11
B. List of papers presented	12
C. List of participants	13

I. INTRODUCTION

The Ad-hoc Expert Group Meeting on Modalities to Ensure a Permanent Flow of Information Aimed at Strengthening Economic Co-operation Among Developing Countries in the Field of Building Materials and Construction Industries was held in Zagreb, Yugoslavia from 2 to 4 April 1986. The meeting was organized jointly by UNIDO and the Institute for Developing Countries in Zagreb.

The objective of the meeting was to identify appropriate information systems and to elaborate ways and means for their implementation in order to ensure a permanent flow of information among developing countries in the field of building materials and construction industries.

II. BACKGROUND

The initiative for the Ad-hoc Expert Group Meeting was made during the Meeting of Experts of the Group of 77 on Co-operation in the Field of Civil Engineering, Building Materials and Equipment, which was held in Zagreb from 11 to 13 September 1984 and hosted by the Institute for Developing Countries. One of the recommendations called for UNIDO to organize "...an expert group meeting ... in order to examine the most appropriate modalities for ensuring the permanent flow of information in this field...". The recommendations were endorsed by the Fourth Meeting of Intergovernmental Follow up and Co-ordination Committee on Economic Co-operation among Developing Countries, held from 19 to 23 August 1985 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The First Consultation on Building Materials Industry, examining, inter alia, UNIDO's possible contribution to assist the developing countries in improving their planning systems, also recommended "the

strengthening of information systems for setting up inventories of resources, assessing requirements and forecasting demands"1/.

The subject Expert Group Meeting was a direct result from the above recommendations. The meeting was attended by eight international experts, who elected as chairman Mr. V. Skendrovic from the Civil Engineering Institute, Zagreb. During the meeting, seven papers were presented (see Annex B) and subsequently discussed by the Expert Group Meeting.

III. AGREED CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

- (1) Information on building materials and construction in the developing countries is of vital importance to the development of these industries and thus to the social and economic development of the country.
- (2) Some developing countries and (sub)regions already have information systems covering specific fields of the building materials and construction industries. It would be of great importance to other developing countries to make better use of these existing systems as well as to make optimal use of the data available in this field.
- (3) The (sub)regional development, use and exchange of existing information systems was considered not satisfactory for the growing needs of the building materials and construction industries. Only a few countries have established relation-

1/ Report on the First Consultation on the Building Materials Industry, Athens, Greece. 26-30 March 1985, ID/335 para 7(a)

ships with relevant international governmental and non-governmental organizations regarding the provision of information in this sector.

- (4) It was felt, that in order to facilitate the transfer of technology, further efforts were needed in the area of the exchange of information in order to promote the economic and technical co-operation among the developing countries (ECDC/TCDC), to help them to strengthen their collective self-reliance.
- (5) The development of the building materials and construction industries in the developing countries would also very much depend on an integrated approach with respect to training, research and development in order to keep pace with the rate of development of these industrial sectors.
- (6) It was noted that various elements of information were missing among the available information sources for the developing countries, inter alia, economic data, building materials (e.g. local, traditional or modern), market information, different experiences in construction projects, training opportunities, ongoing R+D activities, technology information, professional publications and consulting organizations in developing countries.
- (7) The dissemination of information on the construction industry in most of the developing countries is carried out by governmental agencies as well as by private institutions. Usually, there is no single entity which co-ordinates or systematizes dissemination of information.
- (8) The importance was emphasized of activities being carried out by various subregional networks and centres for the promotion and the development of building materials and construction industries, as well as for co-operation among the member countries themselves.
- (9) It was considered of utmost importance for building materials and construction industries in developing countries to receive, through information flow, case studies on projects showing problem descriptions (definitions) and adopted

solutions. The latter should especially refer to difficulties and failures encountered. Presented on a comparable basis, they would be very efficient means of teaching in developing countries, especially with audio-visual material.

B. Recommendations - National level

- (1) Developing countries should re-examine their own information systems and tools with a view to further develop them; optimal use of already available information systems and tools in the field of building materials and construction industries should be made.
- (2) Governments should consider to setting up one or more information centres on a national level in the field of building materials and construction industries. Such centres will, inter alia, provide regular fora for engineers, architects and builders to keep themselves abreast with the latest advances in building science and technology and promote their adoption in practice to achieve improvement and economy in building. Moreover, it could provide other developing countries with the latest information on the national building materials and construction industries.
- (3) National non-governmental organizations, business and industrial institutions should be encouraged to effectively contribute to the development of national information systems.
- (4) Existing information material, such as directories of experts, building research institutes, bibliographies of literature on building materials and construction, catalogues of local resources, should be made available to other developing countries as well.
- (5) Introduction and/or strengthening of computerized or other data banks by national building research centres or institutes should be considered for easy storage and dissemination of information.
- (6) Seminars, workshops, and study tours should be considered as good avenues for the exchange of information and technology transfer.

- (7) On-the-job-training should be taken up both in urban and rural areas in the developing countries with a view to improve the transfer of technology.
- (8) Audio-visual media, including slide shows and video films, should be appropriately utilized to propagate technical information and know-how extensively, particularly in the remote villages. Equipment and facilities for production of audio-visual programmes for their presentations should be provided.
- (9) For the introduction of the use of new materials, substitute/alternative materials and also to introduce improved techniques of production of building materials, training-cum-demonstration centres should be set up in collaboration with the building research centres. International collaboration in such ventures would help to expedite the technology transfer.

C. Recommendations - International level

- (1) It was considered necessary to establish an international information system for the collection and dissemination of information among the developing countries in the field of building materials and construction industries. The system should, to the extent possible, be self-supporting. UNIDO was requested to investigate, through e.g. a fact-finding mission, ways and means for the practical establishment of such a system, including its scope, structure and functioning. The system should take into account existing national and international sources of information. An assessment should be made for the type of required information, the potential users and purpose. National experts should be engaged in this activity.

- (2) Regional United Nations Commissions should be encouraged to contribute to the collection and dissemination of information in the field of building materials and construction industries, through statistical bulletins, newsletters, etc.
- (3) It was recommended that the existing regional network in the Asia-Pacific region should be strengthened and further developed. It was further recommended that the achievements of the network should be communicated to other relevant international governmental and non-governmental organizations or institutions.
- (4) It was stressed that for the further promotion of co-operation among developing countries in the field of building materials and construction industries, the establishment of more regional networks would be of vital importance. It was recommended that UNIDO should assist in the establishment of networks in other regions as well.
- (5) It was recommended that, after the termination of the UN assistance, the regional networks should establish a permanent working committee in order to maintain and continue on a self-supporting basis the exchange and flow of information among participating countries in the long term.
- (6) Establishment and strengthening of linkage with international organizations and regional centres engaged in building materials and construction was recommended, in order to increase available information and possibly draw up joint projects or activities.
- (7) While evolving and developing information systems in developing countries, the possibilities of proper linkages with the information systems of developed countries, as well as with international non-governmental organizations, should be explored further.
- (8) It was underlined, that closer co-operation among national professional, manufacturing and consulting organizations would be beneficial for carrying out various complex activities in

the field of construction industries. In this respect the importance of an improved co-operation among consulting organizations in developing countries was emphasized. UNIDO was invited to assist in investigating ways and means to improve the co-operation between the consulting organizations in the developing countries.

- (9) International and regional exhibitions on building materials and construction industries in the developing countries should be promoted. UNIDO was requested to assist in this matter.
- (10) UNIDO should incorporate in its technical co-operation programme elements which would emphasize the development of exchange of information.
- (11) It was recommended that UNIDO should: a) encourage countries to disseminate project achievements to other interested countries, and b) co-operate in the organization of seminars and workshops.
- (12) UNIDO should prepare and disseminate guidelines for presenting case studies to experts and related organizations of developing countries which would make it possible to compare the various experiences.

ANNEX A

AD HOC EXPERT GROUP MEETING
ON MODALITIES TO ENSURE A PERMANENT FLOW
OF INFORMATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN THE
FIELD OF BUILDING MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRIES
ZAGREB, 2 TO 4 APRIL 1986

AGENDA

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Welcome address
3. Introductory remarks
4. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
5. Modalities to ensure a permanent flow of information among developing countries in the field of building materials and construction industries:
 - 5.1 The identification of existing sources and systems of information in the field of building materials and construction industries in developing countries;
 - 5.2 Indication of information systems which would be required, in addition to existing ones, in order to improve the flow of information among developing countries in the field of building industries;
 - 5.3 Ways and means for the development of additional information systems in the field of building materials and construction industries.
6. Adoption of the final report.

ANNEX B

LIST OF PAPERS

- THE BUILDING INDUSTRY IN THE PHILIPPINES AND THE NEED TO ESTABLISH A PERMANENT FLOW OF INFORMATION ON BUILDING MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES
L. Casanova
- APPROPRIATE MODALITIES FOR FLOW OF INFORMATION IN THE BUILDING INDUSTRY
G.C. Mathur
- MUTUAL LINKS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES INFORMATION SYSTEMS IN THE FIELD OF CIVIL ENGINEERING
Dj. Radin
- INTEGRAL INFORMATION SYSTEM OF CIVIL ENGINEERING AND BUILDING MATERIALS INDUSTRY
D. Radin
- INFORMATION NEEDS AND TASKS IN THE BUILDING MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY
Gy. Sebestyen
- TURKISH MONOGRAPH
D. Sorguc
- DEVELOPMENT NEED OF INDIGENOUS TECHNOLOGY FOR THE BUILDING MATERIALS INDUSTRY FOR THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES
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