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CLOSURE OF THE PUBLICATIONS BUREAU IN NIAMEY AND ITS
ASSIMILATION INTO THE CENTRE FOR LINGUISTIC AND
HISTORICAL STUDIES BY ORAL TRADITION

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The Council of Ministers recalls the account of the establishment of a Publications Bureau of OAU in Niamey. Indeed, at a time when the CCTA was having the documents of this scientific body printed in London, it had opened a Publications Bureau in that European capital to facilitate contacts between the publishing houses.

Following the incorporation of the CCTA into the OAU, this Bureau was transferred to Niamey in the Republic of Niger.

During the visit effected by the Secretary-General to Niger and to this Bureau, it became evident that the work-load of this Bureau had greatly diminished and no longer justified the large amounts allocated to it each year in the OAU Budget. Indeed, this Bureau did no more than publish a few circulating scientific bulletins, while all the other OAU publications were normally handled by the Information Section of the Central Administration.

Bulletins currently published by our Bureau in Niamey are of four kinds:-

- 1) Bulletins dealing with epizooties and veterinary problems in general. Articles contained in these bulletins originate from our Inter-African Bureau for Animal Health (IBAR) based in Nairobi, in Kenya, with the active co-operation of specialists working in the veterinary field in Africa;

- 2) Bulletins on African soils, whose basic articles originate from our Inter-African Bureau for Soils based in Bangui, in the Central African Republic. These Bulletins deal with problems of soils, their cultural suitability, erosion, deterioration and conditions for their preservation, etc...;
- 3) Phytosanitary bulletins, which are drafted and edited by our Phytosanitary Bureau based in Yaoundé in Cameroon. They deal with plant diseases and parasites which destroy the crops, and with the geographical distribution of these disease and parasites, as well as with the measures to be adopted both at technical and juridical level to eliminate or limit the action of these agents which threaten agriculture;
- 4) The fourth kind of bulletins covers the various publications containing the summary reports of technical conferences organized by the Executive Secretariat of the OAU Scientific Commission in Lagos. These summary reports of conferences attended by experts of Member States and by those from abroad contain valuable information and recommendations for our countries' economic and social development.

The four kinds of bulletins handled by the four sources we have just enumerated are sent in typescript form to the Publications Bureau, which despatches them to the printers who until 1971 were in Europe.

In this process, the Publications Bureau's role was little more than that of mailbox for letters of comparatively little importance.

About two years ago, the Council of Ministers directed the Secretary-General to look into the printing facilities available in Africa, with a view to the local printing of our scientific bulletins. These directives were followed, and at the present time, as a result of several enquiries, the directors of our Technical Bureaux have obtained what they were seeking from certain African printing houses.

For example, the bulletin on epizooties is now printed in Nairobi under the direct supervision of our Veterinary Bureau based in Nairobi quite independently of the Publications Bureau.

Technically speaking, therefore, the closure of the Publications Bureau will in no way affect the publication of the above-mentioned scientific bulletins. On the contrary, the result will be greater efficiency, for we have already entrusted the work of publication to the technical bureaux already existing within our Organization, which are endowed with highly-skilled personnel.

During his visit to the Republic of Niger, the Administrative Secretary-General visited the Centre established in Niamey, which is doing first-rate work for our Organization, namely the Centre of Oral Traditions for African Languages and History. The Centre is already efficiently and competently handling the same activities, within a regional framework, as those of the OAU's Linguistics Bureau in Kampala.

Since the Centre's creation in August 1968, fifteen or so countries of West Africa have signed the agreement to join and of these about ten have already ratified this accord. The following countries have signed the agreement: Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Chad, Togo, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Dahomey, the Gambia and Guinea.

Of these, the following countries have already ratified the agreement in question: Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Chad and Togo.

All the countries we have enumerated are members of the Organization of African Unity, and their promptness in joining the Centre for Oral Traditions shows the importance that is being attached to this body.

In view of all that has gone before, the Administrative Secretary-General, following his visit to Niger, despatched two successive missions to Niamey to discuss with the Government of the Republic of Niger the eventual closure of the Publications Bureau in Niamey and the simultaneous incorporation of the Centre for Oral Traditions into OAU. The Government of Niger gave a favourable response to this possibility of extending the Centre's sphere of action so as to enable it to assume its true African vocation and play its full role.

The Government of Niger, in consequence, authorized the Administrative Secretary-General to submit the principle of this operation to the Council of Ministers.

The Niamey Centre is already receiving numerous students from all the French-and English-speaking countries who go there to prepare theses for their doctorates. There, too, are received specialists from around the world attempting to throw light on those portions of our History and linguistical knowledge that have hitherto remained obscure.

We have even remarked that celebrated Africanists, who are strangers to Africa, come to Niamey in search of information.

These varied considerations have led the Secretary-General, in agreement with the Niger authorities and, of course, with the consent of the States who have joined the Centre, to draw the Council's attention to the benefits to Africa which would result

from linking the CRDOT with the Secretariat of our Organization. If this proposal were adopted, the Niamey Centre would play the same role as the Kampala Centre.

In this way, the Kampala Centre would include the whole of Eastern Africa and part of Central Africa in its activities, while that of Niamey would cover the whole of Western Africa and a part of Central Africa.

Such a decision would enable Africa to play a larger part in the work of rehabilitating our historical and linguistical heritage, instead of placing its confidence in so-called world-famous Africanists, who are, for the most part, strangers to our Continent.

With regard to the financial implications of this operation, it should be pointed out that the budget for the staff and operation of the OAU Publications Bureau, excluding the amounts allocated to the printing of the bulletins, actually exceeds that of the Centre for Oral Traditions. The incorporation of this Centre into OAU would therefore not involve any new financial burden for the Organization. If the principle of this operation is approved by the Council of Ministers, the General Secretariat will, in collaboration with the Government of Niger, detail all the administrative and financial implications and submit them to the OAU Advisory Committee on Budgetary and Financial Matters for approval. In this exercise, adequate measures will be taken into consideration to ensure that full use is made of all staff currently serving with the Publications Bureau, a portion of whom might be absorbed by the Centre and a portion re-assigned to other departments of OAU.

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Closure of the Publications Bureau in Niamey and its Assimilation Into the Centre for Linguistic and Historical Studies by Oral Tradition

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