

## **Africa Region Activity Report 2008 & Activity Plan 2009**

**By the Vice-President  
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**Reference Period:** November 2007 – November 2008

### **Visiting card for the Region**

#### **Countries in the Region (36) :**

South Africa, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Ivory Coast, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Chad, Togo, Zambia, Zimbabwe

#### **Countries in the Region which are WAPES members (17):**

Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ivory Coast, Djibouti, Gabon, Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Uganda, Central African Republic, Chad, Togo, Zimbabwe.

The sub-Saharan part of Africa contains 36 countries, 17 of which, as shown above, are members since the cancellation of the Mauritania and Senegal memberships and the resignation of Mauritius. Efforts are under way in order to persuade countries which are not currently members to join, particularly English-speaking countries which are at present very under-represented within Region Africa and AASEP (African Association of Public Employment Services). These efforts took the form this year of the participation of Namibia, Rwanda, Mozambique and Sudan at the African PES meeting on June 4 2008 in Geneva, Switzerland, in association with the 98th International ILO Labour Conference, as well as at the meetings held in Rwanda and Namibia and the ceremonies commemorating the 10th anniversary of AASEP which were held between September 15 and 19 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

### **I. CONTEXT OF POLICIES RELATING TO EMPLOYMENT, OCCUPATIONAL TRAINING AND THE LABOUR MARKET. POLICIES IMPLEMENTED**

#### **I.1 – SITUATION REGARDING THE ECONOMIES AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE REGION**

In November 2007 we were foreshadowing an upturn in the economic situation in sub-Saharan Africa for 2008. These expectations were based on:

- The relatively steady economic growth recorded for the region, nearly 5% in 2007;
- The ever-increasing concern expressed by the international community in such problems as poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion in developing countries;
- The commitment made by the 8 wealthiest countries in the world at Gleneagles to inject public development aid for about an estimated 50 billion dollars up to 2010;
- The growth in the flow of Direct Foreign Investment (IED) from 17 to 31 billion dollars in 2005;
- The steady opening up of the most profitable markets to the poorer countries and the promise to phase out subsidies on agricultural produce;

- The satisfactory completion of the PPTe (Heavily Indebted Poor Country) initiative by several countries in the Region;
- The reduced activity of a number of conflicts in the region, such as the Great Lakes, Darfur and Ivory Coast.

In a very short period of time these hopes have been dashed by the food crisis at the end of the year, a crisis which has led to riots and deaths all over the continent, and the third quarter of the financial crisis currently gripping the world.

Unemployment has now stagnated at around 10%, as it was following 2006, and is in danger of rising, as shown by the ILO forecasts for September 2008 (nearly 20,000,000 jobless world wide at the end of 2009) for the sub-region.

On the matter of low-paid workers, the situation in sub-Saharan Africa is far from encouraging; since this is the region which includes the greatest number of workers living on less than a dollar a day and this number is set to rise to some 40,000,000 over the same period.

Against this background of an increasing impoverishment, our governments have stepped up the fight against informal & precarious work and poverty in general. Part of this action was seen at the 10th anniversary of the African Association of Employment Services in September 2008 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, where the Ministers of Employment met together for a high level discussions on the topic "**Ouagadougou Heads of State Summit 2004 on Employment - Balance sheet and Prospects**". These top level talks concluded with the Ouagadougou declaration which reiterated the support of the ministers in question for the PES in the sub-region and set up a yearly meeting of the ministers to be held on the occasion of the Heads of State and Government Summit at Addis Ababa.

The various actions taking place in the majority of the countries in the sub-region, the Ministers' Meeting in Ouagadougou, the importance of employment in the new generation DSRP (Documents of Strategies to Reduce Poverty) and the projects for regulating employment migration, together with the growing contribution made by the Diaspora to African economies leads us to the conclusion that, in spite of everything, employment remains a core concern of our governments.

## I.2 – CHALLENGES FACING THE PES IN THE REGION

Despite the fact that improvements have taken place across the board, the sub-Saharan Region public employment services are still faced with the same problems. Essentially they turn on structure, equipment and funding. Worth noting, among other matters, are:

- The need to increase the independence of the PES: This is a particular problem for the PES in the English-speaking countries which are all still contained within the Ministries, and also for those which are theoretically independent, but where in fact all decisions are taken by the Minister responsible;
- The shortage of financial, human and equipment resources: the sub-Saharan employment consultant to jobseeker ratio is 1:4000+, while in Latin America it is 1:350 and in Europe 1:150. On the matters of money and equipment, ratios are even worse;
- The professional expertise of our human resources: as a general rule the consultants are trained on the job, and in only in very few cases are they able to benefit from ongoing training.
- The development of a relationship with the business sector: the predominance of the informal sector makes contacts with businesses difficult. This means that business is often prepared to pay for services which are on offer free of charge from the PES;

- Acquiring tools and upgrading the ones already in place (ROME, REACS, RF);
- The fact that our traditional educational systems are unsuited to the needs of business: this is the source of the mismatch between the existing profiles on the market and what business is looking for;
- The challenge of computerising our services: we need greater efficiency and to be able to offer more services to our target sectors.

## II – WAPES ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION

### II.1 – WORKSHOPS

In 2008, and from September 15 to 19, the sub-Saharan Africa Region organised three events in one. Hosted by the 10th AASEP anniversary, we organised:

1. **A meeting with top level talks between the Ministers responsible for employment** on the topic "**Ouagadougou Heads of State Summit 2004 on Employment - Balance sheet and Prospects**" on September 15 2008. This meeting concluded with the Ouagadougou declaration in which the Ministers for Employment made a commitment to support the PES, and more particularly to meet every year on the occasion of the Addis Ababa Heads of State and Government Summit to discuss employment problems.
2. **The Region Africa workshop** on the topic "**Matching Occupational Training and Youth Employment**"
3. And last but not least, the result of the non-stop lobbying by the FNE, President of AASEP, **the first WAPES-ILO Training Seminar** on the topic "**Developing PES skills in the Technical Assistance field**" was organised, giving the African PES an opportunity to master the methodology employed in setting up technical assistance files.

Twenty countries, 15 African and 5 European, took part in these events. Eight ministers attended and 6 were represented.

### II.2 – MEETINGS

AASEP had its usual meeting on the occasion of the ILO conference held in Geneva on June 4, 2008. This meeting dealt with the preparations for the Ouagadougou Days anniversary, and was attended, along with Mrs Helen Hansen from the ILO and Mrs. Katrina Liswani, Head of Employment, Labour and Migration at the African Union, by 20 African countries, 15 of which were represented by their PES CEO's.

### II.3 – VISITS BETWEEN PES

Contacts by mail, information exchanges and physical contacts between PES heads continue as before.

- The CEOs of the AGEPE in Ivory Coast, the ANPE in Mali and the AGUIPE in Guinea took part in the Employment Forum organised between March 12 and 14 by the Niger ANPE in Niamey.
- A delegation from the ONAPE in Chad was welcomed as a study visit by the FNE in Yaoundé at the beginning of the year while the CEO of the organisation remained in Yaoundé from August 7 to 14. The purpose of his visit was to develop a partnership project involving the ONAPE and the FNE.
- The ANPE in Burkina Faso was responsible for organising the ceremonies marking the 10th AASEP anniversary, on which occasion 20 countries, 15 African and 5 European, were present.

### II.4 – EXCHANGES

Cooperation between the countries in the region, through exchanges and information missions, continue as before.

The AASEP website is still in action, to be found at [www.aapes.org](http://www.aapes.org). The English language version is planned for 2007 [sic].

## II.5 – CONTACTS WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

The AASEP Vice-President for West Africa, Mr. Makang Moussa Sissoko, CEO of the Mali ANPE was in contact with the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) in order to coordinate the actions undertaken by this organisation and AASEP in the field of employment. The culmination of these contacts was the signing of a protocol of agreement covering:

- The development of tools to implement strategies intended to mitigate the negative effects of employment problems in the UEMOA zone;
- The application of the provision relating to the harmonisation of the Degree-Masters-Doctorate (LMD) system;
- The definition of a framework of discussion and collaboration between EMOA and AASEP;
- The initiation of talks with other liberal professions along the lines of those of the lawyers, doctors, architects and pharmacists with a view to freeing up the exercise of this professions in the sub-region;
- The establishment of a sub-regional system for preventing and managing emigration.

These contacts are to be extended to cover central and southern Africa in 2009.

AASEP has an observer status with the ILO, and holds a meeting each year on the occasion of the ILO conference. This year it took place on June 4 at ILO headquarters. The ACBF project reached its concluding year in 2008. Research is currently under way into how to set up national information gathering systems so that the knowledge gained can be utilised to the full.

## II.6 – PES MANAGEMENT CHANGES

We are unaware of any changes in the heads of our PES this year.

## II.7 - CONTACTS WITH COUNTRIES LIKELY TO SEEK MEMBERSHIP

Constant lobbying and networking by various members has positively resulted in establishing contacts with Namibia, Mozambique and Rwanda, despite the fact that South Africa has adopted a position of indifference towards the association. Emails have also been sent to all members requesting the payment of their subscriptions.

## II.8 –TECHNICAL COOPERATION PROJECTS

Technical cooperation between the Central African ACEPE and the French ANPE continues, and the Cameroon FNE has received 100 second-hand Pentium IV type microcomputers from its traditional partners, France and Germany, and 100 laser printers, 100 computers and 100 screens from PES Austria / amsbg, the IT provider of the Austrian PES.

The DRC ONEM (Employment Office) has committed itself to a large scale cooperation programme with the Walloon Region and the Belgian FOREM. This cooperation initiative will among other things place them in a position where they can implement effective intermediation immediately.

Upgrading South/South cooperation is also ongoing. The new AASEP interactive site at [www.aapes.org](http://www.aapes.org) should also increase contact possibilities.

## **PROPOSALS FOR 2009**

**February 2009:** Prospective mission by the Regional Secretary in Gabon,

**May 2009:** WAPES General Assembly and Congress in Dubrovnik, with an AASEP members meeting held concurrently,

**June 2009:** African PES meeting concurrently with the ILO meeting in Geneva,

**September 2009:** WAPES workshop in Gabon,

**November 2009:** WAPES Board of Directors,

**December 2009:** AASEP workshop (host country to be decided)

**Year round:** Pressure on countries likely to join and quest for technical cooperation partnership for members.