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The Proposed Institute for Natural Resources in Africa  
of the United Nations University

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on the African Economic Crisis

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1. The UN University's Institute for Natural Resources in Africa (INRA) is essentially an African response to the challenges confronting the continent at the present time. The proposal draws its inspiration from the "Lagos Plan of Action for Economic Development in Africa."

2. The rationale for INRA is that emergency responses, however generous, are not likely to bring a lasting solution to the deepening African crisis and to its most tragic manifestations: hunger and poverty.

3. INRA is designed to build capacity in science and technology, and, by appropriate government policies, to focus it on clearly identified priority areas. The central aim of INRA is to strengthen national institutions in Africa, mobilize scientists throughout the continent, attract others back to Africa, and to provide them with the organizational structure, management capacity and resources necessary for the results of high-quality research to be applied without delay, and on a sustained basis, in areas whose priority is dictated by the present emergency.

4. INRA is the fruit of four years of study by some of the most distinguished scientists in Africa and after extensive consultations with government leaders and national and international organizations and institutions. Through the process of consultations, which has resulted in the proposal for INRA, the planning and preparation of INRA has benefited from the advice and active co-operation of the World Bank, UNDP, and numerous other interested institutions and experts. In particular, the UN University has concluded a memorandum of understanding with the OAU and the ECA concerning co-operation with INRA.

5. In order to attack the root causes of the African crisis urgently and effectively, the UN University has selected four projects from among INRA's priority areas for immediate action. They are:

- a. tissue/meristem culture for crop production;
- b. germplasm distribution and applied research;
- c. land use systems and policies; and
- d. mineral resources development.

6. INRA can only undertake the necessary research and its application to priority areas on a sustained basis if assured of stable support, and that is the justification for the aim to secure a pledged endowment fund of at least US\$50 million.



7. The degree of support which INRA has aroused in Africa is most encouraging. The Governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Zambia have already pledged US\$5 million and US\$2 million, respectively, towards INRA's endowment fund together with all the necessary laboratories, offices, housing and other physical facilities. The main centre of INRA will be located at Yamoussoukro, the new capital of Côte d'Ivoire; and INRA's mineral resources unit will be located in Lusaka at the School of Mines of the University of Zambia.

8. A number of other African governments, including those of Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, and Zimbabwe which initially considered hosting INRA, have assured the UN University of their support and readiness to co-operate with INRA. The Organization of Africa Unity (OAU), at its summit meeting in July 1985, strongly endorsed INRA and recommended it to governments and agencies for their financial support. The current Chairman of the OAU, President Abdou Diouf of Senegal, is making personal representations to a number of donor countries and organizations. President Félix Houphouët-Boigny of Côte d'Ivoire and President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia are also making personal interventions with selected donor countries on behalf of INRA.

9. The Government of France has recently made an initial commitment of 20 million francs (approximately US\$2.7 million) for INRA over the next three years. The UN University is also working with other potential donors concerning support for INRA. UNDP has informed the UN University that it will provide funds. The OPEC Fund has recently approved a grant of US\$175,000 for equipment for INRA's mineral resources unit in Zambia. The World Bank has just completed an appraisal of INRA and has endorsed the concept of INRA and commended it for donor support.

10. In late March, the UN University made a presentation on INRA to the Steering Committee meeting in Addis Ababa and I believe that INRA is mentioned in the proceedings of the Steering Committee meeting.

11. To recapitulate, the work of INRA will, above all, seek to reinforce and help strengthen African national institutions and far from duplicating the work of other institutions and organizations working towards this end, INRA will endeavour to operate in harmony with these agencies and organizations, such as FAO and the African centres of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). As in the case of other developing regions like Asia, for example, this type of co-operation between international organizations and basically sound and motivated national institutions will make a critical contribution to establishing food security in African nations. INRA proposes to bring these techniques to bear on the problems underlying the African crisis.

12. In closing, we are hopeful that the Special Session will endorse the establishment of INRA as one of Africa's medium- and long-term initiatives in the area of scientific and technological research and training that will make an important contribution to the solution of the African crisis.

NOTE: A detailed Prospectus for INRA is available at the UN University New York Liaison Office, DC2-1457.