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**Economic Commission for Africa**  
**Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development**  
Twelfth session  
Addis Ababa (hybrid), 28–30 April 2026

Items 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 of the provisional agenda\*

**High-level panel 1: Scaling up transformative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union**

**High-level panel 2: Unlocking finance for climate resilience and sustainable development in Africa: building on the outcomes of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development and the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

**High-level panel 3: Achieving full employment and decent work for all, poverty reduction and social protection in Africa: taking forward the outcomes of the Second World Summit for Social Development**

**Plenary round-table panel 1: Evidence-based voluntary national and local reviews to drive transformative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063**

**Plenary round-table panel 2: Driving ambitious and integrated actions for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063: leveraging the roles of the United Nations system, young people, the private sector, civil society and voluntarism**

**Parallel meetings to review in depth and showcase progress made and to facilitate peer-to-peer learning in connection with the sub-themes of the Forum**

**Plenary round-table panel 3: Harnessing science, innovation and frontier technologies to scale up transformative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063**

**Plenary round-table panel 4: Sustaining the gains made in relation to the 2030 Agenda: African perspectives on the post-2030 United Nations framework for sustainable development**

## **Turning the tide: transformative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063**

### **Concept note**

#### **I. Background**

1. The Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development is an annual intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder platform mandated by the General Assembly through its resolutions 67/290, 70/1 and 70/299. The Forum was put into operation following the adoption of resolution 930 (XLVIII) at the eighth joint annual meetings of the Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration of the African Union and the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic

\* ECA/RFSD/2026/1.



Development of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in 2015, and resolution 939 (XLIX) at the ninth joint annual meetings, in 2016.

2. The Forum conducts integrated follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union, which, together, constitute a synergistic framework for the achievement of inclusive, people-centred sustainable development in the region.

3. In addition to the reviews conducted by the Forum, implementation of the two agendas is monitored, reviewed and catalysed through two other mechanisms: voluntary national reviews and, at the global level, the high-level political forum on sustainable development. In addition, national and subnational governments conduct voluntary local reviews to foster local action. The Forum also provides a platform for peer-to-peer learning, including on voluntary reviews by subnational entities.

4. As in previous sessions of the Forum, the twelfth session is being organized jointly by ECA, the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and various entities of the United Nations system. It will bring together ministers, senior officials, experts, sustainability practitioners and young people from African countries, the private sector, civil society, academic institutions, entities of the United Nations system and development partners.

## II. Context

5. The twelfth session of the Forum will be held with less than five years to go before the 2030 deadline for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and in the third year of the second 10-year implementation plan (2024–2033) of Agenda 2063, also known as the decade of acceleration, in which African countries are seeking to fast-track progress towards a prosperous, integrated and peaceful Africa.

6. Despite substantial global and regional efforts, progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is far off track, and there is little time left before their 2030 deadline. Specifically, the region is making slow progress in 12 of the 17 Goals and regressing in 5 of them.<sup>1</sup>

7. The scale of the implementation gaps for the five Goals selected to be addressed during the 2026 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development illustrates the extent to which African countries are lagging behind in their progress towards the Goals overall.

8. On Goal 6 (Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all), the majority of the 28 countries around the world in which more than a quarter of the population lacked access to basic drinking water services between 2015 and 2024 were in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>2</sup> In 2020, some 387 million people in that area lacked access to basic drinking water.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, globally in 2024, people in least developed countries were nearly twice as likely to lack access to safely managed sanitation services, more than twice as likely to lack access to safely managed drinking water services and more than three times as likely to lack basic hygiene services as people in other countries.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa, “Africa SDG progress tracker”. Available at <https://ecastats.uneca.org/data/africa-sdg-tracker/> (accessed on 23 December 2025).

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization and United Nations Children’s Fund, *Progress on Household Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene 2000–2024: Special Focus on Inequalities* (Geneva, 2025).

<sup>3</sup> Willow Leahy, Meshack Achore and Florence Dery, “‘In the dry season, our suffering doubles’: Barriers to water access in poor urban settlements in Ghana”, *PLOS Water*, vol. 3, No. 9 (2024).

<sup>4</sup> World Health Organization and United Nations Children’s Fund, *Progress on Household Drinking Water*.

9. Regarding Goal 7 (Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all), in 2025, 600 million people in Africa, some 43 per cent of the population, lacked access to electricity, accounting for more than 80 per cent of the global population without electricity.<sup>5</sup>

10. Regarding Goal 9 (Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation), the industrial base of Africa remains weak, with only a 2 per cent share of global manufacturing value added.<sup>6</sup>

11. Regarding Goal 11 (Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable), between 2014 and 2022, the proportion of the African urban population living in slums or informal settlements declined only marginally, and remained almost twice the global average in 2022. In contrast to the decline globally, the proportion in sub-Saharan Africa increased from 50.2 per cent in 2020 to 53.6 per cent in 2022, underscoring the persistent housing challenges in those countries.<sup>7</sup>

12. Achieving the goals of the two agendas hinges on addressing the persistent challenge of ensuring that efforts are sufficiently financed. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals alone would require between \$802 billion and \$1.67 trillion annually, yet the continent faces a huge financing gap of between \$670 billion and \$848 billion per year.<sup>8</sup> The financing gaps are driven largely by volatile financial flows, including fluctuations in foreign direct investment and official development assistance. Consequently, many African countries face significant challenges in attracting sustainable investment to advance the implementation of the two agendas. Moreover, the debt burden on States has continued to rise, leaving several countries at a heightened risk of debt distress.

13. Africa is therefore at a critical juncture in implementing the two agendas. The region must accelerate progress on the Goals while addressing persistent challenges.

14. The 2026 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and related global and regional conferences provide strategic opportunities for Africa to showcase its achievements, present the challenges that it faces, shape tangible solutions to the challenges, strengthen partnerships and influence the global sustainable development framework for beyond 2030.

15. In preparation for the meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development that will be convened in New York in July 2026, the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, at its twelfth session, will undertake a review and provide regional inputs on: the theme of the 2026 meeting of the high-level political forum; Sustainable Development Goals 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17, which are the focus of that meeting; and the corresponding goals of Agenda 2063 and the strategic objectives of its second 10-year implementation plan (2024–2033).

16. Given that Goals 6 and 11 are among the focus areas of the high-level political forum, the twelfth session offers a timely opportunity for African States to prepare for the meetings of the United Nations Water Conference, the Africa Urban Forum and the World Urban Forum that are all to be held in 2026,

<sup>5</sup> Empower Africa, “Africa’s energy deficit: 600 million people still lack electricity”, 15 August 2025.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Industrial Development Organization, *Factsheet: Africa – Highlights from the International Yearbook of Industrial Statistics 2023* (Vienna, 2023).

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), “Proportion of urban population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing (percent)”, Urban Indicators Database. Available at: <https://data.unhabitat.org/pages/housing-slums-and-informal-settlements> (accessed on 23 December 2025).

<sup>8</sup> United Nations, ECA, “What would it take to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa?: new estimates of the financing gap” (Addis Ababa, 2025).

in order to mobilize global support for the continent's priorities.

17. Furthermore, given the significant challenges that financing gaps and climate change pose to the attainment of the Goals, the twelfth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development provides a platform for participants to reflect on and leverage the outcomes of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development and the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, both held in 2025. The objective of the Forum at its twelfth session is to identify tangible actions that will unlock financing for climate resilience and sustainable development in Africa and to secure a strong role for the continent in global climate decision-making, in particular as Ethiopia prepares to host the thirty-second session of the Conference of the Parties, in 2027.

18. Building on the contributions made during the eleventh session of the Forum to the Second World Summit for Social Development, Africa will use the twelfth session of the Forum as an opportunity to review and draw insights from the outcome documents of that Summit in order to advance job creation, poverty eradication and social protection.

19. In the Pact for the Future (General Assembly resolution 80/178), the General Assembly invited the high-level political forum, under the auspices of the General Assembly, to consider in September 2027 how to advance sustainable development by 2030 and beyond. Accordingly, the twelfth session of the Forum is a strategic moment to examine and articulate initial regional perspectives, priorities and approaches for sustainable development beyond 2030.

### **III. Theme**

20. In view of the context, and with less than five years remaining before the deadline for the Goals in 2030, the theme of the twelfth session of the Forum will be "Turning the tide: transformative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063". The theme is aligned closely with that of the 2026 meeting of the high-level political forum: "Transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals for a sustainable future for all". Both themes underscore the urgent need for a step change in the implementation of the two agendas through the scaling up of transformative and coordinated actions in order to accelerate progress and place Africa firmly on track to achieve its goals.

### **IV. Objectives**

21. The overall objective of the twelfth session of the Forum is to conduct a regional follow-up and review of progress made, facilitate peer-to-peer learning and advance transformative and coordinated actions to speed up progress on the goals of the two agendas, with a focus on the strategic objectives of the second 10-year implementation plan (2024–2033) of Agenda 2063.

22. The specific objectives of the twelfth session of the Forum are as follows:

(a) To serve as an intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder platform for reviewing progress, challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and, in line with the 2026 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, for conducting an in-depth review of the attainment in Africa of Sustainable Development Goals 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17 and the corresponding goals of Agenda 2063, with a special focus on the second 10-year implementation plan (2024–2033);

(b) To strengthen learning and to showcase and advocate the scaling-up of transformative and coordinated policy solutions and actions for the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and the implementation of the second 10-year implementation plan (2024–2033);

(c) To develop the African regional position and determine its inputs to the meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, the United Nations Water Conference, the Africa Urban Forum and the World Urban Forum to be held in 2026;

(d) To adopt measures to follow up on the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, the Second World Summit for Social Development and the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;

(e) To provide capacity-building and support to the 19 African countries<sup>9</sup> that will present their voluntary national reviews in the 2026 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development;

(f) To shape the priorities of Africa for the sustainable development framework of the United Nations beyond 2030.

## V. Sub-themes

23. The activities of the twelfth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development will be conducted on the basis of the following sub-themes, which have been crafted around the five Sustainable Development Goals to be considered at the 2026 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development:

(a) Clean water and sanitation: ensuring sustainable water availability and safe sanitation systems to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(b) Affordable and clean energy;

(c) Industry, innovation and infrastructure;

(d) Sustainable cities and communities;

(e) Partnerships for the goals of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

24. A concise analytical report on each of the sub-themes will inform the deliberations, offering a thorough examination of the selected Goals and of the corresponding goals of Agenda 2063. Among the critical issues to be covered under each sub-theme are:

(a) Progress on implementation, in particular since the previous review, with a focus on trends and progress in areas in which the region is falling short of the targets for the Goals under consideration;

(b) Good current and past practices, including examples of national and regional programmes, projects and other initiatives that produced results that are aligned with the targets of the Goals under consideration;

(c) Challenges and emerging issues that hold back progress;

(d) Key messages in the form of ambitious, transformative and coordinated actions to be implemented or scaled up in order to accelerate the attainment of the Goals.

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<sup>9</sup> Algeria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, Togo, Tunisia and United Republic of Tanzania.

## VI. Format

25. The twelfth session of the Forum will be held in a hybrid format that will provide for both in-person and online participation, facilitating broad engagement and enabling contributions from diverse stakeholders at all levels. In addition to its main segments, the Forum will encompass pre-session meetings and events, as described in detail below.

26. Alongside these events, a knowledge fair will be held, as well as impact labs on the selected Goals.

### A. Preliminary events, side events and other meetings on the margins of the Forum

27. A series of preliminary events, designed to gather and integrate a wide range of stakeholder perspectives, will precede the session. The events will provide a platform for the exchange of ideas, tools, experiences, best practices and lessons learned during the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. In addition, related meetings will be held on the margins of the Forum, the outcomes of which are expected to make substantive contributions to its deliberations.

28. The preliminary events will include the following:

(a) Eighth African Regional Science, Technology and Innovation Forum;

(b) Regional preparatory workshop for African voluntary national reviews and voluntary local reviews;

(c) Annual meeting of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa;

(d) Meeting of resident coordinators;

(e) Meeting of regional directors of entities of the United Nations system;

(f) Preparatory and capacity-development workshop for major groups and other stakeholders in Africa;

(g) Africa climate talks;

(h) Parliamentary forum on the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of Agenda 2063;

(i) Private sector forum on the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063;

(j) Youth forum on the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(k) Round table on harnessing the critical minerals of Africa for green industrialization and sustainable development.

29. The twelfth session of the Forum will also feature the inaugural impact labs, which are designed as collaborative platforms for co-creation and problem-solving in which the Forum will be leveraged to generate actionable and financially viable measures to accelerate progress on the two agendas. The outcomes of the impact labs will inform the parallel meetings of the Forum.

30. In addition, there will be a knowledge fair, which will provide a platform for showcasing and exchanging new and innovative ideas, experiences and solutions relating to sustainable development. It will be a unique opportunity for individuals and organizations to exhibit their work on implementing the two agendas. In the selection of the exhibits, priority will be given to proposals that are aligned with the theme and sub-themes of the Forum.

## **B. Main segments**

31. The twelfth session of the Forum will comprise the four main segments outlined below. In each segment, data and statistics will be treated as a critical priority for driving evidence-based implementation and reporting on the two agendas.

### **1. Opening ceremony**

32. The Prime Minister of Ethiopia will officiate the opening ceremony, and statements will be delivered by the Secretary-General or Deputy Secretary-General, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the President of the African Development Bank, the President of the Economic and Social Council, the President of the General Assembly, the Executive Secretary of ECA and the Chair of the outgoing Bureau.

### **2. High-level panel dialogues**

33. Participants in the first panel will focus on the theme of the Forum, with a view to identifying and articulating transformative actions that accelerate the implementation of the two agendas, with emphasis on the selected Sustainable Development Goals. They will address the major issues and actions that emerge from recent high-level events, including the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development held during the fifty-eighth session of ECA and the meetings of the Africa Business Forum and the Africa Development Impact Forum held earlier in 2026.

34. Panellists will include representatives of the African Union Commission and resident coordinator offices, ministers responsible for the selected Sustainable Development Goals and representatives of development partners, the private sector and civil society organizations. In recognition of the critical role of accurate data and statistics in evidence-based policymaking, the panel will also feature representatives of the statistical community, including heads of national statistical offices. The discussions will be informed by a presentation highlighting the main findings of the 2026 report on African progress towards attainment of the goals of the two agendas.

35. Participants in the second panel will focus on transformative actions to unlock finance for climate resilience and sustainable development in Africa. The panellists may include presidents of regional banks, managers of pension funds, and representatives of finance, climate and other ministries, United Nations entities, development partners, the private sector and young people. Given the crucial role of accurate data and statistics in evidence-based financing, representatives of the statistical community, including heads of statistical agencies, may also be part of the panel. The deliberations will be informed by the outcomes of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and other aforementioned high-level events held in 2026.

36. Participants in the third panel will discuss transformative actions to achieve full employment and decent work for all, reduce poverty and ensure social protection in Africa. The deliberations will be informed by the outcomes of the Second World Summit for Social Development and other aforementioned high-level events held in 2026. The panellists may include: representatives of

economy, social affairs and other ministries, the African Union Commission, United Nations entities, development partners, the private sector and young people. Given the crucial role of accurate data and statistics in evidence-based financing, representatives of the statistical community, including heads of statistical agencies, will also be part of the panel.

### **3. Plenary round-table panels**

37. The round tables will be focused on the following four areas:

(a) Using evidence-based voluntary national and local reviews to drive transformative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(b) Driving ambitious and integrated actions for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 by leveraging the roles of the United Nations system, young people, the private sector, civil society and voluntary action;

(c) Harnessing science, innovation and frontier technologies to scale up transformative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(d) Sustaining the gains made in relation to the 2030 Agenda and African perspectives on the post-2030 United Nations framework for sustainable development.

### **4. Parallel meetings**

38. During the five parallel meetings, participants will thoroughly review the progress made towards achieving the goals of the two agendas that correspond to the five sub-themes of the Forum. They will showcase and advocate the scaling-up of transformative and coordinated policy solutions and actions for the 2030 Agenda and its Goals and for the second 10-year implementation plan (2024–2033) of Agenda 2063, and thereby strengthen learning in that regard. The panellists in each parallel meeting will include representatives of ministries responsible for the selected Goals, the African Union Commission, the United Nations, development partners, the private sector, young people and civil society organizations. Participants in the Forum may attend any of the parallel meetings. During each meeting, participants will collaboratively identify, articulate and agree on a set of key messages regarding ambitious and transformative actions that must be taken or scaled up to accelerate the implementation of the two agendas. The parallel meetings will be informed by background reports and the outcomes of the impact labs.

## **VII. Expected outputs**

39. The twelfth session of the Forum will generate the following outputs, which will be disseminated widely:

(a) Comprehensive policy reports on the sub-themes of the Forum, in which in-depth analysis and strategic guidance will be provided, for advancing sustainable development across the continent;

(b) Outcome documents of the twelfth session of the Forum, in which the agreed priorities, policy solutions and actions and recommendations of African States will be set out, aimed at driving transformative and coordinated actions to accelerate the implementation of the two agendas, while also serving as the region's collective input to the meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, the United Nations Water Conference, the Africa Urban Forum and the World Urban Forum to be held later in 2026:

(i) Summary and key messages of the twelfth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development;

- (ii) Addis Ababa declaration on the theme of the Forum;
- (c) Reports on the preliminary events, the impact labs and the knowledge fair, aimed at enhancing knowledge networks and partnerships to advance implementation of the two agendas.

## VIII. Expected outcomes

40. The twelfth session of the Forum is expected:

(a) To achieve consensus on African priorities, including transformative and coordinated actions to accelerate progress on the two agendas and serving as regional input to the meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, the United Nations Water Conference, the Africa Urban Forum and the World Urban Forum to be held later in 2026, and on measures to follow up on the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, the Second World Summit for Social Development and the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;

(b) To generate ideas for the joint creation of actionable, implementable and financed interventions designed to accelerate progress on the two agendas;

(c) To strengthen the capacity of the 19 African States that are conducting voluntary national reviews in 2026 to undertake them and present the associated reports at the 2026 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development;

(d) To equip members of ECA, civil society, young people, private companies, academic institutions and development partners with knowledge, skills, tools and suggestions for transformative and coordinated policy solutions and actions to accelerate and expand progress on the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals and the second 10-year implementation plan (2024–2033), and to act upon and widen the reach of the Forum's outcome documents;

(e) To forge new, and strengthen existing, multi-stakeholder partnerships to mobilize and deliver strong and coordinated support, including financial, capacity-development and technological assistance for the implementation of projects and initiatives aligned with the goals of the two agendas.

## IX. Documentation

41. The documents for the twelfth session of the Forum will include:

- (a) Pre-session documentation:
  - (i) Concept note;
  - (ii) Concise analytical background reports covering the sub-themes of the session;
  - (iii) Summary of the 2026 report on African progress towards achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union;
  - (iv) Concept notes on the preliminary events, the impact labs and the knowledge fair;
  - (v) Reports and outcome documents of relevant past meetings and events;

- (b) Post-session documentation:
  - (i) Declaration on the theme of the twelfth session of the Forum;
  - (ii) Agreed-upon key messages for presentation at the meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, the United Nations Water Conference, the Africa Urban Forum and the World Urban Forum to be held later in 2026 and at other strategic meetings at the global, regional, subregional and national levels;
  - (iii) Reports on the preliminary events listed above;
  - (iv) Report on the impact labs;
  - (v) Report on the knowledge fair.

## **X. Communication**

42. Communication and outreach for the twelfth session of the Forum will be guided by a multimedia communication strategy developed by ECA. A broad audience will be targeted, including African Governments, entities of the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations, civil society, the private sector and young people.

## **XI. Participants**

43. The twelfth session of the Forum will bring together over 2,000 participants from Africa and other regions, including representatives of:

- (a) All members of ECA;<sup>10</sup>
- (b) African Union Commission, African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development and African Peer Review Mechanism;
- (c) African Development Bank;
- (d) African Export-Import Bank;
- (e) Regional economic communities;
- (f) Entities of the United Nations system and other international agencies and organizations;
- (g) Development partners;
- (h) Major groups and other stakeholders, including civil society, business and industry organizations, and academic and research institutions.

## **XII. Working languages**

44. The working languages of the meeting will be English and French. Simultaneous interpretation will be available in those languages and in sign language.

## **XIII. Dates and venue**

45. The twelfth session of the Forum will be held at the United Nations

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<sup>10</sup> Invitations will be extended to ministers and high-level policymakers, and experts from ministries and agencies responsible for: economic planning; finance; the environment and natural resources, including water and minerals; social affairs; energy; industry; infrastructure; trade; statistics; and science and technology.

Conference Centre in Addis Ababa, in a hybrid format with in-person and online participation, from 28 to 30 April 2026.

46. Preliminary meetings and events will be held from 24 to 27 April 2026.

## **XIV. Contacts**

47. Enquiries concerning the twelfth session of the Forum should be addressed to the representatives of ECA listed below.

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