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Planning and Economic Development
Fifty-eighth session

Tangier, Morocco (hybrid), 2 and 3 April 2026

Report of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development on its work during the fifty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Africa

Introduction

1. The meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development was held in Tangier, Morocco, in a hybrid format with both in-person and online participation on 2 and 3 April 2026 during the fifty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

I. Opening of the ministerial segment [agenda item 1]

A. Attendance

2. The ministerial segment was attended by representatives of the following members of ECA: Algeria, Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

3. The following entities of the United Nations system were represented: Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Monetary Fund, International Telecommunication Union, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Population Fund, World Bank, World Health Organization.

4. An observer from the following State Member of the United Nations was present: Bangladesh.

5. Representatives of the following intergovernmental and regional organizations were present: African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development, African Development Bank, African Export-Import Bank,



African Medicines Agency, African Tax Administration Forum, African Union Commission, Central Bank of West African States, International Seabed Authority, Sahelo-Saharan Bank for Investment and Trade, Tax Justice Network Africa, West African Monetary Institute, West African Development Bank.

6. The following regional economic community was represented: Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa.

7. Observers were present from the following entities: Abdelmalek Essaâdi University; Addis Ababa University; African Guarantee Fund; African Legal Support Facility; Al Akhawayn University; Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa; Alliance of African Multilateral Financial Institutions; Cadi Ayyad University; Central Corridor Transit Transport Facilitation Agency; Coleaders 4 Africa; Cnexia, Crossroads Group LLC; Data E-Quality Consulting; Deposit and Management Fund; Digital Development Agency; Dure Technologies; Enactus Morocco; European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; Financial Sector Deepening Africa; Fingertips Enterprise Development Partners International; Gates Foundation; Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance; GeeksofAI; General Confederation of Moroccan Enterprises; Global Integrated Management Consulting; Global System for Mobile Communications Association (GSMA); Government of Imo State, Nigeria; Higher Institute of Maritime Studies; Higher International Institute of Tourism of Tangier; International Vaccine Institute; Islamic Development Bank; Jadara Foundation; Jubilee Insurance; Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis; Lobito Corridor Transit Transport Facilitation Agency; MedAccess; Miftah Essaâd Foundation; Mohammed V University of Rabat; National Institute for Employment and Vocational Training of Angola; National Ports Agency of Morocco; National School of Commerce and Management of Tangier; Open Society Foundations; Pan-African Youth Union; Payaza Africa; Policy Center for the New South; Port Management Association of Eastern and Southern Africa; PortNet; Poste Maroc for the Tanger-Tétouan-Al Hoceïma Region; Relais Consult Group; Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation; Tanger-Tétouan-Al Hoceïma Regional Centre for Investment; Trans Kalahari Corridor Secretariat.

B. Opening statements

8. The opening of the ministerial segment was chaired by the Minister of Economy and Finance of Morocco and Chair of the outgoing Bureau, Nadia Fettah.

9. Opening statements were made by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, the Director General of the World Trade Organization, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the President of the General Assembly, Annalena Baerbock, and the Executive Secretary of ECA, Claver Gatete. Ms. Fettah formally opened the ministerial segment on behalf of the Head of Government of Morocco, Aziz Akhannouch.

10. Ms. Fettah said that Africa must move beyond growth driven primarily by capital and labour and instead strengthen its competitiveness through enhanced productivity, innovation and technological advancement. Artificial intelligence and emerging technologies represented a strategic turning point for accelerating transformation and driving competitiveness. There was a need to build sovereign digital capacity, to strengthen the voice of Africa in shaping global technology governance and to leverage the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area in order to develop a continental technology market. Africa must finance economic transformation through greater domestic resource mobilization, increased innovative financing and further reforms to the global financial system, so that the continent could shape global change rather than simply adapt to it.

11. The Chairperson of the African Union Commission said that digital transformation in Africa depended on addressing constraints in three critical areas: energy, transport and financing. While major investment was needed in financial technology, data centres and artificial intelligence, a significant share of African capital remained invested abroad rather than being channelled into domestic development. He called for stronger institutions and incentives to mobilize those resources on the continent, reduce reliance on external financing and use innovation and frontier technologies to drive resilience and transformation, guided by Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union.

12. Ms. Okonjo-Iweala said that global trade had remained resilient despite major disruptions but that Africa still accounted for only 3 per cent of world trade. The continent needed to better leverage its youthful population, natural resources and opportunities in digital services and frontier technologies. She called upon members of ECA to diversify partners, attract investments, move up value chains, reduce trade costs and use the African Continental Free Trade Area and the World Trade Organization reforms to strengthen their position in global trade.

13. Underscoring that digital innovation presented significant opportunities for Africa, in particular in health, education and trade, the President of the General Assembly noted that realizing its potential required action in three areas: investment in infrastructure, connectivity and digital skills; stronger governance for data use and coordination; and partnerships to build innovation systems, support technology transfer and strengthen institutional capacity.

14. The Executive Secretary of ECA noted that the Conference was being held amid major global uncertainties owing to geopolitical fragmentation and conflicts, which were increasing pressure on the continent's limited fiscal space. The continent's economic resilience had not yet produced real structural transformation. The harnessing of technologies for economic transformation in Africa necessitated action in four critical areas: investing in infrastructure, including reliable energy; investing in people through education and skills development; acting collectively by leveraging the African Continental Free Trade Area; and mobilizing strategic financing, including through enhanced domestic resource mobilization. Africa must act immediately to turn its youthful population into a driver of transformation.

15. Officially opening the Conference on behalf of the Head of Government of Morocco, Ms. Fettah highlighted that Tangier was a strategic hub that linked Africa to Europe and recalled that the city had, 66 years earlier, hosted the second session of ECA. Describing the investments made by Morocco in digital infrastructure and the country's ambition to become a primary hub for artificial intelligence on the continent, she underlined the urgent need for Africa to change its productivity models and respond to rapid technological change through stronger innovation, continental cooperation, larger markets and greater domestic resource mobilization. She called for the positioning of innovation and frontier technologies as crucial levers of economic growth and for the prioritization of investment in the continent's young people, and urged agreement on a shared continental vision in that regard.

II. Election of the Bureau and adoption of the agenda and programme of work [agenda item 2]

16. The following countries were unanimously elected to form the new Bureau:

Chair:	Cameroon
First Vice-Chair:	Sierra Leone

Second Vice-Chair: Kenya
Third Vice-Chair: Zambia
Rapporteur: Morocco

17. Thanking the outgoing Bureau, the newly elected Chair, Minister Delegate in charge of Planning at the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development of Cameroon, Paul Tasong, said that, although Africa had made progress in technological development and had recorded an economic growth rate of 4 per cent, that growth remained insufficient to meaningfully reduce poverty, as it had not been driven by productivity gains or structural transformation. Africa must strategically and inclusively harness frontier technologies to transform important sectors. The three priority areas were: closing the productivity gap through technology and innovation; leveraging data and digital platforms to strengthen continental integration; and developing an African framework to ensure that artificial intelligence effectively supported the continent's development.

18. Following the acceptance statement by the newly elected Chair, the Conference adopted without further amendment the programme of work and the following agenda, based on the draft programme of work (E/ECA/CM/58/3/Rev. 2) and the provisional agenda that had been circulated as document E/ECA/CM/58/1:

1. Opening of the ministerial segment.
2. Election of the Bureau and adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
3. Dialogue on the theme of the fifty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Africa:
 - (a) Overview of current global economic trends, related challenges and their implications for Africa;
 - (b) Keynote address: 2026 Adebayo Adedeji Memorial Lecture;
 - (c) Launch of the 2026 edition of the Economic Report on Africa;
 - (d) High-level discussion.
4. High-level round-table discussions.
5. Launch of the Sustainable Health Financing Initiative.
6. Consideration of recommendations and adoption of resolutions.
7. Consideration and adoption of the ministerial statement.
8. Other matters.
9. Closing of the ministerial segment and the fifty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Africa.

III. Dialogue on the theme of the fifty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Africa [agenda item 3]

A. Overview of current global economic trends, related challenges and their implications for Africa

19. Presenting an overview of current global economic trends, related challenges and their implications for Africa, the Deputy Executive Secretary (Programme) and Chief Economist of ECA, Hanan Morsy, said that the global economy had entered a new phase characterized by lower growth, heightened

uncertainty, and compounded shocks driven by geopolitical tensions, trade fragmentation and tighter financial conditions. Those developments were affecting Africa through rising commodity prices, disrupted trade routes and reduced access to affordable finance. In the face of such structural challenges as increasing protectionism and rising costs of capital, resilience and growth in Africa would depend on regional integration, productivity-enhancing investment and strategic positioning in the global energy and technology transitions.

20. She then introduced a report on the theme of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission, “Growth through innovation: harnessing data and frontier technologies for the economic transformation of Africa” (E/ECA/COE/44/6-E/ECA/CM/58/4). She noted that the main impediment to growth in Africa was not access to technology but rather the ability to absorb, adapt, diffuse and scale up frontier technologies to generate sustained productivity gains and structural transformation. While access to digital and frontier technologies was expanding, weak absorptive capacity and fragmented markets constrained their impact. Africa possessed strong strategic assets for a technology-driven transformation, including a large and youthful population, abundant renewable energy potential, significant reserves of critical minerals that were essential for clean energy and digital technologies, and rapidly growing data resources. Leveraging those assets effectively required continent-wide initiatives, coordination and regional integration. In order to shift towards productivity-led, innovation-driven growth, policymakers must focus on five priority areas: governance and institutions; skills and innovation systems; infrastructure and financing; regional integration; and sector-specific strategies.

21. Following the presentation, participants highlighted the importance of national efforts in digital entrepreneurship, financing to support innovation by young people, digital governance, remote medical services, online payments and agricultural platforms. They emphasized that technology was essential for driving structural transformation and urged greater focus on ways to harness it more effectively at scale.

22. They cited experiences from various countries, including the use of artificial intelligence, drones, sensors and satellite imagery in social protection, transport corridor monitoring, agriculture, health and capital investment planning. The importance of safeguards and policy frameworks was raised, in particular in relation to artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, privacy, the responsible use of technology and the protection of critical thinking and human capabilities. A concern was raised regarding the unilateral sanctions imposed on certain African countries, which were constraining their access to frontier technologies and digital tools and hindering their ability to mobilize private sector capital to drive growth and economic transformation.

B. Keynote address: 2026 Adebayo Adedeji Memorial Lecture

23. The 2026 Adebayo Adedeji Memorial Lecture was delivered by the former Minister of Finance of South Africa, Trevor Manuel, on the topic of harnessing data and innovation for the economic transformation of Africa.

24. Mr. Manuel framed the choices Africa was facing within a context of heightened global uncertainty, noting that recent unilateral actions had fuelled volatility in energy and commodity markets, disrupted supply chains and threatened food security, with the heaviest burden falling on the poorest. Against that backdrop, he underscored the importance of strengthened collective action to improve transparency in sovereign lending and debt, with a view to enhancing the scrutiny and accountability of credit rating agencies, within a global financial system dominated by creditors. Referring to the Africa Expert Panel established by the Group of 20 under the presidency of South Africa, he highlighted evidence-based recommendations to reform the global financial

architecture, address the debt crisis, unlock investment, strengthen domestic resource mobilization and deepen pan-African partnerships.

25. He said that the regional economic communities played an important role in advancing integration and resilience, and that expert policy recommendations should be tested and adapted to national and regional realities. He urged ministers to pursue bold, coordinated action to accelerate industrialization, foster regional integration, invest in digital infrastructure, leverage the African youth dividend and uphold a rules-based international order. African renewal must begin with Africans.

C. Launch of the 2026 edition of the Economic Report on Africa

26. The Director of the Macroeconomic Policy, Finance and Governance Division of ECA, Stephen Karingi, presented the 2026 edition of the Economic Report on Africa.¹ He said that, as shown in the report, despite the recent resilient growth in Africa, persistent challenges remained, including high levels of poverty and inequality, rapid urbanization, significant gender gaps and slow structural transformation. Africa faced a pivotal opportunity to move decisively towards productivity-driven growth by leveraging frontier technologies and drawing on its strategic assets, namely, abundant renewable energy sources, critical minerals, a youthful population, data as an emerging resource and the African Continental Free Trade Area. Frontier technologies were already reshaping important sectors, including natural resource management, agriculture, industry and trade, as well as the digital economy and public services. A 1 per cent increase in the frontier technology readiness index could yield approximately 2.26 percentage points in productivity growth, with effects materializing over three to four years. Strengthening governance, financing, human capital, infrastructure, regional integration and differentiated sectoral development strategies remained essential policy priorities for translating technology adoption into structural transformation.

D. High-level discussion

1. Introduction

27. A high-level discussion was held on the theme of the session and was moderated by the former news anchor, British Broadcasting Corporation, Anne-Marie Dias Borges.

2. Presentations

28. The presentations under the first three sub-items of agenda item 3 served as the basis for the high-level discussion.

3. Discussion

29. In the ensuing discussion, participants emphasized the need to treat innovation as a broader systemic challenge, encompassing intellectual property protection, financing, institutional coordination and the link between research and productive outcomes. They called for stronger regional collaboration in research and development, including such pooled resource mechanisms as a pan-African data fund, harmonized regulatory frameworks and localized innovation systems. They cautioned that external venture capital inflows could result in the transfer of intellectual property outside the continent and noted that adequate domestic and local financing were vital. They also emphasized the importance of integrating the climate dimension into discussions on frontier technologies and the need to tailor approaches to differing national capacities

¹ *Economic Report on Africa 2026: Growth through Innovation – Harnessing Data and Frontier Technologies for Africa’s Economic Transformation* (Addis Ababa, 2026).

and fiscal constraints.

30. Highlighting structural constraints associated with the current global financial architecture and reiterating the urgent need for reform, they called for the strengthening of mechanisms to curb illicit financial flows, greater South-South solidarity and solutions designed by Africans for Africans.

31. Participants underscored the role of the African Continental Free Trade Area in supporting cross-border cooperation on intellectual property and fostering localized innovation systems. Frontier technologies were critical in supporting the upgrading of small and medium-sized enterprises, strengthening linkages with larger firms and advancing green transitions, with Governments playing an enabling role.

32. They welcomed a declaration on harnessing frontier technologies, digital sovereignty and innovation for youth employment and economic transformation that was adopted by the Pan-African Youth Union on 31 March 2026, on the margins of the session. In the declaration, African young people had urged Governments to build sovereign data infrastructure, harmonize data governance and strengthen cybersecurity. They had called for the scaling up of blended finance to support youth-led start-ups and for reduced barriers to intra-African digital trade, and had encouraged increased accountability through the institutionalization of young people's participation in policymaking in relation to the digital economy.

4. Recommendations

33. In the light of the discussion, the Conference made the following recommendations:

- (a) Members of ECA are encouraged:
 - (i) To increase investment in research and development;
 - (ii) To strengthen intellectual property frameworks;
 - (iii) To expand domestic financing for start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises, with a view to reducing reliance on externally managed capital;
 - (iv) To align public procurement processes with innovation objectives;
 - (v) To promote public-private partnerships and mobilize domestic venture capital in order to support the commercialization of locally generated knowledge;
 - (vi) To integrate digital strategies, skills development and climate resilience into national innovation policies, ensuring that frontier technologies contribute directly to productivity growth, jobs and structural transformation;
- (b) ECA is encouraged:
 - (i) To support its members in developing harmonized approaches to patent protection, data and technology governance, and cross-border intellectual property cooperation, including through such continental initiatives as a pan-African data fund;
 - (ii) To facilitate regional research and innovation partnerships, including through institutional mechanisms that pool resources across universities, research institutions and the public sector;
 - (iii) To promote regional platforms for collaborative research and policies that strengthen linkages between small and medium-sized enterprises and large corporations, advance the adoption of climate and green technology and increase African ownership of data and digital infrastructure;

- (iv) To tailor policy advice to differing national capacities and to strengthen analytical support for managing climate-related risks, curbing illicit financial flows and expanding digital employment opportunities for young people.

IV. High-level round-table discussions [agenda item 4]

A. Round table 1: Leveraging technology for economic growth and transformation

1. Introduction

34. The round table was moderated by Ms. Dias Borges. The panellists were the Director of Treasury and External Finance, Ministry of Economy and Finance of Morocco, Mohamed Tarik Bchir; the Minister of Finance and Economic Planning of the Sudan, Gibril Ibrahim; the Governor of the Bank of Tanzania, Emmanuel Tutuba; the Minister of Planning and Economic Development of Sierra Leone, Kenyeh Ballay; and Mr. Tasong, speaking in his ministerial capacity.

2. Presentations

35. Noting the pivotal role of digitalization in reshaping value chains and enhancing transparency, Mr. Bchir said that it could serve as a catalyst for genuine economic transformation. Adequate financing was important, in particular for innovation and start-ups.

36. Mr. Ibrahim highlighted the significance of digital technologies in driving productivity growth and strengthening resilience. Calling for the prioritization of high-impact sectors and the advancement of data-driven public service delivery, he encouraged the sharing of knowledge and experiences to accelerate digital transformation in Africa in a cost-effective manner.

37. Ms. Ballay underscored the value of data and technology in planning and value addition, citing their application across such sectors as agriculture, education and health to boost productivity, improve service delivery and create employment opportunities for young people.

38. Mr. Tutuba noted that digital financial services were essential for expanding financial inclusion, reducing transaction costs and improving capital allocation. Continued investments were needed in effective regulatory frameworks to support those outcomes.

39. Mr. Tasong said that frontier technologies were reshaping production and consumption systems, although investment volatility remained a challenge. He stressed the importance of leveraging the youthful population of Africa and strengthen private sector participation, which should be complemented by supportive public policies.

3. Discussion

40. In the ensuing discussion, participants said that frontier technologies had the potential to accelerate growth and structural transformation and to enhance domestic resource mobilization. The adoption of those technologies had already led to notable improvements in tax administration and revenue collection. Emphasizing the critical role of the diaspora and human capital development, they called for enhanced cooperation, knowledge-sharing and a unified vision to advance an inclusive technological transformation across Africa.

41. In addition, they identified financing constraints as a primary impediment to harnessing frontier technologies, calling for expanded use of development bonds and blended and innovative financing instruments and for strengthened partnerships, including deeper engagement with the diaspora. Furthermore, they

underscored the critical importance of strong institutions and robust digital systems, in particular interoperable payment systems, to accelerate progress in leveraging technology for sustained growth and structural transformation.

4. Recommendations

42. In the light of the discussion, the Conference made the following recommendations:

- (a) Members of ECA are encouraged:
 - (i) To enhance investments in enabling infrastructure, including energy and digital connectivity infrastructure, in order to drive innovation and leverage frontier technologies;
 - (ii) To mobilize financing through innovative instruments, including blended finance and public-private partnerships;
 - (iii) To strengthen human capital for innovation and to advance and scale up the use of technology through inclusive skills development and technical training;
 - (iv) To develop data governance frameworks and promote digitalization in public administration;
 - (v) To foster innovation systems and encourage the participation of young people and the private sector in related initiatives;
 - (vi) To enhance regional cooperation, peer learning and participation from the diaspora in order to drive innovation and advance and ensure the optimal use of frontier technologies;
- (b) ECA is encouraged:
 - (i) To enhance capacity-building support for its members in harnessing frontier technologies;
 - (ii) To provide technical assistance to its members in the formulation and harmonization of policy and regulatory frameworks in innovation and technology;
 - (iii) To support its members in strengthening data systems and evidence-based policymaking;
 - (iv) To promote regional approaches to research, innovation and knowledge-sharing.

B. Round table 2: Unleashing the Africa of the future – advancing the development of digital public infrastructure, data centres and sovereignty

1. Introduction

43. The round table was moderated by Ms. Dias Borges. The panellists were the Vice-President and Minister of Finance of Botswana, Ndaba Nkosinathi Gaolathe; the Minister of Communications and Digital Transformation of Mozambique, Américo Muchanga; the Deputy Minister of Planning and Investment, Office of the President, United Republic of Tanzania, Pius Stephen Chaya; the Special Envoy for Technology of Kenya, Philip Thigo; the Head of Sub-Saharan Africa at GSM Association, Angela Wamola; and the Chief Executive Officer of Co-location at Cassava Technologies, Adil El Youssefi.

2. Presentations

44. Mr. Gaolathe asserted that digitalization was crucial in fostering inclusion and improving service delivery and highlighted the innovative financing models implemented by Botswana, including a 1 per cent levy on

mobile service providers and funding of 1.2 billion pula for digital infrastructure.

45. Mr. Muchanga said that digital transformation enabled equitable access to services and reduced travel burdens, and stressed the need for secure and inclusive digital public infrastructure, local data control and private-sector collaboration, noting that digital infrastructure was as essential as energy and transport.

46. Mr. Chaya said that the United Republic of Tanzania had embedded digital technology in its development plans to improve revenue collection, customs and government payments. Aiming for a \$1 trillion economy by 2050, the country was investing in digital infrastructure, skills development and cybersecurity across sectors.

47. Mr. Thigo said that the world had entered an “age of intelligence”, which required the development of digital public infrastructure to support local-language artificial intelligence models and thereby generate insights to improve decision-making. He noted that African data accounted for only about 1 per cent of global artificial intelligence training data.

48. Ms. Wamola said that, since Africa accounted for more than 50 per cent of global sales of low-end devices, rising device costs disproportionately affected the continent. Intelligent connectivity was shifting towards high-end devices and Africa risked falling behind as global manufacturers moved production towards artificial intelligence servers and data centres.

49. Mr. Youssefi underlined the need to invest in building artificial intelligence factories as a powerhouse for running artificial intelligence models and noted that the current number of data centres needed to be increased tenfold in order to address demand from Governments. It was also important for the entire data system to be fit for purpose for users, for energy costs to be regulated and for regional integration to be fostered through the development of sovereign national servers located abroad, which were also known as data embassies.

3. Discussion

50. In the ensuing discussion, participants said that the digital future of Africa needed to be built in Africa, to be designed for Africans and to serve African development priorities. Digital integration and harmonization of policies and infrastructure across Africa was also important, in order to drive economic growth and promote regional cooperation.

51. Emphasizing the need for digital sovereignty and data ownership, and for enhanced security to enable Africa to retain the value of its data, participants called for a unified digital infrastructure system to drive inclusion, service delivery and economic participation. They said that Africa needed to move from being a consumer of digital infrastructure to being both a producer and a consumer. In addition, the impact of digital technologies on economic growth needed to be measured.

4. Recommendations

52. In the light of the discussion, the Conference made the following recommendations:

- (a) Members of ECA are encouraged:
 - (i) To create an enabling legal and regulatory environment and ensure policy harmonization for data governance and cross-border data flow;
 - (ii) To invest in the last-mile digital infrastructure needed to expand broadband access, to invest in telecommunication infrastructure and to ensure that rural communities are connected;

- (iii) To strengthen the capacity of their national statistical systems for data collection and to measure the impact of digital technologies on economic growth;
- (iv) To ensure data sovereignty through the building of local data centres while providing reliable and affordable energy for artificial intelligence factories;
- (v) To ensure the active and effective involvement of the diaspora, young people and the private sector in national digital transformation initiatives;
- (b) ECA is encouraged:
 - (i) To continue to provide technical support to its members in developing and implementing national digitalization strategies within the framework of the African Digital Transformation Strategy and the Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy of the African Union;
 - (ii) To support its members in measuring the impact of digital technologies and artificial intelligence on economic growth.

V. Launch of the Sustainable Health Financing Initiative [agenda item 5]

A. Introduction

53. This session constituted the formal launch of the Sustainable Health Financing Initiative, a continental initiative developed by ECA, in partnership with the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Health Organization, development banks and other partners, to accelerate sustainable health financing reform across Africa.

B. Presentations

54. The Chief of Staff of ECA, Aboubakri Diaw, presented the principal features of the Sustainable Health Financing Initiative, including its seven workstreams: embedding health in national macroeconomic fiscal frameworks; deploying innovative financing instruments; strengthening data, tracking and accountability systems; leveraging digital and frontier technologies; providing country-level capacity-building and reform support; scaling up regional integration and local manufacturing through the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area; and changing the narrative from health as a cost to health as an economic investment.

55. He said that most African countries had yet to meet the commitment made in the 2001 Abuja Declaration on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Other Related Infectious Diseases to allocate 15 per cent of national budgets to health. Governments funded less than 41 per cent of total health expenditure, with the remainder financed by external donors or out-of-pocket payments made by households. He noted that the absence of governance frameworks constrained the bankability of the health sector and highlighted several opportunities, including the availability, at the global level, of institutional private capital. Through the African Continental Free Trade Area, Africa also had an unprecedented opportunity to leverage a continental market to support pooled procurement and local pharmaceutical manufacturing.

C. Discussion

56. In the ensuing discussion, participants welcomed the initiative and its launch, stressing that no meaningful socioeconomic development could be achieved without a healthy population. They said that health financing was one of the primary means of achieving such development, alongside infrastructure, quality control and productive capacities. High-quality data, technology and digital tools were required to inform policies, improve efficiency and strengthen the resilience of health systems.

57. They said that domestic resource mobilization for health financing and domestic manufacturing of medicines and other medical products all needed to be increased. Strong public-private partnerships, fiscal discipline and enhanced collaboration across the continent were important in order to address the daunting challenges in the health sector and to guarantee stronger and more resilient health systems in Africa.

D. Recommendations

58. In the light of the discussion, the Conference made the following recommendations:

- (a) Members of ECA are encouraged:
 - (i) To commit themselves to one tangible deliverable for which ECA and partners can provide structured technical support;
 - (ii) To produce a joint compact between ministries of finance and health that embeds health investment within the national macroeconomic fiscal framework;
- (b) ECA is encouraged:
 - (i) To provide technical support to its members with a view to reducing the cost of medical supplies and equipment through pooled procurement, in collaboration with other partners;
 - (ii) To develop and operationalize an end-to-end portal for the collection of comprehensive healthcare data, including on the use of and expenditure on healthcare, inputs and outputs, and the contribution of the healthcare sector to gross domestic product.

VI. Consideration of recommendations and adoption of resolutions [agenda item 6]

59. The Conference considered the recommendations and draft resolutions submitted by the Committee of Experts. In considering the recommendations of the Committee on statutory issues, the Conference requested that the secretariat present future reports on the follow-up to the resolutions of the Conference in tabular format at subsequent sessions.

60. In considering the recommendation of the Committee on the date, venue and theme of the fifty-ninth session of the Commission, the Conference noted the offer by Cameroon to host the session.

61. The Conference recalled the established practice of alternating the venue between Addis Ababa and other locations and, with a view to enhancing ministerial participation, decided that the fifty-ninth session should be held in Addis Ababa. It welcomed and endorsed the theme, “Shaping the future of work in Africa: youth employment, growth and fiscal resilience”.

62. The Conference also endorsed the theme “From extraction to transformation: leveraging the critical minerals and biodiversity of Africa for

industrialization and green growth” for the sixtieth session of the Commission.

63. Uganda offered to host the sixtieth session, and the Conference requested the Bureau to consider the offer.

64. Following that discussion, the Conference adopted the resolutions as set out in annex I to the present report.

VII. Consideration and adoption of the ministerial statement [agenda item 7]

65. The Conference considered the draft ministerial statement and proposed amendments to it. The document was unanimously adopted as amended. The ministerial statement is set out in annex II to the present report.

VIII. Other matters [agenda item 8]

66. No other matters were raised.

IX. Closing of the ministerial segment and the fifty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Africa [agenda item 9]

67. Closing remarks were made by the Executive Secretary of ECA and the Chair of the Bureau.

68. The Executive Secretary congratulated the Chair for effectively leading the Conference and thanked the Government and people of Morocco for their generous support and hospitality. He commended the ministers, experts and other participants on their active engagement and contributions on major issues, including the conflict in the Middle East and preparedness for future shocks, sustainable health financing in Africa and the role of data and frontier technologies in economic growth. He also expressed appreciation to the secretariat for its dedication in organizing the Conference.

69. The Chair commended the secretariat, the participants and the Government of Morocco, in particular the Ministry of Economy and Finance, as well as the media, on the successful organization of the Conference and also the spirit of solidarity that had characterized the event. He highlighted the timeliness of the session’s theme and the evidence-based and practical discussions held. He expressed appreciation to the ministers and experts for their active engagement in defining priorities and building consensus and urged the members of ECA to translate the conclusions of the session into concerted and coordinated actions for the benefit of the continent.

70. Following those remarks and the customary exchange of courtesies, the Chair declared the fifty-eighth session of the Commission closed at 7 p.m.

Annex I

Resolutions and decision adopted by the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development during the fifty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Africa

A. Resolutions

2026/1. 2027 programme plan and budget

The Conference of Ministers,

Acknowledging the strategic importance of annual programme plans and budgets in contextualizing and operationalizing the implementation of the programme of work of the Economic Commission for Africa, in accordance with its strategic directions and core functions, across its nine subprogrammes and pursuant to guidance from the Economic and Social Council,

Recalling the realignment of the programme of work of the Commission to enable a greater focus on emerging priorities and its harmonization with the development priorities and aspirations of Africa, in particular the main transformations that are necessary to accelerate the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹ and the implementation of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union,

Taking note of the revised estimates of the proposed 2026 programme budget of the Commission,² conducted within the context of the UN80 Initiative and endorsed by the General Assembly,³

Taking note also of the organizational changes that have been made with a view to enhancing the programmatic efficiency and organizational effectiveness of the Commission, as described in the administrative note of the Executive Secretary of the Commission to the Conference of Ministers at the fifty-eighth session of the Commission,⁴

Considering that Africa continues to be adversely affected by recurrent crises and conflicts, both within and outside the region, resulting in increased vulnerability to shocks and to rapid socioeconomic and environmental changes,

Recognizing that the proposed 2027 programme plan and budget reflect the outcomes of the spending review and the continued efforts of the Commission to enhance the implementation of its strategic programmatic orientation, in order to facilitate the mobilization of resources needed to finance sustainable development,

¹ General Assembly resolution 70/1.

² A/80/400, part IV.B.38.

³ General Assembly resolution 80/242.

⁴ E/ECA/COE/44/INF/2-E/ECA/CM/58/INF/4.

Having examined the proposed 2027 programme plan and budget, in which the objectives and most important expected results and deliverables for all subprogrammes are highlighted,

1. *Urges* the Economic Commission for Africa to work towards strengthening its resource mobilization efforts, with a view to improving the balance between regular budgetary allocations and extrabudgetary resources;
2. *Endorses* the 2027 programme plan and budget of the Commission.

*10th plenary meeting
3 April 2026*

2026/2. Advancing sustainable energy to enhance digital technology infrastructure in Africa

The Conference of Ministers,

Reaffirming the commitment of African States to implement Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union, which highlights the need for integrated energy and digital infrastructure as a foundation for the continent's transformation and inclusive growth,

Reaffirming also the commitment of African States to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,¹ in particular Goal 7 (affordable and clean energy) and Goal 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure),

Considering the principles and objectives of the Global Digital Compact,² which seeks to foster an open, free and secure digital future for all, and acknowledging its relevance for advancing sustainable, inclusive and resilient digital infrastructure and services across Africa,

Considering also the critical importance of reliable energy and digital infrastructure for economic growth, social development and economic transformation in Africa,

Noting the rapid increase in data generation, the growing need for secure and sustainable data storage and the potential of data centres to support economic diversification and innovation across the continent,

Considering recent advancements in artificial intelligence, cloud computing and big data analytics, which have led to a significant rise in energy consumption that necessitates the implementation of sustainable energy solutions,

Considering also the contribution of productive uses of energy, including in data centres, to de-risking energy investments by ensuring a steady and reliable demand for electricity,

Recognizing the ongoing challenges encountered by numerous African countries, such as limited access to electricity, unstable power grids and inadequate investment in digital infrastructure, all of which impede inclusive socioeconomic development,

Acknowledging the ongoing efforts of the African Union, in particular the formulation of the Energy Transition Strategy and Action Plan, as well as those of the Economic Commission for Africa and other regional bodies to promote sustainable energy solutions and digital transformation,

Recognizing that the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa prioritizes data centre construction, which underpins the digital

¹ General Assembly resolution 70/1.

² General Assembly resolution 79/1, annex I.

economy, as a critical component of its information and communications technology projects to enhance digital infrastructure and enable regional integration,

Acknowledging advancements in the integration of smart grid technologies, renewable energy resources and digital infrastructure, which support innovation, efficiency and development across the continent,

Acknowledging also the critical role of regional energy infrastructure, including regional power pools, in underpinning the objectives of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area by providing the reliable and cross-border energy supply necessary for digital trade, industrial development and continental market integration,

1. *Invites* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to collaborate on expanding modern energy systems and digital networks, especially in rural and underserved areas, on closing digital and energy gaps and on supporting inclusive development;

2. *Invites* the Commission to collaborate with the African Union and other partners on evaluating the energy requirements for the growing need for data centres on the continent, and on developing a comprehensive framework for the joint development of energy infrastructure and data centres in Africa, ensuring alignment with national and regional development strategies;

3. *Encourages* the Commission to work with its partners on the development of guidelines on energy efficiency, environmental impact, data sovereignty and digital security for the sustainable management of data centres across the continent;

4. *Calls upon* members of the Commission and partners to mobilize increased public and private investment for sustainable energy infrastructure, with a specific focus on expanding and modernizing regional power pools, promoting integrated energy and enhancing digital infrastructure, in order to ensure a stable, cross-border energy supply capable of supporting the continent's growing digital economy and industrial base;

5. *Calls upon* international financial institutions, including multilateral development banks, and development partners to significantly scale up financing for integrated sustainable energy and data centre initiatives in Africa by establishing innovative financing mechanisms, such as blended finance, partial risk guarantees and first-loss capital, in order to de-risk investments, unlock private capital and crowd in private sector participation;

6. *Encourages* members of the Commission, in collaboration with regional bodies and development partners, to develop and strengthen local capital markets in order to mobilize domestic resources for long-term infrastructure investment, while also improving the availability, transparency and quality of project finance data to enable fair and accurate risk-return analyses for investors;

7. *Calls upon* the Commission and its partners to continue to provide support to members of the Commission through capacity-building programmes that strengthen local human capital, with a specific focus on increasing the participation of women and young people, providing technical assistance and promoting knowledge-sharing initiatives, in order to encourage the development and implementation of viable business models to boost the generation of sustainable energy for data centres;

8. *Requests* the Commission to provide regular updates on the progress of these initiatives in Africa, including measurable outcomes and recommendations for future steps.

*10th plenary meeting
3 April 2026*

2026/3. Reorganization of the work of the Economic Commission for Africa

The Conference of Ministers,

Recalling Economic and Social Council resolution 671 A (XXV) of 29 April 1958, in which the Economic Commission for Africa was mandated to promote the economic and social development of its members and facilitate international cooperation in support of African development,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 79/318 of 18 July 2025, in which the Assembly welcomed the efforts of the Secretary-General to strengthen the United Nations in order to keep pace with a changing world and to make it fit for the present and future challenges through the UN80 Initiative,

Recalling further General Assembly resolution 80/242 of 30 December 2025, in which the Assembly endorsed the revised estimates related to the proposed programme budget for 2026,¹

Acknowledging the report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Commission from March 2025 to February 2026,² in which the results achieved by the Commission in all its programme areas are highlighted,

Recognizing the continuing efforts of the Commission to reposition itself and its programmatic orientation,

Having considered the note by the Executive Secretary on the recent organizational changes in the secretariat of the Commission,³

1. *Notes* the revision of resource requirements in the proposed programme budget for 2026 and the readjustment of the organizational structure, which were carried out to strengthen internal coordination, improve collaboration across divisions, reduce fragmentation and enhance overall efficiency within the context of the UN80 Initiative;

2. *Also notes* the additional realignments made to the programme of work of the Economic Commission for Africa to further strengthen efficiency and effectiveness, enhance coherence, strengthen synergies and better respond to the needs of the members of the Commission;

3. *Notes with appreciation* that the proposed reorganization does not alter the intergovernmental mandates or geographic coverage of the Commission;

4. *Authorizes* the Commission to reorganize its programme of work by streamlining its divisions and sections;

5. *Also authorizes* the renaming of the Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division as the Socioeconomic Development Division, the renaming of subprogramme 6, on gender and women's empowerment, as "Economic empowerment of women and youth", and the renaming of subprogramme 9, on poverty, inequality and social policy, as "Poverty and socioeconomic policy", and requests that the objectives of these subprogrammes be adjusted

¹ A/80/400, part IV.B.38.

² E/ECA/COE/44/7.

³ E/ECA/COE/44/INF/2-E/ECA/CM/58/INF/4.

accordingly;

6. *Further authorizes* the Commission to refine the objective and area of specialization of subprogramme 7, component 1, subregional activities in North Africa, to better align its programmatic delivery towards a broader and more integrated focus on accelerated and inclusive growth and sustainable development, with increased emphasis on macroeconomic policy, development financing, fiscal management, regional integration and economic diversification;

7. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to continue identifying opportunities to enhance effectiveness and efficiency and to further strengthen the Commission so that it remains fully fit for purpose.

*10th plenary meeting
3 April 2026*

B. Decision

2026/100. Date, venue and theme of the fifty-ninth session and theme of the sixtieth session

At its 10th plenary meeting, on 3 April 2026, the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development decided to hold the fifty-ninth session of the Economic Commission for Africa at the headquarters of the Commission in Addis Ababa, on dates to be determined, under the theme “Shaping the future of work in Africa: youth employment, growth and fiscal resilience” and to hold the sixtieth session of the Commission under the theme “From extraction to transformation: leveraging the critical minerals and biodiversity of Africa for industrialization and green growth”.

*10th plenary meeting
3 April 2026*

Annex II

Ministerial statement

We, African ministers of finance, planning and economic development,

Meeting as the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development in Tangier, Morocco, on 2 and 3 April 2026 during the fifty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Africa,

Honoured by the presence of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, the Vice-President of Botswana, Ndaba Gaolathe, and the former Vice-President of Nigeria, Yemi Osinbajo,

Honoured also by the presence of the ministers responsible for science, technology and innovation and the ministers of health of African States, governors of national central banks in Africa and other high-level dignitaries and special guests,

Having deliberated on the theme of the fifty-eighth session, “Growth through innovation: harnessing data and frontier technologies for the economic transformation of Africa”,

Mindful that, while Africa has experienced notable economic expansion, with gross domestic product growth averaging 4.2 per cent between 2000 and 2024, and has demonstrated global leadership in producing some innovative solutions in such areas as digital finance, renewable energy and technology systems, the overall impact of innovation on broad-based productivity growth and structural transformation has remained limited, reflecting challenges in scaling up and diffusing these successes across the continent,¹

Mindful also that the continent’s growth has been driven largely by sustained increases in capital investment and an expanding labour force, providing a strong foundation for future development, and that the contribution of total factor productivity, while still limited, reflects untapped opportunities to further enhance efficiency, innovation uptake and value creation across economies,

Cognizant that the ongoing slow reallocation of labour and capital from low-productivity activities towards high-productivity sectors, such as manufacturing and modern services, is gradually gaining momentum in several countries, and that continued progress in productivity growth and industrialization holds considerable promise for unlocking the continent’s vast untapped potential and advancing inclusive and sustainable economic transformation,

Cognizant also that frontier technologies and innovation can be used to unlock the growth potential of Africa and to enhance the competitiveness of African economies through productivity growth and diversification,

Cognizant further that frontier technologies can also be used to accelerate structural transformation, enabling the much-needed reallocation of resources from low-productivity to high-productivity sectors,

Aware that frontier technologies and continuing innovation in relation to such technologies will not only improve living standards but also build the capacity of countries to secure a durable competitive advantage, if embedded

¹ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, “Real gross domestic product: total and per capita, growth rates, annual”, UNCTADstat. Available at <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/datacentre/> (accessed on 3 April 2026).

within an enabling policy and regulatory environment, supported by adequate financing and informed by data analytics,

Noting, in particular, that frontier technologies could help in building a healthy and productive workforce, which is essential for advancing sustainable development and long-term economic transformation in Africa,

Concerned about the implications that current global geopolitics, trade tensions and conflicts may have for economic and social development in Africa,

Concerned also about the imposition of unilateral sanctions on a number of African countries, which has adversely affected the efforts of those countries to industrialize, to mobilize private sector capital and to gain access to international development finance, in general, and to assistance relating to frontier technologies, in particular, thereby hindering their efforts to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development² and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union, and creating negative perceptions about the investment climate in those countries,

Acknowledging that African countries are not all at the same level of technological advancement and digital infrastructure development,

Do hereby:

1. *Acknowledge* that frontier technologies not only boost efficiency through total factor productivity but also enhance the mobilization and combination of labour and capital, by strengthening the skills of workers, boosting workforce participation and ensuring that machinery, equipment and infrastructure are used more effectively;

2. *Also acknowledge* that frontier technologies and innovation present significant opportunities for African countries to ensure social and economic transformation, regional integration and progress towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals;

3. *Further acknowledge* that the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, supported by interoperable digital systems, harmonized digital trade rules and trusted data governance frameworks, is establishing a market with the scale, competitiveness and degree of integration necessary to enable African countries to harness the power of data and frontier technologies to drive growth;

4. *Recognize* that the global market for frontier technologies is large and expanding, with recent estimates suggesting that the market size will grow from 2.5 trillion United States dollars in 2023 to 16.4 trillion dollars by 2033;³

5. *Also recognize* that, since Africa is home to one fifth of the world's population, some 42 per cent of its young people, 30 per cent of its critical mineral reserves and 60 per cent of the best solar resources on the planet,⁴ the region has strong potential to capture a meaningful share of the growing market for frontier technologies, but must use its resources effectively in order to fulfil that potential;

6. *Note* that geoeconomic changes present African countries with challenges to and opportunities for developing specific and interconnected frontier technologies and innovative solutions, which are reshaping global economic governance, with increasing debates on data sovereignty, on the regulation of artificial intelligence, on cybersecurity and on cross-border digital trade and with the adoption of industrial policies to secure strategic capabilities,

² General Assembly resolution 70/1.

³ *Technology and Innovation Report 2025: Inclusive Artificial Intelligence for Development* (United Nations publication, 2025).

⁴ Economic Commission for Africa, *Economic Report on Africa 2026: Growth through Innovation – Harnessing Data and Frontier Technologies for Africa's Economic Transformation* (Addis Ababa, 2026).

in particular in relation to semiconductors, critical energy transition minerals,⁵ battery technologies and renewable energy value chains;

7. *Also note* that certain frontier technologies are emerging as being of strategic importance for structural transformation in Africa, including artificial intelligence and automation, blockchain, the Internet of things, biotechnology, nanotechnologies, green industrial technologies, financial technology and digital payment systems;

8. *Further note* that a growing number of artificial intelligence start-ups and tools are focused on such practical challenges as crop monitoring, diagnostics, credit and financial risk assessment, and language services tailored to local contexts;

9. *Note* that other digital frontier technologies are also growing, for instance the size of the market for the Internet of things in Africa is projected to expand from 7 billion United States dollars in 2024 to more than 20 billion dollars by 2031, supported by advancements in mobile network infrastructure;⁶

10. *Recognize* that, despite the modest growth, by global standards, of the African biotechnology and nanotechnology sectors, the number of African countries with high-throughput gene sequencing facilities grew from 7 in 2019 to 31 in 2022⁷ and the African nanotechnology market is projected to grow from 18.4 billion United States dollars in 2025 to 61.2 billion dollars by 2031, driven by applications in nanomedicine, nanomaterials for renewables and nanoelectronics;⁸

11. *Note* that Africa is endowed with unparalleled renewable energy resources, which are vital for increased productive competitiveness through the development of data centres, among other forms of technology, and for innovation-driven economic transformation, with 12 per cent of global feasible hydropower potential⁹ and the capacity to add up to 350 gigawatts of hydroelectric energy, 110 gigawatts of wind energy, 15 gigawatts of geothermal energy and 10 terawatts of solar energy;¹⁰

12. *Also note* that the development of regional electricity markets offers an operational framework for harnessing the continent's renewable energy resources;

13. *Emphasize* that nearly 30 per cent of global critical mineral reserves are located in Africa,¹¹ giving the continent a demonstrable comparative advantage, and that, by fostering domestic production and increasing participation in local, regional and global value chains, African countries can drive forward green industrialization and sustainable development;

14. *Also emphasize* that frontier technologies, such as digital traceability, blockchain and biometrics, are supporting the implementation of

⁵ Critical energy transition minerals are essential, non-fuel resources, for example, lithium, cobalt, nickel and rare earth elements, that are crucial for manufacturing green technologies, such as electric vehicle batteries, wind turbines and solar panels.

⁶ Ravi Bhandari, "Africa IoT market (2026–2032): size, forecast, value, companies, trends, outlook, growth, industry, analysis, share and revenue", 6Wresearch, July 2023. Available at www.6wresearch.com/industry-report/africa-iot-market.

⁷ Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, "A six-year journey: advancing pathogen genomics in Africa", 4 April 2023.

⁸ Mobility Foresights, "Africa nanotechnology market size, share, trends and forecasts 2031", 4 August 2025.

⁹ David Appleyard, "Africa's hydropower future", Renewable Energy World, 1 January 2014.

¹⁰ African Development Bank, "Why Africa is the next renewables powerhouse", 7 December 2018.

¹¹ African Development Bank, "Critical minerals for Africa's inclusive growth and development" (Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 2025).

the Africa Mining Vision¹² and the African Green Minerals Strategy,¹³ by transforming the mining industry in Africa through support for policies aimed at formalizing artisanal and small-scale mining and promoting responsible sourcing, with a view to improving traceability, safeguarding workers' rights and enhancing environmental standards;

15. *Further emphasize* that, if deployed at scale, frontier technologies, in particular biotechnology, agricultural digital technology and the Internet of things, have the potential to transform agriculture in Africa, since they could be used to boost crop productivity, enhance water- and land-use efficiency and promote climate resilience and adaptation;

16. *Acknowledge* that the global digital revolution and advances in frontier technologies require an adaptive workforce, with young people tending to consume more digital and innovative technologies and tending to be more adaptive and creative, thus creating a broader labour market;

17. *Note* that artificial intelligence and automation could result in a net gain of 78 million jobs worldwide by 2030¹⁴ and that Africa could also benefit from job creation if enhanced digital skills training is provided because, by 2030, 230 million jobs on the continent will require digital skills;¹⁵

18. *Also note* that digital payment systems and mobile money platforms are transforming economies in Africa by lowering transaction costs, increasing efficiency, expanding access to finance and markets and advancing financial inclusion, thereby enabling businesses to reach new customers, streamline their operations and establish digital credibility;

19. *Emphasize* that the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, as the basis for advancing regional integration and connectivity, offers immense opportunities for investment, industrialization, innovation and development;

20. *Also emphasize* that frontier technologies are vital for advancing the implementation of the Agreement;

21. *Note* that the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System enables instant cross-border payments using local currencies, almost halving transaction costs, and that the African Trade Exchange enables businesses of all sizes to gain access to new markets and to streamline their supply chains in Africa;

22. *Also note* that high-level, dedicated national leadership on frontier technologies is needed to spearhead the design of relevant domestic policies and strategies, provide adequate resources, monitor progress and make adjustments to address new and emerging issues;

23. *Further note* that the diffusion of frontier technologies into the informal economy and into micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises must be supported, for example by establishing centres of excellence for the rapid development and application of artificial intelligence;

24. *Recognize* that the continent's share of the total number of data centres worldwide currently stands at less than 1 per cent,¹⁶ which increases costs, causes delays and generates risks to sensitive data, and that increasing this share, with a view to boosting African digital sovereignty, will require

¹² African Union, *Africa Mining Vision* (Addis Ababa, 2009).

¹³ African Minerals Development Centre, *Africa's Green Minerals Strategy* (Addis Ababa, African Union, 2024).

¹⁴ World Economic Forum, *Future of Jobs Report 2025: Insight Report* (Cologne, Switzerland, 2025).

¹⁵ Landry Signé and others, "Leveraging Africa's inner strength to realize its full economic potential", in *Foresight Africa: Top Priorities for the Continent, 2025–2030*, Landry Signé, ed. (Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution, 2025).

¹⁶ Hiedberg Insights, "The potential for data centers in Africa with the rise of AI", Medium, 14 July 2025.

greater public and private investment in data centres and in domestic capacity to build them;

25. *Also recognize* the need for countries to implement and enforce continental frameworks and policies to drive digital transformation;

26. *Emphasize* that, despite the growing need for digital skills, only 50 per cent of African countries have incorporated information and communications technology education into their school curricula, compared with 85 per cent of countries in other regions,¹⁷ and therefore that investment in training and jobs in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics and efforts to close gender gaps are essential to ensuring the diffusion of frontier technologies;

27. *Acknowledge* the risks associated with the adoption of frontier technologies, including the cybersecurity threats and technological dependence that are inherent to the hosting of most African data in data centres outside the region and the labour-market disruptions that could exacerbate unemployment and socioeconomic inequality across the continent;

28. *Recognize* that expanding the use of frontier technologies and accelerating digital transformation will require the mobilization of adequate financial resources at the national level;

29. *Acknowledge* that African young people are the primary drivers of the continent's digital transformation but continue to face significant constraints on their ability to adopt innovative solutions more widely;

30. *Call upon* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to treat frontier technology infrastructure as an essential public good and a strategic sovereign asset, in order to reduce broadband costs and enhance data sovereignty, which will require interministerial coordination and robust public-private partnerships;

31. *Urge* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to recognize digital infrastructure as a strategic and essential enabler of economic growth and to integrate the expansion of such infrastructure into national development planning alongside that of other core infrastructure sectors, with a view to prioritizing investment and addressing connectivity gaps, including, where appropriate, through targeted public support;

32. *Encourage* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to promote enabling regulatory and investment frameworks for data centres powered by renewable energy, including by facilitating the signing of power purchase agreements and other risk-mitigation mechanisms, with a view to ensuring a reliable power supply without straining national grids;

33. *Call upon* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to establish robust national cybersecurity strategies and data governance frameworks, with independent data protection authorities and national cybersecurity agencies, in order to mitigate systemic digital disruption and build the trust necessary for a thriving digital economy;

34. *Also call upon* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to enact and enforce comprehensive data protection laws that balance cross-border data flows with national security and privacy requirements;

35. *Encourage* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to deploy innovative financing mechanisms and, by strengthening their national development banks and their regulatory capacity, attract private investment, thereby reducing fiscal burdens and de-risking high-impact frontier technology ventures;

¹⁷ Salah-Eddine Kandri, "Africa's future is bright – and digital", World Bank, 23 October 2019.

36. *Invite* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to consider using blended finance to lower the cost of capital for high-risk technology projects and to implement portfolio guarantee schemes, for instance through the African Guarantee Fund, to encourage commercial bank lending to technology start-ups and to micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises;

37. *Also invite* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to honour their commitment to increase national research and development spending to 1 per cent of gross domestic product by 2030, in line with the recommendation of the African Union,¹⁸ to introduce fiscal incentives for research and development expenditure in the private sector, such as tax credits and immediate expensing, in order to complement public spending, and to establish national innovation funds to channel resources into high-impact sectors, with a view to reducing dependence on imported technologies;

38. *Urge* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to align their national curricula with future labour-market needs through initiatives pertaining to science, technology, engineering and mathematics education and to digital literacy, keeping in mind that addressing the critical skills mismatch requires partnerships between ministries of education and private sector organizations to establish retraining and re-education centres;

39. *Invite* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to mandate the incorporation of computer science and digital literacy into primary and secondary school curricula, expand technical and vocational education and training programmes to include practical modules on artificial intelligence, robotics and equipment maintenance, and reform training programmes to ensure that teachers are proficient in digital tools and modern educational theory;

40. *Also invite* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to bridge the gender gap in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education and to support workers displaced by automation by deploying labour-market information systems and gender-responsive budgeting;

41. *Further invite* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to implement targeted scholarship and mentorship programmes for women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education and to strengthen and leverage existing financing mechanisms, including through the effective allocation of committed resources, to support retraining and skills enhancement for workers displaced by automation, with a focus on their transition to higher-value roles;

42. *Call upon* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to accelerate the implementation of the Protocol to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area on Digital Trade, including its provisions on interoperable payment systems;

43. *Also call upon* members of the Economic Commission for Africa, with the aim of establishing a single digital market, to scale up participation in and fully operationalize the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System for intra-African trade, with a view to reducing reliance on hard currency and lowering transaction costs, and to harmonize their digital trade rules and data governance standards;

44. *Urge* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to develop regional value chains for strategic frontier technology sectors;

45. *Request* the regional economic communities to facilitate multi-country industrial planning, with a view to pooling resources for data infrastructure and fostering domestic value addition in strategic green economy

¹⁸ African Union, *Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa, 2024* (Addis Ababa, 2014).

sectors;

46. *Encourage* members of the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with relevant subregional and continental institutions, to explore and promote, where feasible, the development of cross-border special economic zones focused on battery and electric vehicle production, capitalizing on the continent's critical mineral endowments and ensuring coherence with the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, including the related rules of origin;

47. *Invite* members of the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with relevant subregional and continental institutions and the private sector, to explore and implement joint investment plans for the development of shared regional data centres and high-performance computing infrastructure, while promoting regulatory harmonization and trusted data governance frameworks, in order to address the high costs associated with fragmented national systems;

48. *Call upon* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to scale up investment in technology and innovation by mobilizing domestic resources effectively, including through digitalized taxation, digital public administration and innovative financing, and invite them to work towards fulfilling the commitments reflected in a declaration on domestic resource mobilization adopted at the high-level ministerial meeting organized jointly by the Government of Morocco and the Commission and held on 1 April 2026;

49. *Urge* relevant States to lift unilateral sanctions unconditionally, as such sanctions are contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and have adversely affected the efforts of a number of African countries to industrialize, to mobilize private sector capital and to gain access to international development finance and assistance relating to frontier technologies, thereby hindering their efforts to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union;

50. *Urge* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to strengthen peer learning and experience-sharing mechanisms to accelerate the digital transformation of Africa in a cost-effective, inclusive and development-oriented manner, while ensuring that no country is left behind;

51. *Encourage* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to establish presidential or prime ministerial task forces to spearhead digital strategies, which would demonstrate political will and ensure whole-of-government coordination;

52. *Also encourage* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to establish regulatory sandboxes that enable the safe testing and piloting of new technologies before full-scale regulation is enacted;

53. *Urge* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to facilitate the diffusion of digital technologies to companies in the informal sector and to micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, including by leveraging and scaling up digital extension services, in collaboration with the private sector;

54. *Also urge* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to harness the expertise of Africans in the diaspora to build national research capacity and establish start-ups in the fields of science, technology and innovation;

55. *Invite* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to strengthen support for young entrepreneurs by fostering an enabling environment that promotes innovation, facilitates the more widespread use of digital solutions and safeguards intellectual property rights, including through improved access to grants, venture capital, blended finance mechanisms and

targeted capacity-building initiatives;

56. *Also invite* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to work together to expand modern energy systems and digital networks, in particular in rural and underserved areas, in order to close digital and energy gaps and support inclusive development;

57. *Encourage* members of the Economic Commission for Africa and development partners to scale up investment in the domestic manufacturing of digital devices and to further prioritize domestic and regional procurement, in order to promote digital sovereignty, reduce external dependence and foster the development of regional digital value chains;

58. *Request* the Economic Commission for Africa to collaborate with the African Union and other partners in evaluating the future energy requirements of the data centres that are increasingly needed by Africa and in setting out a comprehensive framework for the joint construction of energy infrastructure and data centres in Africa, ensuring alignment with national and regional development strategies;

59. *Invite* the Economic Commission for Africa to work with its partners on the development of guidelines on energy efficiency, environmental impact and digital security for sustainable data centre management across the continent;

60. *Call upon* the Economic Commission for Africa and its partners to continue to provide support to members of the Commission, in the form of targeted capacity-building programmes, technical assistance and knowledge-sharing initiatives, in order to encourage the development and implementation of viable business models to boost the generation of sustainable energy for their data centres.
