



# Growth through innovation

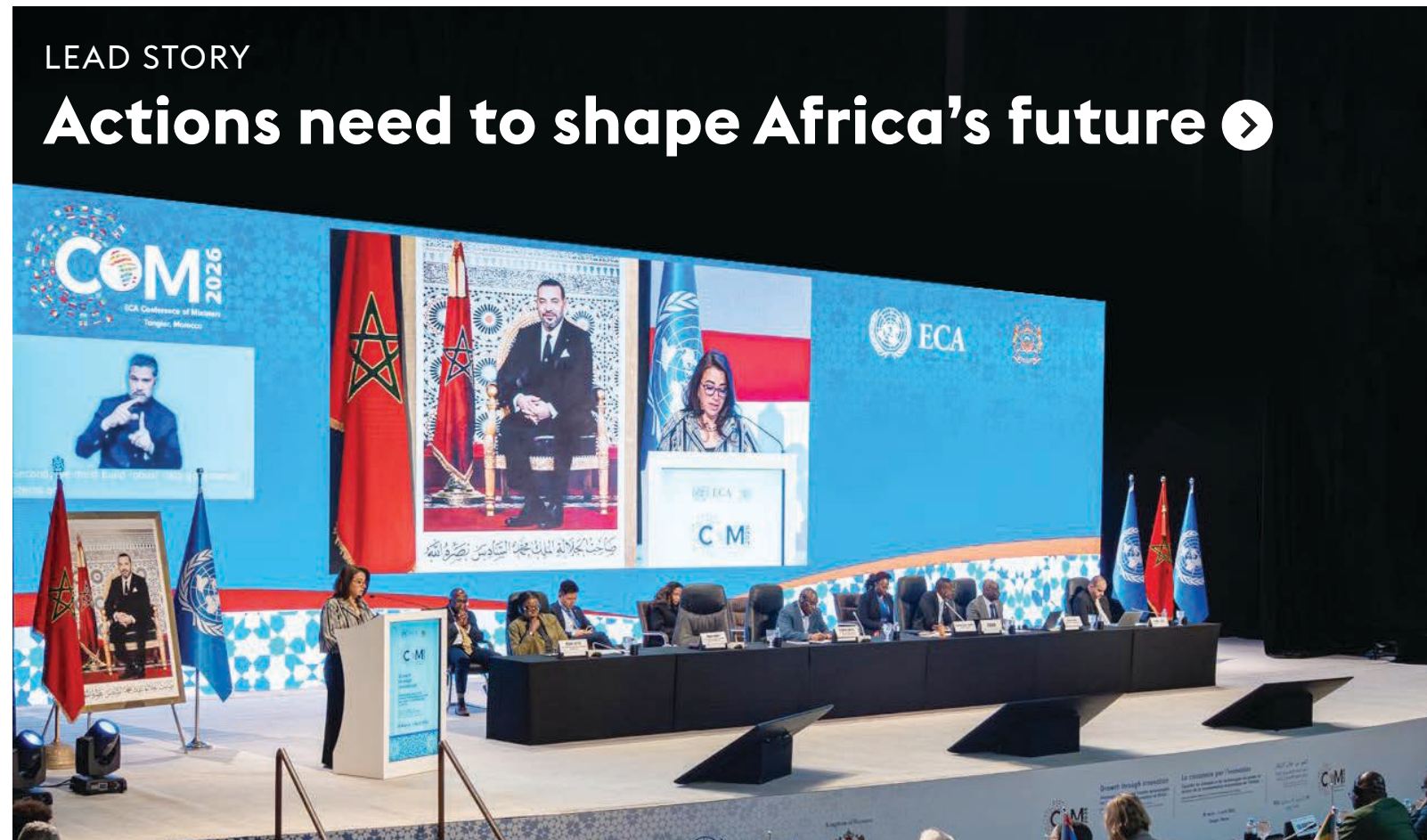
Harnessing data and frontier technologies for the economic transformation of Africa

Fifty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance Planning and Economic Development

28 March - 3 April 2026

# Bulletin 1

Click on the items below to go to the story / Cliquez ci-dessous pour accéder aux articles



Africa needs new models >



Iran war bad for Africa >



SDGs need boost >

BULLETIN 1  
#CoM2026



Regional integration on track >



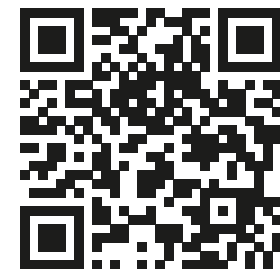
Delegates & Work >



L'offensive d'industrialisation de la CEA >



Knowledge Fair >



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## Africa needs tangible actions to shape the future

**H**anan Morsy, ECA's Deputy Executive Secretary (Programme) and Chief Economist has urged African policymakers to translate technical deliberations into "tangible actions at national, regional and continental levels".

At the closing of the Committee of Experts segment of the Conference of Ministers, she said that in a rapidly changing global situation, Africa stands at a critical inflection point



requiring decisive action.

"The choices we make will determine whether Africa merely adapts to global change or actively shapes its own future," she said.

Morsy called for a series of targeted interventions, based on the deliberations at the conference, to ensure the continent's prosperity. First was a call for a decisive push towards structural transformation.

"We must accelerate structural transformation through innovation-driven growth across agriculture, industry, and services," she said, adding that there must be "country-led prioritisation frameworks to identify which technologies and sectors can deliver the fastest productivity gains within three to five years."

Another priority is the development of robust data governance systems and digital infrastructure.

Morsy said Africa must "actively shape technologies influencing its future", calling for "data sovereignty, robust domestic legislation, AI awareness, and strong cybersecurity."

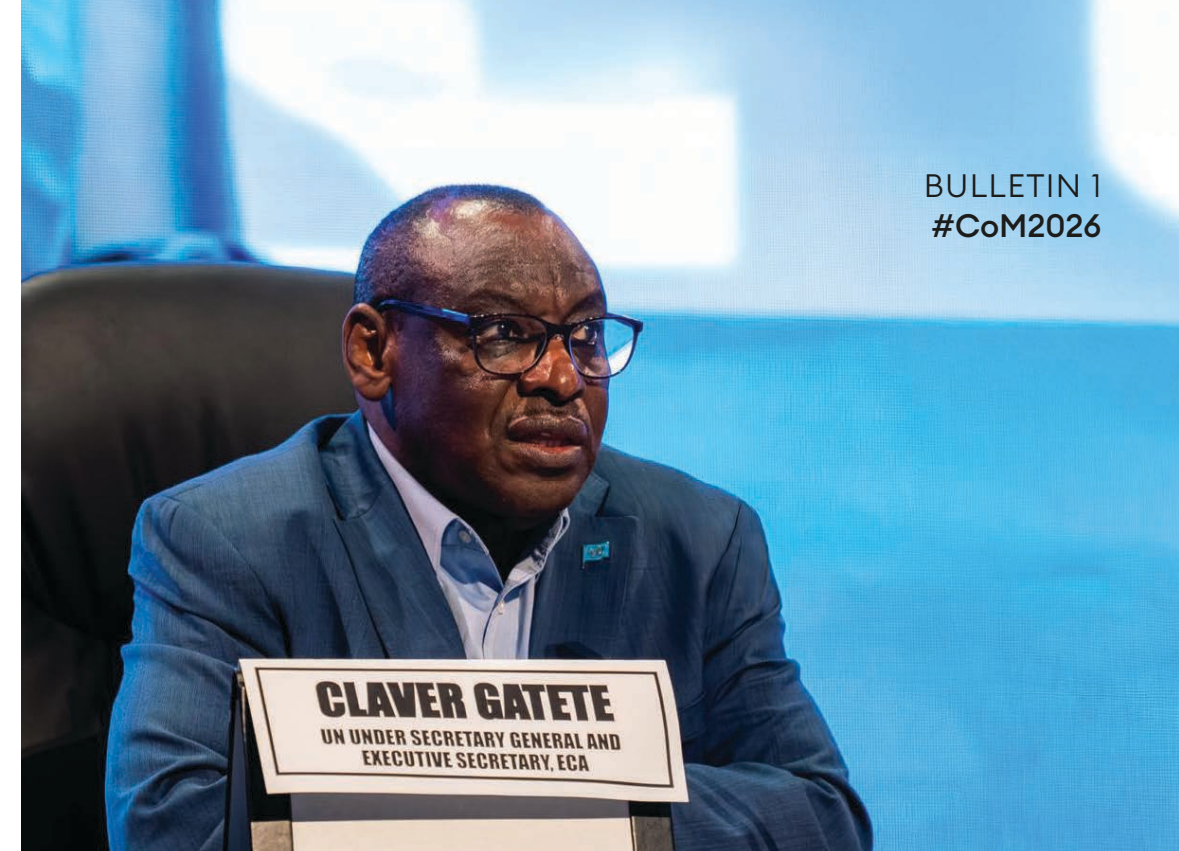
These measures are essential if the continent is to compete in an increasingly data-driven global economy rather than remain a passive consumer of external technologies.

Morsy also stressed the need to "mobilise sustainable financing while strengthening domestic resource mobilisation, improving fiscal governance, and addressing high public debt."

Closing on a note of cautious optimism, Morsy reiterated that Africa's future will depend on effective implementation of policies.

"Africa's trajectory depends not only on the policies we design, but on our ability to implement them through effectively mobilising partnerships and harnessing innovation for the benefit of all Africans," she stressed.

The Director of Treasury and External Finance in the Ministry of Economy and Finance of Morocco and Chair of the outgoing Bureau of the Committee of Experts, Mohammed Tarik Bchir, said despite growth, African economies remained structurally vulnerable and needed to focus on reducing export dependence and making systems more resilient.



## NO MORE BUSINESS AS USUAL

With constant crises and multilateral institutions under threat, ECA Executive Secretary Claver Gatete says it is no longer possible to take a "business as usual" approach to addressing the continent's challenges.

Instead, he urged, the continent must embrace innovation and harness the energy of its youth.

Speaking at the conclusion of the Committee of Experts segment of the ECA Conference of Ministers, Gatete pointed out that the structural weaknesses of the global economic order had been exposed by a series of

disruptions that had intensified the pressure on African economies.

He urged African countries to embrace technology, arguing that "No one can do anything without technology, and we must either embrace it or stay behind."

The reliance on natural resources for economic gains is insufficient. "If we don't embrace technology, innovation, science, research and development and try to leapfrog, Africa will be left far behind."

"We may have a demographic dividend, but if we do not empower the youth with technology, we cannot develop or sustain the gains we have made."

# Africa needs new models for technology driven growth

Africa must rethink its models to accommodate the dynamic technological and other advancements that are taking place, says **Hanan Morsy**, Deputy Executive Secretary (Programme) and Chief Economist, ECA

What worked in East Asia 30 years ago is not possible in this day and age. For example, we will see services being a greater share of the economy than used to be the case," she



## Technology is not a cost centre but an efficiency and savings centre

said, speaking to the theme of the event – Growth through innovation: Harnessing data and frontier technologies for the economic transformation of Africa.

The opportunity for the frontier technology market is about \$2.5 trillion. By 2033 that is expected to grow to \$16 trillion, she said.

"The challenge is that Africa has 20% of the global population but less than 1% of the global capture. It means if we don't catch up, we risk falling behind even further.

## We need to localise innovation to get the best out of it

"While technology access and connectivity in Africa continue to improve, increased access alone is not sufficient to drive transformation. It is also about absorption and scaling."

Constraints are also structural, including significant skills gaps, low technology deployment in industry, limited ICT infrastructure and weak linkages between R & D, financing and productive sectors.

Investment remains mostly located in extractive industries

with firm-level adoption limited and weak spillovers across sectors. This, she said, means productivity gains remain shallow.

"We tend to think about the adoption of technology as being costly. But we need to rethink our development model, focusing on how technology is saving us money and how we can redirect those funds to adopt more technology.

"Technology not a cost centre but an efficiency and savings centre."

"We need to localise innovation to get the best out of it. The best innovations are born from the needs on the ground."

### Data as an asset

"We have the data of 1.4 billion people that we can use to enhance technological growth. Data is a strategic asset."

Morsy addressed the transformation gap in Africa, driven by low levels of efficiency and productivity.

Despite the relatively strong average growth between 2000 and 2023 of about 3.5%, growth remains largely driven by capital accumulation and labour expansion rather than productivity.

"Technology holds immense potential to accelerate Africa's growth, innovation, and social development by enabling more efficient decision-making, fostering entrepreneurship, economic inclusion and sustainability, and improving governance and service delivery."

AI sovereignty was raised by delegates. Morsy said the AU and ECA were collaborating in developing a continental strategy to cover areas such as cybersecurity, data to AI.

She used the example of the recent withdrawal of aid support from African countries' health sectors as an example of why owning data is so important.

"It was not just the money we lost but the health platforms that money was financing. Countries no longer have access to their own national health data. That is more valuable than the money.

BULLETIN 1  
#CoM2026



## CAMEROON HEADS UP BUREAU

Cameroon has been appointed to head of the Bureau of the 58th Session of the ECA's Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development.

The post is held by Efangon Daniel Yannick, Deputy Director, Regional Integration in Africa, Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development in Cameroon.

The first vice chair is Sierra Leone, the second is Kenya and the third, Zambia with Morocco the Rapporteur.

Yannick congratulated the Kingdom of Morocco, Chair of the outgoing Bureau represented by Mohammed Tarik Bchir, Director of Treasury and External Finance in the Ministry of Economy and Finance, for its outstanding leadership over the past year.

Africa's growth was rebounding before war broke out in Iran, according to **Stephen Karingi**, Director of Macroeconomic Policy, Finance and Governance at the ECA.

## Africa's rebound may be hit by Iran war



Presenting the latest report on economic and social developments on the continent, he noted that real GDP expanded by 2.8% in 2024 and is projected to rise to 4.0% in both 2025 and 2026.

The uptick in growth has been primarily driven by improved macroeconomic stability, stronger public investment, and resilient consumer spending. Growth is strongest in East Africa and weakest in parts of Southern Africa.

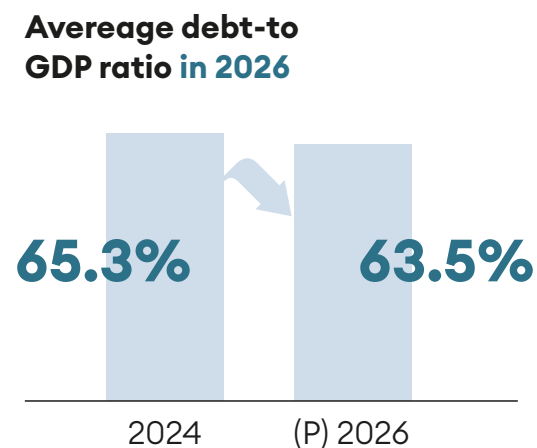
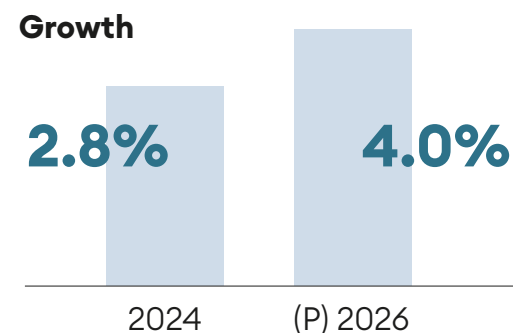
"Growth was on an upward trajectory where the African economy was exhibiting strong resilience from COVID-19 and the shocks from the conflict in

Ukraine. Prices had started to moderate, fiscal consolidation was happening and our debt levels were starting to come down," Karingi said.

"This is the picture as we saw it before the war. The secretariat is working through the numbers as we monitor what is going on with the war."

He pointed out that, although fiscal deficits across most African countries are reducing, the cost of servicing debt is still unsustainably high.

"A lot of money is going into interest payments, which far exceed what the continent is spending on health, education and productive sectors."



In terms of trade, Africa's exports to the rest of the world increased to \$630bn in 2024. Intra-African trade is growing, albeit slower than hoped. Of the \$630bn, intra-African exports were \$106bn, equivalent to about 17% of the continent's overall trade.

He noted that remittances, which reached \$105bn in 2024, continue to be an important external financing source for the continent, with the top recipients being Egypt, Nigeria and Morocco.

"This is an area where we are anticipating – based on what is going on in the Middle East – that there may be an impact because of the huge number of Africans working in that region."

He noted that Africa has witnessed a surge in foreign direct investment, with inflows jumping 75% from \$55bn in 2023 to \$97bn in 2024. Much of that spike was driven by Egypt's \$35bn Ras El Hekma megaproject to build a state-of-the-art city. Yet even without this one-off deal, the continent still posted a solid 12% gain in FDI inflows compared with 2023.

Morocco, he said, was a standout performer, recording a 55% increase in FDI, driven by new investments in green ammonia and synthetic fuel production.



## POVERTY AND INEQUALITY PERSIST

Although Africa hosts some of the world's fastest growing economies, growth has not been broad-based and inclusive, Stephen Karingi warned ECA delegates. "The challenge that we continue to observe is the persistence of poverty and inequality."

Extreme poverty has risen in several of Africa's least developed countries. In South Sudan, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, the absolute number of people living in extreme poverty has increased, even as the incidence of monetary poverty

has eased.

In contrast, Ghana, Morocco, Senegal, and South Africa have recorded declines in both incidence and absolute numbers, while Kenya has made the most progress. Multidimensional poverty has worsened only in the Central African Republic.

## Urbanisation

Income inequality remains stark. More than three-quarters of income is earned by just 10% of the population, while half of Africans share less than a tenth.

Urbanisation is reshaping economies but poses risks due to the dominance of the informal sector, which accounts for over 80% of urban employment. Formal job creation has not kept pace with rapid labour force growth, which is projected to expand from 224 million in 2030 to 730 million by 2050.

Karingi pointed out that wide gender gaps hinder Africa from realising its full economic potential. "Gender inequality has substantial economic consequences, with an average cost of \$95bn a year in Africa since 2010."



## Risks, but progress, in regional integration

Africa's economy is broadly headed in the right direction, despite near-term risks posed by geopolitical tensions. Countries are diversifying their economies and expanding the basket of goods and services they trade.

But the Middle East conflict will have a "significant and negative impact" on the

continent's economy, warned Desta Melaku, Acting Director of the Regional Integration and Trade Division in his assessment of regional integration in Africa.

African governments have managed to tame inflation and narrow fiscal deficits in the past few years. However, the war in Iran is driving up energy prices and threatening to undo much of that progress.

In 2024 services accounted for 48.8% of GDP in 2024. However, services are not yet fully leveraged for cross-border trade and regional integration. The value of Intra-African merchandise trade, meanwhile, has steadily climbed in recent years.

It increased from \$67.1bn in 2020, to \$81.1bn in 2021, \$94.1bn

in 2022, \$94.6bn in 2023 and \$101.7bn in 2024.

Yet despite progress, intra-African trade remains limited, sitting at just 17% of Africa's total trade – considerably lower than Europe (60-65%), Asia (51%), North America (40%) and slightly behind Latin America and the Caribbean (20-25%).

### AfCFTA implementation

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) creates an opportunity to close the gaps in regional trade. Melaku

## Regional trade grows steadily, but integration across Africa still lags

noted that the initiative enjoys strong political support, with 49 member states having ratified the agreement.

He stressed, however, that political backing needs to translate into faster implementation if the agreement is to live up to its promise.

"Great as an initiative as it is, it will not mean anything if we do not focus on implementation."

He noted that ECA is providing technical assistance to member states in this regard, supporting 45 of 50 existing implementation strategies.

Part of this support includes programmes specifically targeted at SMEs. Simplified step-by-step guides for trading under the AfCFTA are being piloted in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Mauritania, Namibia and Tanzania, he said.

Africa has made less progress on monetary and financial integration than on trade but it is moving forward, he said, citing the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) as an example of progress as well as monetary policy harmonisation in each of the Association of African Central Banks' subregions.

By mid-2025, the PAPSS platform covered 18 countries and connected 80 commercial banks.



## NATIONS RESIST FREE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE

The free movement of people is an important complement to the success of the AfCFTA. This is an area where many governments are dragging their feet, Desta Melaku told ECA delegates.

"In 2018, just two months before AfCFTA, our heads of state also adopted a protocol on free movement of persons. Many signed but so far, we have only four countries that have ratified this protocol: Mali, Niger, Rwanda and São Tomé and Príncipe."

He pointed to the African Visa Openness Report 2025 by the African Development Bank, which shows that significant barriers remain for African travellers despite broad progress in the ease of

intra-African travel.

Some countries, like Gambia and Rwanda, offer full visa-free access, while reforms in others, including Kenya, are easing cross-border travel. Among regional blocs, ECOWAS leads in visa openness while Arab Maghreb Union is the lowest performing regional bloc.

Only 28% of countries grant visa-free access to African travelers, while 20% offer visas on arrival. Half of (51%) of African states still require other Africans to secure visas in advance.

Some delegates said the ECA could do more to investigate why the protocol is not being ratified, while one pointed out that it opened up significant security issues.



DELEGATES  
@ WORK



The Economic Commission for Africa is intensifying its efforts to amplify and unify Africa's voice on the global stage, while accelerating reforms across debt management, trade, and energy.

These are issues that will be critical to the continent's economic transformation, according to the Director of the organisation's Strategic Planning, Oversight and Results Division, Said Adejumobi,

Presenting a report on the Commission's activities in 2025 to the Committee of Experts ahead of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Adejumobi said one of the ECA's major interventions over the past year had been to "create a unified voice for Africa to speak in international fora and to be able to draw policy consensus on key development issues".

This coordinated approach, he noted, ensured Africa's positions were clearly articulated across major global platforms including the G20, IMF and World Bank meetings, and the COP30.

"Through the work we did on the global financial architecture, we were able to support the endorsement of a unified stance on debt reform, which was adopted by the AU's Specialised Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration."

## ECA amplifying Africa's voice and agency



Noting that geopolitical tensions, tariffs and tighter financial conditions present an ongoing risk to African countries, Adejumobi reported that the Commission continued its advocacy for the reform of the global financial architecture and addressing Africa's mounting debt vulnerabilities.

"Macroeconomic stabilisation, debt management and domestic resource mobilisation are of major concern on the continent. About seven African countries are in debt distress, with 15 at high risk of distress."

The ECA is working with partners to push for debt reform and improved domestic resource mobilisation, he said.

The Commission has also intensified efforts to curb illicit financial flows, supporting countries such as Nigeria, Senegal and Gabon to develop policy responses. At the same time, it is working with the African Union to establish the African Credit Rating Agency, aimed at delivering "fair and context-specific ratings" and reducing borrowing costs.

Looking ahead to 2026, Adejumobi emphasised that the commission will continue to support the development of regional value chains as "a major strategy for Africa's transformation," alongside a continued focus on climate finance, the digital economy and youth and gender inclusion.

BULLETIN 1  
#CoM2026

## NEW DYNAMICS FOR PLANNING AND BUDGETS

"In a fast-changing and uncertain global environment, the ECA must navigate multiple, shifting dynamics as it plans for 2027," said Said Adejumobi, Director of Strategic Planning, Oversight and Results Division.

Presenting the programme, he said the organisation had recalibrated its work to reflect both the evolving context and shrinking resources following severe UN budget cuts.

"We can see the stress the UN is under and the strain on its resources. At the same time, challenges such as food security, climate change, rising inequality and jobless growth continue to intensify."

Despite these pressures, he said the ECA would maintain its core priorities

including innovative finance mobilisation as well as tackling debt and illicit financial flows.

The 2027 programme strengthens joint planning and implementation and improves alignment between activities.

Mai-Ellen Tahlor Russ, Officer-in-Charge of the Division of Administration and Conference Management, outlined a proposed 2027 budget of \$119.8m, noting that resource mobilisation remains a major challenge.

"The UN80 revised estimates for 2026 have affected the entire system, with most entities experiencing around a 20% cut in staffing and non-staff resources. For the ECA, this translates into a 12.8% reduction – or \$12m – compared to 2025."



# Des résultats mitigés pour l'Agenda 2063

**M**ohamed Abdisalam, chef de la Division de la mise en œuvre et de la coordination des programmes à l'AUDA-NEPAD, a rendu compte des progrès réalisés dans le cadre du deuxième plan décennal de mise en œuvre (2024-2033) de l'Agenda 2063.

L'Agenda 2063 est mis en œuvre à travers cinq plans successifs de dix ans.

« Nous sortons de la première décennie de l'Agenda 2063, que nous appelons la décennie de convergence. Au cours de cette phase, nous avons aligné l'Agenda 2063 sur les politiques et priorités de l'Union africaine ainsi que sur les plans directeurs nationaux et régionaux », a-t-il déclaré.

Cependant, il a reconnu que les performances par rapport aux objectifs fixés sont restées en deçà des attentes. « Au cours de la première décennie de mise en œuvre, le continent n'a atteint que 40 % des objectifs de l'Agenda 2063, ce qui est inférieur aux attentes. »

Le deuxième plan décennal de mise en œuvre (2024-2033) a été baptisé la « décennie de l'accélération de la mise en œuvre ».

Une contrainte majeure du premier plan a été le manque de données adéquates et fiables provenant des États membres. De nombreux pays n'ont pas soumis de rapports, ou ont fourni des données incomplètes ou incohérentes. Cela a rendu difficile la mesure des progrès, la comparaison des performances ou la responsabilisation des gouvernements.

Abdisalam a indiqué que cette situation est en train d'évoluer avec le deuxième plan.

## Un retournement de tendance

Selon lui, les premiers signes indiquent une amélioration des performances, les rapports de 2024 et 2025 montrant que 69 % des objectifs sont en bonne voie.

Le plan s'articule autour de sept « moonshots » ambitieux visant à accélérer la transformation de l'Afrique. Le premier

visé à faire en sorte que chaque État membre de l'UA atteigne au moins le statut de pays à revenu intermédiaire, ce qui implique la mise en place de systèmes productifs résilients.

« Nous avons constaté certains progrès en termes de performance, à 58 % au total, mais il reste des marges d'amélioration en matière d'industrialisation et de fabrication. »

Les progrès les plus significatifs ont été enregistrés dans les moonshots trois, quatre et cinq : des institutions publiques plus réactives (83 %), la résolution pacifique des conflits en Afrique (86 %), et la promotion explicite des valeurs africaines (100 %).

En revanche, le moonshot six – qui vise à renforcer la productivité des citoyens – affiche de faibles résultats, avec 36 %. « C'est préoccupant. Nous avons une croissance socio-économique qui n'est pas inclusive. »

Abdisalam a noté que le moonshot sept, qui vise à positionner l'Afrique comme « un acteur mondial fort et influent », se situe actuellement à 57 %. Il s'agit d'une amélioration, mais des efforts supplémentaires sont nécessaires.

« Nous devons parler d'une seule voix en cette période de turbulences géopolitiques et veiller à ce que l'Afrique ne devienne pas une victime des guerres par procuration. »

## DELEGATES TOUR TANGIER





## La CEA vise une relance industrielle

La Commission économique pour l'Afrique (CEA) se concentre sur la reconstruction de la base industrielle du continent à travers des interventions ciblées dans les chaînes de valeur de l'automobile et du textile, entre autres, afin de stimuler une croissance tirée par le commerce.

Rendant compte des progrès réalisés sur les principales résolutions de la Conférence des ministres de l'an dernier, Said Adejumbi, Directeur de la planification stratégique, du suivi et des résultats, a indiqué que la Commission a mis en place une plateforme de mise en relation

de fournisseurs automobiles, conçue pour relier les PME aux grands fabricants via une place de marché numérique.

« La plateforme vise à renforcer les entreprises des PME, à promouvoir l'approvisionnement régional et à améliorer la compétitivité dans le cadre de la Zone de libre-échange continentale africaine. »

Rappelant que la production textile en Afrique a été presque entièrement anéantie à la suite des programmes d'ajustement structurel des années 1980 et 1990, Adejumbi a indiqué qu'une étude couvrant neuf pays a été menée pour explorer

comment le continent peut récupérer les capacités perdues dans ce secteur. Elle inclut l'Égypte, le Kenya, le Maroc et l'Afrique du Sud.

Les efforts de la CEA visent à inverser cette tendance en permettant aux pays africains de réintégrer le marché « par le haut de gamme de la production textile ».

### Chaînes de valeur

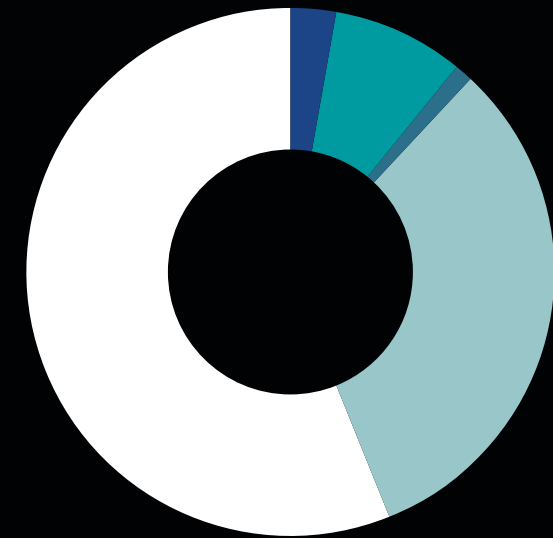
Ces interventions sectorielles spécifiques, a expliqué Adejumbi, s'inscrivent dans une dynamique plus large de renforcement des chaînes de valeur régionales.

« Nos recommandations portent sur le renforcement des chaînes de valeur de la ZLECAf grâce à la coopération régionale, aux infrastructures et aux normes de qualité, ainsi que sur la mise en évidence des avantages de l'harmonisation et des règles d'origine pertinentes pour la ZLECAf. »

Adejumbi a ajouté que la Commission mise également sur les Zones économiques spéciales comme autre pilier clé de sa stratégie industrielle.

Des délégations de la Commission ont visité des ZES au Bénin, au Gabon et en Afrique du Sud pour étudier les pratiques opérationnelles, ainsi que lors de voyages d'étude en Corée du Sud et aux Émirats arabes unis.

## 44 LDCs globally



■ Pacific 3  
■ Asia 8  
■ Caribbean 1  
■ Africa 32

### LDCS REMAIN VULNERABLE DESPITE UPSIDES

Africa's Least Developed Countries (LDCs) face many challenges, which only serves to heighten their vulnerability, Stephen Karingi, Director, Macroeconomics, Finance and Governance Division, ECA, told delegates this week. However, he added that despite weak economic fundamentals overall, there had been some progress.

In his annual progress review of the implementation of priority areas for African LDCs under the Doha Programme of Action, he said six countries are in the graduation process.

Senegal is looking at 2029, Djibouti, Comoros are in the pipeline while three nations – Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda – qualify and will be evaluated at

the 2027 review.

Zambia and Angola had previously qualified but no longer do so due to challenges emanating from the pandemic. Just four African countries have graduated from LDC status – Botswana (1994), Cabo Verde (2007), Equatorial Guinea (2017) and São Tomé & Príncipe (2024).

Karingi cautioned that countries must have a good strategy as they head for the exit to give them a solid foundation to move forward. "They need to focus on macro stability, export competitiveness and also their productive capacities and climate resilience."

Combined productivity growth for all the LDCs has declined by 48.8%, which reflects weakening productivity levels, he said. Public debt levels remain high, with the

debt-to-GDP ratio reaching 87.4% in 2025.

Major disparities exist in labour and employment and the uptake of gender equality, while the digital divide is an issue.

Fixed broadband remains prohibitively expensive while mobile data prices vary dramatically from 1.75% of GNI in Ethiopia to 26.70% in Central African Republic (2024 prices).



## GEOSPATIAL ECOSYSTEMS NEED A BOOST

Africa has made significant progress in building geospatial ecosystems through regional collaboration and policy harmonization.

But many countries still have outdated systems, fragmented governance, and financial constraints that hinder geospatial adoption, said Samuel K Annim, Director of the African Centre for Statistics.

In his report of the Regional Committee of UN Global Geospatial Information Management for Africa, he said despite this, there has been progress.

Investments in training programmes and e-learning have equipped thousands with skills in mapping, cartography and spatial data analysis.

But there are persistent structural gaps. Key among these is limited funding and low

implementation of resolutions. There is also lack of physical assets too with just one major observation site on the continent, which is in South Africa.

Adoption of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (UN-IGIF) is a priority, but implementation is slow. Most countries remain at early or intermediate stages of adoption.

Sustained investment, stronger coordination, and political support are essential to advancing geospatial frameworks regionally, which would assist efforts to modernise economies.

A statutory body under ECA/AU to consolidate continental leadership and convene ministerial or heads-of-state engagement would help, he said.

## SDGs must be put into high gear

This is the decade of accelerating Africa's sustainable development, said Nassim Oulmane, Chief of the Natural Resources and Food Systems Section at the ECA.

He outlined key outcomes from the 11<sup>th</sup> session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD) held in Uganda last year.

Oulmane noted that a key concern raised at the forum was the slow pace of achieving targets set down under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"With less than five years to the 2030 deadline, only 16% of SDGs have been implemented globally, while most targets are stagnating or regressing," he said.

"The situation is particularly dire in Africa, where only 10 of the 144 measurable SDG targets are on track to being achieved by 2030."

The forum focused on driving job creation and economic growth through sustainable, inclusive, science-based solutions to advance both Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063. It

brought together representatives from 52 member states, including ministers and senior officials.

The meeting featured strong political engagement across governments, the African Union, the African Development Bank (AfDB), and the UN system. He noted that the forum managed to "produce tangible results," notably the adoption of the Kampala Declaration, which set consensus on accelerated policy measures for SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 14 (life below water), and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals).

"In this context we have had to speed up implementation using the second 10-year plan of Agenda 2063, which represents the decade of acceleration of sustainable development for the continent."

Oulmane noted that preparations are in high gear for the upcoming 12<sup>th</sup> session of ARFSD, which will be held in Addis Ababa this April. The focus, he said, will be turning the tide and accelerating the implementation of the SDGs.

The meeting is expected to spotlight critical themes including water, energy, infrastructure, and sustainable urbanisation.

## With less than five years to the 2030 deadline, only 16% of SDGs have been implemented globally

It will serve as a preparatory platform for Africa's participation in major global conferences, including the forthcoming UN Conference on Water and discussions on development financing.





## Morocco unveils commemorative ECA stamp

The Moroccan postal service, Barid Al-Maghrib, unveiled its special commemorative stamp for the 58th Session of the ECA at the opening of this year's event in Tangier, Morocco, on 28 March.

The stamp celebrates the long-standing partnership between the ECA and the Kingdom of Morocco, marking Morocco's first hosting of the

ECA CoM event in 1960, also in Tangier.

That event took place in the context of profound transformation across the continent when many nations gained independence and the vision of autonomous African development was being shaped.

Amb Mohamed Arrouchi, Ambassador of His Majesty The King, Permanent Representative to the African Union for

Morocco, reminded delegates that since the establishment of the ECA in 1958, and its organs, Morocco had remained a committed and consistent partner of the institution.

"Under His Majesty's leadership, Morocco continues to actively promote South-South Cooperation, foster intra-African investment, develop sustainable and regional infrastructure and support digital and energy transformation projects."

## Voices from CoM2026

**Zuzana Schwidrowski,**  
Director,  
Socio-Economic  
Development  
Division, ECA



**At least 15 million young people are entering the job market every year and only three million formal jobs are being created. The rest is captured by the informal sector. That puts enormous pressure on the labour market and is one of Africa's biggest challenges.**

**Francis Ikome,**  
Chief - Regional  
Integration Section,  
Regional Integration  
and Trade Division,  
ECA



**There has been a surge in climate finance flows to Africa, increasing by 48%, which is enhancing adaptive capacity and strengthening resilience. That is a shift from about \$29.5bn in 2019 to \$43.7bn in 2022. But there is a variation in these finance flows with just a few landlocked countries, such as Ethiopia, receiving most of it.**

BULLETIN 1  
#CoM2026

**Melaku Desta,** Acting  
Director, Regional  
Integration and Trade  
Division, ECA



**The support to the AfCFTA has remained at the top of our priority list, and at the top of the agenda. We have been urged by member states to assist them to update national strategies to incorporate the protocols.**

**Josephine Marealle Ulimwengu,**  
Chief Systems-Wide  
Coherence Section,  
Strategic Planning,  
Oversight and Results  
Division, ECA



**Adoption of UNGA Resolution 79/329 aims to strengthen the UN-AU partnership, reinforcing joint action to advance peace and security, human rights, and sustainable development across Africa. The resolution further enhances alignment between UN and AU programmes and national development plans, contributing to more effective and efficient delivery of peace and development interventions.**



# ECA KNOWLEDGE FAIR

