



THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY, POVERTY AND GENDER

I. Committee overview

The fifth session of the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender (CSPPG) is a statutory intergovernmental body of experts and policymakers that provides guidance and advice to the Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) on its work and engagement with member States. The Committee meets biennially and is led by a bureau that is elected for the duration of the two years until the next meeting.

The Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division of ECA serves as convener and secretariat of the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender.

II. Theme of the fifth session

The theme of the fifth session of the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender will be “Building New Social Contracts in Africa: Choices to fulfil Developmental Aspirations.”

At the halfway point in implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Africa is not on track to achieve any of the Sustainable Development Goals. Recent crises, notably the coronavirus disease, the war in Ukraine, tightening global financial markets and the impacts of climate change, have undone the development gains of the past decades. As the continent in which more than half of the world’s poor live, Africa is at a crossroads. This is now the time for Africa to rethink its social contracts, with a view to ensuring equal opportunities for all, redesigning a new relationship between states and their people and enabling the policy measures to deliver on their development impacts

In a time of rising debt, additional investment needs of \$850 billion for the attainment of people’s Goals related to eliminating poverty and hunger and providing healthcare and education for all, tightening global financial markets and dwindling official development assistance, policymakers need to consider innovative mechanisms to enhance the effectiveness of their socioeconomic policies. By influencing people’s choices to improve the efficiency of the allocation of resources to social investments, African countries can drive structural change that will help achieve a greater development impact.

Given the narrowing of fiscal space, countries will need to foster an effective and sustainable revenue mobilization by improving the efficiency of their spending, enforcing and widening the taxation systems and strengthening efforts in curbing illicit financial flows, which along with inefficient tax incentives take away about 6 per cent of GDP.

In addition, inefficiency in public spending is costing Africa, on average, more than 2.5 per cent of its GDP every year. Public spending inefficiency in Africa is higher than that of other regions and is a feature of multiple sectors of the economy. The losses due to inefficiency in spending are staggering. For instance, between 2000 and 2017, Africa lost more than \$40 billion per year in education and infrastructure spending and \$28 billion in health spending.

While efforts have been made to address poverty reduction across the continent, rising inequalities mean that fiscal policies and top-down strategies are often unable to reach those whom they are designed

to support. The nuanced and multidimensional nature of poverty and vulnerability can dictate people's behavioural patterns and limit their options, despite well-intentioned policy interventions.

At its fifth session, the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender will call upon policymakers to look beyond the current financing constraints and consider innovative ways to strengthen the social policy agenda and improve the efficiency of public spending. Discussions will be informed by an issues paper, focussing on education to frame the discussion. By looking at the areas of affordability, accessibility and social impact, policy makers can re-evaluate the success of their economic policies and strategies in achieving their original intentions, namely, to reduce poverty, lower inequalities and promote inclusive development.

Government officials, experts and development partners will have an opportunity to deliberate on and identify urgent and practicable measures that will enhance efficiency in public spending and foster more inclusive development in the education sector, as an example of one of the components to support the development of a new social contract in Africa

III. Date and venue

The fifth session of the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender will be held at the United Nations Conference Centre in Addis Ababa with in-person participation, on Thursday and Friday, 2 and 3 November 2023.

IV. Format of the session

The session will comprise structured plenary and parallel sessions, during which delegates and invited experts will actively participate in thematic discussions to provide feedback to the Division. A presentation on the theme of the fifth session –“Building New Social Contracts in Africa: Choices to fulfil Developmental Aspirations” – will serve as the anchor for ensuing discussions in the plenary sessions and is intended to elicit feedback from delegates.

In addition, three parallel sessions will be organized on specific thematic areas related to the work of the three

sections – namely, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment; Social Policy; and Urbanization and Development.

V. Participation

The Committee comprises experts from members of ECA, drawn from ministries responsible for gender, social development, urbanization and economic planning. Representatives of African regional economic communities, the African Union Commission, the United Nations system, civil society organizations and the academic world will attend as observers.

VI. Bureau

The Chair of the Bureau represents the Committee at the sessions of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. Each member of the Bureau is expected to attend the statutory meetings of the intergovernmental committees of senior officials and experts that are held in the members' respective subregions to ensure that gender and social development issues are addressed effectively at the subregional level.

The criterion for the election of the officers is based on the need to ensure equitable geographical representation of each ECA subregion and will take into account language and gender balance. The new Bureau that will be elected at the start of the meeting, will have a two-year term until the next meeting of the Committee. Representatives of the secretariat will facilitate consultations among the members of the Committee, who will submit nominations for the constitution of the new Bureau. The election of the incoming Bureau will be held after the opening of the fifth session. The composition of the outgoing Bureau is the following:

- Chair: Tunisia
- First Vice-Chair: Somalia
- Second Vice-Chair: Malawi
- 1st Rapporteur: Mali
- 2nd Rapporteur Equatorial Guinea