



Addis Ababa, 08 September 2022

Excellency Secretary-General Guetteres,

Greetings from the Staff Union of ECA.

Please accept our sincere gratitude for facilitating a smooth transition of the leadership of ECA with interim arrangements that were announced a few days ago by the outgoing Executive Secretary Ms. Vera Songwe.

We would like to take this opportunity to place our concerns regarding the management of a premier institution such as the ECA, which has played a pivotal role in shaping development policy within its mandate as a UN regional commission in Africa. One can refer to the COM (Conference of Ministers of Finance of Africa), AFRSD (African Forum for Sustainable Development) which feeds the HLPF (High Level Political Forum), The COP (Conference of Parties on Climate Change), etc.

Humanity is facing the greatest challenge in its history, that of its survival, in the face of climate change; growing population, dwindling of food resources, which all seems to be accelerating. We refer to your speeches on Climate action during the last COPs as they are inspiring and underline the urgency of action. Africa, although a small contributor to CO₂ emissions, is one of the most threatened regions in the world. In this decade of action, we the Staff of ECA are committed to do our part and help humanity achieve most of the SDGs. We will do our part to ensure that the progress already achieved is not regressed as we approach the target date of 2030. The Cost of No-Action is greater than doing nothing regarding these mega-trends. If we do not want to see a reversal of the progress made towards achieving the SDGs, Africa must accelerate its development, respecting planetary limits.

This constitutes an unprecedented challenge for the continent, and our institution, the ECA. More than ever, we must serve the general interest of the continent and rise to the challenges. For this we need to have our flagship, thinktank institutions to be led by visionaries, people who have at heart the interest of the continent and the world for many decades to come.

For all of the above to be realised, it is important that an institution, as important as the ECA be led by an individual and backed by a team of professionals with vision, selfless commitment and unflinching belief in the core values of the UN. In this context, it becomes important to laud your efforts to articulate the “UN Values and Behaviour framework”, which we the staff believe can be the foundation for concerted good actions in support of our goals. As you have rightly pointed out, the UN Values and Behaviours framework considers the constant changing nature of the world and renews our commitment to the people we serve.

In the past decade, ECA has unfortunately witnessed a continuous erosion of UN values, particularly at the leadership level. There has been a huge and perceptible gap between the values professed at the top and what is actually practiced. This has created a vicious cycle of mistrust, low staff morale and fear in the organisation. We understand and appreciate that

senior leaders of UN organisations are selected by your office through an elaborate and rigorous process which takes to consideration member states inputs. and result most of the time in appointing sound professionals with proven track record of leadership and excellence. However, our experience over the past decade in ECA left our hope unfulfilled. We are not denying some good achievements that had happened, but more could have been done and done sustainably.

I would like to draw your attention to the brief interaction during your visit to Addis Ababa in January 2017 at the UN Conference Centre in ECA. During the meeting the Staff Union representatives have implored you to carefully consider an individual who comes with considerable UN experience and background with an excellent track record, particularly of adherence to the UN core values. What we have experienced though left a lot to be talked about. During this period, we the staff leaders had to face continuous representations from aggrieved staff members who had been subjected to harassment and abuse by the top leadership. It was moving to see senior staff members, including those who worked in the close proximity of these leaders, break down repeatedly out of fear, frustration and shattered confidence due to the treatment inflicted out by the leaders. As the Staff Union representative, it is my duty to ensure you know about what has transpired.

As well as providing direction, inspiration, and guidance, good leaders exhibit courage, passion, confidence, commitment, and ambition. They nurture the strengths and talents of their people and build teams committed to achieving common goals.

Strong leaders today are those who practice servant leadership which also embodies the values that you have articulated, starting with humility and encompassing humanity, inclusion and integrity. The explosion in the number of staff complaints, litigation has been an outcome of what ECA has become.

During the last decade, we have experienced our leaders behave badly, often shouting, writing abusive emails, taking illegal decisions which staff were too afraid to challenge. As the Staff Union leaders, our staff constituency shared many of these incidents with us in confidence. As the staff union, we continuously raised these issues at the different fora available to us, including at the Joint Negotiations Committee, through interaction with the USG-DMSPC, ASG-OHR etc. However, we never received enough support.

In order to support our staff and to ensure that the system of checks and balanced was respected, the Staff Union at ECA, had to forcefully insist on being included as part of several management processes. These were however stonewalled continuously by the leadership. What was left to us was and is still to react to decisions taken about us without our inclusion in the process. We hope that would change.

It is in this context, that we feel it is important to not only make you aware of what all has transpired over the past decade and specifically over the past five years, so that you can take into consideration, these important learnings in helping select the suitable candidate for the leadership of ECA. We need a leader who believes and practice the UN values and behaviours. We need a leader who understands the value of humility, humanity, integrity and inclusion. We need a leader who is not only a competent professional but is also humane. We need a leader who believes in servant leadership. We need a leader who not only has a vision but is also willing to invest in people and in the team to build ownership for the vision, in support of advancing Africa's cause well.

We humbly thought we should do our part and send you our thoughts in the process of selection of our next leader.

We count on you Sir and we count on your indisputable leadership to bring our beloved institution, ECA to the shore.

Thank you

Mahamadou Nassirou Ba, President
ECA Staff Union