



## Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
22 March 2021

Original: English

**Economic Commission for Africa  
Conference of African Ministers of Finance,  
Planning and Economic Development**  
Fifty-third session  
Addis Ababa (hybrid), 22 and 23 March 2021

Items 5 and 6 of the provisional agenda\*

**Consideration of recommendations and adoption of resolutions and  
consideration and adoption of the ministerial statement**

### Report of the meeting of the Committee of Experts

#### Introduction

1. The thirty-ninth meeting of the Committee of Experts of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development was held in Addis Ababa, in a hybrid format featuring both in-person and online participation, from 17 to 19 March 2021.

#### Part One

##### I. Opening of the meeting [agenda item 1]

###### A. Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following States: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

3. The following United Nations bodies and specialized agencies were represented: Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, International Labour Organization, International Organization for Migration, International Trade Centre, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services, United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Regional Commissions New York Office, United Nations Resident Coordinator Office, United Nations Population Fund, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Children's Fund,

\* E/ECA/CM/53/1.



United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development, United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, United Nations Office for Project Services, United Nations University, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), World Intellectual Property Organization, World Food Programme, World Health Organization.

4. Observers from the following States Members of the United Nations were present: Australia, Canada, China, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation.

5. Representatives of the following intergovernmental and regional organizations were also present: African Development Bank, African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation, Central Bank of West African States, Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce and Industry, West African Monetary and Economic Union.

6. Observers were present from the following organizations, among others: ActionAid International; Addis Ababa University; Africa Finance Corporation; Africa Fintech Network; African Digital Education Trust; African Institute for Mathematical Sciences; Ajemalebu Self Help; Arab Agricultural Production Co. Ltd.; Better Than Cash Alliance; Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; BJM Management Consultancy Co. Ltd.; BlackCamel Energy Ltd.; Brooklyn College; Cellule de Suivi de l'Intégration; Centre for Health Sciences Training, Research and Development; CGE Consultants; Chatham House; Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme Non-State Actors Coalition; COODSynergyn Oil West-Africa Ltd.; Corporate Council on Africa; Crown Agents Ltd.; Datem Ltd.; Delaware State University; East African Bottling Share Company; Eastern Africa Farmers Federation; Economic and Statistical Observatory for Sub-Saharan Africa; ELIF Business Solutions Ltd.; Environnement et Développement du Tiers Monde; LEAD Afrique Francophone; Euclid University; Findlay House Global; Fintech Association of Nigeria; Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Ethiopia; Gatef Organization; Gender Youth for Change and Peace Building; Géomatique Topographie Ingénierie Conseils (GTOPIC); Ghana Geological Survey Authority; Global Youth Connect for Sustainable Agriculture; Goblis Foundation; Groupe Conseils Mireille Mouéllé; Groupe Loukil; Hanyang University; IHS Markit Ltd.; Initiative Africa; International Forum of Sovereign Wealth Funds; International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT); International Movement for Advancement of Education Culture, Social and Economic Development; Kuvuna Foundation; Life and Hope Uganda; Lusa News Agency; Majengo Estates Developers Ltd; Mazars; Meinhardt (Singapore); Muchinga General Enterprises Ltd.; National Association of Nigerian Traders; NFC Bank; PanAfrican Capital Holdings Ltd.; PanaPress; Premium Hortus; PUTTRU Technologies Ltd.; Rail Working Group; Rockefeller Foundation; Rotary International; Samara University; Sargasso Worldwide Ghana Ltd.; Skynotch Energy Africa Ltd.; Social and Media Studies Institute (Morocco); SOS Children's Villages International; South African Youth Council; SUNami Solar Ltd.; Trippinz Care Inc.; Tshwane University of Technology; Union pour la Promotion, la Défense des Droits Humains et de l'Environnement dans la région des Grands Lacs (UPDDHE); University of Cape Coast; University of Ibadan; University of Lagos; University of Lomé; University of Nairobi; University of Tunis El Manar; University of Venda; Urukundo Initiative; Vida Pharmaceuticals (Pty.) Ltd.; Women for Africa Foundation.

## B. Opening statements

7. The opening session was chaired by the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the African Union and the Economic Commission for Africa, and Chair of the outgoing Bureau of the Committee of Experts, Mohammed Arrouchi.

8. Opening statements were made by the Chair of the outgoing Bureau, the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Vera Songwe, and the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the African Union and ECA, Tesfaye Yilma.

9. In his opening remarks, Mr. Arrouchi expressed his gratitude to the Executive Secretary and her team for organizing the fifty-third session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, and the current meeting of the Committee of Experts, amid the very challenging circumstances of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. He outlined various achievements of ECA in the areas of data and statistics, incentivizing private sector investment in energy, supporting landlocked member States in their efforts to gain access to the sea, providing fiscal policy support for the identification and prevention of revenue leakages, and addressing climate change issues. In conclusion, he encouraged participants to make use of ECA expertise and the ECA platform to campaign for access to the COVID-19 vaccine for all African countries.

10. In her welcoming address, Ms. Songwe provided an overview of the COVID-19 epidemiological situation in Africa, with a case fatality rate of 2.7 per cent, higher than the global average. ECA had predicted that African economic growth would decline by 5.4 per cent in 2021 and, if the trend continued, the continent would experience its first recession in almost two decades. She therefore stressed the imperative of building forward better and taking full advantage of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, under which trading had begun in January 2021. She stressed the importance of equitable access for all to COVID-19 vaccines, and highlighted initiatives spearheaded by ECA to support member States in their efforts to tackle the pandemic. In addition, she noted that, to date, 25 African countries had signed up to and benefited from the Group of 20 debt service suspension initiative, creating savings of \$5.9 billion to enable countries to respond better to the crisis. The allocation of special drawing rights to African countries would increase their liquidity, which would give them the means to implement critical reforms and to vaccinate large percentages of their populations, thereby propelling them towards attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

11. In his statement, Mr. Yilma noted the progress made by the African Union leadership in mobilizing the people of Africa to tackle the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. While access to the vaccine was a good start for the continent, more action on that front was needed and Africa should work in solidarity with its partners to tackle the pandemic. He reaffirmed his Government's commitment to multilateralism, exemplified by its pride in having hosted of the ECA headquarters for over 60 years.

12. Following those statements and on the proposal of the Executive Secretary, participants observed one minute of silence to pay homage to all those who had lost their lives and suffered injuries in the recent explosions in Equatorial Guinea.

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

13. The following countries were elected by acclamation to the Committee to form the new Bureau:

Chair:	Equatorial Guinea
First Vice-Chair:	Madagascar
Second Vice-Chair:	Zambia
Third Vice-Chair:	Sierra Leone
Rapporteur:	Morocco

14. Following an acceptance statement by the newly elected Chair of the Bureau, the Ambassador of Equatorial Guinea to the African Union and ECA, Crisantos Obama Ondo, the Committee adopted the following agenda, based on the provisional agenda that had been circulated:

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Election of the Bureau and adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
3. Overview of recent economic and social developments in Africa in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. Assessment of progress on regional integration in Africa in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. Presentation on the theme of the fifty-third session of the Commission.
6. Statutory issues.
7. Date, venue and theme of the fifty-fourth session of the Commission.
8. Other matters.
9. Consideration and adoption of the report of the Committee of Experts, and consideration of recommendations and draft resolutions.
10. Closing of the meeting.

## Part Two

### Account of proceedings

### III. Overview of recent economic and social developments in Africa in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

[agenda item 3]

#### A. Presentation

15. Under this item, the secretariat presented a report on economic and social developments in Africa in 2019 and 2020,<sup>1</sup> and discussed the impact of COVID-19, highlighting recent trends in the global economy and their implications for the African region, including a sharp contraction of the continent's gross domestic product for 2020, widening fiscal deficits, increased debt loads and decreasing intra-African trade. The economic outlook for 2021 was positive, however, owing to the availability of COVID-19 vaccines and improved economic activity in the fourth quarter of 2020.

#### B. Discussion

16. In the ensuing discussion, experts aired their concerns regarding uncertainties in projecting the economic growth of Africa in the context of COVID-19. These included the occurrence of a second wave of infections, inequality and the slow pace of accessing the vaccines, along with the diversity of the virus variants, which affected the capacity of States to fight the pandemic in an effective manner. Experts emphasized the need for an inclusive and cost-effective distribution and access to vaccines at global, regional and national levels, as part of a sustainable response and recovery process.

17. While discussing specific post-COVID-19 recovery measures, experts stressed the need to promote a green recovery and address challenges related to the predominant informal and rural sectors and related small and medium-sized enterprises. They underscored that a fossil fuel export pattern was not sustainable in the long term, as countries relying on such natural resources were vulnerable to external shocks and volatile economic growth. They also recommended macroeconomic interventions that were consistent with the current financial needs of the African economies.

18. Experts encouraged countries to safeguard public debt sustainability, in particular for low-income countries, while defining and implementing COVID-19 response and recovery measures. As such, they referred to measures undertaken by member States around tax and monetary policy adjustments, modification of exchange rates targeting the exports sector, and reduction of transaction costs to enhance trade.

#### C. Recommendations

19. In the light of the discussions, the Committee made the following recommendations:

---

<sup>1</sup> E/ECA/COE/39/11.

- (a) Member States should:
  - (i) As part of their COVID-19 recovery measures, focus on key investments, including green technologies, as well as investments targeting employees and businesses in the rural economy, aimed at integrating people operating in the informal sector into the formal economy;
  - (ii) Take steps to improve the sustainability of their public debts, while addressing the socioeconomic effects of the pandemic;
- (b) ECA should:
  - (i) Continuously update its forecasts of economic growth for Africa, taking into account the uncertainties related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the second wave of infections, the pace of vaccinations, and the number of variants of the virus and the efficacy of vaccines on them;
  - (ii) In collaboration with the international community, support member States in ensuring that their public debts are sustainable and that there are enough resources to finance investments in social sectors, including through debt relief initiatives, reallocation of special drawing rights and enhanced access to credit;
  - (iii) Assist countries to assess the effectiveness of measures taken to respond to, and recover from, the COVID-19 pandemic;
  - (iv) Promote economic diversification and green investments that can benefit and promote the development of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises – in particular for the fossil fuel-dependent economies – for the continent’s sustainable rebuilding process, including industrialization.

#### **IV. Assessment of progress on regional integration in Africa in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic** [agenda item 4]

##### **A. Presentation**

20. Under this item, the representative of the secretariat presented a report on progress made in respect of regional integration in Africa,<sup>2</sup> including highlights of key challenges and constraints, such as low levels of intraregional trade and productive integration.

##### **B. Discussion**

21. The ensuing discussion revolved around the capacity of member States to implement the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area; infrastructure development to harness the full benefits of the Area; the macroeconomic dimensions of regional integration, with a focus on data availability and harmonization; the nexus between peace and security and regional integration; and the work being done by regional economic communities with respect to integration.

---

<sup>2</sup> E/ECA/COE/39/7.

22. Experts pointed out that, although trade under the Agreement had officially started on 1 January 2021, the success of the process would depend greatly on the capacity of State parties to address the challenges associated with the economic transformation to which the African Continental Free Trade Area was expected to contribute. Regional economic communities, as the backbone of regional integration in Africa, had to have a clear role in supporting operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area. The secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area had started to provide support in those areas. In addition, ECA had assisted over 40 member States and several regional economic communities in developing national and regional implementation strategies for operationalization of the Area. The validation of those strategies by member States would set the stage for putting in place implementation mechanisms.

23. Experts underscored the importance of infrastructure development to intra-African trade, and emphasized that inadequate infrastructure contributed to high trade costs and reduced the competitiveness of African products. Growth in intra-African trade resulting from the African Continental Free Trade Area had to be accompanied by investment in infrastructure, in particular energy, railways, roads and information and communications technologies. As such, it was critical for Africa to fully implement its regional and continental infrastructure initiatives in support of the Area.

24. Experts noted advocacy efforts by ECA for the allocation of COVID-19-related stimulus packages for infrastructure development; for addressing the special infrastructure needs of landlocked countries through the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024; and for African countries to ratify the Protocol to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment on Matters Specific to Railway Rolling Stock (Luxembourg Rail Protocol), with the view to crowding-in private sector investment in the rail transport sector.

## C. Recommendations

25. In the light of the discussions, the Committee made the following recommendations:

ECA should:

- (a) Incorporate more concise policy recommendations into the next edition of the publication *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa*;
- (b) Assist member States in building capacity in the area of regional integration and trade, in particular with the establishment of national committees for the operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area;
- (c) Work closely with the African Union Commission to boost infrastructure development on the continent, in particular through resource mobilization;
- (d) Support member States in the development of agricultural, regional and continental value chains;
- (e) Support member States in harnessing innovations in digital technology to enhance regional integration, in particular intra-African trade;
- (f) Strengthen the capacity of member States to apply macroeconomic models for planning and implementation purposes;
- (g) Strengthen the capacity of member States to produce harmonized data and to harmonize policies, measures and standards across countries, to allow for cross-country comparisons.

## **V. Presentation on the theme of the fifty-third session of the Commission [agenda item 5]**

### **A. Presentation**

26. The representative of the secretariat presented the theme of the fifty-third session, “Africa’s sustainable industrialization and diversification in the digital era in the context of COVID-19”,<sup>3</sup> focusing on the need to pursue industrialization as an engine of growth, building on the booming digitalization of operations and services.

### **B. Discussion**

27. In the ensuing discussion, experts noted the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on African economies, and called on African countries to turn the challenges of the pandemic into opportunities to build forward stronger, including through a digital economy and industrialization. They stressed the need to understand the factors underlying the shift away from manufacturing towards the services sector in Africa, such as the high cost and unreliable nature of its energy supply and its poor infrastructure.

28. Experts underscored the role of government policy in developing markets and promoting innovation by the private sector. They noted the urgent need for investments in research and development, science, technology and innovation, and for the human capital that would enable African countries to embrace the fourth industrial revolution.

### **C. Recommendations**

29. In the light of the discussions, the Committee made the following recommendations:

- (a) Member States should:
  - (i) Promote policies and regulations to encourage innovation and to drive research and development;
  - (ii) Embrace digitalization for its industrialization agenda, focusing on high agricultural value chains and transformation of the natural resources of Africa;
  - (iii) Leverage the potential of the African Continental Free Trade Area to boost the intra-African investments needed to industrialize Africa;
  - (iv) Align their industrial policies with those of agriculture and natural resources, fostering pride in African-made products, promoting regional production factors and value chains, and capitalizing on the benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Area, to upgrade industrialization on the continent;
  - (v) Consider the creation of a fund to support digitalization, establish an enabling environment for youth innovation and entrepreneurship, and promote investments in universities;
  - (vi) Ratify the Protocol to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment on Matters Specific to Railway

---

<sup>3</sup> E/ECA/COE/39/4.



Rolling Stock (Luxembourg Rail Protocol), to facilitate operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area;

(vii) Establish appropriate rules and regulations for the implementation of digitalization, including those dealing with cybersecurity and other digital offences;

(b) ECA should:

(i) Drive the industrialization agenda in Africa, including realization of the Third Industrial Development Decade for Africa, working in partnership with other United Nations entities;

(ii) Continue working with the African Union Commission to support African countries in managing liquidity and debt challenges occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to support the implementation of socioeconomic plans for recovery from the pandemic, including resource mobilization through the extension of the Group of 20 debt service suspension initiative and the reallocation of special drawing rights, creating resources that will help African countries to fill the infrastructure gaps needed to roll out the digitalization of various sectors of their economies and enabling them to adapt to the global digital era;

(iii) Continue to build capacity through skills development, with a view to driving industrialization.

## **VI. Statutory issues** [agenda item 6]

### **A. Report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Economic Commission for Africa (covering the period from April 2020 to March 2021)**

### **B. Report on the follow-up to the resolutions of the fifty-second session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and the resolutions of the extraordinary meeting of the Bureau at the ministerial level**

#### **1. Presentation**

30. Before commencing consideration of the item, at the invitation of the Chair, participants observed a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of John Magufuli, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, who had passed away.

31. Under sub-items 6 (a) and (b), representatives of the secretariat presented respectively the report of the Executive Secretary on the work of the Economic Commission for Africa covering the period April 2020–March 2021;<sup>4</sup> and the report on the follow-up to the resolutions of the fifty-second session of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, and the resolutions of the extraordinary meeting of the Bureau of the Conference.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> E/ECA/COE/39/18.

<sup>5</sup> E/ECA/COE/39/6.

## 2. Discussion

32. In the ensuing discussion, experts commended the secretariat on the work done, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. They noted that the pandemic was derailing progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and highlighted that lockdown measures and travel restrictions were having adverse effects on the informal sector, in particular women cross-border traders.

33. Experts noted that, owing to COVID-19-related challenges, the medium-term programme framework required further consultations with different stakeholders, and they had no objection to the proposed new time frame, 2022–2025, for its implementation. They requested the inclusion, however, of quantifiable, time-bound performance measures to help with the tracking of its progress. Experts pointed out the need for the ECA Centre of Excellence for Digital Identity, Trade and Economy to support member States in using digital technologies to combat illicit financial flows, including transnational organized crime, in addition to taxation issues, as part of national digital strategies. Experts called on ECA to campaign for more flexibility in the implementation of the Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) to promote greater access to COVID-19 vaccines.

## 3. Recommendations

34. In the light of the discussions, the Committee made the following recommendations:

ECA should:

(a) Assist member States to speed up implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, the progress of which had been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic;

(b) In collaboration with the African Union Commission and the African Continental Free Trade Area secretariat, support member States in formulating and implementing measures to address the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on women informal cross-border traders and to provide support to formalize their activities;

(c) Harmonize its support for member States with those of other development partners to ensure efficiency and effectiveness, and avoid duplication, including through more effective use of the opportunity and issue-based coalition and regional collaborative platform;

(d) Support the work of the African Union Commission and the African Tax Administration Forum on taxation of the digital economy;

(e) Through the Centre of Excellence for Digital Identity, Trade and Economy, continue to support member States in formulating and implementing national digital strategies in line with the African Union Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020–2030);

(f) Strengthen its work on illicit financial flows to assist member States to combat transnational organized crime, including through the use of digital technology;

(g) Advocate more flexibility in the implementation of the TRIPS Agreement to promote greater access to COVID-19 vaccines.

- C. Report on recent organizational changes in the ECA secretariat: note by the Executive Secretary**
- D. Proposed programme plan of the Economic Commission for Africa for 2022**
- E. Proposed programme budget of the Economic Commission for Africa for 2022**

**1. Presentation**

35. Under sub-item 6 (c), the representative of the secretariat presented a note by the Executive Secretary summarizing recent cost-neutral organizational changes introduced at ECA to accompany the new strategic direction and programme priorities.<sup>6</sup>

36. Under sub-items 6 (d) and (e), representatives of the secretariat presented respectively the draft proposed programme plan for 2022<sup>7</sup> and the draft proposed budget of ECA programmes for 2022.<sup>8</sup>

**2. Discussion**

37. In the ensuing discussion, experts endorsed the organizational changes made to streamline service delivery; to continue supporting the African Union Commission; to work closely with the African Union Development Agency, through the New Partnership for Africa's Development, and with United Nations agencies, in line with the regional reform agenda of the United Nations; and to equip the ECA secretariat to support member States in developing capacities in various areas of sustainable development, including digitalization, climate change and green industrialization. They also endorsed the proposed strategic orientations for the 2022 programme plan.

38. The experts expressed their satisfaction with the decrease in the ECA net budget and highlighted the imperative to focus on efficiencies, given the current circumstances. Concern was expressed about the ratio of extrabudgetary resources to the regular budget, which was relatively low compared to those of other comparable organizations. In response to a question about potential partners that ECA planned to approach for resource mobilization purposes, the secretariat identified several development partners, including the French Agency for Development, the German Agency for International Cooperation, the European Union, the World Bank, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation and the Governments of Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

39. Experts sought more technical cooperation support from ECA, in particular in the form of training in areas such as cybersecurity and e-commerce, in the light of the current crisis and, to that end, proposed an increase in the budget allocation for capacity-building.

40. In response to a concern raised about the possible overlap of ECA activities with those of other United Nations organizations, the secretariat clarified that ECA was collaborating with partner agencies in many areas, with a view, among other aims, to complementing their operational activities with its analytical perspective. It also confirmed that agriculture, the

---

<sup>6</sup> E/ECA/COE/39/21.

<sup>7</sup> E/ECA/COE/39/19.

<sup>8</sup> E/ECA/COE/39/20.

importance of which was emphasized by experts, featured in the work of several of the Commission's subprogrammes.

### **3. Recommendations**

41. In the light of the discussions, the Committee made the following recommendations:

(a) ECA should:

(i) Increase the extrabudgetary resources and step up advocacy and resource mobilization in this regard;

(ii) In the 2022 programme plan, intensify efforts to quantify deliverables and indicators to better measure the progress made;

(iii) Consider consolidating the programme plan and budget document, linking the activities to the budget lines;

(iv) Ensure that its activities remain focused on its mandate;

(v) Further coordinate with the African Union Commission on its programme of work.

(b) The Conference of Ministers should adopt the 2022 programme plan and budget of the Economic Commission for Africa.

### **F. Report on the first session of the Committee on Private Sector Development, Regional Integration, Trade, Infrastructure, Industry and Technology**

### **G. Report on the third session of the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender**

### **H. Reports on the fifth and sixth sessions of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development**

#### **1. Presentation**

42. Under sub-items 6 (f) (g) and (h), representatives of the secretariat presented respectively the report on the first session of the Committee on Private Sector Development, Regional Integration, Trade, Infrastructure, Industry and Technology;<sup>9</sup> the report on the third session of the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender;<sup>10</sup> and the reports on the fifth and sixth sessions of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development.<sup>11</sup>

#### **2. Discussion**

43. In the ensuing discussion, experts pointed out several issues that required attention, including the need for ECA to strengthen the capacity of member States in investment, competition and intellectual property as critical elements in the operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area, attracting external investments through the benefits of the Area and strengthening the role of the private sector in its operationalization. Experts highlighted the need for effective engagement of the private sector in the implementation of infrastructure projects in

---

<sup>9</sup> E/ECA/COE/39/10.

<sup>10</sup> E/ECA/COE/39/16.

<sup>11</sup> E/ECA/COE/39/5 and E/ECA/COE/39/22.

Priority Action Plan II of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa. The specific role of the private sector in linking regional economic communities through the Action Plan for Boosting intra-African Trade and the African Continental Free Trade Area was deemed extremely important. Experts highlighted the link between empowerment of women and reduction of poverty and inequality, and the important role of the private sector in the reduction of poverty. Moreover, there was a need to take advantage of the link between economic growth and population growth by harnessing the demographic dividend and its connection with women's empowerment. Experts also stressed the need for programmes on women's empowerment to participate and benefit from the African Continental Free Trade Area and called for effective engagement of non-State stakeholders and civil society in programmes to set the Area in operation and respond to COVID-19.

44. Experts noted the work of ECA on cross-border trade within the African Continental Free Trade Area and the role of women, improved access to digital financing, harnessing the demographic dividend, gender mainstreaming and resource mobilization through the African Women Leadership Fund.

45. Experts recalled that, at its seventh session, the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development had addressed the need to align the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union, and the serious challenges posed by climate change to development in the region. They highlighted the need to preserve the Congo basin and its peatlands as important carbon sinks. They recalled adaptation mechanisms and the institution of the Blue Fund, as suggested by the Head of State of the Congo at the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It was noted that the establishment of the Blue Fund had been endorsed in the Brazzaville Declaration of the seventh session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development.

### **3. Recommendations**

46. In the light of the discussions, the Committee made the following recommendations:

ECA should:

(a) Support member States in the second phase of African Continental Free Trade Area activities and negotiations on investment, competition and intellectual property;

(b) Conduct a study on how the African Continental Free Trade Area can attract foreign investments;

(c) Work with member States and other partners to establish and operationalize the Blue Fund for the Congo Basin;

(d) Provide specific recommendations on post-COVID-19 pandemic recovery through engagement with the private sector and civil society, in coordination with the relevant member States, with a focus on the needs of women and young people.

- I. Reports on the meetings of the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts**
- J. Progress report on the work of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning**
- K. Report on the fifth Conference of Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration, and the report on the proceedings and outcomes of the seventh meeting of the Statistical Commission for Africa**

**1. Presentation**

47. Under sub-items 6 (i), (j) and (k), representatives of the secretariat presented the reports on the meetings of the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts;<sup>12</sup> the progress report on the work of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning;<sup>13</sup> the report on the Fifth Conference of Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration;<sup>14</sup> and the report on proceedings and outcomes of the seventh meeting of the Statistical Commission for Africa.<sup>15</sup>

**2. Discussion**

48. In the ensuing discussion, experts stressed the need to create collective immunity through a strong campaign for equitable access to COVID-19 vaccinations. On the issue of digitalization, the experts underscored the urgency of improving the infrastructure in terms of qualitative and quantitative access to digital technology as a driving force of sustainable growth and as a tool to tackle climate change. They also highlighted the need for the continent to build its capacity to anticipate future shocks with the potential to cause systemic social and economic disruptions, as had been evidenced by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

49. In addition, experts underscored the need for continued and increased support for the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP), including through annual contributions and the payment of arrears enabling the Institute to continue delivering timely and thematically diverse courses. They also highlighted the important role played by ECA in supporting member States in building the statistical capacities of national statistical offices, thereby equipping them with tools for tracking and reporting on progress towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of Agenda 2063. They underlined the need for continued collaboration by ECA with the African Union and its African Trade Observatory, in building capacity to produce the high quality and reliable statistics that would be key to operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area and to effectively tackling the challenges posed by climate change and shocks such as those inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**3. Recommendations**

50. In the light of the discussions, the Committee made the following recommendations:

- (a) Member States should:

---

<sup>12</sup> ECA/SRO-NA/ICSOE/35/6, ECA/SA/ICSOE/XXVI/2020/8, ECA/CA/ICSOE/36, ECA/WA/ICE/23/01 and ECA/EA/ICSOE/24.

<sup>13</sup> E/ECA/COE/39/13.

<sup>14</sup> CRMC5/2019/30.

<sup>15</sup> E/ECA/STATCOM/7/13/Add.1.

- (i) Continue advocating equitable and timely access to COVID-19 vaccinations and enhanced collaboration in the production of vaccines;
  - (ii) Support and invest in the acquisition of digital technology for sustainable growth, to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and to facilitate operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area;
  - (iii) Support IDEP with adequate resources to enable the Institute effectively to discharge its capacity-building functions in support of the development of Africa;
  - (iv) Invest more heavily in building their capacities to produce timely and good quality statistics;
- (b) ECA should:
- (i) Continue supporting member States, and in particular their national statistical offices, in building the statistical capacities necessary for sustainable development;
  - (ii) Strengthen its collaboration with the African Union Commission in building statistical capacities of the regional economic communities and member States, including for geospatial data.

**L. Report on United Nations support for the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa's Development programme**

**M. Progress in the implementation of the priority areas of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 (Istanbul Programme of Action)**

**N. Report on the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024**

**1. Presentation**

51. Under sub-items 6 (l), (m) and (n), representatives of the secretariat presented respectively a report on United Nations system-wide support for the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa's Development programme for the period February 2019–February 2021, under the nine strategic pathways;<sup>16</sup> a report on progress by least developed countries in achieving the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 (Istanbul Programme of Action), underlining the challenges posed by COVID-19 for future graduation prospects of least developed countries;<sup>17</sup> and a report that discussed the status of implementation of the priority areas of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 and the related challenges.<sup>18</sup>

**2. Discussions**

---

<sup>16</sup> E/ECA/COE/39/12.

<sup>17</sup> E/ECA/COE/39/15.

<sup>18</sup> E/ECA/COE/39/9.

52. In the ensuing discussion, experts took note of the transition from the regional coordination mechanism to the regional collaboration platform, and called for greater United Nations system-wide alignment and collaboration with the African Union Commission.

53. Experts highlighted major gaps in the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, and encouraged the provision of support to the least developed countries in facing their challenges. In particular, they advocated debt sustainability and upgrading of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. They commended the support of ECA to member States, landlocked developing countries in particular, in the design and implementation of their national African Continental Free Trade Area strategies, with a view to leveraging the opportunities offered by such a larger market.

54. Experts expressed concerns about the unachieved targets relating to the graduation of least developed countries' graduation under the Istanbul Programme of Action, and to the challenges faced by landlocked developing countries under the Vienna Programme of Action, in particular in the context of COVID-19, and urged ECA to render assistance in addressing the issue of increased debt.

55. The meeting recognized ECA support provided to member States and regional economic communities through the former regional coordination mechanism, and underscored the need urgently to address past challenges related to the former version of the mechanism, which precluded them from having a long-term impact on the realization of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

56. While recalling gaps and challenges identified by the 2016 midterm review of the Istanbul Programme of Action, experts noted additional challenges related to debt sustainability brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, and encouraged ECA and individual countries to support least developed countries, in particular those close to graduation, in addressing those issues.

### **3. Recommendations**

57. In the light of the discussions, the Committee made the following recommendations:

(a) Member States should promote sound debt management and support the resolution of the Vienna Programme of Action road map for the acceleration of implementation;

(b) ECA should:

(i) Provide support to the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa Priority Action Plan II and its implementation modalities, while taking into consideration technology transfer in infrastructuring, and help member States and regional economic communities to achieve alignment with the Priority Action Plan II projects of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, while encouraging inclusive partnerships to support the implementation;

(ii) Provide support to least developed countries and landlocked developing countries, taking into account structural constraints compounded by new and emerging challenges, including those posed by COVID-19 and debt increase;

(iii) Ensure that the new regional collaboration platform does not face the same challenges that the former regional coordination mechanism faced, and consider rationalizing the clusters of the regional collaboration platform for better coherence and harmonization in the interventions of the United Nations entities in the regional collaboration platform;



(iv) Ensure that the changes and reforms in the United Nations system-wide support lead to improved collaboration and coordination, and strengthen the platform, while addressing the highlighted challenges;

(v) Strengthen its engagement with the African Union and the African Union Development Agency in support of the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda, and other frameworks, in a coherent manner, building on respective reforms and restructuring;

(vi) Continue supporting least developed countries in their efforts to achieve graduation and encourage other development partners to contribute additional resources both to support the graduation of least developed countries and to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

## VII. Date, venue and theme of the fifty-fourth session of the Commission [agenda item 7]

### 1. Presentation

58. The representative of the secretariat introduced a note on the proposed date, venue and theme for the fifty-fourth session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.<sup>19</sup> It was proposed that the fifty-fourth session be held in March 2022 in Addis Ababa under the theme “Rethinking economic development in the post-COVID-19 era”.

### 2. Discussion

59. In the ensuing discussion, the experts accepted the proposed date and venue of the fifty-fourth session, but some expressed concerns about the proposed theme, as it seemed to imply that a transition into a post-COVID-19 period was certain, notwithstanding the possibility that the pandemic could be a continuing concern in 2022. Indeed, economic analysis that focused on mitigating the effects of the pandemic might still be pertinent for the fifty-fourth session. In addition, the experts also noted that the proposed theme was too broad. Furthermore, it seemed to imply that current development strategies in Africa were inadequate and thus needed to be rethought. It was therefore suggested that the theme should have a more positive orientation and be more focused on key themes.

60. The experts suggested that the secretariat consider the specific circumstances of African countries, which were at different stages of development and had been affected differently by the impact of the pandemic. They also suggested that a multisectoral approach be applied in reformulating the theme, to link it to the 2030 Agenda and Africa 2063, and to incorporate topics related to inequality and inclusivity. The experts indicated that the theme should also reflect the opportunities and challenges that had been catalysed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

61. To provide continuity with the theme and discussions of the fifty-third session, the experts suggested that the range of proposed topics be expanded to include: a review of African Continental Free Trade Area-related progress; debt relief; a common African position for the twenty-seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which was scheduled to be held in Africa; and the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa.

<sup>19</sup> E/ECA/COE/39/23.

62. The secretariat responded to the concerns raised by the experts, suggesting that a range of areas might be featured in the theme of 2022. The uncertainties relating to a post-COVID-19 transition period and the need to have positive focus were taken on board by the secretariat.

### **3. Recommendations**

63. In light of the discussions, the Committee made the following recommendations:

(a) ECA should:

(i) Reassess the focus of the proposed theme, to reflect the work being done to seize opportunities and overcome development challenges, including those posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and with a view to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the aspirations of Agenda 2063 in the post-COVID-19 era;

(ii) Ensure that the theme reflects a multisectoral approach to development;

(iii) Work with the Bureau to refine the theme, taking into account the suggestions provided by the Committee.

(b) The Conference of Ministers should accept the proposed dates and venue for the fifty-fourth session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

## **VIII. Other matters** [agenda item 8]

64. No other matters were raised.

## **IX. Consideration and adoption of the draft report on the meeting of the Committee of Experts, and consideration of recommendations and draft resolutions** [agenda item 9]

65. Experts reviewed and adopted the report of their deliberations, on the understanding that the secretariat would be entrusted with its finalization. The draft resolutions, as considered by the Committee, are attached in the annex to the present report for consideration and possible adoption by the Conference of Ministers.

## **X. Closing of the meeting** [agenda item 10]

66. Closing remarks were made by Ms. Songwe and Mr. Ondo.

67. Ms. Songwe expressed her appreciation to the Bureau and the Committee for the smooth conduct of the meeting and the quality of its deliberations, and affirmed the commitment of the secretariat to continue to support member States in their response, recovery and reset efforts. She also undertook to continue promoting engagement by ECA with the Group of Seven and the international financial institutions on debt servicing schemes and the issuance of special drawing rights, affording low-income countries greater access to capital, alleviating their debt burdens and providing much-needed liquidity.

68. Mr. Ondo commended all experts on their constructive engagement over the three days of the meeting and called on member States to continue to support the work of the secretariat and work closely in a joint pursuit of accelerated and green recovery. He expressed his gratitude to the Executive Secretary and her team for

organizing and servicing the meeting, amid the very challenging circumstances of COVID-19 pandemic .

69. Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 9.50 p.m. on Friday, 19 March 2021.

## Annex

### **Draft resolutions for consideration by the Conference of Ministers**

Draft resolutions, the text of which was approved by the Committee of Experts, are set out below for consideration and possible adoption by the Conference of Ministers.

#### **A. African Continental Free Trade Area**

*The Conference of Ministers,*

*Recognizing* the development potential of the African Continental Free Trade Area as a vehicle for achieving the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union,

*Taking note* of declaration Ext/Assembly/AU/Decl.1(XIII) of 5 December 2020, adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union at its thirteenth extraordinary session, in which it endorsed 31 December 2021 as the deadline to conclude phase II and phase III negotiations under the African Continental Free Trade Area,

*Recalling* decision Assembly/AU/Dec.569(XXV) of 15 June 2015, adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union at its twenty-fifth ordinary session, in which it called upon the Economic Commission for Africa to provide support to Member States, the Africa Union Commission and the regional economic communities to ensure the timely conclusion of the negotiations,

*Cognizant* of the role of trade in the equitable sharing of public health goods and services, such as personal protective equipment, ventilators and vaccines, in the face of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis,

*Recognizing* the importance of re-envisioning trade, to account appropriately for climate change, including through the creation of green value chains, and to leverage the emergence of the digital economy, including through the implementation of a protocol on e-commerce to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area,

*Recognizing also* the potential of the African Continental Free Trade Area to accelerate the process of economic recovery and building forward better in addressing the challenges of COVID-19 and the post-COVID-19 environment,

1. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue supporting the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, including and in particular the ratification of the Agreement by those member States that have yet to do so, in close collaboration with the African Union Commission and the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area;

2. *Urges* the Economic Commission for Africa to provide technical support to its member States, the African Union Commission, the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area, and regional economic communities, in respect of agricultural development, industrialization, high-priority continental infrastructure projects, in particular those listed in

Priority Action Plan II of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, digitalization, implementation of national strategies for the African Continental Free Trade Area, and phase II and phase III negotiations under the African Continental Free Trade Area;

3. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa to prepare a study on how to foster investments on the continent through the African Continental Free Trade Area, to be presented to member States in 2022 at the fifty-fourth session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development;

4. *Also requests* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue providing technical support to the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area, including in developing and deploying digital trading systems and documentation.

## **B. Data and statistics**

*The Conference of Ministers,*

*Acknowledging* the urgency, in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, of transforming statistical production systems in African countries, so as to generate the data needed for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union,

*Noting* the continuing efforts and initiatives undertaken to track the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals at the national, subregional and continental levels in Africa in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak,

*Recognizing* the experiences shared by the World Health Organization and member States relating to health statistics and the conclusion that building the capacities of countries in respect of health statistics and mortality surveillance would be critical to improving health services, which have been greatly affected during the COVID-19 pandemic,

*Taking note of* the report and resolutions of the seventh meeting of the Statistical Commission for Africa, held online from 13 to 15 October 2020, under the theme: “Developing regional solutions to enhance the resilience of African national statistical systems to meet the need for data during the decade of action in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic”;

*Welcoming* the creation of an African group on transformation and modernization of official statistics, composed of 10 directors general of national statistical offices, and encourages the group to propose regional guidance and standards for the modernization and transformation of national statistical systems;

1. *Urges* partners and Governments to build strong monitoring systems and health information systems at the national and local levels;

2. *Calls upon* pan-African organizations and partners to work in close collaboration and foster synergies to support African countries, in particular those with the lowest levels of statistical development, to mitigate the impact of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic;

3. *Calls upon* member States to renew their commitments to the conduct of population and housing censuses during the 2020 census round and calls, in particular for technical assistance and advisory services for

countries in conflict and post-conflict countries and for those that have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic;

4. *Urges* that steps be taken to ensure that key targets and indicators of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 are incorporated into national development plans;

5. *Also urges* that steps be taken to ensure that the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework is incorporated into national development plans and is fully contextualized at the regional level, with a view to extending current national data systems to new data frontiers, such as earth observation and geospatial big data, in support of integrated spatial planning and inclusive and sustainable growth;

6. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa, working with other key regional partners, such as the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank, to continue its support for member States in strengthening the capacity of their statistical and data systems.

### **C. Civil registration and vital statistics**

*The Conference of Ministers,*

*Noting* the vital role of data, statistics and civil registration in national planning and in achieving the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union,

*Recognizing* the critical importance of fully functional and universal civil registration systems, and the adoption in 2010 of the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems by the first Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration, the main objective of which has been to ensure that everyone in Africa is counted,

*Acknowledging* the resolutions and achievements of the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration, which has been held every two years since 2010, with the objective of providing policy direction for the transformation and accelerated improvement of civil registration and vital statistics systems in Africa,

*Noting* the adoption in 2019 of the Lusaka Declaration by the fifth Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration, in which the Conference welcomed the opportunity to modernize civil registration and vital statistics systems in Africa through technological solutions aimed at building centralized digital civil registries for all vital events, thereby enabling wide access, inclusive coverage and reduced costs through automated systems,

*Taking note* of the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda, backed by the Deputy Secretary-General, which was launched in 2019 as a “One United Nations” approach to support member States in building holistic, country-owned and sustainable civil registration, vital statistics and identity management systems,

*Cognizant* of the principles of the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda of complete civil registration and universal registration of all vital events; the production of regular, comprehensive and accurate vital statistics; and the establishment and maintenance of population registers and identity-management apparatuses from birth to death,

1. *Urges* African Governments to invest in creating fully functional legal identity systems, with a foundation built on strong civil registration

systems that start at birth and end at death, and to provide citizens with special probatory instruments that allow them to prove, with unquestionable certainty, the facts relating to a person's existence, identity, and personal and family situation;

2. *Recommends* that civil registration systems be recognized as essential government services that should continue even during emergencies, given their intrinsic value in upholding human rights, their administrative uses and their role in the production of vital statistics;

3. *Encourages* member States to digitize civil registration systems and processes, from notification to certification, to make them more dynamic, interoperable, resilient, proactive and agile;

4. *Urges* member States to build interoperable registration systems that are based on a life-cycle approach that accounts for people as they enter the cycle upon birth, progress through various stages of life, and exit the cycle upon death;

5. *Calls upon* member States to establish closer links between civil registration authorities and the health-care sector so that vital events occurring in health-care institutions can be formally reported to civil registration authorities;

6. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue to support member States in promoting civil registration in Africa.

#### **D. Sustainable industrialization and diversification of Africa in the digital era in the context of the coronavirus disease pandemic**

*The Conference of Ministers,*

*Recalling* its resolution 969 (LII) of 26 March 2019 on digitalization and the digital economy initiative, in which it requested the Economic Commission for Africa to continue its work on policy research, regional dialogue and capacity development on digitalization and the digital economy in member States,

*Taking note* of decision EX.CL/Dec.1032(XXXIV) of 8 February 2019 of the Executive Council of the African Union, mandating the African Union Commission, in collaboration with member States, the Economic Commission for Africa and other relevant stakeholders, to develop a comprehensive African Union digital trade and digital economy development strategy,

*Cognizant* of decision Assembly/AU/Dec.751(XXXIII) of 9 February 2020 of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union introducing the negotiation, within the African Continental Free Trade Area, of a protocol on e-commerce and directing the African Union Commission to embark on preparations and capacity-building ahead of that negotiation,

*Acknowledging* the considerable economic challenges posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the effect of the pandemic on efforts to accelerate digitalization and shorten supply chains in Africa and the world more broadly, and the imperative to take advantage of the expanded policy space for industrial policy in building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic, including in the pharmaceutical, agriculture and mining sectors,

*Cognizant* that digitalization is fundamentally changing the nature of industrialization and the means of achieving it and, in that process, the traditional routes to development, economic diversification and job creation,

*Recognizing* the importance of natural gas as a key input and a fuel for the clean energy transition of Africa,

*Reaffirming* the commitments made by all signatories to the Paris Agreement on climate change<sup>1</sup> to reduce the emissions that cause climate change and to transition to a low-carbon economy,

*Taking note* of the issues paper of the Economic Commission for Africa on the sustainable industrialization and diversification of Africa in the digital era in the context of COVID-19<sup>2</sup> and the finding of the paper that Africa must reimagine its industrialization pathway for sustained and inclusive growth, job creation and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda 2063 in Africa,

1. *Encourages* member States to re-envisage industrialization and diversification, including by deepening their research and development capabilities, mainstreaming science, technology and innovation and formulating integrated green and climate-resilient growth and digitalization strategies within national development frameworks;

2. *Calls upon* member States to build better digital and new climate economy foundations by appropriately investing in digital skills development, including basic computing, computer programming and coding, and job-neutral soft skills;

3. *Also calls upon* member States to upgrade digital middleware in Africa by adopting digital identity systems and supporting digital payment solutions and to invest in the continent's digital hardware by improving and ensuring affordable internet coverage and energy access;

4. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to provide technical support to member States to leverage the African Continental Free Trade Area as a framework for the vertical integration of industries and supply chains and achieving the digitalization of Africa;

5. *Also calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to carry out a study to explore the prospects for and merits of establishing an African expert group on gas to advise member States on how to unlock the potential of gas in industrialization and the transition to clean energy.

## **E. Coronavirus disease vaccines**

*The Conference of Ministers,*

*Recognizing* the serious threat that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) poses to the health, social and economic development of peoples and countries around the world, and the rollback in the gains recorded in Africa towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union,

*Noting* the progress made in the development of vaccines to contain and stem the spread of the disease, and the need for equitable access to those vaccines by all countries and peoples around the world,

---

<sup>1</sup> See FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1, decision 1/CP.21, annex.

<sup>2</sup> E/ECA/COE/39/4.



*Considering* that, notwithstanding the declaration by world leaders in April 2020 that any COVID-19 vaccine would be a global public good, it is likely that 9 in 10 people in the poorest countries will not receive the vaccine in 2021,

*Considering also* that the supply of vaccines has skewed disproportionately towards Western countries, which account for only 14 per cent of the global population, prompting the World Health Organization to warn against the practice of “vaccine nationalism”, a practice that may deny developing countries prompt and equitable access to vaccines,

*Recognizing* that African countries escaped the worst of the first wave of the pandemic in 2020 but the second wave is spreading fast across the continent and health systems are in danger of collapsing, and that the longer the virus is left to ravage African countries without immunization, the longer all of humanity remains at risk, because no one is safe until everyone is safe,

*Acknowledging* that, with the existing COVID-19 vaccine supply, production and distribution processes, there is less probability of achieving global herd immunity but greater prospects of genetic mutations, and that much more stringent border controls could lead to longer economic stagnation, with a global cost estimate of 9.2 trillion United States dollars associated with supply chain disruptions and demand shocks, with developed countries bearing half of these costs,

*Considering* that the COVID-19 pandemic, leveraging the African Continental Free Trade Area as a business blueprint, complemented by a smart sustainable industrialization process, also provides opportunities to greatly accelerate the recovery of Africa through vaccine deployment and effective transmission management efforts, and that equitable global access to COVID-19 vaccines is estimated to be worth more than 460 billion dollars in economic benefits to 10 major economies alone,

*Reaffirming* that the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access facility aimed at equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines is welcome, but does not resolve the undersupply of production and at best will only cater to 20 per cent of the African population,

*Recalling* the painful lessons of the early years of the HIV/AIDS response, when millions of lives were needlessly lost because life-saving treatment remained out of reach for African countries, which highlights the urgent need for more timely and effective interventions in response to COVID-19,

*Noting* that the various regional initiatives led by the African Union Commission, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, the Economic Commission for Africa and all other stakeholders, including the private sector, need to take fuller advantage of the African Continental Free Trade Area in the domain of health, by promoting localized manufacturing and pooled procurement in vaccine production, and by enhancing continental and national supply chain management to achieve equitable access, thus contributing to sustainable industrialization,

1. *Commends* various initiatives undertaken by the Economic Commission for Africa to support member States in leveraging the adoption of the African Union Commission and Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention Africa Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 Outbreak in March 2020 as a blueprint and master plan for coordinating regional efforts to ensure synergy and minimize duplication, to save lives and support African social and economic development;

2. *Commends* various initiatives undertaken by the Economic Commission for Africa in supporting African member States in the World

Trade Organization Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights on vaccines, debt relief and the issuance of special drawing rights;

3. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue these efforts;

4. *Also requests* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue to advocate the equitable distribution of and access to COVID-19 vaccines in all regions of the world, including Africa;

5. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the African Union Commission and all relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, to assist African member States in putting in place continental strategies and policies to facilitate the production of vaccines on the continent, improve pooled procurement, in particular through digital technologies, as exemplified by the African Medical Supply Platform, and leverage the use of digital tools in national supply chains for improved accessibility for all, which will improve the affordability and accessibility of vaccines and assist in generating inclusive economic growth, stimulating job creation and eradicating poverty for the continent's socioeconomic development and sustainable growth;

6. *Urges* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue to support member States in vaccine procurement, including through additional funding made available from debt relief under the Group of 20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative, development finance institutions and special drawing rights.

## **F. Economic Commission for Africa support for least developed countries in the context of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries**

*The Conference of Ministers,*

*Recognizing* that African least developed countries and Haiti represent an enormous human and natural resource potential for world economic growth, welfare, prosperity, and food and energy security,

*Acknowledging* the considerable efforts that African least developed countries and Haiti have made in implementing the commitments of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020,

*Concerned* that COVID-19 has further jeopardized the limited progress towards the goals of the Istanbul Programme of Action, as outlined in the 2020 report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Programme of Action<sup>1</sup> and in the 2021 Economic Commission for Africa report on progress in implementation of the Programme of Action by African least developed countries,<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> A/75/72-E/2020/14.

<sup>2</sup> Economic Commission for Africa, "Progress in the implementation of the priority areas of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 (Istanbul Programme of Action): Africa regional review of the Istanbul Programme of Action, Addis Ababa, 2021. (comment (could not add it in the margin): added 'n'. Redundant with twice mention of Istanbul programme of Action from where does this come from? (not in the original resolution).

*Cognizant* of the need to revisit the current system of support for the least developed countries in the lead-up to the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in January 2022, with a view to ensuring that international support measures provide the levels of assistance necessary for the African least developed countries and Haiti to address the structural barriers to development that they face, and overcome their vulnerabilities, as agreed in the political declaration of the Africa Regional Review meeting, held from 22 to 26 February 2021 in preparation for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries,

*Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue to support African least developed countries in their efforts to graduate from least development country status and facilitate their implementation of the Programmes of Action that emanate from the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

## **G. Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024**

*The Conference of Ministers,*

*Recalling* General Assembly resolution 74/15 of 5 December 2019 on the Political Declaration of the High-level Midterm Review on the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, in which the Assembly called for action to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action,

*Affirming* its resolution 963 (LII) of 26 March 2019 on the midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, in which it requested the Economic Commission for Africa, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the African Union, the African Development Bank and other relevant regional organizations further to assist African landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries in infrastructure development, the development of bankable projects, production capacity development, trade facilitation and structural transformation through, in particular, enhanced investment and technical assistance, and to promote greater cooperation between African landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries and enhanced regional integration,

*Recognizing* that landlocked developing countries are highly dependent on transit countries for access to international markets and are particularly vulnerable to cross-border restrictions in combating the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the social and economic impacts of the associated lockdown measures, the health effects of the pandemic, commodity price shocks and any likely global recession,

*Recognizing also* that the pandemic will have an impact on the progress of landlocked developing countries towards attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and the aspirations included in the Vienna Programme of Action,

*Cognizant* that trading pursuant to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, which started on 1 January 2021, signals a unique turning point in the continent's pursuit of industrialization and that effective implementation of that Agreement and the Vienna Programme of Action will further advance progress by African countries towards fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and

Agenda 2063 of the African Union: The Africa We Want, of the African Union,

*Underscoring* the importance of the full implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for sustainable and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and reduction of the impact of future shocks,

*Taking note* of the road map for the accelerated implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in the remaining five years adopted by the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries on 23 September 2020,

1. *Invites* the African landlocked and transit developing countries, regional and subregional organizations and other stakeholders to implement the provisions and actions of the Political Declaration of the High-level Midterm Review on the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024,<sup>1</sup> including those on the promotion of regional connectivity, trade facilitation, the development of regionally integrated, sustainable transport infrastructure resilient to climate change and disasters, the diversification of export structure, the adding of value to exports and the effective implementation of regional integration agreements;

2. *Urges* transit countries to enhance cross-border collaboration with landlocked countries, by taking needed action to minimize disruptions to international and transboundary transport, eliminate trade restrictions and facilitate movement of, primarily, essential goods such as food, medical supplies and personal protection equipment;

3. *Calls upon* transit countries also to enhance collaboration with landlocked countries by strengthening the transparency and availability of information about transit and border procedures, making use of digital technologies, with a view to helping landlocked developing countries to respond effectively to the COVID-19 pandemic and prevent future disruptions of a similar nature;

4. *Invites* development partners and relevant international, regional and subregional organizations to enhance support for landlocked developing countries and transit countries in implementing the relevant international trade and transport facilitation conventions;

5. *Underscores* the importance of mobilizing necessary resources; to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and to support the landlocked developing countries;

6. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, other relevant United Nations system organizations, regional and international development partners and other international organizations to support landlocked developing countries and transit countries in leveraging the opportunities provided by regional and integration initiatives, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area;

7. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the Office of the High Representative, other relevant United Nations system organizations and relevant international and regional organizations, to continue providing technical support to the landlocked developing countries in Africa in the priority areas of the Vienna Programme of Action, including those included in the road map for its accelerated implementation.

---

<sup>1</sup>General Assembly resolution 74/15.

## H. African Institute for Economic Development and Planning

*The Conference of Ministers,*

*Taking into account* the challenges ahead in the context of successful achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the first decade of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union, and the imperative to build stronger and more resilient economies whose performance will benefit all, leaving no one behind,

*Recalling* article IV, paragraph 3, of the updated statute of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, by which the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development is required to appoint the 10 members of the Governing Council of the Institute, who will serve as representatives of African Governments on three-year terms, with eligibility for reappointment for one additional term only,

*Noting* the proposed new membership of the board of the African Institute of Economic Development and Planning, comprising the Central African Republic and Equatorial Guinea for Central Africa; Ethiopia and Rwanda for East Africa; Mauritania and the Sudan for North Africa; Botswana and Mozambique for Southern Africa; and Ghana and Guinea for West Africa, in addition to the permanent seats occupied by Senegal as host country and the African Union Commission,

*Recognizing* the central role of development planning in meeting the development priorities of Africa, in particular in the context of COVID-19 and to support resilient recovery and effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063,

*Taking note* of the decision of the Governing Council of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning at its fifty-sixth meeting, held in Dakar in March 2018, and reaffirmed during its fifty-seventh and fifty-eighth meetings, held in June 2019 and December 2020, respectively, recommending an increase in the regular United Nations grant to the Institute, from 1.3 million to 2.6 million United States dollars per annum,

*Recalling* resolution 956 (LI) of the fifty-first meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, held in Addis Ababa in May 2018, requesting the General Assembly to increase the regular grant in support of the Institute's programme, and noting that the recommendation is yet to be effected,

*Aware* of the current financial challenges facing the United Nations, but cognizant of the great importance of capacity-building to achieving the goals and aspirations of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 for African countries, as evidenced by the rapidly increasing demands by African member States for capacity-building support from the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning,

*Commending* the successful efforts being made by the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning to recover contribution arrears from member States,

*Recognizing* with appreciation the example being set by several African member States through the partial or full settlement of their contribution arrears to the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning,

1. *Endorses* the reconstituted membership of the Governing Council of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning;

2. *Reiterates* its call to the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the African Institute for Economic Development and

Planning, to take all steps necessary to request the General Assembly to increase the regular grant in support of the Institute's programme;

3. *Reiterates* its call to member States for the more regular payment of assessed annual contributions and the settlement of arrears to the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning.

## I. Special drawing rights

*The Conference of Ministers,*

*Noting with grave concern* the adverse socioeconomic and health impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on African economies, coupled with their limited fiscal and monetary tools to respond to the crisis, which will most likely derail their efforts to build forward better and to achieve the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union,

*Welcoming* the fiscal stimulus measures implemented by African countries in response to the pandemic, despite their limited fiscal space,

*Encouraged* by the financial assistance and support provided by the international community to low-income countries, including the postponement of debt service payments and the provision of much needed liquidity to save lives and rebuild livelihoods,

*Concerned* that, notwithstanding existing support measures, the fiscal buffers of African countries have been depleted as revenues have declined and expenditures have surged, in the context of a rising number of COVID-19 cases, deteriorating trade balances, increasing inflationary pressures and depreciating exchange rates,

*Concerned also* that, in the absence of a rapid roll-out of vaccines, subsequent waves of COVID-19 cases will further undermine the fiscal positions of African economies, elevate their debt vulnerabilities and move them even closer to debt distress,

*Conscious* that the growth of high-interest private debt as a share of the debt stock of African countries has been associated with an increase in the debt-service burden, which has further constrained their fiscal space,

*Acknowledging* that additional concessional financing is needed to ensure that macroeconomic responses to the pandemic do not further elevate Africa's debt vulnerabilities,

*Cognizant* of the important role of special drawing rights as a source of concessional financing and the effective role that a new issuance of special drawing rights played in the global response to the financial crisis of 2008,

*Convinced* that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic greatly exceeds that of the financial crisis in terms of its unprecedented impact on real growth in gross domestic product, health, unemployment and inequality, both within and among countries,

*Concerned* that the current mechanism for allocating special drawing rights favours developed countries, at the expense of low-income and middle-income countries, which lack adequate fiscal and monetary tools to respond effectively to a pandemic of this magnitude,

*Encouraged* by the support of the Group of 20, following the endorsement by the Government of the United States of America, for a new allocation of special drawing rights that is underpinned by an appropriate reallocation mechanism,

1. *Commends* the Economic Commission for Africa for its advocacy of and substantive support for a new issuance and reallocation of special drawing rights to low-income and middle-income countries;
2. *Acknowledges* the work performed by the Commission in designing a liquidity and sustainability facility to reduce the cost of private credit for African countries;
3. *Requests* the Commission to continue to provide a convening platform for African policymakers and other relevant stakeholders, and to advocate a new issuance of between 500 billion and 650 billion United States dollars in special drawing rights, which would be a vital step in providing much needed liquidity and investment financing for African countries, and for low-income and middle-income countries in particular;
4. *Also requests* the Commission to support advocacy efforts by member States for the extension of the Group of 20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative until at least the end of 2021, which would free up an additional 8 billion dollars for recovery in 2021 and provide much needed liquidity to respond to the crisis;
5. *Calls upon* the Commission to mobilize support for a special drawing rights reallocation mechanism that is commensurate with the development financing needs of African countries;
6. *Encourages* member States to work collectively to ensure that they have a common voice and position on the issue of special drawing rights.

## **J. 2022 programme plan and budget**

*The Conference of Ministers,*

*Recalling* General Assembly resolution 71/243 of 21 December 2016 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, in which the Assembly called upon the United Nations regional commissions and the United Nations development system to fully implement the statement of collaboration between the United Nations Development Group and the United Nations regional commissions on support to member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

*Recalling also* General Assembly resolution 72/279 of 31 May 2018 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, in which the Assembly reaffirmed the role and functions of the United Nations development system at the regional level, including the regional economic commissions and the regional teams of the United Nations development system, and underlined the need to continue to make them fit for purpose in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda,

*Noting* that the formulation of the medium-term programme framework was affected by the COVID-19 situation and will require further consultations with constituencies and stakeholders,

*Acknowledging* the good level of alignment and focus of the programme plan and budget of the Economic Commission for Africa with the development priorities and aspirations of Africa,

*Having examined* the 2022 programme plan and budget,

1. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to include performance measures in the four-year medium-term programme framework (2022–2025), to facilitate the tracking of progress in its implementation;
2. *Urges* the Economic Commission for Africa to consider working towards the consolidation of its programme plan and budget documents;
3. *Also 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;
4. *Adopts* the 2022 programme plan and budget of the Economic Commission for Africa.

-----