
Economic Commission for Africa
Subregional Office for Eastern Africa

Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts

Twenty-fifth session

Kigali (hybrid), 27–29 October 2021

**Report of the twenty-fifth session of the
Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials
and Experts for Eastern Africa**



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I. Introduction

1. The twenty-fifth session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for Eastern Africa took place in hybrid format in Kigali, from 27 to 29 October 2021. The session was held under the theme “Strengthening resilience for strong recovery and attracting investments to foster economic diversification and long-term growth in Eastern Africa.”
2. The Intergovernmental Committee, a platform for sharing lessons and reflecting on performance of the regional economy and topical issues, brought together participants from member States, regional economic communities and intergovernmental organizations served by the Subregional Office for Eastern Africa of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the private sector, civil society, research centres and development organizations.
3. Since the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had amplified existing gaps in the socioeconomic development process, including social inequalities and digital divides, plenary discussions at the session focused on strategies to build back better and strengthen regional resilience.
4. Following ratification of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area by 10 of the 14 member countries of Eastern Africa, discussions focused on the impetus to enhance intraregional investment and deepen regional value chains. The 14 member States supported by the Subregional Office are: Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania. The issues debated by participants included a case study on the smartphone value chain; a report on regional investments which analysed the dynamics of the distribution of foreign direct investment; and the interlinkages approach to addressing vulnerabilities of communities and improving efficiency of interventions.
5. Participants at the session expressed appreciation for the work by the Subregional Office throughout 2021 and its plans for 2022 and reaffirmed their continued support for the regional integration agenda. Outcomes of the seventh session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and plans for the eighth session of the Forum were also shared.

II. Attendance

6. Representatives of all the States of the Eastern African subregion attended the session.
7. In addition, the session was attended by a representative of the Netherlands.
8. The following institutions and organizations were also represented: African Development Bank; African Economic Research Centre; BioMassters, Rwanda; BloombergNEF; Center for Development Policy, Rwanda; Central Corridor Transit Transport Facilitation Agency; Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa; Congo Challenge; Development Services Institute; Dexterity Africa; East African Business Council; East African Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture; Economic Policy Research Network, Rwanda; Foundation for Youth Initiative, South Sudan; Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis; Mara Phones; National Youth Council, Kenya; Port Management Association of Eastern and Southern Africa; Réseau Solidaire des Jeunes Entrepreneurs du Congo; Rwanda Events;; Seychelles Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Somalia Youth

Volunteers Association; StartUp Nkap; Université de Laval; Vijana Think Tank; YouLead, United Republic of Tanzania. and a number of national and international media outlets.

III. Proceedings

A. Opening meeting

9. Welcoming statements were delivered at the opening meeting by the United Nations Resident Coordinator for Rwanda, Fodé Ndiaye; the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, Vera Songwe; the first Vice-Chair of the outgoing Bureau, Elizabeth Charles; and the guest of honour, the Minister of Finance and Economic Planning of Rwanda, Uzziel Ndagiijimana.

10. Mr. Ndiaye observed that, while the pandemic had devastated regional economies for close to two years, it had not dampened optimism for a better future, hence the anticipation to build back better economies, while leaving no one behind. He also recalled the priority accorded by the Secretary-General to climate change issues. He encouraged participants to identify challenges, opportunities and lessons, with a view to formulating appropriate recommendations on the theme of the current session.

11. Ms. Songwe drew attention to the immense devastation and disruption caused by the prolonged pandemic. She observed that, for the first time, the subregion's economy had shrunk, with the collapse of productive industries in the manufacturing and service sectors. Even the agricultural sector had not been spared, suffering weather-related shocks and the biggest locust invasion in 70 years. Structural barriers, such as limited access to foreign capital markets and the high cost of credit, had further constrained the ability of Eastern African countries to invest in their development. She highlighted points for hope, in particular, progress made in deepening regional collaboration to tackle challenges. She also noted the commendable progress achieved in ratification of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and reaffirmed the commitment of ECA to continued support for the implementation of national strategies. She noted efforts made across the continent to combat COVID-19, including the vaccination programmes under the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility and the African Vaccine Acquisition Trust; the Africa Medical Supplies Platform in partnership with ECA, and the Partnership for African Vaccine Manufacturing.

12. Ms. Charles, speaking on the behalf of the outgoing Bureau, highlighted the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on regional economies and, in that context, noted the timely nature of the theme of the current session. Thanking the members of the outgoing Bureau for their service, she conveyed her wishes to representatives for fruitful deliberations at the current session.

13. Mr. Ndagiijimana observed that the sessions of the Intergovernmental Committee had always been important opportunities to convene government officials and experts from across the subregion. He reiterated the timeliness of the meeting, given the adverse impacts of the pandemic and the urgent need to increase resilience, build back better and to leave no one behind. He noted that, prior to the pandemic, Eastern Africa had lagged in progress towards the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union. Fortunately, regional economies had proved to be resilient, with

sub-Saharan Africa recording the smallest economic contraction globally in 2020 at only 1.7 per cent. He stressed that prevailing potential for economic growth in Eastern Africa due to such factors as the youth of its population and workforce; rapid urbanization; and technological progress, in particular leapfrogging advancements in telecommunications and digitalization. He highlighted the need to take advantage of the African Continental Free Trade Area and to create a conducive business environment by adopting business-friendly policies and easing bureaucratic processes.

B. Constitution of the Bureau, review and adoption of the agenda

14. Exaud Silaoneka Kigahe, United Republic of Tanzania, led the process of the constitution of the Bureau. He expressed thanks to the members of the outgoing Bureau. The following were proposed and endorsed as members of the incoming Bureau for the twenty-fifth session of the Intergovernmental Committee:

Chair:	Rwanda
1st Vice-Chair:	Seychelles
2nd Vice-Chair:	Burundi
Rapporteur:	Democratic Republic of the Congo

15. The incoming Chair presented the agenda, which was adopted by the participants.

C. Session 1: Plenary segment on a macroeconomic and social overview of Eastern Africa

1. Macroeconomic and social developments in Eastern Africa

16. The representative of the secretariat presented the report on macroeconomic and social developments in Eastern Africa for the period 2020–2022, which benchmarked performance, highlighted achievements and identified policy options for the subregion. He noted that the global economy was slowly recovering from the sharp decline that it had experienced during the COVID-19 lockdown of 2020. Although the economic recovery of Eastern Africa had looked assured in the early months of 2021, with growth projected at 3.1 per cent, prospects had started to dim owing to new waves of the pandemic. He acknowledged that the impact of COVID-19 was more severe for countries heavily dependent on certain services subsectors in which greater human contact was required, such as tourism, education and others. Contraction of the tourism sector alone had resulted in the loss of approximately 6.0–9.3 per cent of regional gross domestic product (GDP).

17. Eastern Africa was estimated to have lost the equivalent of 18 million jobs in the second quarter of 2020. Several countries had adopted fiscal packages in response to the crisis, notably to support incomes and businesses. Accordingly, governments were urged to maintain crucial infrastructure projects; accelerate digitalization; promote implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area; and align health services with regional priorities.

2. Accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063: insights from the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

18. The representative of the secretariat presented insights from the seventh session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, noting that, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Africa had already been off track in attainment of most of the Sustainable Development Goals. For that reason, the region needed to scale up its efforts and investments to achieve the Goals by 2030. He also highlighted policy options in the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development and noted that, at its eighth session, planned for 3–5 March 2022 in Kigali, the Forum would focus on Goals 4, 5,

14, 15 and 17, and the corresponding goals of Agenda 2063. The Forum would seek to identify actions for sustainable recovery and to agree on the input by Africa to the 2022 meeting of the high-level policy forum on sustainable development. Member States and regional economic communities were requested to support the translation into action of the policy options outlined by the Forum at its seventh session.

3. Exchange of experiences by countries and regional economic communities

19. Following that presentation, member States, regional economic communities and development partners shared experiences on how they had built resilience in the face of COVID-19, as summarized below.

20. **Rwanda:** The country's economy had receded by 3 per cent in 2020. There were signs of recovery, however, with an anticipated economic expansion of over 5.1 per cent, reduced inflation, improved imports and a narrower current account deficit in 2021. The private sector was growing at the rate of 13 per cent for the first time. Rwanda was exploring opportunities in digitalization, had committed \$350 million to support the private sector and had made budget allocations and instituted measures to build the resilience of the agriculture sector and continue producing during the pandemic.

21. **United Republic of Tanzania:** COVID-19 was being contained through awareness-raising and health measures at local levels. The economy was being cushioned to prevent severe shrinking through the monitoring of tax compliance and avoidance of lockdowns. The Government was pushing forward with its vaccination campaign. Infrastructure development, including health centres and dispensaries, had been ramped up in rural areas. Inflation had been contained between 4 and 5 per cent and any increases were only due to the pandemic. The country expressed its optimism about the recently ratified Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area.

22. **Kenya:** The overall impact of the pandemic on the economy had been substantial, but its impact on the manufacturing sector had been mixed. Demand for and production of essential goods, such as food, had been high. Similarly, the export sector had suffered varied effects. There had been no border closures; instead guidelines had been put in place to ensure continued production. Enterprises and organizations had repurposed their production to meet current needs, while banks had sought to provide affordable credit and micro, medium-sized and small enterprises had leveraged digital solutions.

23. **Djibouti:** Declines in foreign direct investment (FDI) and port revenues had weakened the current account balance to a deficit of 9.2 per cent of GDP in 2020. The national economic system had been challenged by measures taken to contain the pandemic, such as closed borders and a three-month-lockdown, which had led real GDP growth to slow to 1.4 per cent in 2020 from 7.8 per cent in 2019. Total revenues had fallen, leading to a widening of the budget deficit. The value added by the services sector, which normally generated nearly 70 per cent of the country's growth, had increased by only 2 per cent in 2020, compared with 8.2 per cent in 2019.

24. **Madagascar:** Cash transfers, food items and other basic products had been distributed to the needy population. Platforms related to COVID-19 had been established to enable better management and coordination of the pandemic. Tax reductions had also been granted to mitigate the adverse impacts of the pandemic on the private sector. Overall, measures taken against COVID-19 had ensured reasonable protection and ongoing recovery.

25. **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Multisectoral strategies had been instituted, including: a stimulus package of \$2.6 billion; exemption from value added tax for certain pharmaceutical products; suspension and exemption of import duties on basic products; and the nationwide suspension of charges for water and electricity for two months. GDP growth of 1.7 per cent in 2020 had softened the shock of COVID-19. That growth had continued during the first quarter of 2021, with annual growth prospects estimated at 5.3 per cent, largely due to the mining sector. The Democratic Republic of the Congo was continuing its post-COVID-19 economic reform and resilience building.

26. **South Sudan:** The private sector was the engine of economic growth. For its part, the Government was committed to facilitating public-private partnerships, as a means of building the country's infrastructure, which remained a challenge.

27. **Port Management Association of Eastern and Southern Africa:** Port workers and shipping crews had experienced challenges, such as being barred from crew changes to minimize COVID-19 risks. Structural challenges had also arisen, in particular the dearth of cargo vessel ownership in the region. Governments were called upon to abide by the spirit of the African Continental Free Trade Area by reducing non-tariff barriers and improving cabotage throughout the region.

28. **East African Business Council:** Attention was drawn to the growing level of informality in the region, which had implications for poverty, in particular for women and youth. Efforts were needed across the region to address coordination issues, primarily in transport and logistics. In addition, countries should collaborate in building regional resilience rather than being inward-looking. Lastly, he queried how to leverage value chains to boost productivity.

D. Session 2: Plenary segment on investing in Eastern Africa

1. Presentation

29. The segment was moderated by Mama Keita, Director of the Subregional Office for Eastern Africa, and commenced with a presentation by Issouf Soumaré, independent consultant. In his presentation, Mr. Soumaré noted that Eastern Africa captured only a very small portion of worldwide FDI – an average of less than 1 per cent over the period from 2000 to 2019. The total amount of FDI flows captured by the subregion had been increasing overall since 2000, despite certain volatility. Most FDI inflows (84 per cent over 2015–2019) had been captured by only five countries: Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania. Challenges in attracting FDI included unfavourable business environments; limited access to finance and credit in most countries; underdeveloped financial markets and banking sectors; weak infrastructure; lack of economic openness; and corruption.

30. Implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and the forthcoming negotiations on its investment protocol represented an excellent opportunity for Eastern African countries to boost the quantity and quality of investments that fostered industrialization. The region should pay attention to the underlying conditions for successful subregional economic integration, such as a favourable business environment, political stability, comparative advantages and financing markets. The investment protocol should include provisions on the harmonization of investment codes, investment liberalization, granting national treatment to regional investors, and effective intellectual property rights to protect investment and ensure technological transfer.

2. Panel 1: Investment

(a) Presentations

31. Matthijs Wolters, Ambassador of the Netherlands to Rwanda, reviewed investment relations between the Netherlands and Rwanda and outlined opportunities for Eastern Africa to attract new investments. An Africa strategy published by Netherlands companies highlighted opportunities for global cooperation in trade. To offset the high transport costs impeding foreign investments in many regional economies, projects were being financed by the Netherlands Government to improve transport connectivity. Environmental protection and efforts to counter climate change were key areas of support by the Netherlands Government in Rwanda. The energy sector was also receiving support, primarily through the joint monitoring of methane gas production on Lake Kivu. He highlighted the existing support and opportunities in maize value chains as a means of uplifting the livelihoods of farmers. In conclusion, he listed cold chain management and information and communications technology as areas with opportunities for further investment in Eastern Africa.

32. Malado Kaba, Director General for Research, Federation of Business Women Entrepreneurs, Guinea, shared the experience of her country and identified lessons that could be learned by economic players in preparing for such shocks. The mining sector had not been as badly affected by the crisis as other sectors and mining sector performance had helped cushion the economy from severe decline. Support from development partners, digitalization and improvement of the business environment had greatly boosted economic growth in Guinea, in particular since 2016.

33. John Bosco Kalisa, Chief Executive Officer of the East African Business Council, outlined challenges experienced by the Eastern African business community and potential strategies for improvement. The challenges that he identified included: non-tariff barriers; low productivity and skills mismatch; limited access to finance for all businesses; high taxes; insufficient harmonization of standards; and complex rules of origin. The African Continental Free Trade Area presented an opportunity for regionally produced cereals, sugar and other products. The subregion also had a comparative advantage in the services sector, in particular telecommunications. Other promising sectors included renewable energy (solar and wind), construction and real estate, and pharmaceuticals. Regional water bodies could be harnessed as a supplementary means of transport.

34. Andrew Mold, Subregional Office for Eastern Africa, noted the need for the continental harmonization of policies in order for Eastern Africa to attract FDI. In that context, he highlighted the role of multinationals in boosting regional investments. It was anticipated that the African Continental Free Trade Area would stimulate competition, investment and more trade in the region. Infra-Africa trade was also likely to increase when trading started under the Agreement establishing the Area, in particular in manufacturing sectors.

35. Ndung'u Njuguna, Former Governor, Central Bank of Kenya, and Executive Director of the African Economic Research Centre, highlighted impediments to maximizing returns from investment: infrastructure costs, compliance costs and low levels of capital accumulation. He further noted that financing investment for small and medium-sized enterprises offered potential gains and that the digitalization process in the subregion had taken off well.

36. Charles Kahuthu, Chief Executive Officer of the East African Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, highlighted the critical role of regional chambers of commerce in attracting investments, stressing the critical role of the development of infrastructure in attracting investments in Eastern Africa. He discussed the use of public-private partnerships and joint ventures to mobilize partners to fund infrastructure projects and use technical know-how to stimulate innovation rather than duplicate products and processes.

37. Sory Toure, Chief Executive Officer of Dexterity Africa, discussed the principles of Islamic banking – including profit sharing and interest-free access to finance – and their potential to boost private investments in the region. He highlighted its potential role in promoting financial inclusion and in financing major infrastructure projects and, in that context, offered examples of projects funded through Islamic banking throughout West Africa. An Islamic banking financial hub could be instrumental in facilitating such investments. He also identified financial technology as another potential area for investment.

38. Kudakwashe Matereke, Regional Chief Operating Officer of the African Export-Import Bank, highlighted the Bank's industrialization and export development strategy with priority sectors of potential investment including manufacturing to facilitate industrialization. The Bank supported industrialization and agroprocessing; harmonization of standards to increase acceptance of regional products in international markets; and export promotion. The intra-African investment fund and guarantee programme provided equipment and lease financing and investment protection to stimulate intra-African investments. The Bank's Food Emergency Contingent Management Facility had been established to ensure food security amid natural disasters such as severe droughts. In response to COVID-19, a facility had been established for purchasing vaccines to be equitably distributed among member States.

(b) Discussion

39. Participants discussed the challenges foreseen in expanding investment from the point of origin to other African countries, including the obstacles posed to investment by limited infrastructure, low access to finance and an unfavourable business environment.

E. Session 3: Expert group meeting on deepening regional value chains in Eastern Africa**1. Presentation**

40. The meeting opened with a presentation by Andrea Vissol, independent consultant, who noted that the African Continental Free Trade Area offered a comprehensive framework to generate economic growth and deepen industrialization across Africa. Its operationalization could foster industrialization and help to develop integrated regional value chains. Most African exports consisted primarily of raw, unprocessed goods, rendering them particularly vulnerable to commodity price volatility. The smartphone value chain represented an opportunity for African countries to diversify away from resource-intensive to knowledge-intensive value chains.

41. In that context, he noted that phones represented 2 per cent of the continent's total imports and only 0.2 per cent of its total exports in 2020, despite the fact that the industry's key raw minerals, such as nickel, cobalt, copper, gold, aluminium and palladium, were all mined on the continent. By lowering intra-African tariffs on intermediates and final goods, the African Continental Free Trade Area would create opportunities for adding value to natural resources and enable diversification into new business areas. Additional policies to boost production capabilities and improve infrastructure could help Africa to move up the value chains from producing minerals to manufacturing components and final products.

2. Panel 2: Regional value chains**(a) Presentations**

42. Paula Ingabire, Minister of Information, Communications and Technology of Rwanda, stressed the need for a multidimensional approach which combined supply and demand-side considerations is required. Promoting smartphone value chains also required building the capacities of players along the value chain, effectively combined with research and development to steer the innovation of engineers and manufacturers. Demand-side considerations were important in driving smartphone value chains, such as determinants of uptake and willingness to pay. She reported that, given the high cost of smartphones, relatively low incomes, and the requirement of an upfront payment to own a smartphone, Rwanda had developed policies that addressed the issue of affordability. Privacy and security were also being considered. She emphasized that, rather than compete on cheap labour costs, African countries needed to use research and development to compete on the basis of the quality and design of smartphones that were being produced for the region's population.

43. Jimson Olufuye, founder and former Chair of the Africa Information Technologies Alliance, reiterated that the right policies were necessary for the promotion of smartphone value chains. That, needed to be complemented by a multi-stakeholder approach in which public and private sector players worked together to resolve challenges and leverage opportunities. Rapid changes in technology needed to be addressed through effective research and development, which could be stimulated through government policy. A balanced approach was needed to improve quality while addressing value addition. To ensure sustainability, African countries needed to focus on areas where they had comparative advantages along the value chain.

44. Eddy Sebera, Managing Director of Mara Phones, Rwanda, affirmed that opportunities surpassed challenges in promoting smartphone value chains in Eastern Africa. Tapping into those opportunities was important, starting from resolving issues of affordability. The cost of smartphones

had dropped substantially over the past years and currently started from \$45–\$50. The market was not fully exploited, as some potential customers were using feature phones (with prices as low as \$20), while others had no phones at all. The right approaches for device financing could boost accessibility by the potential customer base.

45. Antonio Pedro, Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, mentioned the need to better leverage the continent's endowments in the smartphone value chain. In that context, he noted the findings of a BloombergNEF study to the effect that the Democratic Republic of the Congo accounted for nearly 70 per cent of the world's cobalt production and two thirds of the identified world reserves. In addition, Africa was endowed with significant reserves of manganese, graphite, copper and other minerals which were components of lithium-ion batteries. That presented an opportunity for Africa to take its place at the very heart of the dynamic battery value chain, the electric vehicle revolution and renewable energy deployment. As a commodity exporter still locked in the mining and mineral processing stage, however, the Democratic Republic of the Congo was at the bottom of the global battery and electric vehicle value chain, currently capturing only 3 per cent of a total global value that was expected to reach \$8.8 trillion by 2025. Many resource-rich African economies were volatile and constantly exposed to global price shocks. To break that vicious cycle and move up global value chains, African countries should improve the linkages between the extractive and other sectors of their economies and promote resource-driven industrialization. The integration of African battery mineral producers into global value chains would not only contribute to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and enlarge the share of wealth that was retained locally, but also strengthen the competitiveness of local small and medium-sized enterprises and enable the creation of decent jobs for young people. It was therefore important for African countries to break the vicious cycle stemming from excessive dependence on the export of natural resources, by creating more value on the continent, strengthening productive capabilities, and expanding exports and intra-African trade through the African Continental Free Trade Area.

46. Roy Sasaka Telewa, Chief Executive Officer of the National Youth Council, Kenya, highlighted the need to invest in youth. He noted that the African Continental Free Trade Area harboured immense opportunities for young people if its borders were truly opened. In Kenya, young people were those most affected by the pandemic, but they had found opportunities for new businesses, such as in mask production. Many of those new businesses, however, were already collapsing. He posited the use of affirmative action policies in the supply of goods and services to governments, for example, with 40 per cent of contracts being reserved for youth. He also emphasized the need to explore comparative advantages in the promotion of African-manufactured products, leveraging all supply chains across the continent.

47. Viorel Iordache, Chief of Global Resources Management, Enterprise Solutions Service, Office of Information and Communications Technology, introduced the concept of the multiplier market – content and hardware. He reminded participants that significant opportunities were available for content creation and software development and that those regional value chains could be strengthened in Africa. He pointed out that the bulk of content creation in the world and in Africa was attributable to young people and that the discussion should be extended from the smartphone as a tool to the manner in which it could help solve the developmental issues of the continent, such as youth employment.

48. Gaston Gahou, Chief Executive Officer of Development Solutions Institute, peaking as an independent expert, pointed out that smartphone businesses were reasonably profitable in Africa. The potential uses for smartphones were wide-ranging: entertainment, weather data gathering for farmers, mobile money for payment solutions, e-commerce and others. Smartphones were also widely available to most people, from high to low end options. He also called for efforts to climb up the value chains in the smartphone industry to ensure that the bulk of the value remained in Africa, and called on countries to move from mere assembly of phones, at the lower end of the value chain, to their design and sales. There was also need for appropriate policies for research and development and for making smartphones that were tailored to the African market, for example with in-built solar charging.

(b) Discussion

49. In the ensuing discussion, participants complemented the presentations by highlighting the need to reduce electronic waste by recycling and building a circular economy and the need to prioritize policies addressing affordability. Even in countries such as Seychelles, with relatively high smartphone penetration rates, the prohibitive cost of high-end smartphones, in particular for young people, was potentially detrimental to the economy.

F. Session 4: Expert group meeting on the interlinkages between peace and security, development, human rights and humanitarian pillars in Eastern Africa**1. Presentation**

50. The session was moderated by Jenerali Ulimwengu, independent consultant. A presentation was delivered by Olawale Ismail, independent consultant, on the four-pillar interlinkages approach to conflict prevention and crisis management in Eastern Africa. He noted the necessity for more inclusive, sustainable and effective solutions to armed conflicts, insecurity and persistent development challenges. Survey results suggested that the security situation in Eastern Africa was either stagnant or deteriorating.

51. Dominant threats raised during the session included terrorism, insurgency, inequality, injustice, and unemployment. Participants also raised the issues of governance, boundaries, youth, gender and climate change, among others.

52. Key messages emerging from the session included the following:

- (a) Violent conflicts and displacements linked to insecurity and extreme climate events pose serious challenges;
- (b) Human rights issues, poor governance and political leadership undermine conflict prevention, regional integration initiatives and development goals;
- (c) The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened vulnerability to shocks and slowed progress on the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;
- (d) The youthful population of Africa is an untapped resource;
- (e) Enhanced regional strategies and the coordination of development efforts are key to harnessing the four-pillar interlinkages.

2. Panel discussion

53. Further presentations were delivered by Tigist Yeshiwat, independent expert, and Timothy Murithi, independent expert. In the ensuing discussion, panellists noted the challenges posed by the need for strong institutions and pointed out that, while frameworks were already in existence, implementation was lacking. In addition, attention was drawn to the complexity of interlinkages and the need for a stakeholder approach. A call was made to recognize the knowledge inherent in communities and to centre strategies on human rights. It was noted that most early warning mechanisms were not designed to look at structural conflict. For interlinkages to work, the principle of leaving no one behind should be central and interventions needed to move from managing crisis to managing risks. In addition, corruption was identified

as the cause of the many human conflicts in the subregion. It was also noted that youth should be encouraged to participate in efforts to fulfil both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

54. Panellists further underscored the lack of models to implement the policies. It was noted that the region needed a common approach to deal with the pandemic. The United Nations was urged to find a way to bring governments, the private sector and civil society to reflect on development issues collectively. Technology should also be harnessed to address the interlinkages.

G. Presentation of the annual report on the work of ECA in Eastern Africa 2021

55. The representative of the secretariat presented the annual report on the work of the Subregional Office. She noted the progress that had been achieved in regional integration and implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area, trade and value chain development, the blue economy and regional tourism. Highlights included support for the development of African Continental Free Trade Area strategies in Burundi, the Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda and the East African Community. Continuing support was also being provided to Somalia, South Sudan and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development for the development of such strategies. Following the receipt of support from ECA, Kenya had scheduled the launch of its strategy for 28 October 2021.

56. The Subregional Office had also developed knowledge products on its areas of focus and on the impact of COVID-19. Several reports and policy briefs had been prepared which elaborated on the African Continental Free Trade Area and trade potential for Eastern Africa. Engagements on the Area had been held with the East African Community, member States, the private sector and other stakeholders. The Subregional Office had guided policy debate and raised awareness on several socioeconomic issues.

57. On the issue of the blue economy, participants noted ongoing efforts to deepen analysis. Support had been provided for the development of socioeconomic and ecological assessments of blue economy potential in Djibouti and Seychelles. A joint project with the Regional Maritime Security Programme and the Indian Ocean Commission was under way to explore the economic and social costs of the maritime insecurity.

58. On tourism, participants noted the support provided by the Subregional Office to the East African Community in the formulation of a subregional tourism marketing strategy. The Subregional Office had also made progress in the area of tourism satellite accounts. The Kenyan tourism satellite account was being completed by the National Bureau of Statistics. Work was under way on the tourism satellite account for Zanzibar. An analysis was also being conducted of green value chains in Kenya in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area and in line with the national implementation strategy.

59. The Committee took note of a submission regarding the programme of work for 2021–2022 and confirmed that the Subregional Office would continue strengthening analysis on and providing support for the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

H. Review and adoption of the report

60. Following a discussion of the programme of work and the theme for the twenty-sixth session of the Intergovernmental Committee, participants proposed maintaining the theme of resilience, with the following subthemes:

- (a) Trade and health nexus, including vaccine manufacturing in Africa;
- (b) Investments for female entrepreneurs;
- (c) Cruise tourism revival in the Indian Ocean, in partnership with the Port Management Association of Eastern and Southern Africa;
- (d) Crisis management for resilient economies;
- (e) Business recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic;
- (f) Information and communications technology, digitalization and the enabling environment (infrastructure, policies, laws and regulatory frameworks) to facilitate trade and build trust;
- (g) Rules of origin of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

61. Participants also encouraged ECA to facilitate policy consultations involving all stakeholders, including the private sector, relevant national institutions, youth and women. The Subregional Office was also called upon to evaluate the African Continental Free Trade Area in the areas of tourism and blue economy and to include climate change in future discussions.

I. Closing of the session

62. Ms. Keita thanked the Chair, Leonard Rugwabiza, Economic Advisor, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning of Rwanda, who had represented Mr. Ndagijimana at the session, representatives of the regional economic communities, members of the diplomatic corps, academia and the private sector, other senior officials and United Nations colleagues for their active participation in the session. She highlighted the role to be played by civil society and the private sector in moving forward the agenda for implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area. She emphasized that, while governments had a major role, they could not work without the intervention of local, regional and international organizations in improving the quality of services and mobilizing resources. She wished those participants who would be travelling safe return journeys back to their home countries.

63. Special thanks were extended to the facilitators, panellists, moderators, interpreters, ushers, audio-visual support staff, staff members of the Kigali Convention Centre and the Rwanda Biomedical Centre, the outgoing and incoming members of the Bureau, ECA staff members and the coordinator of the Intergovernmental Committee, Emelang Leteane, for working tirelessly to ensure the success of the event.

64. In his closing remarks, Mr. Rugwabiza thanked participants for their commitment and encouraged them all to share their comments for incorporation in the main report. He also promised that the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Committee would work with ECA to support the recommendations put forward by participants. Following those remarks, he declared the twenty-fifth session of the Intergovernmental Committee officially closed.
