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Economic Commission for Africa
Committee on Private Sector Development,
Regional Integration, Trade, Infrastructure,
Industry and Technology
Second session
Addis Ababa (online), 8 and 9 March 2022

Item 8 of the agenda*

Consideration and adoption of the report on the session

Report on the second session of the Committee on Private Sector Development, Regional Integration, Trade, Infrastructure, Industry and Technology

I. Opening of the session

A. Introduction

1. The second session of the Committee on Private Sector Development, Regional Integration, Trade, Infrastructure, Industry and Technology was held online on 8 and 9 March 2022. The session was convened under the theme: “African economic development in the post-pandemic era: the role of regional integration, infrastructure and technology”.

B. Attendance

2. Representatives of the following African member States attended the session: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Togo, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

3. Representatives of the following regional economic communities and organizations also attended: African Development Bank, East African Community, African Union Commission, Arab Maghreb Union, Economic Community of West African States, Southern African Development Community and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

4. The complete list of participants will be circulated as an information document.

* E/ECA/CPRTIIT/2/1/Rev.1.



C. Opening remarks

5. The Chair of the outgoing Bureau of the Committee made his remarks on behalf of the Committee. He commended the Bureau of the Committee for the hard work done, notwithstanding the context of the pandemic. He thanked Ethiopia for agreeing to host the second session of the Committee. He appreciated the leadership and commitment of the outgoing Bureau. The Chair recalled that the Committee was a body that provided guidance for the activities of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). He also mentioned that, despite the challenges presented by coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the pandemic offered many opportunities, especially in terms of the development of information and communications technology.

6. On behalf of the Executive Secretary of ECA and Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Director of the Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resource Management Division of ECA welcomed the participants. He recalled that the Committee was mandated to review the work of ECA and serve as a platform for dialogue and consensus-building for catalysing development efforts in private sector development, regional integration, trade, infrastructure, industry and technology. He mentioned that ECA provided support to partners (including member States, regional economic communities and the African Union Commission) on several projects and initiated major studies, in line with requests by the Committee.

7. The opening statement was delivered by Fitsumbrhan Tsegaye, on behalf of the Minister of Transport of Ethiopia. He recalled the first session of the Committee, held in 2019, which had been conducted to define priority actions for the Commission before the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Fitsumbrhan indicated that, despite the continent's challenges, in particular in the last two years, its development prospects remained bright. He mentioned that numerous opportunities beckoned, including the African Continental Free Trade Area and other existing regional integration frameworks at the continental and regional levels.

II. Election of the Bureau

8. The participants elected the following countries to constitute its Bureau, based on rotating regional representation.

Chair:	Democratic Republic of the Congo (Central Africa)
First Vice-Chair:	Mali (West Africa)
Second Vice-Chair:	Morocco (North Africa)
Third Vice-Chair:	Namibia (Southern Africa) ¹
Rapporteur:	Uganda (East Africa)

9. Following the election of the Bureau, the Chair of the incoming Bureau, the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, thanked the Central African region for nominating his country to chair the Bureau for the next two years. He then acknowledged the excellent work and leadership of the Chair of the outgoing Bureau. Furthermore, he thanked ECA for its outstanding work, commended its expertise and experience, and welcomed the prospect of its continuing advancement of economic development in Africa, in particular in the areas of financing infrastructure, regional integration and trade, and the advancement of science, technology and innovation. He committed to giving

¹ Subject to confirmation by the country.

ECA full support in implementing its programmes during his mandate as Chair of the Bureau.

III. Consideration and adoption of the agenda and programme of work

10. The newly elected Chair introduced the provisional agenda of the session. The agenda was adopted as follows:

1. Opening of the session.
 2. Election of the Bureau.
 3. Consideration and adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
 4. Presentation of reports by the secretariat:
 - (a) Sustainable energy and infrastructure development in Africa in the era of coronavirus disease;
 - (b) Accelerating the economic transformation of Africa in the post-pandemic era through productive investments and services trade liberalization within the framework of the African Continental Free Trade Area;
 - (c) Advancing science, technology and innovation policies on emerging technologies for economic growth in the post-pandemic era.
 5. General discussion on the theme of the session, “African economic development in the post-pandemic era: the role of regional integration, infrastructure and technology”.
 6. Review of the 2020 and 2021 programme plans relating to private sector development, regional integration, trade, infrastructure, industry and technology, as well as the priorities of the 2022 programme plan.
 7. Consideration and adoption of the report on the session.
 8. Closing of the session.
11. The programme of work was adopted with no amendments.

IV. Presentation of reports by the secretariat

A. Sustainable energy and infrastructure development in Africa in era of coronavirus disease

1. Presentation

12. The representative of the secretariat highlighted some of the critical achievements and innovative efforts and initiatives on the continent to support regional integration in infrastructure and energy, emphasizing the private sector financing of infrastructure and public-private partnerships. Despite the challenges and disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, ECA continued to implement programmes to strengthen the business environment for private sector participation and investment in infrastructure (mainly transport and energy). The pandemic had demonstrated the centrality of infrastructure development in post-COVID-19 recovery plans for Africa.

2. Discussion

13. The Committee highlighted various issues pertaining mainly to the transport and energy sectors. Those included the challenges and obstacles hindering progress relating to the Protocol to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment on Matters specific to Railway Rolling Stock (Luxembourg Protocol), the disparities and differences in the technical standards applicable to railway construction in Africa and the financing of sustainable energy and electricity development projects. In addition, the Committee also discussed digitalization, the increased integration of technology in the labour market and the rising price of gas and energy production in Africa. The Committee commended the Secretariate on its work related to the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa and requested it to continue supporting the implementation of the programme.

3. Recommendations

14. Member States were requested:

(a) To facilitate investments in rail and maritime transport, to ensure that landlocked countries were connected to the coast and to enhance their international trade;

(b) To harmonize and integrate regulatory and institutional frameworks at the regional and continental levels, which should be incorporated into national systems;

(c) To develop strategies for regional integration, taking due consideration of the distortions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic to the supply and demand chain;

(d) To develop policies to improve local production and reduce the cost of energy and infrastructure development;

(e) To encourage the use of innovative technology to improve transport and trade connectivity across borders;

(f) To design regulatory frameworks to protect the private sector and divide the risk of public-private partnership investments between the private and public sectors.

15. ECA was requested:

(a) To continue the prioritization and investment opportunities of projects under the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa through domestic resource mobilization and innovative finance mechanisms;

- (b) To conduct studies to identify practical finance solutions besides public-private partnerships to bridge the gap between development needs and available resources;
- (c) To support the mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa;
- (d) To assist island States to improve maritime transport services connecting them with the mainland of the continent;
- (e) To identify mechanisms for the enhancement of technology transfer in Africa;
- (f) To continue supporting resource mobilization for the implementation of projects under the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa;
- (g) To support member States in implementing harmonized norms and standards for railways in Africa, and harmonized transport laws and procedures in general.

B. Accelerating the economic transformation of Africa in the post-pandemic era through productive investments and services trade liberalization within the framework of the African Continental Free Trade Area

1. Presentation

16. The representative of the secretariat made a presentation that underscored the crucial role of productive investments and trade liberalization in the economic recovery of Africa from the COVID-19 pandemic and its long-term growth prospects. The pandemic had precipitated a sharp fall in inward investment in Africa and had eroded investor confidence. By harmonizing investment rules on the continent, the investment protocol to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, which was currently under negotiation, could significantly raise the level of investment inflows and intra-African investment. Working with such partners as the African Union Commission, ECA had supported various advocacy interventions to raise awareness among relevant stakeholders to facilitate regional integration and the ratification of the Agreement.

2. Discussion

17. The Committee took note of and endorsed the three reports presented. Those reports had been prepared by the Regional Integration and Trade Division of ECA at the request of the Committee on Private Sector Development, Regional Integration, Trade, Infrastructure, Industry and Technology at its first session, held in 2019. The issues discussed included forward and backward linkages of sustainable investments between host industries and the rest of the host countries' economies; the slow pace of the negotiations on the protocol on trade in services to the Agreement; and the importance of the linkages between negotiations on the protocols on trade in goods and trade in services.

3. Recommendations

18. Member States were requested:

(a) To support efforts by the secretariat to disseminate the recommendations of the three reports, encourage their subsequent uptake by all relevant stakeholders and ensure that those recommendations fed into the ongoing negotiations of the African Continental Free Trade Area;

(b) To strike a careful balance in their investment policymaking between investor protection on the one hand and investor obligations and the right to regulate on the other;

(c) To prioritize investment opportunities for value addition and value chain connectivity, and identify, where applicable, a path from high-emission to low-emission investments.

19. ECA was requested:

(a) To continue to support member States in building and strengthening capacity in relation to sustainable investment and services trade issues, especially during negotiations of the relevant protocols to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area;

(b) To analyse industry-specific issues and areas of need arising from the three reports presented and use the findings to inform the development of corresponding legal and regulatory frameworks at the national, regional and continental levels;

(c) To scale up technical support to conduct services value chain analyses for African member States and further study specific promising regional value chains;

(d) To continue and to scale up the roll-out of the three dimensions of the African Continental Free Trade Area-anchored Pharmaceutical Initiative (pooled procurement, local manufacturing, and standards and quality assurance), including through forging and strengthening partnerships with relevant stakeholders.

C. Advancing science, technology and innovation policies on emerging technologies for economic growth in the post-pandemic era

1. Presentation

20. The representative of the secretariat gave a presentation on the design of science, technology and innovation policies that enabled African countries to harness emerging technologies to drive innovation and boost competitiveness. The presentation informed member States about efforts to advance policymaking in that domain and harness the potential of emerging technologies to guide the development of their countries along a sustainable trajectory.

2. Discussion

21. The discussion was centred on ECA initiatives to advance transformation in the digital space, including coding camps for African girls, the launch of an artificial intelligence centre in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the development of a generic curriculum in artificial intelligence, the launch of the Alliance of Entrepreneurial Universities in Africa, and the launch of the African Technology Development and Transfer Network. Participants noted that science, technology and innovation policies often lacked investment planning and that the African science, technology and innovation strategy document did not include an exhaustive assessment of financial sources and their availability.

3. Recommendations

22. Member States were requested:

(a) To strengthen or establish institutions such as national councils or equivalent institutions on science, technology and innovation that were chaired at the highest levels of government to provide continuous, time-relevant and realistic leadership, support and monitoring and evaluation services;

(b) To develop science, technology and innovation implementation plans and strategies for harnessing emerging technologies with clear priorities and financing mechanisms for effective and efficient realization of their policies and development aspirations;

(c) To make full use of the ECA science, technology and innovation policy formulation and implementation guide and the United Nations science, technology and innovation road maps for the Sustainable Development Goals as tools to inform policymaking and the implementation of policies;

(d) To support and encourage their institutions to participate fully in the recently launched Alliance of Entrepreneurial Universities in Africa and the Africa Technology Development and Transfer Network as tools for knowledge-sharing and drivers of economic transformation.

23. ECA was requested:

(a) To help countries, through the launch of the Africa Technology Development and Transfer Network, to enhance the institutional arrangements needed to accelerate the generation, commercialization and diffusion of technology needed to build sound national and regional scientific, technological knowledge;

(b) To assist in providing a clear financial or investment plan and implementation mechanism for science, technology and innovation by member States;

(c) To continue to support member States in building and strengthening capacity in science, technology and innovation policymaking and the implementation and monitoring of those policies, including the development of science, technology and innovation road maps for the Sustainable Development Goals;

(d) To undertake rigorous research on domestic and international technology development and transfer trends and practices, and on legal and regulatory regimes in emerging technologies to inform the development of policies and strategies;

(e) To support member States in the design and implementation of their digital strategies, legal and regulatory regimes, tools and applications in accordance with the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020–2030);

(f) To undertake research and provide technical support to member States in emerging energy technologies, given their importance in meeting climate change commitments, creating green jobs, expanding the energy mix and bringing clean energy to the 600 million African inhabitants without electricity.

V. General discussion on the theme of the session, “African economic development in the post-pandemic era: the role of regional integration, infrastructure and technology”

1. Discussion

24. The meeting noted that, in pursuing its recovery from the negative economic effects of COVID-19, Africa had responded strategically through regional integration efforts, such as the Africa Medical Supplies Platform, the African Vaccine Acquisition Task Team and the Partnership for African Vaccine Manufacturing. It drew attention to the high level of climate change-related expenditure, which was close to 5 per cent of gross domestic product, the need to address the shortfalls in foreign direct investment inflows and the operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area. Efforts had also been exerted to promote regional and national infrastructure development, although financing remained a major challenge requiring access to a range of partnership platforms.

2. Recommendations

25. ECA was requested:

(a) To support the development of national capacities for the structuring, development and negotiation of contracts for renewable energy projects, considering the challenges that the member States faced in relation to institutional capacity;

(b) To assist in the development of resource mobilization strategies for the full and widespread deployment of renewable energy capacity in member States.

VI. Review of the 2020 and 2021 programme plans relating to private sector development, regional integration, trade, infrastructure, industry and technology, as well as the priorities of the 2022 programme plan

26. The representative of ECA presented a review of the proposed programme plan for 2022 and reviewed programme performance in 2020 and 2021 in the three subprogramme areas that fell under the purview of the Committee: private sector development and finance; regional integration and trade; and technology, climate change and natural resource management. Participants commended the excellent performance of ECA in those subprogramme areas, as evidenced by its outstanding research products on related topics. They underscored the importance of ECA work on climate change, including in the context of the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, scheduled to take place in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in November 2022.

VII. Consideration and adoption of the report on the session

27. The Committee adopted the report with some amendments and requested the secretariat to incorporate those amendments and forward the final report to the participants.

VIII. Closing of the session

28. Closing remarks were made by the officer-in-charge of the Private Sector Development and Finance Division, who thanked all participants for their time. He also thanked the Bureau, the ECA team of communications specialists, language staff and conference services officers, and the Government of Ethiopia for their support in organizing the session.

29. Subsequently, the Chair of the Bureau thanked all participants for their contributions to the fruitful deliberations during the session. He commended ECA staff for all their hard work in organizing the second session of the Committee. He then declared the session closed at 6.15 p.m. on Wednesday, 9 March 2022.