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**Joint Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts of Eastern and Southern Africa**

**10 - 13 November 2026**
**Windhoek, Namibia**

# Report on the Work of ECA in Eastern Africa

# DRAFT

*Summary*

This report outlines the key programme activities undertaken by ECA in Eastern Africa between January and September 2026 and the results achieved, and seeks the guidance of member States, through the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts, on the future work of ECA in the subregion. Between January and September 2026 the ECA Sub-Regional Office for Eastern Africa advanced four mutually reinforcing areas of work: trade and regional integration, tourism and the blue economy, investment promotion, and connectivity and infrastructure. Delivery moved from policy formulation towards operational application, producing practical instruments for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), validated tourism and blue economy strategies, an investment strategy for marine biotechnology and digital tools for trade, agriculture and food-security analysis. Recurring constraints remain, among them incomplete national coordination mechanisms, uneven institutional capacity, systems-level gaps, financing and logistics bottlenecks, and the need for sustained follow-up after training and validation. The Committee is invited to take note of the performance, to provide guidance on priorities for the remainder of 2026 and into 2027, and to consider the recommendations in section 4.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background and mandate

1. The present report covers the work of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Sub-Regional Office for Eastern Africa (the Office) between January and September 2026. Headquartered in Kigali, the Office is the principal ECA platform for policy research, technical cooperation, advisory services and capacity development in the subregion. It works through the three core functions of ECA, namely generating policy knowledge and analysis, convening governments and other development actors, and providing operational and technical support, which allow it to connect continental frameworks with national implementation requirements and to convene public institutions, the private sector, development partners, research organisations and civil society.

## 1.2 Strategic context and orientation

2. Eastern Africa combines substantial market, trade and resource potential, supported by growing markets, a strategic location, an entrepreneurial population and diverse natural resources, with structural vulnerabilities: export baskets are frequently concentrated in primary commodities, cross-border trade is constrained by non-tariff barriers, productive capabilities remain uneven and infrastructure gaps limit market integration.

3. Evidence presented at the regional AfCFTA expert workshop held in September 2026 showed strong export performance and increased foreign direct investment across the subregion. Minerals and extractive products nevertheless accounted for approximately 53 per cent of exports, compared with about 20 per cent in 2009. This concentration reinforces the need to use the AfCFTA as an instrument for manufacturing development, value addition, economic diversification and improved regional production networks.

4. Tourism and the blue economy offer further pathways to diversification. Coastal, marine, freshwater and cultural resources create opportunities in fisheries, cruise tourism, maritime transport, biotechnology, conservation and hospitality, but capturing them requires sound governance, reliable evidence, coordinated institutions, sustainable resource management and investment-ready projects. Digital technologies applied to trade, agriculture and food systems can improve market information, forecasting, financial inclusion, value-chain coordination and access to regional markets, provided that institutional capacity, infrastructure, quality data and inclusive access are in place.

5. Delivery combined policy research, technical assistance, capacity development and strategic convening, in collaboration with other ECA divisions and subregional offices, member States, regional economic communities, United Nations entities and private-sector organisations. The four areas of work reinforced one another, as AfCFTA implementation expanded potential markets, investment strategies converted opportunities into commercial propositions, and connectivity provided the systems that link producers, investors and markets.

## 1.3 Objectives of the report

6. The report is based on the Annual Programme Performance Report of the ECA Sub-Regional Office for Eastern Africa for January–September 2026 (October 2026), which contains the detailed performance record. The Committee is invited to take note of programme performance during the reporting period and to provide strategic guidance on priorities for the remainder of 2026 and into 2027. It is further invited to consider the recommendations in section 4, particularly those on AfCFTA implementation, institutional coordination, inclusive digital trade, tourism and blue economy delivery, and the move from validated strategies to implementation.

# 2. Highlights of key activities implemented

7. The report presents highlights of key activities under four areas of work: trade and regional integration (section 2.1), tourism and the blue economy (section 2.2), investment promotion (section 2.3), and connectivity and infrastructure (section 2.4). Section 3 identifies the challenges, lessons and implementation issues on which guidance is sought, and section 4 contains the proposed recommendations and a draft decision.

## 2.1 Trade and regional integration

*A. From continental commitments to practical application*

8. The value of the AfCFTA depends on its practical use by customs administrations, trade institutions, producers, exporters and service providers. The Office addressed three related constraints: the limited ability of

businesses to identify and use market opportunities, uneven knowledge of operational instruments such as rules of origin, tariff schedules, non-tariff barrier reporting systems and continental payment mechanisms, and the need for stronger institutional coordination and direct feedback from private-sector operators already trading across borders. It responded through enterprise acceleration, practical guidance, national training, regional dialogue and engagement with experienced exporters.

9. On the legislative side, ECA convened a capacity-building workshop in Nairobi from 28 to 31 July 2026 for members of the Committee on Communication, Trade and Investment of the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA). Members deepened their understanding of the AfCFTA institutional architecture and its protocols on trade in goods and services, investment, competition policy, intellectual property rights, and women and youth in trade, drawing lessons from other African jurisdictions. The Committee is now better able to initiate and review AfCFTA-related legislation and oversee its alignment with national laws, and to promote accountability. Priority measures identified include national legal gap assessments, stronger engagement with trade and finance ministries, improved financing for enterprises and broader awareness-raising among traders and other stakeholders. The workshop culminated in an agreement for EALA to prepare an action plan on its contribution to AfCFTA implementation in the EAC region, and ECA and EALA committed to further capacity-building and policy exchanges.

10. At the enterprise level, the Office co-convened the Accelerate Africa Startup Acceleration Programme bootcamp in Kigali from 11 to 13 February 2026 for 20 entrepreneurs from across Africa (14 men and 6 women) working in agribusiness, technology, manufacturing and consumer-oriented sectors. The programme combined enterprise development with policy and technical sessions on regional market opportunities under the AfCFTA, including the implications of economic integration for enterprise growth and practical requirements such as determining product origin. It ended with a pitch session in which the entrepreneurs presented refined business models to investors and other stakeholders, which strengthened their strategic, financial and operational readiness and helped them align expansion plans with continental market opportunities.

11. In Seychelles, the Office worked with the ECA Regional Integration and Trade Division and the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning, Trade and Investment to validate a Step-by-Step Guide for Trading Goods under the AfCFTA. The guide turns legal and administrative requirements into a sequence that exporters can follow and clarifies the documentation required and the roles of the institutions involved. It was formally validated at a workshop on 26 and 27 February 2026 attended by public institutions, private-sector organisations, trade support institutions, development partners and United Nations entities, which helped to identify differences in the interpretation of AfCFTA requirements and to clarify agency responsibilities. The guide is expected to reduce information barriers, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises and women- and youth-led firms, and is an instrument for implementing the National AfCFTA Strategy. The process also confirmed that guidance alone cannot resolve every constraint, since logistics bottlenecks, port and customs clearance delays, limited access to trade finance and variations in institutional interpretation call for broader reforms and continued inter-agency coordination.

12. A national workshop in Madagascar on 21 and 22 April 2026, held with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of Trade and Consumer Affairs, addressed a country that had validated its National AfCFTA Strategy in 2024 and ratified the Agreement in 2025 but had not yet set up its National AfCFTA Committee. Forty-five stakeholders were trained on tariff concession schedules, rules of origin, the non-tariff barrier notification and elimination mechanism, the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) and the African Trade Observatory, with remote inputs from Afreximbank and the International Trade Centre.[1] The workshop increased practical knowledge and generated recommendations for moving from strategy to implementation. The absence of a coordination committee remains a significant constraint, and establishing one with clear responsibilities will be essential to maintain momentum and coordinate future support.

### *B. Preferential trade in practice*

13. In Ethiopia, ECA and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) completed an assessment of implementation arrangements from 26 to 28 August 2026 with 35 representatives of nine public and private institutions, including the Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration, the Ethiopia Customs Commission, the Ethiopian Conformity Assessment Enterprise, the Ethiopian Maritime Authority, Ethiopian Shipping and Logistics, the national Chamber of Commerce, logistics associations, exporters and organisations supporting

[1] Sex-disaggregated information was available for 41 of the 45 participants, of whom 19 were men and 22 were women.

women-owned enterprises. It established that Ethiopia has operated a National Implementation Committee since October 2025, has notified tariff commitments covering all three categories of goods and has begun preferential trade with African partners. By August 2026, 27 Ethiopian companies were trading under AfCFTA preferences and 312 certificates of origin had been issued. The work also mapped the seven principal African export markets (Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana, Rwanda, Tunisia and Algeria) and the institutional, procedural and market constraints limiting further growth.

14. The assessment identified manual issuance and endorsement of certificates of origin as a major bottleneck that lengthens processing and weakens exporters' competitiveness. ECA recommended integrating AfCFTA certificates into the existing Ethiopian Electronic Single Window, which already processes certificates under other preferential trade arrangements, as a feasible and cost-effective way to reduce delays and trade costs. Follow-up support is to strengthen the operational capacity of frontline customs and conformity-assessment officials, improve business understanding of rules of origin and non-tariff barrier reporting mechanisms, and offer selected enterprises practical coaching on export readiness, market identification, compliance and digital market-intelligence tools. One Ethiopian manufacturer employing more than 500 people has already requested ECA assistance in identifying African export opportunities.

15. The first Kenya AfCFTA Champions Meeting, convened by ECA and IGAD on 25 September 2026, concentrated on firms already active in cross-border markets, to test whether AfCFTA preferences and procedures work in actual transactions. The 26 participants included exporters in textiles, manufacturing, coffee, cosmetics and logistics, the Kenya Association of Manufacturers, the national AfCFTA focal point and the AfCFTA Secretariat. Companies were introduced to the rules of origin self-assessment module of the Africa Trade Observatory, the AfCFTA electronic tariff book, PAPSS and the continental non-tariff barrier reporting system, and a live product case showed how a Kenyan business could assess origin qualification and the applicable tariff treatment. Firms reported cases in which importing-country customs authorities had not applied preferential duty rates despite valid certificates of origin, which suggests that implementation failures may arise from systems and information gaps rather than the absence of agreed rules. An escalation pathway was set up through the non-tariff barrier platform and Kenya's national focal point, ECA committed to follow up with the AfCFTA Secretariat on a reported bottleneck affecting trade with Mozambique, and an IGAD-wide champions engagement is expected to follow.

### *C. Widening engagement*

16. On 9 and 10 September 2026, the Office and the African Trade Policy Centre convened a technical workshop in Asmara, the first substantive ECA engagement with Eritrea on the AfCFTA. Discussions covered the architecture of the Agreement and the implications of participation for a relatively small domestic market with infrastructure, financing, skills and productive-capacity constraints. Participants identified potential sources of advantage, among them the Red Sea location, maritime access, ports and logistics services, fisheries, the blue economy, agriculture and agro-processing, mineral value addition, tourism and diaspora knowledge and capital. The engagement contributed to a more informed and favourable technical assessment of the merits of joining and produced a structured agenda for continued analysis. The Office will strengthen coordination with the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Asmara and continue to support policy dialogue on trade diversification and continental integration.

17. An online expert group workshop on 16 September 2026 brought together 60 participants from 13 countries, from ministries, private-sector, women's and youth organisations, research institutions, IGAD, the East African Community (EAC) and the African Organisation for Standardisation. It reviewed the macroeconomic and social context for AfCFTA implementation, including export and foreign investment performance and the growing concentration of exports in minerals and extractive products. A discussion on gender and digital trade noted that women account for a substantial share of informal cross-border trade while facing disproportionate barriers to finance, digital technologies and formal markets. Madagascar, Djibouti, Comoros and Seychelles requested technical assistance, and the resulting pipeline covers legislative compatibility reviews, tailored support to small island developing States, capacity-building on AfCFTA instruments and help for women and young people in digital cross-border trade.

18. Earlier support to Rwanda in 2024 and 2025 on revitalising the beef sector contributed to a policy development in March 2026, when the Cabinet approved an agreement with a Brazilian operator for the Gako beef processing plant. The plant is designed to process up to 150 cattle per day, with a complementary feed facility planned, and contributes to efforts to strengthen domestic meat-processing capacity, improve product quality and

position the sector for regional and international trade. The case shows how technical analysis and policy dialogue can contribute to investment decisions, although animal supply, feed availability, quality standards, logistics and market access will need continued attention if the facility is to realise its export potential.

19. The main results in this area and in sections 2.2 and 2.4, with the follow-up each requires, are summarised in table 1.

Table 1
**Key results in trade and regional integration, tourism and digital transformation**

| Area | Illustrative result | Follow-up requirement |
|---|---|---|
| Legislative action | EALA committee capacity strengthened and an action plan agreed | Legal gap assessments and sustained policy exchange |
| Enterprise readiness | 20 entrepreneurs supported in Rwanda | Investment and export-readiness follow-up |
| Operational capacity | 45 stakeholders trained in Madagascar | Establish the National AfCFTA Committee |
| Preferential trade | 27 Ethiopian companies trading under AfCFTA preferences; 312 certificates issued by August 2026 | Integrate certificates into the Electronic Single Window |
| Private-sector feedback | Kenyan exporters reported non-application of preferential duty rates | Use escalation mechanisms and Secretariat follow-up |
| Tourism strategy | Seychelles cruise strategy and EAC marketing strategy validated | Governance, financing, monitoring and formal adoption |
| Digital transformation | Policy instruments and analytical capacities advanced in three countries | National digitalisation strategies and institutional coordination |

*Source: ECA, based on the annual programme performance report, 2026.*

### 2.2 Tourism and the blue economy

20. Tourism remains one of the most dynamic levers for diversification, foreign exchange earnings and regional integration. The Office supported member States and regional bodies at several levels, from national strategy validation in Seychelles to regional marketing harmonisation under the EAC and capacity-building on tourism measurement in Zanzibar, alongside national and regional consultations on the blue economy. The four tourism reports illustrate distinct dimensions of the work, namely policy validation, regional coordination, institutional endorsement and analytical capacity-building. Together with the blue economy interventions they demonstrate progress in the capacity of member States to design and implement policy frameworks, and some have begun to operationalise them nationally.

#### *A. Tourism strategies and measurement*

21. From 13 to 16 April 2026 ECA supported Seychelles through a three-part mission, comprising a preparatory meeting with the Minister of Tourism and Culture, a national stakeholder validation workshop and a high-level meeting with ministers and principal secretaries, to finalise the Cruise Tourism Strategy for 2026 to 2033. The strategy responds to a cost-benefit analysis of cruise tourism and aims to raise national economic benefits while managing environmental, social and governance risks. The Minister stressed that implementation, monitoring and accountability are essential, and that a governance framework, a steering committee, a monitoring and evaluation framework and an implementation matrix are required. The validation workshop of 14 April brought together 25 participants (11 men and 14 women) from the Tourism Department, the Ports Authority, local government authorities, ministries, the private sector, academia and community groups, and reached broad consensus. The Principal Secretary for Tourism formally stated that the strategy was validated, a critical step towards finalisation, Cabinet approval and official launch.

22. The strategy positions Seychelles as a high-value, low-volume and well-managed cruise destination and rests on six pillars: strategic marketing and premium positioning; infrastructure and port operations; local value capture and domestic cruise tourism development; sustainable and environmentally responsible operations; data, monitoring and evidence-based planning; and strengthened governance and regulation. The high-level meeting confirmed an indicative implementation cost of approximately SCR 2.32 billion over seven years against estimated economic benefits of approximately US$1.24 billion, to be financed through a blend of public resources, private-sector participation, development partner support and industry-based revenue mechanisms. The validation workshop, which focused on cruise tourism value chains within the blue economy, local value capture, participation of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, decent employment and stable livelihoods, produced

validated pillars and policy directions, consensus on priority actions and implementation arrangements, consolidated inputs for final refinement and stronger stakeholder ownership.[2] It drew two lessons, namely that early and sustained stakeholder engagement improved legitimacy and ownership, and that strategic frameworks should be clearly distinguished from detailed regulatory instruments.

23. At the regional level, ECA facilitated a Regional Validation Meeting in Mombasa, Kenya, from 23 to 25 June 2026 on the draft EAC Tourism Marketing Strategy for 2027 to 2036, attended by delegates from EAC Partner States, the EAC Secretariat, ECA, the private sector and a consultant. Tourism contributes on average 17 per cent of export earnings, 10 per cent of regional gross domestic product (GDP) and about 7 per cent of employment in the Partner States. ECA analysis supporting a shift from volume to value noted that, in Africa as a whole, the sector contributes 8 per cent of GDP (US$211 billion) and 28 million jobs and is growing by 6.5 per cent a year, yet average visitor spending remains low at US$530 to US$600 and the continent's share of global receipts is declining, while a 10 per cent increase in intra-African tourism alone would raise continental exports by 1.4 to 3.2 per cent. The meeting validated the draft, subject to refining the projections on international arrivals and receipts and reviewing the implementation matrix, and recommended its submission to the thirteenth meeting of the Sectoral Council on Tourism and Wildlife Management for adoption. The strategy provides a common framework for presenting the EAC as a unified destination and extends regional coverage to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia.

24. In Zanzibar, a technical mission from 16 to 19 February 2026 supported a second analytical phase following the first Tourism Satellite Account, compiled in 2019. The aim is to estimate the total economic impact of tourism by integrating the Account with a Social Accounting Matrix (SAM) and Computable General Equilibrium modelling, capturing the economy-wide effects of tourism beyond its direct contribution. A four-day workshop trained 41 participants (26 men and 15 women) in the basics of multipliers and the methods for calculating them (direct, indirect and induced effects) and in building and applying a SAM, using the case of Rwanda, and prepared them to integrate Zanzibar tourism data into a SAM.[3] Experience from Uganda showed that making tourism data widely available can enhance the perception of the sector, attract investment, diversify tourism products and boost domestic tourism.

### *B. Blue economy*

25. In line with the commitment of ECA to support regional blue economy frameworks in Eastern Africa, national consultations and validation workshops aimed to strengthen sustainable ocean-based industries and turn blue economy strategies into investment and implementation plans, with a focus on fisheries, aquaculture, marine biotechnology and ocean governance. Member States were supported in identifying growth sectors, validating policy and investment frameworks, mobilising stakeholders and setting roadmaps for implementation, which enhanced national ownership and institutional coordination. The Office also worked closely with the Sub-Regional Office for Central Africa on maritime security in both subregions.

26. At the regional level, an evaluation of the previous action plan of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) found that, for lack of a structure to coordinate follow-up, member States had focused solely on national progress and given no attention to regional efforts. At a validation workshop on 8 December 2025, stakeholders from all IOC member States gave feedback on regional priorities, expressed willingness to have a coordinating structure and requested support with fundraising. The costed action plan was validated, has since been used to raise funds from a development partner, and implementation of the regional Indian Ocean Institute for Energy and Ocean Sciences has started. A meeting in Mauritius on 9 and 10 December 2025, attended by IOC member States together with Kenya and Djibouti, signatories to the agreement establishing the regional maritime information and operations centres in Madagascar and Seychelles, validated a report on financing options for a stronger maritime security architecture in the Western Indian Ocean. Participants considered extending membership to East African coastal States, involving the private sector, a more equitable contribution from beneficiaries, climate financing and income from the underused assets of the two centres. The Secure Seas webinar series, held on 10 and 30 September 2026 with the Sub-Regional Office for Central Africa and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, drew over 180 participants to examine governance, coordination, information sharing and financing, and a policy brief

[2] The workshop report links the intervention to Priority Area 2 (Prosperity) of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Seychelles, Outcome 2 (a more resilient, sustainable and inclusive economy by 2028), through Output 2.1.

[3] The Social Accounting Matrix for Zanzibar was not yet available, which halted the estimation of the wider economic effects of tourism.

on closing the operationalisation gap is being drafted as a basis for further engagement with partners of the IOC and the GGC.

27. National interventions translated strategies into costed plans. In Burundi, a validation workshop held from 17 to 19 March 2026 with the Ministry of Mineral Resources, Energy, Industry, Trade and Tourism reviewed the certification, branding and value chain assessment and costed action plan for Umukeke, an emblematic fish, to guarantee its quality, traceability and authenticity. An initial mission in Bujumbura from 4 to 6 February 2026 had mobilised government authorities, cooperatives, the Burundi Bureau of Standards and communities, and confirmed the need for stronger regulation, ethical fishing practices, better processing infrastructure and an action plan to formalise the value chain and integrate it into EAC and AfCFTA markets. The study maps stakeholders and their responsibilities, identifies possible transformations, required reforms and capacity needs, and sets out a costed action plan. The African Organisation for Standardisation took part, with 20 women and 40 men from government, cooperatives, academia and civil society, and a main difficulty noted is the number of agencies each holding a small share of responsibility, which complicates coordination.

28. In Djibouti, the Blue Economy Implementation Plan was validated in Djibouti City from 24 to 26 March 2026 by policymakers, the private sector, development partners, academia and international organisations. By identifying priority interventions, responsible institutions, financing requirements and implementation modalities, it addresses a gap between strategic ambition and practice and offers a framework for diversifying beyond ports and maritime logistics into sustainable fisheries, coastal tourism, marine renewable energy and biodiversity conservation. In Zanzibar, the Sea Cucumber Value Chain Study and Action Plan, validated in Unguja and Pemba from 20 to 22 April 2026, addresses constraints in hatchery capacity, maritime security, governance, processing and markets. It identifies practical solutions for sustainable aquaculture and mariculture, quality standards, surveillance and market access, and gives the Government a roadmap for a subsector with strong potential for export earnings, job creation and environmental stewardship. The validation also prompted renewed interest from mainland Tanzania in broader collaboration with ECA.

29. Two exercises applied the ECA toolkit for assessing the contribution of the blue economy (BEVTK). In Somalia, a validation exercise held from 8 to 11 June 2026 with the Ministry of Fisheries and Blue Economy produced a conservative estimate of 3.8 per cent of GDP for 2025, with room for improvement if data collection is strengthened.[4] The contribution of the blue economy to GDP, employment, food security and ecosystem services remains limited, and weak integration of blue economy data into national accounts, fragmented data and weak coordination hinder planning and investment. Twenty-five policymakers, academics and private-sector representatives (5 women and 20 men) were trained, and 39 participants attended the validation. In October 2026 the Zanzibar Department of Blue Economy was supported in a second assessment, following the first in 2024, of the contribution of the blue economy to GDP, gross national income, jobs, ecosystem services and social development. It recorded progress in fisheries, real estate, ports and financial services and updated progress towards the National Blue Economy Policy and Action Plan.

### 2.3 Investment promotion

30. Technical assistance in this area concentrated on turning the marine biotechnology potential of Seychelles into an investment-ready sectoral strategy. An earlier study supported by the African Development Bank had identified more than 20 organisms that could be sustainably exploited. Building on it, ECA identified five that would be commercially viable for foreign or domestic investors, based on supply and demand and on the resources that could be mobilised in the short, medium and long term. Viability was assessed against biological resource availability, regulatory readiness, infrastructure, institutional coordination, human capital and financing conditions, and after stakeholder consultations the strategy was expanded to include pilot business cases, a detailed action plan and a resource mobilisation framework.

31. The Marine Biotechnology Investment Strategy and Action Plan was validated by 45 stakeholders, 25 women and 20 men, from government agencies, the private sector, banks, universities and non-governmental organisations in Beau Vallon, Mahé, on 18 and 19 August 2026. It sets out the value chains that could be developed, their regulatory, financing and training requirements, the investment needed, expected profitability and monitoring indicators, together with conditional scenarios for attracting investment and donor support. Two options are presented: marine biotechnology as a livelihood programme in keeping with the resource constraints of Seychelles,

[4] The current contribution of about 2 per cent cited in Somalia's Centennial Vision 2060 refers to fisheries only; the target is 6.4 per cent by 2034 and as much as 18 per cent by 2060.

or a regional hub for verification and certification services. The work complements a regional strategy for the Indian Ocean islands developed by the private-sector network of the islands, and it opens the way for Seychelles to take regional leadership on verification and certification functions.

### 2.4 Connectivity and infrastructure

32. African countries continue to face significant challenges in strengthening connectivity and infrastructure linkages for deeper regional integration, particularly through digital technologies in trade, agricultural value chains and food systems. Limited institutional capacity to use digital tools, weak connectivity infrastructure, high post-harvest losses and fragmented value chains constrain productivity and market access, and these bottlenecks reinforce one another. Data analytics, artificial intelligence and digital platforms offer a strategic opportunity to address them at their root. The Office delivered three interventions with a common results chain of capacity-building, institutional dialogue, validated policy instruments and actionable national strategies: one in Comoros and, with the Sub-Regional Offices for West Africa and Central Africa, one each in Côte d'Ivoire and the Republic of Congo.

33. In Comoros, the Office sought to strengthen the capacity of the Government to use digital technologies to improve agricultural value chains, trade facilitation and food security, combining technical training with inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogue. Training from 28 September to 2 October 2026 strengthened the capacity of national policymakers to use digital platforms, data analytics and basic predictive models for trade and agricultural analysis. A national workshop of government institutions, the private sector, development partners and civil society validated a diagnostic study and a strategic policy note on strengthening food security through digital innovation, and its inclusive design means that the instruments reflect a shared national consensus. Among the recommendations was a national agricultural digitalisation strategy, which turns the diagnostic findings into a roadmap for government action, and the process strengthened coordination among the institutions responsible for agriculture, digital development, trade and finance.

34. In Côte d'Ivoire, from 13 to 17 April 2026, the Office worked with the Sub-Regional Office for West Africa and the National AfCFTA Secretariat to deliver training and national policy dialogue to the Ministry of Trade on digital tools for trade analysis, agricultural value chain development and food security. Statisticians, economists and policymakers were trained in digital platforms for trade analysis, Python programming and basic machine-learning techniques for trade forecasting. A national workshop examined how digital innovations, including artificial intelligence, can address high post-harvest losses, weak value addition, inadequate infrastructure and limited market connectivity, and national stakeholders validated a draft guidance note on improving food security through digital transformation.

35. In the Republic of Congo, from 18 to 22 May 2026, the Office worked with the Sub-Regional Office for Central Africa on the same package of training and national workshop. Policymakers strengthened their capacity to use digital platforms, data analytics and basic predictive methods for agriculture and trade, and stakeholders from government, the private sector, development partners and civil society validated a diagnostic study and strategic policy note that also recommended, among other actions, a national agricultural digitalisation strategy.

## 3. Challenges and lessons

36. During the reporting period the Office demonstrated measurable progress in translating continental and regional policy commitments into practical instruments for member States and the private sector. Across all four areas of work the defining achievement was the shift from policy formulation to operational application: AfCFTA engagement moved beyond awareness-raising to implementation support, validated strategies and costed plans gave countries financeable roadmaps, and analytical work was converted into an investment pathway in Seychelles and into practical digital tools in Côte d'Ivoire and the Republic of Congo.

37. These results confirm the value of the convening role of ECA, its ability to combine technical depth with inter-agency and private-sector partnership, and the growing demand from member States for implementation-focused rather than purely advisory support. Recurring themes, namely unestablished coordination mechanisms, systems-level gaps, uneven institutional capacity and the need for follow-up after training and validation, indicate that converting strategies and guides into sustained economic outcomes will require deeper and longer-term engagement during the remainder of 2026 and into 2027.

38. The Committee is invited to provide guidance on six recurring implementation issues:

(a) National coordination. Incomplete or weak coordination mechanisms can prevent strategies from being translated into sequenced and accountable implementation;

(b) Operational consistency. Agreed AfCFTA preferences are not always applied at the border, which indicates gaps in information, systems and institutional alignment;

(c) Finance and logistics. Limited trade finance, port and customs delays and infrastructure constraints continue to limit enterprise participation;

(d) Inclusive participation. Women and young people face disproportionate barriers to finance, digital technologies and formal cross-border markets;

(e) Data and analytical readiness. Gaps in data systems and modelling inputs can delay evidence-based implementation, as the unavailability of the Zanzibar Social Accounting Matrix showed;

(f) Continuity of support. Training and validation events require structured follow-up, financing and monitoring if they are to generate sustained economic outcomes.

## 4. Proposed recommendations and draft decision

39. The Committee is invited to consider the following recommendations:

(a) Member States should establish or strengthen national AfCFTA coordination mechanisms, with clear mandates, accountability arrangements and the engagement of customs, trade, finance, standards bodies and the private sector;

(b) Member States and regional institutions should complete legal and policy compatibility reviews and accelerate the domestication of AfCFTA commitments;

(c) Relevant authorities should digitise and align trade procedures, including certificates of origin, tariff treatment, non-tariff barrier reporting and interoperable payment and customs processes;

(d) Member States should integrate women- and youth-led enterprises into trade implementation through targeted finance, digital access, market intelligence, capacity-building and sex-disaggregated monitoring;

(e) Member States and development partners should prioritise viable, costed and investment-ready projects in tourism, the blue economy, productive infrastructure and digital agriculture;

(f) ECA should continue implementation-focused technical assistance, facilitate peer learning and private-sector feedback, and support results monitoring beyond the initial training or validation stage;

(g) Regional economic communities should strengthen coordination of regional marketing, standards, infrastructure and trade-facilitation measures to reduce fragmentation and improve market access.

40. The Committee may wish to adopt the following draft decision, by which the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts:

(a) Takes note of the 2026 programme performance of the ECA Sub-Regional Office for Eastern Africa;

(b) Welcomes the shift towards practical implementation support;

(c) Calls upon member States and regional institutions to strengthen coordination, legal alignment, financing, digital systems and inclusive private-sector participation;

(d) Requests ECA to continue targeted technical assistance and to report on follow-up to the recommendations at the next session;

(e) Encourages development partners to support costed, investment-ready regional and national initiatives.

41. The Committee is invited to consider and endorse the report.