United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

Original: English

Sub-Regional Office for North Africa
Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting
Rabat (hybrid), 4 November 2026

Strengthening economic resilience mechanisms to address the repercussion of simultaneous global shocks in North Africa

Preparing for Future Transformations:
Policy Design for Resilient Societies, Economies, and Ecosystems

Concept Note

1. Background

1.1. Introduction

1. Today, there remains a focus in developing countries on driving economic growth, too often using the experience of developed and emerging economies as a reference point; however, the current global environment and the conditions under which countries are expected to develop are changing radically and there is a real risk of economic decline. Traditional development strategies have largely focused on promoting economic growth, macroeconomic stability and efficiency under the implicit assumption that negative events, or shocks, are temporary and that economies naturally converge back to a stable growth path. However, recent crises have exposed the limitations of this approach. Many countries remain highly vulnerable to external disturbances due to concentrated production structures, dependence on a limited number of export markets or commodities, weak institutional capacities, constrained fiscal space and limited adaptive capabilities.

2. As such, traditional development strategies are being called into question by a global environment that has entered a period of high uncertainty, characterized by increasingly frequent, interconnected and systemic shocks and stresses. One example is climate and nature risks which are now part of the normal operating environment for households, firms and economies. Specifically, floods, droughts, heatwaves, and ecosystem decline are already eroding productive capital, disrupting supply chains, increasing fiscal pressures, and

weakening growth prospects. This could eventually lead to a possible "downward spiral" where exposed capital leads to losses, fiscal stress, weaker investment, lower growth, and even lower capacity to adapt[1].

3. Climate-change-related risks are not limited to direct shocks affecting a given country. They can also be indirect, especially in a globalized world with intertwined and interdependent systems. Moreover, future risks may be cascading in nature, such as pandemics and disease, conflict, political instability, systemic financial risk, and economic crises triggered by climate shocks. These challenges are no longer exceptional events but rather have become structural features of the global economy.

4. In this context, resilience has emerged as a critical dimension of development. Yet, despite its growing prominence, resilience remains an elusive concept. Existing approaches often focus on the ability to absorb shocks and restore previous conditions, while paying insufficient attention to the capacity of economies to adapt, transform and pursue long-term sustainable development in the face of persistent structural changes. Moreover, resilience is rarely integrated into broader development planning and policy design, and operational tools for translating the concept into concrete policy pathways remain limited.

5. In light of this increasing global uncertainty and risk, governments are recommended to redefine development goals, moving away from the focus on simple economic growth and refocussing on resilience. Building resilience in an increasingly turbulent world is a strategic investment for sustainable growth, competitiveness, fiscal stability and human development. Investments in resilience can deliver benefits for communities, firms, and countries via lives saved, job creation, reduced economic losses, stronger GDP, lower borrowing costs, and more stable investment conditions[2]. In this respect, by incorporating resilience into policies, governments can advance in both sustainability and inclusiveness.

6. The central challenge is therefore no longer simply how countries can recover from shocks, but how they can design development pathways that simultaneously strengthen resilience, support structural transformation, and advance long-term sustainability. This requires moving beyond reactive crisis management towards a forward-looking framework that enables countries to anticipate emerging risks, identify vulnerabilities, manage trade-offs, and guide strategic investments and reforms under conditions of deep uncertainty.

1.2. Uncertainty in the Midst of Global Challenges

[1] "Revisiting the middle-income trap amid emerging global challenges », UNECA, 2026
[2] https://www.systemiq.earth/the-returns-on-resilience/

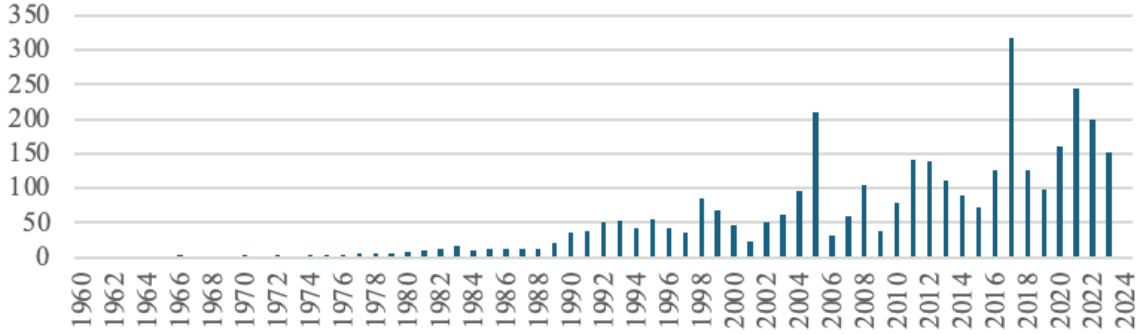
7. The post Second World War period was characterized by an exceptionally favourable global environment for growth, supported by multilateralism, capital accumulation, technological diffusion, expanding trade, and increasingly integrated global value chains. From 1990 to 2008, hyper-globalization relied on a development model based on cheap and abundant energy, mass consumption, economies of scale, and fragmented global production. This model supported rapid productivity growth and convergence but was also highly resource- and material-intensive, contributing to environmental degradation and climate change.

8. Between 2008 and 2020, the foundations of this global economic order began to weaken. Successive shocks from the global financial crisis, rising inequality, oil-price volatility, the COVID-19 pandemic, and a broad productivity slowdown progressively eroded the conditions that had sustained the previous growth model. Geoeconomic fragmentation further accelerated this transformation, with tariffs, export controls, investment screening, and friend-shoring reshaping global production and moving the world economy towards a more State-driven, regionalized, and security-oriented configuration.

9. These developments signalled the emergence of a new era in the global environment, increasingly shaped by a set of structural and interacting global challenges: climate change and mounting resource constraints, artificial intelligence and technological disruption, and geoeconomic fragmentation. Unlike the temporary shocks that characterized earlier periods, these modern challenges are becoming persistent features of the global economy and are altering the fundamental conditions under which countries develop and grow. For developing and middle-income countries in particular, these challenges are changing the opportunities and constraints associated with trade, technology, structural transformation and long-term development.

10. The climate crisis is not only looming but has already arrived, as evidenced by increasingly volatile natural disasters. Figure 1 shows the increasing cost of natural disasters, with a marked rise in spending on resultant damage since the 1990s. Beyond natural disasters, there is anticipated global warming of 2°C by around 2048 coupled with increasing biodiversity loss.

Figure 1. Total economic damages of disasters excluding earthquakes (billion USD)



Source: UNECA (2026)[3]

11. Bilal and Kanzig (2026)[4] estimate that sub-Saharan Africa could lose 20% of GDP for each 1°C increase in temperature. UNECA (2025)[5] estimates that North Africa could lose at least 11% of GDP per capita for a +1°C increase in temperature. These estimates likely represent a lower bound given the impact of temperature increase on the economy is non-linear, as demonstrated by the 2026 heatwaves across the world.

12. The economic impacts of climate change and ecological degradation are far-reaching, resulting in damage to infrastructure and assets, reduced labour productivity, disrupted agriculture and fisheries, and increased health risks. In particular, biodiversity collapse will further undermine ecosystem services that are essential to production, intensifying economic and social instability worldwide. The poorest populations and those living in climate-sensitive regions will be hit hardest, leading to rising inequality, food insecurity, and forced displacement.

13. Moving beyond climate change, geoeconomic fragmentation is reshaping the global environment by changing the way countries trade, invest, and access technology. Growing evidence shows that geopolitical distance is increasingly affecting the geography of trade, foreign direct investment and cross-border finance, while restrictions on strategic technologies are also constraining technology diffusion. Increasing trade barriers, export controls and technological decoupling also weaken knowledge spillovers, innovation and productivity growth. At the same time, the reorganization of global value chains through friend-shoring and other security-driven strategies can increase prices and disrupt supply chains. These effects are particularly important for developing and middle-income countries, whose growth strategies have often traditionally relied on foreign investment, technology diffusion, and integration into global value chains.

14. In addition to climate change and geoeconomic fragmentation, the world is undergoing a technological revolution with the advent of AI. At present AI remains an untapped transformational socioeconomic potential which could play a critical role in societies as the impact of the ageing global population on the labour supply will intensify in the coming years. However, at the same time, on a global scale, artificial intelligence may end up widening productivity gaps between countries and may reduce the opportunities for middle-income countries to integrate into global value chains. The effects of AI remain particularly uncertain, as long-term outcomes will depend on the pace and direction of technological progress,

[3] UNECA (2026). "Revisiting the middle-income trap amid emerging global challenges."
[4] Adrien Bilal, Diego R Känzig, The Macroeconomic Impact of Climate Change: Global Versus Local Temperature, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Volume 141, Issue 2, May 2026, Pages 889–944, https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjag011
[5] "Impact of climate change on Africa: Urgent need to shift the economic paradigm", UNECA, August 2025

whether AI complements or substitutes for labour, as well as countries' capacity to develop the infrastructure, skills and innovation capabilities needed to benefit from AI.

15. Beyond their individual effects, these global challenges will increasingly interact, creating the potential for non-linear and cascading impacts across sectors and countries. Climate shocks may disrupt supply chains and intensify competition for scarce resources; geopolitical tensions may constrain access to critical inputs, technologies and finance; while rapid technological change may amplify labour-market and productivity disruptions to reshape countries' comparative advantages. The resulting uncertainty concerns not only the timing and magnitude of future shocks, but also the way in which these global challenges will interact and the development trajectories they may generate.

16. In light of these global challenges, developing countries will therefore have to pursue growth and structural transformation in an environment characterized by recurrent disruptions, greater volatility, interconnected risks, and a much wider range of possible futures. Governments must prepare to face an unknown future, and in order to do so, policymakers must develop and adopt policies which support resilient societies, economies, and ecosystems, enabling countries to endure increasingly volatile and multidimensional cascading shocks, which will inevitably occur in the near and long-term.

2. Analysis

2.1. Defining Resilience for Policymaking

17. Resilience must first be clearly defined and understood so that policymakers have a common and operational foundation for policy development. The concept of resilience has evolved across several disciplinary traditions, including engineering, ecological, and evolutionary approaches[6]. Rather than treating these as mutually exclusive definitions, recent resilience science increasingly understands resilience as the capacity of a system (1) to cope with shocks, (2) to adapt to changing conditions, and, where necessary, (3) to transform in response to fundamental change and uncertainty[7]. These three capacities provide a useful framework for public policy because they distinguish between what aspects of the economy (or system) need to be preserved and what aspects may need to change.

[6] Pingault, N., and C. Martius (2024). "Resilience thinking: a brief overview." *ResAlliance Project Infobrief 1*, European Forest Institute.
[7] Norström, A., Queiroz, C., Nyström, M., et al. (2025). *Resilience Science Must-Knows: Nine Things Every Decision-Maker Should Know About Resilience*. Stockholm Resilience Centre, Global Resilience Partnership and Future Earth. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.17466370.

Table 1. Core Resilience Capacities for Public Policy

RESILIENCE CAPACITY	DEFINITION	POLICY OBJECTIVE
COPING	The capacity of a system to withstand and recover from shocks without major disruption to its essential functions.	Protect essential functions and prevent systemic breakdown.
ADAPTING	The capacity of a system to adjust, learn and reorganize in response to changing conditions while maintaining its core functions.	Modify behaviours, institutions, technologies or resource use so that the system remains viable under changing conditions.
TRANSFORMING	The capacity to fundamentally reconfigure structures, relationships and functions when the existing system or development trajectory is no longer viable or desirable.	Enable transition towards a different and more sustainable or desirable system.

Source: adapted from Norström et al. (2025).

18. These three capacities for resilience should not be understood as mutually exclusive or as successive stages through which every system must pass. They are complementary and may need to be combined differently depending on the nature of the shock or pressure, the characteristics of the system, and the policy objective. Coping measures can stabilize a system and provide time for adaptation; adaptation can enable a system to remain viable as conditions change; and transformation may become necessary when incremental adjustment is insufficient or when maintaining the existing system would reinforce an undesirable or unsustainable trajectory.

19. Strengthening resilience may involve preserving essential system functions, enabling adjustment to new conditions, or changing the system itself. These objectives can generate synergies but also tensions and trade-offs. Measures that increase the resilience of one sector, territory or social group can reduce that of another, while policies that successfully protect a system in the short run may reinforce vulnerabilities or lock-ins over the longer term. Policymakers therefore need to explicitly consider such trade-offs and distinguish between the resilience of desirable functions and institutions and the persistence of systems that may themselves be socially, economically or environmentally unsustainable.

20. This broader understanding also helps clarify the distinction proposed by Hynes et al. (2022)[8] between Resilience by Intervention (RBI) and Resilience by Design (RBD). RBI relies primarily on external interventions to protect or stabilize a system when disruption occurs, including measures such as emergency support, buffers, stockpiles or bailouts. RBD, by contrast, seeks to embed within the system the capacity to reorganize and respond endogenously to disruption. RBI and RBD should not, however, be considered direct equivalents of particular resilience capacities. RBI will often play an important role in coping with acute shocks and protecting essential functions, but it can also create the space required for subsequent adaptation. RBD can strengthen coping and adaptive capacities by increasing the ability of systems to respond flexibly and reorganize, while also enabling deeper transformation when existing structures are no longer appropriate. The relevant policy question is therefore not whether governments should choose intervention *or* design, but how the two approaches can be combined to strengthen the appropriate mix of coping, adaptive and transformative capacities.

21. In the short term, Resilience by Intervention remains indispensable for preventing systemic breakdown and protecting essential economic and social functions during crises such as financial shocks, geopolitical disruptions, pandemics or environmental disasters. Yet resilience cannot be built only once a crisis occurs. Governments and institutions also need to implement Resilience by Design, investing ex ante in the capacities that allow economies and societies to anticipate change, learn, reorganize and adapt as conditions evolve.

22. Over the longer term, policy should therefore seek an appropriate balance between protecting what needs to persist, adapting what can remain viable under new conditions, and transforming what is no longer compatible with desired development trajectories. This is particularly important when the status quo risks locking economies into vulnerable, inequitable, or environmentally unsustainable configurations. In such cases, resilient policy frameworks should not aim merely to restore the previous equilibrium after a shock, but to implement coping and adaptation capacities to create the conditions for transformation towards a more sustainable and resilient system.

2.2. Designing Policies for Resilient Societies, Economies, and Ecosystems

23. In order for policymakers to effectively design resilient policies, there is a need for in-depth analysis of social, economic, and ecologic systems. Following the Resilience by Intervention approach, timely analysis of current shocks impacting systems is critical for policymakers to design targeted policy interventions. However, for the Resilience by Design approach,

[8] Hynes, W., Trump, B.D., Kirman, A., Haldane, A., and Linkov, I. (2022). "Systemic resilience in economics." *Nature Physics*, 18, 381–384.

policymakers must design policies which allow economies to respond to and evolve with shocks yet to occur, and therefore they must prepare for the unexpected.

24. One critical tool available to support policymakers in preparing for unknown future shocks is Strategic Foresight. The OECD Strategic Foresight Toolkit for Resilient Public Policy (2025)[9] presents a five-step process for implementing Strategic Foresight for resilient public policy, as shown in Table 2. Through this Strategic Foresight process, policymakers first identify possible cross-cutting system-wide shocks or "disruptions", examine implications of these shocks, and develop a continuum of future scenarios which could result from these shocks. Policymakers then identify strategies for policy design and implementation under these scenarios and establish concrete policy recommendations which can be enacted today for policy resilience in the long run. Overall, Strategic Foresight provides policymakers with a rigorous method to qualitatively analyse scenarios and design resilient policies.

Table 2. Steps to Implementing Strategic Foresight for Resilient Public Policy

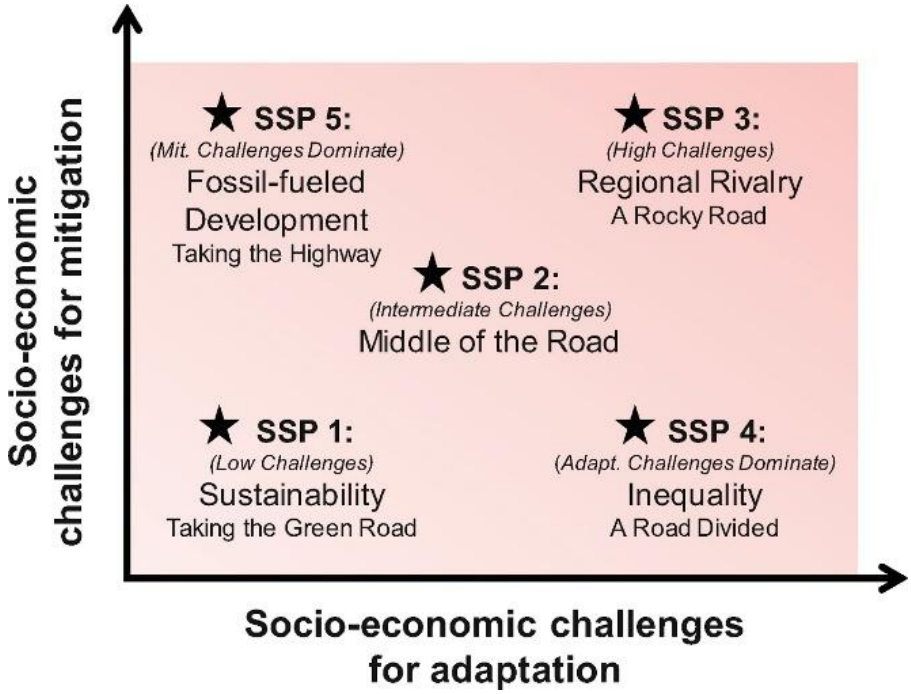
1.	**Explore Disruptions**	**Examine key assumptions and identify possible disruptions in the global, regional and national context**
2.	**Imagine Interactions**	Explore possible implications that would occur if two or more disruptions occur simultaneously
3.	**Create Scenarios**	Develop alternative future scenarios based on selected disruptions
4.	**Envision and Strategize**	Develop strategies for successful public policy under each alternative scenario
5.	**Recommend Policies**	Identify cross-cutting implications and develop scenario-agnostic actions to strengthen current policies

Source: Text Reproduced from OECD (2025) - figure 1.1

25. Beyond qualitative analysis, policymakers can additionally benefit from insights offered by long-run economic modelling, which provides a quantitative framework to compare alternative future scenarios and test different policies. One well known set of scenarios which are used to quantitatively test policies are the Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SSPs), as shown in Figure 2[10]. SSPs are narratives of alternative possible futures which differ by socioeconomic (GDP, equality), environmental (including fossil fuels, agriculture), demographic, and development (education, health) outcomes. Long-run economic modelling implements SSPs to quantitatively test and assess the economic and environmental impacts of different policies.

[9] OECD (2025). "Strategic Foresight Toolkit for Resilient Public Policy: A Comprehensive Foresight Methodology to Support Sustainable and Future-Ready Public Policy." OECD Publishing.
[10] O'Neill, B. C., E. Kriegler, K. L. Ebi, E. Kemp-Benedict, K. Riahi, D. S. Rothman, B. J. van Ruijven, D. P. van Vuuren, J. Birkmann, K. Kok, M. Levy, and W. Solecki (2017). "The roads ahead: Narratives for shared socioeconomic pathways describing world futures in the 21st century." *Global Environmental Change*. 42:169-180.

Figure 2. Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SSPs)



Source: O'neill et al. (2017)

26. Supported by Strategic Foresight and economic modelling, policymakers can design resilient policies for societies, economies and ecosystems. However, effective implementation of policies requires strategic governance. Three recommendations for strategic governance include:

1. Anchoring policy practice in guiding principles
2. Adopting anticipatory and adaptive governance
3. Preparing the next generation of leaders

27. In order to anchor policy practice in principles, decisionmakers can ensure that public policy is founded in factuality and rationality through consultations with scientific and academic communities as well as improved transparency and public engagement in the policy process. Decisionmakers can adopt anticipatory and adaptive governance through strategic long-term planning in order to hedge against future polycrises. Looking forwards, decisionmakers can invest in educating the next generation on strategic thinking to ensure their readiness for the events to come.

28. Strategic governance for resilience also requires institutions capable of coordinating across policy domains and time horizons. Because vulnerabilities and policy responses often cut across ministries, sectors, and levels of government, resilience cannot be effectively addressed

through isolated interventions. Governments need mechanisms that connect long-term strategic objectives with short-term decision-making, enable information and knowledge to circulate across institutions, and allow policies to be adjusted as new evidence and risks emerge. This includes monitoring changes in the operating environment, identifying signals that assumptions underlying existing policies are no longer valid, and maintaining the institutional capacity to modify or redirect policy pathways when necessary.

2.3. Resilient Policy Design to Adress Global Challenges

29. When designing policies for resilience, policymakers are encouraged to take into consideration nine key principles for resilience, as shown in Figure 3[11]. The core idea behind these nine principles is that policies must be designed bearing in mind the necessity to navigate accelerating risks via strategies which enable countries to cope, adapt, and transform with shocks. While policy design and implementation for resilient societies, economies, and ecosystems may consist of important upfront investments, making these investments in resilience today will pay off in the long-run as countries will be better prepared to handle what shocks may come.

Figure 3. Nine Key Principles for Resilience



Source: Norstrom et al. (2025)

[11] Norström, A, C. Queiroz, M. Nyström, A. Jiménez-Aceituno, A. Jonsson, A. McFadden, N. Milton, G. Peterson, M. Barnes, C. Béné, R. Biggs, E. Boyd, W. Broadgate, K. Brown, S. R. Carpenter, G. Collins, C. de Coning, F. Denton, R. Ferreira, C. Folke, L. Gordon, M. Hamann, J. Hornberg, T. McPhearson, H. Nagendra, C. Ringler, J. Rockström, P. Romero-Lankao, M. Scheffer, F. Westley, G. Ziervogel (2025). "Resilience Science Must-Knows: Nine Things Every Decision-Maker Should Know About Resilience." Stockholm Resilience Centre, Global Resilience Partnership, Future Earth.

30. Policies for resilience should be human-centred, focusing on fostering opportunities for continuous learning and innovation while ensuring diversity, equality, and empowerment so that all stakeholders can actively participate in making societies, economies, and ecosystems more resilient. Resilient policies should build upon and support relationships, strengthening social ties within and between communities as well as with nature. Lastly, policy design for resilience should carefully account for trade-offs and ensure that governance institutions are cross-cutting, collaborative, and responsive.

2.4. Embedding resilience into growth strategies becomes critical

31. The resilience perspective also changes the way structural transformation and economic growth should be approached. Resilience should not be understood as an objective separate from growth or transformation, but as a property of the development pathway itself. A resilient growth strategy should strengthen the capacity of economies to generate income, employment and productivity gains while remaining capable of adjusting their productive structures as environmental, technological and geopolitical conditions evolve. This implies assessing development choices not only according to their expected contribution to growth under a baseline scenario, but also according to their robustness to alternative futures, their effects on systemic vulnerabilities, and their capacity to preserve future options.

32. At the sectoral level, this requires combining resilience thinking with sustainability-transition approaches. Firms and sectors are embedded in wider systems that connect production to natural resources, infrastructure, technologies, finance, institutions, workers, and markets. Strengthening the resilience of one component may therefore shift risks or costs elsewhere in the system. Transition strategies should consequently identify which functions need to be preserved, which activities can adapt, and which structures may need to transform, while explicitly considering interdependencies, trade-offs, and distributional effects.

33. On illustrative example that highlights this challenge particularly clearly in North Africa is the agribusiness sector, where developing sustainable food systems becomes critical. Agribusiness SMEs depend simultaneously on agricultural inputs, water and energy systems, infrastructure, finance, labour, technologies, and both domestic and export markets. Climate change and resource scarcity may affect several of these components simultaneously. Building resilience in such complex systems therefore requires moving beyond individual measures towards coherent transition pathways that connect the desired long-term state of the sector with sequenced investments, institutional reforms and adaptive policy options.

2.5. Building and financing a common resilience

34. Two important dimensions of resilience deserve particular attention. First, resilience is not only a national or individual capacity, but also a collective one. In an increasingly interconnected world, vulnerabilities and shocks are transmitted across borders, and as such the resilience of one country may depend on that of its neighbours, regional markets, and the global system. Building resilience therefore also requires cooperation at the regional, continental, and global levels. Second, resilience needs to be financed. Resilience is closely intertwined with the sustainability transition, and as such implementing resilience requires substantial and sustained investment in adaptation, productive transformation, infrastructure and institutional capabilities.

35. Building a common economic resilience across borders requires including regional cooperation and integration. While individual economies are often concentrated in a narrow range of products, export markets, or sources of input, regional integration facilitates the development of regional value chains. Integrating into these regional value chains not only creates opportunities for higher domestic and regional value added but further can support economic diversification which can increase the capacity of economies to reallocate resources towards new activities as conditions change. On top of that, there is a need to develop regional policies and mechanisms that target common resilience. For North African countries, resilience strategies should therefore consider how regional cooperation and integration can advance opportunities for economic diversification while jointly reducing vulnerabilities to global challenges and shocks as well as expanding the range of future development options.

36. Building resilience requires significant up-front investments, with expected returns materializing in the long run through avoided losses, greater adaptability, and improved development opportunities. A resilience perspective also requires moving beyond financing isolated projects towards financing portfolios and pathways of investments that remain robust as conditions evolve. While benefits of investments may accrue beyond the individual investor, uncertainty over future shocks and development trajectories can make conventional project appraisal difficult, and, resultantly, socially desirable resilience investments may remain underfinanced.

37. Sustainable finance can help close this gap by directing public and private resources towards investments that strengthen adaptive capacity, support sustainable structural transformation and reduce future vulnerabilities. Public finance, development finance, risk-sharing instruments and private capital can play complementary roles, depending on the nature of the investment and the distribution of risks and returns.

3. Expert Group Meeting

3.1. Objectives

38. In this context, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) Sub-Regional Office for North Africa (SRO-NA) is convening an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on *Preparing for Future Transformations: Policy Design for Resilient Societies, Economies, and Ecosystems*.

39. The EGM is organized around a central question:

How can North African countries design and implement development pathways that strengthen resilience to multidimensional shocks and global challenges, while accelerating structural transformation and achieving long-term sustainable development?

40. The meeting will seek to:

- Examine key global challenges and shocks which North African countries are currently facing.
- Define and establish resilience as a key component of policies to support development and growth in the context of simultaneous global shocks.
- Illustrate how incorporating resilience into policies can enable societies, economies, and ecosystems to cope, adapt, and transform in the face of global challenges, present and future.
- Discuss how sustainable finance can be harnessed to build resilience.

3.2. Expected outcomes

41. The meeting is expected to produce:

- Recommendations for policymakers and decisionmakers to design, adopt, and implement policies for resilient societies, economies, and ecosystems in North Africa.
- Documented priority areas for policy action, financing, regional cooperation, capacity-building and technical assistance.
- Agreed recommendations transmitted to the forty-first session of the Committee and thereafter to the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development at its 2027 session.

3.3. Organization and Delivery

42. The EGM will be held in hybrid format on 4 November 2026 in Rabat, Morocco.

43. The EGM will be held as a one-day meeting convened in the margins of the forty-first session of the Committee on *Strengthening economic resilience mechanisms to address the repercussion of simultaneous global shocks in North Africa*, and its recommendations will feed directly into the Committee's deliberations.

44. The EGM will have three sessions on (1) Global Challenges Defining the 21st Century, (2) Developing Policies for Resilient Societies and Economies, and (3) Strategic Foresight for Resilient Futures.

45. The meeting will take place in English, French, and Arabic. Interpretation will be available in all three languages.

46. The meeting will bring together experts from governments, international organizations, think-tanks, and academia.

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