



Fostering recovery and transformation in Africa to reduce inequalities and vulnerabilities
ECA CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS

Fifty-fifth session of the Economic Commission for Africa
Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development

15 - 21 March 2023
Addis Ababa



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa



I. Conference overview

The fifty-fifth session of the Economic Commission for Africa consists of a preparatory meeting of the Committee of Experts of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, followed by the ministerial segment of the Conference. In addition to considering the statutory matters of the Commission, the Conference is one of the premier forums on the continent for dialogue and exchanges of views among African ministers responsible for finance, planning and economic development and governors of central banks on issues pertinent to the development agenda of Africa.

II. Theme of the fifty-fifth session

The theme of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission will be “Fostering recovery and transformation in Africa to reduce inequalities and vulnerabilities”.

High rates of growth in the past two decades have resulted in reduced poverty levels in Africa, with the share of the population living in extreme poverty decreasing from 55 to 35 per cent between 2000 and 2019. Nonetheless, a staggering 546 million people in Africa still live in extreme poverty. Alarming, global shocks are turning millions of vulnerable people into the continent’s new poor, reversing decades of progress. The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed an additional 55 million Afri-

cans below the poverty line, and the impact of the war in Ukraine is expected to further compound the challenge.

Even when growth rates were high in Africa, everyone did not benefit equally. For example, between 2004 and 2019, the top 10 per cent of wage earners received about 75 per cent of total income. High inequality, along with high levels of poverty, creates a vicious cycle in which structural bottlenecks persist, rendering the population in Africa perennially vulnerable to both economic and non-economic shocks.

The ability of African countries to effectively tackle poverty and inequality is now severely constrained given declining economic growth, narrowing fiscal space, rising debt, commodity shocks and tightening global financial conditions. The risk of missing the poverty and inequality targets set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union, is higher than it has ever been before.

The aim of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission is thus to renew focus and action on reducing poverty, inequality and other factors that leave the African population continuously vulnerable to these scourges. Recovery efforts must be pro-poor and inclusive, with a view to fostering a new social contract that offers equal opportunity for all. Considerable opportunities to reach these goals exist on

the continent and beyond, including through activities carried out under the African Continental Free Trade Area, green investments, digital transformation and reforms to the global financial architecture.

III. Date and venue

The fifty-fifth session of the Commission will be held at the Skylight Hotel in Addis Ababa in a hybrid format featuring both online and in-person participation from Wednesday, 15 March, to Tuesday, 21 March 2023.

IV. Format of the session

A. Committee of Experts, 15–17 March 2023

The Committee of Experts will hold a three-day preparatory technical meeting to consider the theme of the session, review the state of economic and social development in Africa and consider progress on regional integration. The Committee will also consider the statutory issues relating to the work of the Commission and make recommendations, as appropriate, for consideration by the Conference.

B. Conference of Ministers, 20 and 21 March 2023

The plenary meetings of the Conference will commence with a high-level policy dialogue on the theme of the session, followed by a round-table discussion on a series of sub-themes. The Conference is designed to be interactive and thought-provoking. Contributions from seasoned and high-level panellists will be used to guide the discussions, which will also be based on recent research reflected in the issues paper.

The annual Adebayo Adedeji lecture will also be held during the session.

V. Participation

As this is a statutory meeting of the Commission, all member States of the Commission are called upon to participate. Other participants may include relevant ministers and representatives of member States, entities of the United Nations system, including the specialized agencies, regional economic communities, pan-African financial institutions, African academic and research institutions, development partners and other intergovernmental organizations. Invitations will also be extended to partners and stakeholders in the private sector.

VI. Bureau

The Bureau represents the five African subregions. It comprises a Chair, three Vice-Chairs and a Rapporteur. Bureau members are elected at the commencement of the first meeting of each session, normally on a rotational basis, according to sub-region. The Chair or a Vice-Chair acting as Chair shall participate in the session in that capacity and not as the representative of the member by which he or she is accredited. The following Bureau composition is proposed for the fifty-fifth session:

- Chair: (East Africa)
- First Vice-Chair: (Southern Africa)
- Second Vice-Chair: (North Africa)
- Third Vice-Chair: (Central Africa)
- Rapporteur: (West Africa)