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Statutory issues: Reports on the work of the subsidiary bodies
of the Economic Commission for Africa

Report of the Intergovernmental Committees of **Senior Officials and Experts for North and West** **Africa on the work of their third joint session**

Note by the secretariat

The secretariat of the Economic Commission for Africa has the honour to transmit to the members of the Commission the report of the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts for North and West Africa on their third joint session.

* E/ECA/COE/43/1.

Report of the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts for North and West Africa on their third joint session

Introduction

1. The third joint session of the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts for North and West Africa was held from 19 to 21 November 2024, in Rabat, on the theme “Accelerating implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area in North and West Africa through digital transformation and economic diversification”. The subregional offices built on the successful experience of the previous joint sessions and took on board the feedback and recommendations provided by members of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

Part one

I. Opening of the session [agenda item 1]

A. Attendance

2. The joint session was attended by more than 100 participants, including representatives of 6 members of ECA in North Africa (Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia) and of 13 members of ECA in West Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d’Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo), and observers from regional economic communities and organizations, including the African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development, the African Solidarity Fund, the Arab Maghreb Union, the Central Bank of West African States, the Economic and Statistical Observatory of Sub-Saharan Africa (AFRISTAT), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development, the Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the Ghana International Trade and Finance Conference, the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation, the Liptako-Gourma Integrated Development Authority, the National Association of Nigerian Traders, the Niger Basin Authority, the Organization for the Development of the Senegal River, the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area, the West African Development Bank, the West African Monetary Agency and the West African Monetary Institute. Representatives of United Nations entities, namely, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Development Programme in Morocco, the Office of the Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel and the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Morocco, attended the joint session.

B. Opening statements

3. During the opening of the joint session, speeches were delivered by the Director of Multilateral Cooperation and International Economic Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates of Morocco and outgoing Chair of the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North Africa, Abdellah Ben Mellouk; the Director of Strategy and Studies at the Ministry of Economy and Finance of Côte d’Ivoire and the outgoing Chair of the Bureau of the Intergovernmental

Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for West Africa, Ali Bamba; and the Resident Coordinator in Morocco, Nathalie Fustier.

4. Mr. Ben Mellouk welcomed all participants to Morocco and noted that achieving the objectives of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area required not only strong political will but also investment in economic development, including by building production and export capacities. Strengthening the fabric of business in Africa to increase local value addition and reduce import dependency remained an imperative.

5. Mr. Bamba referred to the main achievements attained by the Subregional Office for West Africa since the twenty-sixth session of the Intergovernmental Committee for West Africa, including the regular provision of technical support and advisory services to countries in the subregion for the formulation of national strategies to implement the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and national development plans and the establishment of an interregional peer-learning platform. He emphasized the efforts made to adopt budgetary processes that took into account the demographic dividend of countries.

6. Ms. Fustier, speaking on behalf of ECA and all United Nations entities in Morocco, welcomed representatives to the country. She noted the transformative potential of digitalization in driving economic growth and accelerating the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. She emphasized the role of the Agreement in enabling businesses to connect across borders more efficiently, in fostering trade and in supporting the e-commerce revolution in North and West Africa.

II. Election of the bureaux [agenda item 2]

7. Participants elected the following bureaux:

North Africa

Chair: Sudan
 Vice-Chair: Tunisia
 Rapporteur: Egypt

West Africa

Chair: Senegal
 Vice-Chair: Guinea-Bissau
 Rapporteur : Côte d'Ivoire

III. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work [agenda item 3]

8. The representative of the secretariat presented the provisional agenda and the draft programme of work.

9. Participants adopted the agenda and the programme of work of the joint session.

Part two

IV. Ad hoc expert group meeting [agenda item 4]

10. The theme of the meeting was “harnessing the potential of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area: the catalytic role of economic diversification and innovative digital technologies”. The discussions were centred on the implementation of the Agreement and addressed such challenges as regulatory alignment, infrastructure deficits and stakeholder engagement. The need for policy harmonization was underscored. The role of digital technologies, in particular e-commerce, financial technology (known as fintech) and blockchain, was emphasized as a critical driver for expanding cross-border trade and improving economic resilience. Participants also highlighted the importance of diversifying economies beyond commodities, fostering regional value chains and empowering small and medium-sized enterprises, especially those led by women and young people. The main recommendations emanating from the meeting included those on investing in digital infrastructure, implementing policy reforms, strengthening public-private partnerships to support inclusive and sustainable growth and positioning Africa as a competitive player in global trade.

V. Recent economic and social conditions in North and West Africa: review of subregional profiles [agenda item 5]

A. North Africa

11. The secretariat (Subregional Office for North Africa) presented the main findings contained in the report entitled “Socioeconomic development landscape: North Africa subregional profile 2023–2024” (ECA/SRO-NA/ICSOE/39/3–ECA/SRO-WA/ICSOE/27/3). The report provided an analysis of macroeconomic developments and selected social indicators on unemployment in North Africa. Despite the economic recovery of the subregion in 2021, the gains had been difficult to sustain. North African countries should prioritize fiscal adjustments in the near term, including the prompt implementation of tax reforms, the restructuring of subsidies and the enhancement of public spending efficiency. Macroeconomic conditions should be stabilized through prudent public spending, targeted employment programmes and exchange rate management. In the medium term, countries should work towards sustainable debt reduction, economic diversification and structural reforms to reduce their reliance on commodities, which could be done, for example, by attracting private sector investment, enhancing institutional capacity and building resilience to economic and climate-related shocks. The report contained a recommendation that Egypt, Libya, the Sudan and Tunisia should prioritize exchange rate stability, address fiscal imbalances and support conflict recovery to achieve macroeconomic stability.

12. Participants noted that some of the economic indicators used in the report were different from those published by the Central Bank of Egypt and the High Commission for Planning of Morocco. The representative of Morocco noted that the recommendation on implementing structural reforms was overly generic and suggested that it could be made more specific by, for example, including measures to broaden the tax base. A representative of Libya emphasized the importance of diversification, which was critical for the country as it developed its diversification strategy. The representative of Sierra Leone proposed that countries in the two subregions collaborate to identify investment

opportunities in both subregions. The representative of Burkina Faso noted that security and budget constraints were the primary challenges for Sahel countries and recommended that the issues be addressed in future reports to enhance their relevance for policymaking.

13. The Director of the Subregional Office for North Africa, Adam Elhiraika, took note of the comments made by participants. He stated that data sets might vary according to their respective sources. The data used in the report had been collected in June 2024 and any data published after that date had not been considered.

B. West Africa

14. The secretariat (Subregional Office for West Africa) presented insights from the report on the socioeconomic profile of the subregion in 2024 (ECA/SRO-NA/ICSOE/39/6–ECA/SRO-WA/ICSOE/27/6) and the outlook for 2025.

15. They said that the main findings demonstrated that West Africa was experiencing adverse social and economic effects from global and regional challenges, including the lingering consequences of a slow recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, climate change, geopolitical tensions and inflationary pressures on food and energy prices. In addition, the subregion faced persistent security and governance challenges, food insecurity and demographic pressures, all of which had impeded its economic recovery and weakened its social fabric. A deteriorating security situation had caused loss of life and physical destruction, forced population displacements and increased the need for humanitarian assistance. The situation was undermining the business environment and confidence among domestic and foreign investors. The subregion faced higher rates of youth unemployment than that of the general population, with 24.2 per cent of young people not in employment, education or training in 2024.

16. Despite the daunting challenges, the subregion had demonstrated economic resilience by achieving a moderate recovery. The average economic growth rate for countries in West Africa was forecast to stand at 3.8 per cent in 2024 and increase to 4.3 per cent in 2025. Average inflation rates for the countries were projected to be 22.3 per cent in 2024 and 16.7 per cent in 2025.¹ Although the current account position, fiscal space and debt sustainability had remained unfavourable in 2024, West Africa presented huge opportunities derived from natural resources that needed to be harnessed through the creation of regional value chains and economic diversification, which were catalysts for regional integration and development.

17. The ensuing discussions were focused on ensuring that the economic data presented in the report were consistent with data from national sources. Participants emphasized the importance of analysing data that were recent and sourced nationally. They noted the generic nature of the recommendations regarding security challenges and called for more specific, targeted solutions to address them. They referred to issues relating to compliance with macroeconomic convergence criteria, especially in the Sahel, which were compounded by worsening security. They suggested that the temporary suspension of the regular convergence compliance for 2020 and 2021 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic could be adapted and applied to the Sahel countries most exposed to the security crisis. Experts recommended that analysis should take into account factors that were exogenous to the subregion and heterogeneous among the countries so that tailored measures could be

¹ International Monetary Fund, *Regional Economic Outlook: Sub-Saharan Africa – Reforms amid Great Expectations* (Washington, D.C., 2024).

identified to address disparities, in particular those between Sahel and non-Sahel countries in West Africa.

VI. Review of the implementation of regional and international development agendas and special initiatives [agenda item 6]

A. Progress of North African countries towards sustainable development

1. Presentation

18. A representative of the Subregional Office for North Africa presented the report entitled “Progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in North Africa: unlocking the positive impact of migration on sustainable development”(ECA/SRO-NA/ICSOE/39/4–ECA/SRO-WA/ICSOE/27/4).The report was aimed at assisting countries in monitoring their performance in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with a detailed analysis of trends per country for the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. It contained an analysis of the progress made, with a focus on remittances as alternative sources to finance development and a discussion of the challenges and opportunities associated with leveraging the contribution of migration to sustainable development in North Africa.

19. The representative noted that, although North Africa had been the best-performing subregion, it had made limited progress towards attaining the Goals. On the one hand it had made progress towards attaining Goals 1 (no poverty), 3 (good health and well-being, including reductions in maternal and child mortality), 13 (climate action) and 17 (partnerships for the Goals). However, significant challenges had persisted in efforts to achieve Goal 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality) and 10 (reducing inequality). There had also been setbacks on Goal 2 (zero hunger), 6 (clean water and sanitation) and 8 (decent work and economic growth) owing to food insecurity, water scarcity and economic uncertainty. Given the limited fiscal space and constrained access to international resources, innovative funding mechanisms were crucial. Remittance flows should be leveraged as a resilient income source by fostering an enabling regulatory environment, offering diaspora investment incentives, producing accurate migration data and enhancing coordination among stakeholders to maximize the impact of migration on development.

2. Discussion

20. Participants noted the importance of continuing efforts to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to take greater advantage of migration by strengthening domestic resource mobilization, attracting private investment, enhancing debt sustainability and leveraging innovative financing. The representative of Morocco indicated that the country’s score on the Sustainable Development Goals Index might not fully reflect its development between 2015 and 2023. For instance, the country had made great strides in enhancing access to water. Developing coherent and integrated policies on water, energy, food and the environment would be an important solution to water scarcity in the subregion. Participants agreed that it was important to enhance South-South cooperation, reinforce intra-African efforts to share best practices, leverage trade among North African countries and with the rest of the continent, and track the attainment of the Goals.

21. The representative of the Subregional Office took note of the comments and recommendations and confirmed the intention of the Office to collaborate closely with relevant national departments and with the secretariat of the Arab

Maghreb Union to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union.

B. Sustainable development report on West Africa for 2024

1. Presentation

22. A representative of the Subregional Office for West Africa gave a presentation on the implementation of regional and global agreements and development agendas and initiatives. The year 2024 had been unique: during the Summit of the Future, held in September 2024, world leaders had reaffirmed shared commitments to accelerate the attainment of the Goals; it was the first year of the second 10-year plan on the implementation of Agenda 2063; and the world was facing numerous crises. The report was focused on the five Goals (3, 5, 8, 14 and 17) that were aligned with the theme of the 2025 high-level political forum on sustainable development and on the three Goals (1, 2 and 16) that were considered a priority in West Africa. According to the findings in the report, West Africa was making progress towards many of the Goals, though not quickly enough to achieve the targets. It was on track to meet only 6 per cent of the targets, and a significant data gap persisted, as 60 targets could not be measured.

2. Discussion

23. Participants highlighted the need to enhance data availability to inform public policies geared towards attainment of the Goals. Geopolitical fragmentation, political instability, insecurity and governance deficits had adversely affected the achievement of the Goals. Participants emphasized the importance of sharing success stories and examples from countries that had made significant progress. Recognizing diaspora remittances as a vital financing channel for realizing the 2030 Agenda, participants proposed that ECA conduct a comprehensive study on the contribution of remittances to the attainment of the Goals and to economic development, especially in West Africa.

VII. Statutory issues [agenda item 7]

A. Presentation

24. The Director of the Subregional Office for North Africa presented the report on the activities of the Office between October 2023 and September 2024 (ECA/SRO-NA/ICSOE/39/8) and the programme of work for 2025 (ECA/SRO-NA/ICSOE/39/2/Rev.1). He drew attention to notable achievements, which had included bolstering policymaking capabilities in such areas as taxation and migration, facilitating the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and advancing regional value chains, as exemplified by electric vehicle production involving the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Morocco and Zambia. Partnerships with Governments, United Nations agencies and academia, including Mohammed V University, had facilitated knowledge-sharing and research on sustainable development, food security and climate finance.

25. The Director said that, in the proposed programme of work of the Subregional Office for 2025, the strategy on and implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, climate action and expanded technical assistance for Mauritania and the Sudan would be prioritized. Gender-sensitive programmes, fiscal reforms and inclusive growth were very important. Planning for the period 2026–2028 was focused on

migration, digital transformation and regional integration. Strategic partnerships, innovation and technical assistance were very important to address sustainable development challenges. He reaffirmed the Office's commitment to make progress towards the goals of the Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals.

26. The Director of the Subregional Office for West Africa, Ngone Diop, presented the results achieved by the Office through the programme of work for 2024, which had been carried out between November 2023 and October 2024. As explained in the report (ECA/SRO-NA/ICSOE/39/5–ECA/SRO-WA/ICSOE/27/5), the programme had been implemented in challenging circumstances, given the many crises and the geopolitical and security issues in West Africa and the wider Sahel.

27. The main achievements had included progress made on projects related to the African Continental Free Trade Area, the development of national and regional trade strategies, and the provision of technical support for budgeting that took into account the demographic dividend in Burkina Faso, the Niger, Senegal and Togo. Under capacity-building initiatives, entrepreneurs, in particular women and young people, had been empowered through such platforms as the West Africa Business Linkages Platform. The programme for 2025 would be focused on the demographic dividend, the Area, economic diversification, macroeconomic policy analysis and the alignment of efforts with the two agendas.

28. A representative of the Strategic Planning, Oversight and Results Division gave a presentation on the activities of ECA under the programme of work for 2024. She provided a brief overview of The Pact for the Future and the importance of adapting the international cooperation frameworks to present realities. Africa had two frameworks (the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063) that served a single mission, and it was important to align them to ensure an integrated delivery. ECA was well positioned to support countries in achieving the Goals through its convening, think-tank and operational functions. The representative provided an overview of the programming context for ECA, including its primary mandate, medium-term plan (2022–2025), programme plan and budget, and annual business plan. She referred to the strategic role of the subregional offices, with their specialization in various domains, and referred to their programmes of work.

B. Discussion

29. The discussion on West Africa was focused on the scope of ECA activities for West Africa, which were driven by country requests. Participants thanked ECA for its substantial support for its members and urged it to strengthen countries' capacity to attain the Goals, implement the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and ascertain demographic dynamics for development. They discussed the ways in which countries could be supported in the following years and called for best practices and experiences to be shared between the two subregions under South-South cooperation.

30. In the discussion on North Africa, participants noted the importance of supporting small and medium-sized enterprises as drivers of economic growth, job creation and climate resilience. They called for targeted programmes to enhance the capacities of such enterprises and to integrate them into regional and global value chains. They highlighted the critical need to address security, climate change and governance challenges in the Sahel as a foundational step towards ensuring regional stability and unlocking economic opportunities. They discussed proposals for development corridors between North Africa and the Sahel, through which natural and human resources would be leveraged to

foster peace and economic stability. The initiatives would be aimed at building resilient communities while enhancing regional integration and fostering mutually beneficial partnerships across borders. The main recommendations of participants were focused on enhancing South-South cooperation and triangular partnerships for the exchange of best practices, in particular between the two subregions.

VIII. Presentation of flagship initiatives of the Economic Commission for Africa [agenda item 8]

31. A representative of the secretariat presented an overview of the work being carried out by the Subregional Office for North Africa on the interlinkages between migration and development. He focused on the work of ECA to support African countries in meeting the 23 objectives of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. He stated that, between 2019 and 2023, ECA had supported six African countries in establishing a database on digital migrants and mechanisms under which the skills and qualifications of African migrants would be recognized in their host countries. Migration stakeholders had received training. The representative highlighted the work to support African countries in achieving objectives 19 (establish conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries) and 20 (promote faster, safer and cheaper transfer of remittances and foster financial inclusion of migrants) of the Global Compact. He shared the scope and objectives of the new development account project, which was aimed at supporting countries in integrating the contributions of their diaspora into national development strategies and facilitating and promoting their diaspora as partners in sustainable development projects. Through the programme, six African countries (Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ghana, Lesotho and Tunisia) would be assisted in achieving objectives 19 and 20.

32. A representative of the Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resources Management Division gave a presentation on the support of ECA for its members in responding to the principal messages emanating from the tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, held in 2024. He said that the Forum had provided a multi-stakeholder platform for driving progress towards the implementation of the two agendas. At the tenth session, participants had reviewed the progress made towards the attainment of Goals 1, 2, 13, 16 and 17, as well as the corresponding goals of Agenda 2063, with emphasis on the second 10-year plan for implementation of the latter. Main outcomes had included peer learning, capacity-building and stronger national processes for voluntary national and local reviews. Participants had also adopted the Addis Ababa Declaration on the Effective Delivery of Sustainable, Resilient and Innovative Solutions to Reinforce the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and to Eradicate Poverty in Times of Crises (ECA/RFSD/2024/12), advocated inclusive green recovery and accelerated progress towards the achievement of the Goals, prepared the continent's position for the high-level political forum on sustainable development held that year and noted transformative activities for advancing the implementation of the two agendas at all levels.

33. Notable observations emanating from the tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development had been that, globally, countries were on track to achieve only 16 per cent of targets for the Goals by 2030. In Africa, only 10 of 144 measurable targets would be achievable without urgent action.

34. Responding to the presentation, participants emphasized the need to reconcile the objectives of economic growth with sustainable development by considering social factors and prioritizing environmental protection, including

environmental impact assessments. They urged ECA to provide a comprehensive framework, such as the integrated planning and reporting toolkit, in which the four dimensions of sustainable development – social, economic, environmental and governance – were integrated, in alignment with national development plans.

35. Conflicts, governance deficits, geopolitical tensions and exogenous shocks continued to negatively affect the attainment of the Goals, underscoring the need for countries to strengthen their preparedness and build resilience. Collective efforts at the continental level were required to address the root causes of conflicts and governance challenges that hindered progress towards attainment of the Goals.

IX. Consideration and adoption of the draft recommendations of the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts for North and West Africa [agenda item 9]

36. The committees made and adopted the recommendations listed below and requested that the respective bureaux convey them to the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

A. Economic diversification and industrialization

37. Both committees recommended that Governments should:

(a) Modernize and finance national statistical systems to boost capacities, including on the use of trade data, especially in relation to the African Continental Free Trade Area, and establish a platform for information-sharing, which would ensure access to real-time data for all stakeholders;

(b) Strengthen regional and cross-border infrastructure² that facilitates trade among North African countries, trade among West African countries and trade between the two subregions;

(c) Enhance capacities and exchange expertise and knowledge related to trade policies and digitalization in the two subregions;

(d) Unlock the potential of small and medium-sized enterprises in various sectors, in particular those owned by women and young people, through specific retraining to support access to substantive finance and national and subregional markets;

(e) Work with private sector stakeholders from both subregions to support business linkages, peer learning and exposure.

B. Macroeconomic stability and debt management

38. With support from ECA and other development partners, Governments in both subregions should:

² Including transport infrastructure, such as high-quality roads, railways, ports, airports and trade corridors; energy infrastructure, such as cross-border power grids and renewable energy resources to ensure a stable and affordable energy supply, which is essential for economic growth and industrialization as anchored in the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area; and digital infrastructure, such as an expanded broadband network and digital platforms to promote e-commerce and digital trade among countries within and across both subregions.

- (a) Devise and implement sound fiscal and monetary policies and enforce structural reforms to support inclusive economic growth;
- (b) Ensure price stability by keeping inflation within a manageable range;
- (c) Develop rigorous policies and measures to prevent or address substantial currency depreciation;
- (d) Take urgent action on debt sustainability, including by maintaining a debt-to-gross domestic product ratio that would not impede poverty reduction or sustainable development efforts;
- (e) Strengthen domestic resource mobilization, including through sound tax policies, subsidy restructuring, tax revenue enhancement and effective public spending;
- (f) Leverage innovative and renewable financing mechanisms to mobilize additional resources, expand remittances and establish an environment that encourages diaspora investments;
- (g) Ensure coordination on migration and establish effective partnerships to improve migration management and the contribution of remittances to development;
- (h) Provide an integrated modelling framework in which the dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social, environmental and governance-related) are captured simultaneously;
- (i) Facilitate experience-sharing among countries and between the subregions, including homegrown solutions that could be tailored to the contexts of other countries;
- (j) Strengthen coordination among countries to accelerate the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area.

C. Crisis and risk preparedness and response

39. Countries in both subregions faced numerous crises that were mutually reinforcing, including economic, climate change and security crises. Governments should therefore:

- (a) Address the challenges of climate change by developing innovative and effective strategies to utilize water resources and renewable energy and ensure the sustainable use of natural resources;
- (b) Leverage digitalization and innovation to develop and implement sector-wide policies and programmes on water resources, energy and food;
- (c) Promote or expand the implementation of green initiatives and green value chains across economic sectors, including agriculture and minerals.

D. General recommendations for both subregions

40. Governments should:

- (a) Build capacity on the sustainable management of water resources through transboundary basin organizations and national hydrometeorological services;
- (b) Study the contribution of diaspora remittances to the attainment of the Goals and their impact on economic development;

(c) Carry out national and subregional results-oriented initiatives to implement the outcomes of the tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and the Summit of the Future;

(d) Actively participate in the eleventh session of the Forum, in 2025, to share good practices and evidence-based solutions to increase the pace and scale of the implementation of the two agendas;

(e) Invite countries and regional economic communities to consider holding subregional forums on sustainable development as bottom-up participatory platforms to prepare for sessions of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

E. Recommendations specific to each subregion

41. In addition to making recommendations applicable to both subregions, participants proposed solutions tailored to the unique challenges of each subregion.

42. Governments in West Africa should address the root causes of its crises, namely, food insecurity and terrorism and related insecurity, by strengthening good governance institutions and promoting synergistic, complementary and integrated measures in line with the peace-security-development nexus.

43. The Intergovernmental Committee for North Africa called upon ECA, in partnership with regional and international organizations, to assist countries in the subregion in:

(a) Strengthening South-South cooperation, exchanging best practices and expertise and learning from comparative experiences in leveraging innovative digital technologies to boost intra-African trade;

(b) Accelerating implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and increasing regional integration;

(c) Developing green regional value chains, relying on clean and renewable energy, promoting a carbon-free economy through capacity development and expertise exchange, and supporting the formulation of economic policies;

(d) Improving the mobilization of domestic financial resources, in particular by increasing tax revenue through digitalized tax systems and by combating tax evasion;

(e) Improving their debt management, alleviating their debt burden and enhancing their debt sustainability;

(f) Increasing diaspora contributions to development, integrating diaspora contributions into national development strategies and directing remittances towards investment in the country of origin;

(g) Accelerating implementation of the two agendas;

(h) Exchanging economic information and data to accelerate implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area;

(i) Boosting economic empowerment and supporting micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises and young and women entrepreneurs;

(j) Presenting the results of the technical support received, measured using digital indicators if possible;

(k) Leveraging innovative digital technologies to enhance digital cooperation and intra-African trade.

39. The Intergovernmental Committee for West Africa called upon ECA, in partnership with regional and international organizations:

(a) To advocate a differentiated commitment to respecting macroeconomic convergence criteria for countries in West Africa facing a security crisis, such as the same type of adjustments made during the COVID-19 pandemic, to enable a more effective response from the countries concerned;

(b) To include in the socioeconomic profile report specific, targeted recommendations to address the security crises in the subregion, with a particular focus on the Sahel;

(c) To support the development of South-South cooperation, in particular with North Africa, with a focus on the areas in which the two subregions have comparable advantages and on regional peer learning and experience-sharing among countries for the attainment of the Goals;

(d) To accelerate and intensify the deployment of the integrated planning and reporting toolkit to strengthen the capacity of countries in strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting in relation to national development plans and the two agendas.

X. Date and venue of the next sessions of the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts for North and West Africa [agenda item 10]

44. The Chair of the joint session and Director of Planning at the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Cooperation of Senegal, Cheikh Modou Thiam, highlighted the need to agree upon the dates and venue for the next joint session. Participants decided that the next session would be held on mutually agreed dates between October and November 2025. The Government of Senegal offered to host the next joint session.

XI. Other matters [agenda item 11]

45. Participants requested that ECA clarify the rules for electing the bureaux and the criteria for making recommendations. They advised countries to deliberate internally before selecting the venue for the next joint session, for which West Africa proposed the following themes: addressing African economic vulnerabilities vis-à-vis the numerous crises, tackling security issues for sustainable development, fostering transborder cooperation, managing water and energy for regional integration, advancing e-commerce and leveraging digital innovation and artificial intelligence for sustainable development.

XII. Closing of the session [agenda item 12]

46. A vote of thanks was extended to ECA by a representative of Mauritania on behalf of all participants.

47. The directors of the two subregional offices thanked all participants for the fruitful discussions and strategic guidance. Mr. Thiam declared the proceedings of the third joint session closed.