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Economic Commission for Africa
Committee of Experts of the Conference of African
Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
Forty-third meeting
Addis Ababa, 12–14 March 2025

Agenda item 9

Consideration and adoption of the report of the Committee of Experts
and consideration of recommendations and draft resolutions

Report of the Committee of Experts on its forty-third meeting

Introduction

1. The forty-third meeting of the Committee of Experts of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development of the Economic Commission for Africa was held in Addis Ababa in a hybrid format featuring both in-person and online participation, from 12 to 14 March 2025.

Part one

I. Opening of the forty-third meeting of the Committee of Experts and the fifty-seventh session of the Economic Commission for Africa [agenda item 1]

A. Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following members of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA): Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

3. The following entities of the United Nations system were represented: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Labour Organization, Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, World Bank, World Food Programme, World Meteorological Organization.



4. Observers from the following States Members of the United Nations were present: Canada, China, Japan, Sri Lanka, Türkiye, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
5. Representatives of the following intergovernmental and regional organizations were present: African Civil Aviation Commission, African Development Bank, African Export-Import Bank, African Regional Organization of the International Trade Union Confederation, African Tax Administration Forum, African Union Commission, Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, Eastern and Southern African Trade and Development Bank, European Union, secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area.
6. The following regional economic community was represented: Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa.
7. Observers were present from the following entities: Addis Ababa University, AeTrade Group, African Airlines Association, African Centre for Economic Transformation, AfricaNenda Foundation, African Forum and Network on Debt and Development, Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, Badji Mokhtar-Annaba University, Business Unity South Africa, Caritas Switzerland, Development Reimagined, Enderase Youth Association, Ethiopian Aviation Forum, Ethiopian Youth Council, Ethiopian Youth Dialogue for Peace Association, Global System for Mobile Communications Association (GSMA), Global Trade Analysis Project of Purdue University, Green Climate Fund, HawKar, Hurricane Island Centre for Science and Leadership, Independent Continental Youth Advisory Council on the African Continental Free Trade Area, Model Africa Union-Ethiopia, Mustapha Stambouli University, National School of Business and Management of Tangier, National Youth Council of Nigeria, National Youth Development Agency, New Generation University College Chapter of the United Nations Association of Ethiopia, Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority, Open Society Foundations, Pan African Youth Union, People Empowering People (PEP) Africa, Project Health Education Achievement Love (HEAL) Ethiopia, Southern and Eastern Africa Trade Information and Negotiations Institute, Synergy International Systems, Tax Justice Network Africa, The Youth Print, Trade Union Congress of Namibia, Uniting to Combat Neglected Tropical Diseases, Women Entrepreneurs for Intra-African Trade, World Resources Institute.

B. Opening statements

8. The opening session was chaired by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, Economic Development and Investment Promotion of Zimbabwe and Chair of the outgoing Bureau of the Committee of Experts, Andrew Bvumbe.
9. Opening statements were delivered by the Deputy Executive Secretary (Programme Support) of ECA, Antonio Pedro, and the State Minister of Finance for Economic Cooperation of Ethiopia, Semereta Sewasew.
10. In his opening remarks, Mr. Bvumbe highlighted the major opportunity represented by the African Continental Free Trade Area to transform the continent through economic diversification and sustainable industrialization and, in that context, called for African States and institutions to take a coordinated approach to strengthening regional value chains and make targeted investments in a variety of areas, including infrastructure, technology, innovation and digital trade, as well as green financing, while ensuring that growth was environmentally and socially sustainable. Acknowledging progress that had been made by the Bureau with the support of ECA on financial and economic reforms at the regional and international levels, on financial and digital governance and in amplifying the voice of Africa in the reform of the

global financial architecture, he called for efforts to build on those achievements and for strategies that fostered economic transformation through the Area.

11. In his statement, the Deputy Executive Secretary (Programme Support) of ECA pointed out that the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area was a development blueprint and a platform for Africa to assert its position in a unified manner. Noting that challenges with implementation of the Agreement included slow ratification of its protocols, he reaffirmed the commitment of ECA to helping its members to seize the opportunity presented by the Agreement and called upon the experts to propose transformative, strategic actions for its implementation.

12. In her statement, Ms. Sewasew called for innovative solutions to address such challenges as inadequate infrastructure, fragmented policies and financial constraints. She underscored the need for harmonized trade policies and customs procedures, robust regional infrastructure development and investment, measures to address violent extremism, and improved freedom of movement of people and goods. She urged the experts to propose action-oriented recommendations for the realization of the Area and stressed her Government's commitment to enhancing regional integration through trade, highlighting the strategic measures that it had already taken.

II. Election of the Bureau and adoption of the agenda and programme of work [agenda item 2]

13. The following countries were unanimously elected by the Committee to form the new Bureau:

Chair:	Morocco
First Vice-Chair:	Cameroon
Second Vice-Chair:	Benin
Third Vice-Chair:	Kenya
Rapporteur:	Zimbabwe

14. Following an acceptance statement by the newly elected Chair, Head of the Multilateral African Affairs Division of the Ministry of Economy and Finance of Morocco, Zakaria El Harmiri, the Committee adopted without further amendment the programme of work and the following agenda, based on the draft programme of work (E/ECA/COE/43/3/Rev.2) and the provisional agenda (E/ECA/COE/43/1) that had been circulated:

1. Opening of the forty-third meeting of the Committee of Experts and the fifty-seventh session of the Economic Commission for Africa.
2. Election of the Bureau and adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
3. Overview of recent economic and social developments in Africa.
4. Assessment of progress on regional integration in Africa.
5. Presentation on the theme of the fifty-seventh session of the Economic Commission for Africa.
6. Statutory issues:
 - (a) Report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Economic Commission for Africa from March 2024 to February 2025;

- (b) Report on the follow-up to the resolutions of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development;
 - (c) Report of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on its tenth session and follow-up activities;
 - (d) Report on United Nations support for the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa's Development programme;
 - (e) Proposed programme plan and budget for 2026;
 - (f) Reports on the work of the subsidiary bodies of the Economic Commission for Africa;
 - (g) Report on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024;
 - (h) Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries: report on progress in implementation of priority areas in Africa.
- 7. Date, venue and theme of the fifty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Africa.
 - 8. Other matters.
 - 9. Consideration and adoption of the report of the Committee of Experts and consideration of recommendations and draft resolutions.
 - 10. Closing of the forty-third meeting of the Committee of Experts.

Part two

Account of proceedings

III. Overview of recent economic and social developments in Africa [agenda item 3]

A. Presentation

15. Under this agenda item, a representative of the secretariat introduced an overview of recent economic and social developments in Africa (E/ECA/COE/43/4). In the report, it was highlighted that economic growth in the region was expected to rebound, driven by easing inflationary pressures, gradually declining debt and significant reforms in some countries. Although growth had proved to be resilient, it remained below levels needed for sustainable development. In the short-to-medium term, private consumption and an increase in exports would continue to underpin growth. The contribution of trade to growth on the continent, however, remained below historical levels. The fact that intra-African trade was more diversified than the continent's trade with the rest of the world was an impetus for advancing the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. Nevertheless, downside risks persisted and included global economic uncertainty, fragmentation, declining aid and geopolitical tensions, all of which posed significant challenges to the growth trajectory of the region.

B. Discussion

16. In the ensuing discussion, experts highlighted several challenges affecting African economies, including the growing informal sector, limited access to development financing and technology, rising debt levels, the effects of climate change and ongoing geopolitical tensions. They welcomed the policy recommendations set out in the report and noted that Africa must implement measures to enhance tax administration and efficiency in revenue collection. They underscored the importance of targeted infrastructure investment and initiatives to empower informal businesses, which were critical to boosting their competitiveness and productivity. Concerns were raised regarding rising debt levels and the need for innovative debt financing strategies, revenue mobilization and the imperative to combat illicit financial flows through strengthened partnerships across the continent. They called for robust policy measures to enhance productivity, in particular greater investment in infrastructure, which was a foundation for sustainable growth, and cautioned that demographic dynamics, if left unchecked, could undermine recent economic gains. They underscored the importance of a vibrant private sector and the need to enhance access to finance. They stressed the need to take actions, in the context of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, aimed at implementing a common currency and monetary union in the correct order, including by ensuring that a single African market for goods and services was established and functioning effectively prior to advancing towards a unified currency.

C. Recommendations

17. In the light of the discussion, the Committee made the following recommendations:

- (a) Members of ECA are encouraged:
 - (i) To widen the tax base by formalizing the informal sector, enhance access to credit and targeted support, invest in infrastructure and diversify economies, with a view to boosting employment, competitiveness and productivity;
 - (ii) To enhance tax revenues by strengthening tax administration and leveraging digital technologies;
 - (iii) To optimize public expenditure in order to ensure long-term debt sustainability;
 - (iv) To promote job creation and entrepreneurship by investing in youth education, expanding access to credit and strengthening government support for the informal sector;
- (b) ECA is encouraged:
 - (i) To support its members in devising mechanisms to incentivize the private sector to play a significant role in the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, by raising awareness, enhancing capacity and improving access to finance and foreign direct investment;
 - (ii) To support its members in reducing their high dependency on debt and their exposure to its associated risks by enhancing debt governance, combating illicit financial flows and formalizing the informal sector, in order to enhance job creation and entrepreneurship;

(iii) To provide policy guidance and technical support to its members on strengthening the collection of revenues from digital services and activities;

(iv) To support its members in designing and implementing policies to manage demographic growth in order to ensure that it supports economic gains.

IV. Assessment of progress on regional integration in Africa [agenda item 4]

A. Presentation

18. Under this agenda item, a representative of the secretariat introduced an assessment of progress made on regional integration in Africa (E/ECA/COE/43/5/Rev.1). Several persistent challenges that continued to hinder the full integration of the continent were highlighted in the report, including sluggish growth, ongoing conflicts and the prolonged economic repercussions of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Although the signing and implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area were landmark achievements, there had been little progress in regional trade. Intra-African trade accounted for just 14.6 per cent of all African trade. To maximize the benefits of the Agreement, it was vital to leverage the implementation of the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade and to promote the free movement of persons.

B. Discussion

19. In the ensuing discussion, experts noted that, despite ongoing efforts to deepen regional integration, Africa was experiencing setbacks. To achieve the full potential of the Agreement, it was necessary to implement the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment, address infrastructure gaps, promote industrialization, accelerate the implementation of the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System and reform education systems. In addition, peace and security were essential. They advocated the establishment of a clear road map to support the effective implementation of the protocols to the Agreement and emphasized the need for enhanced collaboration among ECA, the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank in order to accelerate progress in regional integration efforts.

C. Recommendations

20. In the light of the discussion, the Committee made the following recommendations:

(a) Members of ECA are encouraged:

(i) To accelerate the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade;

(ii) To expedite the ratification of the protocols to the Agreement on investment, intellectual property rights, digital trade, competition policy, and women and youth in trade;

- (iii) To ratify the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment;
- (iv) To increase investment in infrastructure, including through the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa;
- (v) To improve the interoperability of immigration control systems through the use of digital platforms, in order to facilitate travel and strengthen security;
- (vi) To implement reforms to education systems and increase investment in skills development;
- (vii) To pursue the simplification of trade and customs procedures, including through the broad adoption of single-window and electronic systems;
- (viii) To advance the implementation of the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System;
- (b) ECA is encouraged:
 - (i) To support its members and regional economic communities in implementing national and regional strategies on the Agreement;
 - (ii) To support the promotion of public-private partnerships, enhance management tools and strengthen national capacity to develop bankable infrastructure projects;
 - (iii) To strengthen partnerships with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and other stakeholders in order to drive the regional integration agenda;
 - (iv) To develop, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, a road map to address concerns regarding the ratification and implementation of the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment.

V. Presentation on the theme of the fifty-seventh session of the Economic Commission for Africa [agenda item 5]

A. Presentation

21. Under this agenda item, the Deputy Executive Secretary (Programme) and Chief Economist of ECA, Hanan Morsy, introduced a report on the theme of the fifty-seventh session of the Commission, “Advancing the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area: proposing transformative strategic actions” (E/ECA/COE/43/6-E/ECA/CM/57/4). She outlined the challenges of leveraging the Agreement for sustainable development and highlighted untapped opportunities for deeper trade integration in the context of the Agreement, which could yield significant economic and social benefits.

B. Discussion

22. In the ensuing discussion, experts emphasized that the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area was a transformative and innovative initiative. They underlined the urgency of strengthening political

will for its success and endorsed the transformative actions outlined in the report. They observed that, although ratification was progressing, adapting the Agreement to local contexts remained a significant challenge and required targeted national programmes. In addition, they stressed the urgency of harmonizing national policies with regional commitments.

23. Experts called for the development of capital markets, with a view to addressing the funding gaps on the continent. They highlighted the role of digitalization and technology in enhancing the implementation of the Agreement, noting the capacity of single-window systems to reduce business costs. They underscored the importance of trade-related infrastructure, including information and communications technology platforms and cross-border transport, and the need to streamline customs processes. The Pan-African Payment and Settlement System was highlighted as a solution to reduce dependency on foreign exchange and accelerate trade payments. In addition, the high cost of air transport and limited intra-African airline connectivity were identified as barriers to economic integration.

24. Experts recognized the crucial role of the private sector, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises, in the implementation of the Agreement. They called for greater financial support, investment in industrial hubs and strengthened collaboration between Governments and the private sector. They stressed the need to raise awareness of existing initiatives among various stakeholders.

C. Recommendations

25. In the light of the discussion, the Committee made the following recommendations:

- (a) Members of ECA are encouraged:
 - (i) To accelerate the adaptation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area to local contexts by strengthening national committees and engaging stakeholders;
 - (ii) To invest in trade infrastructure, including information and communications technology and cross-border transport, and the modernization of customs processes;
 - (iii) To help small and medium-sized enterprises to benefit from the Agreement by investing in the development of human capital, expanding access to credit, promoting industrial hubs and fostering public-private partnerships;
 - (iv) To strengthen collaboration with the private sector on the implementation of the Agreement;
 - (v) To harmonize investment and financial policies and strengthen capital markets in order to boost intra-African investment;
 - (vi) To integrate capacity development and training relating to the Agreement into the curricula of tertiary institutions;
- (b) ECA is encouraged:
 - (i) To provide continued technical support for the adaptation of the Agreement to local contexts and its implementation;
 - (ii) To raise awareness of existing instruments, including the African Continental Free Trade Area adjustment fund, that can be used to support the implementation of the Agreement;

(iii) To assess the challenges and bottlenecks relating to the ratification of the Agreement and its protocols and their adaptation to local contexts;

(iv) To promote efforts to strengthen financial markets through policy reforms and capacity-building;

(v) To support policy harmonization and coordination with regional economic communities with a view to advancing regional integration, while respecting national sovereignty.

VI. Statutory issues [agenda item 6]

A. Report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Economic Commission for Africa from March 2024 to February 2025

B. Report on the follow-up to the resolutions of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development

1. Presentation

26. Under sub-items 6 (a) and (b), representatives of the secretariat introduced the report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Economic Commission for Africa from March 2024 to February 2025 (E/ECA/COE/43/7) and the report on the follow-up to the resolutions of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (E/ECA/COE/43/8).

2. Discussion

27. In the ensuing discussion, experts commended the secretariat for the technical and institutional assistance provided to members of ECA, notably with regard to the development of national strategies for the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and of “green supplements” to complement the strategies. They stressed the importance of domestic resource mobilization for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and fostering African trade and development. Recognizing the diverse partners that were supporting efforts to strengthen domestic resource mobilization, including through the strengthening of tax administration, they called upon ECA to take a leading role in creating synergies and standardizing practices in order to avoid duplication of efforts. They enquired about the memorandum of understanding between ECA and the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area, seeking clarity on its benefits for members of ECA. They also requested clearer evidence of the impact of ECA interventions on tax-to-gross domestic product ratios in the countries that it had supported, indicating that that would facilitate the learning of lessons.

28. Experts highlighted the role played by regional economic communities in developing regional strategic infrastructure corridors to complement the larger continental infrastructure development framework. They sought guidance on accessing support from ECA. In response, the secretariat clarified that technical support provided by ECA was the result of strategic planning activities or was provided upon request, to address the needs of its members. ECA also continued to support continental and regional infrastructure development and the development of transport corridors through the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa. Positive impacts,

including increased domestic resource mobilization, had been observed in countries that were receiving assistance from ECA.

3. Recommendations

29. In the light of the discussion, the Committee made the following recommendations:

- (a) Members of ECA are encouraged:
 - (i) To leverage and utilize technical support from ECA in such priority areas as enhancing domestic resource mobilization, including strengthening tax administration;
 - (ii) To prioritize investments in regional strategic infrastructure corridors, such as roads, railways and energy projects, to complement continental infrastructure development efforts;
 - (iii) To harness technological advances in order to create value in the circular economy and empower women and young entrepreneurs through targeted capacity-building programmes;
- (b) ECA is encouraged:
 - (i) To enhance the assistance that it provides to its members to support the harmonization and standardization of diverse domestic resource mobilization efforts;
 - (ii) To promote peer-to-peer learning and knowledge-sharing among its members as a means of disseminating best practices and successful strategies;
 - (iii) To employ robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in order to track the progress that it has made in implementing initiatives and providing support to its members, and to determine the impact thereof;
 - (iv) To strengthen the role of regional economic communities in supporting regional infrastructure development;
 - (v) To continue to provide technical support for the development and implementation of national strategies for the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and “green supplements” to the strategies.

C. Report of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on its tenth session and follow-up activities

D. Report on United Nations support for the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa’s Development programme

1. Presentation

30. Under sub-items 6 (c) and (d), representatives of the secretariat introduced the report of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on its tenth session and follow-up activities (E/ECA/COE/43/9) and the report on United Nations support for the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa’s Development programme (E/ECA/COE/43/10).

2. Discussion

31. In the ensuing discussion, experts welcomed the outcomes of the tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and the specific actions taken to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the goals of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union. They raised concerns about the slow progress made on the continent towards attaining the goals of the two agendas and called for the urgent and effective implementation by all stakeholders of the recommendations contained in the outcome documents of the Forum and for transformative actions to accelerate the implementation of the goals of both agendas. They emphasized the need for stronger mechanisms to track the progress made towards attaining the goals and greater resources for the implementation of the two agendas. Uganda affirmed its readiness to host the eleventh session of the Forum from 9 to 11 April 2025 and extended an invitation to all participants to attend, noting the important role that the upcoming session was expected to play in promoting job creation, economic growth and the implementation of the two agendas.

32. They recognized that industrialization, in particular that carried out within the African Continental Free Trade Area, was an essential driver of job creation and structural transformation, and that there was a need to identify and de-risk investment opportunities. They underscored the importance of establishing a new generation of special economic zones and stressed the need to harness the demographic dividend by creating employment opportunities for young people and women. They observed that the interventions that had been identified for climate action, the blue and green economy transition, and multi-stakeholder partnerships were crucial to ensuring inclusive and sustainable development.

33. They highlighted the fact that limited access to affordable finance was a major barrier to productivity and called for stronger resource mobilization, innovative domestic financing, capital market development and new strategies to improve credit ratings. They emphasized the crucial role of the African Peer Review Mechanism and the African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development programme and called for sustained funding to support these mechanisms in order to ensure their continued impact.

3. Recommendations

34. In the light of the discussion, the Committee made the following recommendations:

- (a) Members of ECA are encouraged:
 - (i) To accelerate the implementation of the recommendations contained in the outcome documents of the tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, carry out other transformative actions and leverage the Forum and other mechanisms in order to strengthen peer-to-peer learning and South-South and triangular cooperation on best practices;
 - (ii) To enhance the business environment by improving the availability of data on investment opportunities and strategies and by reducing market distortions;
- (b) ECA is encouraged:
 - (i) To provide guidance and policy options aimed at raising awareness of the need for closer alignment of the goals of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and making concerted efforts to accelerate their joint implementation;
 - (ii) To increase the support that it provides to its members to strengthen capacity, experience-sharing and peer learning with a view to scaling up and replicating success stories, including with regard to domestic resource mobilization and innovative financing, such as the development of capital markets and credit rating systems;

(iii) To establish an integrated statistical platform that serves as a repository for geographically disaggregated data on the progress made towards the achievement of the goals of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(iv) To support its members in developing a new generation of special economic zones, including by enhancing their capacity to negotiate with investors, boost value added exports and harness regional value chains to achieve sustainable growth;

(v) To continue to provide technical assistance to its members in responding to climate change, promoting blue and green growth, transitioning to a circular economy and gaining access to sustainable finance;

(vi) To assist its members in adopting the 2025 System of National Accounts and methodologies for measuring sustainable development and economic growth that go beyond gross domestic product, in order to ensure alignment with emerging international standards.

E. Proposed programme plan and budget for 2026

1. Presentation

35. Under sub-item 6 (e), representatives of the secretariat introduced a summary of the proposed programme plan and budget for 2026 and programme performance for 2024 (E/ECA/COE/43/11). They emphasized the importance of scaling up the core functions of ECA to enhance delivery capacity and efficiency, with a view to ensuring the provision of value added services, adhering to the principles of value for money, achieving tangible results and having a visible impact.

2. Discussion

36. In the ensuing discussion, experts recommended for consideration and adoption by the Conference of Ministers the proposed programme plan and budget for 2026. They expressed concerns regarding the persistent liquidity crisis and financing challenges. They noted that the proposed budget for section 18, which included both regular budget and extrabudgetary resources, along with sections 11 and 23, totalled \$123.5 million for 2026, with zero growth.

37. The move towards a more streamlined budget was appreciated, and the continued support provided by ECA to the continent in the face of persistent development challenges was welcomed. Experts acknowledged the delay that Africa experienced in achieving various targets and emphasized that accelerating progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 necessitated substantial financial resources.

38. Experts noted the impact of ongoing liquidity constraints on the operational effectiveness of ECA, highlighting the need for enhanced efficiency measures, accountability and value for money. They welcomed the realignment of the programme of work of ECA to ensure that business as usual became business for purpose. Furthermore, they acknowledged the strategies employed by ECA to reduce recurrent spending and optimize resource utilization, including human capital.

3. Recommendations

39. In the light of the discussion, the Committee made the following recommendations:

- (a) Members of ECA are encouraged:
 - (i) To promote the provision of adequate resources for ECA, with a view to enabling the Commission to continue the implementation of its mandate effectively and efficiently;
 - (ii) To engage in knowledge-sharing and the adoption of best practices to optimize the use of resources and minimize waste;
- (b) ECA is encouraged:
 - (i) To build on the articulation of its strategic focus areas, with a view to prioritizing interventions that will generate catalytic results;
 - (ii) To devise innovative financing mechanisms and implement specific actions to mobilize additional resources for programme delivery;
 - (iii) To enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of limited financial resources in order to ensure value for money, accountability and tangible results;
 - (iv) To strengthen its integrated planning and utilization of resources for effective programme delivery and maximum cost efficiency.

F. Reports on the work of the subsidiary bodies of the Economic Commission for Africa

1. Committee on Economic Governance

2. Statistical Commission for Africa

(a) Presentation

40. Under sub-item 6 (f), representatives of the secretariat introduced the report of the Committee on Economic Governance on the work of its second session (E/ECA/COE/43/12) and the report of the Statistical Commission for Africa on the work of its ninth session (E/ECA/COE/43/13).

(b) Discussion

41. In the ensuing discussion, experts expressed concern about the limited capacity of African countries in negotiations on such matters as tax agreements and the risk that the African Continental Free Trade Area might disproportionately benefit multinational corporations at the expense of African countries. In that regard, they emphasized the need for regulatory measures to protect local enterprises. They also stressed the importance of addressing illicit financial flows and called for tangible steps to combat such flows. Highlighting the need to strengthen the African position in global financial governance, they called for improved domestic resource mobilization, fair taxation policies and sustainable debt management and underlined the importance of balancing economic growth with financial stability. They urged ECA to support capacity-building initiatives tailored to national needs and circumstances and requested it to provide guidance on innovative financing, tax policy and governance frameworks.

42. On the issue of data and statistics, experts emphasized the need for increased investment in statistical development and financial governance and underscored the critical role of robust statistical systems in shaping policies, in

particular in view of the growing influence in that domain of artificial intelligence and big data. The need for harmonized data standards, the collection of disaggregated data and strategic planning for statistical modernization was also emphasized. They called for enhanced African representation in global decision-making forums and stronger coordination among stakeholders to ensure inclusive development. They emphasized the need to align statistical systems with global standards to improve comparability and accessibility and to ensure that policymaking across Africa was underpinned by reliable data.

(c) Recommendations

43. In the light of the discussion, the Committee made the following recommendations:

- (a) Members of ECA are encouraged:
 - (i) To allocate adequate and sustainable funding for statistical development and advance the establishment of dedicated funding mechanisms for that purpose;
 - (ii) To strengthen African representation and participation in global platforms and negotiations on issues relating to international taxation and financing for development;
- (b) ECA is encouraged:
 - (i) To facilitate and step up capacity-building initiatives to empower countries to participate effectively in negotiations, in particular on tax-related agreements;
 - (ii) To continue to provide support for the harmonization of statistics in Africa;
 - (iii) To conduct needs-based assessments for all African countries to determine their specific capacity gaps and opportunities for the modernization of statistical systems;
 - (iv) To assist its members in developing their national capacity to produce data and statistics that are disaggregated by such categories as gender, internal displacement, refugee status and disability, to inform decision-making and ensure that no one is left behind.

3. African Institute for Economic Development and Planning

(a) Presentation

44. Under sub-item 6 (f), a representative of the secretariat introduced the progress report on the work of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) (E/ECA/COE/43/14).

(b) Discussion

45. In the ensuing discussion, experts commended the work of IDEP in delivering targeted capacity-development activities that were responsive to the needs of members of ECA. They expressed solidarity with IDEP regarding the impact on its operations of the outstanding arrears in annual contributions due from members of ECA.

(c) Recommendations

46. In the light of the discussion, the Committee made the following recommendations:

- (a) Members of ECA are encouraged:
 - (i) To prioritize the payment of their outstanding arrears and make their annual contributions to the budget of IDEP;
 - (ii) To reinforce South-South cooperation through the sharing of experiences and best practices among African countries, in areas including trade and regional integration, resource mobilization, the digital economy, climate change adaptation and mitigation, inclusive and sustainable industrialization, job creation and the demographic dividend;
- (b) ECA is encouraged:
 - (i) To establish a comprehensive support programme, including enhanced capacity-building programmes, with expanded reach, policy analysis and tailor-made solutions, in order to respond to specific needs and emerging development challenges faced by members of ECA;
 - (ii) To continue to collaborate with regional economic communities and other international, regional and subregional organizations and centres of excellence to deliver capacity-building activities.

4. Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts**5. Subregional preparatory meetings****(a) Presentation**

47. Under sub-item 6 (f), representatives of the secretariat introduced the reports on the sessions of the subregional Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts (E/ECA/COE/43/15/Rev.1, E/ECA/COE/43/16 and E/ECA/COE/43/17/Rev.1) and delivered an oral report on the subregional preparatory meetings for the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

(b) Discussion

48. In the ensuing discussion, experts commended the secretariat on the work conducted on a wide range of priority areas, including food and energy security, climate change, resource mobilization, the participation of young people and the implementation of the Agreement at the national and continental levels, through knowledge-production and capacity-building programmes. They also commended ECA for championing the interests of young people at regional and international forums.

(c) Recommendations

49. In the light of the discussion, the Committee made the following recommendations:

- (a) Members of ECA are encouraged:
 - (i) To facilitate, increase and enhance the effectiveness of the participation of young people in the design and implementation of national and continental development frameworks that are aligned with global and continental agendas;
 - (ii) To ensure that issues of social protection and labour standards are sufficiently addressed in their efforts to implement

the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area;

(iii) To promote the free movement of people by advancing the adoption, ratification and implementation of the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment;

(iv) To increase investment in cross-border infrastructure in order to facilitate the implementation of the Agreement;

(b) ECA is encouraged:

(i) To continue its work on the impact of non-tariff barriers and provide its members with policy recommendations on overcoming the restrictions to intra-African trade;

(ii) To reinforce its support provided to post-conflict countries in fostering recovery and development through short-term and medium-term interventions;

(iii) To continue its work on the impact of climate change on food security and to assess the threat that environmental challenges pose to economic and social development;

(iv) To strengthen the capacity of countries to generate data-driven insights, policy options and investment strategies on leveraging natural capital and the blue and circular economies and establishing innovative financing mechanisms for sustainable economic growth and diversification;

(v) To continue to provide technical support to its members regarding their national strategies for the implementation of the Agreement and of the “green supplements” to complement the strategies, including through capacity-building programmes targeting micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises led by women and young people;

(vi) To support efforts by its members and by regional economic communities to accelerate a just energy transition through research and capacity-building;

(vii) To strengthen the capacity of African countries to improve debt management and domestic and external resource mobilization by, for example, leveraging diaspora contributions, fostering regional cooperation, promoting green value chains and enhancing digital trade integration.

G. Report on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024

H. Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries: report on progress in implementation of priority areas in Africa

1. Presentation

50. Under sub-items 6 (g) and (h), representatives of the secretariat introduced the report on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 (E/ECA/COE/43/18/Rev.1) and the report on progress in implementation of

priority areas in Africa of the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (E/ECA/COE/43/19). The High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, Rabab Fatima, delivered remarks on landlocked developing countries and least developed countries in Africa.

2. Discussion

51. In the ensuing discussion, experts noted the mixed progress among landlocked developing countries in advancing the priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action. They emphasized the crucial role of coastal countries in facilitating the transit of goods to and from landlocked developing countries and the importance of integrated customs systems and collaboration within regional economic communities. Further support was needed to implement strategies concerning the Agreement, enhance infrastructure and integrate African countries into regional and global value chains. Such challenges as unsustainable debt and limited fiscal space were common to least developed countries and most African countries. In addition, they highlighted the importance of collective engagement to empower women and young people to benefit from the Agreement and urged ECA to sustain the support that it provided to least developed countries in that regard.

3. Recommendations

52. In the light of the discussion, the Committee made the following recommendations:

(a) Members of ECA that are landlocked developing countries or least developed countries are encouraged:

- (i) To intensify efforts to collect good-quality data, including through integrated approaches that combine traditional data sources, such as surveys and administrative records, with new data sources;
- (ii) To align national development plans with the Doha Programme of Action and ensure linkages between the Programme of Action and national budgets;
- (iii) To boost domestic resource mobilization through innovative tax measures, including measures to capture digital payments and tax the informal sector, through the imposition of excise duties on harmful goods, through improved spending efficiency, through the leveraging of pension and sovereign wealth funds and through the curbing of illicit financial flows;
- (iv) To develop robust social protection systems that are targeted at vulnerable populations, in particular during periods of hardship, by leveraging digital technologies;
- (v) To promote domestic investment in infrastructure, including that associated with transport, information, communication and digital technology;
- (vi) To adopt policies and increase investments that help to diversify exports, increase value addition and enhance overall economic diversification;
- (vii) To increase efforts to mobilize domestic and foreign direct investment;

(b) For its least developed members, ECA is encouraged:

- (i) To promote the formulation of a unified approach to sustainable debt management through the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, the Africa high-level

working group on the reform of the global financial architecture and efforts to reform the Common Framework for Debt Treatments beyond the Debt Service Suspension Initiative;

(ii) To advocate greater concessional resources, technical assistance, the capitalization of multilateral development banks, the reform of special drawing rights and fairer credit ratings;

(iii) To provide technical support to strengthen social protection systems, enhance trade capabilities, lower trade costs, diversify exports and deepen global economic integration;

(iv) To support landlocked developing and transit countries in implementing regional infrastructure projects and attracting foreign direct investment;

(v) To support the formulation of national strategies for the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, with a view to promoting value chain development, industrialization and economic diversification;

(vi) To collaborate with development partners to build human capital, empower female entrepreneurs and enhance women's participation in the opportunities provided by the implementation of the Agreement;

(vii) To support African initiatives aimed at improving connectivity and integration in Africa, in order to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

VII. Date, venue and theme of the fifty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Africa [agenda item 7]

A. Presentation

53. A representative of the secretariat introduced a note on the date, venue and theme of the fifty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Africa (E/ECA/COE/43/20). It was proposed that the fifty-eighth session be hosted by one of the members of ECA in March 2026 under one of the following themes, which had been formulated by ECA through a consultative process and were submitted to the Committee for its consideration:

(a) Option one: "Future of work in Africa amid demographic, technological and climate change";

(b) Option two: "Growth through innovation: harnessing data and frontier technologies for the economic transformation of Africa";

(c) Option three: "Harnessing natural resources, biodiversity and climate finance for economic and climate resilience in Africa".

B. Discussion

54. In the ensuing discussion, experts expressed preference for the theme "Growth through innovation: harnessing data and frontier technologies for the economic transformation of Africa", pointing out that it was forward-looking and in line with the continent's aspirations for change. Moreover, discussion of that theme would help to address the risk of Africa being left behind in the digital era and the need to develop digital infrastructure.

55. Morocco offered to host the fifty-eighth session of the Commission under the proposed theme. The offer from Morocco was acknowledged with appreciation, and the Committee unanimously supported it, with no objection.

C. Recommendations

56. In the light of the discussion, the Committee made the following recommendations:

(a) The fifty-eighth session of the Commission should be held under the theme “Growth through innovation: harnessing data and frontier technologies for the economic transformation of Africa”;

(b) The offer from Morocco to host the fifty-eighth session of the Commission under the proposed theme should be accepted.

VIII. Other matters [agenda item 8]

A. Presentation

57. Under this agenda item, experts raised the issue of the liquidity challenges faced by ECA and the need to develop and implement a programme of work that covered multiple areas, including the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063 and the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, taking into account the growing shortage of budgetary resources.

B. Discussion

58. In the ensuing discussion, it was clarified that the United Nations 80 initiative recently launched by the Secretary-General was a direct response to that issue and that tangible actions to revamp the work of the United Nations would be set out under that initiative, which would include streamlining efforts and ensuring a holistic and synergistic approach to the work of the Organization on various global and regional development frameworks. The IDEP integrated capacity-development programme and the integrated planning and reporting toolkit were highlighted as examples of efforts by ECA to enhance alignment and linkages among various aspects of its work.

59. Experts also observed that it was difficult to track and report on the progress made both by members of ECA and by ECA itself in the implementation of recommendations of the Conference of Ministers.

C. Recommendations

60. In the light of the discussion, the Committee made the following recommendations:

(a) Members of ECA are encouraged to prepare consolidated thematic subregional reports on the implementation of the recommendations of the Conference of Ministers that are addressed to them;

(b) ECA is encouraged:

(i) To continue to explore and adopt further initiatives and approaches aimed at harmonizing and streamlining its activities, so as to optimize resources and ensure a deeper impact of its work;

- (ii) To prepare a report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Conference of Ministers that are addressed to it.

IX. Consideration and adoption of the report of the Committee of Experts and consideration of recommendations and draft resolutions [agenda item 9]

61. Under this agenda item, the Committee considered the draft report on its meeting together with the draft resolutions to be submitted for consideration and adoption by the Conference of Ministers. Several experts made comments and proposed amendments to the report and to the draft resolutions. After extensive discussion, the Committee unanimously adopted the report. The resolutions, as amended by the Committee, are attached in the annex to the present report for consideration and adoption by the Conference of Ministers.

X. Closing of the forty-third meeting of the Committee of Experts [agenda item 10]

62. Closing remarks were made by the Deputy Executive Secretary (Programme) and Chief Economist of ECA and by Mr. El Harmiri.

63. In her remarks, the Deputy Executive Secretary (Programme) and Chief Economist of ECA recapitulated five priority areas that had emerged during the meeting: fast-tracking industrialization and increasing value addition; closing the infrastructure and connectivity gaps; championing digital transformation and trade facilitation; investing in efforts to build human capital for the future of work; and strengthening macroeconomic stability and governance. She also underscored the need to accelerate the removal of trade barriers and improve logistics as well as build strong partnerships within Africa and beyond.

64. Mr. El Harmiri observed that African States had an opportunity to boost industrialization and intra-African trade, if they demonstrated strong political commitment, by making good use of the new technologies being developed, including artificial intelligence, and by accelerating the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. He expressed his gratitude to the Bureau, the Government of Ethiopia, the secretariat and the service providers on the successful organization of the meeting.

65. Following those statements and the customary exchange of courtesies, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 7:45 p.m., on Friday, 14 March 2025.

Annex

Draft resolutions for consideration by the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development

Draft resolutions, the text of which was approved by the Committee of Experts of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, are set out below for consideration and possible adoption by the Conference of Ministers.

A. Request to strengthen the capacity of the Economic Commission for Africa to fulfil its mandates and to provide its members with transformational, results-oriented policy and technical support

The Conference of Ministers,

Recalling Economic and Social Council resolution 671 (XXV) of 29 April 1958, on the establishment of an Economic Commission for Africa,

Recalling also Economic and Social Council resolution 2018/23 of 7 August 2018, by which the Council endorsed the new strategic directions of the Economic Commission for Africa,

Recalling further the realignment of the programme of work of the Commission to address emerging African development priorities and aspirations, approved by its resolution 2024/3 of 5 March 2024 on the reorganization of the work of the Economic Commission for Africa, with a focus on the principal transformations that are necessary to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹ and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union,

Noting the vital, catalytic role of the Commission within the United Nations development system in the promotion of the socioeconomic development of its members, in the fostering of international cooperation on African development, pursuant to its mandates, and in the translation of global commitments, including the 2030 Agenda, into action at the regional, subregional and national levels,

Recognizing that Africa continues to be adversely affected by recurrent crises and conflicts, within and outside the region, resulting in increased vulnerability to shocks and to rapid socioeconomic and environmental change, and requiring urgent action to prevent the further exacerbation of the effects of those events,

Noting the need to address the effects of the crises through sustainable development, economic transformation, and strengthened and inclusive growth that facilitates job creation,

Cognizant of the Pact for the Future and its annexes, the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations,²

Recognizing that sustainable development, in all three of its dimensions, is a central goal in itself,

¹ General Assembly resolution 70/1.

² General Assembly resolution 79/1.

Reaffirming the need for the accelerated achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, leaving no one behind, including through practical political steps and significant resource mobilization, with a particular focus on meeting the needs of vulnerable population groups and on creating opportunities for young people,

Acknowledging the partnership between the African Union and the United Nations development system on the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda and the second 10-year implementation plan (2024–2033) of Agenda 2063, through the “two agendas, one framework” approach, and the strategic role of the Economic Commission for Africa in supporting the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa, including the work of the opportunity and issues-based coalitions, the resident coordinators and the United Nations country teams, in advancing implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063,

Bearing in mind the additional responsibilities assumed by the Commission in supporting the African Union upon its accession to membership of the Group of 20, as one of the designated knowledge partners of the Union, and in contributing to other critical initiatives at the international level, such as the reform of the global financial architecture and the curbing of illicit financial flows from Africa,

Noting that, in 2025, the Commission is conducting a spending review, pursuant to paragraph 20 of General Assembly resolution 77/262, aimed at enhancing joint integrated resource planning and promoting a culture of efficiency and effectiveness in the use of human, material and financial resources,

Expressing appreciation for the recognition and support received from the members of the Commission, bilateral and multilateral development partners, entities of the United Nations development system, regional intergovernmental bodies and the African Union and its organs,

1. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to address the effects of the recurrent crises and conflicts through sustainable development, economic transformation and inclusive growth, which can be achieved by:

- (a) Scaling up macroeconomic policies and innovative development financing, designed to position Africa as a leading player on the global stage;
- (b) Using the African Continental Free Trade Area as a platform for boosting regional integration and competitiveness;
- (c) Increasing climate action, food security and sustainable natural resources management at all levels, with the aim of enhancing resilience to shocks and disasters;
- (d) Accelerating resource-driven industrialization and economic diversification;
- (e) Strengthening infrastructure development, including in the energy sector, to support inclusive socioeconomic development;
- (f) Harnessing the potential of science, emerging and frontier technologies and innovation for enhanced digital transformation, productive capabilities, competitiveness, governance and accountability;
- (g) Pursuing support for the provision of credible data and statistics for evidence-based analysis and decision-making;
- (h) Fostering the mainstreaming of social dimensions into all workstreams to promote social inclusion, ensure that no one is left behind, and reduce poverty and inequality;
- (i) Strengthening capacity development to support members of the Commission in accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for

Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union, on the basis of the strategic priorities of the Commission;

2. *Requests* the Secretary-General to strengthen the capacity of the Commission to fulfil its mandates and to provide its members with relevant, tailor-made capacity-building assistance and with transformational, results-oriented policy and technical support, by enhancing its convening, think tank and operational functions, in order to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in particular in the strategic focus areas of the Commission, pursuant to its realigned programme of work;

3. *Decides* to transmit to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session in 2025 a draft resolution on this issue for consideration and possible adoption.

B. Use of artificial intelligence to advance the socioeconomic development of Africa

The Conference of Ministers,

Recognizing the transformative potential of artificial intelligence for advancing the socioeconomic development of Africa and implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹ and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union,

Reaffirming the commitment of African States to the responsible, inclusive and ethical development of artificial intelligence in a manner that respects human rights, data privacy and the sovereignty of African States,

Reaffirming also the commitment of African States to the principles enshrined in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063, the Global Digital Compact,² the African Digital Transformation Strategy and the Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy of the African Union,

Recognizing the pivotal role of artificial intelligence in driving growth and innovation across such sectors as healthcare, education, agriculture and infrastructure,

Affirming that a robust network of artificial intelligence researchers, companies and users can significantly contribute to economic diversification, job creation and improved quality of life for the entire population of the continent,

Noting with concern the potential risks associated with artificial intelligence, including job displacement, data exploitation, biases in algorithmic decision-making and cybersecurity vulnerabilities,

Recognizing the need to bridge the digital divide by providing equitable access to artificial intelligence technologies and ensuring the adequate development of human capital in Africa to make the workers of the continent competitive within the global labour market,

Acknowledging the critical need to establish an enabling environment for the development and proliferation of artificial intelligence technologies in Africa,

Acknowledging also the importance of initiatives to build artificial intelligence capacity within African States to optimize the benefits of technological advancements,

¹ General Assembly resolution 70/1.

² General Assembly resolution 79/1, annex I.

Noting with satisfaction the launch of various initiatives aimed at advancing artificial intelligence research, education and innovation across the continent,

Noting with appreciation the progress achieved by the Economic Commission for Africa in establishing the African Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence in the Congo and innovation hubs throughout Africa, and in ensuring that education institutions incorporate artificial intelligence and digital skills training into their curricula,

1. *Invites* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to formulate and implement national artificial intelligence strategies that are aligned with their development goals and address local needs;

2. *Also invites* members of the Commission to invest in digital infrastructure and data generation and in related management, education and training programmes, with a view to equipping workers with the skills to enable them to make full use of artificial intelligence technologies;

3. *Calls upon* the Commission and its partners to continue to provide support to its members in establishing enabling environments for artificial intelligence development, including appropriate regulatory, institutional and governance structures at the national and regional levels, and adequate financing for research, innovation and business development;

4. *Requests* the Commission and its partners to facilitate policy-based research and to develop knowledge-sharing platforms and collaborative networks among its members to promote the exchange of best practices in artificial intelligence deployment;

5. *Encourages* the Commission to work with its partners on the development of ethical guidelines and regulatory frameworks to govern artificial intelligence applications, with a view to ensuring fairness, accountability and respect for human rights.

C. 2026 programme plan and budget

The Conference of Ministers,

Acknowledging the strategic importance of annual programme plans and budgets in contextualizing and operationalizing the implementation of the programme of work of the Economic Commission for Africa, in accordance with its strategic directions and core functions, across its nine subprogrammes and pursuant to guidance from the Economic and Social Council,

Recalling the realignment of the programme of work of the Commission to enable a greater focus on emerging priorities and its harmonization with the development priorities and aspirations of Africa, in particular the main transformations that are necessary to accelerate the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹ and the implementation of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union,

Cognizant of the evolving regional development landscape, including the accession of the African Union to membership in the Group of 20, the assumption by South Africa of the presidency of the Group of 20 and the contribution of Africa to the reform of the global financial architecture, and of many other demands for active policy and technical support from the Commission,

¹ General Assembly resolution 70/1.

Taking note of the organizational changes that have been made with a view to enhancing the programmatic efficiency and organizational effectiveness of the Commission, as described in the administrative note of the Executive Secretary of the Commission to the Conference of Ministers at the fifty-seventh session of the Economic Commission for Africa,²

Recalling that the Commission is carrying out a spending review pursuant to paragraph 20 of General Assembly resolution 77/262 of 30 December 2022 and in the context of the action plan for the United Nations 2.0 initiative, which is aimed at achieving institutional transformation through renewed skills, processes and culture change for stronger impacts and adapting to future challenges and opportunities,

Considering that Africa continues to be adversely affected by recurrent crises and conflicts, both within and outside the region, resulting in increased vulnerability to shocks and to rapid socioeconomic and environmental changes,

Stressing the need for tailor-made interventions that take into account the latest technological and scientific developments and the second 10-year implementation plan (2024–2033) of Agenda 2063, and the need for those interventions to be aimed at attaining an improved science-policy-society interface, enhanced resource mobilization, sustained infrastructure development and continued support for regional integration, economic diversification, sustainable industrialization, food security and climate action,

Recognizing that the proposed 2026 programme plan and budget reflect the anticipated outcomes of the above-mentioned spending review and the continued efforts of the Commission to enhance the implementation of its strategic programmatic orientation, in order to facilitate the mobilization of resources needed to finance the economic recovery of the continent from the effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and other global crises,

Having examined the proposed 2026 programme plan and budget, in which the objectives and most important expected results and deliverables for all subprogrammes are highlighted,

Adopts the 2026 programme plan and budget of the Economic Commission for Africa, noting the augmented tasks and responsibilities of the Commission and the catalytic role of the spending review exercise in enhancing joint integrated resource planning and in strengthening a culture of efficiency within the Commission.

D. Use of regional value chains to harness the wealth of Africa

The Conference of Ministers,

Emphasizing the immense, yet largely untapped, potential of African regional value chains, driven by the abundant natural resources of the continent, which provide critical inputs for value added industries,

Noting with concern the disruption to global value chains that is being caused by rising protectionism and trade tensions, making it crucial to develop African regional value chains, with a view to enhancing resilience, reducing reliance on distant markets, lessening vulnerability to global tensions and strengthening industrial self-sufficiency through deeper intra-African trade integration,

Recognizing that, under the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, new opportunities are being created for regional value chains through the removal of the tariffs and non-tariff barriers that have

² E/ECA/COE/43/INF/2.

long hindered intra-African trade, leading to a reduction in the costs of cross-border trade in goods, services and inputs,

Stressing that the full implementation of the Agreement is projected to significantly increase intra-African trade, with the harmonized rules of origin and cumulation mechanism for which it provides enabling African States to collectively meet local and regional content thresholds, through shared value creation and collaborative supply chain fulfilment,

Affirming that, in the second 10-year implementation plan (2024–2033) of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union, States members of the Union are encouraged to operationalize regional value chains, with the aim of increasing the continent's share of global trade and industrial output,

Recalling the Niamey Declaration on Industrialization and Economic Diversification, adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union at its extraordinary session, held in Niamey in November 2022, which included a request for support for member States of the Union in developing regional value chains in such priority sectors as food, automotive, cotton apparel and pharmaceuticals,

Recalling also that the Niamey Declaration includes a commitment to leverage sustainable special economic zones to become hubs for regional value chain integration,

Welcoming the outcomes of the extraordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union, held in Kampala in January 2025, which included the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme strategy and action plan, a 10-year road map for transforming African agrifood systems by scaling up investments in regional value chains for critical agricultural commodities, with a view to ensuring food security and sustainable livelihoods,

1. *Encourages* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to incorporate regional value chain development into national and regional strategies, in accordance with the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union, and to facilitate the rapid implementation of such strategies;

2. *Also encourages* members of the Commission to increase the competitiveness of special economic zones by deepening continental industrial linkages, promoting regional value creation and increasing the proportion of local content in goods manufactured on the continent;

3. *Calls upon* members of the Commission to strengthen infrastructure development, including transport networks, energy systems, digital connectivity and financial services, to ensure the effective operation of regional value chains and special economic zones, thereby facilitating seamless trade, promoting industrialization and attracting investment;

4. *Urges* the Commission and its partners to scale up analytical and capacity-building support for members of the Commission in the development of competitive regional value chains and special economic zones, including by providing assistance with the incorporation into domestic law of the provisions of the Agreement, with the de-risking of investments in priority industries and with the establishment of regulations and standards that are aimed at ensuring the success of the new generation of special economic zones in Africa.
