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Item 6 of the provisional agenda*
Statutory issues

Report of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North Africa on the work of its fortieth 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 Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North Africa on the work of its fortieth session.

* E/ ECA/COE/44/1.



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Report of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North Africa on the work of its fortieth session

Introduction

1. The fortieth session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North Africa was held in Rabat from 11 to 13 November 2025, under the theme “Enhancing domestic resource mobilization through innovation and technology in North Africa”.

2. The session was attended by representatives of all seven members of ECA in North Africa: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia. Observers from regional economic communities and organizations, academic institutions, development partners and financial institutions were also in attendance. In addition, representatives of entities of the United Nations system attended the session.

I. Opening of the session [agenda item 1]

3. The Chair of the outgoing Bureau of the Committee and Director General of Digital Transformation of the Ministry of Telecommunications and Digital Transformation of the Sudan, Khalid Abuali, opened the session by presenting an overview of the activities undertaken by the Subregional Office for North Africa between October 2024 and September 2025. He recalled that the recommendations made during the previous session had been focused on four priority areas: support for small and medium-sized enterprises led by women; the development of a road map for the establishment of a regional value chain for e-mobility; the leveraging of diaspora remittances for national development; and domestic resource mobilization in North African countries. He also referred to the report of the Subregional Office on post-conflict reconstruction in the Sudan,¹ which drew on international case studies and best practices. Against the backdrop of the focus on artificial intelligence and innovation in 2025, he highlighted the launch of the first governmental data exchange platform of the Sudan as a significant milestone. He concluded by stressing that financing remained a central challenge, owing to limited United Nations resources, and expressed the hope that stronger partnerships would help to mobilize the support required to advance progress in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

4. The Director of Economic Affairs and Permanent Representative of the Arab Maghreb Union to the African Union, Amina Salmane, expressed appreciation to Morocco for hosting the fortieth session of the Committee and reaffirmed the long-standing partnership between the Arab Maghreb Union and the Subregional Office. She also drew attention to persistent challenges across the subregion in mobilizing domestic resources and emphasized the need for comprehensive financial reforms, incorporating digital transformation, strong governance and anti-corruption measures. In addition, she highlighted the importance of harmonizing industrial and development policies and identified critical priorities, including the development of digital tax systems, expanded digital access for small and medium-sized enterprises and skills development for young people in the fields of artificial intelligence and the green economy. Lastly, she reiterated the strong commitment of the Arab Maghreb Union to

¹ ECA, *Planning Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development in the Sudan: Framework and Lessons from International Experiences* (Rabat, 2025).

supporting efforts within the subregion towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

5. In his introductory remarks, the Director of the Subregional Office for North Africa of ECA, Adam Elhiraika, emphasized that domestic resource mobilization was fundamental to financial independence and sustainable development in the subregion. He noted that declining development assistance and rising debt-service obligations continued to constrain fiscal space, limiting the capacity of Governments to invest in essential services. He observed that, although there had been progress in tax administration and the digitalization of public finance systems, reform efforts remained uneven among countries. Stressing that ratios of tax to gross domestic product (GDP) in several North African economies fell below international benchmarks, he called for a comprehensive approach to improving tax systems, involving digital tax systems, the formalization of the informal sector and improved public financial management. In conclusion, he highlighted opportunities in climate finance and underscored the importance of innovation, technology and regional cooperation in advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

6. The Deputy Director of the Department of the Treasury and External Finance of Morocco, responsible for the Africa-Europe Relations Division, Hicham Talby, extolled the strength of the partnership between the Subregional Office and his country. Stressing the need for the subregion to reinforce its financial sovereignty and reduce dependence on external aid, he highlighted the role of domestic resource mobilization – supported by innovation and technology – as a crucial driver of resilience and sustainable growth. He expressed concern about rising public debt levels, declining development assistance and the uncertainty surrounding global investment flows. He also underscored the importance of coherent national strategies, supported by the reform of financial markets, the formalization of the informal economy and the expansion of financial inclusion using digital tools. Drawing on the experience of reforms implemented in Morocco, he illustrated ways in which strategic leadership, long-term vision and technological innovation could accelerate national transformation. He concluded by calling for deeper subregional cooperation and knowledge-sharing to advance domestic resource mobilization across North Africa.

II. Election of the Bureau [agenda item 2]

7. After consultations, the Committee unanimously elected the following Bureau:

Chair:	Tunisia
Vice-Chair:	Algeria
Rapporteur:	Egypt

III. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work

[agenda item 3]

8. Following an acceptance statement by the Chair of the incoming Bureau, the Director of the Directorate General of Public Debt Management and Financial Cooperation of the Ministry of Finance of Tunisia, Adnene Zrour, the Committee adopted, without further amendment, the programme of work and the following agenda, based on the draft programme of work (ECA/SRO-NA/ICSOE/40/2) and the provisional agenda (ECA/SRO-NA/ICSOE/40/1) that had been circulated:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of the Bureau.
3. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
4. Evolution of economic and social conditions in North Africa: review of the subregional profile.
5. Review of the implementation of regional and international development agendas and special initiatives in North Africa.
6. Statutory issues:
 - (a) Report on the activities of the Subregional Office for North Africa (October 2024–September 2025) and work programme for 2026;
 - (b) Programme of work of the Economic Commission for Africa for 2026.
7. Ad hoc expert group meeting.
8. Presentation of flagship initiatives of the Economic Commission for Africa.
9. Consideration and adoption of the draft recommendations of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North Africa.
10. Date and venue of the next session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North Africa.
11. Other matters.
12. Closing of the session.

IV. Evolution of economic and social conditions in North Africa: review of the subregional profile [agenda item 4]

A. Presentation

9. The representative of the secretariat introduced the report on socioeconomic development in North Africa in the period 2024–2026 (ECA/SRO-NA/ICSOE/40/4), which included a review of recent macroeconomic trends, fiscal and monetary developments, external sector conditions and salient social indicators. She noted that growth had remained modest and uneven in 2024, although the outlook for the period 2025–2026 was improving, albeit with continuing vulnerability to structural constraints and geopolitical tensions. She emphasized the need for continued fiscal consolidation, strengthened debt management, economic diversification and the enhancement of targeted social protection.

B. Discussion

10. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Libya reported a reduction in her country's inflation rate in 2023 compared with the previous year, noted a stable exchange rate between the national currency and the United States dollar and indicated that inflation was expected to fall further in 2025. The representative of the Sudan highlighted significant data losses resulting from the conflict in his country and requested support from ECA in rebuilding the country's statistical systems. The representative of Algeria emphasized the importance of reflecting country-specific contexts in comparative analyses and encouraged the use of national data. The representative of Egypt reported progress in his country's debt management through its issuance of bonds in China and Japan denominated in renminbi and yen, respectively, a reduction in public debt and an increase of over \$500 million in the country's foreign exchange reserves. The representative of Mauritania reiterated the need for tailored policy guidance to support diversification.

11. Participants stressed the importance of reliable, up-to-date data and sustained technical cooperation. Noting that data collected in June 2025 had been used in the subregional profile, the representative of the secretariat encouraged States to share their national data and reaffirmed the commitment of ECA to supporting its members and strengthening the analytical relevance of the profile.

V. Review of the implementation of regional and international development agendas and special initiatives in North Africa [agenda item 5]

A. Presentation

12. The representative of the secretariat introduced the report on progress made in the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 8 in North Africa (ECA/SRO-NA/ICSOE/40/5), in which it was noted that, although, in 2025, the subregion continued to have the best Sustainable Development Goal Index scores of all the subregions, the score had declined since 2024, which reflected uneven and limited progress. She said that positive trends had been recorded in relation to some Goals, but slow progress in the attainment of others, including Goal 8, served to confirm that the subregion remained off track. From the analysis, stagnation or decline were evident in relation to several Goal 8 targets, owing to such factors as low labour productivity; high structural unemployment, in particular among young people; and low labour-force participation. Structural constraints, including macroeconomic instability, climate shocks and export concentration, continued to hinder the attainment of the Goals. The recommendations set out in the report included strengthening fiscal and regulatory reforms, mobilizing additional financial resources and investing in high value added and job-intensive sectors, with digital transformation identified as a critical accelerator.

B. Discussion

13. In the ensuing discussion, participants emphasized the need for an integrated and holistic approach to accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda and unlocking the full potential of Goal 8. The representative of Mauritania highlighted significant financing gaps, stressing the importance of domestic resource mobilization and innovative financing instruments, such as remittances and green finance, alongside greater subregional collaboration. The representative of Libya underscored the importance of country-specific

analysis, noting that States should look beyond aggregate scores to identify their individual challenges and strengths. The representative of Algeria stressed the central role of reliable national data in tracking progress in the attainment of the Goals and outlined recent reforms aimed at improving productivity and the business environment, including regulatory modernization, financial sector reforms and the adoption of a law on investment. Participants agreed on the importance of enhancing South-South cooperation, of strengthening intra-African trade and of sharing best practices to advance domestic resource mobilization, regional integration and joint monitoring of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union. The representative of the secretariat confirmed that the Subregional Office for North Africa intended to collaborate closely with national and subregional entities to accelerate implementation of the two agendas.

VI. Statutory issues [agenda item 6]

A. Report on the activities of the Subregional Office for North Africa (October 2024–September 2025) and work programme for 2026

1. Presentation

14. The Director of the Subregional Office for North Africa introduced the report on the activities of the Subregional Office (October 2024–September 2025) and work programme for 2026 (ECA/SRO-NA/ICSOE/40/6). Outlining the Subregional Office's mandate, he said that he wished to highlight four priority areas: support for small and medium-sized enterprises, including capacity-building for companies led by women and young people; work on migration and remittances; technical assistance to strengthen domestic resource mobilization, debt management, and sustainable and green finance; and the promotion of regional integration and of the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. Special initiatives had been taken during the previous year, including the preparation of the report on post-conflict reconstruction in the Sudan and work under partnerships with various international, public, private and educational entities. Progress had been made in implementing the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North Africa, made during its thirty-ninth session. In the 2026 work programme, further emphasis would be given to economic diversification, stronger public finances, the incorporation of remittances into development frameworks and analysis of human capital, digital transformation and the green economy.

2. Discussion

15. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Egypt affirmed his Government's readiness to share its experiences with the Governments of other countries in the subregion. The representative of Mauritania requested support for economic forecasting and data systems. Underscoring regional solidarity, the representative of Morocco stressed the need to digitalize tax systems, strengthen regional value chains, provide clearer guidance on channelling remittances into productive investment and encourage closer collaboration between the Subregional Offices for North and West Africa. The representative of the secretariat highlighted the ongoing facilitation by the Subregional Office for North Africa of cooperation among North African tax authorities.

B. Programme of work of the Economic Commission for Africa for 2026

1. Presentation

16. The representative of the secretariat introduced the programme of work for 2026. Outlining the mandate, vision and mission of ECA, she said that she wished to highlight the importance for the evolving development landscape of Our Common Agenda, the Summit of the Future, the UN80 Initiative and other reforms of the United Nations system. The six global transitions to accelerate attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals – food systems, energy access and affordability, digital connectivity, education, jobs and social protection, and climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution² – shaped ECA programming in all areas of its activity, supported by cross-cutting work on data, statistics, gender and employment. The subregional offices operated as decentralized platforms that aligned national priorities with regional and continental frameworks. For North Africa, in the work programme for 2026, economic diversification, stronger fiscal management, deeper regional integration and improved recognition of migrant workers' contributions were prioritized. Expected results included evidence-based remittance and diaspora investment policies, increased development finance mobilization and bolstered productivity, diversification and value addition.

2. Discussion

17. During the discussion, the representative of the Sudan emphasized the need for stronger data ecosystems, for analytics enabled by artificial intelligence and for digital infrastructure, all in order to enhance governance, policymaking and regional cooperation on data governance, cybersecurity and digital inclusion; in response, the representative of the secretariat confirmed the centrality of artificial intelligence to the work of ECA. The representative of Morocco requested further information on energy infrastructure, noting the important role of transport and energy systems in supporting trade, competitiveness and industrialization.

VII. Ad hoc expert group meeting [agenda item 7]

18. The theme of the meeting was “Enhancing domestic resource mobilization through digital technologies in North Africa”. Participants underscored the role of digital technologies in making tax systems more efficient, increasing the tax base and reducing tax evasion. They also highlighted the importance of remittances and ways in which digital technologies could be used to foster innovation, in order to mobilize such funds and channel them into investment. The main recommendations included calls for the acceleration of fiscal reforms and tax digitalization, in order to broaden the tax base, improve compliance and support inclusive financing; for investment in national digital and innovation infrastructure, with a view to boosting domestic value addition and increasing the resilience of national economies; and for the strengthening of digital trust and fiscal transparency through robust data protection, coordinated governance and the secure, ethical use of systems based on artificial intelligence, among other information and communications technologies.

² United Nations, “Six transitions: investment pathways to deliver the SDGs” (New York, 2023).

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

A. Mobilization of domestic and external resources

1. Presentation

19. The representative of the secretariat introduced an overview of the four flagship initiatives through which the Subregional Office for North Africa was assisting the States of the subregion in mobilizing domestic and external resources. He said that the first initiative, on increasing tax revenues, was focused on strengthening large taxpayer offices and improving revenue performance in such critical sectors as oil, banking and construction. As part of the initiative, support had been provided to the Governments of Egypt, Libya, Mauritania and the Sudan, tailored to the institutional context and reform priorities of each country. Under the second initiative, aimed at harnessing diaspora remittances and migrant savings, States were being helped to design appropriate financial instruments for channelling such resources into productive investments; in Egypt, implementation was expected to begin in January 2026. The third initiative, launched in 2024, was aimed at enhancing national debt governance systems and analytical capacity. Under the initiative, 35 government officials had been trained on the International Monetary Fund framework for assessing sovereign risk and debt sustainability for market access countries, with the Government of Egypt receiving customized technical assistance. The fourth initiative was focused on sustainable finance, which had accounted for between 7 and 10 per cent of global financing in 2024, amounting to approximately \$6 trillion. Under the initiative, delegations from Egypt and Morocco had been among the participants in a regional forum on sustainable finance for Governments, convened by the Subregional Office in Nairobi during June 2025. He wished to highlight emerging forms of finance, such as green bonds, sustainability-linked loans, social impact funds, and climate and blue finance. With the support of the Subregional Office, the Governments of Mauritania and Tunisia were preparing national sustainable finance strategies; under a new initiative, those preparations would be expanded in 2026.

2. Discussion

20. In the discussion, participants underscored the importance of strengthening domestic resource mobilization, improving debt governance and accelerating efforts to adopt sustainable finance practices to respond to the widening financing gap in the subregion. They also emphasized the value of peer-to-peer learning, regional cooperation and coherent national policies, aligned with long-term development strategies to ensure that North African States could ease persistent financing constraints and advance progress towards both national and regional development agendas. The representative of the Sudan expressed interest in the prioritization of his country for future initiatives, given the significant humanitarian and economic pressures that it continued to face, and emphasized the need for broader support, including for investment promotion and essential services. The representative of Libya explained that his country was experiencing large inflows of migrants and received few remittances from abroad, a combination that posed distinct financial and governance challenges. In response, the representative of the secretariat underlined that all ECA initiatives were demand-driven and undertaken only upon receipt of a formal request from a given Government, subject to the availability of funding from donors.

B. Measuring development beyond gross domestic product: challenges and opportunities

1. Presentation

21. A member of the High-level Expert Group on Beyond Gross Domestic Product, Leonard Wantchekon, introduced an overview of the expert group's mandate and emerging recommendations. He said that the Beyond Gross Domestic Product initiative was aimed at developing a limited set of country-owned indicators that complemented and went beyond GDP in the assessment of development progress, given that current metrics failed to capture the multidimensional aspects of human well-being and that a more comprehensive, human-centred framework was needed. The initiative was underpinned by the pillars of well-being, equity and inclusion, and sustainability. Health, education and governance were among the core domains that were being considered. The aim was to reflect both the objective and the subjective dimensions of people's lives, along with the interconnected nature of development, moving beyond income and averages. The intention was to complement GDP, which would remain an important economic metric and would not be replaced, and adjusted variants of GDP were being explored. For the framework to be meaningful, the indicators must be sensitive to policy measures and capable of informing national planning. Strong political commitment, methodological clarity and institutional capacity would be essential for the framework's effective adoption.

2. Discussion

22. During the discussion, participants raised questions about the relevance of the proposed indicators in contexts of sovereign debt challenges. One participant stressed that developing countries could not meaningfully strengthen national agencies before structural issues in the global financial architecture had been addressed. Other participants highlighted the need for the framework to capture political institutions, social cohesion, unpaid household work – especially important for women in African contexts – and natural-resource flows, which remained defining elements of many African economies. Several participants expressed concerns about data availability and the feasibility of regular reporting by African States. Mr. Wantchekon explained that the measurement approach would be grounded in a bottom-up methodology, supported by the use of technology and artificial intelligence to address persistent data gaps, in particular in relation to the social dimensions of development. Participants emphasized the need for capacity-building to ensure that States were able to produce, analyse and effectively use the new indicators. The representative of Egypt noted the proliferation of existing social indicators and called for alignment between the limitations of current tools and the design principles of the new framework. The representative of Libya reiterated the existence in North Africa of persistent data constraints and the importance of targeted technical support. In conclusion, Mr. Wantchekon encouraged African States to guide the prioritization of domains and develop the institutional capacity required for them to start using the new metric.

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

23. The Committee made and adopted the recommendations listed below and requested that the Bureau should convey them to the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

24. Members of ECA are encouraged:

(a) To support inflation control and ensure the rationalization, efficiency and effectiveness of public spending, through continued efforts to maintain macroeconomic stability, by means of, on the one hand, flexible and evolving economic, fiscal, monetary and trade policies, including those policies related to technology and artificial intelligence, and, on the other hand, the promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, based on high-quality national data;

(b) To break down regulatory barriers and promote intraregional trade, by harmonizing regulations, fostering transparency, improving infrastructure, reducing administrative burdens and expanding access to digital services;

(c) To develop resilient financial systems, strengthen public financial management, improve domestic resource mobilization, integrate informal activities into the formal economy, reduce unjustified tax exemptions and enhance budget transparency and data accuracy, by digitalizing public financial management, tax administration and revenue collection;

(d) To strengthen national capacity in sustainability, transparency and the management of public debt, build upon successful experiences of using innovative and sustainable financing mechanisms and enhance the role of the private sector in development, including by bolstering public-private partnerships;

(e) To employ innovative financing tools and climate finance, strengthen supportive institutional frameworks, such as integrated national development strategies, and attract the savings of members of the diaspora, to be channelled into sustainable, long-term investments in their country of origin;

(f) To enhance coordination and establish effective partnerships for better migration management, harness remittances and diaspora contributions to support sustainable development, and develop investment tools and implement policies and programmes to encourage diaspora members to invest their savings in their country of origin;

(g) To promote digital transformation, advanced data analytics and the use of artificial intelligence, while also improving the business environment to attract private sector investment, accelerate economic diversification and achieve inclusive and sustainable growth;

(h) To improve the quality of data and create the necessary digital environment and infrastructure for better data access and use;

(i) To provide the Committee with up-to-date national data.

25. ECA is encouraged:

(a) To continue to assist its members in strengthening domestic resource mobilization through the modernization of tax systems, digital transformation, the improved management of the public finances, the promotion of financial inclusion and greater efficiency in the use and allocation of public resources;

(b) To help its members with managing and controlling their debt levels, reducing their debt burden and ensuring debt sustainability;

(c) To assist its members in developing integrated sustainable finance strategies that enhance their capacity to mobilize alternative resources, including climate finance to raise additional funds;

(d) To strengthen South-South cooperation, share best practices and experiences, and use innovative digital technologies to support domestic resource mobilization;

- (e) To enhance institutional capacity to improve tax administration, broaden the tax base to support tax justice, control tax burden levels, integrate the informal sector into the formal economy and reduce illicit financial flows;
- (f) To assist its members in adopting innovations and modern digital technologies to diversify their economies, expand the role of private enterprise, raise productivity levels and develop regional trade, thereby ensuring higher employment rates, sustainable macroeconomic growth and enhanced regional integration;
- (g) To continue to support its members in developing appropriate financial frameworks and innovative financing tools to enable them to make the best possible use of remittances and diaspora contributions for financing national development and investment and for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals;
- (h) To continue to support its members in accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, including through the preparation and application of national strategies for implementing the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and enhancing regional integration;
- (i) To assist its members in providing and creating the necessary digital environment to improve data quality and enhance data-sharing, which includes developing the capacity of North African States in the field of artificial intelligence;
- (j) To support African States in their ongoing campaign for reform of the global financial system, to enable greater representation of such States in the decision-making bodies of international financial institutions and to increase their access to the resources needed for achieving sustainable development;
- (k) To continue to support its members in capacity-building programmes for private and public institutions in the areas of governance, access to finance, in particular green finance, digitalization and the use of modern technology;
- (l) To support African States in integrating the informal sector into the formal sector, by conducting strategic studies and by facilitating the exchange of best practices in the field;
- (m) To urge international financial institutions and credit rating agencies to reform their current debt sustainability assessment standards and models to give greater consideration to the needs of climate finance and sustainable development;
- (n) To launch initiatives aimed at developing new financing instruments that rely on domestic resources to fund cross-border partnerships between its members;
- (o) To prioritize the use of national data, where available, and work to update existing data.

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

26. Announcing that no offers to host the forty-first session of the Committee had been received to date, the Director of the Subregional Office for North Africa encouraged members of ECA to submit their offers promptly. He said that, to facilitate agreement on the date and venue of the forty-first session, an

online meeting would be convened in June 2026, at which any expressions of interest received in the interim would be considered.

XI. Other matters [agenda item 11]

27. The representative of the secretariat invited members of the Committee to propose possible themes for the forty-first session of the Committee. He said that further discussion and refinement of proposals would be possible during the online meeting to be held in June 2026.

XII. Closing of the session [agenda item 12]

28. On behalf of all participants, the Chair of the Bureau extended a vote of thanks to ECA. Participants expressed their appreciation to the Government of Morocco, as host, and to ECA. The representative of Egypt emphasized the importance of strengthened regional cooperation. The representative of Libya underscored the need for African countries to better organize and mobilize their resources to accelerate development. The representative of Morocco reaffirmed his country's commitment to advancing regional integration in North Africa.

29. In his concluding remarks, the Director of the Subregional Office for North Africa highlighted the subregion's ability to meet its development ambitions, emphasized the importance of peer-to-peer learning, in particular for domestic resource mobilization, and reaffirmed the commitment of ECA to supporting the priorities of North Africa.

30. The Chair of the Bureau declared the session closed at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, 13 November 2025.
