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Economic Commission for Africa
Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender
Sixth session
Addis Ababa, 26–28 November 2025

Item 6 of the provisional agenda*

General discussion on the theme of the sixth session
“From informal employment to sustainable
livelihoods: emerging technologies as pathways for an
equitable transition”

From informal employment to sustainable livelihoods: emerging technologies as pathways for an equitable transition

Aide-memoire

I. Context

1. The Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender is a statutory intergovernmental body of experts and policymakers that provides guidance and advice to the Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) on its strategic priorities and engagement with members of the Commission.
2. The Committee meets biennially and is led by a Bureau that is elected during the session and serves a two-year term, until the next session. The Division serves as both the secretariat of the Committee and the convener of its sessions.

II. Theme

3. The sixth session will be held under the theme “From informal employment to sustainable livelihoods: emerging technologies as pathways for an equitable transition”.
4. Generative artificial intelligence represents a major technological breakthrough. With the increased accessibility and utility of such artificial intelligence systems, routine tasks are being automated, new job roles are being created and human capabilities are being augmented, resulting in increased efficiency and productivity. An understanding of these changes is critical in order to enable policymakers, researchers, industry leaders and workers to anticipate the future implications for labour markets, innovation and governance.
5. Artificial intelligence, in particular generative artificial intelligence, is having four kinds of effects on jobs: job displacement, job transformation, job creation and job disparities. The effects are linked with expected productivity gains in situations in

* E/ECA/CSPPG/6/1.

which the adoption and application of artificial intelligence can be used to replace human labour, complement human labour, create new jobs or deepen automation.

6. Overall, generative artificial intelligence offers greater potential for augmenting human labour than replacing it, which is especially important in both low-income and middle-income African countries. If States take a sectoral approach to targeting policy interventions, they will be presented with immense opportunities for sectoral improvements in labour conditions driven by artificial intelligence transformation, through skills enhancement and retraining of workforces, the use of digital technology to empower women, girls and young people, and the formalization of precarious jobs and their associated working environments.
7. During its sixth session, the Committee will explore how African States can use innovation and digital technologies to create decent jobs, address the persistence of informal employment, enhance social protection systems and promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Discussions will be focused on four thematic pillars:
 - (a) Structural drivers and socioeconomic implications of informal employment in Africa, in particular for women, girls and young people;
 - (b) Social protection as a catalyst for inclusive growth, with an emphasis on innovative policies and systems that strengthen resilience, reduce poverty and bridge inequality, with a particular focus on women, girls and young people;
 - (c) Investigation of how emerging technologies, such as digital platforms, mobile solutions and artificial intelligence, can represent new opportunities and increase productivity in the informal sector;
 - (d) Exploration of policy interventions and reforms that enable the reimagining of cities as inclusive hubs for economic transformation and social cohesion.

III. Date and venue

8. The sixth session of the Committee will be held in person at the United Nations Conference Centre in Addis Ababa from 26 to 28 November 2025.

IV. Format

9. The session will be conducted in a plenary format, during which representatives of members of ECA, along with invited experts, will engage in structured thematic discussions, in order to provide substantive feedback and strategic guidance to the Division.
10. A presentation on the theme of the sixth session – “From informal employment to sustainable livelihoods: emerging technologies as pathways for an equitable transition” – will serve as a starting point for the plenary discussions and is intended to elicit responses from participants.
11. As part of the plenary discussions, expert group meetings will be organized to facilitate in-depth exchanges on the following topics:
 - (a) Journey of African women in the world of work, technology and finance since the issuance of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995;
 - (b) Use of new technologies to connect strategies for poverty reduction and for social protection;
 - (c) Current state of urbanization, development and digital transformation in Africa.

12. The outcomes of the expert group meetings will be presented in plenary to inform the deliberations of the Committee and to guide the formulation of focused recommendations on the future programme of work of the Division. The conclusions that are reached from the discussions held during the meetings will thus constitute essential elements of the report of the Committee on its sixth session

V. Participation

13. The Committee comprises experts from members of ECA, drawn from ministries responsible for gender, social development, urbanization and economic planning. In addition, representatives of regional economic communities, the African Union Commission, entities of the United Nations system, civil society organizations and academic institutions will attend as observers.

VI. Bureau

14. The Chair of the Bureau represents the Committee at the meetings of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. Members of the Bureau are expected to participate in the statutory meetings of the intergovernmental committees of senior officials and experts held in their respective subregions, in order to ensure that gender and social development issues are effectively addressed at the subregional level.
 15. Members of the Bureau are elected on the basis of the principle of equitable geographical representation of each subregion, with language and gender balance also taken into consideration. A new Bureau will be elected at the start of the sixth session.
 16. Representatives of the Secretariat will support consultations among Committee members, who will nominate candidates for the incoming Bureau. The election will be held following the official opening of the session.
 17. The composition of the outgoing Bureau is as follows:
 - (a) Chair: Ghana;
 - (b) First Vice-Chair: Djibouti;
 - (c) Second Vice-Chair: Cameroon;
 - (d) First Rapporteur: South Africa;
 - (e) Second Rapporteur: Tunisia.
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