



Economic and Social Council

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Economic Commission for Africa Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender

Sixth session

Addis Ababa, 26–28 November 2025

Item 1 of the provisional agenda*

Opening of the session

Terms of reference of the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender

I. Background

1. In 2012, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) embarked upon a reform process that led to changes in its mandate, structure, programmes and intergovernmental mechanisms. The changes were endorsed in resolution 908 (XLVI), adopted at the forty-sixth session of ECA, held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire on 25 and 26 March 2013, as part of the sixth Joint Annual Meetings of the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance. The Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, in its decision 450 (XX), welcomed the changes to the strategic reorientation and refocusing of ECA to support the accelerated socioeconomic transformation of Africa.

2. The reform further revised intergovernmental mechanisms to ensure that the subsidiary bodies were congruent with the new programme priorities and structure. Accordingly, the following intergovernmental mechanisms of the Commission were maintained: (a) the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and its Committee of Experts; (b) the intergovernmental committees of experts of the subregional offices; (c) the Committee on Gender and Social Development; (d) the Committee on Sustainable Development; (e) the Committee on Regional Cooperation and Integration; and (f) the Committee on Statistics.

3. Between 2013 and 2019, the Committee on Gender and Social Development served as the intergovernmental body guiding the work of two subprogrammes: subprogramme 6 (Gender and women in development) and subprogramme 9 (Social and development policy). This Committee combined the former Committee on Women in Development, which had existed since 1979, and the Committee on Human and Social Development, which had existed since 2009. During this period, the Committee was convened twice: in 2015 and in 2017.

4. In 2019, as part of a wider reform of the Secretariat of the United Nations, the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development endorsed a review of the intergovernmental structure of ECA, pursuant to its resolutions 943 (XLIX) and 957 (LI). The Conference of Ministers recalled its resolutions 908 (XLVI), of 26 March 2013, and 943 (XLIX), of 5 April 2016, in which it called for a thorough review of the intergovernmental structure of the Commission, including its intergovernmental committees of

* E/ECA/CSPPG/6/1.



experts, to realign its structure and reorganize its sectoral subsidiary organs. One element of that review (the details of which can be found in annex I) was that the Committee of Gender and Social Development was replaced with the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender.

II. Role of the Committee

5. In paragraph 18A.45 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014–2015 (A/68/6 (Sect. 18)), the Committee on Gender and Social Development – as the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender was formerly known – was designated as “an advisory forum of experts and policymakers” the role of which was “to provide guidance to the Commission in its work of promoting equitable and inclusive human and social development in Africa, with particular focus on gender, employment, population and youth development, social protection and urbanization”. It was further explained that, during its biennial meetings, the Committee “reviews follow-up activities pertaining to global conferences and regional action programmes in the areas of social development, including the global and regional platforms for action on the advancement of women” and “reviews major trends and issues of regional interest regarding human and social development”.

6. Specifically, the Committee, with a focus on ECA subprogrammes 6 (gender equality and women’s empowerment) and 9 (poverty, inequality and social policy), serves:

- (a) To provide guidance and expert opinion on the priorities and activities of ECA;
- (b) To review the past activities and future programmes of ECA;
- (c) To provide recommendations to strengthen the programmes of ECA, with a view to better serving its members and the regional economic communities;
- (d) To provide policy guidance to ensure that ECA activities are relevant to meeting the region’s development needs and addressing its development challenges;
- (e) To advise on priorities for the implementation and review of regional and international policy agendas in relation to the work of ECA;
- (f) To provide direction on ECA partnerships with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and development partners.

III. Composition of the Committee

7. The Committee is composed of the following:

- (a) Experts from relevant ministries and departments of members of ECA;
- (b) Representatives of the African Union Commission and the regional economic communities, as observers;
- (c) Representatives of the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and civil society, as observers;
- (d) Representatives of ECA, as convener and secretariat of the Committee.

IV. Bureau of the Committee

8. The Chair of the Bureau should be present at the annual meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

9. Members of the Bureau are expected to attend statutory meetings in their subregions to ensure that gender and social development issues are addressed effectively at the subregional level.

V. Election of the Bureau

10. The geographical representation of each ECA subregion (see annex II), as well as language and gender balance, are taken into account in the election of officers.

11. A new Bureau is elected every two years, at the sessions of the Committee. During the Committee's sixth session, the election of the Bureau will be held on Thursday, 27 November 2025. The members and secretariat of the Committee will consult on the election of the Bureau. Nominations are to be made by members of the Committee.

Annex I

At its fifty-second session, held in Marrakech, Morocco, on 25 and 26 March 2019, the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development adopted resolution 966(LII) on the review of the intergovernmental structure of the Economic Commission for Africa pursuant to its resolution 943(XLIX) and resolution 957(LI). The operative part of the resolution, which was included as an annex to the report of the Conference of Ministers on the work of its fifty-second session (E/ECA/CM/52/2), reads as follows:

The Conference of Ministers,

[...]

1. Takes note of the review of the intergovernmental structure, its findings and recommendations;

2. Endorses the following adjustments to the intergovernmental structure of the Economic Commission for Africa:

(a) To organize the sectoral subsidiary organs as follows:

- (i) Committee on Economic Governance;
- (ii) Committee on Statistics and Data;
- (iii) Committee on Private Sector Development, Regional Integration, Trade, Infrastructure, Industry and Technology;
- (iv) Committee on Climate Change, Blue Economy, Agriculture and Natural Resource Management;
- (v) Committee on Social Development, Poverty and Gender;

(b) To change the name of the subregional intergovernmental committees of experts to the intergovernmental committees of senior officials and experts, with a view to ensuring effective policy uptake and greater participation of senior government officials in the committees.

Annex II

List of countries by subregion

Central Africa

Cameroon
Central African
Republic
Chad
Congo
Equatorial Guinea
Gabon
Sao Tome and
Principe

East Africa

Burundi
Comoros
Democratic Republic
of the Congo
Djibouti
Ethiopia
Eritrea
Kenya
Madagascar
Rwanda
Seychelles
Somalia
South Sudan
Uganda
United Republic of
Tanzania

North Africa

Algeria
Egypt
Libya
Mauritania
Morocco
Sudan
Tunisia

Southern Africa

Angola
Botswana
Eswatini
Lesotho
Malawi
Mauritius
Mozambique
Namibia
South Africa
Zambia
Zimbabwe

West Africa

Benin
Burkina Faso
Cabo Verde
Côte d'Ivoire
Gambia
Ghana
Guinea
Guinea-Bissau
Liberia
Mali
Niger
Nigeria
Senegal
Sierra Leone
Togo