



Republic  
of Burundi



United Nations  
Economic Commission for Africa



## 2023 Session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts (ICSOE)

UN Economic Commission for Africa - Central and Eastern Africa

Establishing Central and East Africa as Sources of Quality  
Products and Investment Destinations of Choice, to  
Accelerate Industrialization and Economic Diversification,  
and to Strengthen Food Security

Club du Lac Tanganyika - Bujumbura, Burundi  
26 - 29 September 2023

# Concept Note

## I. BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

The Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts (ICE) oversees the activities of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Sub-regional Offices (SROs). It is a discussion forum for experts from Member States, Regional Economic Communities and their specialised institutions, the private sector, researchers, civil society, and other technical and financial partners. The ICE meets annually to establish and monitor the implementation of the work programme of Sub-regional Offices (SROs), and to discuss key issues and challenges related to the economic and social development of each sub-region in order to formulate appropriate recommendations to address them.

The ECA sub-regional offices for Central and Eastern Africa will organize their second joint ICE meeting, given the similarity of the development challenges facing their respective sub-regions and the positive feedback from participants in the first joint meeting held in Victoria, Seychelles, in November 2022, who recommended that the experience be repeated.

The joint session of the ICE will hold from 26 to 29 **September 2023**, in Bujumbura, Republic of Burundi, on the theme ***“Establishing Central and Eastern Africa as Quality Product Origins and Preferred Investment Destinations to Accelerate Industrialization and Economic Diversification, and Strengthen Food Security”***.

Participants in the first joint session made several key recommendations, including the urgent need for Central and Eastern African economies to adopt “quality” as the basis for processing their abundant strategic raw materials and critical minerals locally. This is a prerequisite for repositioning these sub-regions within the new industrial and post-COVID-19 strategy impetus, enabling them to become quality product origins and leading investment destinations, while increasing their production capacity to meet local demand and generate surpluses for export.

There is also an urgent need to address food insecurity in these two sub-regions. It is necessary to identify the barriers to achieving food security and to explore the role of intra-regional trade, particularly digital food exchanges, as a potential solution. The severity and frequency of extreme weather events, high global food prices and disruptions to global food supply chains are exposing people to hunger and food crises, increasing their vulnerability and undermining efforts to ensure adequate food for all and end all forms of malnutrition. The statistics are alarming. It is estimated that 62.6 per cent of the undernourished in sub-Saharan Africa live in Central and Eastern Africa (FAO *et al.*, 2021). The most affected countries in January 2023 were DRC, South Sudan, Chad, CAR, and Somalia.

The choice of this theme is also justified by the declaration of the African Union Heads of State and Government, who, at the end of their Extraordinary Summit in Niamey, Niger, in November 2022, called for the acceleration of commodity-based industrialization as a driver of growth, productive job creation and economic diversification through the continent's regional natural resource value chains.

In their declaration, the African leaders also recalled Decision EX.CL/Dec1144(XL) by which the Executive Council endorsed the Quality Policy for Africa and urged the African Union Commission to collaborate with the African Regional Standards Organization (ARSO) and the Pan-African Quality Infrastructure (PAQI) in order to expedite the finalization of the norms and standards for the "Made in Africa" label.

Considering the continent's precarious food situation over the past two years owing to the pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine, the joint session of the ICE held in Victoria, Seychelles, in November 2022, also called on Member States to reduce their excessive reliance on commodities and, in particular, to invest in regional food value chains. Member States also showed a growing interest in prioritizing tourism in the region.

## II. MEETING OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this joint meeting of the ICE is to examine regulatory issues related to the mandate and functioning of the Sub-regional Offices in Central and Eastern Africa and to enable experts to exchange views on economic and social development issues in order to identify realistic, inclusive and sustainable options related to the meeting theme: ***"Establishing Central and Eastern Africa as Quality Product Origins and Preferred Investment Destinations to Accelerate Industrialization and Economic Diversification, and Strengthen Food Security"***.

Specifically, the meeting of the ICE will discuss the following points:

- What is the quality and quantity of current production in (or generated by) Central and Eastern African economies? How do these qualities and quantities affect prospects for industrialization and increased food security?
- What are the main challenges in implementing quality, food security and economic diversification policies in Africa in general and in Central and Eastern Africa in particular?
- What initiatives, approaches, policies and strategies have been adopted to improve production quality and quantity in order to achieve greater industrialization, diversification and food security?
- How effective are they and what are their target limitations?
- How can these be improved and mutually enriched in Central and Eastern Africa?

- What is the situation of food trade? What is the source of the food consumed and how can international trade and food exchanges help to reduce food insecurity in these two sub-regions?
- Who are the actors involved in food production and marketing and what are the strengths and weaknesses of food trade in the quest for food security?
- How can the challenge of making Central and Eastern Africa attractive destinations for international investors be met?
- How can the AfCFTA be leveraged to attract more investment and tackle food insecurity?
- What policies, strategies and options can be recommended for implementing a “quality culture” and promoting intra-African trade in order to increase the quantity and quality of production in the region so as to strengthen food security, promote economic diversification and attract more investment?

### **III. ORGANIZATION AND FORMAT OF THE MEETING**

The meeting of the ICE will last four days during which working documents prepared by ECA will be presented and discussed. Papers will be presented by Member States and partners that so wish. Discussions will follow each presentation in plenary and break-out sessions.

The main theme is ***“Establishing Central and Eastern Africa as Quality Product Origins and Preferred Investment Destinations to Accelerate Industrialization and Economic Diversification, and Strengthen Food Security”***.

### **IV. EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

Participants will have a platform for discussing and sharing ideas on best practices. Key recommendations made during the deliberations will provide valuable input to the ECA strategy for cooperation in Central and Eastern Africa, as well as to the resilience and development strategies of various countries, RECs and other stakeholders.

To this end, the expected outputs are: (i) a statement of conclusions summarizing the papers presented, the deliberations and their main decisions, as well as recommendations, particularly those aimed at improving the activities of the Sub-regional Offices for Central and Eastern Africa; and (ii) a report giving a detailed account of the deliberations.

The meeting will also formulate proposals relating to the theme, date and venue of the next meeting of the ICE.

## **V. PARTICIPATION**

Participants in the Joint Session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts of the ECA Offices for Central and Eastern Africa will include high-level decision-makers, especially ministers and heads of institutions and/or their senior officials.

The meeting of the ICE will also bring together representatives of the Member States of Central and Eastern Africa, the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities, intergovernmental organizations and the African Regional Standards Organization (ARSO), as well as representatives of the private sector, international institutions, universities and research centres, and civil society organizations, including women's and youth groups, think-tanks and other relevant stakeholders.

## **VI. DATE AND VENUE**

The Joint Session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts of the ECA Offices for Central and Eastern Africa will hold in Bujumbura, Republic of Burundi, from **26 to 29 September 2023**.

## **VII. WORKING LANGUAGES**

The proceedings will be conducted in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish, with simultaneous interpretation.

## **VIII. CONTACTS**

**Mr Adama Ekberg Coulibaly**

Email: [ekbergcoulibaly@un.org](mailto:ekbergcoulibaly@un.org)

Tel: (237) 222 50 43 24

**Mr Mamadou Malick BAL**

Email: [balm@un.org](mailto:balm@un.org)

Tel: (237) 222 50 43 46

**Ms Emelang Leteane**

Tel: (250) 782 179 187

Email: [leteane.uneca@un.org](mailto:leteane.uneca@un.org)