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**Economic Commission for Africa  
Committee of Experts of the Conference of African  
Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development**  
Thirty-ninth meeting

Addis Ababa (hybrid), 17–19 March 2021

Item 6 of the provisional agenda \*\*

**Statutory issues**

### **Report on the follow-up by the Economic Commission for Africa to the resolutions of the fifty- second annual meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, and the 2020 extraordinary meeting of the Bureau of the Conference**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. The present report highlights progress in the implementation by the secretariat of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) of the resolutions adopted by the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development at its fifty-second session, held in Marrakech, Morocco, on 25 and 26 March 2019, as well as by the extraordinary meeting of the Bureau, held on-line on 9 April 2020, in lieu of the fifty-third session, postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. The Conference adopted eight resolutions, and the extraordinary meeting of the Bureau, two resolutions, which were submitted to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations for review and endorsement. The present report highlights progress made in the implementation of nine of those resolutions which require action to be taken by the Commission.

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\* Reissued for technical reasons on 11 February 2021.

\*\* E/ECA/COE/39/1.



## II. Resolutions of the fifty-second annual meeting of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development

### A. Resolution 962 (LII): on data and statistics

#### Paragraph 12

##### (a) Text

12. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa to strengthen the capacity of member States to make use of the integrated tool developed by the Commission for monitoring implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

##### (b) Progress

ECA provided support to member States in the use of tools to monitor and align their development plans with the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union. In that endeavour, a training workshop was organized on the integrated planning and reporting toolkit, from 27 to 29 August 2019, in Addis Ababa, to introduce more countries to the toolkit. Representatives of 13 countries<sup>1</sup> attended the workshop and received training in the use of the toolkit for the alignment of national development plans with the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063. During the workshop, attention was drawn to the importance of a streamlined flow of results from impact to outcomes and then to outputs, and also for the need to limit the number of indicators for each layer of result.

As of December 2019, 18 countries<sup>2</sup> registered as users of the toolkit, and the result frameworks of their national development plans have been entered into the portal. Efforts are now under way to align those plans with the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063, with five countries<sup>3</sup> having passed the halfway point in that alignment process. From this point on, the Commission will be working with United Nations country teams and Resident Coordinators' offices to promote the use of the toolkit in more countries and to import international data on the Sustainable Development Goal indicators hosted by the ECA African Centre for Statistics and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs into the toolkit, using the Sustainable Development Goal Gateway methodology developed for that purpose by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

### B. Resolution 963 (LII) on the midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action for the Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024

#### Paragraph 4

##### (a) Text

4. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue to provide technical support to the region's landlocked developing countries in areas related to the Vienna Programme of Action, such as infrastructure investment,

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<sup>1</sup> Burkina Faso, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, the Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

<sup>2</sup> Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Congo, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mauritania, Namibia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, the Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

<sup>3</sup> Ethiopia, Seychelles, the Sudan, Uganda and Zambia.

transport facilitation, productive capacity development, logistical integration and logistics cost studies;

**(b) Progress**

ECA provided technical support to Ethiopia in incentivizing private sector investment in the energy sector. To this end, the Commission undertook a review of the country's regulatory environment for investment in its electricity sector. The study was undertaken in the context of private sector generation of electricity to supply industrial parks in Ethiopia, and in the framework of a memorandum of understanding between ECA, the Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy of Ethiopia and the infrastructure development fund Africa50. ECA also collaborated with the African Union Commission in conducting the midterm review of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa.

As part of the Programme's steering committee, ECA has also been involved in preparing the second phase of the Programme, including in applying the criteria for project selection, anchored on the prioritization of regional projects. This is important, as regional corridors not only enable landlocked countries to participate effectively in intra-African trade, but also provide them with access to the sea, hence facilitating their international trade.

**Paragraph 5**

**(a) Text**

5. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the African Union, the African Development Bank and other relevant regional organizations to further assist African landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries in infrastructure development, development of bankable projects, production capacity development, trade facilitation and structural transformation through, in particular, enhanced investment and technical assistance, and to promote greater cooperation between African landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries, and enhance regional integration;

**(b) Progress**

As part of its contribution to the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 in Africa, in infrastructure, ECA provided technical assistance to Angola, Eritrea and Ethiopia in energy statistics and in efforts to attract private sector investment in the energy sector. In addition, ECA trained 22 officials from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan in energy modelling.

In collaboration with the RES4Africa Foundation, the Commission has also developed a methodology to assess the effectiveness of the regulatory environment of the electricity sector in African countries. Experts from nine African countries have been trained in the use of the methodology and will thus undertake national case studies in 2020. These interventions are designed to contribute to the objective of universal access to electricity in African countries. As a member of the steering committee of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, ECA promotes cooperation between African landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries in infrastructure development and regional integration. Thus, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, ECA has developed the post-2020 strategic directions for road safety in Africa, adopted at the fourth African Road Safety Conference, held in Addis Ababa in August 2019. These directions will be of particular benefit following the expected increase in cross-border traffic that will result from the African Continental Free Trade Area.

ECA convened a meeting in Addis Ababa, on 24 and 25 April 2019, as part of the project on preventing trade misinvoicing in selected African countries, attended by officials of the six countries<sup>4</sup> identified for the first phase of that project. The meeting was organized in collaboration with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, as implementing partners of the Development Account Project. Participants at the meeting examined the solutions available on the market and resolved to adapt and enhance the capacity of their existing digital tools to track and curb the malpractice of trade misinvoicing, which is costing member States significant amounts in lost tax revenues.

ECA also provided technical input into the midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action, organized by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, and ECA.

Lastly, the Africa Regional Midterm Review Meeting of the Vienna Programme of Action for the Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 was held on 18 and 19 March 2019 in Marrakech, on the sidelines of the fifty-second session of the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. The meeting assessed progress achieved in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action along the programme's six priority areas: – fundamental transit policy issues; infrastructure development and maintenance; international trade and trade facilitation; regional integration and cooperation; structural economic transformation; and means of implementation. The outcomes and key recommendations from the meeting are available at [www.lldc2conference.org/custom-content/uploads/2019/04/Adopted-Outcome-document-2-April.pdf](http://www.lldc2conference.org/custom-content/uploads/2019/04/Adopted-Outcome-document-2-April.pdf).

#### **Paragraph 6**

**(a) Text**

6. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, to undertake the ten-year regional review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024;

**(b) Progress**

The 10-year review will be undertaken in 2024.

### **C. Resolution 964 (LII) on the 2020 programme plan and budget**

#### **Paragraph 1**

**(a) Text**

1. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to develop a medium-term programme framework covering three to five years, to facilitate the engagement of member States with the Commission; annual plans and budget will be derived from the framework and performance measured on its bases;

**(b) Progress**

The ECA medium-term programme framework for 2021–2024 is under development. However, due to the exigencies and challenges witnessed in 2020

<sup>4</sup> Egypt, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tunisia and the United Republic of Tanzania.

related to COVID-19, the document could not be completed, as it requires further consultation with different constituencies and stakeholders. Due to this delay, it is proposed that the document should be for 2022 to 2025.

**Paragraph 2**

**(a) Text**

2. *Also calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to increase the level of ambition in its programme of work;

**(b) Progress**

Please refer to paragraph 1 (b) above on progress on the resolution.

**D. Resolution 965 (LII) on the Luxembourg Protocol to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment on Matters Specific to Railway Rolling Stock**

**Paragraph 1**

**(a) Text**

1. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue, including through its subregional offices, its awareness-raising and advocacy efforts for States across the African continent on the Protocol to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment on Matters specific to Railway Rolling Stock (Luxembourg Rail Protocol) at the earliest opportunity, with a view to elucidating its merits and potential contribution to the financing of rolling stock in rail projects;

**(b) Progress**

The Commission, led by the Private Sector Development and Finance Division, undertook awareness-raising and advocacy measures on the benefits and potential contribution to rail rolling stock financing through the signing and ratification of the Luxembourg Rail Protocol. The Commission organized a session on the Protocol during the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Conference of Ministers responsible for transport, communications and metrology, that was convened in Dar-es-Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, from 18 to 20 September 2019. More than 100 delegates from 10 SADC member States were briefed on the potential economic benefits of the Rail Protocol and the role that it could play in incentivizing private sector investments in the rail sector.

Following requests from member States, rail stakeholder workshops on the Protocol were planned for Namibia, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe in early 2020. ECA also undertook an awareness-raising mission to Cairo in December 2019, during which senior officials of the Egyptian National Railways, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of International Relations and Ministry of Investment and International Cooperation were briefed on the Protocol. In addition, ECA was invited to deliver a presentation on the Luxembourg Rail Protocol at a diplomatic conference in Pretoria in November 2019. In close coordination with the Railway Working Group, ECA has also been involved in awareness-raising exercises in Kenya, Morocco and South Africa, during which senior officials were briefed on the benefits of the Protocol and how to fast-track its ratification.

**Paragraph 2****(a) Text**

2. *Also calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to inform interested parties from the public sector and the private sector across the continent, and educate them in the way that private credit and leasing can assist with providing the financial resources necessary to revitalize and expand the African rail network, and the benefits of becoming party to the Luxembourg Rail Protocol;

**(b) Progress**

The Commission has made use of high-level forums such as the Africa Rail Summit, held in June 2019, the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa Week, from 24 to 29 November 2019, and sessions of the Specialized Technical Committee on Transport, Tourism and Energy of the African Union Commission to inform and educate both public sector and private sector operators on the Luxembourg Rail Protocol and how the Protocol offers a new, worldwide legal framework for the recognition and regulation of the security interests of lenders, lessors and vendors selling under conditional sale agreements, each of which is secured by railway rolling stock. Every opportunity was seized to inform stakeholders of the numerous benefits of the Protocol, which, by reducing the risk for rail equipment, has the potential to attract more private sector lenders and lessors into the market. This, in turn, will result in cheaper finance for non-State-guaranteed operators, as the risks for private sector funders decreases, thereby attracting more capital investments to promote the expansion of rolling stock manufacturing. The Protocol has been ratified by Gabon and signed by Mozambique, while Kenya, Mauritius and South Africa are currently considering signing the Protocol.

**E. Resolution 967 (LII) on progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 and preparation for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries****Paragraph 2****(a) Text**

2. *Encourages* the Economic Commission for Africa and its development partners, including countries in Africa that are not in the least developed country category, to continue their support for implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action;

**(b) Progress**

The Commission has continued to support the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 (Istanbul Programme of Action) through its contribution to the annual status report on the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action that is produced by the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

Over the period under review, ECA has supported some least developed countries in Africa, including Burundi, Djibouti and Ethiopia, in the development and implementation of their macroeconomic models aimed at helping those countries in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of their economic policies, and in ensuring their effectiveness in achieving the objectives of sustainable growth and structural transformation. In addition, the Commission organized three training workshops, in Cameroon, the Congo and

Uganda, on the use of system dynamics tools in support of their national development plans.

ECA also contributed to the Istanbul Programme of Action in the area of domestic revenue mobilization through the high-quality analytical work in the *Economic Report on Africa 2019*, which identified six key areas through which African countries can increase their tax-to-gross domestic product ratios by between 12 and 20 per cent. The report was launched at a number of different forums, and three countries – Ethiopia, the Sudan and Zimbabwe – who have submitted requests for assistance with implementation of its recommendations. In response, ECA has carried out technical assistance missions to all three countries which, among other outcomes, has led to the incorporation of recommendations into the legislative systems of Ethiopia and the Sudan, with potential gains in revenue for those countries of as much as \$400 million.

In the area of governance, ECA provided a substantive contribution to the current programme under the African Peer Review Mechanism on deepening the peer review process through the rethinking of the idea and original vision of the Mechanism, and also through other studies, which led to the identification of 13 bottlenecks and their incorporation in the review, to streamline its operation and to make it more relevant to contemporary governance challenges. As a result, the Niger agreed to undertake a country review, which took place in November and December 2019. ECA also supported the Government of Kenya in launching its “Huduma Halisi” (“honest public service”) campaign and developing an associated data-collection platform to facilitate the roll-out of the multi-stakeholder campaign in December 2019. ECA will continue to monitor the effect of this campaign on the state of governance in Kenya.

In addition, and as noted in section B, on follow-up to resolution 963 (LII), ECA is assisting the Governments of Senegal and the United Republic of Tanzania, in particular their customs and financial intelligence units, along with other African least developed countries, to enhance their capacity to curb the malpractice of trade misinvoicing, which is costing member States significant amounts of tax revenues.

In the area of agriculture, food security and rural development, Malawi was selected as a pilot country for the Land Investment Mapping Tool, a diagnostic tool designed to map potential areas for agricultural investment. The exercise will be extended to include other African countries, with a special focus on African least developed countries that have successfully mainstreamed land governance through application of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Programme, with the support of ECA.

In addition, and in response to a request from the Government of Malawi, the ECA African Land Policy Centre, working in collaboration with the Malawian Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, organized a training course to help key stakeholders in that country to facilitate equitable, efficient and sustainable large-scale land-based investments in land, in accordance with the African Union Declaration on Land and the African Union Guiding Principles on Large-scale Land-based Investments. ECA also responded to a request by the Government of Rwanda to develop two customized gender-related training modules, namely, on gender dimensions of incorporating the Guiding Principles on Large-scale Land-based Investments into domestic law and on strengthening women’s land tenure security. The support of ECA was also extended to the Government of Guinea, in assisting its review of national land policy and legal frameworks with a view of creating an enabling environment for private sector involvement in land-based investments in agriculture.

**Paragraph 3****(a) Text**

3. *Invites* the Economic Commission for Africa, with the cooperation of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, to organize a regional review meeting for Africa in 2020, prior to the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries;

**(b) Progress**

Plans are under way to organize the Africa Regional Review meeting on the Istanbul Plan of Action for Least Developed Countries in 2020. The meeting is to be hosted by the Government of Malawi and, subject to confirmation, to be held on 18 and 19 February 2020 in Lilongwe. The meeting will bring together ministers responsible for finance and economic planning from all the 33 African least developed countries and also from Haiti, together with representatives of the regional economic communities and other key partners, to review the status of implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the remaining gaps, to consider how these can be overcome, and also to lay out the expectations for a new programme of action in support of the least developed countries.

ECA, under the leadership of the Macroeconomics and Governance Division, is working in collaboration with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the Government of Malawi on the substantive and logistical arrangements. Discussions with the Government of Malawi and the Office of the High Representative have been launched and preparations are under way: the concept note and invitation letters have been drafted, the programme of work is being worked on and key speakers are being identified.

**F. Resolution 968 (LII) on fiscal policy, trade and the private sector in a digital era: a strategy for Africa****Paragraph 2****(a) Text**

2. *Urges* the Economic Commission for Africa to support member States and the African Tax Administration Forum in their efforts to develop frameworks that leverage digitization to strengthen revenue mobilization and public financial management through automation, digital identity and the modernization of fiscal processes;

**(b) Progress**

The Commission issued its annual flagship publication the *Economic Report on Africa 2019*, with the theme “Fiscal policy for financing Africa’s sustainable development”. The report provides an evidence-based assessment of the nature and performance of fiscal policy in Africa, including an analysis of challenges and opportunities, together with best practices on fiscal policy management and domestic finance mobilization strategies and revenue generation. The analysis in the report is based on case studies of 12 African countries (Angola, Benin, Chad, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, South Africa, the Sudan and Zimbabwe).

As part of the implementation of the recommendations set out in the *Economic Report on Africa 2019*, ECA carried out an assessment and analysis of tax policy to identify potential revenue leakages and areas for immediate reform that could strengthen tax revenue collection in Ethiopia, the Sudan and



Zimbabwe. It also published a policy brief on fiscal policy measures that could assist African countries in their quest to increase domestic revenues for the financing of their development priorities.

ECA organized the first session of the Committee on Private Sector Development, Regional Integration, Trade, Infrastructure, Industry and Technology on 11 and 12 December 2019. The theme of the session was “Private sector development and digital economy in support of regional integration in Africa”. The issues paper for the session identified various ways through which digitalization could improve the effectiveness and efficiency of infrastructure assets and services, industrialization and regional integration. ECA also collaborated with the African Union Development Agency in the organization of a capacity-building workshop on the digitalization of rural services, with a focus on transport infrastructure. The workshop identified ways in which digitalization could enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of rural transport infrastructure and services.

In the area of road safety, ECA spearheaded the articulation of the African post-2020 Road Safety Strategy, which highlights the importance of digitalization in road safety management and ultimately curbing the number of deaths on the roads of the African continent.

### **Paragraph 3**

#### **(a) Text**

3. *Also urges* the Economic Commission for Africa to support member States in building digital infrastructure that could be used to combat illicit financial flows;

#### **(b) Progress**

With ECA support, Nigeria has identified requirements for the digitalization of processes to bridge the databases of various agencies active in the domain of illicit financial flows, and is developing a programme to build its capacity to enhance the effectiveness of programmes set up in the country to combat such flows. Based on the experience gained by Nigeria, ECA plans to adapt the programme for other countries in 2020. In addition, it is working with software providers to enhance the interoperability of member States’ existing digital systems, with a view to comprehensively tackle trade misinvoicing malpractices. ECA will also provide a training programme for government officials and private practitioners to use the enhanced systems to implement measures that address trade misinvoicing.

### **Paragraph 4**

#### **(a) Text**

4. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and other relevant partners, to develop a comprehensive African digital trade and digital economy development strategy, including principles for good digital identity and harmonized standards, and a regional regulatory framework for digital finance and financial technology;

**(b) Progress**

ECA has been supporting the African Union Commission in the development of a digital strategy for Africa. Working in collaboration with the African Union as a joint leader of the initiative, it aims to develop a continental digital transformation strategy, designed to harness the benefits of digitalization and support the implementation of digital trade, digital identity and digital economy programmes in support of the African Continental Free Trade Area. The strategy is under discussion by the appropriate bodies of the African Union, such as the Specialized Technical Committee on Communication and Information and Communications Technology and the Specialized Technical Committee on Trade, Industry and Minerals, and will be submitted for endorsement by the African Heads of State in February 2020.

**G. Resolution 969 (LII) on digitization and the digital economy initiative****Paragraph 2****(a) Text**

2. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue to work on policy research, regional dialogue and capacity development on digitization and the digital economy in member States, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, regional economic communities, member States, the African Development Bank, the African Tax Administration Forum, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Bank and other stakeholders;

**(b) Progress**

In fulfilment of the resolution, ECA is working on establishing the Digital Earth Africa programme. The programme is intended to deliver an exceptional fit-for-purpose platform that can translate over 50 years of Earth observation satellite imagery (taken every two weeks at 25 metre resolution or every five days at 10 metre resolution) into information and insights on changes on land and sea in Africa. Digital Earth Africa will build on the Data Cube technology to deliver a unique continental-scale structure and tools that democratize the capacity to process and analyse satellite data into ready-to-use insights about the continent's environmental conditions, including soil and coastal erosion, agriculture, forest and desert monitoring, water management, and changes to human settlements, disaster risk management and other processes.

Digital Earth Africa serves as a building block in the efforts by the African continent to harness information resources for an African information society and knowledge-led economy. The programme will offer a new way to build a robust data infrastructure, with trillions of individual observations, that can give a better understanding of the continent's changing landscape and provide insights that will enable African Governments, non-governmental organizations, businesses and individuals to make better informed decisions.

**Paragraph 3****(a) Text**

3. *Also requests* the Economic Commission for Africa to fully operationalize a centre of excellence on digitization and the digital economy, with a view to tackling the critical issue of capacity shortfalls in the digital sector of member States, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the regional economic communities, the African Development Bank, the African Tax Administration Forum, the Organization for Economic

Cooperation and Development, the World Bank, development partners and African institutions of higher learning;

**(b) Progress**

The Centre of Excellence for Digital Identity, Trade and Economy was launched by ECA to support member countries in their effort to fully exploit the benefits of digitalization for the continent's development. The establishment of the Centre of Excellence was spearheaded by the African Centre for Statistics. The Centre deals with a range of topics in such areas as digital identity and digital trade and economy.

The Centre will serve as an on-demand source of technical advice for countries on their digital identity and digital economy. It will also undertake research on the various dimensions of the digital economy, and will pool and coordinate digital economy-related work in the Commission. In particular, the Centre will promote the harmonization of related standards across member States, support the development of regulation to safeguard security and the promotion of investments in infrastructure, and develop the capacity and skills of key stakeholders in member countries, including from the private sector, so that they can embrace the opportunities for innovation and job creation that digitalization presents.

In addition, the Centre will seek to backstop support provided by ECA for the creation of a digital common market under the African Continental Free Trade Area, with a view to helping African countries, the operators of information and communications technology and members of the general public to take advantage of the opportunities and benefits associated with the digital economy in a continent-wide market. As one of its key deliverables, the Centre focuses on the development of strategic and legal frameworks for a harmonized legal identity that is based on a strong civil registration system and enabled by digitalization. The Centre has already garnered a resource commitment of \$1.2 million from the philanthropic investment firm Omidyar Network.

**Paragraph 4**

**(a) Text**

4. *Urges* the Economic Commission for Africa to ensure that the centre of excellence on digitization and the digital economy has tangible, time-bound and results-based deliverables to support member States;

**(b) Progress**

To this end, the Centre of Excellence has primarily developed a comprehensive conceptual framework to guide work within the continent in the domain of digitalization and to streamline the provision of technical and capacity-development support to member States in the various aspects of the initiative. For that purpose, the Centre has adopted the digitalization opportunities diagnosis process, working in partnership with the Pathways for Prosperity Commission. In this process, the Centre is applying its flagship Digital Maturity Model, which assesses the status of digitalization in the various target countries. This has enabled the Centre to kick-start the provision of technical support to countries in the following areas:

- (i) Digital identity: Ministry of Innovation and Technology and Ministry of Peace, Ethiopia;
- (ii) Online course on digital identity for eight officials and executives from various areas of the Government of Ethiopia, including the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Peace, and the Ministry of Innovation and Technology. The course focused on addressing current practices in digital identity in regard to

technology, and regulatory and policy frameworks, and best practices in the application of a digital identity to support economic growth and development. Of particular significance, the course addressed the process of establishing requisite national governance mechanisms in designing and implementing national identity programmes and resource requirements;

- (iii) Refugee digital identity and services with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the MasterCard Partnership: Ethiopia;
- (iv) Broadband initiative with Africa50: Cameroon and Ethiopia;
- (v) Financial inclusion with the mobile payment system EcoCash and other partners (currently under discussion): Zimbabwe;
- (vi) E-taxation: Benin, Guinea and Senegal;
- (vii) Digital transformation: Cameroon, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe;
- (viii) Huduma Hali Campaign: Kenya;
- (ix) Digital loop: Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Kenya, the Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa and Zimbabwe;
- (x) 5G test: Cameroon, the Congo, Kenya, Morocco, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa and Zimbabwe;
- (xi) Information and communications technology master plan for Parliament: Botswana.

### **III. Resolutions of the 2020 extraordinary meeting of the Bureau of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development**

#### **A. Resolution 970 (LIII) on the 2021 programme plan and budget**

##### **Paragraph 2**

##### **(a) Text**

2. *Requests* the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa to continue to support the efforts of the Commission in securing the additional resources needed to conduct critical evidence-based analyses of the socioeconomic consequences of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic as a basis for assisting the region to adopt the strategies and measures necessary to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on the development prospects of African countries;

##### **(b) Progress**

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Commission has been playing an instrumental role in supporting African countries in addressing COVID-19-related challenges. ECA has been very responsive and reactive in undertaking a series of studies towards estimating the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 on Africa, including gross domestic product, fiscal, trade, poverty, gender and employment dimensions. The fiscal space, debt profile and external debt exposure of African countries were reviewed in depth. Implications of border closures and trade policies, the ability to access and/or produce COVID-19-related supplies, equipment and medicines were further analysed. All related findings fed back into strategic assessment reports on the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 on African economies and development goals, including the identification of targeted policy

decisions, as shown further below. All ECA COVID-19 publications can be further consulted at <https://www.uneca.org/>.

ECA has joined other United Nations regional economic communities in the development of a joint United Nations project to be funded through the 14th tranche of the Development Account on “Statistics and Data Programme – Improving the resilience and agility of national statistical systems to meet pressing data needs and inform COVID-19 responses at local, national, regional and global levels”.

### **Paragraph 3**

#### **(a) Text**

3. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, to design e-learning and tailor-made training and capacity development programmes for member States in response to their requests;

#### **(b) Progress**

The African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) acts as a think tank, with the aim of guiding policy change and decision-making at the highest level on several development challenges. The COVID-19 crisis has resulted in a significant increase in digital training. In response to the new trends, IDEP reoriented its training delivery method from in situ to digital learning, focusing on (a) macroeconomic modelling and planning, (b) regional integration, (c) social development, and (d) integrated natural resource management.

IDEP will be working towards a hybrid strategy as soon as it is able to offer in situ training, and will continue to actively seek cost-sharing collaborations with other institutions in the delivery of its programme. Further information is included in the IDEP progress report (E/ECA/COE/39/13).

### **Paragraph 4**

#### **(a) Text**

4. *Also requests* the Commission to organize and coordinate meetings under the African Union–United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to report on the status of implementation of the Framework;

#### **Progress**

ECA, in collaboration with the United Nations Office of the African Union and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, and in partnership with the African Union Commission, successfully convened the fourth African Union–United Nations Annual Conference under the leadership of the United Nations Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission. The Conference resulted in the adoption of the communiqué that recognized the achievements so far and underscored the need for accelerated joint efforts in the context of the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals.

Working closely with the United Nations development system, ECA led the development of the progress report on the implementation of the African Union–United Nations framework and the results achieved. The report highlighted the progress made in particular areas of a coordinated African response to the COVID-19 pandemic; supporting advocacy on the African Union theme of the year: “Silencing the guns by 2020”; enhancing trade and regional integration; improving data and statistics; gender equality; and integrated planning, reporting and stemming illicit financial flows.

**Paragraph 5****(a) Text**

5. *Further, requests* the Commission to support member States, the regional economic communities and the African Union Commission in operationalizing the digital transformation strategy for Africa, through the building of inclusive digital skills and human capacity across the digital sciences, the judiciary and the education sector;

**(b) Progress**

ECA undertook several pioneering activities in support of the African Union Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020–2030), which was developed with its collaboration, also building on the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa to create a Digital Single Market. ECA helped Ethiopia in developing an inclusive digital strategy (Digital Ethiopia 2025 Strategy), aligned with the national development vision and priorities, and endorsed at the highest level in June 2020.

ECA also consolidated significant advancements in the digital field within the framework of its Digital Centre of Excellence for digital identity, trade and economy, in particular on the institution's Digital Initiative to support African countries in fully harnessing the opportunities of digital identity to facilitate the provision of legal identity for all Africans, and to leverage digital trade in the African Continental Free Trade Area, with a view to addressing cross-cutting and complex digitization interventions. The work on digital identity is also embedded within the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda (2020–2030), launched in support of member States building holistic, country-owned, sustainable civil registration, vital statistics and identity managements. Against this backdrop, ECA has assisted Ghana, Liberia, the Niger, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Mozambique and Zambia – in collaboration with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Children's Fund and United Nations Development Programme – in conducting assessments of their respective civil registration and vital statistics systems.

On 6 October 2020, ECA launched the Africa Data Leadership Initiative with Future State and Smart Africa (spearheading a knowledge economy through affordable access to broadband and usage of information and communications technology (ICT), creating a safe space for policymakers, digital rights experts and entrepreneurs to learn together.

A coding boot camp was jointly organized by ECA and the International Telecommunication Union as part of activities to mark the United Nations' 75th anniversary. The camp brought together over 2,000 young girls online and in person at the United Nations Conference Centre in Addis Ababa from 30 November to 11 December 2020. The event aimed at promoting information and communications technologies as important tools for women's empowerment. It was seen as an important outlet of innovative expression as well as a major avenue of hope for the younger generations, who have been severely affected by school disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Paragraph 6****(a) Text**

6. *Requests* the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa to report to the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development at its next session on the implementation of the programme of work of the Commission.

**(b) Progress**

Despite constraints and limitations linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, ECA has continued to deliver its programme of work around its convening, think tank and operational functions, alongside its strategic directions on knowledge-building,

formulation of policy options and innovative finance models, supporting regional and transboundary issues, and advancing Africa's position at global level.

The Report of the Executive Secretary on the work of the Economic Commission for Africa covering the period from April 2020 to March 2021 (E/ECA/COE/39/18) highlights the progress achieved in the implementation of the programme of work of ECA.

## **B. Resolution 971 (LIII) on the coronavirus disease 2019**

### **Paragraph 12**

#### **(a) Text**

12. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa:

(a) To continually evaluate estimates of the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on Africa in the light of the fluid nature of the crisis, including, among the areas of special attention: estimates of immediate fiscal stimulus requirements needed for the recovery of the economy, employment and trade and the reduction of poverty; and the nexus between pharmaceuticals and food security in the African Continental Free Trade Area;

(b) To provide a platform for experience-sharing among African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, along with other stakeholders, on effective response measures to the crisis;

(c) To assist Governments in forecast planning to better anticipate and respond to future crises, including by supporting the recalibration by Governments of their fiscal and monetary frameworks, in line with the exigencies of combating COVID-19 and the need to strengthen the employment-inducing effects of trade initiatives;

#### **(b) Progress**

As highlighted under paragraph 2 of resolution 970 (LIII) on the 2021 programme plan and budget, ECA acted upon above-mentioned requests through a series of thematic studies and publications, available at [www.uneca.org/](http://www.uneca.org/).

ECA prepared informative policy and technical reports and assessments, which received general recognition and appreciation, and conducted a large series of thematic webinars, which were well attended despite the crisis. As part of flagship studies, there were national and subregional reports on impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (in all five subregions), including detailed impact analyses for member States (including Ethiopia, Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Rwanda, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire), regional economic communities and intergovernmental organizations (including the East African Community, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and the Economic Community of West African States) as well as inclusions of COVID-19 dimensions in national development plans (including that of Djibouti). Most of the United Nations country teams (including Ghana, Mauritius, the Niger, Rwanda, Senegal and Seychelles) appealed to ECA to provide additional in-depth socioeconomic reviews of impacts, as well as policy recommendations for their various strategic frameworks (United Nations cooperation frameworks, common country analyses, economic reviews and targeted response plans), which were provided mainly through ECA subregional offices. An initial analysis of the impacts of COVID-19 on tourism aviation and recommendations on sector recovery strategies was carried out and the preparation of a database on the indebtedness of African airlines was kick-started.

In Africa, the COVID-19 pandemic has severely tested countries' social, economic, political and environmental resilience, exacting a massive toll on the poor and most vulnerable, and jeopardizing decades of hard-won development gains. ECA

supported advocacy for a debt standstill and platforms for experience sharing by African Ministers of Finance and the African Union Commission on COVID-19. This facilitated the adoption of a common African position. Several webinars were organized – including on “Debt, taxation and financing for development: immediate responses to global emergencies and efficient planning” – aimed to provide technical expertise on efficient macroeconomic planning, able to cope with social and economic contingencies, as well as a road map for a short/medium-term resource mobilization plan. This was supplemented by additional research and webinars on the topic of mobilization of domestic resources, as well as through building coalitions to support the United Nations call for countercyclical measures to be undertaken by development finance institutions, to protect the private sector in Africa from collapse, while laying the foundation for resilient value and supply chains.

ECA has used its unique voice and broker position to foster and facilitate policy dialogue in prestigious international high-level forums on COVID-19-related issues and potential solutions, through sustained negotiations on financial sustainability, to the direct benefit of African countries and the formulation of a bold medium-term strategy on “Building forward together: financing a sustainable recovery for the future of all”. ECA has exerted advocacy for the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) and its extension, and led global and continental efforts to mobilize both financial and technical resources. As a result, 25 African countries have taken up DSSI, leading to savings of about \$5 billion for the continent.

Furthermore, recalling the responsibility of all, ECA played a critical role in pushing a plan to extend DSSI, endorsed in April 2020 by the G20 and the Paris Club in the aftermath of the COVID-19 economic crisis until the end of 2021 or possibly the end of 2022; get more funding through special drawing rights; and set up a facility to help countries meet short-term debt payments and get a boost in lending from development banks. In October 2020, G20 officials agreed to extend the DSSI freeze on official bilateral debt payments to the first half of 2021, and said they would consider another six-month extension in April 2021.

In October 2020, the African Peer Review Mechanism, ECA and the African Development Bank virtually launched the first African Sovereign Credit Rating Review Report, which assesses trends in the credit ratings of African countries during the first half of 2020. The report examines the risk drivers that led to different downgrading in the face of the COVID-19; assesses their impact on the public debt servicing costs; examines the consistency, objectivity and transparency of the rating process; and makes recommendations to African countries on how to avoid negative rating actions and improve future ratings.

### **Paragraph 13**

#### **(a) Text**

13. *Requests* the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa to continue to work with African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, together with other partners, to address the concerns of African countries regarding the impact of COVID-19 on their societies and economies, and to devise strategies and policies to establish an enabling environment for the development of industries, including the pharmaceutical industry, that can respond to the needs and challenges of African countries with regard to the current outbreak of COVID-19 and any future outbreaks.

#### **(b) Progress**

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, ECA has developed a “Strategy for integrated response: scope and objectives” to further guide and streamline its interventions.

As a major achievement, in April 2020, ECA, with some other United Nations agencies, launched the Africa Knowledge Management Hub on



COVID-19 and Africa COVID-19 Dashboard.<sup>5</sup> It is a digital/online one-stop shop for information and knowledge resources on the pandemic in Africa, as well as strategies and responses by the United Nations Development System and development partners at continental, subregional and national levels, to strengthen capacities of member States to effectively respond to the pandemic. The Africa COVID-19 dashboard, launched in October 2020, aggregates data from the World Health Organization and other reliable data sources to provide a multilayered and contextualized view of the different aspects of COVID-19 and its situation across the continent.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the work on the hub and dashboard is providing practical insight for scaling up and sustaining an ecosystem approach to knowledge management and delivery with the United Nations Regional Knowledge Management Hub for the African region.

ECA convened various webinars on leveraging the potential of digital transformation, including e-commerce, in addressing the COVID-19 crisis. Technology has been crucial in the fight against the pandemic, and will be even more important in the “building forward better” process. The ECA Centre of Excellence for Digital Identity, Trade and Economy is working hard towards assisting African nations to address the challenges they face. The digitization of the continent would strengthen inclusive and sustainable growth, as well as transforming economies and societies.

ECA played a catalyst role in the conceptualization of the Africa Medical Supplies Platform (AMSP) under the leadership of the African Union, a unique platform aimed at operationalizing and fostering the primary objectives of the Pharmaceutical Initiative. AMSP is expected to facilitate the procurement of cost-effective strategic and certified medical equipment required to battle the COVID-19 pandemic. The platform serves as a unique interface enabling volume aggregation, quota management, pooled procurement, capacitated local production, payment facilitation, as well as logistics and transportation, to ensure safe, cost-effective, equitable and efficient access to critical supplies for African Governments. ECA conducted a series of high-level webinars for ministers of finance and ministers of health to showcase AMSP and advocate related opportunities, including in terms of creating fiscal space, growing local manufacturing, and reaping the early fruits of the African Continental Free Trade Area. The orders in the pipeline exceed \$200 million in global market value.

With the President of the Congo, ECA launched the Africa Communication and Information Platform for Health and Economic Action on 23 June 2020, with the aim to reach between 600 million and 800 million existing mobile subscribers in Africa. The Platform is a mobile-based tool for two-way information and communication between citizens and governments. It furnishes national and regional COVID-19 task forces with user-generated survey data and actionable health and economic insights that will enable authorities to better analyse pandemic-related problems and implement appropriate responses. Thirty-six African member States are currently part of the initiative. ECA will also continue to closely follow up on the equitable, fair and transparent supply of vaccines against COVID-19 to Africa through several facilities and platforms, such as COVAX.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the need for information-sharing and use of technologies for coordinated responses in the area of trade and transport connectivity. In its COVID-19 cross-border trade report, ECA urged governments on the continent to adopt and harmonize policies that will help the continent strike an appropriate balance between curbing the spread of the virus and facilitating emergency and essential trade. Maintaining trade flows

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<sup>5</sup> Available at <https://knowledge.uneca.org/covid19/>.

<sup>6</sup> Available at <https://arcg.is/5LCSa>.

as much as possible during the pandemic will be crucial in providing access to essential food and much-needed medical items, and in limiting negative impacts on jobs and poverty.

Together with the anti-poverty organization ONE, ECA launched a report on “Preserving remittances in the time of COVID-19”. The report noted that remittances had steadily increased over the past few decades, and had become the main financial inflow in developing countries, surpassing foreign aid, private capital flows and foreign direct investment. However, due to the global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, remittance flows to Africa were projected to decline by 21 per cent in 2020 (\$18 billion less going to people relying on the money). In Africa, one out of five people sends or receives international remittances. It is therefore critical to preserve this essential lifeline for Africa through effective action to facilitate and boost remittances flows.

The outcomes of a virtual Youth Policy Conversation on “Building Back Better with Young Africans”, jointly organized with the African Union Commission, informed the African Union Commission Special Technical Committee meeting of Ministers in charge of Youth, held on 17 June 2020. ECA launched an appeal to the youth to further get involved in the design of artificial intelligence systems and platforms that can be curated to get better data, ensuring that the informal sector becomes part and parcel of an active economic issue in Africa.

ECA jointly organized the 2020 edition of the African Economic Conference, with the African Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme, on the theme “Africa beyond COVID-19: accelerating towards inclusive sustainable development”, from 8 to 10 December 2020. The Conference provided a platform for established academics and young researchers to present their solution-oriented research to policymakers and decision makers. ECA has also endeavoured to develop networks of African researchers and universities to boost the capacity of African countries to upscale their design and production of medical devices, testing facilities and protective equipment to address the COVID-19 crisis.

With the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the South Africa Department of Science and Innovation, and in partnership with the African Union Commission and Engineering for Change, ECA convened the first Africa Innovation and Investment Forum, including an innovation challenge, 15–19 June 2020, with a focus on COVID-19. The challenge was open to all firms, individuals, research centres, innovation hubs, universities and institutes, as well as government leaders and agencies, and business leaders of all sizes and ages. The meeting sought to identify and showcase some of the top technologies and innovations from across Africa and beyond; explore investment and market needs; and identify business opportunities.

ECA will hold the seventh session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on “Building forward better: towards a resilient and green Africa to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063”, 1–4 March 2021, hosted by the Congo in Brazzaville.