ECA QUARTERLY

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Conference of Ministers 2026: Positioning Innovation at the Core of Africa's Growth Strategy

Page 5

CORPORATE OVERVIEW

This edition of the ECA Bulletin highlights key achievements and activities from January to March 2026, showcasing the Economic Commission for Africa's continued efforts in consensus-building, advocacy, and knowledge generation in a rapidly evolving environment.

From the annual Senior Leadership Team Retreat, held in conjunction with the Executive Secretary's North Africa tour, to the African Union Summit, the African Business Forum, and the Conference of Ministers, ECA continues to drive high-level policy discussions, mobilize partnerships, and deliver innovative solutions to Africa's most pressing challenges.

Over the past quarter, the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the ECA, Claver Gatete, has continued to position the ECA at the forefront of Africa's economic transformation agenda, advancing a forward-looking vision anchored in innovation, resilience, and inclusion.

The global economic context remains highly uncertain. Tightening financial conditions, rising costs of capital, and declining predictability of development assistance are placing increasing pressure on African economies, while geopolitical developments continue to constrain fiscal space. In response, the ECA has reinforced its strategic direction, focusing on supporting member States to navigate uncertainty while accelerating structural transformation. Central to this approach is a strong emphasis on innovation, data, and frontier technologies as drivers of productivity, competitiveness, and sustainable growth.

At the same time, the urgency of addressing Africa's employment challenge, particularly for its rapidly growing youth population, has become increasingly central to the ECA's strategic positioning. With millions of young people entering the labour market each year, the ECA has elevated job creation as a core outcome of its economic policy agenda, emphasizing the need to align macroeconomic, industrial, and innovation policies with employment generation at scale.

INSIDE PAGES

Page 2

Executive Secretary Mission to North Africa: Deepening Regional Partnerships and Policy Alignment

Page 3

African Union Summit: Water, Finance and Partnerships at the Heart of the 39th AU Summit

COM... Page 8

The Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Mr. Claver Gatete

Executive Secretary Mission to North Africa: Deepening Regional Partnerships and Policy Alignment

The Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Mr. Claver Gatete, undertook a high level mission to North Africa (Algeria, Mauritania, and Morocco) as part of ECA's continued engagement with member States to support economic transformation, regional integration, and innovation driven growth.

The mission took place in a challenging continental context marked by high debt levels, constrained access to external finance, climate impacts, and persistent unemployment, particularly among youth. Within this environment, the mission aimed to strengthen strategic partnerships with governments and regional institutions, align national and continental priorities including the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and Agendas 2030 and 2063, and advance preparations for the 2026 Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (COM2026).

Across North Africa, the Executive Secretary held high level meetings with key political and institutional leaders, including President Abdelmadjid Tebboune of Algeria, read about it here.

President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani of Mauritania, and senior ministers responsible for key economic, trade, transport, and digital portfolios. He also engaged with central bank governors, as well as UN country leadership and regional partners, underscoring ECA's engagement at the highest decision making levels.

Strategic Engagements and Policy Alignment

The mission featured presidential-level, ministerial, and institutional engagements, including with ministers of finance, economic affairs, trade, transport, digital transformation, foreign affairs, central bank governors, and UN country teams. Discussions focused on:

- Macroeconomic stability, governance, and institutional credibility, including the role of independent central banks
- Innovation, data, and digital transformation as catalysts for productivity, fiscal sustainability, and transparency
- Domestic resource mobilization and sustainable finance, including capital markets, remittances, and climate-aligned instruments
- Trade integration, competitiveness, and regional value chains, anchored in AfCFTA implementation
- Employment creation, with an emphasis on youth, women, and small and medium-sized enterprises

Governments reaffirmed their commitment to closer policy coordination and expressed strong interest in the ECA's analytical support, technical assistance, and convening role. The mission reinforced the ECA's position as a trusted advisor and catalyst, capable of translating continental frameworks into actionable national reforms.

Focus on Ports, Logistics and Trade Corridors

A key cross-cutting theme of the mission was the strategic importance of ports and logistics systems in enabling diversification, industrialization, energy exports, and regional integration.

In Mauritania, the Executive Secretary visited the Port of Nouakchott, highlighting its role as a critical gateway for trade and economic activity. The visit underscored the port's importance for imports and exports, including food security; its growing role in gas-related logistics linked to the Greater Tortue Ahmeyim project; and its contribution to priority sectors such as fisheries, agribusiness, and mining. The Executive Secretary emphasized the need to link port development with digital trade facilitation, modern customs and payment systems, improved hinterland connectivity, and SME access to export markets, ensuring that infrastructure investment translates into inclusive growth and employment. Find out more here.

In Morocco, the mission highlighted Tangier's role as a leading logistics hub, demonstrating how integrated ports, transport infrastructure, and digital platforms can support competitiveness and structural transformation. The decision to host COM2026 in Tangier reinforces this message by anchoring Africa's flagship economic policy conference in a city emblematic of connectivity, innovation, and trade integration, and reflective of the conference theme, Growth through innovation. Read more here.

Overall, the Executive Secretary's mission strengthened ECA's partnerships in North Africa and reinforced its role as a trusted policy partner, convener, and catalyst for coordinated economic transformation. By combining high-level policy dialogue with a practical focus on ports, logistics, innovation, and governance, the mission advanced a clear message: Africa's transformation rests on strong institutions, modern infrastructure, and regional cooperation working together to deliver inclusive, resilient growth.

African Union Summit: Water, Finance and Partnerships at the Heart of the 39th AU Summit

The Thirty-Ninth African Union Summit of Heads of State and Government, held in Addis Ababa in February 2026, convened under the theme of elevating water and sanitation as a central pillar of Agenda 2063, reaffirming the critical role of sustainable water management, sanitation, and hygiene in driving Africa's development, public health, and economic transformation.

Taking place amid global economic uncertainty, climate shocks, tightening financial conditions, and growing calls for reform of the international financial architecture, the Summit provided a pivotal platform for advancing Africa's priorities across development financing, climate resilience, health systems strengthening, and global governance reform.

The participation of the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, underscored the importance of strengthened United Nations–African Union collaboration. In his address, he called for accelerated progress on sustainable development, urgent climate action, and a more just and inclusive global financial system. He reiterated the need for debt relief, increased access to affordable finance, and stronger African representation in global decision-making, aligning closely with Africa's collective priorities. Read his full statement here.

As a core pillar of the UN development system on the continent, the ECA played a central convening and technical role throughout the Summit. The Commission advanced evidence-based dialogue on macroeconomic resilience, development financing, and the integration of water, sanitation, and health within broader economic policy frameworks. It also reinforced the importance of gender-responsive infrastructure, particularly in water and sanitation, linking improved service delivery to productivity, inclusion, and long-term growth. Read about it here.

At the Executive Council, Executive Secretary Gatete emphasized the urgency of building a new African financial architecture, anchored in strengthened domestic resource mobilization, improved debt sustainability, and coordinated continental action. He highlighted the need to tackle illicit financial flows, address risk perceptions and sovereign credit ratings, and accelerate industrialization through regional value chains under the African Continental Free Trade Area. Read his full statement here.

On the margins of the Summit, the Executive Secretary engaged in a series of high-level bilateral meetings to advance strategic partnerships. Discussions with AfDB's Sidi Ould Tah focused on deepening collaboration between ECA and the African Development Bank to support countries in strengthening domestic resource mobilization, improving debt management, and advancing a new continental financial architecture. Both institutions

Africa Business Forum 2026: Mobilizing Capital, Innovation, and Jobs at Scale

The Africa Business Forum 2026, convened in Addis Ababa under the theme "Financing the Future of Africa: Jobs and Innovation for Sustainable Transformation," brought together heads of government, investors, development finance institutions, private-sector leaders, and youth entrepreneurs to address one of the continent's most pressing challenges: job creation. With more than 362 million young people expected to enter the workforce this decade against only 161 million available jobs, the forum highlighted the urgent need to mobilize capital, scale innovation, and strengthen partnerships to close the employment gap. Learn more about it here and here : Africa Business Forum 2026 calls for bold investments to finance Africa's future through jobs and innovation | Events | United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

As the host, the ECA had a key platform for advancing its delivery objectives. An example of this was the launch of the Jobs Wall Commitments Tracker, an accountability mechanism designed to capture, monitor, and report on commitments made by governments, investors, and partners. Integrated into ECA's broader policy processes, including the Conference of Ministers and the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, the Tracker ensures continuity between dialogue and implementation. Find out more about the Job wall here. As a central pillar of accountability, it introduces transparent tracking through annual scorecards and public reporting, transforming the Forum from a convening space into a results-oriented platform where commitments translate into measurable outcomes.

Key outcomes from the forum reflected strong momentum across multiple fronts. Governments and private-sector leaders

committed to intensifying joint analytical work and reinforcing the Joint Secretariat Support Office as a platform for coordinated implementation with the African Union.

Engagements with African leaders further underscored ECA's country-level impact. In discussions with H.E Daniel Francisco Chapo, priorities included strengthening economic resilience through integrated energy solutions, responsible natural resource governance, tourism diversification, and deeper regional trade under the AfCFTA. A bilateral meeting with H.E Duma Boko focused on fast-tracking project delivery, expanding strategic value chains such as leather, and leveraging digital systems to enhance productivity and competitiveness. Additional engagements with institutions including the Trade and Development Bank, UNEP, and IFAD further reinforced partnerships to support sustainable development outcomes across the continent.

The Summit demonstrated strong convergence around key priorities aligned with ECA's mandate, including advancing sustainable infrastructure, particularly water and sanitation—mobilizing innovative financing, strengthening institutional partnerships, and accelerating regional integration. Collectively, these outcomes reaffirmed the African Union's role as the continent's premier political platform and strengthened ECA's position as a trusted policy advisor, bridging high-level political dialogue with technical expertise and implementation support.

announced new initiatives to expand youth employment in technology, green industries, and the creative economy. Development finance institutions and investors committed frameworks to unlock up to $1.1 trillion in domestic capital, including pension funds and sovereign assets, for investment in youth-led enterprises. Read about it here .

The forum also catalysed partnerships to strengthen innovation ecosystems, supporting accelerators, incubators, and digital platforms to help startups and SMEs scale. In parallel, leaders from the creative industries committed to expanding sectors such as film, music, fashion, and sports as engines of growth and cultural influence.

Overall, the Africa Business Forum reinforced ECA's role as a catalyst for investment, partnerships, and innovation, while advancing a practical and accountable approach to addressing Africa's youth employment challenges. Find out more about ABF2026 here: Africa Business Forum 2026 | Events | United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

Conference of Ministers 2026: Positioning Innovation at the Core of Africa's Growth Strategy

The first quarter of the year culminated in the Fifty-Eighth Session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (COM2026), held in Tangier, Morocco. Convened under the theme "Growth through Innovation: Harnessing Data and Frontier Technologies for the Economic Transformation of Africa," the conference brought together policymakers, experts, and partners to address pressing challenges, including global economic uncertainty, rising debt vulnerabilities, and rapid technological change. It also served as a strategic platform to align policy priorities with both the agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Catch up on the conference here.

The conference underscored the central role of innovation, data, and technology in advancing Africa's structural transformation. Discussions focused on embedding these elements into macroeconomic and development planning, with particular emphasis on aligning fiscal policy, investment strategies, and digital transformation to drive productivity, resilience, and long-term growth. The Economic Commission for Africa served as the principal convener and technical anchor, supporting deliberations through policy analysis, technical expertise, and high-level engagement, while positioning innovation as a practical instrument for strengthening fiscal resilience and enabling structural change.
More insights: Ahead of COM 2026 ministerial, experts spotlight innovation as driver of Africa's structural transformation | Events | United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

A key highlight was the launch of the Economic Report on Africa (ERA) 2026, which examined how frontier technologies—including artificial intelligence, digital platforms, and advanced manufacturing—can accelerate inclusive growth. The report emphasized the need for robust governance frameworks, skills development, and targeted investments to fully harness these technologies, while underscoring regional integration as a critical enabler of scale and technology diffusion. Read the report.

Throughout the conference, Executive Secretary, Claver Gatete called for urgent, coordinated action to advance innovation-led growth that delivers jobs, particularly for Africa's growing youth population. He highlighted the importance of strengthening digital infrastructure, improving data governance, and integrating innovation into macroeconomic and industrial policy frameworks. Read his Remarks: Statement by Mr. Claver Gatete at the 58th Session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development | Events | United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

A notable feature of COM2026 was the high-level side event on health as a sovereign investment, which reframed health systems as a cornerstone of economic resilience and fiscal stability rather than a recurrent expenditure. Discussions emphasized that investing in health is essential for building productive workforces, reducing vulnerability to shocks, and sustaining long-term growth. Participants highlighted the need for stronger coordination between finance and health ministries, improved efficiency in public spending, and innovative financing mechanisms—including blended finance and regional risk pooling—while underscoring the importance of regional cooperation in strengthening health systems and expanding access to quality care. Learn more about the initiative.

The ministerial segment provided a high-level platform for policy dialogue and decision-making, bringing together African ministers to deliberate on key priorities shaping the continent's economic future. Discussions reinforced the need for innovation-driven structural transformation, strengthened data governance and digital infrastructure, sustainable financing and debt management reforms, and increased investment in human capital. Ministers also emphasized deeper regional integration and coordinated policy action to enhance resilience and competitiveness, while stressing the importance of translating technical recommendations into actionable national and regional frameworks.

The conference concluded with strong convergence around key strategic priorities, including innovation-led growth, strengthened macroeconomic governance, investment in human capital, and deeper regional integration. Participants reaffirmed COM's role as Africa's premier platform for economic policy dialogue and underscored the importance of translating commitments into tangible outcomes that support inclusive and sustainable development across the continent. More in COM2026 Bulletins: CoM 2026 Bulletins | Events | United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

Bulletin 1

Actions need to shape Africa's future

Fifty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance Planning and Economic Development

Bulletin 2

Middle East war is a catalyst for strategic rebuilding

Fifty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance Planning and Economic Development

Bulletin 3

Technology must drive Africa's growth and competitiveness

Fifty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance Planning and Economic Development

Bulletin 4

Investing in healthis a macroeconomic imperative

Fifty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance Planning and Economic Development

Hanan Morsy: Advancing Data-Driven Policy for Africa's Transformation

This quarter, Deputy Executive Secretary Hanan Morsy led the Development Economics and Statistics function at the Economic Commission for Africa, delivering high-impact analytical and policy support to member States. Her work focused on strengthening macroeconomic surveillance, advancing structural transformation, and positioning innovation, digitalization, and data systems as key drivers of inclusive and sustainable growth.

On the margins of the African Union Summit, she spoke at a high-level G20 side event hosted by South Africa's Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), where she highlighted key outcomes of South Africa's G20 Presidency. She underscored the importance of the Africa Engagement Framework and the Multilateral Development Banks (MDB) Monitoring and Reporting Framework as critical tools to advance global financial architecture reform, curb illicit financial flows, and scale investment that delivers decent jobs and local value addition.

In a separate G20 engagement on gender equality and inclusive economic governance, she emphasized the importance of inclusive leadership, paying tribute to African women leaders and platforms such as the African Women Leaders Network, while commending South Africa's role in elevating gender equality within global economic discussions.

At the Fifty-Eighth Session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (COM2026), she played a central coordination role, aligning technical analysis with ministerial priorities and ensuring coherence across ECA's contributions. In her interventions, she emphasized that Africa's innovation gap is driven less by a lack of ideas than by limited access to long-term, affordable, and structured finance. She called for increased investment in digital infrastructure, data systems, and productivity-enhancing technologies, alongside reforms to expand local currency financing, extend lending tenors, and reduce risk premiums.

She further underscored the urgency of translating technical deliberations into tangible policy actions at national, regional, and continental levels, particularly in a rapidly evolving global context. As highlighted during the Committee of Experts segment, Africa's trajectory will depend not only on policy design but on effective implementation, supported by strong data governance, digital infrastructure, and sustainable financing frameworks. Read her remarks.

She also convened high-level discussions on macroeconomic stability and financing frameworks, emphasizing the need to mobilize domestic resources, strengthen debt sustainability, and scale innovative financing instruments to support resilience and long-term transformation.

DES Morsy's work reflects ECA's continued commitment to evidence-based policymaking and innovation-led growth, strengthening Africa's resilience, competitiveness, and capacity to shape its own development trajectory.

"In her interventions, she emphasized that Africa's innovation gap is driven less by a lack of ideas than by limited access to long-term, affordable, and structured finance.

Mama Keita: Strengthening Programme Delivery and Institutional Coordination

The Economic Commission for Africa has welcomed Mama Keita as its newly appointed Deputy Executive Secretary in charge of Programme Support, marking a renewed focus on strengthening institutional delivery and coordination across the Commission.

In this role, she provides strategic leadership on programme support functions, ensuring that ECA's analytical and policy work is effectively translated into coordinated, high-impact delivery. Her mandate is central to aligning programme implementation with continental development priorities while enhancing institutional performance and accountability.

Ms. Keita, of Guinea, brings over 25 years of experience in economic policy, research, and international development.

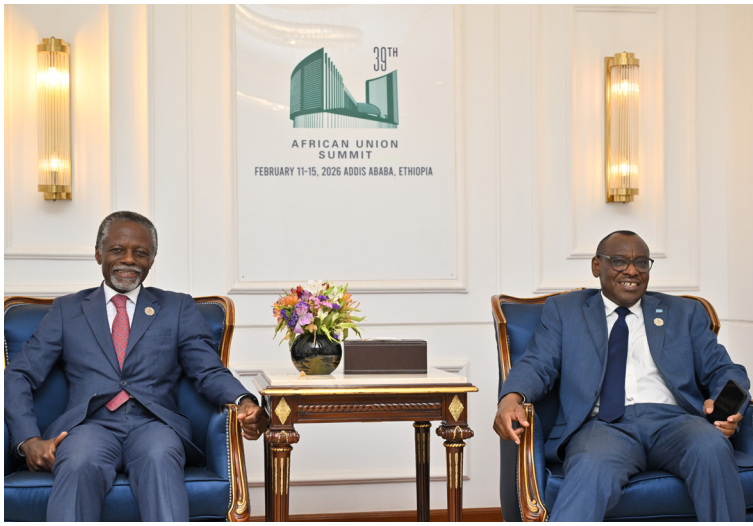
Since joining ECA in 2011, she has taken on increasing responsibilities across the institution, including serving as Director of the Subregional Office for East Africa in Kigali. Most recently, she served as United Nations Resident Coordinator in Niger, where she also held the role of Humanitarian Coordinator.

At the Fifty-Eighth Session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (COM2026), she delivered the opening remarks of the Committee of Experts, calling for a shift from "business as usual" toward decisive, innovation-driven action. She emphasized the urgency of translating technical discussions into tangible policy outcomes, highlighting the importance of data governance, digital infrastructure, and sustained investment in innovation to ensure Africa actively shapes-rather than passively consumes-the technologies driving its future. Read her remarks.

Her return to ECA brings a wealth of regional leadership and policy expertise, alongside a strong and sustained commitment to advancing Africa's development agenda.

AU Summit

48th Ordinary Session of the Executive council


39TH
AFRICAN UNION
SUMMIT
FEBRUARY 11-15, 2026 ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

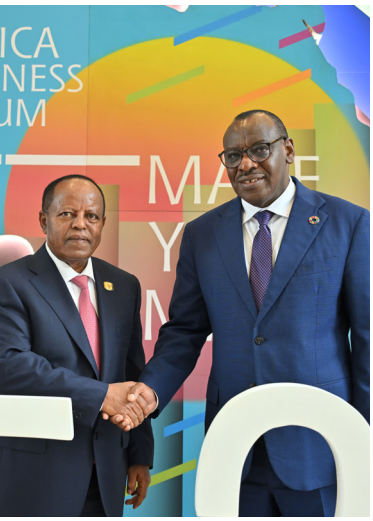
COM 2026

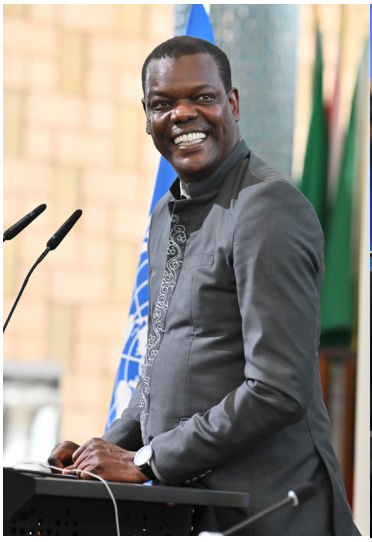
“Growth through innovation: harnessing data and frontier technologies for the economic transformation of Africa”.

ECA

ABF- 2026

Financing the future of Africa: jobs and innovation for sustainable transformation





ARFSD-12

Twelfth Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

HIGHLIGHTS FROM ACROSS ECA'S KEY ACTIVITIES

Institutional Updates: Supporting Workforce Transition and Continuity

Early retirement packages have been implemented as part of the ECA's workforce planning and organizational alignment efforts. The initiative supports voluntary staff transitions while ensuring continuity through knowledge transfer and structured retirement preparedness. Emphasis is placed on transparent processes and support mechanisms, including guidance on pensions, health care, and post-service engagement, reflecting a balanced approach to institutional renewal and staff support.

REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND TRADE

- The ECA is supporting the implementation of the AfCFTA through both national and continental initiatives aimed at boosting intra-African trade. In Namibia, efforts are underway to align national strategies, strengthen public–private collaboration, and build the capacity of businesses to access regional markets. Read the full article here. At the same time, ECA has developed step-by-step trade guides to address information barriers, providing practical support to enterprises—particularly SMEs—on navigating trade procedures, complying with rules of origin, and accessing new opportunities. Together, these efforts aim to enhance competitiveness, improve market access, and accelerate inclusive economic growth across the continent. Read the full article here.
- Nigeria is strengthening parliamentary capacity to support the implementation of the AfCFTA, with support from the ECA. The initiative focuses on enhancing legislators' understanding of trade policy, regulatory frameworks, and the role of oversight in ensuring effective implementation. Participants emphasized the importance of informed policymaking, legislative alignment, and stakeholder engagement to maximize AfCFTA benefits. Strengthening parliamentary capacity is seen as key to advancing trade reforms, boosting competitiveness, and supporting inclusive economic growth. Read the full article here.

GENDER, POVERTY AND SOCIAL POLICY

- Kenya advanced migration governance through a national workshop on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, with support from the ECA. The workshop focused on strengthening policy coherence, enhancing data systems, and aligning national frameworks with international commitments. Participants emphasized the importance of evidence-based policymaking, inter-agency coordination, and inclusive approaches to manage migration effectively while maximizing its development benefits. The initiative supports efforts to improve governance, protect migrants' rights, and harness migration as a driver of sustainable development. Read the full article here
- Africa's fashion industry is emerging as a powerful driver of job creation, cultural identity, and economic growth, according to insights highlighted by the ECA. Discussions emphasized the sector's potential to generate employment—particularly for youth and women—while strengthening local value chains and promoting African creativity on global markets. However, unlocking this potential requires targeted investment, improved access to finance, stronger infrastructure, and supportive policies. Participants highlighted the need to formalize the sector, enhance skills development, and scale production to position African fashion as a competitive and inclusive industry. Read the full article here.
- On the margins of the African Union Summit, discussions focused on moving from commitments to funded action to advance gender equality through improved access to finance. Supported by the ECA, stakeholders emphasized the need to scale investment in women-led enterprises, strengthen financial inclusion, and address structural barriers limiting women's economic participation. Participants highlighted the importance of innovative financing mechanisms, policy reforms, and stronger partnerships to translate commitments into tangible outcomes. The dialogue reinforced that closing gender financing gaps is critical to driving inclusive growth and sustainable development across the continent. Read the full article here.
- The ECA is stepping up efforts to support African women farmers by strengthening their access to resources, markets, and financing. The initiative focuses on addressing structural barriers that limit women's productivity and economic participation, including unequal access to land, inputs, and technology. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of targeted policies, capacity-building, and inclusive value chains to enhance agricultural productivity and resilience. Empowering women farmers is seen as critical to improving food security, boosting rural livelihoods, and driving inclusive economic growth across the continent. Read the full article here.

MACROECONOMIC POLICY AND FINANCE

- Africa's economic outlook is projected to remain resilient in 2026 despite global trade uncertainty, according to a ECA report. Growth is expected to strengthen, supported by improved macroeconomic management, easing inflation, and continued investment, although risks persist from external shocks, geopolitical tensions, and high debt servicing costs. The report highlights the need to accelerate structural transformation, deepen regional integration, and boost intra-African trade to sustain growth momentum. It also underscores the importance of strengthening domestic resource mobilization, enhancing productivity, and leveraging the AfCFTA to build more

resilient and diversified economies. Read the full article here.

- The ECA in collaboration with Nigeria, strengthened national capacity to curb illicit financial flows through advanced trade data analysis. The initiative focused on equipping experts with tools to detect trade misinvoicing and improve the use of data for evidence-based policy and enforcement. Participants emphasized the importance of enhancing statistical systems, inter-agency coordination, and analytical capacity to address revenue losses and improve domestic resource mobilization. The effort supports broader goals of strengthening economic governance, transparency, and sustainable financing for development. Read the full article here.
- Six African cities, with support from the ECA, reviewed progress on fiscal reforms aimed at strengthening sustainable urban finance. Discussions focused on improving domestic revenue mobilization, enhancing public financial management, and increasing investment in urban infrastructure and services. Participants highlighted the importance of building resilient, well-governed cities through stronger fiscal frameworks, innovative financing mechanisms, and better coordination between national and local governments to support inclusive and sustainable urban development. Read the full article here.

TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

- Progress is being monitored on the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision and the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM), key frameworks aimed at liberalizing Africa's air transport sector. Supported by the ECA, discussions highlighted the need to accelerate implementation, strengthen regulatory harmonization, and enhance connectivity across the continent. Participants emphasized that a more integrated and competitive aviation market is critical to boosting intra-African trade, tourism, and economic integration, while supporting broader development objectives under the AfCFTA. Read the full article here.
- At the African Union STI Week 2026, the ECA championed Africa's innovation agenda through the implementation of the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA-2034). Discussions emphasized the need to strengthen innovation ecosystems, invest in research and development, and align science and technology policies with industrialization and economic transformation goals. Participants highlighted the importance of collaboration between governments, academia, and the private sector to accelerate technological adoption and drive inclusive growth. The meeting reinforced the critical role of STI in advancing Africa's competitiveness and long-term development. Read the full article here.
- Tanzania validated its landmark electronic data governance framework, marking a significant step toward building a digitally sovereign nation, with support from the ECA. The framework aims to strengthen data governance, enhance digital infrastructure, and support secure, efficient data management across sectors. Participants emphasized the importance of robust legal and regulatory systems, institutional capacity, and interoperability to maximize the value of data for development. The initiative is expected to improve service delivery, support evidence-based policymaking, and accelerate digital transformation. Read the full article here.
- Efforts to chart the future of African infrastructure are focusing on closing financing gaps, strengthening project preparation, and aligning investments with long-term development priorities, with insights highlighted by the ECA. Discussions emphasized the need for integrated infrastructure planning, stronger regional connectivity, and innovative financing mechanisms to support sustainable growth. Participants highlighted the importance of public–private partnerships, improved governance, and climate-resilient infrastructure to enhance productivity and competitiveness. Advancing these priorities is critical to unlocking Africa's economic potential and supporting inclusive development. Read the full article here.

CLIMATE CHANGE

- African officials strengthened their capacity to advance continental priorities in economic and climate diplomacy through a training initiative supported by the ECA. The programme focused on enhancing negotiation skills, policy coherence, and strategic engagement in global forums on climate finance, development financing, and economic governance. Participants emphasized the importance of coordinated African positions, stronger institutional capacity, and effective diplomacy to secure better outcomes for the continent. The initiative supports efforts to amplify Africa's voice in international negotiations and advance sustainable, climate-resilient development. Read the full article here

SRO NORTH AFRICA

- The ECA and the Government of Morocco signed a Host Country Agreement ahead of the 2026 Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, formalizing arrangements for the high-level gathering. The agreement underscores Morocco's continued commitment to supporting continental dialogue on economic transformation and regional integration, while reinforcing ECA's role as a leading platform for policy coordination. The Conference is expected to convene ministers, policymakers, and partners to address key priorities including innovation-driven growth, financing, and Africa's development agenda. Read the full article here
- Africa can achieve significant gains in manufacturing and high-technology sectors with the right mix of policies and investments, according to insights highlighted by the ECA. Unlocking this potential will require stronger industrial strategies, investment in skills and innovation, and deeper regional value chains to drive productivity and value addition. Experts emphasized the need to move beyond commodity dependence and position Africa within higher-value segments of global production. With coordinated policy action and targeted investment, the continent can enhance its competitiveness and accelerate inclusive economic transformation. Read the full article here.

- The ECA and Mauritania strengthened their strategic partnership to advance inclusive growth and economic transformation. Discussions focused on aligning national development priorities with ECA's technical support in areas such as economic diversification, structural transformation, and data-driven policymaking. Participants emphasized the importance of enhancing institutional capacity, mobilizing investment, and leveraging regional integration opportunities to support sustainable development. The partnership aims to accelerate reforms and deliver tangible outcomes that improve livelihoods and strengthen economic resilience. Read the full article here.

SRO WEST AFRICA

- West African stakeholders are examining how innovation, data, and frontier technologies can accelerate economic transformation, with support from the ECA. Discussions focus on leveraging digital technologies, strengthening data systems, and integrating innovation into policy frameworks to boost productivity and competitiveness. Participants emphasized the need for investment in digital infrastructure, skills development, and supportive regulatory environments to unlock the potential of emerging technologies. The initiative aims to position the region to harness innovation for inclusive growth and sustainable development. Read the full article here.
- A high-level policy dialogue, supported by the ECA, explored how innovation, data, and frontier technologies can drive Africa's economic transformation. Discussions focused on integrating digital technologies into policy frameworks, strengthening data governance, and scaling innovation ecosystems to boost productivity and competitiveness. Participants emphasized the need for investment in infrastructure, skills development, and enabling regulatory environments to harness emerging technologies effectively. The dialogue reinforced the importance of coordinated policy action to translate technological potential into inclusive and sustainable growth. Read the full article here.

SRO CENTRAL AFRICA

- Cameroon is advancing a strategic shift toward harnessing its estimated $22 trillion blue economy potential through data-driven approaches, with support from the ECA. The initiative emphasizes the use of data and analytics to better manage marine and coastal resources, inform policy decisions, and unlock sustainable economic opportunities. Experts highlighted the importance of strengthening data systems, governance frameworks, and investment in key sectors such as fisheries, maritime transport, and coastal tourism. Leveraging data more effectively is expected to enhance productivity, support environmental sustainability, and drive inclusive growth within the blue economy. Read the full article here.
- Cameroon is advancing efforts to secure its blue economy through a combination of grassroots action and data-driven decision-making, with support from the ECA. The initiative highlights the importance of community engagement alongside strengthened data systems to improve the management of marine and coastal resources. Participants emphasized the need for inclusive approaches that connect local action with national policy, supported by better data, governance frameworks, and investment. This integrated strategy aims to enhance sustainability, protect ecosystems, and unlock economic opportunities across fisheries, coastal livelihoods, and maritime sectors. Read the full article here.
- The ECA is building a knowledge alliance to support evidence-based economic diversification in Central Africa. The initiative brings together policymakers, researchers, and partners to strengthen data systems, analytical capacity, and policy design aimed at reducing dependence on extractive sectors. Participants emphasized the importance of leveraging data, fostering innovation, and aligning national strategies with regional priorities to drive structural transformation. The alliance aims to enhance decision-making, support sustainable growth, and promote more diversified and resilient economies across the subregion. Read the full article here.
- Central Africa has launched a new initiative to mobilize "Ambassadors for Economic Diversification" to help drive the narrative and accelerate the region's shift toward more diversified and resilient economies, with support from the ECA. The initiative aims to strengthen advocacy, promote evidence-based policymaking, and raise awareness of the benefits of moving beyond extractive sectors. Participants emphasized the importance of strategic communication, stakeholder engagement, and coordinated action to support structural transformation. The effort seeks to influence policy, attract investment, and build momentum for sustainable and inclusive economic diversification across the subregion. Read the full article here.
- The ECA and São Tomé and Príncipe are partnering to transform the tourism sector as a driver of economic growth and diversification. The initiative focuses on strengthening data systems, enhancing policy frameworks, and building institutional capacity to better capture tourism's economic impact and guide strategic investment. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of sustainable tourism development, improved infrastructure, and stronger value chains to maximize the sector's contribution to jobs and growth. The effort aims to position tourism as a key pillar of inclusive and resilient economic transformation. Read the full article here.
- São Tomé and Príncipe is advancing efforts to transform tourism into a key driver of economic growth through the launch of a national initiative focused on strengthening tourism data systems, with support from the ECA. The initiative aims to improve the collection, analysis, and use of data to better capture the sector's contribution to the economy and inform policy decisions. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of evidence-based planning, institutional capacity-building, and integrated data frameworks to enhance sector performance. Leveraging data more effectively is expected to boost competitiveness, attract investment, and support sustainable and inclusive tourism development. Read the full article here.

SRO EAST AFRICA

- The ECA in collaboration with Zanzibar, launched a technical workshop to assess the total economic impact of tourism. The initiative focuses on strengthening data systems and analytical tools to better capture tourism's contribution to GDP, employment, and broader economic activity. Participants emphasized the importance of evidence-based policymaking, improved statistics, and capacity-building to support sustainable tourism development. The effort aims to enhance decision-making, optimize sector performance, and maximize tourism's role in driving inclusive economic growth. Read

the full article here.

- Eastern Africa continues to outperform the rest of the continent in economic growth, but rising divergence among countries is posing challenges to regional integration, according to insights from the ECA. While some economies are experiencing strong expansion driven by investment and structural reforms, others face persistent vulnerabilities, including debt pressures and external shocks. Participants emphasized the need for coordinated policy action, strengthened regional value chains, and improved macroeconomic convergence to sustain growth and deepen integration. Addressing these disparities will be critical to unlocking the full potential of regional markets and advancing inclusive development. Read the full article here.
- A high-level dialogue within the East African Community (EAC), supported by the ECA, called for stronger regional action to boost trade and economic integration. Discussions focused on addressing non-tariff barriers, enhancing infrastructure connectivity, and improving policy coordination across member States. Participants emphasized the need for accelerated implementation of regional agreements, stronger institutions, and increased private sector engagement to unlock the full potential of intra-regional trade. The dialogue underscored the importance of coordinated action to drive competitiveness, resilience, and inclusive growth in the region. Read the full article here.
- Rwanda is exploring nuclear energy investment as a strategic pathway to support industrial growth and long-term energy security, with insights highlighted by the ECA. Discussions emphasized the role of reliable and scalable energy in driving industrialization, improving productivity, and supporting high-value sectors. Participants underscored the importance of strong regulatory frameworks, skills development, and international partnerships to ensure safe and effective deployment. The initiative reflects Rwanda's broader ambition to diversify its energy mix and position itself for sustained innovation-driven economic transformation. Read the full article here.

SRO SOUTHERN AFRICA

- The Southern African Development Community (SADC), with support from the ECA, convened in Lusaka to validate a regional framework for a just energy transition. Discussions focused on balancing energy security, affordability, and sustainability, while ensuring that the transition supports economic growth and job creation. Participants emphasized the need for increased investment in renewable energy, strengthened regional power integration, and policy coherence to enable a fair and inclusive shift away from carbon-intensive systems. The meeting also underscored the importance of mobilizing climate finance and aligning national and regional strategies to ensure that no country is left behind in the transition. Read the full article here.
- The Southern African Development Community (SADC), with support from the ECA, validated a regional Just Energy Transition Framework aimed at advancing a resilient, inclusive, and low-carbon energy future. The framework emphasizes balancing energy security, affordability, and sustainability while promoting economic diversification and job creation. Participants highlighted the need for scaled-up investment in renewable energy, stronger regional integration, and coordinated policies to ensure a fair transition. Mobilizing climate finance and supporting member States in aligning national strategies with regional priorities were also identified as critical to delivering an equitable energy transition across the region. Read the full article here
- Botswana, with support from the ECA, deployed its inaugural "Every Policy is Connected" framework to strengthen policy coherence and improve development outcomes. The approach emphasizes integrated policymaking, ensuring that economic, social, and environmental policies are aligned and mutually reinforcing. By breaking down silos across government institutions, the framework aims to enhance coordination, efficiency, and impact in policy implementation. Participants highlighted its potential to support evidence-based decision-making, improve resource allocation, and accelerate progress toward sustainable and inclusive development. Read the full article here.
- The ECA Subregional Office for Southern Africa is advancing its transition to clean energy through the deployment of a ground-breaking solar energy system. The initiative aims to reduce the office's carbon footprint, enhance energy efficiency, and demonstrate leadership in sustainable practices. It also reflects ECA's broader commitment to supporting Africa's energy transition by promoting renewable energy solutions and climate-resilient development. The project highlights the role of institutions in leading by example while contributing to a greener and more sustainable future. Read the full article here.
- Namibia validated a national guide for trading in goods under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), with support from the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), to facilitate more inclusive participation in continental trade. The guide provides practical, step-by-step support to businesses—particularly SMEs—on how to access AfCFTA markets, comply with rules of origin, and navigate trade procedures. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of strengthening capacity, improving awareness, and aligning national frameworks to ensure that firms can fully benefit from expanded market opportunities. The initiative aims to boost intra-African trade, enhance competitiveness, and support inclusive economic growth. Read the full article here.
- Zambia hosted a national workshop, with support from the ECA, to strengthen SDG localization, Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), and integrated urban planning. The initiative focused on enhancing

local governments' capacity to align development plans with the Sustainable Development Goals, improve data systems, and track progress at the local level. Participants emphasized the importance of inclusive, place-based approaches, stronger coordination between national and local authorities, and evidence-based planning to accelerate implementation. The workshop aims to support more effective delivery of sustainable development outcomes across cities and communities. Read the full article here.

IDEP

- With technical support from the ECA, Sierra Leone validated key civil service reform instruments aimed at strengthening public sector performance and service delivery. The process focused on enhancing human resource management, improving accountability, and aligning institutional frameworks with national development priorities. Participants emphasized the importance of building a professional, efficient, and results-oriented civil service to support policy implementation and economic transformation. The initiative marks a significant step toward modernizing governance systems and reinforcing state capacity to deliver inclusive and sustainable development outcomes. Read the full article here.
- The legacy of the IDEP continues to make a meaningful impact across the continent, as highlighted by Sierra Leone's Minister of Planning and Economic Development. Supported by the ECA, IDEP's work in training and capacity-building is strengthening leadership, policy design, and implementation across African institutions. Participants emphasized the importance of investing in human capital and institutional capacity to drive effective governance and sustainable development. The initiative underscores the critical role of knowledge and skills development in advancing Africa's long-term transformation. Read the full article here.

ADIF EDITION

- Ahead of the Africa Development and Investment Forum (ADIF), ECA convened a pre-forum webinar highlighting Africa's critical minerals as a key catalyst for youth employment and sustainable development. Discussions emphasized that while the continent holds a significant share of the world's critical mineral resources, greater value addition, local processing, and stronger linkages to regional value chains are essential to maximize benefits. Experts underscored the need for targeted investments in skills development, innovation, and industrial policy to ensure that Africa's growing youth population can participate meaningfully in emerging green and digital economies. Strengthening governance frameworks, promoting responsible mining practices, and aligning mineral strategies with broader development goals were also identified as critical to translating resource wealth into inclusive growth and job creation. Read the full article here.
- Artificial intelligence (AI) presents both opportunities and risks for jobs in Africa, according to insights highlighted by the ECA. While AI has the potential to boost productivity, drive innovation, and create new employment opportunities, it may also disrupt existing jobs—particularly in routine and low-skill sectors. Experts emphasized the need for proactive policies, investment in digital skills, and strengthened education systems to prepare the workforce for a rapidly evolving labor market. Ensuring inclusive access to technology and supporting job transitions will be critical to harnessing AI for sustainable and equitable growth. Read the full article here
- Efforts are underway to bridge Africa's youth aspirational gap by unlocking high-growth entrepreneurship, with insights highlighted by the ECA. The initiative focuses on creating pathways for young people to access finance, skills, and markets needed to build scalable businesses. Participants emphasized the importance of strengthening entrepreneurial ecosystems, improving access to capital, and aligning education with market needs to support innovation-driven enterprises. Addressing these gaps is critical to harnessing Africa's demographic dividend and driving inclusive, job-rich economic growth. Read the full article here.

Knowledge Generation

- In the first quarter of the year, ECA produced the following key publications.
- Economic Report on Africa 2026 (ERA 2026)
  Growth through Innovation: Harnessing Data and Frontier Technologies for Africa's Economic Transformation
  ECA's flagship annual report analysing how data, frontier technologies, and innovation-led policies can drive productivity, industrialization, and inclusive growth across Africa.
- Economic Governance Report III: Governance of Public Debt in Africa
  Provides an in-depth assessment of public debt governance across African countries, with policy recommendations to strengthen transparency, accountability, and fiscal resilience.
- The Joint Policy Brief : THE IMPACTS OF THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT ON AFRICA:
- Find more publications here: https://www.uneca.org/?q=publications and the ECA Institutional Repository here: https://www.uneca.org/knowledge-services-section/institutional-repository

BLOGS:

Africa needs a decisive pivot towards innovation-led growth powered by data and frontier technologies

- Africa must decisively shift toward innovation-led growth, powered by data and frontier technologies, to accelerate productivity, competitiveness, and structural transformation. Achieving this requires stronger investment in digital infrastructure, skills, and governance frameworks to ensure that innovation drives inclusive and sustainable economic development.

[Blog] Zambia at a Crossroads: Turning Migration Policy into Reality

- Zambia stands at a critical juncture in translating its migration policy into effective implementation, with a focus on strengthening governance, coordination, and data systems. Turning policy into action will be key to harnessing migration as a driver of development while ensuring protection, inclusion, and sustainable outcomes.

[Blog] Beyond the headlines: How Africa is building a new future for migration

- Africa is moving beyond crisis narratives to build a more strategic and development-oriented approach to migration, focusing on governance, mobility, and regional integration. By strengthening policies, data systems, and cooperation frameworks, the continent is positioning migration as a driver of economic growth and shared prosperity.

[Blog] Powering women's economic futures: energy and opportunity in Africa's inclusive industrialization transformation

- Expanding access to reliable and affordable energy is critical to unlocking women's economic opportunities across Africa, particularly in productive sectors. Investing in inclusive energy systems can boost women's entrepreneurship, enhance livelihoods, and drive broader economic growth and gender equality.

[Blog] GiveToGain: Promoting women's economic empowerment in Southern Africa

- Promoting women's economic empowerment in Southern Africa requires targeted investments and initiatives that expand access to finance, skills, and market opportunities. By strengthening women's participation in the economy, such efforts can drive inclusive growth, resilience, and sustainable development across the region.

[Blog] Water, sanitation, and women's economic empowerment across the lifecycle in Africa

- Improving access to water and sanitation is essential to advancing women's economic empowerment across all stages of life in Africa. By reducing time burdens and health risks, investments in WASH systems can enhance education, productivity, and income opportunities, driving inclusive and sustainable development.

[Blog] Why ending child marriage is key for seizing Africa's demographic dividend

- Ending child marriage is essential for Africa to harness its demographic dividend, as it limits girls' education, health, and economic participation while perpetuating poverty and inequality. Investing in girls' empowerment and delaying marriage can boost human capital, drive inclusive growth, and accelerate sustainable development across the continent.

LOOKING AHEAD

SOME KEY EVENTS

- Twelfth Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development
- Theme: Turning the Tide: Transformative and Coordinated Actions for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063
- Dates: 28 - 30 April 2026
- Location: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, United Nations Conference Center

THE SEVENTH AFRICA CLIMATE TALKS (7th ACT!)

- Theme: Africa's Road to COP32: Urgency, Leadership and Action
- Dates: 30 April- 1 May, 2026
- Location: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, United Nations Conference Center

https://www.uneca.org

- ECA's Sustainable Africa Podcast Series: From ECA's key events, we bring the human narrative to the themes we work on and speak to stakeholders, celebrities and more who are contributing to sustainable development. Check out our Sustainable Africa Podcast Series on the ECA YouTube Channel here: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcfKplk33JTgQGtMWgEYcSmQLFXEd3yTz