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**Economic Commission for Africa**  
**Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender**  
Fourth session  
Online, 17 and 18 November 2021

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

### **I. Context**

1. The Committee on Women and Development (1979–2013) and the Committee on Social Development (2009–2013) were formerly the main intergovernmental bodies guiding the work of ECA in the areas of gender equality, women's empowerment and social development. In 2012, ECA embarked on a series of reforms that led to changes in its mandate, structure, programmes and intergovernmental mechanisms. Those changes were endorsed in resolution 908 (XLVI), adopted at the forty-sixth session of ECA, held in Abidjan on 25 and 26 March 2013, as part of the sixth joint annual meetings of the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. The new mandate was also derived from decision No. 450 of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (Assembly/AU/Dec.450 (XX)), adopted at the twentieth ordinary session of the Assembly, held in January 2013, in which the Assembly of the African Union endorsed the refocusing of ECA to support the transformation agenda of Africa.

2. The reform process provided for the restructuring of the intergovernmental machinery to ensure that subsidiary bodies were congruent with the new programme priorities and structure. In that regard, the following ECA intergovernmental entities and committees were maintained: (a) Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and its Committee of Experts; (b) Intergovernmental committees of experts of ECA subregional offices; (c) Committee on Gender and Social Development; (d) Committee on Sustainable Development; (e) Committee on Regional Cooperation and Integration; and (f) Committee on Statistics.

3. From 2013 to 2019, the Committee on Gender and Social Development served as the intergovernmental body guiding the work of two ECA subprogrammes, namely, subprogramme 6 (Gender and women in development) and subprogramme 9 (Social and development policy). During that period, the Committee convened twice, in 2015 and 2017.

4. In 2019, the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, meeting in Marrakech, Morocco, endorsed resolution 966(LII) on the review of the intergovernmental structure of the Economic Commission for Africa pursuant to its resolutions 943(XLIX) and 957(LI). In that resolution, the Conference of Ministers recalled resolutions 908(XLVI) of 26 March 2013, and 943(XLIX) of 5 April 2016, in which it had requested the Executive Secretary of ECA to undertake an independent,



comprehensive and thorough review of the intergovernmental structure of the Commission, including its Intergovernmental Committee of Experts, and it endorsed adjustments to the intergovernmental structure of the Commission.<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to that resolution, the Committee on Gender and Social Development was renamed the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender.<sup>2</sup> The Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender also carries out the functions of the disbanded ECA Committees on Women and Development and on Social Development.

## II. Role of the Committee

5. The role of the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender is set out in para. 18A.45 of the United Nations General Assembly (2013), Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014–2015, Part V, Regional cooperation for development, Section 18, Economic and social development in Africa, A/68/6 (Sect. 18), which reads as follows:

### **“2. Functional and sectoral subsidiary organs of the Commission**

#### *Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender*

18A.45 The role of the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender, as an advisory forum of experts and policymakers, is to provide guidance to the Commission in its work of promoting equitable and inclusive human and social development in Africa, with particular focus on gender, employment, population and youth development, social protection and urbanization. The Committee reviews follow-up activities pertaining to global conferences and regional action programmes in the areas of social development, including the global and regional platforms for action on the advancement of women. It also reviews major trends and issues of regional interest regarding human and social development. The Committee meets biennially”.

6. More specifically, the Committee focuses on ECA subprogramme 9 (Poverty, inequality and social policy) and subprogramme 6 (Gender equality and women’s empowerment) and:

- (a) Provides guidance and expert opinion on the priorities and activities of ECA;
- (b) Reviews past activities and future programmes of ECA;
- (c) Provides recommendations for strengthening ECA programmes to better serve member States and regional economic communities;
- (d) Provides policy guidance to ensure that ECA activities are relevant to development needs in Africa and address the continent’s critical development challenges;
- (e) Advises on priorities for the implementation and review of regional and international policy agendas in relation to the work of ECA and;
- (f) Provides direction on the partnership of ECA with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and other development partners.

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<sup>1</sup> For further information, see ECA, *Report of the meeting of the committee of experts* (E/ECA/ COE/38/17), (Annex) Available at: [repository.uneca.org/handle/10855/43052](https://repository.uneca.org/handle/10855/43052).

<sup>2</sup> The full text of resolution 966(LII), contained in document E/2019/15/Add.1, is available at: [www.regionalcommissions.org/RCR2019add1\\_fin\\_E.pdf](https://www.regionalcommissions.org/RCR2019add1_fin_E.pdf).

### **III. Participation**

7. The Committee comprises experts from ECA member States drawn from ministries responsible for gender, social development, national planning and urbanization. Representatives from the African regional economic communities, the African Union Commission, the United Nations system, civil society organizations and academic institutions attend sessions of the Committee as observers.

8. The Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division of ECA serves as convener and secretariat of the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender.

### **IV. Duties of the Chair and members of the Bureau**

9. The Chair of the Bureau is expected to attend the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. All members of the Bureau are expected to attend statutory meetings in their relevant subregions to ensure that gender and social development issues are addressed effectively at the subregional level.

### **V. Election of the Bureau**

10. The election of Bureau members is based on three criteria, namely geography (one representative from each ECA subregion), language and gender. A list of African countries per subregion is provided in the Annex to these terms of reference.

11. The upcoming elections to the Bureau will take place immediately prior to the fourth session of the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender, to be held in November 2021. The Committee shall elect a Bureau for a two-year term (2021–2023). Members of the Committee and the secretariat of the Committee (ECA) shall consult on the election of the Bureau. Nominations shall be made by members of the Committee.

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## **Annex**

### **List of countries in each African subregion**

#### **Central Africa:**

Cameroon  
Chad  
Congo  
Equatorial Guinea  
Gabon  
Sao Tome and Principe

#### **East Africa:**

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

#### **North Africa:**

Algeria  
Egypt  
Libya  
Mauritania  
Morocco  
Sudan  
Tunisia

#### **Southern Africa:**

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

#### **West Africa:**

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