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**Economic Commission for Africa
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Item 6 of the provisional agenda*

Statutory issues**Report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the
Economic Commission for Africa covering the period
April 2022–March 2023****I. Introduction**

1. The key interventions and achievements of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) from the period April 2022 to March 2023 are described in the present report.

2. The reporting cycle was characterized by deep and interlocking crises in Africa. The lingering effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, along with the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, significantly weakened African macroeconomic performance in terms of gross domestic product (GDP), inflation, exchange rates, total income and fiscal balance. The war directly affected trade, food and fuel prices and macroeconomic performance, while also having an indirect impact on imported inflation, the energy transition and the geopolitical alignment of the continent. Within this context, the work of ECA remained relevant in reducing vulnerability, mitigating risks and building more resilient economies. Consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union, and guided by its mission to transform ideas into actions for an empowered continent, ECA continued to support member States in tackling priority challenges and harnessing opportunities to accelerate the socioeconomic transformation of the continent. As in previous years, ECA programmes continued to focus on the following priorities: the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, macroeconomic modelling, taxation, curbing illicit financial flows, infrastructure development, agricultural value chains, gender mainstreaming, demographic dividends, cybersecurity, census, digitalization, geospatial statistics, climate change, and technical support for the annual session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

3. Consistent with its three core functions as a convener, think-tank and operational organization, and through its strategic positioning as a key development partner, ECA supported its member States in strengthening the capacity of national institutions to plan and implement development programmes. ECA convened multilateral and multi-stakeholder platforms and conducted interdisciplinary research and analysis of the key challenges facing member States and Africa as a whole, while

* E/ECA/COE/41/1.



promoting peer learning and development. ECA also provided direct policy advice and technical support to member States and worked with other United Nations agencies, especially through the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa, in delivering support to member States and the African Union.

4. The second section of the present report contains the key achievements of ECA in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, with a focus on six areas: supporting resilience to multiple shocks; advancing the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area; strengthening policy formulation and implementation through the use of macroeconomic models; promoting socioeconomic development and gender equality; promoting the digital and data revolution in Africa; and building forward better for sustainable development, focusing on a green recovery, the mainstreaming of climate change and the blue economy. In addition, ECA support for the African Union and the implementation of United Nations regional reforms are highlighted. Section II also includes a review of the enhanced operational modalities put in place for more sustainable and effective implementation of the ECA programme of work. Section III sets out conclusions and highlights some key trends that are likely to occur in the next reporting cycle.

5. The report on the follow-up by ECA to the resolutions of the fifty-fourth session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (E/ECA/COE/41/8) provides more information on the actions taken by ECA to address the challenges and needs of member States during the reporting cycle.

II. Key results achieved

A. Supporting resilience to multiple shocks

6. The war in Ukraine produced alarming cascading effects on a global economy already weakened by COVID-19 and climate change. The growing conflict had severe consequences for developing countries, especially those in Africa and the least developed countries, which had just begun to recover from the pandemic when the war erupted. African countries were affected by the conflict through its impact on trade costs, commodity prices and financial markets. The risk of civil unrest, food shortages and inflation-induced recessions cannot be discounted, in particular given the interconnectedness of the global economy and its current fragility as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Within this context, ECA has been supporting member States in building more resilient economies in the face of the multiple shocks affecting the continent.

7. The level of debt of oil-importing countries in Africa is expected to reach 73 per cent of GDP in 2022, owing to increasing energy costs as a result of the war in Ukraine. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as at 31 January 2023, 14 African countries were at a high risk of debt distress and 8 were already in debt distress.¹ In the light of the above, ECA convened a debt management workshop in October 2022. The workshop was attended by 128 policymakers from various African countries and research institutions, during which they discussed the findings of an ECA research project on debt profiles and bond yields. The workshop served as a platform on which member States could exchange information on challenges and best practices in debt management, especially in the context of COVID-19 and the crisis in Ukraine. In addition, participants discussed the recent debt management initiatives of ECA, such as the Liquidity and Sustainability Facility and research on special drawing rights.

¹ IMF, "Debt sustainability analysis of low-income countries: list of LIC DSAs". Available at www.imf.org/en/publications/dsa.

8. ECA supported the capacity-building of policymakers in Angola in the areas of public debt management, and treasury management, with a view to expanding financial markets, mobilizing long-term investment, and building investor confidence. Angola successfully implemented several reforms to increase and diversify its sources of local financing to reduce risk and exposure to rate fluctuations. Benchmark bonds were issued in 2022, with increased competition in primary market auctions. The results have been a much lower cost of funds, national savings across the yield curve, and the first long-term (8- and 10-year) bond issues in the domestic market. ECA continued to support member States on taxation reform to increase domestic resource mobilization capacity as they transition out of the COVID-19 crisis. In collaboration with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, ECA assisted three countries (Ethiopia, Kenya and Zambia) in undertaking direct tax assessments. Based on the recommendations of the assessment and with further ECA technical support, Kenya initiated tax reforms, through the introduction of the 2022 Finance Act, that have expanded tax collection in the digital economy and increased the capital gains tax from 5 to 15 per cent. National capacity to implement excise tax stamps and improve tax regulation was also strengthened in four countries (Ethiopia, Sudan, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania) through peer learning and study tours, resulting in the exchange of experiences in the implementation of tax regimes and laws and discussions on the challenges and opportunities associated with using digital technology in excise tax administration. As a result, Ethiopia is now planning to introduce an excise stamp with a track-and-trace system that is similar to the system that has helped Kenya to increase its revenue collection.

9. In 2022, ECA, in collaboration with the national planning entities platform of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), convened a policy dialogue on the macroeconomic impact of the crisis in Ukraine in the SADC subregion. Key measures were presented for building resilience in Southern Africa, namely, self-reliance, financing, and building institutional resilience to external shocks. Participants highlighted the importance of building value chains to sustain the economies of the subregion and other measures for strengthening the productive capacity of the subregion in key sectors, such as energy, transport and cross-border infrastructure, information and communications technology. Finally, they emphasized the need to put in place supportive financial systems, to mitigate crisis situations.

10. Similarly, ECA convened a discussion on the impact of the double crisis in East Africa ahead of the fifty-fourth session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, held in May 2022, which resulted in key recommendations on: promoting, setting up and prioritizing structural transformation to reduce vulnerability to shocks; strategies to quickly recover from crisis, such as extending credit to businesses, especially women-owned businesses; using adjustments to taxation in response to critical shocks; cross-border infrastructure development; and climate finance mobilization.

11. A high-level working group on the global financial architecture was established in February 2022, following a request by ECA and African ministers of finance, planning and economic development.² The working group has since held nine meetings, resulting in the preparation of a report on the structural challenges within the global financial architecture that are affecting African economies and recommendations for IMF consideration. The report includes specific proposals to IMF, including with regard to its lending portfolio, governance model and debt restructuring efforts. In addition, ECA presented the key findings of the report to African ministers of finance, planning and economic development, the African

² Members of the working group, which is coordinated by ECA, comprise African ministers of finance, planning and economic development and representatives of the African Union, the African Development Bank, the African Export-Import Bank and the World Bank. Staff and Executive Directors of IMF also participate in the group, and ECA serves as its secretariat.

Union, the African Export-Import Bank, the African Development Bank and IMF staff and Executive Directors at the annual meeting of IMF and the World Bank in October 2022. Another outcome of the meetings of the working group was the submission of a letter to the Group of 20 on behalf of African ministers, seeking greater liquidity and a better debt restructuring framework.

B. Advancing the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area

12. By 22 October 2022, 44 African countries had ratified the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, 5 of which deposited their instruments of ratification during the reporting cycle. In 2022, ECA supported seven countries (Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda and Tunisia) in the formulation and validation of national strategies for the African Continental Free Trade Area. The national strategies include an analysis and recommendations on the diversification of productive capacity and patterns, and, thus, contribute to efforts to accelerate industrialization and expand regional markets. Upon request, ECA worked with another 10 countries through advocacy, awareness-raising, impact studies and the formulation of national strategies, all of which reflect the demand-driven relevance of ECA in supporting the implementation of the Free Trade Area.

13. Furthermore, the country business index for the African Continental Free Trade Area, which is an assessment of the perceived impact of the Free Trade Area on the private sector, was successfully tested in nine countries (Angola, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa and Zambia). ECA also supported the Government of Zambia in launching its Free Trade Area implementation strategy and its implementation committee and subcommittees, and strengthened the capacity of 79 government officials (47 men and 32 women) and 14 private sector representatives (9 men and 5 women) in trade policy formulation, trade negotiation and trade facilitation.

14. In Burundi, Kenya and Rwanda, ECA supported the strengthening of capacity to leverage the advantages of the Free Trade Area for trade and economic growth. All three countries have commenced the implementation of their Free Trade Area strategies. In Kenya and Rwanda, priority export products were identified. The two countries are among the seven countries that have been selected to trade provisionally in goods on a pilot basis in the Free Trade Area. In addition, Rwanda launched a national campaign to raise awareness in the private sector of the benefits of the Free Trade Area. In Burundi, a regional centre for quality assurance has been established to standardize the quality assurance processes of trade products across Africa, which is expected to facilitate the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area.

C. Strengthening policy formulation and implementation through the use of macroeconomic models

15. Levels of inequality, poverty and unemployment remain high in African countries and have been exacerbated by the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. Optimal policies informed by evidence remain crucial to ensuring economic transformation. Modelling is essential for devising policies and economic models that help policymakers to develop evidence-based decisions. ECA supported the training of 89 policymakers (28 women and 61 men) in four countries (Lesotho, Namibia, Niger and Sierra Leone) in the analysis, modelling and forecasting of macroeconomic variables for policy development and the acceleration of the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

16. In 2022, Ghana and Seychelles migrated their national development plans to the integrated planning and reporting toolkit platform with technical support from ECA, allowing the two countries to assess the alignment of their plans with the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and to track and report on their progress in the implementation of the two Agendas in a harmonized way. The National Planning Commission of Malawi has also adopted the toolkit. By December 2022, 20 countries had either initiated or completed the adoption of the toolkit.

17. Illicit financial flows remain a major roadblock to domestic resource mobilization and a threat to development financing in Africa. ECA contributed to the strengthening of the institutional architecture for tackling illicit financial flows in 11 pilot countries (Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Gabon, Ghana, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa). Furthermore, ECA supported the Government of Zambia in generating preliminary statistical estimates of illicit financial flows and the development of inter-institutional structures to tackle them.

D. Promoting socioeconomic development and gender equality

18. The Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa provides a framework for the engagement of investors and partners in the development of regional and continental infrastructure and combines continental infrastructure initiatives and regional master plans in a coherent infrastructure investment programme with an implementation strategy and portfolio of priority projects. ECA, as the secretariat of the second priority action plan of the Programme, affirmed its commitment to the implementation of the second phase of the action plan at the seventh Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa Week. During the event, ECA contributed to the discussions on key topics, such as the acceleration of the implementation of the Single African Air Transport Market, the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia transport corridor to Central Africa and beyond, and public-private partnerships for infrastructure based on the initial findings of assessments in six countries (Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Malawi, Uganda and Zambia). ECA supported the six countries in adopting action plans for people-first public-private partnerships. Focused on five outcomes (increased access and equity; replicability; sustainability and resilience; economic effectiveness; and stakeholder engagement), the people-first approach goes beyond value for money towards value for people and is critical in mobilizing the private sector for the Sustainable Development Goals.

19. ECA supported a study on the assessment of maize and dairy value chains in Zambia and Zimbabwe to inform the development of the planned common agro-industrial park, which will be located on each side of the border between the two countries. The maize and dairy value chains are two of the nine value chains identified in the pre-feasibility study as anchors of the park and are among the identified strategic value chains in both the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and SADC. The park is being implemented under the joint industrialization cooperation framework between Zambia and Zimbabwe under article 99 of the Treaty Establishing the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, which seeks to promote agricultural development by encouraging member States to collaborate on industrial development and transformation. The memorandum of understanding signed between the two countries in 2021 provides a firm foundation for the growth of the park as a medium for strengthening economic and structural transformation in the two countries.

20. Similarly, with ECA support, a cooperation agreement was signed in April 2022 between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia to facilitate the development of a value chain in the electric battery and clean energy sector. ECA provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Industry of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Haut-Katanga Province in relation to the conclusion of an official decree allocating 2,000 ha of land to the Democratic Republic of the Congo-Zambia special economic zone. The agreement is expected to provide a framework

for bilateral cooperation on the initiative to develop the battery value chain and to strengthen collaboration between the two countries. Once implemented, the common strategy will create jobs and boost the economies of both countries.

21. In August 2022, the Council of Ministers of the steering committee for the rationalization of the regional economic communities of Central Africa adopted as its reference framework the ECA framework for designing an industrialization and economic diversification master plan. The rationalization of the regional economic communities in Central Africa is part of an overall process to strengthen regional economic integration that was adopted by the African Union in order to create a common African market. The initiative is expected to curb the phenomenon of institutional plurality in Central Africa, where the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries are present, by setting up a single and more efficient regional economic community through the harmonization and integration of programmes and instruments among States.

22. Given the importance of tourism as a driving force for economic growth and inclusive development, and in line with the SADC industrialization strategy, ECA assisted Namibia in developing its Tourism Satellite Account to measure the performance and economic impacts of tourism. The preparedness of Namibia for a Tourism Satellite Account was assessed, and policymakers benefited from efforts to build capacity to apply standardized methodologies and approaches to developing such a tool. In addition, ECA provided technical support to Zimbabwe in the development of a local-content policy framework for the pharmaceuticals, fertilizer and packaging industries.

23. In the Gambia, ECA contributed to the development of an action plan for the decade for road safety 2021–2030, aiming to reduce road deaths in the country by 50 per cent by 2030, in line with the United Nations Second Decade of Action for Road Safety.

24. ECA contributed to the capacity development of policymakers in five countries (Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia) by designing and drafting policies and strategies to address sectoral issues related to the demographic dividend. Subsequently, Nigeria and Zambia adopted a population and development policy and an eighth national development plan, respectively, that include efforts to mainstream gender.

25. ECA contributed to the generation of preliminary evidence concerning national budget allocations to the pillars of the demographic dividend³ over the past 10 years in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, the Niger, Senegal and Togo by analysing government expenditure in social sectors. In addition, ECA supported the capacity development of 45 experts from nine countries in budgeting with a view to leveraging the demographic dividend. Draft country reports to inform resource allocation to the pillars were also produced. Aligning national budgets with the pillars could accelerate the achievement of the conditions for sustainable and inclusive growth.

26. The African Gender and Development Index, which is a composite index comprising the mutually reinforcing Gender Status Index and the African Women's Progress Scoreboard, is one of the flagship tools of ECA and has been used by Governments since 2004 to measure progress towards the achievement of their gender equality commitments. In 2022, ECA supported policymakers in Namibia and Seychelles in strengthening the evidence base and monitoring progress in relation to gender equality and the empowerment of women by using the African Gender and Development Index to identify high-priority gender issues. With ECA support, the two countries assessed gender gaps using the Index methodology and developed a

³ The pillars of the demographic dividend are employment and entrepreneurship, education and skills development, health and welfare, and governance and youth empowerment.

road map to mainstream a gender-based approach into their national statistical systems.

27. ECA revised the African Gender and Development Index in October 2022 with a view to incorporating the quantitative indicators of the Gender Status Index and the qualitative indicators of the African Women's Progress Scoreboard, in order to ensure that, after 18 years, the African Gender and Development Index continues to be a tool that is relevant and fit for purpose, in particular in the current context, where progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women remains increasingly at risk in the face of such crises as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change.

E. Promoting the digital and data revolution in Africa

28. As part of its convening function, ECA organized three key events relating to data and statistics in Africa in October 2022: the eighth session of the Statistical Commission for Africa; the sixth session of the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration; and the eighth meeting of the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Africa. The outcomes of the events included a Statistical Commission road map and 15 recommendations for strengthening civil registration and vital statistics.

29. ECA promoted digital platforms and initiatives to develop digital public goods for a digital-economy-led transformation in Africa. As a result of ECA advocacy and technical support, two member States (Ethiopia and Nigeria) aligned the digital identity framework principles with their national digital transformation strategies in 2022. The two States are currently implementing a national identity programme. Furthermore, the Government of Ethiopia endorsed a national digital identity law in August 2022.

30. ECA continued to promote the modernization of African census systems from paper trails to digital systems, providing support to member States in census digitalization for improved data collection and production. The traditional methods of conducting a census are lengthy, labour-intensive and carry a risk to data reliability, factors that reduce the prospect for successful censuses and deter countries from undertaking censuses. In 2022, ECA supported eight member States (Liberia, Mauritius, Nigeria, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Togo, Zambia and Zimbabwe) in deploying information technology applications for the conduct of pilot and main censuses. Owing to the use of modern tools, the interval between the collection of data and the release of census findings was reduced from two years to three months.

31. To better harness geospatial information in Africa, which can bring positive transformational change, ECA provided technical support to three countries (Burkina Faso, Burundi and Central African Republic) in enhancing their capacity to develop integrated geospatial information frameworks. In Burundi, the Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies developed a geocoding scheme for the geospatial analysis of 2022 population and health-care data. In Burkina Faso, ECA supported the validation of the national action plan for the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework. In addition, ECA supported 10 member States (Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe) in strengthening their capacity to make informed and evidence-based decisions through the use of innovative geospatial decision-support systems.

32. ECA also contributed to enhanced African cooperation in cybersecurity and the fight against cybercrime. Following the adoption, in March 2022, of the Lomé declaration on cybersecurity and the fight against cybercrime, ECA signed a memorandum of understanding with the Government of Togo to develop a regional centre of excellence for cybersecurity research and development. The Lomé declaration is a commitment by member States to sign and ratify the African Union

Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection, which is one of the most elaborate conventions in the world on cybersecurity. Togo is one of the few countries to have ratified the Convention. ECA contributed to the conceptualization and structuring of the centre of excellence, which, as a central regional hub and independent centre, is expected to provide expertise and promote cybersecurity and the investigation of cybercrime. In Togo, ECA also supported the development of the national cybersecurity policy framework.

F. Sustainable development issues

33. ECA technical support was instrumental in the development and adoption of the African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022–2032) in support of the realization of Agenda 2063 regarding climate-resilient communities and economies, by setting out the principles, priorities and action areas for enhanced climate cooperation and climate-resilient development.

34. In September 2022, ECA and the African Union jointly convened the second meeting of African ministers of finance, economy, development and environment to ensure coherence among African climate finance positions and priorities ahead of the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Participants highlighted African needs and the continent’s ambitions in relation to the climate change agenda and identified the support necessary to develop before the session updated nationally determined contributions to the global response to climate change. The meeting resulted in a unified view on the key areas of action to stimulate climate and nature-friendly investments and actions to advance the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

35. The development of carbon credit markets represents a significant opportunity for African countries to leverage their natural capital as a means of mobilizing additional resources. To this end, ECA supported the Congo Basin Climate Commission in developing a harmonized regional protocol and the establishment of a regional registry. The registry is underpinned by the development of a pipeline of potential investments that could have a meaningful impact on communities that depend on the forests of the Congo basin, by creating sustainable livelihoods and incomes and by rehabilitating degraded lands. In addition, in May 2022, member States adopted Climate Commission statutes covering its organization and functioning, which marked a new and necessary milestone for the proper functioning of the African Union body in its mission to preserve what is known as the second lung of the planet.

36. ECA provided substantial technical support in the process of organizing the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in November 2022. ECA provided support for the African team of climate negotiators on issues relating to a just energy transition, carbon credits and climate financing, along with support in the installation of the Africa Pavilion at the session venue. The loss and damage fund agreed upon at the session was a major step forward in addressing the deleterious effects of climate change on developing countries. Establishing the fund, however, requires further technical work.

G. Implementation of regional reforms and working with resident coordinators

37. ECA continued to support and advance the ongoing reforms of various institutions, including those of the United Nations, and ECA itself, and of the African Union. An overarching focus has been to strengthen the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa, with a view to fostering cohesion in the collaboration with the

African Union, which is especially important for accelerating the integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. The newly established African Union-United Nations regional collaborative platform held its inaugural annual meeting in June 2022, agreeing on seven priority areas: climate action and supporting African initiatives and positions at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; macroeconomic frameworks and economic diversification; digital transformation; data and statistics; food security; humanitarian summits; and subregional issues. Working modalities and a workplan for 2022 were adopted, as well as action items to be pursued at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties, including an African common position, climate statistics, the capacity development of negotiators, capacity development on carbon trading and climate finance, and the installation of the Africa Pavilion.

38. ECA supported the African Union in organizing a regional policy conference on peace, security and development in October 2022, which was attended by key policymakers, political leaders, senior officials from the African Union and the United Nations, representatives of the African Development Bank and the African Export-Import Bank, leading civil society actors and development partners of Africa. ECA played a key role and supported the African Union in the preparation of the conference, during which participants highlighted the links among peace, security and development and how trade, investment, youth economic empowerment and general economic progress can have a positive spill-over effect in promoting peace and security. Participants called for the accelerated implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area as a vehicle to fast-track African economic growth, increase productivity, support the growth of the private sector and create jobs for African young people. The role of good governance in deterring conflict in Africa was underscored.

39. ECA continues to play a major role in the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa by promoting collaboration among United Nations agencies and by implementing the United Nations regional reform process in Africa. ECA serves as the Co-Vice-Chair of the Platform, is a member of its joint secretariat, and is a co-convenor of its task forces 2 and 3 (on the regional knowledge management hub and regional reporting, respectively) and its opportunity and issues-based coalitions 1 and 2. The Platform, through its opportunity and issues-based coalitions, which are its major vehicles, was able to offer support to member States in data and statistics, economic diversification, the African Continental Free Trade Area, the development of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, climate change and the preparations for the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, human rights and peace and security. In addition, important decisions, including on the rationalization of the coalitions from eight to six and the development of a funding formula to support the work of the coalitions, were taken at a retreat organized by the Platform in November 2022.

H. Operational modalities for enhanced delivery of the programme of work of the Economic Commission for Africa

40. ECA continued to pursue the digitalization of business processes, which is expected to yield positive results for electricity usage, printing and photocopying costs, drive efficiency gains and, ultimately, contribute to the reduction of the ECA carbon footprint. Three inter-office functions, namely, the work processes for projects and programme implementation, the maintenance of the master file for consultants and individual contractors, and the procurement of goods and services, were digitalized, resulting in a paperless environment. An estimated 18,528 records were added to a central repository, increasing the number of records that are accessible electronically to 481,027.

41. In human resources management, an area of concern with extended recruitment processes, efforts were intensified to attract, retain and promote top talent. ECA launched a recruitment campaign with a faster recruitment cycle that reduced vacancy rates in 2022. Human resources management was restructured to provide dedicated recruitment services as part of the campaign, resulting in the reduction of vacancy rates across ECA from 15 per cent in 2021 to 11 per cent in 2022.

42. The contract to renovate Africa Hall was signed and a ground-breaking ceremony was held in October 2022. The renovated hall will provide modern and functional conference facilities that will support the ECA think-tank function and raise financial resources. Furthermore, ECA extended the provision of its duty of care to staff members of United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations stationed outside Addis Ababa through satellite clinics that were opened in Mekele and Shire, Ethiopia.

43. ECA strengthened its existing media partnerships and established new ones with three media houses – AllAfrica, The East African and Financial Afrik – to enhance its institutional visibility through the dissemination and uptake of ECA content. In addition, two new outreach initiatives were launched, namely, the ECA monthly press briefing and the monthly podcast, to support the dissemination of ECA content.

44. To deepen its culture of accountability and enhance its programme performance, ECA conducted quarterly accountability and programme performance review meetings, in which staff involved in the subprogrammes reported on progress in carrying out planned activities and utilizing funds in accordance with the annual business plan. The review meeting in the fourth quarter incorporated an exposition to showcase the work of ECA in an audiovisual format. The exposition served as an innovative platform to celebrate the achievements of its staff members and to engage with internal and external stakeholders.

45. ECA launched the integrated change management initiative as the foundation for building ECA 2.0, that is to say, to create an organization brand that drives a culture of results and job satisfaction, where staff members feel empowered and are provided with opportunities to excel and make an impact, all of which will make ECA an employer of choice in Africa.

III. Conclusions

46. The reporting period began with Africa still coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic and with the onset of the conflict in Europe, which immediately put more pressure on African economies. Overcoming the challenges of the overlapping crises of food, finance and energy will require African countries to formulate innovative strategies that provide a range of policy options. African countries need adequate financing, sufficient energy, the right infrastructure mix, agricultural and food systems that are resilient to external shocks, and climate mitigation measures that reduce the impact of climate change. Innovative solutions are imperative and must be developed by African countries. Investing in green sectors in Africa has significant benefits. Green and blue bonds, debt-for-climate investment swaps and carbon credits offer unique opportunities to raise the resources necessary for development. Another avenue for resource mobilization is value addition in mining. A just energy transition remains an imperative for the continent, and universal access to electricity and sustainable industrialization are essential for economic transformation. Similarly, the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area continues to be the blueprint for the African economic recovery.

47. As African countries pursue recovery from the above-mentioned shocks, ECA is committed to remaining a key partner in supporting member States, the African Union, regional economic communities, intergovernmental organizations and other

development partners to achieve social and economic recovery and sustained growth. Guided by its medium-term programme framework (2022–2025) (E/ECA/COE/40/INF/1), which was endorsed at the fifty-fourth session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, ECA will support interventions around the pillars of trade and regional integration; macroeconomic policy for sustainable and inclusive development; poverty, gender and social policy; private-sector development and innovative financing; data, statistics and digital transformation; and climate change and the green economy.

48. ECA will endeavour to accelerate the implementation of cross-cutting frameworks, such as the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, and mainstream related principles and activities throughout its programme of work. ECA will strengthen joint planning and delivery to maximize synergy and the impact of ECA contributions. It will also improve resource mobilization and programme delivery and optimize the use of its human and financial resources. That approach will become even more relevant during 2023, which, with threats of an economic recession in developed countries, which may have turbulent effects on African economies, could become a year of uncertainties. Those challenges and the war in Ukraine should provide opportunities for Africa to promote increased agricultural productivity, self-reliance in food production, the development of a fertilizer value chain in the region and thriving intra-African trade. The free movement of people, goods and services across the continent will be crucial to the success of intra-African trade and investment.
