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Statutory issues: reports on the work of the subsidiary bodies
of the Economic Commission for Africa

Report of the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts of Central and East Africa on their joint session

Note by the secretariat

The secretariat of the Economic Commission for Africa has the honour to transmit to the members of the Commission the report of the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts of Central and East Africa on their joint session.

* E/ECA/COE/41/1.



Report of the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts of Central and East Africa on their joint session

I. Introduction

1. In partnership with the Ministry of Finance, National Planning and Trade of Seychelles, the Subregional Offices for Central and Eastern Africa of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) held a joint session of the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts for Central and East Africa from 15 to 18 November 2022 in Beau Vallon, Seychelles, on the theme “Strengthening resilience, economic growth and diversification in a context of instability and global shocks: the role of special economic zones, innovative financing, tourism and the African Continental Free Trade Area”.
2. The main objective of the joint session was to discuss statutory issues related to the mandate and functioning of the two subregional offices and to provide the experts present with a platform to discuss economic and social development challenges and identify realistic, sustainable and integration-driving options aligned with the theme of the meeting.

II. Participation

3. Nearly 160 participants attended the hybrid session, which brought together representatives from 18 member States: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, South Sudan and United Republic of Tanzania.
4. Representatives of regional economic communities (Central African Economic and Monetary Community, East African Community, Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)), the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area, the African Export-Import Bank, regional development banks, international and national non-governmental organizations, think tanks, centres of excellence, civil society organizations, national and regional private sector federations, and international, national and regional media houses attended the meeting.
5. The United Nations was represented by the Resident Coordinators in the Comoros and Eritrea and by delegates from the Resident Coordinator Office in Rwanda, the office of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization in Somalia, and ECA.

III. Opening session [agenda item 1]

6. Statements were delivered by the outgoing Chairs of the two bureaux of the Intergovernmental Committees for Central and East Africa, the Director, Subregional Office for Eastern Africa, Mama Keita, and the Minister of Finance, National Planning and Trade, Seychelles, Naadir Hassan.
7. Mr. Hassan indicated that the event presented an opportunity to share experiences and draw lessons on how to strengthen resilience, economic growth and diversification in the context of instability and global shocks, taking into account the role of special economic zones, innovative financing, tourism and the African Continental Free Trade Area. He recalled the challenges of climate change, debt management and inflationary pressures and recommended that common solutions be crafted to navigate future external shocks.

IV. Constitution of bureaux, review and adoption of the agenda [agenda item 2]

8. Participants unanimously elected the following bureaux:

Central Africa

Chair:	Gabon
Vice-Chair:	Cameroon
Rapporteur:	Chad

East Africa

Chair:	Seychelles
Vice-Chair:	Burundi
Rapporteur:	Ethiopia

9. Participants adopted the agenda and the programme of work.

V. Session 1: Macroeconomic and social overview [agenda item 3]

A. Presentations and discussion

10. The session was chaired by the representative of Chad and moderated by the Acting Director, Private Sector Development and Finance Division, ECA, Robert Lisinge. Presentations were made by the Chief, Regional Integration and African Continental Free Trade Area Section, Subregional Office for Eastern Africa, Andrew Mold, and by Economist, Subregional Office for Central Africa, Mamadou Malick Bal. Inputs followed from selected representatives of countries who shared their experiences on measures that had been taken to strengthen resilience and mitigate external shocks.

11. In his presentation on the macroeconomic and social overview of East Africa, Mr. Mold indicated that an economic downturn had been recorded in 2022, as compared with the upturn that had been witnessed in 2020. Ethiopia had posted the highest inflation rate in the subregion (30 per cent). Overall, inflation in the subregion had been caused by the crisis in Ukraine, since the majority of countries in the subregion were net food importers. Debt levels had increased over the past four years and the debt burden depended on the composition of the debt (for example, whether it was concessional or private). There was clearly a variation in debt repayments between countries. In bilateral trade between Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania, the United Republic of Tanzania had increased its exports to Kenya as a result of the lifting of non-tariff barriers. According to ECA, exports (mainly agricultural food) from the United Republic of Tanzania to Kenya had increased to \$503 million in 2021, up from \$258 million in 2020.¹ In 2021, foreign direct investment had risen by 3 per cent to about \$10 billion. Humanitarian aid was still dominant compared with development assistance. On the social front, there had been a spike in communicable diseases as a result of lifestyle changes. The largest killer remained HIV/AIDS. Some countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and South Sudan, had been hit hard by food crises caused, notably, by climate change (which had caused droughts and floods) and conflicts.

12. In his presentation on macroeconomic developments in Central Africa during the period 2020–2021 and forecasts for the period 2022–2025, Mr. Bal noted that the subregion had recorded a recession of 3.6 per cent in 2020, owing

¹ United Nations, ECA, *Macroeconomic and Social Developments in Eastern Africa 2022: Building Resilience in a Hostile Global Context* (Kigali, 2022), figure 16.

to a difficult global context that was marked by the health crisis that had disrupted supply chains and restricted the movement of people globally. Central Africa had recorded overall high rates of inflation in 2020 (7.3 per cent) and 2021 (7.4 per cent), as a result of supply restrictions and a sharp increase in demand, especially in the wake of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which had been combined with an increase in the prices of imported food products. The current account balance showed a deficit of 0.8 per cent of the subregional gross domestic product (GDP) in 2021, compared with a surplus of 0.5 per cent of GDP in 2020. The subregional current account balance had returned to a surplus (2.4 per cent of GDP). Public finances remained dependent on commodity prices. Central Africa had recorded an overall budget deficit of 5.5 per cent of GDP in 2020, which had reduced in 2021, owing to an increase in oil revenues and the efforts that had been made to mobilize non-oil tax revenues. In the medium term, economic growth in ECCAS was expected to consolidate to 3.8 per cent in 2023, 4.0 per cent in 2024 and 4.2 per cent in 2025. There was a need to accelerate structural reforms and to move away from commodity dependence to ensure sustained, inclusive and sustainable growth.

13. Representatives of member States, the private sector and young people spoke about how they had strengthened resilience in the face of COVID-19 and underscored the importance of economic diversification to improve resilience.

14. The Director, Macroeconomic and Governance Division, ECA, Adam Elhiraika, gave a presentation on the 2023 edition of the Economic Report on Africa, highlighting the impacts of global economic shocks on Africa and ways to strengthen resilience.

B. Recommendations

15. In the light of the discussion, the Committees made the following recommendations:

- (a) Member States should:
 - (i) Strengthen economic diversification policies;
 - (ii) Maintain the priorities of national development plans;
 - (iii) Invest in regional food value chains to reduce dependence on global food value chains;
- (b) ECA should support countries in diversifying their economies.

VI. Session 2: Innovative financing for East Africa – financial technology, cryptocurrency and Islamic finance [agenda item 4]

A. Presentations and discussion

16. A working document was introduced by the Director, Laboratory for Financial Engineering, University of Laval, Canada, Issouf Soumaré. He noted that development in the information and communications technology sector had had a huge impact on human beings and on all economic activities, with a reduction in the cost of transactions and an increase in financial inclusion. Mobile payments were the main type of financial technology (known as fintech) transactions used in East Africa, and their development would boost financial inclusion and drive subregional development. Financial technologies could also contribute to the success of the African Continental Free Trade Area through payment systems, e-commerce and cross-border investments in financial

technologies. The increased adoption of cryptocurrencies by people and businesses had compelled many central banks to prepare for or launch their own digital currencies. The challenges that stood in the way of a much broader role for fintech in East Africa included a lack of skills and expertise, limited connectivity to the Internet, in particular in rural areas, the high cost of Internet access and mobile telephones, a limited digital culture, and legal and regulatory requirements. The growing number of financial institutions offering Islamic financial services and products combined with the expanding volume of their total assets represented a great financing opportunity for East African economies that were struggling to mobilize development funding. He spoke about the principles of Islamic financing: wealth should derive from legitimate asset-based trade and investments; investments should provide a social and ethical benefit for society; and risks should be shared. Any illicit activities (described in Arabic as “haram”) should be avoided. There were potential benefits of Islamic financing in the subregion for small and medium-sized enterprises, women and young people, including better financial inclusion and the mobilization of additional financing through the attraction of investors from the Gulf region.

17. Interventions made during the high-level panel discussion, which was moderated by the Director, Subregional Office for Eastern Africa, highlighted the need to: expand financial inclusion; develop the current banking system for finance start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises; reconcile transparency and privacy in fintech; build capacity in innovative financing; acknowledge that mobile money was becoming more popular; recognize that, in some countries, women and young people turned to Islamic financing to avoid the security requirements of traditional banks; and promote cooperation in East Africa in the area of financial technologies because they could help to provide a backstop to cross-border financing.

B. Recommendations

18. In the light of the discussion, the Committees made the following recommendations:

- (a) Member States should:
 - (i) Establish a regulatory framework conducive to innovative financing tools, such as M-PESA;
 - (ii) Improve the finance sector environment and enable greater digital reach;
 - (iii) Create a pan-African commercial settlement and payment system based on an intra-African blockchain;
- (b) ECA should:
 - (i) Build and/or strengthen the capacity of domestic capital markets;
 - (ii) Support the improvement of the efficiency of public finances to create fiscal space;
 - (iii) Set up a subregional digital environment and a rating and graduation tool to facilitate the formalization of the informal sector, very small enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises in order to promote innovative financial inclusion and private sector development.

VII. Session 3: Status of the effective implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area [agenda item 5]

A. Presentations and discussion

19. The session was held in a round-table format and was chaired by a representative of Seychelles and moderated by the Director, Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resource Management Division, ECA, Jean-Paul Adam. It included presentations by the Chief, Technology Section, Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resource Management Division, Mactar Seck; Economist, Subregional Office for Central Africa, Jean-Marc Kilolo; Market Access Adviser and Regional Adviser for Central Africa, secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area, Emmanuel Mbarga; international consultant, Sekou Doumbouya; Mr. Mold; and Mr. Lisinge. They provided information on the status of the African Continental Free Trade Area, the implementation of the Guided Trade Initiative and related challenges and opportunities; the potential of the transport sector to be a catalyst for trade, develop regional value chains and foster industrialization; the potential of the Africa Trade Exchange platform to promote trade and investment within the Area, and other issues.

B. Recommendations

20. In the light of the discussion, the Committees made the following recommendations:

- (a) Member States should:
 - (i) Build the capacity of young people, women and small and medium-sized enterprises to make the most of the African Continental Free Trade Area;
 - (ii) Facilitate the rapid integration of young people and women entrepreneurs into the processes of the Area;
 - (iii) Promote the emergence of business leaders who will be African champions;
- (b) ECA should:
 - (i) Initiate, jointly with financial partners, joint industrialization projects to support the African Continental Free Trade Area and create regional value chains;
 - (ii) Strengthen the capacity of countries for global and regional trade integration;
 - (iii) Contribute to the establishment of a system for the exchange of information on business opportunities that are available on the continent, in the form of an observatory;
 - (iv) Support trade data collection activities that are sensitive to women and young people to better inform policy development;
- (c) The private sector should:
 - (i) Advocate public-private dialogue and systematic consultation on the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area;
 - (ii) Identify the legitimate representation of the private sector at the continental level.

VIII. Session 4: Introduction of the working document on next-generation special economic zones for economic diversification and industrialization in Central Africa

[agenda item 6]

A. Presentations and discussion

21. The working document was introduced by Assistant Professor, Marien Nkouabi University, Brazzaville, Sylvestre Ossiala, and former industrial site design engineer, Philémon Roger Essono Obam. Mr. Ossiala presented an assessment of Central African economic performance, identifying some of the major challenges and impediments to structural transformation in Central Africa. He highlighted the successful experiences of special economic zones worldwide, of which it was estimated there were around 5,400 in 147 economies in 2019, 1,000 of which had been created since 2014.² Developing countries were reported to be home to most special economic zones, with Asia taking the lion's share (4,046). Central Africa had opened its economies to the implementation of such zones, with projects flourishing in almost all 11 ECCAS countries. The zones responded to the need for diversification, industrialization and local processing of raw materials. Conventional special economic zones and their evolution towards next-generation zones were the fundamental pillars on which responses to the negative economic performance of Central Africa should be based.

22. Mr. Essono Obam, speaking on industrial planning, recalled the genesis of the four industrial revolutions that, in combination with the advent of electricity, had permitted mass production, as opposed to cottage production.

23. A high-level panel discussion chaired by the Acting Director, Subregional Office for Central Africa, Jean-Luc Mastaki, followed.

24. The Director of Industrial and Logistics Zones Development, Tanger Med Engineering, Ayoub R'mili, described the Tanger Med industrial platform, a global logistics gateway located on the Strait of Gibraltar and connected to more than 180 ports worldwide.

25. The Coordinator, Africa Centre of Excellence for Battery Research, Jean-Marie Kanda, delivered a presentation on the Centre of Excellence, an African research and training centre that was part of a vast project that included the establishment of a batteries council in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that was responsible for implementing the policy of the Government on batteries and energy transition, as well as the establishment of a special economic zone in the Haut-Katanga province, where batteries for electric vehicles would be produced.

26. Experts from the Congo and Gabon shared the experience of their countries regarding special economic zones.

B. Recommendations

27. In the light of the discussion, the Committees made the following recommendations:

- (a) ECA should:
 - (i) Support investment promotion and strengthen public-private partnerships;

² *World Investment Report 2019: Special Economic Zones* (United Nations publication, 2019).

- (ii) Assist in the formulation of common industrial policies within the framework of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

IX. Session 5: Introduction of the working document on the strategic framework for the development of next-generation infrastructure for special economic zones in Central Africa and an operationalization guide [agenda item 7]

A. Presentations and discussion

28. The international development lawyer, François Serres, shared a situational analysis of special economic zones in Central Africa, focusing on the scope of application, the governance framework, development modalities and incentive mechanisms and emphasizing the need for a paradigm shift so that the areas of focus of development policies could be increasingly reflected in regulatory instruments and mainstreamed into criteria for recruiting promoters and developers. Industrial policy, which should not be developed “off the cuff”, should underpin the zones. He shared several recommendations for the operationalization of special economic zones.

29. A high-level panel discussion chaired by Senior Economic Affairs Officer, Subregional Office for Central Africa, Adama Coulibaly, followed. The panellists – Director General, Economic Forecasting Bureau, Senegal, Moubarack Lo; President, Pan-African Project Management Conference, Babissakana; international consultant, Sekou Doumbouya; and an expert at the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area, Emmanuel Mbarga – highlighted the following points:

- (a) Most special economic zones in Africa were often poorly defined and those that succeeded often had a limited number of objectives;
- (b) It was important to have a proper balance when funding infrastructure for special economic zones to avoid putting a huge strain on the State budget;
- (c) There was a need for balanced project-management, monitoring and evaluation frameworks for special economic zones;
- (d) Close attention should be paid to quality standards, such as technical standards of the International Organization for Standardization;
- (e) The industrialization programme in Africa must take into account special economic zones.

B. Recommendations

30. In the light of the discussion, the Committees recommended that ECA should support the mobilization of financing to implement industrial development and economic diversification plans.

X. Session 6: Fostering economic diversification through the tourism sector – exploring opportunities for urban tourism in East Africa [agenda item 8]

A. Presentations and discussion

31. The session included two presentations by consultants working at ECA, Jim Ayorekire and Pius Odunga. Mr. Ayorekire highlighted that, in order to remain competitive and to encourage domestic and regional tourism, Africa needed diversification in tourism. Prior to the pandemic, there had been 1.5 billion international tourists globally, of which Africa captured only 5 per cent. In 2021, there had been 1 billion fewer international tourist arrivals globally, which made the case for developing other forms of tourism. Europe was an example of how to leverage the potential of intraregional travel. In Africa, intraregional travel constituted only 30 per cent of all travel. The drivers of urban tourism in East Africa included the expanding middle class, the growing international conference segment and information and communications technology penetration. Challenges to the development of urban tourism were the unfavourable economic environment, low tourism performance, low levels of planning and policy support, low attractiveness, inadequate infrastructure and minimal health provisions.

32. Addressing the role of statistics in better harnessing urban tourism opportunities, Mr. Odunga elaborated on the Tourism Satellite Account methodology, explaining that it had the capacity to measure the economic, social and environmental dimensions of the impact of tourism. Tourism was not a stand-alone sector but cut across food, health, gender and investment activities. It was vital for the sector to sustain the tourism destination, which formed the basis of its prosperity, and the methodology could help to identify the dimensions of its support framework.

33. The interventions of the panellists were guided by the Executive Director, Partnership for African Social and Governance Research, Anthony Mveyange. Speakers included the State Minister for Destination and Infrastructure Development, Ministry of Tourism, Ethiopia, Sileshi Girma; the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Tourism, Seychelles, Sherin Francis; the Chief Executive Officer, Djibouti National Tourism Office, Osman Abdi Mohamed; the Chief Executive Officer, African Tourism Partners, Kwakye Donkor; the Acting Chief Executive Officer, Kenyan Tourism Research Institute, David Gitonga; Principal Tourism Officer, East African Community, Simon Kiarie; the Chief Executive Officer, Kenya Tourism Federation, Susan Ongalo; Senior Tourism Research and Statistics Officer, Zanzibar Commission for Tourism, Maabad Muhuddin; and Senior Statistician, Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, Uganda, Denis Ojok.

34. The panellists highlighted the facilitative role of e-visas and “visas on arrival”, the need for effective tourism data collection, the mainstreaming of urban tourism and good transportation networks, the need to ensure that tourism sustainability was anchored in the local context, the need for tourism satellite accounts throughout East Africa and the importance of addressing trust issues with private tour operators and encouraging information-sharing, which promoted the availability of credible data.

B. Recommendations

35. In the light of the discussion, the Committees made the following recommendations:

- (a) Member States should:
 - (i) Raise awareness among officials of the need to support and fund tourism data collection;

- (ii) Take into account climate change adaptation and mitigation measures in tourist facilities and conservation areas;
 - (iii) Improve tourism policy planning;
 - (iv) Undertake institutional and regulatory reforms in favour of tourism;
 - (v) Provide tourism infrastructure and services;
 - (vi) Consider the institutionalization and digitalization of statistical research on tourism;
- (b) ECA should:
- (i) Support countries in the formulation of a strategy for the development of urban tourism in Africa;
 - (ii) Support countries in the development of an environmental and social accounting system for tourism;
 - (iii) Raise awareness among operators in the tourism sector of the importance of sharing reliable data;
- (c) The private sector should get involved in the dialogue on urban tourism.

XI. Session 7: Challenges and opportunities of a consortium on the evaluation and valuation of natural capital in Central Africa [agenda item 9]

A. Presentations and discussion

36. Session 7, which was held in a round-table format, was chaired by the representative of Gabon and moderated by the Acting Director, Subregional Office for Central Africa.

37. The Senior Economic Affairs Officer, Subregional Office for Central Africa, indicated that the Central and East African subregions were in short supply of financing for development. Africa at large remained particularly vulnerable: it received little climate finance, while the continent accounted for nearly a quarter of the world's land mass. The Central African subregion had immense natural capital in the Congo Basin. Among the options studied at the thirty-seventh session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for Central Africa, held in Brazzaville in 2021, was that of a consortium for the development of natural capital that would mobilize resources to collect data on natural capital and its value, allowing the continent to speak in one voice internationally and, thus, have a better negotiating position.

38. The round table was followed by a discussion in which speakers and high-level experts took the floor.

B. Recommendations

39. In the light of the discussion, the Committees made the following recommendations:

- (a) Member States should accelerate structural reforms to move away from overdependence on raw materials;
- (b) ECA should carry out a situational analysis on sustainability and climate resilience.

XII. Session 8: Presentation of the outcomes of the eighth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development [agenda item 10]

40. The Director, Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resource Management Division, ECA, presented highlights of the eighth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, which had recommended that African member States and partners should:

- (a) Facilitate equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines for African countries;
- (b) Invest in the development of more resilient education systems, including by strengthening centres of excellence for, and the delivery of, science, technology, engineering, mathematics and arts education;
- (c) Strengthen institutional arrangements to enhance monitoring and accountability in relation to gender-related goals and targets;
- (d) Strengthen institutional capacity for marine resources management;
- (e) Strengthen capacity for the valuation of natural capital;
- (f) Make efforts to align national development plans with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union;
- (g) Invest more in the generation of relevant and timely statistics to inform national, regional and global development agendas.

XIII. Session 9: Introduction of the reports on the activities of the Subregional Offices for Central Africa and Eastern Africa since the previous sessions of the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts [agenda item 11]

A. Presentations and discussion

41. Representatives of the Subregional Offices for Central and Eastern Africa presented the milestones that had been reached since the previous sessions of the Intergovernmental Committees.

42. The Acting Director, Subregional Office for Central Africa, presented three major outcomes achieved in line with the strategic framework of the Subregional Office for 2022: increased economic diversification through the adoption of policies and reforms; a shift from design to implementation of economic diversification strategies; and a move towards policies that were conducive to economic diversification in order to build back better from the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 and to implement the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. The outcomes had been achieved through:

- (a) Validation of the draft reference framework for the development of the industrialization and economic diversification master plan for Central Africa;
- (b) Increased awareness among diverse stakeholders of the benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Area;
- (c) Intensification of support for the Democratic Republic of the Congo to develop with Zambia a special economic zone for batteries, electric vehicles and renewable energies and an entire associated skills development strategy for better inclusiveness (several implementing agreements and decrees illustrated the efforts of the Subregional Office in that regard);

(d) The commitment, in May 2022, of Africa Finance Corporation, through the advocacy of the Subregional Office, to support the Congo in the implementation of its new development plan for the period 2022–2026, which had been adopted in January 2022;

(e) Expansion of multiple partnerships for the development of special economic zones and the establishment of a consortium on the evaluation and development of natural capital in support of diversification and industrialization;

(f) Capacity-building for experts from Central Africa in various areas of economic diversification and on the importance of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

43. The strategic framework of the Subregional Office for 2023, in which the development of special economic zones and the adoption of bold policies for economic diversification and industrial development in Central Africa would be emphasized, was introduced.

44. The achievements of the Subregional Office for Eastern Africa since the twenty-fifth session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for East Africa, and the annual report of the work of the Subregional Office were presented by Social Affairs Officer, Subregional Office for Eastern Africa, Emelang Leteane. She noted progress in the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, trade and value chain development, the blue economy and regional tourism. Ongoing support for strategy development in respect of the African Continental Free Trade Area was being provided to the Comoros, South Sudan and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. Following the receipt of ECA support, Kenya and Rwanda had launched their respective national strategies for the Area and started implementing them. Rwanda had been supported through a market access study as part of the implementation of its national strategy. The Subregional Office was also assisting Somalia and South Sudan with strategies for accession to the World Trade Organization. In addition, Somalia had benefited from support for the development of a legal and policy framework for public-private partnerships.

45. The Subregional Office for Eastern Africa had developed knowledge products in its areas of focus and on the impacts of COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine. It had engaged with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, member States, the private sector and other stakeholders on the African Continental Free Trade Area and guided policy debates on several socioeconomic issues. Support had been provided to Seychelles and the United Republic of Tanzania to enhance their capacity to harness the blue economy, and a joint study with the Regional Maritime Security Programme and the Indian Ocean Commission to explore the economic and social costs of maritime insecurity had been published in June 2022. The Subregional Office had supported the East African Community in the development of its tourism marketing strategy for the period 2021–2025, which had been published in 2022, and had made progress on tourism satellite accounts. The account in Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania, had been completed in May 2022. Work on the publication entitled *Boosting Regional Tourism in Eastern Africa: Exploring the Potential of Urban Tourism* had already begun.

46. The discussions that followed the presentations were focused on the African Continental Free Trade Area. Experts stressed the importance of building the capacity of the private sector to make the most of the Area and suggested a need for a private sector engagement strategy.

47. The Committees took note of the presentations by the Subregional Offices for Central and Eastern Africa on their 2022 work programmes, and it was noted that the Subregional Offices would continue to strengthen analysis on and provide support for the implementation of the Agreement. Participants welcomed ongoing efforts to deepen analysis and to provide continued technical support.

B. Recommendations

48. In the light of the discussion, the Committees recommended that member States should promote renewable energy and invest in the blue economy.

XIV. Session 10: Theme, dates and venue of the next session of the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts for Central and East Africa [agenda item 12]

49. The theme of the next session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for Central Africa, “Improving standards and norms to make Central Africa a high-quality area of origin and an investment destination of choice to accelerate industrialization and economic diversification”, was unanimously adopted. The Subregional Office for Eastern Africa will also discuss quality issues on trade during subsequent sessions of the Intergovernmental Committee on East Africa.

50. It was announced that the Subregional Offices would, in due course, conduct consultations on the venue and dates of the next session.

XV. Session 11: Other matters [agenda item 13]

51. Participants noted the relevance of the themes discussed during the joint session but expressed dissatisfaction with the number of topics that had been addressed and the limited time allotted for discussions. They would have liked to have had an additional day for field visits related to the sub-themes of the session: tourism and special economic zones. An evaluation questionnaire for the meeting was distributed to participants with a view to improving the quality of future meetings.

XVI. Session 12: Review and adoption of the statement of recommendations of the joint session of the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts of Central and East Africa [agenda item 14]

52. Based on the discussions and deliberations that followed the introduction of the working documents of the Intergovernmental Committees and the content of reflection panels and round tables, the Intergovernmental Committees adopted the recommendations, which were presented by Ms. Leteane:

53. The secretariat noted the requests and recommendations of member States and advised them to direct the requests through formal channels.

XVII. Closing [agenda item 15]

54. Following interventions by the Director of the Subregional Office for Eastern Africa and the Acting Director of the Subregional Office for Central Africa, the Principal Secretary, Ministry of Finance, National Planning and Trade of Seychelles and Chairperson of the joint session of the Intergovernmental Committees for Central and East Africa, Elizabeth Charles, delivered the closing address on behalf of Mr. Hassan.