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Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe (hybrid), 28 February–1 March 2024

Item 6 of the provisional agenda*

Statutory issues

Report of the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender on its fifth 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 Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender on its fifth session.

* E/ECA/COE/42/1.



Report of the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender on its fifth session

I. Introduction

1. The Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender is a statutory body of experts and policymakers entrusted with providing guidance and advice to the Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division by reviewing the activities implemented during the biennium 2022–2023 and the strategic vision and direction for the biennium 2024–2025.

2. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), through its Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division, convened the fifth session of the Committee, held in Addis Ababa on 2 and 3 November 2023 under the theme “Building new social contracts in Africa: choices to fulfil development aspirations”. The thematic focus speaks to the African Union theme for 2024¹ and the priorities of the United Nations in helping its Member States to rethink their social contracts to ensure equal opportunity for all, design a new relationship between States and their peoples and enable policies that deliver progress on development.

II. Opening of the session [agenda item 1]

A. Attendance

3. The session was attended by representatives of the following 36 members of ECA: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

4. The African Union Commission was also represented.

5. The following entities of the United Nations system were represented: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Industrial Development Organization and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

6. In total, 95 participants attended the session.

B. Opening statements

7. Opening the session, the Director of Women’s Affairs at the Ministry of Families, Women, Children and Older People of Tunisia and outgoing Chair of the Bureau of the Committee, Mohamed Dhaoui, welcomed all participants and thanked the Bureau for the work that had been done over the previous biennium.

¹ The theme of the African Union for 2024 is “Educate an African fit for the twenty-first century: building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa”.

8. The Deputy Executive Secretary (Programme) and Chief Economist of ECA, Hanan Morsy, speaking on behalf of the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, Claver Gatete, emphasized the significance of enhancing the effectiveness and impact of ECA in the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union. She stressed the importance of recognizing the current times and noted that the future of Africa would be greatly influenced by four major trends and regional dynamics that were shaping the global economy: climate change, demographic shifts, rapid urbanization and digital transformation.

9. Ms. Morsy remarked that, given the circumstances, the theme of the fifth session was highly relevant and timely, allowing participants to reconsider how policies could be made more effective. Governments should increase their commitment to forging new social contracts to ensure equal rights and opportunity for all while integrating employment, sustainable development and social protection, as advocated by the Secretary-General, António Guterres, who had proposed a new social contract for a new era.

10. The Chair-elect of the incoming Bureau and Director of the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection of Ghana, Florence Ayisi, thanked the outgoing Bureau and its Chair. She underscored the importance of the Committee in pushing forward solutions to translate the 2030 Agenda into tangible activities and outcomes, despite the numerous challenges brought about by the convergence of various crises. In this vein, she remarked that the theme of the fifth session was highly appropriate, given the numerous challenges affecting the people living in the region.

III. Election of the Bureau [agenda item 2]

11. Consultations were held to ensure that each subregion was represented on the incoming Bureau of the Committee. The following countries were unanimously elected to the Bureau:

Chair:	Ghana
First Vice-Chair:	Djibouti
Second Vice-Chair:	Cameroon
First Rapporteur:	South Africa
Second Rapporteur:	Tunisia

IV. Consideration and adoption of the agenda and programme of work [agenda item 3]

12. The Committee unanimously adopted the following agenda, which was based on the preliminary agenda that had been circulated in document E/ECA/CSPPG/5/1:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of the Bureau.
3. Consideration and adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
4. Reports to the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender – reporting and discussion:

- (a) Subprogramme 9: poverty, inequality and social policy;
 - (b) Subprogramme 6: gender equality and women's empowerment.
5. Parallel sessions:
- (a) Digital technical and vocational education and training: enhancing the skills of women and girls across Africa;
 - (b) Reducing poverty through skills development;
 - (c) Reviewing the *Africa Voluntary Local Review Guidelines*² as a tool to foster the adaptation of the Sustainable Development Goals to the local level.
6. General discussion under the theme of the fifth session "Building new social contracts: choices to fulfil development aspirations":
- (a) Presentation of the issues paper;
 - (b) Breakout sessions;
 - (c) Reporting back on the breakout sessions and discussion on the way forward.
7. Consideration and adoption of the conclusions and recommendations of the fifth session.
8. Closing of the session.

V. Reports to the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender: reporting and discussion [agenda item 4]

13. In her presentation on the work of the Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division, the representative of the secretariat recalled the mandate of ECA, which was to promote the economic and social development of its 54 members, foster social development and facilitate international cooperation. She added that, to fulfil the mandate, ECA had organized its core functions into three areas: its convening, think tank and operational functions.

14. The representative said that the Division focused on the promotion of inclusive and sustainable social and economic development in African countries and was organized into two subprogrammes. Subprogramme 6 was focused on achievements on gender equality and women's empowerment across Africa; subprogramme 9 was focused on poverty eradication, reduction of inequality and the urbanization process in Africa. In 2024 and 2025, the Division would continue to help members of ECA to reduce inequality, eradicate poverty and integrate gender into the economy and digital transformation through the generation of analytical and policy-relevant knowledge products. It would also provide dedicated regional intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder platforms that would result in agreed standards and action plans for development policy frameworks. The work on urbanization would focus on the social and

² United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa; United Cities and Local Governments of Africa and United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). *Africa Voluntary Local Review Guidelines* (2022).

economic costs and environmental effects of urbanization and would help members of ECA to carry out their voluntary local reviews.

A. Subprogramme 9: poverty, inequality and social policy

1. Presentation

15. A representative of the secretariat presented the report on subprogramme 9. She reviewed the research, capacity-building and technical assistance to ECA members carried out during the 2022–2023 biennium in areas that included poverty and inequality, employment, social protection, population, migration and urbanization. Through its work under the subprogramme, ECA had highlighted the status of poverty and inequality in Africa in the context of the recent crises, outlining the compounding factors, and had also highlighted opportunities for African countries to pursue a people-centred recovery. The regional review of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002 had shown that, without robust social protection systems in place, it was a significant challenge for most countries to respond to the social and economic effects that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic was having on older people. She highlighted the work that ECA had done to improve migration data architecture through the use of administrative data sources. Noting that the estimation of the gross domestic product of six cities had allowed ECA to identify key findings, lessons and challenges and formulate policy recommendations, she said that measuring the gross domestic product of cities would enable those cities to improve their social, economic and infrastructural planning. She outlined key areas of work planned for 2024–2025 and the partnerships entered into under the subprogrammes for the delivery on the mandates of the respective subprogrammes.

2. Discussion

16. In the ensuing discussion, the Committee urged ECA to scale up its technical assistance to support its members in formulating and implementing policies to reduce poverty and inequality and promote full and productive employment, decent work and gender equality in the context of rapid urbanization. In addition, it encouraged ECA to help to identify and share good practices that its members could adopt or adapt. It also encouraged members to take full advantage of the range of knowledge products, technical materials and technical support offered by ECA. Furthermore, it emphasized the need for ECA to forge stronger partnerships with African and multilateral institutions, experts and universities.

3. Recommendations

17. In the light of the discussion, the Committee made the following recommendations:

- (a) Members of ECA should:
 - (i) Strengthen their efforts to reduce poverty and inequality and promote full and productive employment, decent work and gender equality to meet Sustainable Development Goals 1, 5, 8 10 and 11 by 2030 and goals 1, 3, and 17 of Agenda 2063 by leveraging the knowledge products and tools of ECA;
 - (ii) Strengthen their commitment to, and enhance the implementation of, policies and targeted interventions aimed

at fostering sustainable development through poverty reduction and improving social protection, in particular to meet the needs of those that are at the greatest risk of being left behind, while placing inclusion and equality in African cities at the core of the efforts undertaken in that regard.

(b) ECA should:

(i) Provide its members with policy and advisory support and capacity-building assistance, through the development of tools and by convening policy dialogues and sharing best practices on the adaptation of global and regional goals to local conditions and the formulation of national strategies to alleviate and eradicate poverty and reduce inequality, with a focus on such areas as productivity, social protection, population, informal labour, migration and ageing, in the context of the rapid urbanization in Africa;

(ii) Continue to support its members in implementing the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration by engaging with specialized agencies of the United Nations, the private sector and all other stakeholders to leverage emerging continental opportunities and technological solutions to improve the implementation of relevant policies with a view to increasing resilience;

(iii) Provide technical support to its members to assist them in building their capacity to develop indicators and gather baseline data to measure poverty, and provide, through the African Centre for Statistics, technical and capacity-building assistance to national statistical offices in the use of national data sources to measure and analyse significant and emerging issues related to gender, poverty, inequality, vulnerability and migration;

(iv) Increase the number of partnerships with African institutions, experts and universities to develop and implement policy reforms and strategies to create and expand fiscal space, improve municipal financial performance and increase resilience;

(v) Increase the number of partnerships with multilateral institutions to leverage their expertise in and support for the strengthening of social dialogue, the development of social protection floors and other issues;

(vi) Undertake research on the economic cost, social consequences and environmental impact for its members of unplanned rapid urbanization on the continent and intensify programmatic interventions in African States, in particular in those that are unable to implement proposed interventions.

B. Subprogramme 6: gender equality and women's empowerment

1. Presentation

18. The representative of the secretariat presented the work of subprogramme 6, providing an overview of the implementation of the work programme, the challenges and opportunities during the biennium 2022–2023, and the work activities planned for 2024–2025. She noted that the

work of ECA was organized around the three pillars of the regional initiative on gender equality, namely the social sector, women's social, economic, political and human rights, and women's economic empowerment. She also noted that its work was in line with global and regional commitments and normative frameworks on gender equality and women's empowerment, and that the programmes were delivered through knowledge generation and dissemination, capacity development, technical advisory services, policy dialogues and strategic partnerships. The focus on helping ECA members to integrate gender perspectives into their sectoral plans, policies and budgets and to address the gender digital divide and the monitoring of global and regional commitments would continue in 2024–2025.

2. Discussion

19. In the ensuing discussion, participants emphasized the importance of putting in place common indicators and establishing baseline information to measure, compare and periodically monitor the progress of ECA members in achieving gender equality. Participants sought clarification of the criteria that ECA used to ensure inclusiveness in determining in which countries to conduct its activities, and they called for the countries to be chosen on the basis of evidence. Participants also discussed ECA support for its members in developing their capacity to monitor their progress on gender equality, in designing country policies and programmes to address gender inequality, and in capitalizing on good practices from other countries.

3. Recommendations

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

- (a) Members of ECA should:
 - (i) Consider calculating the full cost of achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 in a comprehensive and integrated manner, accounting for all the major activities planned by various relevant ministries in that regard;
 - (ii) Enhance the collection, analysis and dissemination of comprehensive data, disaggregated by sex, age, disability, ethnicity, location and socioeconomic status, to facilitate an accurate assessment of the realization of gender equality in all areas covered by the international and regional instruments to which they are a party;
 - (iii) Use the technical assistance offered by ECA, which is readily available upon request, through the Office of the Executive Secretary.
- (b) ECA should:
 - (i) Continue to support its members in using the African Gender and Development Index to assess progress in achieving commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;
 - (ii) Support the dissemination of research and good practices relating to gender equality and women's empowerment through capacity development, technical assistance and mainstreaming gender perspectives in various sectors for their possible adaptation and adoption by other members;

(iii) Provide further clarity and share information on the means through which its members can seek the technical support that it offers;

(iv) Track national programmes more consistently and identify examples of and disseminate information on good practices, with a view to reducing the resources required by and increasing the efficiency of national programmes.

VI. Parallel sessions [agenda item 5]

A. Parallel session 1 – Digital technical and vocational education and training: enhancing the skills of women and girls across Africa

1. Presentation

21. In the first parallel session, a representative of the secretariat presented the work of subprogramme 6 on enhancing the skills of women and girls. She presented a regional brief on gender and digitization and the five-pillar capacity development programme of ECA to enhance the digital skills of women and girls. Following the presentation, participants discussed the outcome statement endorsed by experts in gender equality and women's empowerment at the hybrid meeting on "Digital technical and vocational education and training: enhancing the skills of women and girls across Africa" held on 31 October and 1 November 2023, at which it was recommended that the outcome document be presented to the Committee at its fifth session.

2. Recommendations

22. In the light of the discussion, the Committee made the following recommendations:

(a) Members and partners of ECA should:

(i) Provide education, training and extracurricular opportunities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics to students at an early age, including through technical and vocational education and training on subjects relating to the digital sector;

(ii) Develop programmes and enhance current efforts to change gender stereotypes and encourage girls and young women to choose such fields of study and professions as science, technology, computer studies and engineering, including through the use of quotas and affirmative action in recruitment and hiring practices, and the distribution of bursaries, grants, scholarships and stipends to reduce the financial barriers to education and training;

(iii) Strengthen the collection and management of data and statistics on the use of digital technology and participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education, disaggregated by sex, age, geographical location, socioeconomic status and other relevant factors, to facilitate the analysis of gender gaps, with a view to supporting evidence-based policy action to address those gaps;

(iv) Form national coordination mechanisms comprising core ministries, departments and agencies with a view to institutionalizing efforts to bolster the digital skills of women

and girls across Africa by leveraging existing resources, including as part of the ECA programme on the topic.

- (b) ECA should:
- (i) Develop a deeper understanding of the role of technical and vocational education and training on subjects relating to the digital sector in attaining gender equality and women's empowerment and in accelerating digital and economic transformation in Africa;
 - (ii) Support its members in developing policies and strategies aimed at promoting science, technology, engineering and mathematics education, training and job opportunities for girls and women, with a focus on digital literacy and the use of technology, including through exchange programmes, case studies, guidelines and tools;
 - (iii) Support its members in lowering the cultural, financial, social and institutional barriers that women and girls face to their participation in the digital sector and to gaining access to digital devices and to education and training in science, technology, engineering and mathematics;
 - (iv) Promote the safe, responsible, inclusive and productive use of digital tools, products and services by girls and young women, emphasizing online learning opportunities by expanding the roll-out of the ECA programme on bolstering the digital skills of women and girls across Africa to additional countries in the region.

B. Parallel session 2 – Reducing poverty through skills development

1. Presentation

23. A representative of the secretariat delivered a presentation in which she highlighted the considerable progress that Africa had made in the previous two decades to reduce poverty and the role of skills development in poverty alleviation. Although it had long been recognized that skills training was important to reduce poverty, evidence showed that there had been a sustained crisis in the development of education and skills in Africa. Providing young people with employable skills would have a catalytic effect on poverty reduction.

2. Recommendations

24. Following a discussion of the key issues raised in the presentation, the Committee made the following recommendations:

- (a) Members of ECA should:
- (i) Strengthen the involvement of the private sector in schemes to develop skills in order to minimize skills mismatches and ensure that the skills developed are aligned with sectoral demand;
 - (ii) Allocate additional organizational, human, technical and financial resources for the development of skills;
 - (iii) Reform the education sector in order to provide employees with the skills that they need to be competitive at

the national, regional and international levels, with a view to reducing unemployment and poverty.

- (b) ECA should:
 - (i) Review its strategies to support its members in providing young people with a solid educational foundation and employable skills, which can help to raise productivity, enhance resilience to shocks and prevent a relapse into poverty;
 - (ii) Support its members in developing and implementing legal frameworks that recognize prior learning and skills acquired through informal means;
 - (iii) Establish a continental resource mobilization strategy to raise funds to finance the skills development programmes of its members.

C. Parallel session 3 – Reviewing the *Africa Voluntary Local Review Guidelines* as a tool to foster the adaptation of the Sustainable Development Goals to the local level

1. Presentation

25. In this session, the Committee was informed of the work that the Division had carried out in accordance with the *Africa Voluntary Local Review Guidelines* to support local authorities in preparing reviews. The *Guidelines* had been applied in helping five cities and localities in Africa to conduct voluntary local reviews: Accra, Harare, Yaoundé, Ngora District (Uganda) and Victoria Falls (Zimbabwe).

2. Recommendations

26. In the light of the discussion following the presentation, the Committee made the following recommendations:

- (a) Members of ECA should:
 - (i) Expand the adoption of voluntary local reviews in Africa with a view to accelerating progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;
 - (ii) Strengthen the collection and management of data and statistics to make the conduct of voluntary local reviews more efficient and effective;
 - (iii) Adopt a participatory approach to conducting voluntary local reviews by involving local authorities, universities, civil society organizations, government officials at all levels and other stakeholders;
 - (iv) Allocate adequate organizational, human, technical and financial resources to voluntary local reviews.
- (b) ECA should:
 - (i) Increase the technical capacity of stakeholders representing its members in the conduct of voluntary local reviews;
 - (ii) Foster peer learning among its members through knowledge exchange and the sharing of best practices on voluntary local reviews;

- (iii) Update the tools used to improve the conduct of voluntary local reviews through evidence-based practice;
- (iv) Strengthen the capacity of its members to collect data on urbanization needs at the local level.

VII. Discussion under the theme of the fifth session: “Building new social contracts in Africa: choices to fulfil development aspirations” [agenda item 6]

A. Presentation of the issues paper

27. The Head of the Education Division of the African Union Commission, Sophia Ndemutila Ashipala, reading the keynote address on behalf of Mohamed Belhocine, said that Africa was at a critical juncture in its history. With a young population and an abundance of natural resources, African had excellent potential for growth and prosperity, but was also grappling with numerous challenges, including poverty, inequality and social disparities. The theme of the day’s session was therefore highly relevant. A new social contract anchored in education and skills development was the key to unlocking the potential of Africa and fulfilling the aspirations of its people.

28. Following the keynote address, a representative of the secretariat presented the issues paper under the theme of the fifth session. In her presentation, she highlighted that affordable, accessible and applicable education was the foundation for building new social contracts and a catalyst in advancing numerous Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, to ensure that the social contract was robust, a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach was needed that would foster a virtuous cycle of trust between the Government and the people while contributing to policies that would provide equal opportunity, promote intergenerational mobility and reduce poverty.

29. The issues paper contained the following recommendations, which were endorsed by the Committee:

- (a) Members of ECA should:
 - (i) Build new social contracts among the Government, people, civil society and the private sector that integrate employment, sustainable development and social protection on the basis of equality and non-discrimination, putting people at the centre of policies and ensuring that their needs are met;
 - (ii) Prepare to manage successfully the four global megatrends of demographic transition, urbanization, climate change and digitalization;
 - (iii) Improve policy coherence and adopt systems thinking to ensure the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.
- (b) ECA should:
 - (i) Disseminate knowledge among its members on techniques for building a new social contract in Africa through innovative solutions that reduce poverty and inequality, promote gender equality and increase inclusion;

- (ii) Assist its members in building the technical capacity to develop new social contracts, with a focus on new entry points and the improved integration of social and urban policies, including through the increased use of behavioural science.

B. Breakout sessions

30. Following the presentation of the issues paper, the Committee discussed and considered strategies for building new social contracts in three breakout sessions. The sessions focused on gender equality and women's empowerment; poverty and social policy; and urbanization and development. The sessions also focused on broader social, gender and development policies, strategies and activities for African countries to achieve their education-related development aspirations.

C. Reporting back on the breakout sessions and discussion on the way forward

31. In the light of the discussion in the breakout sessions, the Committee made the following recommendations:

1. Gender equality and women's empowerment

(a) Members and partners of ECA should:

- (i) Strengthen the collection and management of data and statistics disaggregated by sex, age, geographical location, socioeconomic status and other factors relating to participation in and progression through the education system and the quality of education;
- (ii) Put in place the adequate infrastructure, such as boarding schools, to ensure that girls from rural areas have safe living arrangements to facilitate their education;
- (iii) Implement gender-responsive budgeting to address gender issues holistically, and monitoring and auditing of such budgeting to ensure that it addresses gender gaps in areas of strategic priority;
- (iv) Implement programmes to raise awareness among parents and community leaders of the importance of educating girls, with a view to changing the cultural biases and social norms that impede the educational achievement of girls;
- (v) Adopt new measures and strengthen current measures to prevent gender-based abuse and sexual violence at school and to ensure that perpetrators are punished appropriately.

(b) ECA should:

- (i) Share good practices with its members on financing programmes that are aimed at ensuring that young women and girls enrol in education and stay in school;
- (ii) Support its members in implementing gender-responsive budgeting;
- (iii) Establish a regional gender-equality observatory to monitor gender issues.

2. Poverty and social policy

- (a) Members of ECA should:
 - (i) Rethink the social contract with a view to creating a symbiotic relationship among governments and people in Africa and fostering more sustainable and inclusive development;
 - (ii) Explore opportunities and strengthen efforts to mobilize domestic resources in order to increase public expenditure on education and expand its coverage and affordability, and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the education system, in particular for vulnerable groups;
 - (iii) Strengthen investment in the monitoring and evaluation of education and social protection programmes in order to identify better the needs of beneficiaries and the gaps and inefficiencies in the provision of services to them.
- (b) ECA should:
 - (i) Assist its members in identifying bottlenecks in their social contracts in order to reinforce social cohesion around national and regional development agendas and accelerate progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and implementing Agenda 2063;
 - (ii) Support its members in developing a more coordinated approach to tracking progress, using limited resources efficiently and effectively, including through the integration of robust digital tools into social protection programmes in order to enhance transparency in programme delivery;
 - (iii) Assist its members in establishing national and regional observatories to strengthen the collection of data on employment and training, in developing national strategies on skills recognition to support the accreditation of skills, and in evaluating the efficiency of policies, projects and programmes;
 - (iv) Support its members in improving their migration data management systems and in designing gender-sensitive programmes to reintegrate and reduce poverty among women migrants who have returned to their countries of origin;
 - (v) Convene social dialogues on human development, including high-level discussions on the importance of social issues, and promote South-South dialogue to support peer learning among its members.

3. Urbanization and development

- (a) Members of ECA should:
 - (i) Promote sustainable urbanization, with a focus on equal access to core urban services;
 - (ii) Explore new opportunities by rethinking the nexus between rapid urbanization and decent job creation, while placing equality and inclusion at the centre of urban policies.
- (b) ECA should:
 - (i) Assist its members in building the capacity to formulate and implement policies that address inequality

within African cities by increasing access to urban services, and support its members in building tangible social contracts through citizen participation in urban settings;

(ii) Raise awareness of the interrelated nature of public finance and social policy with a view to formulating inclusive policies that effectively address the challenges related to informal economic activity;

(iii) Work with strategic partners, such as the African Union Commission, to facilitate the creation of an African observatory focused on data collection, knowledge-sharing and capacity-building in relation to urbanization.

VIII. Consideration and adoption of the conclusions and recommendations of the fifth session [agenda item 7]

32. The Committee adopted its conclusions and recommendations, as set out under the respective agenda items above, to guide the Division in its work to examine the linkages among growth, poverty and inequality in the context of social policy, urbanization, gender equality and women's empowerment.

IX. Closing of the session [agenda item 8]

33. In her closing remarks, the officer-in-charge of the Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division, Sweta Saxena, commended the Committee for the rich, thought-provoking and productive discussion on education, skill building and other important issues. She underscored that the recommendations and ground-breaking suggestions adopted by the Committee would make the work of ECA over the following two years more effective and ensure that ECA contributed positively to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda by allowing it to better respond to the needs of its members. She said that ECA would urgently review and reflect on the recommendations to determine how best it could respond to them. In addition, the recommendations would be presented to the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development for endorsement at its fifty-sixth session, to be held in March 2024. She emphasized that the theme of education was also important for other stakeholders, noting that it would be the theme of the thirty-seventh ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, to be held in 2024. In this regard, she called upon the Committee to continue its engagement in this important, ongoing dialogue to better address the development challenges faced by Africa.

34. In her closing remarks, the Chair expressed her sincere appreciation to the Bureau members and representatives who had contributed to the success of the meeting. The high level of engagement by members of the Committee over the two days had contributed to the rich and constructive discussions on matters that affected social policy, poverty and gender issues in African countries. Furthermore, the Committee had reflected on the ongoing development challenges on the continent and how best to tackle them, taking into consideration how it could ensure that the benefits of development were more equitably distributed to all people. In addition, the focus of the deliberations had been on what African Governments and other stakeholders needed to do to deliver social contracts that would not only rebuild trust and social cohesion, but also accelerate action that would promote inclusive and resilient development pathways that would leave no

one behind. On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked ECA for organizing the event and expressed her hope that ECA would continue to engage with its members to implement the recommendations agreed during the fifth session. She underscored that strategic leadership by ECA was essential for the development of Africa.

35. The Chair of the Bureau declared the fifth session of the Committee closed at 7.30 p.m. on Friday, 3 November 2023.
