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Statutory issues

Report on United Nations system support for the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa's Development programme

I. Introduction

1. In the present report, a summary is provided of the support given by entities of the United Nations system working in Africa to the African Union and the African Union Development Agency during the period April 2023–March 2024. It covers support for the implementation of priorities at the regional and subregional levels, including those set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union. The report comprises six sections. Following the introduction in section I, section II is focused on high-level strategic engagement between the African Union and the United Nations, and the main achievements in strengthening the partnership between the two organizations. Section III contains an overview of the support provided for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, in the context of the “two agendas, one framework” approach, including the support for the African Union Development Agency. In section IV, an overview is provided of the assistance delivered through the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa, in the context of the African Union–United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda. Section V sets out the major activities conducted under programme 9 of the proposed programme budget for 2023 (A/77/6 (Sect. 11)) of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), together with the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the Department of Global Communications, in working together to deliver for Africa. Section VI contains a conclusion.

II. High-level strategic engagement between the United Nations and the African Union and main outcomes

2. In January 2015, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union adopted Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want as a strategic framework for Africa's inclusive growth and sustainable development that included goals to be realized by 2063. Nine months later, in September 2015, the General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a global framework for achieving sustainable development by ending poverty, protecting the planet and

* E/ECA/COE/42/1.



ensuring that, by 2030, all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The formulation of both agendas was based on extensive stakeholder consultations that helped to identify the priorities for realizing the structural transformation of Africa. As a result, the two frameworks are naturally aligned with each other, and both the African Union and the United Nations have been keen to work together to implement them in a harmonized and integrated manner.

3. Bearing out that approach, three major cooperation frameworks have been signed by the Chairperson of the African Union and the Secretary-General of the United Nations: the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, signed in 2017; the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, signed in 2018; and the African Union-United Nations Framework on Human Rights, signed on 28 November 2023. The frameworks are designed to support a harmonized and collective approach to the promotion of peace, security, human rights and socioeconomic development in Africa that is geared towards the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

4. In 2023, the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union and the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations met in person on 1 and 2 May and online on 15 November to engage in a high-level strategic dialogue on strengthening the partnership underlined by the principle of “two agendas, one framework”. During the meetings, the participants considered the ways to recalibrate the architecture of the partnership, with a view to making it more results-oriented and impactful, reaffirming the strong commitment of the heads of entities of the United Nations and the Commissioners of the African Union to collaboration, identifying priorities and areas of support, establishing a clear division of labour between the two organizations and discussing the potential for jointly funding projects and activities.

5. The main outcomes of those meetings include the introduction of a new structure, known as “college to college”, in which the heads of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and Commissioners of the African Union are brought together to discuss policy and strategic issues relating to the partnership; a matrix of principal areas of collaboration; and the renewed commitment by both organizations to ensuring the scaled-up implementation of agreed priorities. At the apex of the new architecture of the partnership is the United Nations-African Union annual conference (a meeting of the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the two organizations), which is underpinned at the strategic and policy level by the meeting of the Deputy Secretary-General and the Deputy Chairperson and the college-to-college structure, and, at the technical level, by the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa and its major drivers, the opportunity and issue-based coalitions.

6. In 2023, the United Nations-African Union annual conference was held on 28 November in New York under the leadership of the Chairperson of the African Union and the Secretary-General and with the attendance of Commissioners of the African Union and senior officials of the United Nations. During the meeting, the participants emphasized the primacy of African agency led by the African Union; reiterated the pledge for continued support from the United Nations for peacekeeping efforts in Africa led by the African Union; condemned the growing trend of unconstitutional changes of Government on the continent, highlighting the need to improve governance to combat the phenomenon; underlined the support from the United Nations for the African Union joining the Group of 20; and called for joint action to reform the global financial architecture, which was not fit for purpose.

III. Support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, including for the African Union Development Agency and the African Peer Review Mechanism

7. In 2023, ECA supported the evaluation of the first 10-year implementation plan (2014–2023) of Agenda 2063 and the formulation of the second 10-year implementation plan (2024–2033). ECA is a core member of a technical working group on Agenda 2063, the other members of which are the African Union Commission, the African Union Development Agency, the African Capacity-Building Foundation, the African Peer Review Mechanism, the African Development Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). As a strategic partner of the African Union, ECA has participated in all aspects of Agenda 2063, from its inception and conceptualization, to the formulation of the second 10-year implementation plan. Specifically, in relation to the evaluation of the first 10-year implementation plan, ECA participated in conducting desk reviews, including of 40 national consultation reports, served in various teams writing reports and preparing documentation, assisted with research, provided technical input and oversight, drafted lessons learned in thematic areas and participated in the overall framing and finalization of the evaluation.

8. With regard to the formulation of the second 10-year implementation plan, ECA provided significant support in framing the indicators, reflecting on the lessons learned from the first 10-year implementation plan and providing recommendations to improve the implementation of the second plan. ECA helped to devise data collection methodologies and identify sources of data relating to the indicators; contributed to the discussion on the theory of change, the costing of the plan and the development of the indicator handbook; and reviewed national progress reports. Draft versions of the report on the evaluation of the first 10-year implementation plan and the second 10-year implementation plan were presented at the annual retreat of the Executive Council of the African Union Commission, held from 1 to 3 October 2023 in Kigali. The Executive Council approved the two reports provisionally and requested some minor changes and updates. ECA, as a member of the technical working group, supported the finalization of both reports, which are expected to be endorsed during the thirty-seventh ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, in February 2024.

9. As part of the “two agendas, one framework” approach, ECA continues to support members of the African Union in integrating the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 into their national development plans using the integrated planning and reporting toolkit. In 2023, six countries received such support.¹

10. In celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the creation of the Organization of African Unity (the predecessor to the African Union), and in collaboration with the African Union Commission, ECA organized a symposium entitled “Towards an ‘Integrated Africa’: Achieving SDGs and Agenda 2063 for the Continent that We Want”, which was held in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, from 4 to 6 December 2023. Fifteen “think pieces” were presented at the meeting, which served as the basis for a robust dialogue and discussion with a view to generating policy options and recommendations to support Africa’s development and transformation. The subjects of the “think pieces” included the African Continental Free Trade Area, the prospects for a common African currency, the use of resources of the blue economy for economic transformation, women’s empowerment, the role of young people in emergency response and policy reform, and the improvement of governance in Africa. Participants agreed to establish a platform for sharing technical knowledge in order to accelerate the joint implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

¹ Central African Republic, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Lesotho and Uganda.

11. ECA and the African Union Development Agency signed a memorandum of understanding on 27 September 2021, the third in a series of such memorandums. The memorandum is in place for a three-year period. Although some progress was made during the initial phase of the implementation of the memorandum, the change of leadership in both institutions affected its implementation. The new leadership of ECA and the Development Agency met on 12 January 2024 in Addis Ababa and recommitted their organizations to working closely together in support of the African development agenda. Areas of cooperation identified during the meeting included data and statistics, industrialization and economic diversification. A meeting at the technical level is expected to follow the leadership meeting, with a view to elaborating upon those areas of cooperation.

12. Despite the slow pace with which the memorandum has been implemented, ECA continues to collaborate with the Development Agency in several areas. ECA is part of the implementation architecture of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, the framework for cross-border infrastructure development on the continent led by the Development Agency. Other major implementing partners are the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank. The role of ECA is to provide technical capacity and advise in implementing projects of the second priority action plan of the Programme, for the period 2020–2030. ECA served as the secretariat of the task force that selected the projects and continues to monitor the progress of their implementation. In addition, ECA led the development of a partnership strategy for the Programme, which provides guidance to African countries on handling project partnerships.

13. ECA, the African Union Commission and the Development Agency were tasked by the African Union Commission Specialized Technical Committee on Transport, Infrastructure, Intercontinental and Interregional Infrastructure, Energy and Tourism to develop a continental energy security policy framework to provide members of the African Union and regional institutions with policy guidance in their pursuit of national and regional energy security strategies, with a view to mitigating energy insecurity and building resilience on the continent.

14. ECA continues to support the African Peer Review Mechanism in developing an African credit rating system. The two organizations jointly publish the African Sovereign Credit Rating Review, in which recommendations for boosting the long-term foreign currency sovereign credit ratings of African countries are set out. In addition, ECA and the secretariat of the Mechanism have established a network of national credit rating regulators, through which technical experts can share information and learn from one another to prevent their countries from being awarded negative credit ratings.

IV. Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa and the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda

15. The Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa and its opportunity and issue-based coalitions continue to be the technical arm at the regional level in the joint implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. The coalitions work closely with the African Union and its agencies in several areas and provide support and carry out interventions at the country level through resident coordinators and United Nations country teams. The engine room of the Platform is the joint secretariat, comprising ECA, the Development Coordination Office and UNDP. In addition, ECA is the Co-Vice-Chair of the Platform and the co-convenor of two coalitions and two task forces of the Platform. ECA, therefore, plays a major role in the activities of the Platform.

16. Three major meetings were organized by the Platform in the period under review to support the acceleration of the implementation of the two agendas: the

annual meeting of the Platform, the meeting of regional directors and resident coordinators and the annual retreat of the Platform. The annual meeting took place on the margins of the ninth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, which was held in Niamey from 28 February to 2 March 2023, and provided an opportunity for participants to take stock of the progress that the Platform had helped to achieve, including in the context of the partnership and joint delivery efforts of the African Union and the United Nations. In addition, priority areas for 2023 were identified at the meeting and included: support for 15 United Nations country teams in designing United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks through opportunity and issue-based coalitions and peer support groups; data and statistics; the African Continental Free Trade Area, which was the subject of the African Union theme for 2023; follow-up to major United Nations meetings;² the peace, security and development nexus; and the economic recovery in Africa. At the meeting, emphasis was placed on the need to move from processes to results for the accelerated implementation of the two agendas. Considerable progress was made in those priority areas in 2023 through the opportunity and issue-based coalitions working in collaboration with the African Union.

17. In the meeting of regional directors and resident coordinators, which was also held on the margins of the ninth session of the Regional Forum, the participants expressed the need for engagement throughout the year. The purpose of the annual meeting is to ensure that information about regional and subregional priorities is shared at the country level, and that engagement and support at the regional and national levels are enhanced.

18. The annual retreat of the Platform was held in September 2023 in Nairobi under the theme “Galvanizing the Africa RCP Regional Assets in rescuing the SDGs and the implementation of Agenda 2063”. The meeting provided an opportunity for participants: to reflect on ways to improve the work of the Platform and to deepen collaboration with the African Union; to discuss the decisions made at the strategic dialogue meeting between the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union, in particular in relation to the “college-to-college” structure; and to begin to consider the priorities of the Platform for 2024. It was decided at the meeting that: collaboration with the African Union must be strengthened; policy dialogues or workshops on carbon markets must be held and attract the participation of members of the African Union and resident coordinators (in order to improve their knowledge and understanding of the workings of the markets so that African countries could derive the maximum benefit from them); and a policy dialogue on governance issues must be organized, with a view to identifying the challenges being faced by States that lead to unconstitutional changes of Government.

19. Selected activities during the period under review of each of the opportunity and issue-based coalitions are highlighted in the following paragraphs.

A. Opportunity and issue-based coalition 1: strengthened integrated data and statistical systems for sustainable development and the Africa we want

20. During the reporting period, the efforts of the coalition were targeted at capacity-building, the development of digital, planning and reporting tools, and the establishment of best practices that can increase the availability of data in Africa. In response to the high demand from States and regional entities for statistics, and as part of an initiative on high-quality data systems provided through a harmonized data

² Including the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the World Climate Action Summit, the Transforming Education Summit and the United Nations Food Systems Summit.

gateway for the Sustainable Development Goals, the coalition upgraded the Africa United Nations Data for Development Platform by updating the results for most of the Goal indicators.³ In addition, the Platform has been enhanced to include aggregate statistics for the regional and subregional levels, and a dashboard for Agenda 2063 has been included to improve monitoring and reporting in relation to the efforts of the United Nations and the African Union under their “two agendas, one framework” approach to the implementation of the two agendas. The United Nations country teams have been informed of the updates and have been encouraged to use the Platform.

21. Coalition 1 promoted the modernization and use of digital tools in the processes associated with the 2020 round of population and housing censuses. A workshop was held in Cairo from 4 to 6 May 2023 for representatives of over 20 countries to enhance their capacity to use existing digital tools and share best practices in conducting digital population and housing censuses and disseminating census data, among other objectives.

22. Coalition 1 strengthened the capacity of States to produce vital statistics through capacity-development workshops, which were delivered by ECA, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Health Organization and UNICEF. Representatives of 21 States attended a workshop held in English in Accra from 30 July to 4 August 2023, and representatives of 19 States attended a workshop held in French in Lomé from 7 to 11 August 2023.⁴

23. The ninth Global Forum on Gender Statistics was held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in August 2023, under the coordination of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). Members of the coalition guided sessions and helped to showcase the work that is ongoing in Africa with regard to the disaggregation of data by gender. Participants agreed that gender mainstreaming must be strengthened in all surveys, various sources of data must be used to produce gender statistics and more partnerships were needed.

24. Coalition 1 supported many African countries in several other areas, including in the creation of a land cover atlas for the period 2017–2021 and an associated database in Lesotho; in making improvements to the national statistical system in the Congo working with the United Nations country team; and in providing continued assistance to strengthen the civil registration and vital statistics system of Rwanda through technical and financial support in the collection of data and the disaggregation of mortality data, which is linked to 15 health-related indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals.

B. Opportunity and issue-based coalition 2: ensuring effective and efficient macroeconomic management and accelerated inclusive economic transformation and diversification

25. In 2023, under the leadership of ECA, the United Nations continued its partnership with the African Union Commission and its agencies, and other pan-African institutions in various areas, including in relation to illicit financial flows, the United Nations tax convention and public financial management.

26. ECA partnered with the African Union Commission to deepen the work being done to apply statistical methodologies in measuring illicit financial flows to African

³ For more information, see the website of the Platform: <https://ecastats.uneca.org/unsdgsafrica/>.

⁴ Representatives of the following States attended the workshop in Accra: Botswana, Egypt, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Representatives of the following States attended the workshop in Lomé: Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Togo.

countries. A total of 15 countries were selected and plans are being developed for joint missions to support them.

27. In support of the development of an international tax cooperation convention and the adoption by the General Assembly of a resolution on the subject in December 2023,⁵ ECA drafted a technical paper that informed the discussion on the common African position on international tax cooperation and provided technical advisory services to its members in that regard.

28. By November 2023, 35 national strategies for the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area had been produced and validated. ECA and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) are making good progress in developing green supplements to the strategies in 19 countries.⁶ The strategies will assist countries in the inclusive implementation of trade policies with the objective of diversifying their economies, increasing production and creating jobs.

C. Opportunity and issue-based coalition 3: education, innovation, digitalization and youth

29. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Health Organization and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS supported both the process leading to the endorsement, by the ministers of education and health of 25 countries, and the implementation of a commitment to promote the education, health and empowerment of adolescents and young people. The commitment is intended to contribute to the achievement of the goals, targets and aspirations of Agenda 2063 in education, health, gender equality and youth empowerment by strengthening large-scale, multisectoral responses to early and unintended pregnancies, HIV, gender-based violence and gender disparities in education.

30. Through the Connected African Girls Initiative, ECA is helping its members to close the gender digital divide by training young women and girls in basic coding and digital literacy skills. In 2023, ECA organized coding camps in Mozambique and the Niger, in collaboration with the ministries of information and communications technology of its members, UN-Women and the International Telecommunication Union. At the camp in Mozambique, 60 girls were trained from each region of the country and Angola. In the Niger, the camp was one of the events to precede the ninth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and brought together in person 108 young African women and girls ranging from 17 to 25 years of age and almost 4,500 online participants. To date, some 35,000 girls have been trained under the Initiative in a hybrid format in eight African countries.

31. At the country level, in Namibia, the United Nations supported the development of a national strategic framework for the response to HIV and AIDS for the period 2023–2028 and a gender-based assessment of the response to HIV and tuberculosis.

⁵ A/RES/78/230.

⁶ Algeria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Gabon, Gambia, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, Togo, Tunisia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

D. Opportunity and issue-based coalition 4: fostering climate action and resilience

32. Coalition 4 secured the formal endorsement of the Sustainable Debt Coalition initiative by African ministers of finance at the fifty-fifth session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.⁷ The endorsement is critical to guarantee support for the work of the Sustainable Debt Coalition in Africa and to reform the global financial architecture, with a view to attracting green finance to the continent.

33. Coalition 4 analysed the Africa Carbon Markets Initiative and found that, by leveraging existing methodologies, almost 2,000 MtCO₂-equivalent could be generated, which could be worth more than \$40 billion each year by 2030. In addition, the coalition developed a regional registry for carbon credits for the Congo basin, providing a valuable framework for the creation of a continental carbon market. Furthermore, policy options have been produced for a carbon market in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area. The project pipeline for the Congo basin registry is designed in such a way that tangible progress on carbon markets can be shown and an objective basis can be provided to attract direct support at the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

34. Members of the coalition worked together on the issue of loss and damage in Africa. Working with other entities of the United Nations system, ECA adapted a model to quantify such losses on the continent. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the World Meteorological Organization and UNDP are preparing to upgrade DesInventar, the existing disaster information management system, and develop a new system to track more comprehensively loss and damage on more localized scales. In addition, the coalition supported African countries in their preparations for the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

35. At the subregional level, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Food Programme, UNICEF and UNDP actively participated in the analysis of an early warning information system that was conducted by a food security and nutrition working group of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has prepared a project to support subregional offices in strengthening pathways for the transformation of national food systems, with which similar efforts by other entities of the United Nations system will be aligned. In June 2023, workshops were held to highlight good practices, gaps and issues related to reporting on the targets of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and their relationship with the Sustainable Development Goals. The African Union Commission and regional economic communities participated in that initiative.

36. A joint regional programme on smart urban resilience in Africa was initiated by UNDP and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) to advance their collaboration on resilient and sustainable urban development on the continent. The partnership was expanded to include the African Union Commission as a crucial continental partner. The Commission adopted the programme as an implementation mechanism for its own urban resilience programme, which is aimed at strengthening urban risk management capacity across the continent to build innovative urban resilience systems in human settlements located in areas of risk and change. The aim is to enhance the prevention, mitigation and adaptation capacity in those areas in order to address socioeconomic and environmental challenges, along with shocks and stresses caused by conflict and the climate, and to leverage green growth opportunities, technology and innovation.

⁷ See E/ECA/CM/55/6, resolution 2023/7.

E. Opportunity and issue-based coalition 5: towards peace, security, the respect of human rights and forced displacement

37. Coalition 5 organized, under the leadership of the African Union, the second African Business and Human Rights Forum, which was held in Addis Ababa from 5 to 7 September 2023. Stakeholders from across Africa attended the Forum to take stock of progress and discuss challenges and opportunities for advancing responsible business practices and human rights in the region. The imperative of progress in those areas has been highlighted by the ongoing efforts to implement the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. At the Forum, the groundwork was laid for future peer-learning sessions and collaborative initiatives and programmes on business and human rights in Africa.

38. In May 2023, the Office of Counter-Terrorism launched the United Nations Joint Appeal for Counter-Terrorism in Africa, which is aimed at steering and incentivizing strategic joint action across the United Nations system for a more visible, transparent and effective multilateral contribution in Africa to the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. UN-Women spearheaded the development, with UNDP, the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the United Nations Office to the African Union and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, of a concept note for a project titled “Engaging women and youth in preventing and countering violent extremism”. The project is aimed at preventing violent extremism and countering terrorism in East and Southern Africa in a transformative manner through women and young people, including by establishing an enabling environment for those populations to lead and participate in efforts to prevent and respond to violent extremism, in line with resolutions 1325 (2000), 2242 (2015) and 2250 (2015) of the Security Council. The project was selected to be supported by the Joint Appeal in 2023 and 2024.

39. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Labour Organization helped to convene on 16 June 2023 a conference of ministers responsible for refugee affairs from members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the East African Community. At the conference, participants signed a ministerial declaration on durable solutions for refugees in East Africa and the Horn of Africa (the “Munyonyo Declaration”). The signatories agreed to address violence, conflict, natural disasters and the adverse effects of climate change while maintaining space for asylum and the rights of refugees, as enshrined in global and continental frameworks.

F. Opportunity and issue-based coalition 6: subregional initiatives and strategies

40. The Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa has spearheaded a comprehensive review of the regional prevention and integration strategy for the Horn of Africa. UN-Women supported the process by integrating gender, peace and security into the updated strategy, with a view to strategically positioning the United Nations to apply a two-pronged approach to advancing the women, peace and security agenda in the implementation of the strategy: first, the agenda would be a stand-alone priority under the revised pillar on regional peace, security and governance; and, second, gender and the agenda would be mainstreamed in all the pillars and priority areas of the strategy.

41. UN-Women provided policy support to regional security institutions in an effort to advance the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda in the security sector. UN-Women in East and Southern Africa successfully provided technical support for the finalization of the gender policy of the Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States. Given the vital role played by women in preventing the proliferation of small arms

and light weapons, the policy will encourage States to integrate gender into the control and management of those arms and weapons and the prevention of their use, by entrenching gender perspectives in relevant policies and operations.

G. Taskforce 2: regional knowledge management hub

42. The Africa Knowledge Management Hub, the development of which is very near completion, was launched in September 2023, during the annual retreat of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa, and is accessible online at <https://akmh.uneca.org/>.

43. The main functions and features of the Hub include: a home page and subpages on the secretariat of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa, United Nations country teams in Africa and the United Nations Development System in Africa; and a main menu of pages on the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa, an expertise repository, data and statistics, publications, resources and tools, collaboration, events and the Sustainable Development Goals.

V. Working together to deliver for Africa: highlights of major joint activities with the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa involving United Nations support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development programme

A. Delivering the Africa Dialogue Series

44. In 2023, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa organized its annual African Dialogue Series in partnership with ECA, UNCTAD, the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area, the Common Fund for Commodities, the Department of Global Communications and the African Union. In 2023, the flagship event, to which ECA continues to make a significant contribution, was held from 1 to 24 May under the theme "Market and Scale: Unlocking Industrialization through Intra-African Trade", which aligned, as usual, with the African Union theme of the year, which, in 2023, was "Acceleration of AfCFTA Implementation". Three sub-themes were featured during the Series:

(a) Sub-theme 1, "Boosting Trade Facilitation and Rethinking the Foundations of Africa's Export Diversification", was led by UNCTAD, the Common Fund for Commodities and the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area from 1 to 5 May;

(b) Sub-theme 2, "Growing Middle Class and Import Substitution: Connecting the Dots to Unlock Made in Africa", was led by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area from 6 to 12 May;

(c) Sub-theme 3, "Digital Service Trade: Great Potential but Regulatory Frameworks are Urgent", was led by ECA and the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area from 15 to 19 May and featured a webinar, on 17 May, under the same title as the sub-theme. The webinar was focused on several steps that Africa could take to improve the alignment of its digital regulatory policies and the development of resilient digital infrastructure, including physical items, such as power lines and Internet cables. Improved regulatory policies would help to connect the physical infrastructure to networks across the continent. The proposed regulatory changes would limit discriminatory practices in the management of Internet traffic, reduce restrictions on digital transactions and dismantle barriers to digital trade. Panellists in the webinar noted that to address the regulatory environment for digital

trade in Africa, negotiations on the protocol on digital trade to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area should be finalized, in order to establish a legal framework that promotes legal harmonization and collaboration among African countries.

B. Interdepartmental task force on African affairs

45. ECA has continued to work closely with the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and other partners on implementing the work programme of an interdepartmental task force on African affairs. During 2023, the task force was mainly focused on digital transformation and food systems. Meetings were held at the principal and technical levels. Within that context, the African Union Commission and the African Union Development Agency proposed an integrated approach to promoting industrialization-based agriculture, through the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme, which would, in turn, inform the Common Africa Agro-Parks Programme. The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme is aimed at creating the policy environment that is needed for substantial improvements to productivity, value addition, product development, logistics and the distribution of agricultural commodities. As part of a series of meetings of the task force on the transformation of agrifood systems in Africa, the third meeting of the task force was focused on the role of agrifood processing in building food sovereignty and resilience in Africa. Participants in the meeting explored the various actions that should be scaled up to harness the potential of agrifood systems on the continent.

VI. Conclusion

46. During the reporting period, the partnership between the African Union and the United Nations was further strengthened with renewed high-level commitment and engagement, the redesign of its architecture through the introduction of the “college-to-college” structure and greater support and collaboration in the joint implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, focusing on priority areas, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area, climate, data and statistics, industrialization and economic diversification, food security and the nexus of peace, security and development. In addition, the two organizations signed a human rights framework. The notion of “two agendas, one framework” is facilitating an integrated approach in the joint implementation of the two agendas.

47. The African Union theme of the year for 2023 was a major area of focus for the programme as part of its continued close cooperation with the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the Department of Global Communications. In 2024, the United Nations development system in the region will give priority to education, which is the African Union theme of the year.

48. The Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa is continuously evolving to be more efficient and impactful. Its opportunity and issue-based coalitions have been rationalized: their number has been reduced to six and they have been aligned with the priorities of the African Union. Preparations for the Summit of the Future, including the elaboration of a common African position, are under way, with a view to ensuring that African voices and interests are prominent in the deliberations at the Summit and in its outcome.