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Harnessing energy and transport for economic and social transformation in Africa

I. Introduction

1. The Technology, Innovation, Connectivity and Infrastructure Development Division of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) spearheads the efforts of the Commission to improve connectivity and infrastructure development in Africa, with a primary focus on energy and transport. Through this work, the Commission aims to enhance the capacity of members to formulate and implement policies and regulations that promote greater investment in energy and transport infrastructure, thereby facilitating transitions to meet the Sustainable Development Goals.
2. The present report contains an overview of the interventions of the Commission aimed at promoting and supporting initiatives that enhance energy and transport connectivity, thereby accelerating economic and social development on the continent. The reporting period spans from 2024 to 2025. However, most of this work is ongoing, and some projects commenced before 2024.
3. The overall objective of the report is to present to the Committee on Private Sector Development, Regional Integration, Trade, Infrastructure, Industry and Technology a selection of recent interventions by the Commission, through the Technology, Innovation, Connectivity and Infrastructure Development Division, aimed at assisting Africa in developing its energy and transportation sectors, attracting investment and private sector participation, using innovative digital tools to increase efficiency through the development of regulatory frameworks and building innovative technology solutions.
4. Section II of the report provides a summary of ECA support for the development of the energy sector. Section III, which is focused on transport infrastructure, contains an overview of the efforts of ECA to assist members in monitoring the condition of regional transport corridors, improving road safety and developing the electric vehicle sector. Section IV provides a summary of the work of ECA to promote public-private partnerships in support of infrastructure projects. Section V contains the conclusion and an overview of future areas of work of the Commission.

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II. Promoting the development of the energy sector

5. The transition to cleaner and renewable energy is gaining momentum. Renewable energy is expected to comprise 45 per cent of total power capacity by 2035, demonstrating the continent's commitment to sustainable development.¹ This shift is a practical one, as countries recognize and harness the continent's abundant renewable energy potential. From the vast solar resources of the Sahara to its coastal wind potential, Africa possesses natural advantages for developing appealing renewable energy sources.

6. The economics of energy production are crucial for accelerating the transition to a sustainable energy future. The decreasing levelized costs of renewable energy, in particular solar and wind, have rendered these options competitive with fossil fuels. This cost reduction has a big impact in Africa, where energy accessibility poses a critical challenge for millions of people. Renewable solutions provide flexible and scalable options for expanding energy access in rural and underserved communities, thereby minimizing the need for extensive grid infrastructure.

7. As energy is a priority sector, ECA has continued to support efforts at the country, regional and continental levels to transform the energy sector and enhance resource mobilization. For instance, ECA continues to provide technical support to the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa for both the energy and transport sectors. It is also part of the steering committee for the establishment of the African Single Electricity Market. In collaboration with the African Export-Import Bank, ECA supports efforts to increase the capacity of the African power pools. It also offers technical support for the establishment of public-private partnerships in African countries and many other initiatives. The initiatives that ECA and its partners are promoting in the energy sector are outlined below.

A. Tracking progress towards the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 7 in Africa

8. Energy access in Africa has improved significantly. According to data from the International Energy Agency, in 2010, 25 per cent of the African population had access to electricity, including only 5–10 per cent in rural areas; now, more than 55 per cent of Africans have access, and nearly 100 per cent in urban regions. By 2014, electrification was outpacing population growth, despite delays in projects during two years because of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Investment in modern renewable energy peaked at \$10 billion in 2018, then fell to \$6 billion in 2024 owing to the pandemic. The share of renewable energy in electricity production increased from 19.9 per cent in 2015 to 25.4 per cent in 2024.² Since 2000, policies in the electricity sector have improved through the unbundling of supply, enhanced efficiencies and the encouragement of private investment. Cross-border energy projects have strengthened regional electricity markets, thereby reducing costs and improving security. However, approximately 600 million people still lack access to electricity, and 900 million people lack access to clean cooking technologies.³

9. ECA has been part of the technical advisory group on Goal 7 since 2016. To this end, ECA, alongside partners both within the continent and

¹ KfW Development Bank, German Agency for International Cooperation and International Renewable Energy Agency, *The Renewable Energy Transition in Africa: Powering Access, Resilience and Prosperity*, 2021.

² International Energy Agency, *World Energy Investment 2025*, 10th ed. (2025).

³ United Nations, United Nations Sustainable Development Group, "Decoding Africa's energy journey: three key numbers", 27 January 2025; and www.moderncooking.africa/.

internationally, is tracking progress towards the achievement of the Goal in Africa and recommending short- and medium-term action to be taken by the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

B. Development of a just energy transition policy framework for the Southern African Development Community

10. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) faces difficulties in transitioning to cleaner energy sources while promoting economic growth and social equity. A framework for a just energy transition is being developed to align climate goals with developmental needs and social justice. The SADC region is vulnerable to climate change owing to droughts, floods and extreme weather events that endanger livelihoods. Many SADC countries, notably South Africa, rely heavily on fossil fuels, especially coal, for electricity. South Africa generates about 80 per cent of its electricity from coal, while Botswana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe also possess significant coal reserves. Such frameworks balance priorities by creating pathways to reduce carbon emissions while ensuring energy security.

11. In May 2024, ministers responsible for energy of SADC countries, gathering in Luanda, directed the SADC secretariat to form a technical working group composed of SADC member States and regional organizations. This group is responsible for initiating the development of the framework for a just energy transition. SADC sought technical support from ECA to develop the framework, which is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2026. It is anticipated that the Commission will assist other regional economic communities in undertaking similar exercises.

C. Securing energy supply in Africa

12. The energy sector in Africa is among the most vulnerable globally, mainly because of the lack of energy security strategies, weak institutional response mechanisms, infrastructure gaps that impede regional energy cooperation and national infrastructure bottlenecks that significantly hinder economic development. In the oil and gas subsector, despite the fact that Africa holds 13 per cent of global gas and 7 per cent of global oil reserves, the continent faces supply insecurity owing to limited refining capacity, constraints in distribution infrastructure, challenges in managing strategic reserves and other deficiencies.⁴

13. To tackle these challenges, ECA is collaborating with the African Union, the African Energy Commission, the African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development, the secretariats of the various African power pools, and other partners to develop a continental energy security policy framework to assist States in crafting their national energy security strategies.

D. Regulatory reform to attract private sector financing in electricity markets

14. The work of ECA on energy regulation, which is aimed at addressing regulatory barriers to private investment, has shifted from conducting national regulatory reviews in 18 African countries to the next phase of assisting members through regulatory reform and capacity development initiatives that promote investment-friendly regulation. Consequently, in 2024, ECA

⁴ African Energy Commission, "Oil products and refining in the African energy landscape: a special report from AFREC", June 2022.

collaborated with energy sector institutions in Egypt to enhance energy storage regulation and in Kenya to support the development of regulation allowing open access to electricity, which was subsequently enacted. In both instances, ECA also mobilized partnerships to help the national institutions to develop the necessary capacity for drafting energy regulation.

15. In 2025, ECA is working with energy sector institutions, in particular regulators, in Cameroon, Mozambique and Tunisia to provide technical support for regulatory reform, alongside capacity development. These interventions are expected to result in increased institutional capacity and regulatory road maps to address critical barriers to private sector investment.

E. Productive uses of energy for rural development

16. Across rural Africa, energy applications that enhance productivity are producing measurable economic benefits while transforming traditional ways of life. The incorporation of renewable energy technologies into income-generating activities demonstrates how access to energy can drive rural development, rather than being merely a means to an end. To expand such initiatives, it is essential to tackle systemic barriers. Many potential beneficiaries lack awareness of renewable energy opportunities or struggle to obtain appropriate financing. Furthermore, numerous solar companies primarily focus on household lighting rather than on productive uses that can foster economic development.

17. ECA partnered with the World Food Programme (WFP) in Madagascar to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy solutions, thereby enhancing food security and supporting rural transformation. ECA assisted the Office of Electricity Regulation in reviewing the electricity market and identifying critical areas for reform to attract investment and increase national electricity capacity. In addition, ECA conducted a cost-effectiveness analysis of current productive use projects by WFP, which will assist in designing feasible projects as they expand. By developing a geospatial tool using geographical information system technology, ECA also supported the work of WFP in Madagascar, enabling the optimal placement of projects within the water-energy-food nexus to promote food security and rural development. Furthermore, ECA conducted a continental study on best practices for the productive use of energy to foster learning through the sharing of experiences on innovative policies and programmes.

III. Transport infrastructure

18. Africa is experiencing unprecedented growth in transport infrastructure development, with numerous transformative projects reshaping connectivity on the continent. African transport infrastructure relies heavily on roads, which carry 80 per cent of goods and passengers, according to ECA estimations. However, a lack of financing, poor quality and uneven distribution plague the continent's road network, which is vital for its economy and growth. According to the Africa Finance Corporation, the continent's 680,000 km road network is six times smaller than that of India, which has a similar population but one tenth the land size. Moreover, the continent's paved road network accounts for just 1.5 per cent of the global total.⁵

19. Regional transportation corridors are emerging as the backbone of continental integration, facilitating the movement of goods and services between countries and regions that were previously disconnected because of

⁵ Africa Finance Corporation, *State of Africa's Infrastructure Report 2024: The Infrastructure Imperative – Igniting Africa's Industrial Renaissance* (2024).

infrastructural deficiencies. These corridors are designed not only as transportation routes but also as economic development zones that attract investment, create employment opportunities and stimulate industrial growth in areas that have been previously marginalized. The primary goal of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa is to expedite regional integration and promote sustainable economic development throughout the continent by developing improved infrastructure. By 2040, the Programme is expected to help to build 30,700 km of modern highways and 30,200 km of modern railways in the transport sector.⁶

20. The significance of railways in fulfilling the continent's ambitions for industrialization and intra-African trade is crucial, in particular for landlocked developing countries. Plans to develop and upgrade the rail network under phase 1 of the priority action plan of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa have had limited success. In 2023, the African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development reported that 16,066 km of roads and 4,077 km of railway lines had been developed since the inception of the Programme.⁷ During the period 2015–2019, greenfield railway developments, including the Djibouti-Addis Ababa standard gauge railway, the Mombasa-Naivasha standard gauge railway, the Abuja-Kaduna standard gauge railway and the Lagos-Ibadan standard gauge railway, as well as the Tangier-Kenitra high-speed line and the Boké bauxite railway, were completed.⁸

21. The wave of port privatization is attracting new investment partners and enhancing trade facilitation capabilities, positioning African ports as competitive global trade hubs. These modernized ports are implementing cutting-edge technologies and operational efficiencies that reduce processing times and increase capacity to handle the rising volumes of imports and exports. Since 2005, African ports have received an estimated \$15 billion in investment, allowing them to accommodate larger ships and offload more cargo for transportation across the continent.⁹ This investment, along with reforms and digitalization, has led to the emergence of new regional ports and megahubs, as well as improved logistical efficiency.

22. Through its Container Port Performance Index, the World Bank monitors port capacity for export, import and trans-shipment of containers. In the Index for 2022 and 2023, Tanger Med port, in Morocco, was ranked fourth, improving from sixth place in 2021.¹⁰ Tanger Med enhanced its status as a Mediterranean hub by handling a higher volume of containers. The port complex handled 10.2 million containers in 2024, representing an 18.8 per cent increase from 2023.¹¹ Port Said, in Egypt, ranked sixteenth in the 2023 Index.¹² The United Republic of Tanzania has invested significantly in the infrastructure of the Dar es Salaam port to enhance clearance procedures and establish it as the gateway of the Central Corridor to Southern Africa.

23. Efficient air transport is vital for Africa, considering the continent's limited road infrastructure and vast size. However, the African air transport system is characterized by poor connectivity and high costs, which could hinder

⁶ African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development, *Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA): First 10-Year Implementation Report – A Decade of Transforming Africa's Infrastructure* (Midrand, South Africa, 2023).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Africa Finance Corporation, *State of Africa's Infrastructure Report 2025: Mobilizing Domestic Capital* (2025).

⁹ International Finance, "Are African ports ready for global trade boom?", 23 April 2025.

¹⁰ World Bank, *The Container Port Performance Index 2023: A Comparable Assessment of Performance Based on Vessel Time in Port* (Washington, D.C., 2024).

¹¹ Tanger Med Port Authority, "Tanger Med passes the 10 million container mark", 31 December 2024.

¹² World Bank, *The Container Port Performance Index 2023*.

the goal of boosting intra-African trade through the African Continental Free Trade Area.

24. As of February 2025, the number of countries participating in the Single African Air Transport Market was 38.¹³ Empirical studies have demonstrated the benefits of air transport liberalization in Africa under the Single Market. In a 2021 study commissioned by the African Union Commission, the International Air Transport Association projected that full liberalization of intra-African air markets could boost traffic by 51 per cent, increasing from 31.2 million passenger trips in 2019 to 47.1 million.¹⁴ These additional 15.9 million journeys are currently not being taken because of excessive expenses, limited flight availability and unsatisfactory services. According to the International Air Transport Association, the pilot implementation project for the Single Market, which is aimed at increasing traffic under the Fifth Freedom of the Air right from 14.5 to 30.0 per cent by 2025 and enhance collaboration across various economic sectors, has achieved significant milestones. Approximately 85 per cent of intra-African flights are direct, while the remaining 15 per cent involve one or more stopovers. Routes operating under the Fifth Freedom Right account for 21 per cent of direct flights. African airlines have announced 59 new routes since 2022, including 13 routes under the Fifth Freedom Right. The Single Market is expected to reduce fares by 26 per cent, save \$1.46 billion, generate \$2.85 billion in consumer surplus, generate 588,750 jobs and increase African gross domestic product by \$4.2 billion.

25. Industry transformation is increasingly driven by digitalization and climate change considerations. Smart infrastructure solutions, renewable energy integration and sustainable construction practices are becoming standard features in new transport projects. Digital platforms for logistics management, electronic documentation and real-time tracking systems are revolutionizing how goods are moved across the continent, reducing delays and improving transparency throughout supply chains.

26. The impact of improved transportation infrastructure goes beyond economic indicators to vital social outcomes, including food security. By addressing transport inefficiencies, countries can reduce post-harvest food losses, enhance market access for agricultural producers and more effectively distribute essential goods to underserved communities. The ability to move agricultural products quickly and affordably from production areas to consumption centres is transforming food systems across the continent, helping to tackle long-standing food insecurity issues that have persisted for decades.

A. African regional transport corridor management system

27. Road density in sub-Saharan Africa continues to be substantially lower than in other regions. The average density is nearly 2.3 km per 100 km², which is significantly lower than in Asia. In India, the density is 138.0 km per 100 km². Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have an average density of 29.5 km per 100 km².¹⁵ The high costs of transport and, by extension, of products for final consumers are exacerbated by the poor condition of these roads. Therefore, road monitoring is essential for the timely collection of information, with a view to facilitating prompt processing.

28. Together with partners, ECA developed a pilot project on the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport Corridor and extended it to the Central

¹³ African Union, “Malawi becomes 38th African country to join Africa’s Single Air Transport Market”, 20 February 2025.

¹⁴ International Air Transport Association, *Continental Study on the Benefits of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) and Communication Strategy for SAATM Advocacy* (Geneva, June 2021).

¹⁵ Africa Finance Corporation, *State of Africa’s Infrastructure Report 2024*.

Corridor and the Northern Corridor. The project resulted in the development of a digital application, known as the African regional transport corridor management system, that uses satellite imagery and artificial intelligence to assess the condition of regional transport corridors.

29. The management system represents a significant step towards creating a more efficient, safe and sustainable road transport system in Africa. The initiative has the potential to make a substantial contribution to the continent's economic growth, regional integration and social development. Priorities for the future include:

- (a) Expanding the network of corridors covered by the management system;
- (b) Further harmonizing regulations and standards across countries;
- (c) Strengthening the monitoring and evaluation framework for regional transport corridors;
- (d) Promoting the use of technology to enhance information-sharing and communication;
- (e) Mobilizing financial resources to support activities related to the project.

B. Ensuring safe use of road infrastructure in Africa

30. Road safety is a critical issue in Africa owing to the significant economic and social repercussions of road traffic injuries and fatalities. Although the continent is home to 15 per cent of the global population and only 3 per cent of the worldwide vehicle fleet, road fatalities were estimated to be 225,482 in 2021, accounting for 19 per cent of the worldwide road traffic mortality. Since 2010, the road mortality rate in Africa has increased by 17 per cent, according to data from the World Health Organization (WHO). Even though mortality rates in certain countries have decreased by as much as 49 per cent, the region continues to have the highest fatality rate in the world, at 19.4 deaths per 100,000 population. As acknowledged by WHO, these figures could still underrepresent reality, given the limited monitoring and evaluation capacities of many African countries.¹⁶ This sobering reality underscores the urgent need to enhance road safety throughout Africa, which would not only save lives but also support social and economic development.

31. However, it is widely recognized that the smooth implementation of the African Road Safety Action Plan (2021–2030) and the ambitious goal of halving the number of road accidents, fatalities and severe injuries by 2030 are being hindered by the lack of financing for road safety. Various financing mechanisms have been proposed and tested over the years, with mixed results.

32. ECA contributes to road safety in Africa through its three core roles: as a think-tank, as a convenor and through its operational functions. As a think-tank, the Commission has developed a methodology to measure the performance of African countries in road safety and used it to rank countries across the continent. ECA has also conducted road safety performance reviews in African countries, including Cameroon, Ethiopia, Uganda and Zimbabwe, in collaboration with the secretariat of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Road Safety and the Governments of these countries.

33. In collaboration with the International Road Federation, the International Road Assessment Programme, the World Road Association and the Tanzania Roads Association, ECA completed a project to improve road safety in the

¹⁶ WHO, *Status Report on Road Safety in the WHO African Region 2023* (Brazzaville, WHO African Region, 2024).

United Republic of Tanzania on the basis of the 10-step plan for safer road infrastructure of the United Nations Road Safety Collaboration. The project involved various bodies within the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, as well as other major institutions, non-governmental organizations focused on road safety and industry stakeholders in the country. The objective was to reduce traffic fatalities and injuries by strengthening institutional capacity and establishing a regulatory framework to enhance infrastructure safety. The framework covered road management, road safety audits and assessments, investment, road design standards, upgrades and monitoring. The approach was piloted through specific actions taken on ongoing and planned road projects.

34. ECA has supported numerous members in developing their national road safety strategies or action plans. For example, in Cameroon, Eswatini, the Gambia and Sierra Leone, a comprehensive gap assessment was conducted to improve their regulatory frameworks on road safety.

35. In Uganda, ECA, with support from the United Nations Road Safety Fund, collaborated with the Government to develop a road safety monitoring and evaluation system, as well as a road safety database to inform evidence-based decision-making.

36. The Kofi Annan Road Safety Award, jointly organized each year by ECA, the secretariat of the Special Envoy for Road Safety and the Kofi Annan Foundation, is a prominent continental event that has established itself as the primary forum for high-level political advocacy, knowledge exchange and cooperation on road safety. The third edition of the Award was hosted in Ezulwini, Eswatini, on 14 and 15 April 2025.

37. In collaboration with the African Union Commission and the Africa Transport Policy Programme, ECA led the development of the African Road Safety Action Plan (2011–2020) in the context of the Decade of Action for Road Safety for the same period. Furthermore, ECA collaborated with the African Union Commission to develop the African Road Safety Charter and ensure its alignment with the African Road Safety Action Plan (2011–2020). ECA also partnered with the African Union Commission to develop the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-African Highways Network, which includes an annex on road safety. The Agreement was adopted at the third session of the Conference of African Ministers of Transport and endorsed at the twenty-fifth ordinary session of the Executive Council of the African Union. In 2019, ECA and the African Union Commission jointly proposed a number of strategic directions for road safety for the post 2011–2020 Decade of Action, as well as the African Road Safety Action Plan (2021–2030), and collaborated on the monitoring and evaluation of the proposals. ECA is also part of the task force that developed the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030.

C. Electric vehicle development in Africa

38. The transportation sector is a significant contributor to energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions. It accounts for approximately 27.1 per cent (105.2 exajoules) of total final energy consumption, ranking third among major energy-consuming sectors.¹⁷ Similarly, the transportation sector is responsible for 21.2 per cent (7.2 billion tons) of total carbon dioxide emissions, again ranking third, after the power and industry sectors. The global transition to electric vehicles represents a crucial approach in the fight against

¹⁷ International Energy Agency, *Net Zero by 2050: A Roadmap for the Global Energy Sector*, 4th revision (Paris, 2021).

climate change, the reduction of carbon emissions and the advancement of sustainable transportation.

39. African countries face unique challenges in adopting electric mobility, such as inadequate infrastructure, limited technological capabilities and a lack of local manufacturing capacity. To better understand and tackle such challenges, ECA carried out various activities, including capacity-building for the electric vehicle planning stage and for electric vehicle inspections and the development of norms and standards among its members. ECA also took strategic steps, such as supporting the African Union Commission in creating a continental strategic direction for electric vehicle development, in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme, the International Motor Vehicle Inspection Committee and African States. To facilitate this, ECA conducted a series of dialogues and a comprehensive survey covering all African countries to gain a clearer understanding of the electric vehicle landscape across Africa.

40. The continent has significant potential for electric vehicle adoption, driven by its increasing urban population and rich renewable energy sources, including solar, wind and hydroelectric power. These resources offer an opportunity to integrate clean energy into the electric vehicle sector, thereby reducing dependence on fossil fuels and promoting sustainable transportation solutions. The wealth of critical minerals necessary for electric vehicle development presents an opportunity for the continent to develop extensive electric vehicle battery value chains. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the continent holds over a fifth of the world's reserves for a dozen metals that are vital to the energy transition and the production of electric vehicles, solar panels and batteries.¹⁸

41. The Central Corridor Transit Transport Facilitation Agency and the Tanzania Railways Corporation have expressed interest in investigating the feasibility of creating electric mobility hubs at principal standard gauge railway stations for passengers. The United Republic of Tanzania is constructing an electric standard gauge railway along the Central Corridor from Dar es Salaam to Mwanza and Kigoma. The section between Dar es Salaam and Dodoma, the capital, has been operational since 2024 and has received positive feedback. The standard gauge railway is owned and operated by the Tanzania Railways Corporation. It is a vital part of the Central Corridor, which is a transportation route overseen by the Central Corridor Transit Transport Facilitation Agency. The Agency aims to transform the Central Corridor into a green corridor featuring electrified rail and low-emission urban transport. In response, ECA has initiated a pre-feasibility study to assess the technical, economic and environmental aspects of e-mobility hubs, along with suggestions for their development, including an option to establish public-private partnerships. The project will ultimately support the decarbonization of the last mile of the Central Corridor, transforming it into a fully green route.

IV. Infrastructure financing through public-private partnerships

42. The lack of proper infrastructure in Africa hinders economic growth. Urbanization increases the demand for high-quality infrastructure in the areas of transport, energy, water, sanitation and telecommunications. Traditional public funding falls short of meeting these needs, resulting in an annual financing gap of \$68 billion to \$108 billion, according to the African

¹⁸ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, "Critical minerals boom: global energy shift brings opportunities and risks for developing countries", 26 April 2024.

Development Bank.¹⁹ Public-private partnerships are crucial for bridging the infrastructure gap, enabling Governments and the private sector to share resources, risks and rewards in infrastructure projects. Using private sector expertise and capital enables African countries to undertake projects that budget limitations might otherwise prevent. However, maximizing the potential of public-private partnerships requires tackling such challenges as creating effective legal frameworks, improving project management skills, ensuring transparent procurement processes and designing sustainable projects that balance public affordability with private benefits. International financial institutions and development partners play a crucial role in assisting African Governments in addressing these challenges through technical assistance and financial support. As Africa advances, public-private partnerships will be vital for bridging infrastructure deficits, encouraging collaboration, speeding up development, boosting competitiveness and enhancing the quality of life for citizens.

43. At its fourth ordinary session, held in Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania, in September 2023, the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Transport, Transcontinental and Interregional Infrastructure, and Energy mandated that ECA and the African Union Commission, in collaboration with partners, coordinate public-private partnership initiatives to avoid the duplication of efforts and strengthen complementarity. This is in line with the focus of ECA to enhance the capacity of its members on various aspects of public-private partnership implementation.

A. Public-private partnerships to catalyse infrastructure development and innovative financing for industrialization in Africa

44. The work of ECA to catalyse infrastructure development and innovative financing for industrialization through public-private partnerships has two main objectives. The first is to strengthen the ability of policymakers to develop public-private partnership frameworks that are in compliance with relevant laws in chosen countries. The second is to improve the technical skills of staff at public-private partnership units in these countries to identify potential partnerships and structure them accordingly, including people-first public-private partnerships. More specifically, the initiative is aimed at achieving the following results:

- (a) Countries adopt national action plans to implement public-private partnerships for infrastructure projects;
- (b) Public-private partnership frameworks are harmonized with relevant national laws;
- (c) Countries adopt international tools and standards for public-private partnership implementation;
- (d) Countries identify planned infrastructure projects that are already primed to benefit from a public-private partnership;
- (e) There is an increase in the number of private sector operators showing interest in the public-private partnership value chains;
- (f) There is an increase in North-South and South-South public-private partnership cooperation agreements for project development and technology transfers.

¹⁹ African Development Bank, “Africa’s infrastructure: great potential but little impact on inclusive growth”, in *African Economic Outlook 2018* (2018).

B. Green, circular and resilient public-private partnerships in support of the Sustainable Development Goals for transformational change

45. ECA is working with the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to strengthen the capacity of public officials in selected States to develop and implement green, circular, resilient and high-quality infrastructure projects through public-private partnerships in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. In Africa, support is provided to Uganda and Zambia to promote and develop public-private partnerships for the attainment of the Goals on the basis of five principal criteria: increasing access to essential services and reducing social inequality and injustice; improving economic efficiency and fiscal sustainability; enhancing resilience and environmental responsibility; promoting replicability and the development of further projects; and fully involving all stakeholders.

46. The impact of the initiative, which will be completed in 2026, will be evidenced through policies that promote the development of public-private partnerships and infrastructure projects aligned with the Goals. Specifically, the initiative will foster sustainable transformational change, resilience and transitions in response to the economic and social effects of ongoing crises and shocks.

C. Improving the capacity of the public-private partnership unit in Madagascar

47. Public-private partnerships are vital for Madagascar to address its substantial infrastructure gap while respecting fiscal limits. Currently, a number of public-private partnerships are at various stages of development in the energy, transportation and water sectors. Although the outlook is promising, several projects face challenges in securing financial closure owing to issues related to bankability, regulatory uncertainties and capacity limitations. The country's public-private partnership unit is responsible for developing relevant policies, assessing projects, providing technical assistance and promoting market growth. Based within the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the unit oversees public-private partnership activities across various ministries, ensuring project feasibility and alignment with national development goals. The unit plays a central role in standardizing public-private partnership implementation strategies and strengthening the institutional capacity of government departments.

48. Madagascar currently has 15 to 20 public-private partnership projects under way in various sectors, with a particular focus on renewable energy generation, transportation infrastructure and water supply systems. These projects are at very different stages of development. Some are still in the conceptual phase, while others have progressed to feasibility studies or initial market assessments. Understanding this pipeline, along with the prioritization criteria used by the Government, provides crucial context for stakeholders looking to engage in infrastructure development in the country.

49. With support from the World Association of Public-Private Partnership Units and Professionals, ECA provided technical assistance aimed at thoroughly exploring the implementation of such partnerships in Madagascar, with a particular focus on making infrastructure projects bankable.

V. Conclusion

50. While there has been some progress and promising developments, considerable challenges persist in the energy sector. The implementation of

energy storage systems still lags behind the growth of energy generation capabilities, resulting in bottlenecks within the renewable energy supply chain. This discrepancy primarily arises from the prioritization of infrastructure development, as countries focus on improving basic energy access. Furthermore, the growth potential of the continent's renewable energy sector is constrained by the need for enhanced collaboration among Governments, private sector actors and international organizations to combat energy poverty, which affects about 600 million Africans who still lack access to reliable electricity.

51. With a view to supporting efforts to increase access to affordable energy in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal 7, ECA will seek answers to the following questions:

(a) What strategies can be used to accelerate collaborative financing models that bring together government guarantees, development finance and private capital to fund large-scale renewable projects?

(b) How can ECA assist members in developing progressive regulatory frameworks that eliminate barriers to renewable energy investment while ensuring an equitable distribution of benefits?

(c) How can ECA support members in the design of their national energy security strategies to mitigate the effects of energy insecurity on socioeconomic development?

(d) What measures can be taken to promote best practices in productive uses of sustainable energy in Africa to accelerate industrialization and economic transformation?

(e) How can ECA help members to design and implement national energy transition strategies based on regional policy frameworks?

52. Although the transport sector in Africa faces significant challenges, it also offers excellent opportunities for transformation. Existing infrastructure bottlenecks, in particular in road and rail networks, could limit its potential for growth resulting from trade liberalization. The notable decline in rail service utilization in certain markets highlights the urgent need for modernization and increased investment in this mode of transport.

53. In support of efforts to improve access to safer, cleaner and more affordable transportation, as outlined in Sustainable Development Goals 3, 7 and 11, ECA will examine the following questions:

(a) How can frontier technologies be leveraged to improve regional transport infrastructure and services that lower transport costs and achieve the goals of the Decade of Action for Road Safety (2021–2030)?

(b) How can ECA assist members in developing an e-mobility system that integrates renewable, reliable energy planning and digital technologies for greener, safer and more efficient transport?

(c) How can ECA help members to make evidence-based transport decisions through the development of a comprehensive transport platform based on reliable data and robust sectoral analysis?

(d) How can ECA support members in designing and implementing national road safety strategies based on the established regional policy frameworks?

(e) How can ECA support members in implementing the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Transport 2026–2035?