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**Report on the activities of the Subregional Office
for West Africa (November 2024–September 2025)
and work programme for 2026**

* ECA/SRO-WA/ICSOE/28/1.



I. Introduction

1. The annual report of the Subregional Office for West Africa of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is a summary of main achievements. It covers the period following the twenty-seventh session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for West Africa, which was held jointly with the thirty-ninth session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Official and Experts for North Africa, which took place in Rabat in November 2024.

2. In 2025, the implementation of work programmes is taking place in a particularly challenging context, marked not only by the socioeconomic repercussions of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the resurgence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, global geopolitical tensions and the climate crisis, but also by political instability, economic volatility and rising insecurity in the Sahel.

3. These multiple, multi-faceted crises, combined with fragile governance, increased exposure to global market shocks and persistent social pressures – poverty, inequality, food insecurity and youth unemployment – are eroding the fiscal space of States and are hampering progress towards sustainable development. In the face of declining aid flows and tightening global financial conditions, the imperative to build resilient and inclusive economies in West Africa has become urgent. The subregion should make better use of its opportunities, in particular in natural and agricultural resources. To achieve that aim, it must mobilize stakeholders around the reform of public finance management and innovative financing mechanisms, with a view to making economies resilient and inclusive.

4. It is against the backdrop of changing crises and opportunities that the Subregional Office for West Africa has implemented its work programme. The present activity report highlights the achievements from which the members have benefited. In addition, it includes a description of the current challenges facing stakeholders, and the measures taken in response to them, and future plans.

II. Policy areas of the Subregional Office for West Africa

5. Pursuant to its mandate, the Subregional Office has the following two objectives:

- (a) Accelerating the harnessing of the demographic dividend;
- (b) Realizing regional integration.

6. The mandate is implemented within the framework of an anticipatory and strategic approach, emphasizing vertical partnership with the divisions and other ECA subregional offices in order to improve the alignment of United Nations system support and expand the ownership of policies by countries. At the same time, horizontal partnerships are being established, in particular with intergovernmental organizations, national governments and members of the private sector, with a view to fostering regional cooperation in response to emerging challenges. The challenges include not only the liquidity crisis within the United Nations and the launch of the UN80 initiative, but also growing insecurity, political instability and subregional dynamics that are marked, in particular, by the exit from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) by the States of the Confederation of Sahel States: Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

7. The work of ECA is focused on three core functions:

(a) Think tank function, which includes the preparation of studies, research reports and other knowledge products;

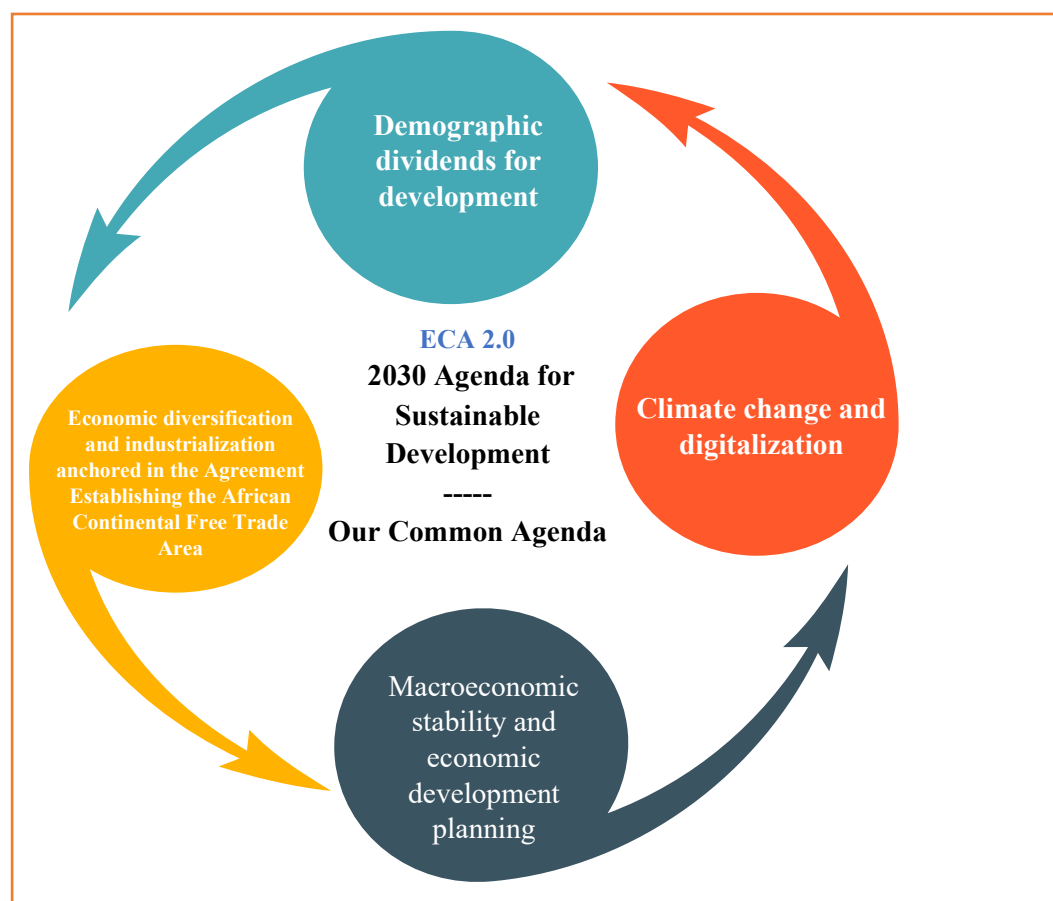
(b) Convening function, which involves the organization of conferences and platforms for discussion and advocacy;

(c) Operational function, which consists of providing States with advice, support and other forms of technical assistance.

8. In line with its core functions, the Subregional Office has structured its work using four strategic focuses. They align with the reform programme known as ECA 2.0 and the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Our Common Agenda.

Figure I

The four strategic focuses



Source: Author.

III. Landmark achievements of the Subregional Office

A. African Continental Free Trade Area

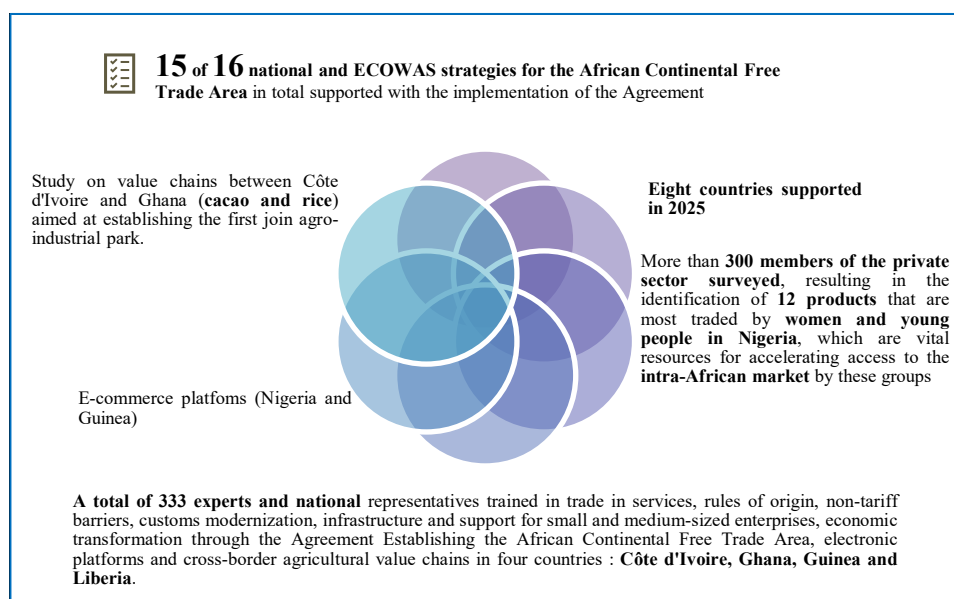
9. West Africa is making significant progress in implementing the Agreement Establishing

the African Continental Free Trade Area, including with support for eight countries: Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo.

10. As a result, 14 of the 15 national strategies for the Agreement and the regional ECOWAS strategy have benefited from a significant acceleration in implementation through the use of priority projects.¹ Of the 16 validated strategies in West Africa, the strategy of Mali is the only one for which direct implementation support from ECA has not yet been provided.

Figure II

Implementing the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area in West Africa



Source: Author.

11. For example, in Nigeria, the Subregional Office, in partnership with the national coordination office for the Agreement, has produced evidence-based data that are essential for economic inclusion in the country. A survey of over 300 members of the private sector resulted in the identification of 12 products that are traded the most by Nigerian women and young people, including ready-to-wear clothing, gari, shea butter, handicrafts and kulikuli (peanut cakes). That major advance led to the finalization of a market access guide and the development of an e-commerce platform, thereby enhancing the skills of women and young people to participate actively in and take full advantage of the continental market.

12. In the area of trade facilitation, the Subregional Office has supported its members, such as Guinea and Nigeria, in setting up digital tools to facilitate their access to the intra-African market.

¹ The 15 strategies are the 14 national strategies – Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo – and the regional strategy of ECOWAS.

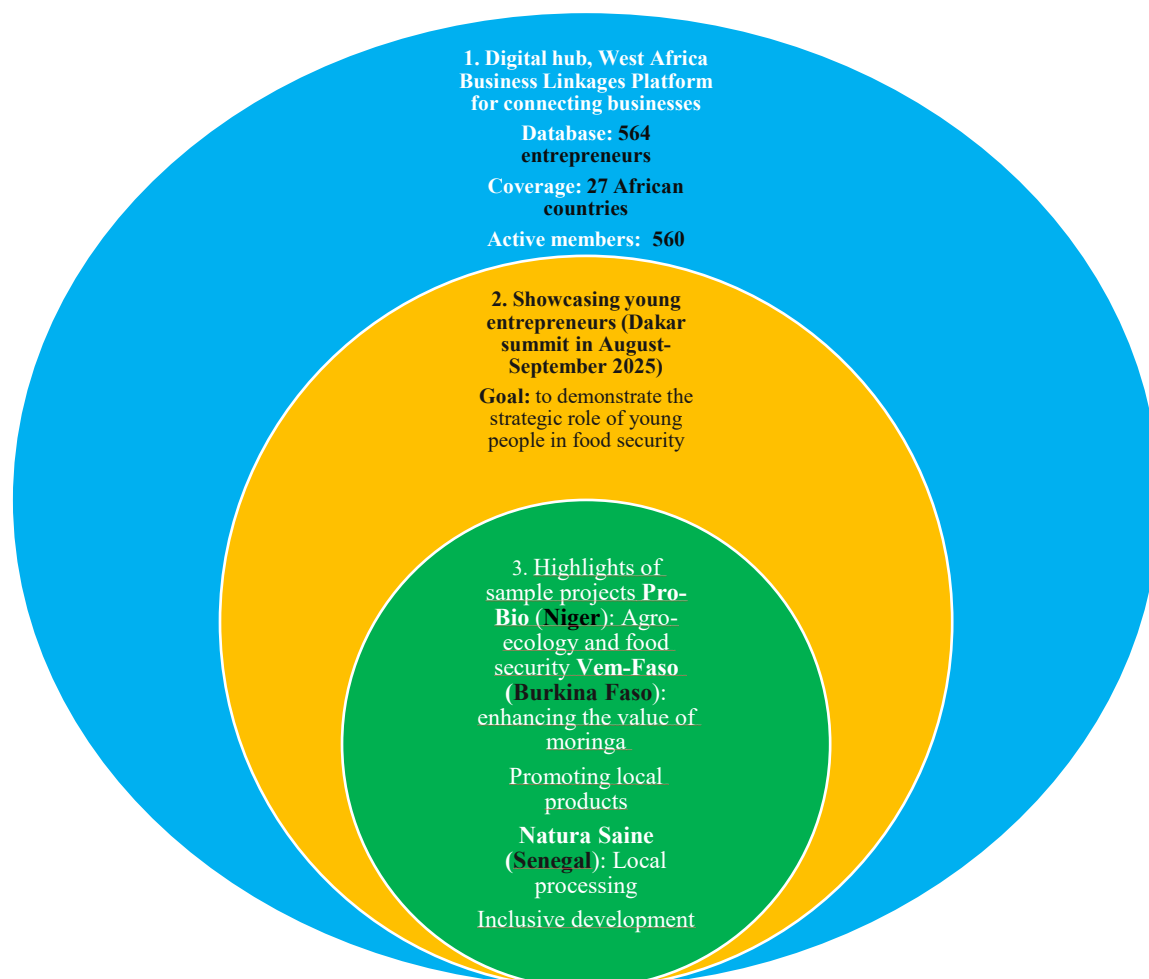
13. In addition, at a conference co-organized by the African Solidarity Fund in February 2025 in Niamey, strategic actions were defined for reducing economic risks and attracting innovative financing using guarantees as levers. All those initiatives are aimed at accelerating the implementation of the Agreement and supporting the development of regional value chains.

B. West Africa Business Linkages Platform

14. The West Africa Business Linkages Platform, which connects women and youth entrepreneurs in the subregion, now serves as a continent-wide digital hub for 564 entrepreneurs from 27 African countries.² As of 3 October 2025, at least 560 of those members are active on the digital platform.

Figure III

Vital role of women and young people in implementing the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area



Source: Author, using information from ECA, West Africa Business Linkages Platform. Available at <https://wablp.netlify.app/>.

15. During a summit on food security held in Dakar from 31 August to 5 September 2025, the Subregional Office showcased three young entrepreneurs from the Platform. In doing so,

² See the website of the platform: <https://wablp.netlify.app/>.

the Subregional Office emphasized the strategic role of young people. The Pro-Bio project in the Niger reflects the effectiveness of agroecology for food security, and the Vem-Faso project in Burkina Faso has enhanced the value of moringa. The Natura Saine initiative in Senegal has demonstrated the potential of processing local products. Those examples are models for inclusive development in West Africa.

C. Specific technical support for the Sahel

16. In conjunction with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the Development Coordination Office regional office in Africa, the Subregional Office helped to create and launch with relevant ministries three transformative flagship programmes for Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger. The country-led initiatives, based on the peace, humanitarian and development nexus, should enable progress to be made in the areas of food and energy sovereignty, education, youth empowerment and governance, in perfect alignment with national priorities.

17. At the same time, in close collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the economic planning directorate of the Niger, the Subregional Office has developed a flagship socioeconomic governance programme, which is focused on the country's national priorities: governance, food sovereignty, security and human capital. In addition, it has supported the deployment of technical assistance to the three countries – Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger – to accelerate support for their Resident Coordinator Offices and United Nations country teams.

D. Budgeting that is responsive to the demographic dividend

18. The Subregional Office continues to support the adoption of an approach to budgeting that is responsive to the demographic dividend in the following four countries: Burkina Faso, Niger, Senegal and Togo. The support is aimed at aligning the content of the countries' multi-year economic and fiscal programming documents with their objectives to accelerate harnessing the demographic dividend. The aim is to consolidate what has already been achieved, guide the preparation of national budgets for 2026 more effectively and ensure that the demographic dividend is fully taken into account in the new budgets.

19. The application of the approach in the four countries has facilitated the preparation of national budgets for the 2026 financial year, thus strengthening the alignment of resources with the priorities of the demographic dividend.

20. Similarly, an innovative regional monitoring framework has been created to provide countries with a platform on which to assess their efforts in implementing the demographic dividend road map of the African Union. The framework, which is based on a groundbreaking subregional survey, bridges gaps and provides countries with a results-based mechanism for measuring their progress. It thus enables countries to direct their budgetary and programmatic resources more effectively towards targeted investment in young people.

21. In June 2025, during a webinar organized by the Subregional Office and the Central and West Africa Regional Office of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the survey report and regional monitoring framework were validated. Seventy-eight national and regional experts from 15 countries attended the event, not only to validate the documents, but also to share experiences and best practices that are essential for the effective implementation of the continental road map.

22. Vital tools for national demographic dividend observatories in 12 African countries were validated during an online workshop on 26 and 27 August 2025, which was supported by the Subregional Office. As a result of the event, experts' skills with the tools, such as demographic profiles and the demographic dividend tracking index, were enhanced. Their shared understanding establishes a solid basis for the better use of demographic data and greater influence on public policy.

23. In that context, 140 national experts, out of a target of 100 civil servants by 2025, have been trained.

IV. Other achievements under the core functions of the Economic Commission for Africa

24. ECA has three core functions: the think tank function involves the production of studies, research reports and other knowledge products; the convening function involves the organization of conferences and platforms for discussion and advocacy; the operational function involves providing States with advice, support and other forms of technical assistance.

25. The implementation of the work programme of the Subregional Office between November 2024, when the twenty-seventh session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for West Africa was held, and September 2025 entailed contributions to all three core functions in West Africa. Nine knowledge products were generated as part of the think tank function. Nine high-level meetings were organized. Under the operational function, 10 different types of multidimensional support were given to States, regional economic communities and intergovernmental organizations. Further technical assistance is under way, demonstrating an ongoing commitment to the three critical areas.

A. Think tank function: research reports, studies and knowledge products

26. The results achieved in relation to the think tank function include 12 research reports, studies and guidance notes. They have helped to provide evidence-based guidance to accelerate policies on economic diversification, the development of value chains, realizing the demographic dividend and strengthening regional integration.

1. Strategic partnerships for 2024–2025 and beyond

27. In the context of its broad partnerships, the Subregional Office has consolidated its collaboration with intergovernmental organizations in West Africa. With that in mind, action taken under that approach, which was adopted in 2023, by cluster, was focused on the following activities:

(a) The Subregional Office was among the organizers of a forum on guarantee institutions and the African Continental Free Trade Area; is collaborating on a study with the West African Development Bank; has produced reports on cocoa and rice value chains; and has shared analyses on the effect of macroeconomics on food security with ECOWAS, the World Food Programme and the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel;

(b) In August 2025, a joint mission by ECA, ECOWAS and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) supported Togo in updating its national accounts,

resulting in new macroeconomic aggregates that better reflect the country's economic transformation and the foundations for a strengthened national statistical system, and leading to an outline of further action, including a meeting with development partners and a plan to enhance the skills of officials responsible for rebasing the country's national accounts.

28. The achievements described above highlight strengthening of partnerships and the increased commitment by intergovernmental organizations to sustainable development and regional integration.

2. Helping members to make the most of their strengths and build on progress to date with their national strategies for implementing the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area

29. To support the implementation of national strategies in the Free Trade Area, the Subregional Office has produced the following documents and taken the following specific measures:

(a) Development and validation of a practical export guide and an e-commerce platform in February 2025; the aim of which is to improve access to intra-African markets for Nigerian women and young people and stimulate the development of regional value chains, thereby contributing to industrialization and economic diversification in West Africa;

(b) In June 2025, Guinea adopted a national trade in services strategy, which is aimed at supporting the implementation of the Agreement and the Vision Simandou 2040 by placing trade at the heart of its economic development;

(c) In an effort to identify the success factors of special economic zones, the Glo-Djigbé industrial zone in Benin was assessed in July 2025 during an ECA mission, the data from which will be used to carry out a comparative analysis aimed at formulating strategic recommendations, with a view to strengthening African special economic zones as part of the implementation of the Agreement and the promotion of regional value chains;

(d) In August 2025, a study on the promotion of cross-border cocoa and rice value chains between Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana was finalized and validated, thus serving as the basis for policies aimed at establishing the first joint agro-industrial park in the two countries, which is a strategic initiative designed to boost the diversification and added value of agricultural products in the subregion;

(e) Development in Cabo Verde of a strategy and action plan for the Agreement, budgeted for in December 2024, to support the country's economic diversification;

(f) Report on a diagnostic study of trade facilitation compliance within the context of the implementation of the Agreement in Senegal (in progress);

(g) Case study on domestic debt management in Sierra Leone, towards a long-term budget strategy (in progress).

3. Other studies and research reports to inform the decision-making process and action of ECA members

30. West Africa Socioeconomic Profile 2025: Strengthening Domestic Resource Mobilization in West Africa, August 2025.

31. Report on progress by West African States towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, August 2025.

4. Technical and guidance documentation

32. The publication of the following four policy briefs on demographic dividend budgeting, accessible to the general public, which provide a summary of the main findings of technical work carried out by various teams, highlighting socioeconomic implications and serving as a guide for future national budgets:

(a) Burkina Faso: “How can budget allocations be optimized to accelerate harnessing the demographic dividend?”, March 2024;

(b) Niger: “Which budget structure is best for capturing the demographic dividend?”, March 2024;

(c) Senegal: “A tool for improving the effectiveness of public spending using macroeconomic budget modelling”, March 2024;

(d) Togo: “The optimal use of public resources to capture the demographic dividend and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”, March 2024.

33. Policy guide, “The BSDD toolkit, a regional reference guide designed to help countries integrate the demographic dividend into their budgets and policies” (in progress).

B. Convening function: conferences and platforms for discussion and advocacy

34. With a view to achieving active participation in the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, ECA organized an online dialogue in February 2025. The event was attended by 84 representatives of West African countries and regional organizations. Discussions were focused on the priorities of the African Continental Free Trade Area. In addition, participants stressed the importance of digitalization, food security, peace and security as critical success factors. They also made recommendations for the ministerial deliberations in March 2025.

35. In March 2025 in Cotonou, Benin, the Subregional Office jointly organized with UNDP and the African Development Bank a high-level regional dialogue on public finance systems in Africa. The meeting provided an opportunity to develop specific strategies for strengthening budget policies, optimizing revenue mobilization and improving resource efficiency. A follow-up platform has been set up to ensure that the recommendations are implemented, thus contributing to better governance and the acceleration of budget reforms on the continent.

36. In August 2025, ECA and ECOWAS organized two joint workshops in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. The meetings, which were attended by over 60 experts, resulted in the finalization

of a study and the definition of the next steps for an investment case. The aim is to create a joint agro-industrial park for cocoa and rice, with a view to enhancing local processing, boosting producers' incomes and reinforcing climate resilience in the region.

37. In August 2025, Liberia, with the support of ECA and the secretariat of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, organized a workshop to launch the implementation of its national strategy. Forty-five members of the public and private sectors attended the meeting and enhanced their understanding of rules of origin and non-tariff barriers. In addition, ECA highlighted the potential of the country's green and blue economies. The initiative resulted in recommendations for modernizing customs, improving infrastructure and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises.

C. Operational function: advice and support for countries

1. Facilitating the implementation of the African Union road map on the demographic dividend

38. Through targeted technical support, examples of which are outlined below, the Subregional Office has strengthened national skills and consolidated the institutionalization of the framework for democratic dividend budgeting.

(a) In September 2025, in vital pilot initiative, the Subregional Office developed, in strategic partnership with UNFPA and other ECA divisions, including the Technology, Innovation, Connectivity and Infrastructure Development Division and the African Centre for Statistics, the first-ever harmonized regional digital tool for monitoring the operationalization of the African Union road map on the demographic dividend, filling a gap in the coherence of national frameworks, and thereby ensuring uniform monitoring of progress across West and Central Africa, laying the foundations for replication across the continent and strengthening country accountability;³

(b) To strengthen political commitment to the African Union road map on the demographic dividend, the Subregional Office, in partnership with UNFPA, the World Bank, ECOWAS, the Regional Consortium for Research in Generational Economics and the Economic Community of Central African States, organized a high-level regional forum from 23 to 25 September 2025 which was attended by over 52 important stakeholders, including parliamentarians and ministerial representatives, and served as a platform on which to share knowledge products of national demographic dividend observatories, helping to consolidate stakeholder capacities, encourage the adoption of policies and achieve firm commitments to operationalize the road map;

(c) From 25 to 27 March 2025, 48 Togolese civil servants from relevant ministries were trained in demographic dividend budgeting, with a view to introducing them to the process of transforming traditional budgets into functional budgets, in order to improve the budgets' alignment with demographic dividend priorities and support the preparation of the multiannual budgetary and economic programming document for the period 2026–2028;

³ Data collected in 2024 by ECA and UNFPA was validated on 17 June 2025 during a webinar attended by the relevant countries in West and Central Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo (West Africa); and Central African Republic, Chad, Congo and Equatorial Guinea (Central Africa).

(d) In a continuation of the capacity-building and technical assistance initiatives of 2024, including remote technical support provided since November that year, the dimensions of the demographic dividend have been integrated into the citizen budget of Burkina Faso for 2025, which was published in February 2025 having been strengthened thanks to the ongoing support of the national demographic dividend observatory, the budget directorate and relevant ministries.

2. Strengthening national development planning, domestic resource mobilization and integration of national budgeting framework plans

(a) Liberia

39. In a continuation of the support provided since April 2024 for the development of the national development plan of Liberia for the period 2025–2029, “ARREST Agenda for Inclusive Development”, the Subregional Office worked closely with the Office of the Resident Coordinator and the United Nations country team to support the finalization and official launch of the national development plan by the President of Liberia on 15 January 2025 in Monrovia. The plan is now the country’s road map for transformative and sustainable development.

40. Thanks to the support of the Subregional Office, Liberia has achieved strategic results. A monitoring framework for the country’s inclusive development programme was established in April 2025, filling the gap left by the United States Agency for International Development. In June 2025, a programme-based budget was presented, aligning budget priorities with the strategic objectives of the inclusive development programme. Finally, support for a government retreat with its partners strengthened commitment to accelerating the implementation of that national plan.

(b) Sierra Leone

41. To support the fiscal policy of Sierra Leone, the Subregional Office and Subregional Office for North Africa carried out a joint assessment mission in the country from 24 to 27 March 2025.

42. Organized in collaboration with the debt management division of the Ministry of Finance, the Bank of Sierra Leone and UNDP, the mission’s objective was to assess the country’s public debt management needs.

43. It resulted in a report containing operational recommendations that are intended to guide ECA support for domestic resource mobilization and fiscal resilience.

44. From 2 to 5 June 2025 in Freetown, 15 Sierra Leonean officials to acquire knowledge of innovative financing and sovereign ratings through a skills-building programme. The initiative has strengthened the country’s ability to mobilize financing for sustainable and strategic projects. In addition, the programme has improved the financial credibility of the country, helping it to attract domestic and external resources and reduce investment shortfalls.

45. From July to August 2025, the Subregional Office, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, developed an action plan to enhance domestic resource mobilization. The plan, approved by the Minister, includes proposals for immediate measures, such as withholding tax, reverse charges and the modernization of tax reporting, in order to broaden the tax base and improve data collection. In addition, the capacity of 19 officials from the national revenue authority has been developed. Through pilot audit approaches in the extractive sector, efforts

are being made to bolster oversight of multinationals, combat base erosion and profit shifting and secure strategic revenues. The action is designed to help the country to finance its development priorities and reduce fiscal shortfalls, in particular in the education and health sectors.

(c) Togo

46. In terms of statistical capacity-building, joint efforts by ECA, ECOWAS, WAEMU and the Economic and Statistical Observatory for Sub-Saharan Africa (AFRISTAT) began in August 2025 to assist in the process of rebasing the national accounts of Togo.

3. Developing the institutional and technical skills of members for the effective implementation of the national strategies for the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area

47. With a view to maximizing the benefits and consolidating the gains of the African Continental Free Trade Area, the Subregional Office provided technical support to its members. The support has taken the form of the following specific projects:

(a) The final evaluation of the strategy of Togo for the Agreement for the period 2019–2024 has resulted in new strategic guidelines for accelerating the implementation of the Agreement and maximizing its benefits, which, following their validation during a workshop in Kpalimé, Togo, in May 2025, will serve as a road map for the new national strategy for the Agreement;

(b) In May 2025, in connection with Vision Simandou 2040, Guinea developed and validated a national strategy to promote trade in services, with a view to unleashing the country's export potential in full and consolidating the role of trade as the cornerstone of the long-term economic vision;

(c) In May 2025, a high-level ECA mission to Liberia led to an agreement on joint work plans with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning and the Institute of Statistics and Geoinformation Services, the aim of which is to strengthen resource mobilization, data governance and strategic planning and open up new avenues for youth entrepreneurship, value chains and the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, in addition to consolidating partnerships through dialogue with development stakeholders;

(d) During the period under review, preliminary research carried out in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, in collaboration with the Climate, Food Security and Natural Resources Division of ECA, was focused on cross-border cocoa and rice value chains, and its conclusions will form the basis of a subsequent feasibility study, paving the way for the development of those sectors;

(e) As part of its support for the implementation of the Agreement, the Subregional Office has strengthened the capacities of its members and the private sector to formulate and implement policies promoting economic diversification, including through a workshop held in Lagos, Nigeria, in December 2024, which was organized in collaboration with the country's national coordination office for the African Continental Free Trade Area and the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment and was attended by over 100 participants, including public decision-makers and entrepreneurs, who validated a study on the main products traded by women and young people in Nigeria.

4. Other technical assistance

48. In July 2025, the Subregional Office was among the organizers of a workshop on tourism satellite accounts in Sao Tome and Principe. Participants reinforced their skills in methodology and data processing, producing preliminary tables. The results represent a major step towards the finalization of the tourism satellite accounts in September 2025. Upon the tool's finalization, the country can measure the economic impact of tourism, maintain the tourism satellite accounts and guide its sustainable development policies.

49. In March 2025, the Subregional Office provided support to Liberia and Nigeria in the use of the integrated planning and reporting toolkit. As a result, a data-driven digital platform has been created for assessing the progress made by the two countries towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and the objectives of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union. The tool will help to accelerate and improve the measurement of progress towards the attainment of the Goals.

50. In addition, the Subregional Office has planned training for stakeholders in the Niger on the integrated planning and reporting toolkit.

5. Partner testimony

51. The initiatives of the Subregional Office and the actions that it has taken have been well received by beneficiaries. Examples of its work are given below.

52. Demographic dividend budgeting: a strategic tool for Burkina Faso. With the support of the Subregional Office, Burkina Faso is aligning its national budget with demographic realities, thanks to the demographic dividend approach to budgeting, thus transforming its demographic potential into an engine for growth and sustainable development. On 26 August 2024, in Ouagadougou, during a national political dialogue for parliamentarians and policymakers on demographic dividend budgeting, which was organized by the Subregional Office, Marie-Angèle Tiendrebeogo, Chair of the Gender, Social Action and Humanitarian Commission of the Transitional Legislative Assembly, said: "Demographic dividend budgeting offers the potential for a better future for our country, if we are able to apply it effectively."

53. In addition, Cabo Verde has received support from the Subregional Office. According to Ludmilde Fernandes Semedo, Director of Trade Services in the Directorate for Industry, Trade and Energy, in the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Energy of the country, who spoke on 25 September 2025, as part of the "United Nations at 80: shared lives, shared future" initiative, "the support from ECA helps Cabo Verde to implement the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area by promoting regional integration, sustainable development, capacity-building for small and medium-sized enterprises and more efficient integration into the African continental market."

54. With regard to Guinea, Diaka Kaba, National Director for External Trade and Competition, in the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, said, on 12 September 2025, as part of the "United Nations at 80: shared lives, shared future" initiative: "Thanks to the technical and strategic support from the United Nations, Guinea has been equipped with the essential tools for implementing the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and promoting sustainable and inclusive economic integration."

55. Besides the aforementioned initiatives, the Subregional Office has been involved with other initiatives concerning the circular economy and entrepreneurship. In the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area, the Subregional Office launched a regional initiative to promote the circular economy, aligning value chains with the Sustainable Development Goals and leveraging the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area to stimulate economic growth. Furthermore, the West Africa Business Linkages Platform fosters inclusive dialogues, bringing together women and young entrepreneurs from the agriculture, technology, creative industries and services sectors, thereby contributing to job creation, environmental sustainability and economic diversification.

V. Cooperation for action and impact

56. The development and strengthening of strategic alliances with various international organizations, including at the regional level, has helped the Subregional Office to achieve results on behalf of ECA members.

57. The Subregional Office has close partnerships with:

- (a) African Solidarity Fund;
- (b) Compass Limited, the strategic partner for the operationalization of the West Africa Business Linkages Platform;
- (c) Department of Economic and Social Affairs;
- (d) Economic and Statistical Observatory for Sub-Saharan Africa (AFRISTAT);
- (e) ECOWAS;
- (f) International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation;
- (g) National demographic dividend observatories;
- (h) Private sector leaders;
- (i) Regional Consortium for Research in Generational Economics;
- (j) Resident coordinator offices;
- (k) Sector champions;
- (l) UNDP;
- (m) UNFPA;
- (n) United Nations Conference on Trade and Development;
- (o) United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women);
- (p) United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel;

- (q) United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel;
- (r) WAEMU;
- (s) Women's business networks;
- (t) World Trade Organization;
- (u) Youth associations and other networks.

VI. Main challenges and risks, mitigation taken and future plans

58. The main challenges and risks faced by the Subregional Office are:

- (a) Sociopolitical instability, characterized by many complex, multifaceted crises and by insecurity in the Sahel;
- (b) Several persistent infrastructure challenges, including poor Internet connectivity and complex air links, which result in long journey times and high costs;
- (c) Weakness of national statistical systems;
- (d) Combined effect of insufficient funding; sovereign debt crises in members of ECA; and budget cuts, a liquidity crisis and a recruitment freeze in the United Nations;
- (e) Difficulty filling vacancies, given that new recruits are unable to bring their families with them to the Niger.

59. The main mitigation measures taken and responses made by the Subregional Office are:

- (a) Sustained recruitment drive to strengthen the human resources of the Subregional Office: an international staff member joined the team on 26 October 2024; a research fellow was taken on for six months, with a contract starting on 3 June 2025; and two interns from the Niger – one from a grande école in Rwanda and the other from a university in the Niger – were welcomed for a six-month period from 12 August 2025;
- (b) Increased focus on the humanitarian-development-security nexus and peace in the Sahel;
- (c) Establishment of strategic partnerships and of the coalition of ECA partners for action and impact, with a view to providing the best possible response to the various requests for assistance from members;
- (d) Prioritization, joint establishment and funding of programmes that have a major effect within the subregion, in particular through ECA partnerships with the African Solidarity Fund, UNDP and UNFPA.

60. The principal plans of the Subregional Office for 2026 are:

- (a) Consolidation of national expertise in demographic dynamics and establishment, by a growing number of ECA members, of monitoring and accountability mechanisms in relation to the demographic dividend;

(b) Sustained advocacy and technical support to countries to strengthen fiscal and debt policies through the elaboration of long-term fiscal strategies on improving debt management and supporting development planning;

(c) Consolidation of gains with a growing number of countries implementing their national priorities within the framework of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area.
