



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
12 January 2026

Original: English

Economic Commission for Africa
Committee of Experts of the Conference of African
Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
Forty-fourth meeting
Tangier, Morocco (hybrid), 28–30 March 2026

Item 6 (f) of the provisional agenda**
Statutory issues: reports on the work of the subsidiary
bodies of the Economic Commission for Africa

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

Note by the secretariat

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

* Reissued for technical reasons on 3 March 2026.

** E/ECA/COE/44/1/Rev.1.



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

Introduction

1. The fourth joint session of the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts for Central and East Africa was held online on 1 October 2025, under the theme “Investing in productive capacities and trade for a resilient future”. The session was held in partnership with the Ministry of Economy, Finance, Debt and Shareholdings, Responsible for Combating the High Cost of Living, of Gabon.

2. The main objective of the joint session was to examine regulatory issues relating to the mandates and operations of the Subregional Offices for Central and Eastern Africa of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and to provide experts with a platform for the discussion of economic and social development issues and for the identification of realistic, inclusive and sustainable policy recommendations aligned with the theme of the joint session. The concerns of both women and young people were addressed during the discussions.

I. Opening of the session [agenda item 1]

A. Attendance

3. Approximately 230 participants attended the joint session, including representatives of the following members of ECA: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Gabon, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania.

4. The following entities of the United Nations system were represented: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; International Labour Organization; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; Resident Coordinator Office for Eritrea; Resident Coordinator Office for Kenya; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Environment Programme; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women); United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat); United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic; World Bank; World Health Organization.

5. Representatives of the following intergovernmental and regional organizations were present: African Organization for Standardization; Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) Commission; Central African Financial Market Supervisory Commission; Central African States Development Bank; Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States; East Africa Business and Investment Advisory Council; East African Business Council; East African Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture; Economic and Financial Reform Programme of CEMAC; Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the African Union; Federation of Organizations for Women Entrepreneurs in Central African States; Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

6. The session was also attended by observers from civil society organizations, private companies, academic institutions, think tanks and the media.

7. The Subregional Offices for Central and Eastern Africa acted as the secretariat for the joint session.

B. Opening statements

8. The Chair of the outgoing Bureau for Central Africa and Director of Regional Integration in the Ministry of the Economy, Planning and Regional Development of Cameroon, Jérémie Biban Biban, delivered opening remarks on behalf of the outgoing bureaux for Central and East Africa. Commending the secretariat and members of ECA for their efforts in organizing the joint session and implementing the Committees' work programmes, despite financial and institutional challenges, he said that he wished to emphasize the relevance of the theme, which was aligned with regional ambitions for economic diversification and structural transformation. Critical initiatives undertaken during the reporting period had included a symposium on new-generation special economic zones, held in Douala, Cameroon, from 21 to 23 January 2025; support for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises in the Central African Republic; and an international conference on the sustainable blue economy in the Gulf of Guinea, convened in Yaoundé on 9 and 10 July 2025. In closing, he reaffirmed his commitment to supporting sustainable and inclusive development efforts across Central and East Africa.

9. Thanking the Government of Gabon, the Director of the Subregional Office for Central Africa, Jean Luc Mastaki, emphasized the importance of resilience in the face of global economic uncertainty and highlighted the need to invest in productive capacity and trade, in order to strengthen Central and East African economies. Drawing on data from the productive capacities index of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, he underscored the two subregions' lagging performance and the urgent need for economic diversification. He also pointed to the Sevilla Commitment as a framework for financing sustainable development, and he reaffirmed the commitment of ECA to supporting its members by means of technical assistance and policy guidance.

II. Election of the Bureau and adoption of the agenda and programme of work [agenda item 2]

10. The following States were elected to form the new Bureau:

Chair:	Gabon
Vice-Chair:	Chad
Rapporteur:	Sao Tome and Principe

11. The Committee adopted the programme of work and the following agenda:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of the Bureau and adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
3. Socioeconomic overview of Central and East Africa and principal findings set out in the background paper.
4. Presentation of the annual activities of the Subregional Offices for Central and Eastern Africa.

5. Consideration and adoption of the draft recommendations of the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts for Central and East Africa.
6. Closing of the session.

III. Socioeconomic overview of Central and East Africa and principal findings set out in the background paper [agenda item 3]

A. Recent socioeconomic conditions in East Africa

12. A representative of the secretariat introduced the report on recent socioeconomic conditions in East Africa.¹

13. Participants said that, despite great uncertainty regarding the prospects for the global economy and an average debt burden that remained high, East Africa was displaying a degree of resilience, with an average growth rate of 5.8 per cent in 2024 and a forecast average growth rate of 6.1 per cent in 2025, primarily driven by strong commodity prices, buoyant trade among the countries of the subregion and increased investment. While most East African inflation rates had fallen slightly in 2024 and in the first half of 2025, owing principally to slight reductions in food and fuel prices, double-digit rates had been recorded by Burundi and Ethiopia in 2025.

14. They were concerned about the possible adverse effects of the imposition of tariffs by the United States of America on its imports from many countries, in particular from East African countries that had close trading relations with the United States. On the basis of the latest available trade data, pertaining to July 2025, however, East African exports to the United States had yet to be affected and exports from a number of countries in the subregion had actually increased.

15. Annual trade among the partner States of the East African Community had increased by 22 per cent from 2023 to 2024; its total value had surpassed \$11 billion for the first time. In the light of the greater sectoral diversification of trade within the subregion, that increase represented hope of accelerating economic diversification away from commodities.

16. Countries continued to grapple with high levels of indebtedness, although some relief had been provided by the weakening of the United States dollar. Increased domestic resource mobilization and reductions in non-essential spending remained priorities for many East African Governments.

17. Noting that tourism remained a powerful driver of growth in East Africa, participants highlighted that, in 2025, the Subregional Office for Eastern Africa had helped the Government of Kenya to draft a new national tourism strategy; offered the Government of Seychelles technical assistance in developing a strategy for fostering cruise tourism; and was conducting an ongoing assessment of the economic effects of tourism in Rwanda.

¹ ECA, "A comparative analysis of recent economic and social developments in Eastern Africa" (paper prepared for the fourth joint session of the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts for Central and East Africa).

B. Recent socioeconomic conditions in Central Africa

18. A representative of the secretariat introduced the report on recent socioeconomic conditions in Central Africa.²

19. Participants said that, while the average growth rate of Central Africa had increased slightly, from 3.4 per cent in 2023 to 4.5 per cent in 2024, including a strong increase driven by surging oil revenue in Angola, States in the subregion continued to struggle to create conditions conducive to inclusive and robust growth that could lead to improved living standards. Since the average growth rate of the subregion remained far below 7 per cent, achieving Sustainable Development Goal 8 (Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all) continued to pose a significant challenge.

20. While inflation rates varied significantly among countries, the average rate for Central Africa had remained high in 2024 and had increased from 11.7 to 15.9 per cent since 2023. Inflation was mostly fuelled by high food prices.

21. In 2024, fiscal and current account deficits had, once again, been recorded in most Central African States, which was evidence of their continued dependence on the prices of commodities, in particular oil, and of the vulnerability of their economies. Only the Governments of Angola, Congo and Gabon had recorded a current account surplus.

C. Investing in productive capacities and trade for a resilient future

22. A representative of the secretariat introduced the background paper on the theme of the session: investing in productive capacities and trade for a resilient future.³

23. Participants said that, owing to enduring structural vulnerabilities, Central and East African economies remained highly susceptible to global shocks, several of which the subregion had experienced in the previous two decades, including the global financial crisis of 2007 and 2008, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the ongoing war between the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

24. While East Africa had registered relatively stable growth, Central Africa had faced significant volatility, with sharp economic downturns during periods of falling oil prices.

25. Both subregions continued to rely heavily on a narrow set of productive capacities and on primary commodity exports, making them especially sensitive to external shocks caused by, for instance, pandemics, supply chain disruption and global demand fluctuations. Achieving greater resilience was a long-term process, requiring investments in productive capacity and greater regional integration.

26. Although trade integration within East Africa (20.8 per cent) was stronger than in Central Africa (2.8 per cent), both subregions continued to lag behind other parts of the world in the productive capacities index of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

² ECA, "Rapport sur les conditions socio-économiques: investir dans les capacités de production et le commerce pour un future résilient" (paper prepared for the fourth joint session of the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts for Central and East Africa).

³ ECA, *Background Paper: Investing in Productive Capacities and Trade for a Resilient Future* (forthcoming).

27. Priority areas for government action included strengthening human and natural capital, improving infrastructure and energy systems, expanding digital and transport connectivity and supporting private sector development. Diversification of economic structures and greater participation in regional trade were essential to reducing vulnerability to economic shocks and to placing Central and East Africa on a more sustainable development trajectory.

IV. Presentation of the annual activities of the Subregional Offices for Central and Eastern Africa [agenda item 4]

A. Central Africa

28. A representative of the secretariat introduced the report on the activities of the Subregional Office for Central Africa during the reporting period⁴ and the proposed work programme for 2026.

29. Participants said that the Subregional Office for Central Africa had consolidated its efforts around three strategic priorities: advancing natural capital accounting, fostering inclusive industrialization through bankable projects and promoting economic diversification through new-generation special economic zones. The priorities had been used as the basis of targeted initiatives across eight countries, encompassing technical assistance, capacity-building and the drafting of policy briefs on the African Continental Free Trade Area, regional value chains and the blue economy.

30. In the subregion, members of ECA had received enhanced support in incorporating small and medium-sized enterprises into the wider economic fabric, in optimizing natural resource management and in formulating coherent industrial policies tailored to national contexts.

31. Despite budgetary constraints, the Subregional Office had strategically mobilized its available resources to achieve tangible outcomes aligned with its core mandate.

32. In 2026, the Subregional Office was expected to build on those accomplishments by supporting the operationalization of environmental accounts, catalysing productive investments and accelerating the establishment of special economic zones linked with priority value chains. The overarching vision was to aim to make Central Africa more resilient, inclusive and competitive, both regionally and internationally.

33. The Committee endorsed the annual report on the work of ECA in Central Africa for 2025 and the proposed work programme for 2026.

B. East Africa

34. A representative of the secretariat introduced the report on the activities of the Subregional Office for Eastern Africa during the reporting period⁵ and the proposed work programme for 2026.

⁴ ECA, “Rapport d’activités: Bureau Afrique Centrale” (paper prepared for the fourth joint session of the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts for Central and East Africa).

⁵ ECA, “Annual programme performance report: ECA Sub Regional Office – Eastern Africa, 2025” (paper prepared for the fourth joint session of the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts for Central and East Africa).

35. Participants said that the Subregional Office had focused its efforts on supporting East African members of ECA in the promotion of trade within the subregion, on tourism and on the blue economy.

36. The Subregional Office had helped East African States to strengthen trade within the subregion through capacity-building. Stakeholders had been trained in the use of tools to implement the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, and assessments of the Agreement's effects on structural transformation had been produced and disseminated. In addition, the Subregional Office had explored digital trade solutions to strengthen food security and agricultural value chains.

37. Advancements had been made in the application of a blue economy valuation toolkit in Rwanda, where it had enabled policymakers to measure the sector's economic contribution more accurately.

38. Participants identified priorities for 2026, with a focus on consolidating progress and addressing existing policy gaps.

39. The Committee endorsed the annual report on the work of ECA in East Africa for 2025 and the proposed work programme for 2026.

V. Consideration and adoption of the draft recommendations of the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts for Central and East Africa [agenda item 5]

40. In the course of their deliberations, the members of the Committees discussed possible measures that Central and East African States could take to strengthen macroeconomic stability and increase investment in productive capacity and trade, with the aim of fostering inclusive, resilient and sustainable economic growth, along with measures that ECA could take to support its members in their development efforts.

41. In the light of the discussions, the Committees made and adopted the recommendations listed below and requested that the Bureau should convey them to the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

42. Members of ECA are encouraged:

- (a) To strengthen institutional capacity for structural and fiscal resilience;
- (b) To facilitate regional trade to act as a buffer against global shocks;
- (c) To accelerate industrialization and value chain development;
- (d) To upgrade infrastructure and improve regional connectivity.

43. ECA is encouraged:

- (a) To follow up on the establishment of a forum for engagement among the private sector federations of Central and East Africa to enhance interconnectivity in trade and investment links;
- (b) To respond to its members' requests for support in obtaining financial resources for their bankable projects;
- (c) To organize a conference at which its members will be able to present bankable projects to financial institutions;

(d) To provide, upon request, training for its members on the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area;

(e) To continue to support its members in the operationalization of national strategies to implement the Agreement;

(f) To conduct studies on regional value chains in non-traditional sectors, such as forestry products and minerals;

(g) To strengthen support for blue economy assessments;

(h) To provide support for the validation of national strategies on tourism;

(i) To organize workshops on digital trade and food security.

VI. Closing of the session [agenda item 6]

44. Participants underscored the need for ECA:

(a) To ensure that the recommendations should be transmitted to the appropriate stakeholders to be implemented, monitor the implementation process and keep the Committees apprised of progress made;

(b) To continue to provide technical support to its members in Central and East Africa, with a view to facilitating their implementation of the recommendations.

45. The Committees agreed that consultations regarding possible themes and locations of the next session should continue.

46. In their concluding remarks, the Director of the Subregional Office for Central Africa and the Director of the Subregional Office for Eastern Africa, Andrew Mold, thanked all participants for the quality of the discussion. They reiterated their commitment to working with the Bureau to implement the recommendations emanating from the joint session.

47. The Chair of the Bureau declared the joint session closed at 1.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 1 October 2025.

Annex I

Main observations and recommendations made during the ad hoc expert group meetings

I. Introduction

1. On 2 October 2025, the Subregional Office for Eastern Africa of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) convened an online ad hoc expert group meeting, at which the experts reviewed a report about the effects of official development assistance (ODA) reductions on development programmes and outcomes in East Africa.⁶

2. On 3 October, the Subregional Office convened another online ad hoc expert group meeting, at which the experts reviewed a report about making the most of trade among the partner States of the East African Community in the context of a changing global order.⁷

II. Main observations and recommendations

A. Effects of official development assistance reductions on development programmes and outcomes in East Africa

1. Discussion

3. A representative of the secretariat introduced the report on the effects of ODA reductions on development programmes and outcomes in East Africa.

4. Following the presentation of the report, the experts said that, although ODA had historically been a development-focused instrument, its effectiveness beyond national budgetary processes remained uncertain, which was an issue of particular concern for States nearing graduation from the category of least developed countries, which often faced the withdrawal of financial support. Non-governmental organizations, among other entities, had also been adversely affected by ODA cuts.

5. Aid reductions of the anticipated scale could slow growth rates in some countries, such as Somalia. Accordingly, States had been forced to explore alternative financing options and seek exemptions for critical programmes. Such developments could represent an opportunity to strengthen national systems and improve fiduciary risk management.

6. Recent aid reductions had adversely affected social services, in particular in such areas as health, education and nutrition. Since the subregion could face setbacks in the progress achieved over recent years in those sectors, the need for proactive measures to safeguard development gains was clear. In response to shrinking aid flows, non-governmental organizations were exploring alternative approaches, such as establishing partnerships with Governments to support solutions owned at the national level, strengthening the capacity of national civil society and conferring decision-making power on communities and children. Those changes reflected a narrowing space for traditional civil society action and, with a view to sustaining impact, necessitated adaptive strategies.

⁶ ECA, “The effects of ODA cutbacks in Eastern Africa’s programmes and development outcomes – what do we know?” (forthcoming).

⁷ ECA, “Eastern Africa’s trade performance in 2024–2025: Resilience amid global uncertainty and regional integration gains” (paper prepared for the ad hoc expert group meetings).

7. In the United Republic of Tanzania, from an assessment of the impact of ODA reductions on revenue generation and socioeconomic activities, it had emerged that health had been the most affected sector, given its historical dependence on externally funded programmes. In response, the Government had initiated a strategic move towards greater fiscal self-reliance and sustainability. Measures included increased domestic budget allocations to health and education, the establishment of alternative financing mechanisms, such as the AIDS Trust Fund, and reforms aimed at strengthening domestic revenue collection systems.

8. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the adverse effects of ODA cuts on the private sector had been significant, in particular on micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, many of which had stagnated or ceased trading, owing to reduced access to donor-funded microfinance. In addition, local value chains in the country's chief industrial sectors, such as agro-industry and mining, had been disrupted, as donor support had previously subsidized critical infrastructure and services. Furthermore, initiatives pertaining to sustainability and inclusivity – including those related to the blue-green economy and gender issues – were at risk of stagnation, which was evidence of the vulnerability of development efforts to changes in external financing.

9. Humanitarian aid had also been adversely affected by ODA reductions, which was further proof of the fragility of aid-dependent systems and of the urgent need for resilient, domestically funded solutions.

2. Recommendations

10. In the light of the discussions, the experts made and adopted the recommendations listed below.

11. Members of ECA are encouraged:

(a) To review fiscal frameworks, with a view to promoting domestic savings, enhancing private sector financing, strengthening technical cooperation and supporting trade development and the transfer of technology and skills;

(b) To develop strategies to enhance fiscal resilience and self-reliance;

(c) To review financing mechanisms for local businesses and development initiatives;

(d) To consider sustainable financing solutions, including strengthened domestic resource mobilization, and explore innovative financing instruments, such as diaspora bonds, which had been successfully piloted in some countries.

12. ECA is encouraged:

(a) To make ODA a permanent subject of discussion in subregional and continental forums, since it is an issue of long-standing concern;

(b) To establish an ODA observatory and, concurrently, identify and support non-governmental organizations that can serve as alternative development institutions;

(c) To approach the African Development Bank about establishing a technical assistance programme to formulate credible and bankable projects for businesses, including small and medium-sized enterprises, with a strong focus on young people;

(d) To work with the African Development Bank to assess the readiness of small island developing States for ODA reductions and provide support to those that already have appropriate response strategies;

(e) To help States to conduct reviews of fiscal regimes with a view to enhancing domestic savings, mobilizing private financing, strengthening technical cooperation and promoting trade development and the transfer of technology and skills;

(f) To request the African Development Bank to renew its engagement with the States members of the Indian Ocean Commission, where its presence has been limited over the past decade;

(g) To promote the use of alternative financing mechanisms, such as diaspora bonds;

(h) To urge continental institutions, regional economic communities and Governments to mobilize resources and build capacity for using those resources;

(i) To expand subregional and continental platforms for dialogue on the development of an autonomous financing regime for Africa, including such areas as mobilizing domestic savings, strengthening fiscal frameworks and advancing trade development to mitigate the impact of ODA cuts;

(j) To evaluate the development impact and effectiveness of ODA;

(k) To help its members with the diversification of financing and the promotion of resource mobilization by continental institutions, regional economic communities and Governments.

B. Making the most of East African trade in the context of a changing global order

1. Discussion

13. A representative of the secretariat introduced the report on making the most of East African trade in the context of a changing global order.

14. Following the presentation of the report, the experts said that they acknowledged the impact of the tariffs imposed by the United States of America on its imports from many countries, in particular on the textile sector, which was critical for some countries in the subregion. Reliance on that country's African Growth and Opportunity Act was risky, however, as it was a unilateral arrangement. East African States needed diversification of their products and markets, along with a strategy to navigate the short-term economic shock caused by global trade instability.

15. It was commendable that, despite global pressures, opportunities were also highlighted in the ECA report. Proactive and deliberate measures were needed. The surge in exports from China to Africa posed a threat to industrialization policy. Resilience must be built through stronger regional value chains – for instance, in the agribusiness, textiles and automotive sectors – and intra-Africa trade must be increased. It was important for African companies to establish themselves in services sectors – such as logistics, information and communications technology and tourism – to which increasing non-tariff barriers were a major obstacle. New non-tariff barriers and other impediments to trade within the subregion needed to be identified.

16. The Government of the United States was threatening to require the Government of Kenya to allow imports of second-hand clothing in exchange for access to the United States market under the African Growth and Opportunity Act. Since second-hand clothing did not meet the definition of dumping under the Agreement on Implementation of Article VI of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994 (Anti-Dumping Agreement), the concept

needed to be redefined to encompass environmental damage caused by the disposal of used clothing in Africa.

17. Although, owing to productive infrastructure development and the elimination of some non-tariff barriers, for instance through the use of one-stop border posts, trade within East Africa had doubled, productivity growth in the subregion remained very low.

18. It would be useful to have more in-depth analysis for the identification of major players and value chains driving trade within East Africa. Since Central Africa was one of the least integrated subregions, increased trade between Central and East Africa would be beneficial. Social and environmental sustainability must be mainstreamed into the trade debate.

19. Many African exports to the United States – including steel, aluminium and cobalt – were exempt from that country's new tariffs. In combination with the lower tariffs, on average, levied on African exports to the United States than were levied on exports from other regions and with the depreciation of the United States dollar, such exemptions made African goods more competitive.

20. Industrialization and trade were inextricably linked by the need for standardization or effective quality infrastructure. In Africa, a patchwork of regulations across the various regional economic communities presented a major obstacle. It was therefore important to develop an African quality policy and continental technical regulatory framework to harmonize standards within the African Continental Free Trade Area.

2. Recommendations

21. In the light of the discussions, the experts made and adopted the recommendations listed below.

22. Members of ECA are encouraged:

(a) To intensify efforts to deepen regional integration under the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, by promoting regional value chains in pivotal sectors, such as agribusiness, textiles and light manufacturing, which will require the development of integrated industrial parks and free trade zones to boost competitiveness, along with the encouragement of policies that spur sourcing and procurement within East Africa, prioritize domestic value addition and support enterprises in the subregion;

(b) To work with regional bodies to ease logistical and regulatory bottlenecks, by reducing the length of time required to removed non-tariff barriers, by implementing automated trade facilitation platforms, by prioritizing investments in transport corridors, energy networks and information and communications technology infrastructure and by fast-tracking the harmonization of standards and certification systems through a continental framework, which would enhance cross-border efficiency and strengthen market integration;

(c) To reduce vulnerability to external shocks by moving from reliance on exports of commodities towards exports of higher value added manufactured goods, through the provision of incentives and the expansion of access to finance for firms engaged in processing and industrial upgrading;

(d) To diversify export destinations by aligning national trade strategies with plans for implementing the Agreement in order to further expand the continental market because, while the African Growth and Opportunity Act has provided some trade benefits, the subregion's overreliance on unilateral trade preferences poses long-term risks.

23. ECA is encouraged:

(a) To prepare a policy paper on priority regional value chains and opportunities for trade between Central and East Africa;

(b) To provide the regional economic communities with technical assistance in reducing non-tariff barriers;

(c) To assist its members in building their capacity to implement the Agreement, with a focus on rules of origin and dispute resolution.

Annex II

Main messages and recommendations of the Central African ambassadors from their meeting held in advance of the fourth joint session of the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts for Central and East Africa

1. The Subregional Office for Central Africa of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) convened a meeting of Central African ambassadors in Yaoundé on 26 September 2025, at which representatives of countries in the subregion met, along with representatives of regional economic communities and other institutions in the subregion.
2. The main objective was for the Subregional Office to present its activity report to the ambassadors, strengthen ties with them, as the first points of contact with States in the subregion, and discuss mechanisms for regular information exchanges on the activities and ambitions of the Subregional Office. The meeting was also aimed at mobilizing ambassadors to participate actively in upcoming events, including the fourth joint session of the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts for Central and East Africa.
3. Participants included representatives of Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Congo and Gabon, along with those of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States and the Central African States Development Bank.
4. The Director of the Subregional Office, Jean Luc Mastaki, opened the meeting by emphasizing its strategic importance, as part of enhancing the visibility of ECA measures among Central African Governments. He stressed the importance of collaboration with ministries and regional economic communities and invited ambassadors to support ECA by requesting that their Governments should apprise the Commission of their national priorities, facilitate ECA missions to their countries and mobilize domestic financing to address liquidity challenges.
5. The discussions provided an opportunity to present the achievements, publications, challenges and prospects of the Subregional Office. One participant highlighted that ECA measures were aligned with the national development strategy and the import substitution policy of his country. One participant expressed appreciation for projects focused on women and young people and called for strengthened information-sharing with diplomatic missions. Another participant welcomed support for the industrial strategy of his country and for a special economic zone project there. In addition, a further participant expressed interest in the blue economy and digital development. The representative of an institution in the subregion emphasized collaboration on the import substitution strategy and the finalization of a memorandum of understanding with ECA. Lastly, the representative of another institution in the subregion recalled the importance of the Central Africa consensual transport master plan and advocated increased cooperation on green finance.
6. In the light of the discussions, the experts made and adopted the recommendations listed below.

7. ECA is encouraged:

(a) To institutionalize a permanent platform for discussions between the Commission and diplomatic missions;

(b) To inform the missions regularly about ongoing activities;

(c) To involve the missions in the channels of the Subregional Office for publications and newsletters;

(d) To relaunch an evaluation of the Central Africa consensual transport master plan.
