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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

Agenda item 9

Consideration and adoption of the report of
the Committee of Experts and consideration of recommendations
and draft resolutions

Report of the Committee of Experts on its forty-fourth meeting

Introduction

1. The forty-fourth meeting of the Committee of Experts of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) was held in Tangier, Morocco, in a hybrid format featuring both in-person and online participation from 28 to 30 March 2026.

Part one

I. Opening of the forty-fourth meeting of the Committee of Experts and the fifty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Africa [agenda item 1]

A. Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following members of ECA: Algeria, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

3. The following entities of the United Nations system were represented: Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, International Labour Organization, International Monetary Fund, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and World Health Organisation.

4. An observer from the following State Member of the United Nations was present: Bangladesh.

5. Representatives of the following intergovernmental and regional organizations were present: African Centre of Meteorological Applications for



Development, African Export-Import Bank, African Tax Administration Forum, African Union Commission, Central Bank of West African States, International Seabed Authority, Tax Justice Network Africa, West African Monetary Institute.

6. The following regional economic community was represented: Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa.

7. Observers were present from the following entities: Abdelmalek Essaâdi University, Addis Ababa University, Alliance of African Multilateral Financial Institutions, Financial Sector Deepening Africa, Gates Foundation, Global Integrated Management Consulting, Islamic Development Bank, Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis, National Institute for Employment and Vocational Training of Angola, National School of Commerce and Management of Tangier, Pan-African Youth Union, Policy Centre for the New South, Port Management Association of Eastern and Southern Africa, Poste Maroc for the Tanger-Tétouan-Al Hoceïma Region, Tanger-Tétouan-Al Hoceïma Regional Centre for Investment, secretariat of the Lobito Corridor Transit Transport Facilitation Agency, Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation, Trans Kalahari Corridor Secretariat.

B. Opening statements

8. The opening session was chaired by the Director of Treasury and External Finance in the Ministry of Economy and Finance of Morocco and Chair of the outgoing Bureau of the Committee of Experts, Mohammed Tarik Bchir.

9. Opening statements were delivered by the Deputy Executive Secretary (Programme Support) of ECA, Mama Keita, and Mr. Bchir on behalf of the Minister of Economy and Finance of Morocco, Nadia Fettah.

10. In his opening remarks, Mr. Bchir emphasized that, although the gross domestic product (GDP) of Africa had rebounded by 4 per cent in 2025, African economies remained structurally vulnerable and dependent on exports of raw materials and intermediate goods. He said that Africa needed to consolidate recent gains, including by increasing capital investment, while addressing persistent structural weaknesses, in particular the underutilization of its young people. Growth had been driven largely by capital accumulation and labour rather than productivity gains, reflecting in part the limited efficiency of public investment. Innovation remained the main driver of modern economies, but, in the context of rising uncertainty, the availability of reliable and transparent data was essential for effective strategic planning. Digital technologies had great potential to boost productivity, reduce high transaction costs and support African integration in terms of trade and research and development. There was an urgent need to deepen regional integration and strengthen regional value chains.

11. In her opening statement, the Deputy Executive Secretary (Programme Support) noted that the theme of the session was timely and provided an opportunity to examine the ways in which frontier technologies could drive growth and structural transformation in Africa by reallocating resources towards more productive sectors. She said that such technologies had the potential to create millions of jobs, reduce poverty, boost efficiency and support climate adaptation, in particular in the area of agriculture. Africa was lagging behind other regions in adopting technology. In that regard, artificial intelligence was projected to contribute only 5.6 per cent to the continent's economic growth, and its biotechnology market, which was expected to reach \$138.2 billion in value by 2030, remained modest when compared with the global biotechnology market, which was projected to reach \$1.38 trillion during the same period. Africa needed to prioritize the acquisition of digital skills by its population and to have committed

national leadership in the domain of advanced technologies. Informal businesses and microenterprises should be empowered to leverage advanced technologies through adequate financing. Investment in digital infrastructure, including data centres, and the establishment of centres of excellence could support technology diffusion, including in the informal sector. Bold and strategic actions were required to leverage data and advanced technologies for the economic transformation of Africa.

12. Mr. Bchir highlighted the efforts of Morocco to promote innovation and harness frontier technologies, as articulated by the Government in its Digital Morocco 2030 national strategy. He said that those efforts included the expansion of high-speed digital infrastructure and measures to facilitate investment in technology sectors. New technologies were transforming all dimensions of society. African countries needed to rethink their economic models, which still relied heavily on natural resources. Greater solidarity was required to pool the continent's resources and maximize the benefits of those technologies.

13. In concluding the opening session, representatives of ECA and the Government of Morocco unveiled a commemorative stamp marking 66 years since the second session of ECA, which had also been held in Tangier.

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

14. The following members of ECA were unanimously elected by the Committee to form the new Bureau:

Chair:	Cameroon
First Vice-Chair:	Sierra Leone
Second Vice-Chair:	Kenya
Third Vice-Chair:	Zambia
Rapporteur:	Morocco

15. Following an acceptance statement by the newly elected Chair, Head of Economic Integration in Central Africa of the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development of Cameroon, Efangon Daniel Yannick, the Committee adopted without further amendment the programme of work and the following agenda, which were based on the draft programme of work (E/ECA/COE/44/3/Rev.1) and the provisional agenda (E/ECA/COE/44/1/Rev.1) that had been circulated:

1. Opening of the forty-fourth meeting of the Committee of Experts and the fifty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Africa.
2. Election of the Bureau and adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
3. Overview of recent economic and social developments in Africa.
4. Assessment of progress on regional integration in Africa.
5. Presentation on the theme of the fifty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Africa.
6. Statutory issues:
 - (a) Report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Economic Commission for Africa from March 2025 to February 2026;

- (b) Report on the follow-up to the resolutions of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development;
 - (c) Report of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on its eleventh session and follow-up activities;
 - (d) Report on United Nations support for the African Union and its African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development programme;
 - (e) Proposed programme plan and budget for 2027;
 - (f) Reports on the work of the subsidiary bodies of the Economic Commission for Africa;
 - (g) Report on the implementation of the Awaza Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2024–2034;
 - (h) Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries: report on progress in implementation of priority areas in Africa.
7. Date, venue and theme of the fifty-ninth session of the Economic Commission for Africa.
 8. Other matters.
 9. Consideration and adoption of the report of the Committee of Experts and consideration of recommendations and draft resolutions.
 10. Closing of the forty-fourth meeting of the Committee of Experts.

Part two

Account of proceedings

III. Overview of recent economic and social developments in Africa [agenda item 3]

A. Presentation

16. Under this agenda item, a representative of the secretariat introduced an overview of recent economic and social developments in Africa (E/ECA/COE/44/4). In the report, which had been prepared before the recent escalation of global conflicts, it was highlighted that economic growth in Africa was projected to reach 4 per cent in 2026, underpinned by public investment, fiscal reform and easing inflationary pressures. Although growth had proved resilient, it remained below the levels needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Fiscal deficits and debt-to-GDP ratios were expected to decline gradually, reflecting sustained consolidation efforts, although debt service obligations remained high and continued to undermine development spending. Significant progress had been made in implementing the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area: pivotal protocols had been adopted, and 48 States Parties had ratified the Agreement. While total African exports had increased, intra-African trade remained stagnant at about one sixth of total global exports, which was clear evidence of the urgent need to accelerate the implementation of the Agreement. Downside risks, including

poverty and inequality, the dominance of the informal economy and limited digital connectivity and social integration, persisted and posed significant challenges to the growth trajectory of the region.

B. Discussion

17. In the ensuing discussion, experts highlighted the opportunities and risks associated with digitalization, noting its potential to improve productivity, transparency and public financial management. Concerns were raised, however, regarding limited statistical capacity for measuring digital activities, uneven technology adoption and the risk of job displacement. Experts underscored the importance of foreign direct investment and continued policy reform, emphasizing the need for diversification and structural transformation towards value addition and job creation, as well as for greater accountability and transparency, in particular in resource-rich economies. They stressed the importance of predictable regulatory frameworks and partnerships with the private sector as essential conditions for attracting investment. Concern was expressed about fiscal uncertainty stemming from high debt levels and the adverse effects of geopolitical tensions on African economies. In addition, experts underscored the importance of strengthening intra-African trade, advancing the development of regional value chains and fostering economic self-reliance. Lastly, experts emphasized the need for sustained investment in energy, digital and transport infrastructure, which would lay the foundations for long-term growth.

C. Recommendations

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

- (a) Members of ECA are encouraged:
 - (i) To accelerate investment in energy, digital and transport infrastructure, including through blended finance mechanisms, as a basis for structural transformation, regional integration and inclusive growth;
 - (ii) To reorient foreign direct investment towards value addition, industrialization and the domestic processing of raw materials, supported by investor-friendly tax reforms and strengthened partnerships with the private sector;
 - (iii) To promote transparency and accountability in public finances by harnessing technology and data, and adopting a uniform approach to debt management and reporting;
 - (iv) To implement policies aimed at ensuring that digitalization, natural resource management and fiscal reforms translate into broader job creation and more equitable development outcomes;
- (b) ECA is encouraged:
 - (i) To provide policy guidance on value addition and job creation, in particular in strategic sectors, such as mining and natural resource processing;
 - (ii) To provide targeted analytical and technical support to countries that are in or are emerging from conflict situations, with a view to supporting economic resilience, recovery and development;
 - (iii) To assist countries with strengthening data and digital governance systems, including the measurement of both digital activities and performance in the services sector, and with improving access to

international platforms for debt transparency and concessional financing.

IV. Assessment of progress on regional integration in Africa [agenda item 4]

A. Presentation

19. Under this agenda item, a representative of the secretariat introduced an assessment of progress on regional integration in Africa (E/ECA/COE/44/5). In the assessment, a strengthening macroeconomic outlook was highlighted, alongside easing inflation and narrowing fiscal deficits. Those improvements notwithstanding, structural challenges continued to constrain the pace and depth of integration. While progress in implementing the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area had been significant, the impact on trade outcomes remained limited, and infrastructure gaps, limited digital connectivity, skills mismatches and inadequate health financing persisted. Attention was drawn to the need to accelerate implementation of the Agreement, promote free movement and labour mobility, invest in digital and physical infrastructure, strengthen health and education systems, address debt vulnerabilities and reinforce peace, security and governance frameworks.

B. Discussion

20. In the ensuing discussion, experts noted that, despite ongoing efforts towards regional integration, African countries continued to be constrained by significant structural and financing challenges. They called for stronger domestic resource mobilization, tax reform and diversified financing channels to reduce reliance on debt-financed development. They also underscored the importance of investing in transport and connectivity infrastructure, as a driver of trade and value chain development, and noted that deliberate efforts were required to develop strategic industries, including the aerospace sector, to support long-term economic transformation. They observed that the free movement of persons remained a critical pillar of integration but that many issues remained unresolved, citing challenges related to visa regimes, border management and security concerns. They also stressed the need for sequenced reforms in trade facilitation, investment frameworks and infrastructure development, guided by clear short-term priorities and measurable objectives, and called for a shift in focus away from service-led growth and for the prioritization of productive sectors that generated higher value addition, employment and economic diversification.

C. Recommendations

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

- (a) Members of ECA are encouraged:
 - (i) To establish short-term and medium-term priorities for regional integration, with a focus on sequenced reforms in such areas as trade facilitation, infrastructure development and investment frameworks, supported by specific implementation and monitoring arrangements;
 - (ii) To strengthen domestic resource mobilization through tax reform, modernized tax administration and the crowding in of private capital, with a view to reducing reliance on debt financing and expanding fiscal space for development;

(iii) To pursue and ensure measurable progress in ratifying the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment in a manner that balances economic benefits with national security considerations and implementation capacity;

(b) ECA is encouraged:

(i) To provide technical support to its members in widening their tax bases, improving tax administration efficiency and diversifying financing instruments;

(ii) To support industrial development strategies and strengthen regional value chains, including through such initiatives as the Single African Air Transport Market;

(iii) To continue to support the effective implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and free movement frameworks, while assisting its members in balancing economic integration with security and stability considerations.

V. Presentation on the theme of the fifty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Africa [agenda item 5]

A. Presentation

22. Under this agenda item, the Deputy Executive Secretary (Programme) and Chief Economist of ECA, Hanan Morsy, introduced a report on the theme of the fifty-eighth session of the Commission, “Growth through innovation: harnessing data and frontier technologies for the economic transformation of Africa” (E/ECA/COE/44/6-E/ECA/CM/58/4). She highlighted the role of data and frontier technologies in unlocking inclusive, sustainable economic transformation across several sectors, important issues affecting the adoption of frontier technologies in Africa, and opportunities to unlock productivity-driven growth and economic transformation on the continent through innovation and the scaling-up of technologies.

B. Discussion

23. In the ensuing discussion, experts highlighted the important role that digital technologies played in improving governance and productivity. They also highlighted the low levels of investment in research and development in Africa, the weak total factor productivity and the continued reliance on capital accumulation and raw material exports. Major structural constraints included limited technical skills, weak innovation systems, insufficient sovereign and reliable data and fragmented artificial intelligence and data governance frameworks.

24. Experts underscored the importance of strengthening artificial intelligence and data sovereignty to leverage frontier technologies for productivity gains. They also underscored that Africa continued to face major constraints, including a brain drain, weak research and development strategies, poor alignment between education systems and economic needs and limited support for local innovators.

25. Experts called for action to localize innovation and address skills shortages, reverse the brain drain, remove the financing constraints encountered by young innovators and fully leverage the potential of African young people. They also called for stronger continental integration and for closer collaboration between ECA and the African Union Commission, including in

undertaking country-level assessments of efforts to finance innovation among young people.

26. Experts emphasized the need to scale up the training of highly skilled engineers across the continent and to strengthen partnerships between Africa and the global North, with a view to mitigating the brain drain.

C. Recommendations

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

- (a) Members of ECA are encouraged:
 - (i) To increase financing to foster innovation and productivity, in particular among young innovators, in line with continental-level commitments, such as the African Union target of allocating at least 1 per cent of GDP to research and development;
 - (ii) To align the development of frontier technologies with national development plans through the use of innovative financing strategies, including blended finance and green bonds;
 - (iii) To promote local innovation start-ups and establish platforms for promoting financial inclusion through shared infrastructure;
 - (iv) To align education, skills development and apprenticeships with the requirements of high-productivity sectors, in particular industry;
 - (v) To actively involve the private sector in implementing policies that align skills with labour-market needs, taking into account technological developments, innovation dynamics and the growing requirements of Industry 4.0;
 - (vi) To strengthen data autonomy and artificial intelligence sovereignty in order to reduce external dependence and strengthen national and subnational data systems and strategies;
- (b) ECA is encouraged:
 - (i) To support its members in developing frameworks for prioritizing and monitoring the adoption of frontier technologies and for strengthening governance of artificial intelligence, data and cybersecurity;
 - (ii) To support its members in developing stronger legal and institutional frameworks for inclusive, data-driven decision-making, in particular in critical economic sectors;
 - (iii) To support regional and intercountry collaboration on research and development, including technology development;
 - (iv) To provide technical support to its members for the development of a continental framework to guide foreign direct investment, including in extractive industries, with minimum requirements regarding benefits for African countries;
 - (v) To provide technical support to its members in the establishment of centres of excellence specializing in artificial intelligence and the governance and management of data.

VI. Statutory issues [agenda item 6]

A. Report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Economic Commission for Africa from March 2025 to February 2026

B. Report on the follow-up to the resolutions of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development

1. Presentation

28. Under sub-items 6 (a) and (b), a representative of the secretariat introduced the report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Economic Commission for Africa from March 2025 to February 2026 (E/ECA/COE/44/7) and the report on the follow-up to the resolutions of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (E/ECA/COE/44/8).

2. Discussion

29. In the ensuing discussion, experts expressed appreciation for the Commission's technical assistance in advancing the development priorities of Africa, including domestic resource mobilization, debt management and advocacy concerning the reform of the global financial architecture and regional integration. They emphasized the importance of speaking with a common African voice in global forums, including at meetings of the Group of 20. They noted the work of ECA that had led to the rechannelling of special drawing rights to regional development banks and the restructuring of the debt of members of ECA and stressed the need for more evidence of the impact of the work of ECA at the country level.

30. Experts highlighted the barriers limiting climate finance flows to Africa and underscored the value of benchmarking investments in the special economic zones of members of ECA.

31. Recognizing the growing protectionist tendencies that could undermine the effectiveness of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and lead to deindustrialization, experts stressed the need to support the implementation of the Agreement through sustained engagement to secure national buy-in; to address practical issues, including rules of origin and trans-shipment; and to promote value addition and industrialization. In that regard, they called for strengthened synergies among ECA, the African Union Commission and the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

32. Experts requested additional support from ECA to strengthen sovereign creditworthiness and develop capital markets, to facilitate capacity-building and peer learning in the areas of artificial intelligence and digital governance, and to develop financing approaches in order to strengthen resilience in countries affected by conflict, natural disasters and other shocks.

3. Recommendations

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

(a) Members of ECA are encouraged:

(i) To strengthen domestic resource mobilization and debt management, including by curtailing illicit financial flows and improving tax administration and service delivery;

- (ii) To accelerate the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area by addressing implementation challenges;
- (b) ECA is encouraged:
 - (i) To continue to support a common African position on the reform of the global financial architecture and debt restructuring;
 - (ii) To scale up its support for the sovereign credit ratings of its members, capital market development and the operationalization of an African credit rating agency;
 - (iii) To support its members through capacity-building and peer learning in the areas of artificial intelligence and digital governance;
 - (iv) To employ robust monitoring and evaluation tools to track and report on the impact of its work at the country level;
 - (v) To collaborate with other entities of the United Nations system to provide technical assistance tailored to the specific needs of its members in the areas of access to climate finance, accreditation processes, capacity for project preparation and the framing of climate investments in terms of risk and return profiles.

C. Report of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on its eleventh session and follow-up activities

D. Report on United Nations support for the African Union and its African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development programme

1. Presentation

34. Under sub-items 6 (c) and (d), representatives of the secretariat introduced the report of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on its eleventh session and follow-up activities (E/ECA/COE/44/9) and the report on United Nations support for the African Union and its African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development programme (E/ECA/COE/44/10/Rev.1).

2. Discussion

35. In the ensuing discussion, experts welcomed the reports and commended the secretariat for the work that had been done in that regard. They emphasized the need for a clear and comprehensive picture of the progress that countries had made towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, noting that many countries were facing significant challenges.

36. Concerns were raised that some countries were falling behind in their transition to middle-income status, and that even those that were already classified as middle-income countries showed limited prospects of advancing into the high-income category. Highlighting the importance of tracking the progress made by least developed countries towards graduation from that category, experts noted that sustained growth would be needed in order to accelerate progress in the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the second 10-year implementation plan¹ of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union.

¹ African Union, *Decade of Accelerated Implementation: Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan, 2024–2033* (Addis Ababa, 2024).

37. Experts underscored the challenge of linking the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 at the national level and called for adherence to the “two agendas, one framework” approach, which was conducive to the better coordination of such implementation; for stronger action at the national level; and for more support to enable countries to implement both agendas successfully. In relation to ensuring accountability and progress, they emphasized the critical role to be played by ECA and the African Union, again employing the “two agendas, one framework” approach, in support of national planning and in the implementation of monitoring and reporting on the two agendas.

3. Recommendations

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

(a) Members of ECA are encouraged:

(i) To accelerate the implementation of the recommendations contained in the outcome documents of the eleventh session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development;

(ii) To align national development strategies with the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(b) ECA is encouraged:

(i) To intensify support for its members on data-driven development planning and integrated reporting, including in their efforts to strengthen national systems for the generation and use of high-quality data for evidence-based policymaking;

(ii) To assist its members, in partnership with the African Union Commission and other stakeholders, in aligning the goals of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 through integrated national planning, implementation and reporting frameworks, including targeted technical assistance and policy advisory services;

(iii) To further expand and strengthen its dashboard and data laboratories for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa, in order to enhance the availability, usability and visualization of high-quality, timely data, with a view to supporting evidence-based policymaking, improving the tracking of progress made in implementing the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and fostering greater transparency and coordination.

E. Proposed programme plan and budget for 2027

1. Presentation

39. Under sub-item 6 (e), representatives of the secretariat introduced a summary of the proposed programme plan and budget for 2027 and programme performance for 2025 (E/ECA/COE/44/11).

2. Discussion

40. In the ensuing discussion, experts took note of the programme plan for 2027 and welcomed the proposed budget for sections 18 (including both regular budget and extrabudgetary resources), 11 and 23, amounting to \$119.8 million, which had been prepared on the basis of the 2026 revised estimates, with zero growth. In addition, they noted the organizational changes made to sharpen the Commission’s strategic focus and enhance its development impact.

41. Experts acknowledged the secretariat’s sustained engagement with countries emerging from conflict and related constraints, noting the relevance

of tailored interventions, including capacity-building, resource mobilization and regional integration support, and highlighted the importance of strengthening support for national economic development and regional integration. They emphasized the need for enhanced assistance in implementing the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, in particular regarding strategies to improve participation in intra-African trade, diversify the economy and attract sustainable investment. They also reiterated the importance of mobilizing domestic and international resources, strengthening domestic capital markets and expanding financial inclusion for women and young people.

42. Experts called for coordinated advocacy by members of ECA to secure the requisite funding to enable the Commission to deliver on its mandate.

43. It was recalled that resources under the regular programme of technical cooperation remained available to members of ECA, upon request and in accordance with established procedures.

3. Recommendations

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

(a) Members of ECA are encouraged:

To strengthen coordination between their respective permanent missions to the United Nations in New York, with a view to collectively advocating and defending the Commission's programme and budget for 2027;

(i) To submit requests to the Commission for technical assistance in priority areas, including innovative finance, capital market development, climate action and value chain development;

(b) ECA is encouraged:

(i) To continue supporting its members in advancing inclusive financing initiatives, in particular for young people and women, through policy advisory, capacity-building and partnership facilitation initiatives in relation to national development, trade, climate-resilient green transition and natural resource management;

(ii) To scale up support for countries emerging from conflict, through programmes tailored to their specific institutional and development needs, in particular in the areas of trade, economic governance, financial sector development and climate resilience;

(iii) To continue strengthening engagement with national and regional stakeholders, so as to promote coherence, enhance programmatic impact and improve delivery across all subregions.

F. Reports on the work of the subsidiary bodies of the Economic Commission for Africa

1. Committee on Private Sector Development, Regional Integration, Trade, Infrastructure, Industry and Technology

2. Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Africa

3. Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender

(a) Presentation

45. Under sub-item 6 (f), representatives of the secretariat introduced the

report of the Committee on Private Sector Development, Regional Integration, Trade, Infrastructure, Industry and Technology on its fourth session (E/ECA/COE/44/12), the report of the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Africa on its eleventh meeting (E/ECA/COE/44/13) and the report of the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender on its sixth session (E/ECA/COE/44/14).

(b) Discussion

46. In the ensuing discussion, experts emphasized the strategic importance of strengthening the technological and industrial base and aerospace capabilities in Africa.

47. They highlighted challenges faced by countries with regard to leveraging opportunities offered by the African Continental Free Trade Area and called for the accelerated ratification of the Protocol to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area on Digital Trade, improved access to finance for young people and entrepreneurs, the scaling-up of renewable energy initiatives and the enhancement of trade efficiency through digital platforms.

48. Experts also highlighted structural inequalities in labour markets, in particular gender disparities, including limited participation of women in such sectors as mining, and the need to address systemic barriers to their inclusion.

49. The role of big data and digital systems in promoting equitable access to opportunities was discussed and calls were made for stronger governance frameworks and coordinated approaches at the national and regional levels.

50. Experts also highlighted gaps in statistical systems and urged countries to better capture unpaid care and domestic work in national accounts and to strengthen gender-responsive data systems.

51. They underscored the need for the ethical use of geospatial data and their integration into national development plans, data protection and anonymization, and adequate frameworks and tools to measure and address multidimensional poverty across the continent.

(c) Recommendations

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

(a) Members of ECA are encouraged:

(i) To accelerate the ratification and implementation of the Protocol to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area on Digital Trade, including through the broader use of the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System by African central banks;

(ii) To develop and implement the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework for ethical geospatial information management;

(iii) To recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through regular time-use surveys and the compilation of household production satellite accounts;

(iv) To strengthen national statistical and data systems, including through the integration of multidimensional poverty measures, gender-responsive data and geospatial information into development planning;

(b) ECA is encouraged:

(i) To support its members in the accelerated implementation and incorporation into domestic law and frameworks of the

Protocol to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area on Digital Trade;

(ii) To support its members in institutionalizing the African Gender and Development Index within their gender monitoring and reporting systems and in adapting the tool to inform more targeted programming;

(iii) To provide technical assistance to its members with a view to improving the ability of their national statistical systems to measure multidimensional poverty, produce subnational data and implement geospatial information frameworks;

(iv) To support its members in regularly undertaking time-use surveys on unpaid care and domestic work and in compiling household production satellite accounts;

(v) To support its members in strengthening intergovernmental cooperation for the purpose of sharing knowledge and experience in managing big data by leveraging existing data warehouses across the continent.

4. African Institute for Economic Development and Planning

(a) Presentation

53. Under sub-item 6 (f), a representative of the secretariat introduced the progress report on the work of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) (E/ECA/COE/44/15).

(b) Discussion

54. In the ensuing discussion, experts commended the Institute for its work in delivering targeted and demand-driven capacity-development activities that were responsive to the needs of members of ECA and welcomed the strategic repositioning of the Institute under its new strategic framework for the period 2026–2030. They expressed solidarity with IDEP regarding the impact of outstanding arrears on its operations and encouraged members of ECA to regularize their contributions.

(c) Recommendations

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

(a) Members of ECA are encouraged:

(i) To fulfil their statutory obligations to contribute to the annual budget of IDEP;

(ii) To engage actively with IDEP in identifying capacity-development needs, with a view to ensuring that its programmes remain demand-driven and aligned with national development priorities;

(b) ECA is encouraged:

(i) To continue the strategic review of the business model of IDEP with a view to responding to the evolving global and regional environment;

(ii) To support the implementation of the new strategic framework of IDEP, including through an integrated capacity-development programme and diversified financing arrangements, in order to strengthen the Institute's financial sustainability and expand its reach across the continent.

5. Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts**6. Subregional preparatory meetings****(a) Presentation**

56. Under sub-item 6 (f), representatives of the secretariat introduced the reports of the Intergovernmental Committees of Senior Officials and Experts for the subregions of Africa on their sessions (E/ECA/COE/44/16, E/ECA/COE/44/17, E/ECA/COE/44/18 and E/ECA/COE/44/19) and delivered an oral report on the subregional preparatory meetings for the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

(b) Discussion

57. In the ensuing discussion, experts commended the subregional offices for the targeted and responsive support provided to members of ECA across a wide range of priority areas, including domestic resource mobilization, digital transformation, infrastructure development, economic diversification and the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. They welcomed the analytical work undertaken on digitalization, the informal sector, climate finance, the blue economy and sustainable tourism, recognizing the relevance of that work to the specific development contexts of different subregions. Experts also commended ECA for its efforts to promote inclusive and sustainable growth and for championing the interests of young people and women at regional and international forums.

(c) Recommendations

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

(a) Members of ECA are encouraged:

(i) To accelerate the digitalization of tax administration and public financial management systems, with a view to broadening the tax base, reducing tax inequalities and strengthening domestic resource mobilization;

(ii) To invest in digital infrastructure and connectivity, and to adopt cross-border data-sharing frameworks and automated customs systems, so as to facilitate regional trade and support the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area;

(iii) To develop and implement strategies that harness the blue economy, sustainable tourism and green value chains as drivers of economic diversification and inclusive growth, in particular with expanded opportunities and capacity strengthening for young people;

(b) ECA is encouraged:

(i) To continue providing tailored analytical and technical support on the focus area of each subregional office, taking into consideration subregional contexts and comparative advantages;

(ii) To strengthen its support for post-conflict countries and those facing elevated climate vulnerability, through interventions that promote economic resilience, recovery and sustainable development.

H. Report on the implementation of the Awaza Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2024–2034

I. Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries: report on progress in implementation of priority areas in Africa

1. Presentation

59. Under sub-items 6 (g) and (h), representatives of the secretariat introduced the report on the implementation of the Awaza Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2024–2034 (E/ECA/COE/44/20) and the report on progress in implementation of priority areas in Africa of the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (E/ECA/COE/44/21).

2. Discussion

60. In the ensuing discussion, experts underscored the importance of strengthened collaboration between landlocked developing countries and transit countries to address persistent transit challenges, emphasizing the need to harmonize national regulations with international transit obligations and noting that the implementation of such obligations often remained constrained by national policies and limited mechanisms to resolve transit-related problems. Improved regional cooperation and regular stocktaking were essential to enhancing transit efficiency and integration. In addition, experts highlighted concerns regarding the sustainability of graduation from the least developed country category, noting that, although no country had returned to that category after graduating from it, several countries had faced delays in graduating owing to rising debt burdens and external shocks, such as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

3. Recommendations

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

(a) Members of ECA that are landlocked developing countries or least developed countries are encouraged:

(i) To align national development plans, strategies and budgets with the priorities of the Doha Programme of Action and the Awaza Programme of Action, while ensuring coherence with the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(ii) To strengthen resilience to external shocks by investing in and enhancing adaptive and productive capacities, food security and sustainable natural resource management;

(b) Members of ECA that are landlocked developing countries are encouraged to apply international transit obligations to national contexts and harmonize them with national policies and regulations;

(c) Members of ECA that are least developed countries are encouraged to ensure that they develop smooth transition strategies before graduation from the least developed country status, with a view to sustaining their graduated status;

(d) ECA is encouraged:

(i) To provide technical assistance in support of the alignment of national development frameworks with the Doha Programme of Action

and the Awaza Programme of Action and to strengthen monitoring and reporting capacities;

(ii) To assist its members in strengthening trade facilitation, reducing trade costs and enhancing participation in regional and global value chains, including through the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area;

(iii) To promote regional infrastructure and connectivity, including cross-border initiatives;

(iv) To facilitate knowledge-sharing, peer learning and regional dialogue in order to accelerate the effective implementation of the programmes of action and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

VII. Date, venue and theme of the fifty-ninth session of the Economic Commission for Africa [agenda item 7]

A. Presentation

62. A representative of the secretariat introduced a note on the date, venue and theme of the fifty-ninth session of the Economic Commission for Africa (E/ECA/COE/44/22). It was proposed that the fifty-ninth session be held in March 2027 at ECA headquarters in Addis Ababa, unless one of the members of ECA offered to host it, under one of the following themes, which had been formulated by ECA through a consultative process and were being submitted to the Committee for its consideration:

(a) Option one: “Shaping the future of work in Africa: youth employment, growth and fiscal resilience”;

(b) Option two: “From extraction to transformation: leveraging the critical minerals and biodiversity of Africa for industrialization and green growth”;

(c) Option three: “Reclaiming financial sovereignty for Africa to drive sustainable, inclusive and resilient development”.

B. Discussion

63. In the ensuing discussion, experts expressed a preference for the theme “Shaping the future of work in Africa: youth employment, growth and fiscal resilience”, pointing out the forward-looking nature of the theme, given the high number of unemployed young people in Africa, and the fact that it was in continuity with the theme of the current session. Moreover, the theme reflected one of the most urgent and cross-cutting challenges facing Africa, namely, the need to harness the continent’s demographic potential by creating jobs, improving employability and aligning youth skills with labour-market demand.

64. Experts highlighted that the strategic future of Africa was increasingly tied to critical minerals, green industrialization and value addition, and they proposed that the theme “From extraction to transformation: leveraging the critical minerals and biodiversity of Africa for industrialization and green growth” be considered for the sixtieth session of the Commission. Identifying the theme for the sixtieth session at the current stage would enable rigorous analysis and allow for comprehensive, in-depth preparations well ahead of the meeting.

65. Cameroon offered to host the fifty-ninth session of the Commission under the preferred theme.

C. Recommendations

66. In the light of the discussion, the Committee recommended that:

(a) The fifty-ninth session of the Economic Commission for Africa be held under the theme “Shaping the future of work in Africa: youth employment, growth and fiscal resilience”;

(b) The sixtieth session of the Economic Commission for Africa be held under the theme “From extraction to transformation: leveraging the critical minerals and biodiversity of Africa for industrialization and green growth”;

(c) The offer from Cameroon to host the fifty-ninth session of the Economic Commission for Africa under the preferred theme be considered by the ministers.

VIII. Other matters [agenda item 8]

67. No other matters were raised.

IX. Consideration and adoption of the report of the Committee of Experts and consideration of recommendations and draft resolutions [agenda item 9]

68. Under this agenda item, the Committee considered the draft report on its meeting together with the draft resolutions to be submitted for consideration and adoption by the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development of the Economic Commission for Africa. Several experts made comments and proposed amendments to the report. After extensive discussion, the Committee unanimously adopted the report. There were no amendments to the draft resolutions, which are attached in the annex to the present report for consideration and adoption by the Conference of Ministers.

X. Closing of the forty-fourth meeting of the Committee of Experts [agenda item 10]

69. Closing remarks were made by the Deputy Executive Secretary (Programme) and Chief Economist of ECA and by the Chair of the Bureau.

70. In her remarks, the Deputy Executive Secretary (Programme) and Chief Economist of ECA outlined several essential messages from the meeting, namely, the importance of accelerating structural transformation through country-led frameworks to identify sectors for productivity gains; building robust data governance systems and digital infrastructure, ensuring data sovereignty and enhancing awareness of artificial intelligence; strengthening cybersecurity; mobilizing sustainable financing while strengthening domestic resource mobilization; improving fiscal governance; investing in inclusive research and development and human capital; and deepening regional cooperation and regional integration.

71. The Chair noted that the report and its recommendations reflected the collective views of all experts on the issues discussed during the past three days. He said that, as Chair of the Bureau, Cameroon would work with the secretariat to present the report to the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development on 3 April 2026. He expressed his gratitude to the outgoing Bureau, the Government of Morocco, the secretariat of ECA and the service providers on the successful organization of the meeting.

72. Following those statements and the customary exchange of courtesies, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.25 p.m., on Monday, 30 March 2026.

Annex

Draft resolutions for consideration by the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development

Draft resolutions, the text of which was approved by the Committee of Experts of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, are set out below for consideration and possible adoption by the Conference of Ministers.

A. 2027 programme plan and budget

The Conference of Ministers,

Acknowledging the strategic importance of annual programme plans and budgets in contextualizing and operationalizing the implementation of the programme of work of the Economic Commission for Africa, in accordance with its strategic directions and core functions, across its nine subprogrammes and pursuant to guidance from the Economic and Social Council,

Recalling the realignment of the programme of work of the Commission to enable a greater focus on emerging priorities and its harmonization with the development priorities and aspirations of Africa, in particular the main transformations that are necessary to accelerate the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹ and the implementation of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union,

Taking note of the revised estimates of the proposed 2026 programme budget of the Commission,² conducted within the context of the UN80 Initiative and endorsed by the General Assembly,³

Taking note also of the organizational changes that have been made with a view to enhancing the programmatic efficiency and organizational effectiveness of the Commission, as described in the administrative note of the Executive Secretary of the Commission to the Conference of Ministers at the fifty-eighth session of the Commission,⁴

Considering that Africa continues to be adversely affected by recurrent crises and conflicts, both within and outside the region, resulting in increased vulnerability to shocks and to rapid socioeconomic and environmental changes,

Recognizing that the proposed 2027 programme plan and budget reflect the outcomes of the spending review and the continued efforts of the Commission to enhance the implementation of its strategic programmatic orientation, in order to facilitate the mobilization of resources needed to finance sustainable development,

Having examined the proposed 2027 programme plan and budget, in which the objectives and most important expected results and deliverables for all subprogrammes are highlighted,

¹ General Assembly resolution 70/1.

² A/80/400, part IV.B.38.

³ General Assembly resolution 80/242.

⁴ E/ECA/COE/44/INF/2-E/ECA/CM/58/INF/4.

1. *Urges* the Economic Commission for Africa to work towards strengthening its resource mobilization efforts, with a view to improving the balance between regular budgetary allocations and extrabudgetary resources;
2. *Endorses* the 2027 programme plan and budget of the Commission.

B. Advancing sustainable energy to enhance digital technology infrastructure in Africa

The Conference of Ministers,

Reaffirming the commitment of African States to implement Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union, which highlights the need for integrated energy and digital infrastructure as a foundation for the continent's transformation and inclusive growth,

Reaffirming also the commitment of African States to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,¹ in particular Goal 7 (affordable and clean energy) and Goal 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure),

Considering the principles and objectives of the Global Digital Compact,² which seeks to foster an open, free and secure digital future for all, and acknowledging its relevance for advancing sustainable, inclusive and resilient digital infrastructure and services across Africa,

Considering also the critical importance of reliable energy and digital infrastructure for economic growth, social development and economic transformation in Africa,

Noting the rapid increase in data generation, the growing need for secure and sustainable data storage and the potential of data centres to support economic diversification and innovation across the continent,

Considering recent advancements in artificial intelligence, cloud computing and big data analytics, which have led to a significant rise in energy consumption that necessitates the implementation of sustainable energy solutions,

Considering also the contribution of productive uses of energy, including in data centres, to de-risking energy investments by ensuring a steady and reliable demand for electricity,

Recognizing the ongoing challenges encountered by numerous African countries, such as limited access to electricity, unstable power grids and inadequate investment in digital infrastructure, all of which impede inclusive socioeconomic development,

Acknowledging the ongoing efforts of the African Union, in particular the formulation of the Energy Transition Strategy and Action Plan, as well as those of the Economic Commission for Africa and other regional bodies to promote sustainable energy solutions and digital transformation,

Recognizing that the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa prioritizes data centre construction, which underpins the digital economy, as a critical component of its information and communications technology projects to enhance digital infrastructure and enable regional integration,

Acknowledging advancements in the integration of smart grid technologies, renewable energy resources and digital infrastructure, which supports innovation, efficiency and development across the continent,

Acknowledging also the critical role of regional energy infrastructure, including regional power pools, in underpinning the objectives of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area by providing

¹ General Assembly resolution 70/1.

² General Assembly resolution 79/1, annex I.

the reliable and cross-border energy supply necessary for digital trade, industrial development and continental market integration,

1. *Invites* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to collaborate on expanding modern energy systems and digital networks, especially in rural and underserved areas, on closing digital and energy gaps and on supporting inclusive development;

2. *Invites* the Commission to collaborate with the African Union and its partners on evaluating the energy requirements for the growing need for data centres on the continent, and on developing a comprehensive framework for the joint development of energy infrastructure and data centres in Africa, ensuring alignment with national and regional development strategies;

3. *Encourages* the Commission to work with its partners on the development of guidelines on energy efficiency, environmental impact, data sovereignty and digital security for the sustainable management of data centres across the continent;

4. *Calls upon* members of the Commission and partners to mobilize increased public and private investment for sustainable energy infrastructure, with a specific focus on expanding and modernizing regional power pools, promoting integrated energy and enhancing digital infrastructure, in order to ensure a stable, cross-border energy supply capable of supporting the continent's growing digital economy and industrial base;

5. *Calls upon* international financial institutions, including multilateral development banks, and development partners to significantly scale up financing for integrated sustainable energy and data centre initiatives in Africa by establishing innovative financing mechanisms, such as blended finance, partial risk guarantees and first-loss capital, in order to de-risk investments, unlock private capital and crowd in private sector participation;

6. *Encourages* members of the Commission, in collaboration with regional bodies and development partners, to develop and strengthen local capital markets in order to mobilize domestic resources for long-term infrastructure investment, while also improving the availability, transparency and quality of project finance data to enable fair and accurate risk-return analyses for investors;

7. *Calls upon* the Commission and its partners to continue to provide support to members of the Commission through capacity-building programmes that strengthen local human capital, with a specific focus on increasing the participation of women and young people, providing technical assistance and promoting knowledge-sharing initiatives to encourage the development and implementation of viable business models to accelerate sustainable energy development in support of data centres;

8. *Requests* the Commission to provide regular updates on the progress of these initiatives in Africa, including measurable outcomes and recommendations for future steps.

C. Reorganization of the work of the Economic Commission for Africa

The Conference of Ministers,

Recalling Economic and Social Council resolution 671 A (XXV) of 29 April 1958, in which the Economic Commission for Africa was mandated to promote the economic and social development of its members and facilitate international cooperation in support of African development,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 79/318 of 18 July 2025, in which the Assembly welcomed the efforts of the Secretary-General to strengthen the United Nations in order to keep pace with a changing world and to make it fit for the present and future challenges through the UN80 Initiative,

Recalling further General Assembly resolution 80/242 of 30 December 2025, in which the Assembly endorsed the revised estimates related to the proposed programme budget for 2026,¹

Acknowledging the report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Commission from March 2025 to February 2026,² which highlights the results achieved by the Commission in all its programme areas,

Recognizing the continuing efforts of the Commission to reposition itself and its programmatic orientation,

Having considered the note by the Executive Secretary on the recent organizational changes in the secretariat of the Commission,³

1. *Notes* the revision of resource requirements in the proposed programme budget for 2026 and the readjustment of the organizational structure, which were carried out to strengthen internal coordination, improve collaboration across divisions, reduce fragmentation and enhance overall efficiency within the context of the UN80 Initiative;

2. *Also notes* the additional realignments made to the programme of work of the Economic Commission for Africa to further strengthen efficiency and effectiveness, enhance coherence, strengthen synergies and better respond to the needs of the members of the Commission;

3. *Notes with appreciation* that the proposed reorganization does not alter the intergovernmental mandates or geographic coverage of the Commission;

4. *Authorizes* the Commission to reorganize its programme of work by streamlining its divisions and sections;

5. *Also authorizes* the renaming of the Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division as the Socioeconomic Development Division, the renaming of subprogramme 6, on gender and women's empowerment, as "Economic empowerment of women and youth", and the renaming of subprogramme 9, on poverty, inequality and social policy, as "Poverty and socioeconomic policy", and requests that the objectives of these subprogrammes be adjusted accordingly;

6. *Further authorizes* the Commission to refine the objective and area of specialization of subprogramme 7, component 1, subregional activities in North Africa, to better align its programmatic delivery towards a broader and more integrated focus on accelerated and inclusive growth and sustainable development, with increased emphasis on macroeconomic policy, development

¹ A/80/400, part IV.B.38.

² E/ECA/COE/44/7.

³ E/ECA/COE/44/INF/2-E/ECA/CM/58/INF/4.

financing, fiscal management, regional integration and economic diversification;

7. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to continue identifying opportunities to enhance effectiveness and efficiency and to further strengthen the Commission so that it remains fully fit for purpose.
