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Tangier, Morocco, 2 and 3 April 2026

Agenda item 7

Consideration and adoption of the ministerial statement**Draft ministerial statement**

We, African ministers of finance, planning and economic development,

Meeting as the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development in Tangier, Morocco, on 2 and 3 April 2026 during the fifty-eighth session of the Economic Commission for Africa,

Honoured by the presence of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, the Vice-President of Botswana, Ndaba Gaolathe, and the former Vice-President of Nigeria, Yemi Osinbajo,

Honoured also by the presence of the ministers responsible for science, technology and innovation and the ministers of health of African States, governors of national central banks in Africa and other high-level dignitaries and special guests,

Having deliberated on the theme of the fifty-eighth session, "Growth through innovation: harnessing data and frontier technologies for the economic transformation of Africa",

Mindful that, while Africa has experienced notable economic expansion, with gross domestic product growth averaging 4.2 per cent between 2000 and 2024, and has demonstrated global leadership in producing some innovative solutions in such areas as digital finance, renewable energy and technology systems, the overall impact of innovation on broad-based productivity growth and structural transformation has remained limited, reflecting challenges in scaling up and diffusing these successes across the continent,¹

Mindful also that the continent's growth has been driven largely by sustained increases in capital investment and an expanding labour force, providing a strong foundation for future development, and that the contribution of total factor productivity, while still limited, reflects untapped opportunities to further enhance efficiency, innovation uptake and value creation across economies,

Cognizant that the ongoing slow reallocation of labour and capital from low-productivity activities towards high-productivity sectors, such as manufacturing and modern services, is gradually gaining momentum in several countries, and that continued progress in productivity growth and industrialization holds considerable promise for unlocking the continent's vast

¹ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, "Real gross domestic product: Total and per capita, growth rates, annual", UNCTADstat. Available at <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/datacentre/dataviewer/shared-report/56e5fc3-b8e9-41f7-9a21-338ad963b074> (accessed on 3 April 2026).



untapped potential and advancing inclusive and sustainable economic transformation,

Cognizant also that frontier technologies and innovation can be used to unlock the growth potential of Africa and to enhance the competitiveness of African economies through productivity growth and diversification,

Cognizant further that frontier technologies can also be used to accelerate structural transformation, enabling the much-needed reallocation of resources from low-productivity to high-productivity sectors,

Aware that frontier technologies and continuing innovation in relation to such technologies will not only improve living standards but also build the capacity of countries to secure a durable competitive advantage, if embedded within an enabling policy and regulatory environment, supported by adequate financing and informed by data analytics,

Noting, in particular, that frontier technologies could help in achieving a healthy and productive workforce, which is essential for advancing sustainable development and long-term economic transformation in Africa,

Concerned about the implications that current global geopolitics, trade tensions and conflicts may have for economic and social development in Africa,

Acknowledging that African countries are not all at the same level of technological advancement and digital infrastructure development,

Do hereby:

1. *Acknowledge* that frontier technologies not only boost efficiency through total factor productivity but also enhance the mobilization and combination of labour and capital, by strengthening the skills of workers, boosting workforce participation and ensuring that machinery, equipment and infrastructure are used more effectively;

2. *Also acknowledge* that frontier technologies and innovation present significant opportunities for African countries to ensure social and economic transformation, regional integration and progress towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals;

3. *Further acknowledge* that the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, supported by interoperable digital systems, harmonized digital trade rules and trusted data governance frameworks, is establishing a market with the scale, competitiveness and degree of integration necessary to enable African countries to harness the power of data and frontier technologies to drive growth;

4. *Recognize* that the global market for frontier technologies is large and expanding, with recent estimates suggesting that the market size will grow from 2.5 trillion United States dollars in 2023 to 16.4 trillion dollars by 2033;²

5. *Also recognize* that, since Africa is home to one fifth of the world's population, some 42 per cent of its young people, 30 per cent of its critical mineral reserves and 60 per cent of the best solar resources on the planet,³ the region has strong potential to capture a meaningful share of the growing market for frontier technologies, but must use its resources effectively in order to fulfil that potential;

6. *Note* that geoeconomic changes present African countries with challenges and opportunities for developing specific and interconnected

² United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *Technology and Innovation Report 2025: Inclusive Artificial Intelligence for Development* (United Nations publication, 2025).

³ Economic Commission for Africa, *Economic Report on Africa 2026: Growth through Innovation – Harnessing Data and Frontier Technologies for Africa's Economic Transformation* (Addis Ababa, 2026).

frontier technologies and innovative solutions, which are reshaping global economic governance, with increasing debates on data sovereignty, on the regulation of artificial intelligence, on cybersecurity and on cross-border digital trade and with the adoption of industrial policies to secure strategic capabilities, in particular in relation to semiconductors, critical energy transition minerals,⁴ battery technologies and renewable energy value chains;

7. *Also note* that certain frontier technologies are emerging as being of strategic importance for structural transformation in Africa, including artificial intelligence and automation, blockchain, the Internet of things, biotechnology, nanotechnologies, green industrial technologies, financial technology and digital payment systems;

8. *Further note* that a growing number of artificial intelligence start-ups and tools are focused on such practical challenges as crop monitoring, diagnostics, credit and financial risk assessment, and language services tailored to local contexts;

9. *Note* that other frontier digital technologies are following similar trends, for instance the size of the market for the Internet of things in Africa is projected to expand from 7 billion United States dollars in 2024 to more than 20 billion dollars by 2031, supported by advancements in mobile network infrastructure;⁵

10. *Recognize* that, despite the modest growth, by global standards, of the African biotechnology and nanotechnology sectors, the number of African countries with high-throughput gene sequencing facilities grew from 7 in 2019 to 31 in 2022⁶ and the African nanotechnology market is projected to grow from 18.4 billion United States dollars in 2025 to 61.2 billion dollars by 2031, driven by applications in nanomedicine, nanomaterials for renewables and nanoelectronics;⁷

11. *Note* that Africa is endowed with unparalleled renewable energy resources, which are vital for increased productive competitiveness through the development of data centres, among other forms of technology, and for innovation-driven economic transformation, with 12 per cent of global feasible hydropower potential⁸ and the capacity to add up to 350 gigawatts of hydroelectric energy, 110 gigawatts of wind energy, 15 gigawatts of geothermal energy and 10 terawatts of solar energy;⁹

12. *Also note* that the development of regional electricity markets offers an operational framework for harnessing the continent's renewable energy resources;

13. *Emphasize* that nearly 30 per cent of global critical mineral reserves are located in Africa,¹⁰ giving the continent a demonstrable comparative advantage, and that, by fostering domestic production and increasing participation in local, regional and global value chains, African

⁴ Critical energy transition minerals are essential, non-fuel resources, for example lithium, cobalt, nickel and rare earth elements, that are crucial for manufacturing green technologies such as electric vehicle batteries, wind turbines and solar panels.

⁵ Ravi Bhandari, "Africa IoT market (2026–2032): size, forecast, value, companies, trends, outlook, growth, industry, analysis, share and revenue", July 2023. Available at www.6wresearch.com/industry-report/africa-iot-market.

⁶ Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, "A six-year journey: advancing pathogen genomics in Africa", 4 April 2023.

⁷ Mobility Foresights, "Africa nanotechnology market size, share, trends and forecasts 2031", 4 August 2025.

⁸ David Appleyard, "Africa's hydropower future", Renewable Energy World, 1 January 2014.

⁹ African Development Bank, "Why Africa is the next renewables powerhouse", 7 December 2018.

¹⁰ African Development Bank, "Critical minerals for Africa's inclusive growth and development" (Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 2025).

countries can drive forward green industrialization and sustainable development;

14. *Also emphasize* that frontier technologies, such as digital traceability, blockchain and biometrics, are supporting the implementation of the Africa Mining Vision¹¹ and the African Green Minerals Strategy,¹² by transforming the mining industry in Africa through support for policies aimed at formalizing artisanal and small-scale mining and promoting responsible sourcing, with a view to improving traceability, safeguarding workers' rights and enhancing environmental standards;

15. *Further emphasize* that, if deployed at scale, frontier technologies, in particular biotechnology, agricultural digital technology and the Internet of things, have the potential to transform agriculture in Africa, since they could be used to boost crop productivity, enhance water and land-use efficiency and promote climate resilience and adaptation;

16. *Acknowledge* that the global digital revolution and advances in frontier technologies require an adaptive workforce, with young people tending to be more adaptive and creative and to consume more digital and innovative technologies, creating a broader labour market;

17. *Note* that artificial intelligence and automation could result in a net gain of 78 million jobs worldwide by 2030¹³ and that Africa could also benefit from job creation if enhanced digital skills training is provided because, by 2030, 230 million jobs on the continent will require digital skills;¹⁴

18. *Also note* that digital payment systems and mobile money platforms are transforming economies in Africa, by lowering transaction costs, increasing efficiency, expanding access to finance and markets and advancing financial inclusion, thereby enabling businesses to reach new customers, streamline their operations and establish digital credibility;

19. *Emphasize* that the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, as the basis of regional integration and connectivity, offers immense opportunities for investment, industrialization, innovation and development;

20. *Also emphasize* that frontier technologies are vital for advancing the implementation of the Agreement;

21. *Note* that the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System enables instant cross-border payments using local currencies, almost halving transaction costs, and the African Trade Exchange enables businesses of all sizes to gain access to new markets and to streamline their supply chains in Africa;

22. *Also note* that high-level, dedicated national leadership on frontier technologies is needed to spearhead the design of relevant domestic policies and strategies, provide adequate resources, monitor progress and make adjustments to address new and emerging issues;

23. *Further note* that the diffusion of frontier technologies into the informal economy and into micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises must be supported, for example by establishing centres of excellence for the rapid development and application of artificial intelligence;

¹¹ African Union, *Africa Mining Vision* (Addis Ababa, 2009).

¹² African Minerals Development Centre, *Africa's Green Minerals Strategy* (Addis Ababa, African Union, 2024).

¹³ World Economic Forum, *Future of Jobs Report 2025: Insight Report* (Cologny, Switzerland, 2025).

¹⁴ Landry Signé and others, "Leveraging Africa's inner strength to realize its full economic potential", in *Foresight Africa: Top Priorities for the Continent, 2025–2030*, Landry Signé, ed. (Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution, 2025).

24. *Recognize* that the continent's share of the total number of data centres worldwide currently stands at less than 1 per cent,¹⁵ which increases costs, causes delays and incurs risks to sensitive data, and that increasing this share, with a view to boosting African digital sovereignty, will require greater public and private investment in data centres and in domestic capacity to build them;

25. *Also recognize* the need for countries to implement and enforce continental frameworks and policies to drive digital transformation;

26. *Emphasize* that, despite the growing need for digital skills, only 50 per cent of African countries have incorporated information and communications technology education into their school curricula, compared with 85 per cent of countries in other regions,¹⁶ and therefore that investment in training and jobs in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics and efforts to close gender gaps are essential to ensuring the diffusion of frontier technologies;

27. *Acknowledge* the risks associated with the adoption of frontier technologies, including the cybersecurity threats and technological dependence that are inherent to the hosting of most African data in data centres outside the region and the labour-market disruptions that could exacerbate unemployment and socioeconomic inequality across the continent;

28. *Recognize* that expanding the use of frontier technologies and accelerating the digital transformation will require the mobilization of adequate financial resources at the national level;

29. *Acknowledge* that African young people are the primary drivers of the continent's digital transformation, but continue to face significant constraints on their ability to adopt innovative solutions more widely;

30. *Call upon* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to treat frontier technology infrastructure as an essential public good and a strategic sovereign asset, in order to reduce broadband costs and enhance data sovereignty, which will require interministerial coordination and robust public-private partnerships;

31. *Urge* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to recognize digital infrastructure as a strategic and essential enabler of economic growth and to integrate the expansion of such infrastructure into national development planning alongside other core infrastructure sectors, with a view to prioritizing investment and addressing connectivity gaps, including, where appropriate, through targeted public support;

32. *Encourage* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to promote enabling regulatory and investment frameworks for data centres powered by renewable energy, including by facilitating the signing of power purchase agreements and other risk-mitigation mechanisms, with a view to ensuring a reliable power supply without straining national grids;

33. *Call upon* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to establish robust national cybersecurity strategies and data governance frameworks, with independent data protection authorities and national cybersecurity agencies, in order to mitigate systemic digital disruption and build the trust necessary for a thriving digital economy;

34. *Also call upon* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to enact and enforce comprehensive data protection laws that balance cross-border data flows with national security and privacy requirements;

¹⁵ Hiedberg Insights, "The potential for data centers in Africa with the rise of AI", Medium, 14 July 2025.

¹⁶ Salah-Eddine Kandri, "Africa's future is bright – and digital", World Bank, 23 October 2019.

35. *Encourage* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to deploy innovative financing mechanisms and, by strengthening their national development banks and their regulatory capacity, attract private investment, thereby reducing fiscal burdens and de-risking high-impact frontier technology ventures;

36. *Invite* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to consider using blended finance to lower the cost of capital for high-risk technology projects and to implement portfolio guarantee schemes, for instance through the African Guarantee Fund, to encourage commercial bank lending to technology start-ups and to micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises;

37. *Also invite* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to honour their commitment to increase national research and development spending to 1 per cent of gross domestic product by 2030, in line with the recommendation of the African Union,¹⁷ to introduce fiscal incentives for research and development expenditure in the private sector, such as tax credits and immediate expensing, in order to complement public spending, and to establish national innovation funds to channel resources into high-impact sectors, with a view to reducing dependence on imported technologies;

38. *Urge* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to align their national curricula with future labour-market needs through initiatives pertaining to science, technology, engineering and mathematics education and to digital literacy, since addressing the critical skills mismatch requires partnerships between ministries of education and private sector organizations to establish retraining and re-education centres;

39. *Invite* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to mandate the incorporation of computer science and digital literacy into primary and secondary school curricula, expand technical and vocational education and training programmes to include practical modules on artificial intelligence, robotics and equipment maintenance, and reform training programmes to ensure that teachers are proficient in digital tools and modern educational theory;

40. *Also invite* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to bridge the gender gap in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education and to support workers displaced by automation by deploying labour-market information systems and gender-responsive budgeting;

41. *Further invite* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to implement targeted scholarship and mentorship programmes for women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education and to strengthen and leverage existing financing mechanisms, including through the effective allocation of committed resources, to support retraining and skills enhancement for workers displaced by automation, with a focus on their transition to higher-value roles;

42. *Call upon* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to accelerate the implementation of the Protocol to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area on Digital Trade, including its provisions on interoperable payment systems;

43. *Also call upon* members of the Economic Commission for Africa, with the aim of establishing a single digital market, to scale up participation in and fully operationalize the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System for intra-African trade, with a view to reducing reliance on hard currency and lowering transaction costs, and to harmonize their digital trade rules and data governance standards;

¹⁷ African Union, Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa, 2024 (Addis Ababa, 2014).

44. *Urge* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to develop regional value chains for strategic frontier technology sectors;

45. *Request* the regional economic communities to facilitate multi-country industrial planning, with a view to pooling resources for data infrastructure and fostering domestic value addition in strategic green economy sectors;

46. *Encourage* members of the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with relevant subregional and continental institutions, to explore and promote, where feasible, the development of cross-border special economic zones focused on battery and electric vehicle production, capitalizing on the continent's critical mineral endowments and ensuring coherence with the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, including the related rules of origin;

47. *Invite members* of the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with relevant subregional and continental institutions and the private sector, to explore and implement joint investment plans for the development of shared regional data centres and high-performance computing infrastructure, while promoting regulatory harmonization and trusted data governance frameworks, in order to address the high costs associated with fragmented national systems;

48. *Call upon* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to scale up investment in technology and innovation by mobilizing domestic resources effectively, including through digitalized taxation, digital public administration and innovative financing;

49. *Urge* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to strengthen peer learning and experience-sharing mechanisms to accelerate the digital transformation in Africa in a cost-effective, inclusive and development-oriented manner, while ensuring that no country is left behind;

50. *Encourage* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to establish presidential or prime ministerial task forces to spearhead digital strategy, which would demonstrate political will and ensure whole-of-government coordination;

51. *Also encourage* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to establish regulatory sandboxes that enable the safe testing and piloting of new technologies before full-scale regulation is enacted;

52. *Urge* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to facilitate the diffusion of digital technologies to companies in the informal sector and to micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, including by leveraging and scaling up digital extension services, in collaboration with the private sector;

53. *Also urge* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to harness the expertise of Africans in the diaspora to build national research capacity and establish start-ups in the fields of science, technology and innovation;

54. *Invite* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to strengthen support for young entrepreneurs by fostering an enabling environment that promotes innovation, facilitates the more widespread use of digital solutions and safeguards intellectual property rights, including through improved access to grants, venture capital, blended finance mechanisms and targeted capacity-building initiatives;

55. *Also invite* members of the Economic Commission for Africa to work together to expand modern energy systems and digital networks, in particular in rural and underserved areas, in order to close digital and energy

gaps and support inclusive development;

56. *Encourage* members of the Economic Commission for Africa and development partners to scale up investment in the domestic manufacturing of digital devices and to further prioritize domestic and regional procurement, in order to promote digital sovereignty, reduce external dependence and foster the development of regional digital value chains;

57. *Request* the Economic Commission for Africa to collaborate with the African Union and its partners in evaluating the future energy requirements of the data centres that are increasingly needed by Africa and in setting out a comprehensive framework for the joint construction of energy infrastructure and data centres in Africa, ensuring alignment with national and regional development strategies;

58. *Invite* the Economic Commission for Africa to work with its partners on the development of guidelines on energy efficiency, environmental impact and digital security for sustainable data centre management across the continent;

59. *Call upon* the Economic Commission for Africa and its partners to continue to provide support to members of the Commission, in the form of targeted capacity-building programmes, technical assistance and knowledge-sharing initiatives, in order to encourage the development and implementation of viable business models to boost the generation of sustainable energy for their data centres.
