The ECA Communications Strategy:

How communications and media relations will project and help bring about the "new" ECA

United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

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Executive Summary

In 2012, the new Executive Secretary began a change process aimed at making ECA Africa's premier think tank to support the continent's transformative agenda. Ten in-house Task Forces were commissioned to propose new ways of doing business, and one addressed the topic of an ECA Communications Strategy. To this end, a team of 25 staff considered the issues, consulted with their colleagues and presented their recommendations in July 2013. The recommendations were accepted, and the Director of the Public Information and Knowledge Management Division was tasked with preparing the Strategy document.

The communications effort of ECA has evolved over the years, going from one information officer in 1995 to 26 staff in 2006, and then back down to 12 positions by 2012. Currently, there is only one P4 professional, one G7 filling a P3 post, and five other G-level staff in place in the External Communications and Media Relations Section of the Public Information and Knowledge Management Division, where this function is now located (Subregional Offices and some ECA special initiatives and projects also have dedicated Communications Officers). At the same time, communications responsibilities have become more important and time-consuming, given the increasing demands for timely media coverage of publications and events, more interaction with the public through social media, and the aspirations of a higher profile for the organization.

The role of communications in organizational effectiveness has also become more prominent, as greater appreciation for the ability of the media to shape perceptions becomes a driver of outreach efforts. To this end, the need to introduce an appropriate strategy for communications and media relations is imperative for the refocused ECA, in that it provides an opportunity to reconsider the approach, re-establish the priorities, and allocate adequate resources.

Based on the investigations and recommendations of the Task Force, the following vision is suggested for the Communications Strategy: *To project the organization as Africa's premier think tank, responding effectively to opportunities for shaping Africa's economic future and its overall transformation*. For this, communications in ECA should aim to be an effective, coordinated

outreach effort providing compelling, focused messages tailored to specific target audiences, using up-to-date communications tools, working in multiple languages, and leveraging product launches and key events to positively influence African policies and policymakers, as well as the public image of ECA, and more broadly, the United Nations in Africa.

Based on the above vision and mission, the following principles are intended to guide resource, staffing, and work planning decisions for the communications efforts of ECA. Implications of these principles on actions to be carried out by the responsible units are also summarized.

1. **ECA interactions with the world should feature a strong, consistent and identifiable brand that projects its key message – Africa First – and its key attributes – African, Think Tank, and United Nations affiliation.** A brand book should be produced that explains the rationale and style guidelines for print and digital material, promotional items and its physical infrastructure, and it should be consistently adhered to. The key message and key attributes should be featured in demonstrating the unique qualifications of ECA for being an influential actor in Africa's transformation.

2. **ECA should build up its image as a world-class think tank.** ECA leadership should strive for strategic exposure at key events and media placements (talk shows, lectures etc.). The website and the Executive Secretary's Blog should feature messages addressing timely issues, presented from a professionally rigorous and compelling perspective. Thought-provoking policy newsletters and the proposed ECA Journal would help distinguish ECA as a first-order think tank. Outreach efforts should be carefully tailored to different interest groups – policy makers, the diplomatic community, private sector, the general public, the academic community and other think tanks – through proactive engagements, networking opportunities, special partnerships and tailored multimedia products. The External Communications and Media Relations Section should have the necessary staff, tools and equipment for producing these tailored products – including a much-needed upgrading of the ECA Broadcasting Facility.

3. **ECA should apply a "campaign approach" to its strategic publications and key events.** ECA publications and reports are outputs; it is the messages contained in these products that produce the desired outcome of influencing policy. Messages should be delivered using not just publications but a range of mediums, with the specific mediums tailored to the target audience. A campaign approach to communications would focus on delivering the policy message before, during and after the launch of a particular product. Communications should be fully integrated into every ECA product launch and key event, and a fixed percentage – 10 per cent – of the product/ event budget set aside for communications

in the form of a "Marketing Plan". The marketing plan should clearly lay out the suggested approach, key messages applied to diversified target audiences, communication tools and engagements, an Internet and social media strategy, campaign participants and partners, roll-out plan and timing, and budget. The overall impact of the effort should be assessed, and from this result the impact and cost-effectiveness of the communications effort should be derived.

4. **Media relations should feature prominently in getting the message of ECA out and building its reputation.** The media should be cultivated as an important ally in making the work of ECA more widely known among professional circles and the public in general, and in building its reputation as a top-flight African think tank. The External Communications and Media Relations Section and the Subregional Offices should work to maintain, expand and deepen the media contacts of ECA. Media Leaders from the African Media Initiative should be retained as the media advisory council for ECA. Journalists covering ECA should be given greater attention and access. The major media syndicators and news organizations should be tapped for strategic partnerships and for disseminating ECA-generated content to as wide an audience as possible.

5. **All ECA staff, and not just the Communications Section, should be able to effectively represent the ECA brand and communicate the ECA messages**. The responsibility of the External Communications and Media Relations Section should be to put ECA staff in front of their audience, and not to do all of the communications itself. For this, the capacity of the Section should itself be strengthened, and specialized training in media relations provided to Communications Officers in the Section and the Subregional Offices. Communications skills should be a regular feature of ECA leadership training programmes, including language classes to ensure multilingualism. Interaction should be scaled up between suitably proficient ECA staff and key influencers, particularly the media. Internal communications should ensure that all members of staff stay current with the positions, achievements, and newsworthy occurrences of ECA.

Additionally, the physical environment of ECA should support its public image, by emphasizing its African cultural heritage and pan-African history, as well as its aspirations to become a world-class think tank, through well-kept surroundings and staff disposed to leaving visitors with a favourable impression.

Implementation of the Communications Strategy falls to the External Communications and Media Relations Section, as the key unit responsible for the communications function of ECA. For this, the Section should be organized into units for communications campaigns, media relations and outreach, multimedia communications, branding and graphic design,

website maintenance and development, and programme management and coordination.

A business plan should be prepared for scaling up the Section to provide it with sufficient capacity and means to carry out its role effectively. Strategy implementation should be overseen by the Director of the Public Information and Knowledge Management Division, who would report to the Senior Management Team every six months. Substantive advice and guidance should be provided by an advisory body of selected Media Leader members of the African Media Initiative. Quality assurance should be arranged through the Strategic Planning and Operational Quality Division's Programme Accountability Framework, based on criteria established for the individual functional responsibilities and the Strategy as a whole.

Risks identified include: unresponsive contracting processes; content quality not being at the desired level; capacity of the External Communications and Media Relations Section not being adequate for the tasks it is responsible for; staff communication skills not being up to the level required; and communications messages not being consistent across ECA. Each of these risks can be mitigated, and Part 6 of the present document offers suggestions to this effect.

The new Communications Strategy, if implemented successfully, can be a major force for ECA, in its ability to positively influence African policies, policymakers, and the public image of ECA and the United Nations in Africa.

A Communications Strategy for the "new" ECA

PART I — Introduction

As one of the five United Nations Regional Commissions, ECA has, over the years of its existence, dedicated itself to implementing a wide range of activities in support of African development. It has gone through a number of reforms in the past, ranging from divisional restructuring to reorientation of programmes aimed at strengthening its capacity and visibility as a key actor in the continent's development.

The intention of the ECA Business Plan for 2013-2015, is "to become the think tank of reference on matters pertaining to African development." To this end, the Executive Secretary, Mr. Carlos Lopes, in consultation with the staff at large, aims to transform ECA along these lines, to become a premier African policy think tank, and to be more influential with policymakers. This requires a strategic refocusing of the organization, repositioning and rebranding ECA as an innovative, professionally rigorous organization. One that is at the forefront of providing data and in-depth research that can lead to better decision-making and policy direction for stimulating Africa's economic future and transformation, and indeed, to assist member States in developing and implementing policies that are better at responding to citizens' needs. To have wider impact, the strategic refocusing process also aims to strengthen the presence of ECA in countries and its relations with Governments, to the point that when it comes to consulting on policy research and advice on Africa, Governments would consider ECA as the institution of choice.

As part of this change process, a new ECA structure has been put in place to focus on the following thematic areas: macroeconomic policy; regional integration and trade; social development; natural resources; innovation and technology; gender; and climate change. Another important feature of the change agenda was the establishment of ten Task Forces to propose new ways of doing business in terms of the major institutional and administrative processes of the organization[1].

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1   These Task Forces were:
       1. Capacity Development Strategy for ECA (enhanced support to member

The work began in early 2013, and the results were considered and approved following a retreat of the ECA Senior Management in September. The results have now been formalized in the ECA Business Plan for 2013-2015.

Given the importance of communications in the effective functioning of any modern organization, one of the ten Task Forces was mandated to define a communications strategy to create and support the new positioning and branding of ECA. To this end, the present document represents the realization of the work of this Task Force, and the recommendations put forward have been incorporated therein.

States).
2. Rules of Engagement for ECA key initiatives (delivering on major conferences and publications).
3. Governance of associated agencies (one set of rules for the management of the Centres).
4. Databank Architecture for ECA (one common databank).
5. ECA Communications Strategy.
6. Conference Planning (disciplined Calendar of Events).
7. Knowledge Networking Strategy (significant reduction in the number of workshops).
8. Gender Parity targets (ambitious gender parity policies).
9. Reprofiling and training initiative (no post reduction but realignment to reprofiled functions).
10. ECA Green Policy (targeted carbon footprint).

PART 2 –
Overview of past and current communications activities

The communications effort of ECA has evolved over the last 15 years. Between 1995 (when ECA had only one information officer on its staff) and 2005, the number of staff working in communications grew significantly, as a new multi-skilled "Communication Team" was created as part of the then Executive Secretary's reform and institutional strengthening programme.

Between 2003 and 2006, newly recruited Communications Officers were embedded in most of the Divisions to promote their respective publications and work in general. Under this arrangement, the Communications Officer posts belonged to their respective Divisions, and so this gave rise to issues surrounding the use of their time on purely divisional versus the corporate work of ECA.

Furthermore, not all Divisions were covered by communications personnel; including the ECA Subregional Offices.

At its largest in December 2005, the ECA Communication Team staff complement, numbered 26.[2] Subsequently, however, the Communication Team was disbanded as part of the ECA repositioning exercise in 2006, and the majority of staff did not have their contracts renewed. A smaller Information and Communication Service was created to replace the Communication Team. In early 2013, as a result of the current strategic refocusing effort, the service was brought back under the newly formed Public Information and Knowledge Management Division as the External Communications and Media Relations Section.

Since 2007, just five Communications Officers, with a few support staff, have been carrying out all the tasks undertaken by the former Communication Team. It has been supporting the production, launching and dissemination

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2   Communication Team Head; English and French Editors; Communications Officers for the Office of the Executive Secretary, Social Development Division, Office of the Executive Secretary/Development Policy Management Division, Trade and Regional Integration Division, Development Information Services Division, Economic and Social Policy Division, and Public Information; Information Officer; Webmaster; French Webmaster; Cluster Heads for Multimedia, Publications, Broadcasting; Assistants for Information, Communications, Desktop Publishing (two), Programme, Website, Multimedia (three) and Reference.

of the major publications of ECA (Economic Report on Africa; Assessing Regional Integration in Africa; and African Governance Report), and providing communication support (issuing press releases and advisories, drafting information kits, fielding interview requests and media liaison) for all major conferences and events. It has maintained and updated the ECA website, managed the social media sites, and maintained connections with the media

sector, ensuring placements for articles and feature stories. It has also been supporting joint communications efforts with other United Nations partners.

As of December 2013, the total capacity of External Communications and Media Relations Section's staff currently in post is as follows.

Professionals	General service
- Communications Officer and Acting Chief – P4 - Graphic Design Consultant - French Translation Consultant (part time)	- Public Information Assistant (Media relations) – G7 - Media Relations Support – G3 - Webmaster – G7 (filling a P3 post) - Web Content Assistant – G5 - Multimedia Assistant – G3 - Programme Assistant – G7

When fully staffed, the Section is authorized for five professionals: Chief (P5); Communications Officer (P4); two Public Information Officers (P3), for Social Media and Media Relations, and a Webmaster (L3); and two additional G7 Information Assistants for website maintenance.

In addition to the Section, the Subregional Offices plus the African Institute for Economic Development Planning now each have designated Communications Officers (one P4 and four National Officers). Some of the special initiatives and projects also have their own Communications Officers (African

Climate Policy Centre, Illicit Financial Flows, African Minerals Development Centre, and the Land Policy Initiative). Also, the Office of the Executive Secretary maintains a Research Officer and two Special Assistants for Social Media, the Secretary's Blog, and speeches.

A new Communications Strategy. Several attempts at an ECA Communications Strategy were developed in the past, but none were officially introduced. A provisional version from 2008 reflected a very solid approach and way forward, but was limited to the ECA special initiatives taking place in that year. In general, communications in ECA, to date, has

essentially been reactive and conducted on an ad-hoc basis, driven by particular events, including the launching of key publications.

However, it is fair to note that over the years, ECA has enhanced its visibility and presence in Africa through the publishing and dissemination of some very insightful reports, most notably on the external website (established in 1998), through its "convening power" around key development questions facing Africa; and through a variety of mediums, including more recently, the use of documentaries (e.g. on intra-African trade, and on the African Peer Review Mechanism). In the process, ECA has established important contacts with the media, and has also extended its outreach to a wide variety of non-media audiences, including civil society. ECA has been able to accomplish this work with meagre resources, especially over the last five years with very limited human capacity.

The refocusing exercise now offers an opportunity to shape a new Communications Strategy, which can have a more coordinated and targeted outreach effort in Africa, apply modern communication tools and instruments, base its efforts on a new vision, and convey the "new" ECA work and messages in both English and French, as an institution responding effectively to shaping Africa's economic future and its overall transformation.

The new Strategy is informed by developments on the continent as espoused in various documents, debates and discussions on Africa's evolving media landscape; the 2063 agenda; and the mega-trends shaping Africa's

trajectory. In order to capture and be at the forefront of these trends, ECA needs to reorient its strategic focus, including the way it communicates to the world.

To achieve its aspiration as Africa's premier think tank, it is necessary for ECA to become a more active and aggressive player in shaping the narrative on Africa, and influencing the editorial line on the big debates. The refocusing effort is designed to ensure that ECA would be up to the task. With its renewed focus on statistical evidence to support policymaking, ECA messages can be both compelling and refreshing, providing new information told through stories revealed from the statistics.

The new Communications Strategy is also informed by the proliferation of new media tools and actors – both mainstream and independent, as well as the expansion of the media sector and the growth of media conglomerates that are shaping the media terrain. To accommodate this changing landscape, ECA needs to take a more critical look at its audience and evolve a more targeted approach, deepening its reach on key issues among policymakers, but also widening its reach for the general public.

Against this backdrop, the Communications Strategy presented here is intended to define the remit of the External Communications and Media Relations Section, working in collaboration with other units of the Public Information and Knowledge Management Division, the Subregional Offices, and the other Divisions and Offices within ECA.

To paraphrase the Executive Secretary's call for ECA to change to the beat of Africa's change – "communications at the ECA must change." The new African realities, combined with the compelling policy messages emanating from ECA, makes for fortunate timing to introduce a scaled-up communications effort, to prominently project the new aspirations of ECA and contribute to its impact.

PART 3 –
Suggested principles for a communications strategy[3]

Vision and mission

The vision for the ECA Communications Strategy is *to project the organization as Africa's premier think tank, responding effectively to opportunities for shaping Africa's economic future and its overall transformation*. For this, communications in ECA should aim to be an effective, coordinated outreach effort that provides compe lling, focused messages tailored to specific target audiences, by using up-to-date communications tools, working in multiple languages, and leveraging product launches and key events to positively influence African policies and policymakers, as well as the public image of ECA and, more broadly, the United Nations in Africa.

To this end, the strategy can be considered successful if communications in ECA:

- **is an effective, coordinated outreach effort** – guided by a well-designed and cost-effective marketing plan for every product or event, which engages all the concerned units in the house;

- **provides compelling, focused messages** – prepared to high professional standards to maximize impact and influence;

- **is tailored to specific target audiences –** according to their strategic role – Government/intergovernmental policymakers and officials, the international community, key influencers in civil society and the private sector, the media, academia and other think tanks;

- **uses up-to-date communication tools** – including social media, multimedia, applications designed for smart phones and tablet computers, as well as more traditional tools such as print and broadcasting;

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3   Based on the report of Task Force 5.

- **works in multiple languages** – with English and French standard, and other languages depending on the regional audiences;

- **leverages product launches and key events –** to promote the policy message and the ECA position;

And as a result of all this,

- positively influence African policies and policymakers, as well as the public image of ECA and, more broadly, the United Nations in Africa.

Guiding principles of the strategy

Based on the above vision and the corresponding mission to realize it, the following five principles are intended to guide resource, staffing, and work planning decisions for ECA communications efforts.

1. ECA interactions with the world should feature a strong, consistent and identifiable brand that projects its key message – Africa First – and its key attributes – African, Think Tank, and United Nations affiliation.

2. ECA should build up its image as a world-class think tank.

3. ECA should apply a campaign approach to its strategic publications and key events.

4. Media relations should feature prominently in getting the ECA message out and building its reputation.

5. All ECA staff, and not just the Communications Section, should be able to effectively represent the ECA brand and communicate its messages.

The implications of these guiding principles are covered in the following section.

PART 4 – Implications of the strategy for communications in ECA

Guiding principle 1: ECA interactions with the world should feature a strong, consistent and identifiable brand that projects its key message – Africa First – and its key attributes – African, Think Tank, and United Nations affiliation.

UNECA or ECA? A brand is the articulation of the "essence" of an organization, and it attributes help to define the characteristics that make it unique. An organization's name is the best opportunity to visually introduce its brand. For ECA, the Task Force considered the two alternatives used in the past – "United Nations Economic Commission for Africa", or "UNECA", and "Economic Commission for Africa", or "ECA". As a branding choice, the issue becomes one of whether the organization should represent the United Nations agenda to Africa, or Africa's agenda to the United Nations. The Task Force preferred the latter ("ECA") since the key message for the organization's strategic refocusing is based on its aspirations of "Africa First". Additionally, the ECA logo contains the United Nations logo, and so its affiliation with the United Nations is self-explanatory.

The tag line. The recommended tag line – or the brand's "slogan" – was similarly, "Africa First", simply because the brand ideal of ECA should be putting Africa first in whatever it does. The chosen brand would guide ECA in its work to contribute to creating a better Africa, and would also reflect its unique identity as an institution dedicated to Africa and working exclusively towards the transformation of the continent.

Brand consistency. Beyond the logo, a strong brand calls for visual consistency in all its representations – documents, letterheads, presentation graphics, website banners, multimedia identifiers, signage etc. These elements currently exist in various inconsistent formats. A brand book should be issued that contains a style guide establishing well-considered standards for brand-related fonts, colours and appearances, and lays out how

they should be applied for printed material, digital material, promotional items and the physical infrastructure of ECA.

Key brand attribute 1: **African**

The substantive work of ECA should concentrate on projecting the African transformation – defining and sustaining an African narrative generated by Africans, rather than by the international media. Its message should consistently feature the reality of Africa as an emerging global economic player, and it should work with the media to project this message to the widest possible regional and global audience.

Key brand attribute 2: **Think Tank**

Preparing and disseminating regular policy briefs, journal articles and Op-Eds on emerging issues of interest to Africa could enhance the ECA image as an institution ahead of the curve in communicating ideas on topical issues, and taking leadership in policy. For example, some of the issues warranting ECA policy positions – and warranting its place in the top tier of think tanks – could include an in-depth look into the growing presence of China in Africa, land policies and grassroots communities, as well as illicit financial flows.

Key brand attribute 3: **United Nations affiliation**

ECA holds a unique strategic advantage as a regional office of the United Nations, lending it an impartiality among all nations and perspectives, a good-governance, anti-poverty-oriented mandate derived from the United Nations charter and global conventions, and an authoritative voice from its legitimacy as an intergovernmental body. It should utilize these strategic advantages in its advocacy and think tank work, and in promoting buy-in for its policy positions. Opportunities to feature the ECA and United Nations affiliation should be highlighted in communications story lines and outreach efforts, illustrating how its impartiality, mandate and authority made the difference in influencing national policies.

> **Guiding Principle 2***: ECA should build up its image as a world-class think tank.*

Maximizing exposure. Maximizing the visibility of ECA as a top-ranked think tank must be a critical feature of the Communications Strategy. To this end, the Communications Section, in consultation with the Offices of the Executive Secretary and Deputy Executive Secretary, should seek out opportunities for (and coordinate) participation of the Executive Secretary, the Deputy Executive Secretary, the Heads of Divisions and Subregional Offices and other senior staff at key events and media placements – talk shows, lectures, debates, interviews etc.

Close interaction with specific audiences should be cultivated by the ECA units to engage them on a professional level: communities of development professionals (from government, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, private sector, foundations, policy institutes and academia) through knowledge networks supported by the Knowledge and Library

Services Section; policymakers and legislators through events participated in or sponsored; the African Diplomatic Community through regular consultations by the Executive Secretary/Deputy Executive Secretary Offices in Addis Ababa, Subregional Office Heads in Subregional Office locations, and the United Nations Regional Commissions in New York and Geneva; international development agencies and donor partners through consultations led by the Office of Partnerships; and the local, regional and international media through networking by the External Communications and Media Relations Section and the Subregional Office Communication Officers.

Projecting the professional face of ECA.
The ECA website and interactive social media platforms (Facebook; Twitter) are the organization's public face. The newly revamped website, designed to be a platform for strategic, accurate and timely information on ECA and its work, in both English and French, has dramatically improved the numbers of visitors. The Facebook and Twitter feeds are also both widening exposure, enabling interaction with the public, and directing traffic to the website and the Executive Secretary's Blog, "Africa Cheetah Run". The Blog adds new posts fortnightly, illustrating how ECA stays abreast of, and positions itself with, compelling views on the continent's "hot issues". This approach should be extended to the wider website, with all units responsible for the thematic areas of ECA showcasing their own innovative work and position on current topics.

The website should also offer digests and syntheses of themes and topics surrounding major events and conferences, drawing on the Institutional Repository for material. The Institutional Repository, along with the federated search engine, ASKIA (the online portal for Access to Scientific and Socio-Economic Knowledge and Information in Africa), should be featured more prominently in the website, to demonstrate the richness of ECA material and its access to scholarly works. All publications featured on the ECA website should be accessed through their link in the Institutional Repository for viewing or downloading, so that users could be drawn into browsing the Repository collection. To ensure that the website remains effective, it should have a space for inviting user feedback ("Have your Say"), and the site's activity statistics should be analysed to pinpoint areas needing enhancement.

Publishing like a think tank. The recently approved circular on Publications and Documentation Guidelines at ECA (ST/ECA/IC/2013/043) was based on recommendations of the task force charged with rationalizing the numbers and types of publications issued by ECA. The earlier situation stressed volume over substance, and so one of the early actions of the reprofiling exercise was to place more attention on a systematic approach to publications that emphasized quality and impact (cutting the number of publications by half).

Accordingly, the Guidelines created specific publication types for projecting the reputation of ECA as a top-flight intellectual organization

– "Policy Newsletters", to highlight the major developments stemming from the work of ECA (including from Subregional Offices), and an ECA Journal publishing scholarly papers related to Africa's transformation. For the former, ECA should issue a quarterly magazine with online and print versions, discontinuing separate Subregional Office quarterlies (proposed name – *"TransAfrican"* in English, *TransAfricain* in French), complemented by easily read monthly bulletins in a one-page colour format.

The ECA Journal should be issued periodically as a double-blind peer reviewed research journal, publishing thought-provoking original studies from contributing authors from both within and outside of ECA. As envisaged, it would have an independent editorial board of African thought leaders, and aim to meet the highest standards of academic journals. In order to increase readership of all types of ECA publications, readability should be improved by simplifying the language, reducing the acronyms, adding more graphics and using more concrete examples. With all its publications in both English and French, ECA should be able to reach across the language barrier, thereby expanding its reach and influence.

Marketing ECA – targeting. Outreach efforts to develop relations with key stakeholders, calls for careful tailoring of messages targeted to the different interest groups. Policymakers in member States (Ministers and senior government officials) would benefit from policy briefs and periodic policy seminars. The African Group of Ambassadors in New York and Geneva, and Ambassadors from Regional Centre clusters should receive periodic briefings similar to those done for the Addis Ababa Ambassadors. Influential private sector players should be proactively engaged around specific topics and events, (e.g. the Private Sector Forum) and special partnerships should be built and nurtured.

Civil society and the general public should become more familiar with the contributions and success stories of ECA, with suitably packaged messaging through social media and traditional media channels. The academic community should be engaged by: disseminating ECA publications to university libraries; hosting product launches, lecture series and joint policy seminars with the ECA leadership; collaborating on research topics, sponsorship to ECA of postgraduate students; and continuing support to the ECA fellowship programme. Partnering with other think tanks who share the same intellectual and policy "space" can be a win-win option, one that can expose ECA to new audiences and networks. Most importantly, reaching out to the media community, which is necessary for projecting the image and messages of ECA, warrants special consideration and is covered separately below.

Marketing ECA – packaging. Tailoring of messages to specific audiences calls for attention to the delivery mechanisms, of which there are several – message-driven mobile apps and interactive features linked to a publication's statistics; short films and documentaries; DVDs, CDs and MP3s/podcasts; video newscasts for video-sharing sites; and radio and television spots. To produce these tailored packages

the External Communications and Media Relations Section needs to apply a range of tools and resources that it does not have at present. Among the steps to take, the Section should subscribe to the "Livestream" video production/broadcasting service, and purchase equipment to provide streamed videos of events/conferences. Also, the ECA Broadcasting Facility, built in 2003/2004, is badly in need of upgrading. It should be recommissioned and upgraded to produce ECA podcasts, online radio, editing of videos for YouTube and Vimeo, running Livestream productions and videos on demand during conferences, and for producing interviews, discussions and call-ins.

> **Guiding Principle 3:** *ECA should apply a campaign approach to its strategic publications and key events.*

Promoting the message, not the product. Publications addressing issues and reports on events represent the core deliverables of the work of ECA. However, these products do not in themselves represent achievements – they are outputs, not outcomes. To gauge the impact of ECA as a think tank it is necessary to focus on the influence of the policy messages delivered – and for this, publications and reports are only one of many channels to reach decision makers. The launch of a product provides an opportunity to build a campaign around the message being addressed. To this end, campaigns should be designed for the ECA flagship report and other headline publications, and around key events, to generate interest and anticipation in the message. Furthermore, a product's launch should be just that – a launch, and not an end,

of the influencing effort. Once the message is formally delivered, the campaign should also shift gears into "influence" mode, by tapping all of the communication channels and tools in the toolbox to help persuade policymakers to buy into the policy message and take the actions being advocated.

Diversifying the medium. A campaign should not simply focus on the launch of a book. Publications tend to be voluminous, and while they can be useful for some constituencies such as the academic community, students, researchers or technical experts, they can be too unwieldy to digest by the senior policymakers they are intending to influence. For these constituencies, other ways of conveying the message should be emphasized. Therefore, depending on the subject matter, the messages contained in publications and reports should be delivered through shorter, simpler, or more appealing mediums – press releases, infographics, websites, summaries, policy briefs, op-ed pieces, podcasts, documentaries, "advertorials" placed in key journals, etc. – which are specifically tailored to target constituencies: policymakers and legislators; academic community; private sector; civil society; and the media. Different information packages for each campaign (press kits; briefing kits, etc.) should be developed for different target audiences

Creating a plan. Every project plan for launching a publication or holding an event should include a marketing plan – what is foreseen for the communications campaign, and how it is to be delivered. The marketing plan should be prepared jointly by the unit

responsible and the External Communications and Media Relations Section, with the Section taking the responsibility for delivering the components assigned to it. These responsibilities should include all elements for which a communications competency is required, such as producing documentary films. It should be a standardized form, attached to the project proposal, which clearly lays out the suggested approach, the key messages to be applied to diversified target audiences, the communication tools, engagement schedule, the web and social media strategy, campaign participants and partners, roll-out plan and timing, and the budget.

Making the investment. Providing a pro-forma earmarking to form the basis of the consultation between the responsible unit and the Section would result in a proposal that is both realistic and cost-effective. Based on past experience of ECA and comparable agencies, approximately 10 per cent appears to be the norm for a realistic, successful marketing plan, with the amount varying depending on the number of launch events foreseen. In order, then, to ensure that the investment made in producing the publication or event achieves the desired outcome, a fixed amount of 10 per cent of the total budget should be earmarked for the marketing plan. The amount would be an initial allocation at the time the budget is approved, and could be added to or taken from once the plan is prepared in sufficient detail.

Determining the impact. The communication campaign is a necessary component of a successful outcome, but it is hard to determine its success in isolation from the success of the overall effort. With a retrospective analysis, the extent of policy influence of a given product or event can be gauged, and attributed to the overall level of effort and the quality of the product. From here, specific feedback can be obtained on the extent to which the communications campaign made a difference. Feedback of this nature is important for continual improvement of communications campaigns, so that they become increasingly effective over time.

> **Guiding Principle 4:** *Media relations should feature prominently in getting the ECA message out and building its reputation.*

The media as partner in change. The media industry (television, radio, print) is an agent for change and development that should be harnessed by ECA to support and advance its work on Africa. If effectively cultivated, the media – and the African media in particular – can also be an important ally in the African transformation, amplifying the ECA message as well as its reputation. Members of the African Media Initiative, initiated by ECA, should be available to provide ECA staff with strategic advice and guidance on how to become more effective at refining its image and getting its story across. The African Media Initiative meeting at ECA in November 2013 was the occasion to hear from a select number of Media Leaders on how ECA could best improve its communications. Responses received at the session were excellent and many have been incorporated into this strategy. The Initiative's Media Leaders should continue to act as the advisory body on communications for ECA,

thereby providing an invaluable and continuing channel for keeping the relations with ECA and the media strong; and building among media leaders a sense of ownership and buy-in to the communications efforts of ECA. Finally, in order to strengthen the alliance, a yearly ECA Media Awards (with regard to reporting on ECA and its work in Africa) should be introduced in partnership with other branded awards, such as the CNN annual journalists' awards.

Cultivating the network. The External Communications and Media Relations Section has maintained excellent contacts with key media organizations, and has a database of 2,000 outlets. More should be done to take advantage of this contact list, including purchasing an application to host the list and facilitate its access by the Section and other units in the house, and obtaining an annual compendium with continually updated information. The contact list should be expanded to bloggers and freelance journalists who specialize in relevant topics.

Existing contacts with media owners and senior editors should be strengthened through periodic visits and invitations to ECA-hosted meetings. The African Media Initiative, as mentioned above, should continue to be leveraged for advice and partnership development. The Section and the Subregional Office Communications Officers should be continuously scanning the networks to expand the possibilities of identifying useful connections that could be used to promote ECA and its work. The Section and the Subregional Offices should also institute a number of visits per year to key media houses in order to interact

and formalize support and collaboration with editorial boards, producers and other senior officials. The Executive Secretary's calendar should be enhanced to include visits to media organizations wherever the Secretary travels, within and outside of Africa.

Engaging the journalists. Given the extent to which ECA communications rely on media relations, it is important to maintain close contact with the journalists covering the stories about, and the events of, ECA. They should be engaged more effectively by putting them on a knowledge-sharing network (such as the ECA mining journalists' network) and periodically launching conversations. Press releases should be produced more efficiently with the most relevant information, so that journalists can quickly understand the key facts for their articles. More attention should be paid to journalist briefings, and a contact person should be made accessible to respond to any questions. Journalists should be invited to accompany specialists on visits to countries carrying out case studies for a flagship publication, to better understand what the research reveals.

Getting the message out. Tapping into the media network would ensure the widest possible dissemination of the ECA message and its stories to the most appropriate audiences. Partnerships with aggregators such as Project Syndicate, allAfrica.com, www.africaportal.org, Portland Communications, Africa Practice, PR Newswire, and the African Press Organization[4]

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4   *Project Syndicate* is the world's largest opinion-focused syndicate. It disseminates original, engaging, and thought-provoking commentaries on a wide range of topics by esteemed leaders and thinkers from around the world to readers in more than 500 member publications in over 150 countries and multiple languages. *AllAfrica. com* aggregates, produces and distributes 2,000 news and information items daily from

could provide sustained dissemination of press releases, Op-Eds, multimedia products and articles. Targeted partnerships with big media players for feature spots – for example CNN "Inside Africa", BBC "Focus on Africa", TV5 Monde's "Wari", CCTV "Faces of Africa", Africa 24, The Economist, Jeune Afrique Group, IC Publications Group (New African, African Business, Le Magazine De L'Afrique, and others) – could promote the ECA brand among global audiences and boost its visibility as a world-class think tank. Similarly, reaching local and regional media organizations could promote ECA exposure within Africa and open up new possibilities for country interactions and partnerships.

> **Guiding Principle 5:** *All ECA staff, and not just the Communications Section, should be able to effectively represent the ECA brand and communicate ECA messages.*

Taking on new roles. The organization needs to strengthen its communication capacity to respond to the increased prominence on communications in the refocused ECA, as reflected by this Strategy. For this, the External Communications and Media Relations Section should be provided with an adequate number of professional staff, and organized to more

effectively cover all its responsibilities. The Task Force recommended preparing a business plan for this, covered in the next section below. For the Subregional Offices, the role suggested for Communications Officers for the countries within their regions was to focus on media coverage of Executive Secretary visits, outreach to the public, maintaining contacts with media houses, and responsibilities outsourced from the Section.

In order for the Section and Subregional Office Communications Officers to become more effective at media relations, the Task Force recommended a training programme that covered (a) gaining a fuller understanding of the media in Africa; (b) logistics, costs and strategies for engaging the media; (c) training in social media tools and techniques; and (d) training in communication equipment and tools. Traineeships on social media should be arranged with a media house (suggested at the African Media Initiative Media Leaders' lunch)

Polishing skills. The role of the External Communications and Media Relations Section is to put ECA staff in front of their audience, and not to do all of the communications itself. Skill training should be provided for ECA professional staff to become more professionally competent as communicators, and communications skills should be a regular feature of ECA leadership training programmes. Several opportunities exist for communications training – C4D (Communications for Development) Network is a non-profit network offering training packages that have been used by United Nations organizations; the United Nations System Staff College has expressed

over 130 African news organizations and its own reporters to an African and global public. *www.africaportal.org* is an online knowledge resource for policy-related issues in Africa, featuring an online library collection holding over 4,000 books, journals, and digital documents related to African policy issues. *Portland Communications* and *Africa Practice* are public relations firms that lend targeted high profile support to outreach efforts. *PR Newswire* is hired by corporations, public relations firms and NGOs to deliver news and multimedia content via the Web, email and RSS to media, consumers, investors and the financial new community in 135 countries. *The African Press Organization* is the leading press release wire in Africa, and the global leader in media relations related to Africa, with a media database of over 25,000 contacts and the main Africa-related news online community.

interest in offering training; and others. Furthermore, multilingualism – a conversational level of English/French at the minimum – should also be a corporate requirement for ECA professionals. Language classes should be provided for this purpose and opportunities for multilingual interactions encouraged.

Expanding opportunities. Increasing the number of ECA professionals capable of being top-quality presenters and panellists should greatly enhance its reputation for quality. With their newly minted communications skills, ECA staff interaction with key influencers should be scaled up to increase public exposure of ECA, as noted above under Guiding Principle 2. Here, a protocol should be issued to govern media contacts and speaking engagements by ECA staff. The protocol should include the monitoring of messages to the media, and the identification of the spokespersons able to speak on behalf of ECA, particularly on sensitive issues.[5]

Within ECA, professional staff should be briefed on and fully grasp the key messages to convey for product or event launches, to ensure full alignment. Opportunities for interaction with the media should also be enhanced through seminars bringing together ECA Directors and major news editors, and more specifically around findings of a flagship publication, so as to increase dialogue on the one hand, and

to promote deeper understanding by news organizations of the publication's key messages, on the other.

Communicating internally. Like the ECA Website, communications within ECA also needs revamping to foster a more efficient and transparent message transmission across ECA. Internal communications has an important role to play in enhancing staff morale, encouraging staff to feel motivated and recognized for their contributions to the reputation and success of ECA among its clients, and reminding them of their own value towards fulfilling the transformation vision for Africa. Task Force suggestions for this, included:

- Issuing a newsletter – "What's new in ECA" – to keep staff updated on ECA achievements, offer authoritative positions on developments of interest, circulate highlights of senior management meetings, etc.

- Organizing periodic town halls with the Executive Secretary.

- Organizing events and features designed to promote informal staff interaction – book talks; story-telling; challenges such as tests of ECA history.

- Revamping the Intranet to make it the backbone of ongoing in-house communications and access to reference material.

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5   The protocol should take into account the spirit of DPI/2189, which stipulates that as a matter of principle, every member of the Secretariat may speak to the press, within limits and within their areas of competence and responsibility, providing facts, not opinions or comments, and leaving sensitive issues to officials who are specifically authorized to speak on them.

- Purchasing an electronic broadcasting system for information on meetings, announcements etc. with screens on each floor and in Conference Centre locations

The final word — public image of ECA

Beyond the actions relating to communications as the vehicle for getting the word out, managing a brand implies managing perceptions about the public image of the physical environment of ECA, and the comportment of staff. Several Task Force recommendations addressed this point:

Communicating the African heritage of ECA. ECA is an historic African icon, so an effective brand strategy should emphasize the image of ECA as a culturally diversified, historic and uniquely African institution. The Task Force suggested a number of things ECA could do to promote its image as a multicultural African institution, embracing staff members from different backgrounds, nationalities and cultures.

Within the ECA grounds, a cultural museum and art gallery could be established, along with an African restaurant to serve African foods. ECA could also be promoted as a cultural, historic and political place of interest. The iconic Africa Hall, the birth place of the charter that established the Organization of African Unity (now African Union), along with Afewerk Tekle's most famous and influential work, the Total Liberation of Africa's 150 square metre stained glass triptych, have gained increased attention as a result of the African Union's fiftieth

Anniversary celebrations. To capitalize on this, a documentary could be produced showcasing the historical, cultural and political significance of the two icons.

Presenting like a think tank. An organization with a reputation as an African icon, a world-class think tank and a United Nations office should strive to maintain well-kept and welcoming surroundings, including use of its green space, as well as disciplined working hours, polite, responsive phone and e-mail etiquette, and an inviting attitude that leaves visitors with a favourable impression. On the other hand, other Task Force recommendations on the public image of ECA could possibly be seen as overly publicity-oriented. While relevant for some United Nations Agencies, media spots featuring human interest stories or celebrity brand ambassadors could end up detracting from the professionalism and integrity of an organization aspiring to be a world-class policy think tank with a mission to influence transformation in Africa. When considering comparative levels of efforts between targeting the core client base (decision makers and professional communities) and creating awareness with the public, the former should take precedence.

PART 5 – Organizational arrangements

Management arrangements – External Communications and Media Relations Section as the Strategy's implementing unit

Comparing the scope and level of effort of this Strategy with the current and even planned capacities of the External Communications and Media Relations Section, the discrepancies become obvious. Fortunately, the 2014-2015 Biennial Budget includes significant resources for communications, taking the allocations for the Section together with allocations to other Divisions for product development and to the Subregional Offices. These resources could be supplemented with extra-budgetary funds, tapping into potential donors – including media-related foundations – interested in advancing the African narrative. Therefore, based on the adoption of this Strategy, a business plan would be prepared and

authorized separately, which takes into account the guiding principles and their implications in terms of strengthening the capacity of the External Communications and Media Relations Section, and the rest of ECA to adhere to them.

Organizationally, the Section's units should be aligned to the roles presented in Part 4 above:

- **Communications campaigns** – preparing and implementing the marketing plans for ECA-wide conferences and publications, managing the relationships with the sponsoring Divisions/Offices and coordinating inputs from the rest of the Section. Plan preparation would entail discussions with sponsoring offices on marketing plan features, actors, budgets and time frame. Plan implementation would entail coordination tasks with the Section's units providing branded material, multimedia coverage, website pages etc.; communications tasks such as drafting and disseminating dispatches, press releases, updates and blog posts leading up to, during and after a publication launch/conference event in French, English and other languages (or organizing translations); and media

relations tasks during the event, including preparing media kits and press briefings. Also, providing Subregional Offices with guidance, advice and support to regional campaigns.

- **Media relations and outreach** – covering interactions with ECA and media professionals and organizations, as well as the general public. Media responsibilities would entail: maintaining media contact lists; identifying and sustaining partnerships; coordinating media participation for ECA events; organizing media exposure visits, interviews and other interactions with ECA staff; placing of articles and other communications material with journals and syndicates; drafting media advisories; acting as, or arranging for, an ECA spokesperson. Outreach responsibilities would entail organizing events, briefings and tours involving the general public and visitors to ECA.

- **Multimedia communications** – managing ECA newsletters, enhancing its presence on social media platforms, and producing multimedia material. It would entail: organizing internal communications activities; preparing content for and producing newsletters; advising/guiding ECA participation on social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter etc.); providing video, photo and Livestream coverage for ECA events and newsworthy items; producing advertorials, documentaries, and Livestream/YouTube/Vimeo videos and

podcasts for news releases and Public Service Announcements; managing the ECA Broadcasting Facilities.

- **Branding and graphic design** – maintaining the ECA brand identity and providing graphic material for publications and events. It would entail: establishing, advising, monitoring and providing quality assurance for brand-related items; overseeing the brand roadmap (roll-out); maintaining the brand book and style guide; preparing or outsourcing brand-appropriate imagery (graphic designs and representations of messages) for publications and events – books, newsletters, pamphlets, posters, banners as well as infographics etc.

- **Website maintenance and development –** ensuring that the ECA Internet and intranet stay current and relevant. It would entail: establishing website standards and guidelines; preparing and maintaining corporate pages; uploading content or providing quality assurance for Divisions/Offices authorized to upload content; building templates for new sites (for events etc.); training relevant staff on ECA web content applications; troubleshooting issues with the Internet, intranet, and social media applications (blogs and social media platforms).

- **Programme management and coordination –** ensuring effective administrative, operational and coordination responsibilities for the Section. It would entail: preparing and

monitoring the implementation of the Section's work programmes and budgets; administering the Section's financial, human resource, procurement, logistic and records management responsibilities; coordinating with the Directorate of the Public Information and Knowledge Management Division; liaising with Communications staff of the Subregional Offices and ECA special initiatives and projects, and advising their supervisors on the quality of the substantive aspects of their work.

Oversight and guidance arrangements

Given that communications supports all the units within ECA, regular advice and feedback should be sought on the implementation of the Strategy and the business plan. The Task Force did not recommend the creation of a separate oversight Committee; rather, the current arrangements would be adequate to ensure proper oversight and accountability. Specifically:

- The Director of the Public Information and Knowledge Management Division should be responsible for the oversight and day-to-day monitoring of the business plan for the External Communications and Media Relations Section. For this, the Directorate would work with the Section to prepare the business plan and the component projects, assist in arranging financing for the plan projects, and review plan progress quarterly.

- The Senior Management Team should be the body reviewing and endorsing the strategic plan, presented by the Director of the Public Information and Knowledge Management Division, and for monitoring its implementation. The strategic plan should be a standing agenda item for the Team's meetings at six month intervals.

- Substantive advice and guidance to the overall communications efforts of ECA should be provided by selected Media Leader members of the African Media Initiative. The working lunch with this group organized at the November 2013 African Media Initiative session could be an appropriate regular format. Convened as an advisory body, the group should monitor the communications work of ECA, offer feedback on its performance, as well as to advise on new developments in the media field, and suggest future areas of opportunity that ECA could take advantage of.

Quality assurance

The Communications Strategy contains multiple items for which the quality of the effort is critical to a successful outcome. Success criteria for the overall Strategy were spelled out at the beginning of Part 3. In the business plan, these success criteria would be detailed and monitored in the context of the biennial reviews by the Senior Management Team.

To oversee the various dimensions of the Strategy from a performance perspective, the Strategic Planning and Operational Quality Division of the ECA should incorporate progress and performance parameters into its overall Programme Accountability Framework. Quality Assurance aspects for each of the functional responsibilities of the External Communications and Media Relations Section should be as follows:

- Communications campaigns – the substantive unit responsible for a publication or event would assess the performance of its marketing plan, in light of the feedback received on the quality of the overall effort.

- Media relations and outreach – media relations feedback would be provided by the communications advisory body; outreach by participant feedback.

- Multimedia communications – periodic user feedback surveys would be carried out to gauge quality and effectiveness.

- Branding and graphic design – the External Communications and Media Relations Section performs Quality Assurance on corporate adherence to the brand book. General staff feedback would gauge the Section's performance.

- Website maintenance and development – the Section's performance here, including Quality Assurance for website standards, would also be gauged through general staff feedback.

- Programme management and coordination – the Director of the Public Information and Knowledge Management Division would provide the Quality Assurance for this aspect, and the overall supervisor for the Section.

PART 6 –
Risks And Assumptions

The following assumptions are to be considered in the context of the Communications Strategy roll out:

That contracting processes are sufficiently responsive to ensure timeliness and quality. Communications campaigns are high-profile, time sensitive efforts, and the media industry is used to operating in a fast-paced environment. United Nations rules governing processing of contracts and payments are not well suited to this environment. ECA therefore risks gaining a reputation for poor service, inhibiting the ability to attract top-quality firms. Mitigating this risk calls for finding innovative ways to speed up its contracting processes. The Public Information and Knowledge Management Division will be working with the Division of Administration to explore alternatives that, if found workable, would address this issue.

That the quality of the content is sustained at the level desired. An aggressive Communications Strategy can work both ways, amplifying perceptions of either excellence or mediocrity. The Media Leaders advisory body would be able to offer suggestions on ways to improve perceptions, but in the end the various units producing the publications and events have to maintain the standards expected from a world-class think tank. The overall refocusing effort being undertaken is designed to ensure that ECA outputs are compelling, high-quality products. So, ensuring that the overall effort succeeds is the best way to mitigate this risk.

That the capacity of the External Communications and Media Relations Section is adequate for the tasks they are responsible for. The current situation is that the Section is overwhelmed by the demands placed on it. Success of the Strategy depends on its ability to staff up and obtain the resources needed to implement the business plan. To mitigate this risk, the business plan would be carefully prepared and vetted to ensure that it can successfully address the capacity gaps. Also, efforts to fill staff vacancies would be addressed on an urgent basis. As of January 2014 all the current vacancies were under active recruitment.

That staff communication skills are up to the level required. A presenter must be both compelling and convincing when addressing decision makers or a general audience, particularly in live broadcast settings. To mitigate this risk, communications skills training would include assessments on competency levels, which would factor into the protocol governing media contacts and speaking engagements mentioned above. Similarly, good communications skills would be included as a key qualification for all ECA professional positions.

That the communications message will be consistent across ECA. Communications Officers located in Subregional Offices and in ECA special initiatives and projects are not directly reporting to the External Communications and Media Relations Section and could therefore produce inconsistent or alternative messages that do not conform to the corporate position. To mitigate this possibility, the Section would have coordination and quality assurance responsibilities, so that the views of the Section Head would go to the relevant Communications Officer's supervisor. Depending on the issue, potential miscommunications could be discussed and resolved on a case-by-case basis.

PART 7 – Conclusions

A strategy paper lays out how an organization intends to approach a particular business function, in this case, communications. It establishes the parameters against which decisions are taken, projects are approved, and resources are allocated. It also projects how the particular function supports the organization's overall business model in the most effective manner. From the strategy, there comes a business plan and corresponding resource allocations and investment decisions. Rather than focusing in on programme plans and budgets directly, the strategy allows for the preliminary step of providing the rationale behind plan contents.

In this case, the parameters are both simple and far-reaching. The basic intention is for communications in ECA to be an effective, coordinated outreach effort providing compelling, focused messages tailored to specific target audiences, using up-to-date communications tools, working in multiple languages, and leveraging product launches and key events to positively influence African policies and policymakers, as well as the public image of ECA and, more broadly, the United Nations in Africa. This intention leads to five guiding principles: (i) ECA needs a strong, consistent and identifiable brand promoting "Africa First"; (ii) it should build up its image as a world-class think tank; (iii) it should apply a campaign approach to its strategic products and key events; (iv) media relations should be expressly cultivated and prominently featured; and (v) all ECA staff should be able to represent the ECA brand and communicate its messages. From these principles a wide range of implications are derived that would determine the communications-related activities to be carried out and how the responsibilities would be organized.

When compared to the current situation, these implications are a considerable departure from the earlier reactive approach, and will require a significant level of commitment and effort to be achieved. Formulation of this Strategy had the advantage of inputs from a Task Force of 25 staff members representing the range of units at ECA Headquarters and the Subregional Offices, and is a testament to the vision and creativeness of the Task Force members. This being said, however, it is believed that

the results reflect the general thinking of the house, and can, therefore, proceed with a high level of buy-in.

The Communications Strategy laid out in this document reflects a bold, ambitious and far-reaching attempt to make communications and media relations key enablers for achieving the overall aspirations of ECA as Africa's premier think tank. It brings communications to the forefront of the organization's efforts at impact and influence. As such, the Strategy reflects an updating to the age where a greatly expanded media presence is a prerequisite for attracting any attention at all. In an earlier era, it may have been sufficient to issue a flagship publication or event report that could then speak for the organization, to bring about the desired result. Given the present media environment, however, target audiences can be reached only through multiple channels and occasions. It is this new, more media- and exposure-oriented environment that the Communications Strategy attempts to respond to. If successful, then communications can be a major contributor to the ability of ECA to positively influence African policies, policymakers, and the public image of ECA and, more broadly, the United Nations in Africa – and Africa in the United Nations.

Annex – Summary of actions suggested, based on the implications of adopting the communications strategy and its guiding principles

Guiding principle 1: *ECA interactions with the world should feature a strong, consistent and identifiable brand that projects its key message – Africa First – and its key attributes – African, Think Tank, and United Nations affiliation.*

1. Make the brand "ECA" without the "United Nations" preface, and make the recommended tag line "Africa First".

2. Issue a brand book that contains a style guide for brand-related fonts, colours and appearances, and lays out how they should be applied for different physical and digital items.

3. Concentrate the work of ECA on projecting the African transformation – defining the African narrative, and consistently featuring the reality of Africa as an emerging global economic player

4. Emphasize the ECA think tank role by producing policy briefs, journal articles, and Op-Eds on emerging issues of pressing interest to Africa.

5. Highlight the ECA and United Nations affiliation in communications story lines and outreach efforts, illustrating how its impartiality, mandate and authority contributed to its policy influence.

Guiding Principle 2: *ECA should build up its image as a world-class think tank.*

6. Seek out opportunities for the Executive Secretary, the Deputy Executive Secretary, the Heads of Divisions and Subregional Offices, and other senior staff to participate in media events (talk shows, lectures, interviews etc.).

7. Cultivate close interactions by the

respective ECA units with specific audiences to engage them on a professional level, through knowledge networks, event participation, consultations etc.

8. Use the website pages of the units responsible for ECA thematic areas to showcase their innovative work and positions on topical subjects, to demonstrate how ECA stays abreast of "hot issues".

9. Have units' sites also offer digests and syntheses of themes and topics surrounding major events and conferences, drawing on the Institutional Repository for material.

10. Feature the Institutional Repository, along with the federated search engine, ASKIA, more prominently in the website, to demonstrate the richness of ECA material and access to scholarly works.

11. Access all publications featured on the ECA website through their link in the Institutional Repository for viewing or downloading, so that users could be drawn into browsing the Repository collection.

12. Have a space on the website for inviting user feedback ("Have your say"), and analyse the site's activity statistics to pinpoint areas needing enhancement.

13. Issue a quarterly magazine for Policy Newsletters with online and print versions, complemented by easily read monthly bulletins in a one-page colour format.

14. Periodically issue the ECA Journal as a double-blind peer reviewed research journal, publishing thought-provoking original studies from contributing authors within and outside of ECA.

15. Improve readability and increase readership of all types of ECA publications, by simplifying the language, reducing the acronyms, adding more graphics and using more concrete examples.

16. Tailor outreach efforts to different interest groups (policymakers, academia, other think tanks etc.) using proactive engagements, networking, special partnerships and multimedia products

17. Provide the External Communications and Media Relations Section with the capacity, tools and resources to produce tailored messages – interactive apps; documentaries; DVDs; podcasts; video newscasts; radio and television spots.

18. Have the Section subscribe to the Livestream video production/broadcasting service, and purchase equipment to provide streamed videos of events/ conferences.

19. Upgrade the ECA Broadcasting Facility to produce podcasts, online radio, editing of videos and Livestreamed conferences, and for producing interviews, discussions and call-ins.

Guiding Principle 3: *ECA should apply a campaign approach to its strategic publications and key events.*

20. Design communications campaigns for the ECA flagship report and other headline publications, and around key events, to generate interest in and anticipation of the message.

21. Once the policy message is delivered through a launch, use communications tools to help persuade policymakers to buy into it and take the actions being advocated.

22. For constituencies unable or unwilling to digest a large, dense publication, emphasize other ways of conveying the message – policy briefs, op-ed pieces, podcasts, documentaries, etc.

23. Develop different information packages for a campaign – press kits; briefing kits, etc. – for different target audiences.

24. Include a marketing plan as part of every project plan for launching a publication or holding an event – what is foreseen for the communications campaign, and how it is to be delivered.

25. Prepare the marketing plan jointly by the unit responsible and the External Communications and Media Relations Section, laying out the approach, key messages, communication tools, partners, timing and roll-out plan, and budget.

26. Give the Section responsibility for all elements in the marketing plan for which communications competencies are required, such as producing documentary films.

27. Set aside a fixed amount of 10 per cent of the total budget for the marketing plan as an initial earmarking at the time the budget is approved, which would be adjusted during plan preparation.

28. Derive the success of the marketing plan from gauging the overall impact and quality of the product or event, and then obtaining feedback on the plan's contribution to this result.

Guiding Principle 4: *Media relations should feature prominently in getting the ECA message out and building its reputation.*

29. Have the Media Leaders of the African Media Initiative continue to act as advisory body on communications for ECA, providing a continuing channel for maintaining strong relations with the media.

30. Introduce a yearly ECA Media Award (on reporting on ECA and its work in Africa), in partnership with other branded awards, such as the CNN annual journalists' awards.

31. Take better advantage of the External Communications and Media Relations Section's media contact list, introducing an application to improve access to the list and obtaining an annual compendium with continually updated information.

32. Expand the contact list to bloggers and freelance journalists who specialize in relevant topics.

33. Strengthen existing contacts with media owners and senior editors through periodic visits and invitations to ECA-hosted meetings.

34. Continue to leverage the African Media Initiative for advice and partnership development.

35. Have the External Communications and Media Relations Section and Subregional Office Communications Officers continuously scanning the networks to expand possibilities of identifying useful connections that could be used to promote ECA and its work.

36. Institute regular visits from the Section and the Subregional Offices to the offices of key media houses to interact and formalize support and collaboration with editorial boards, producers and other senior officials.

37. Enhance the Executive Secretary's calendar to include visits to media organizations wherever he travels, within and outside of Africa.

38. Engage journalists covering ECA stories and events more effectively by putting them on a knowledge-sharing network and periodically launching conversations.

39. Produce press releases more efficiently with the most relevant information, so that the journalists can quickly understand the key facts for their articles.

40. Pay more attention to journalist briefings, and make a contact person accessible to respond to any questions.

41. Invite journalists to accompany specialists on visits to countries carrying out case studies for a flagship publication, to better understand what the research reveals.

42. Create partnerships with key media aggregators to ensure wide dissemination of ECA press releases, Op-Eds, multimedia products and articles to the most appropriate audiences.

43. Arrange partnerships with big media players for feature spots to promote the ECA brand among global audiences and boost its visibility as a world-class think tank.

44. Target local and regional media organizations to promote ECA exposure within the continent and open up new possibilities for country interactions and partnerships.

Guiding Principle 5: *All ECA staff, and not just the Communications Section, should be able to effectively represent the ECA brand and communicate its messages.*

45. Provide the External Communications and Media Relations Section with an adequate number of professional staff, and

organize it to more effectively cover all its responsibilities. Prepare a business plan to carry this out.

46. Establish the Subregional Office Communications Officers' role as providing outreach to the public, maintaining contacts with media houses, media coverage of Executive Secretary visits, and responsibilities outsourced by the External Communications and Media Relations Section.

47. Offer a training programme to the Section and Subregional Office Communications Officers to become more effective at media relations.

48. Arrange traineeships on social media with a media house.

49. Provide skills training for ECA professional staff to become more competent communicators, and make communications skills a regular feature of ECA leadership training programmes.

50. Require multilingualism (conversational English/French at the minimum) for ECA professionals; provide language classes, and encourage opportunities for multilingual interactions.

51. Scale up interaction of qualified ECA staff with key influencers to increase ECA public exposure.

52. Issue a protocol to govern media contacts and speaking engagements by ECA staff, including monitoring of messages to the media, and identifying spokespersons able to speak on behalf of ECA.

53. Ensure ECA professional staff are briefed on and fully grasp the key messages to convey for product or event launches, to ensure full alignment.

54. Enhance interaction with the media through seminars bringing together ECA Directors and news editors, to increase dialogue and promote deeper understanding about a publication's key messages.

55. Revamp internal ECA communications to foster a more efficient and transparent communication across the organization. Suggestions here include:

- Issue an internal newsletter to keep staff updated on ECA achievements, offer authoritative positions on developments of interest, report senior management meeting highlights, etc.

- Organize periodic town halls with the Executive Secretary.

- Organize events and features designed to promote informal staff interaction – book talks; story-telling; challenges such as tests of ECA history.

- Revamp the intranet to make it the backbone of ongoing in-house communications and access to reference material.

- Purchase an electronic broadcasting system for information on meetings, announcements etc. with screens on each floor and in Conference Centre locations.

Public image of ECA. Beyond the actions relating to communications as the vehicle for getting the word out, ECA should manage its public image through its physical environment and the comportment of staff:

56. Emphasize ECA as a culturally diversified, historic and uniquely African institution, with a cultural museum, art gallery, African restaurant, and documentary on Africa Hall and the stained glass triptych.

57. Maintain well-kept and welcoming surroundings, including use of its green space, and an inviting attitude by ECA staff that leaves visitors with a favourable impression.

58. When considering comparative levels of efforts, give precedence to targeting the core client base (decision makers and professional communities) over creating awareness with the public.

Actions relating to the Strategy's organizational arrangements

59. Organizationally, align the External Communications and Media Relations Section units to the roles presented in Part 4 above:

- **Communications campaigns –** preparing and implementing the marketing plans for ECA-wide conferences and publications.

- **Media relations and outreach** – covering ECA interactions with media professionals and organizations, as well as the general public.

- **Multimedia communications** – managing the ECA newsletters, enhancing its presence on social media platforms, and producing multimedia material.

- **Branding and graphic design** – maintaining the ECA brand identity and providing graphic material for publications and events.

- **Website maintenance and development –** ensuring that the ECA Internet and intranet stay current and relevant.

- **Programme management and coordination –** ensuring effective administrative, operational and coordination responsibilities for the Section.

60. Establish the Strategy's oversight, guidance and quality assurance arrangements as the following:

- The Director of the Public Information and Knowledge Management Division would be responsible for the

oversight and day-to-day monitoring of the business plan for the External Communications and Media Relations Section.

- The Senior Management Team would review and endorse the strategic plan, presented by the Director of the Public Information and Knowledge Management Division, and monitor its implementation, as a standing agenda item twice yearly.

- Substantive advice and guidance to the overall communications efforts of ECA would be provided by selected Media Leader members of the African Media Initiative.

- For quality assurance, the Strategic Planning and Operational Quality Division would incorporate progress and performance parameters into its overall Programme Accountability Framework.