



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

Distr. : General

ECA/SRO-NA/ICE/31/4
March 2016

Original: French

Thirty-First session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE)

Rabat (Morocco)
1 – 4 March 2016

Report on ECA Activities in North Africa
(March 2015–February 2016)

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I. Introduction

1. The ECA Office for North Africa has been mandated by the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts to direct its programmes and actions towards achieving two outcomes: a) strengthening Member States' capacities to produce and disseminate in real time high quality statistics and policy analyses in support of national and sub-regional development priorities, and b) strengthening the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) and other sub-regional actors capacities to accelerate the design and implementation of sub-regional initiatives.
2. This report covers the period of the second year of implementation of 2014-2015 programme. The report therefore takes into consideration the activities carried out by the ECA Office for North Africa from March 2015 to February 2016.
3. The activities implemented in 2015 were performed in close cooperation and collaboration with the Member States, the organic divisions of ECA and other sub-regional Offices and regional economic communities (REC), including the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), the United Nations system agencies, in addition to other partners.

II. Main achievements of the work programmed during the period under review

4. The activities specified in the Office work programme were performed for the purpose of producing outcomes within the priority focus areas specified by the strategic frameworks for 2014-2015. The recommendations emanating from the previous meetings of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE), as well as contributions by UMA Member States and other partners will also help mark out the framework of interventions by the Office throughout the period under review.
5. These activities were carried out in complete alignment with the new ECA strategic programme orientations approved by the Ministerial Conference in March 2013.

A. Major Outcome 1: Strengthening Member States capacity to produce and disseminate in timely fashion high quality statistics and policy analyses in support of national and sub-regional development priorities

6. By implementing its activities the Office has contributed to the improvement of the Member States' capacities in areas pertaining to the role of industry in developing the green economy, continental free trade agreements, pending a memorandum of understanding on the Rules of Origin (ROO), harmonization of customs procedures and the exchange of computerized documents between customs administrations. The mechanism for the production of country profiles, a key document in the new ECA orientations, was improved during this period and 8 country profiles were devised.

1. Contributions to the strengthening of the Member States capacities

a. Forum for the development of North Africa under the title «North Africa and Continental Free Trade Agreements»

7. The Forum for the development of North Africa is a biannual initiative mobilizing regional players around the issues of interest and which are thematic in the sub-region. The 2015 edition of the Forum was held in Rabat Morocco from 27 to 30 October 2015. Based on the theme of «North Africa and continental free trade agreements», the Forum enabled an exchange of views and experiences

among a wide range of players on the challenges of trading integration in North Africa in the context of free trade agreements.

8. The Forum joined together regional players such as economic journalists and operators in the North African private sector to boost their knowledge of continental free trade agreements, as well as the implication of trading agreements in North Africa and the rest of the Continent. More specifically, the scheduled activities made it possible to:

- Raise awareness of the North African private sector actors with regard to the continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) and their possible role in negotiations,
- Provide the relevant players with the resources produced by academics to support their decisions and actions in the global framework of multilateral agreements, and regional and of continental free trade zones in particular,
- Raise awareness of regional media on the needs and expectations of citizens in general and private sector players, as well as their potential role in the framework of free trade agreements,
- Raise media awareness regarding the CFTA, negotiation processes and the role they are expected to play to support these processes and public awareness-raising.

9. The Forum was organized in three major components (i) a training workshop for the media, (ii) a regional workshop for the private sector on the challenges involved in commercial integration in the context of the CFTA and (iii) an international colloquium on “WTO 20 years after, African Integration and Major Regional Trade Agreements”¹.

10. The media training workshop allowed the participants to establish a network of economic journalists on trade issues. The workshop on the private sector was an opportunity for the private sector Maghreb Employers’ Union to hold its first conference in 2015 to give a new push to its activities. As for the international colloquium, it provided academia, development experts and players in the private sector with an opportunity to discuss pivotal issues such as: (i) the WTO and multilateral trade negotiations: stalling of the Doha round; (ii) the WTO and development, (iii) the WTO and dispute settlements; (iv) articulation between multilateralism and regionalism; (v) Multilateralism and pluralism; (vi) the effects of liberalization on agriculture; (vii) the effects of liberalism in territorial redistribution of activities; (viii) regional mega trade agreements; (ix) regional trade agreements in the Mediterranean and Africa, and (x) the African continental free trade zone.

b. Training workshop on Rules of Origin for the UMA working group in charge of preparing the memorandum of understanding (MOU) on this issue

11. The UMA countries initiated a draft free trade agreement in June 2010. This agreement calls for the adoption of a Maghreb MOU on the rules of origin constituting a key component of the Agreement. A working group (WG) has been created to prepare the memorandum. The WG has been meeting since 2011. It examines the various rules of origin according to different scenarios depending on the general or specific rules, as well as the existing trading relationships, on one hand, between Maghreb countries and on the other hand, and European Mediterranean countries and Africa. The multiple rules include

¹The colloquium was a joint initiative of the ECA, the African Commercial Policy Center of the World Trade Organization (WTO) The 2015 edition was the result of cooperation between the WTO dean – Mohammed V University (Rabat) and the economic Laboratory applied to development (LEAD) of Toulon University. Academics and development practitioners made about fifty during the colloquium. In addition, a day was dedicated to a get-together of young researchers with more experienced players in the general framework of a doctoral school. The previous editions of the colloquium were an occasion to edit several books and special issues of scientific reviews. This is a living example of cooperation between the Office and the academic world.

those depending on the type of agreement linking partners together (for example generic rules with the League of Arab States of which are a part of the UMA Member countries, or specific rules with certain countries at the bilateral level in the framework of the Agadir Agreement or different rules in conjunction with the European Union).

12. To meet the needs of training and capacity building of the WG members required for the preparation of the memorandum to provide the WG with substantial and technical instruments to fulfill their mission, the ECA North Africa Office, in close collaboration with UMA General Secretariat, held a training workshop on the rules of origin for the working group.

13. The training workshop is a joint activity in the framework of the ECA-AMU cooperation programme for 2014-2015. The training workshop was for the working group (WG) members in charge of preparing the memorandum of understanding on rules of origin. Also invited to this meeting were the national experts and members of the WG involved in the negotiations for the establishment of the Maghreb free trade zone reporting to national ministries responsible for foreign trade, customs, industry and agriculture of the five UMA countries.

c. Workshop on harmonization of customs procedures and computerized document exchange between customs administrations in the Arab region.

14. In support of the efforts deployed by UMA and the Agadir declaration regarding customs cooperation, and by way of execution of the project pursuant to “Strengthening the capacities of developing countries with transitional economies to facilitate the crossing of borders, regional and integration cooperation“, the ECA Office for North Africa and the ESCWA, in close collaboration with the UMA General Secretariat, held a workshop on the harmonization of customs procedures and the exchange of computerized documents between customs administrations. This workshop was held in Casablanca, Morocco on 2 to 4 December 2015, the main objectives being to contribute to the strengthening of the trade facilitation system in the Maghreb via the acceleration of customs harmonization procedures and the establishment of an action plan for electronic data exchange.

15. The national experts from UMA Member Countries’ customs administrations and from the Arab region, representatives of the UMA general secretariat and representatives of the Agadir technical Committee attended the meeting.

16. This workshop provided the region’s customs officials with an opportunity to benefit from the experience of other regions with regard to harmonization and computerized document exchange between customs services. This refers specifically to the experience of the Asia region and also Europe. These exchanges facilitated:

- Sharing the outcome on the analysis of the hurdles to customs harmonization in the Arab region;
- Analyzing the technical and legal gaps with respect to the electronic exchange of documents between the customs authorities of the Maghreb;
- Sharing the lessons learnt from the experience and international and regional practices regarding customs harmonization, and initiate the bases of an Arab project for the electronic exchange of customs documents;
- Discussing the opportunity for Member Countries of the Agadir initiative and UMA Member Countries to connect to an electronic document exchange platform.

17. The meeting allowed participants to come out with the idea of creating a regional platform for the electronic exchange of customs documents. This will require starting with the establishment of a platform for the four Agadir Agreement countries, in particular Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan, and reaching out to the other countries in the region.

18. To do so, the platform must be in star shape to facilitate its future opening to many different countries. It was also decided to refrain from limiting the content of the platform to customs declaration documents but rather to extend it to other documents such as invoices, and certificates of origin, etc. In addition, the participants took note of the proposal by Tunisia Trade Net (« TTN ») providing information on its experience with regard to the establishment of the platform.

2. Country profiles already developed and other in process

19. The ECA country profiles find their rationale in the mission and new programme of the institution, in particular the constitution and enhancement of the sub-regional data centers and the need for coherence and harmonization of data and information used in the ECA flagship publications and reports including the economic report on Africa. The very principle of country profiles as well as their methodology was presented to the ECA Conferences of Ministers of the Economy and Planning in March 2014 at Abuja (Nigeria), in compliance with the mission of the new ECA orientation. The end purpose of the country profiles is (i) to enable the ECA to carry out and disseminate analyses per country and per region; (ii) to devise recommendations relative to economic transformation through the promotion of sustainable growth and social development; (iii) to strengthen regional integration, development planning and economic governance (iv) to proceed to an analysis of the potential risks and propose means to foresee their mitigation.

20. The country profile development process implies the constant gathering and harmonization of country data and information, the aggregation of indicators used by the regional economic communities and other groups of countries, as well as trend analysis so as to produce timely forecasts. The production of country profiles will have other cascading effects on the strengthening of the capacities of the Member States for the production and dissemination of statistics and high quality policy statistics and analysis. They will also facilitate the planning and devising of policies based on pertinent data by way of support to sub-regional development.

21. The country profiles developed between March 2015 – February 2016 period deal with Morocco (2), Tunisia (2), Algeria (1), Mauritania (1), Egypt (1) and the Sudan (1). The subject of the green economy was developed in four country profiles according to the specificities of the national stakes involved: Algeria (diversification and reduction of dependence on hydrocarbons), Morocco (industrialization and new trades in Morocco), Mauritania (green economy and governance in the fishing sector), and Tunisia (green jobs and regional development). For the Sudan the topics dealt with the sustainability of public finance given the significance of this matter further to the secession of the South. For Egypt, subsidies were at the heart of the concerns of public authorities in an attempt to rationalize public finance and boost the efficiency of the social system. The Egypt CP integrated in it the reflection on the subsidy system. Lastly, the second Morocco CP dealt with social exclusion, a genuine issue for a more inclusive development of the country. The country profile of Libya is currently being finalized and will be published before the end of 2016.

22. In addition to assessing countries' economic and social situations, the country profiles analyzed the implemented policies and the challenges the countries have to confront in the economic and social fields (rationalization of public finance, curbing inflation, economic diversification and fighting poverty). The various topics addressed presented some recommendations which took into account some country specificities. In the short term, the thematic analysis led to better knowledge of the vision and measures adopted in the different countries. They thereby constitute a tool for experience sharing and for guiding public policies.

B. Major outcome 2: Strengthening the capacity of the UMA and other sub-region actors to accelerate the design or implementation of sub-regional initiatives.

23. The partnership with UMA was significantly strengthened, as well as partnership between UMA and other regional institutions. Over this period, major achievements were made with the support of other partner institutions.

24. The partnership for integration was reinforced according to two focus areas: bilateral strengthening between UMA and the Office, and multilateral strengthening by activating the Sub-regional Coordination Mechanism.

1. The bilateral dimension

25. In May 2015, the General Secretariat of the ECA North Africa Office met to (i) evaluate the programme initiatives to support the UMA and its countries in the framework of the multi-annual programme for cooperation and (ii) update the medium term priorities of the sub-regional agency to ensure coherency with the activities still to be carried out.

26. The meeting made it possible to establish an itemized report on the achievement of the cooperation programme after a year of implementation and to present, for analysis and follow up, the draft Gender Strategy prepared by the Office for the UMA General Secretariat.

27. Regarding the strengthening of the General Secretariat and the UMA institutional framework, significant progress was recorded in three areas: (i) support to the mobilization of partners to strengthen sub-regional integration and initiatives in North Africa, (ii) the organization of a meeting of experts from the UMA Member States on the funding of integration, (iii) support to the UMA General Secretariat in the framework of the BIAT/CFTA initiative and (iv) the organization of a workshop for the members of the UMA technical group on rules of origin.

28. To accelerate regional integration, actions initiated included (i) the promotion and development of regional value chains, (ii) the facilitation of transport and trade in North Africa (iii) the harmonization of customs procedures and electronic exchange of customs documents.

29. This evaluation meeting allowed both partners to come to an agreement on the importance of holding meetings of the UMA thematic Committees and of its statutory entities, insofar as possible, in an observer capacity. This statute will enable the Office to be a partner of choice in UMA's work therefore allowing better anticipation of its technical assistance needs. Such anticipation capacity will increase significantly and enhance the ECA strength of advocacy to the benefit of UMA by lending it the means to rely on the regular and properly documented feedback from UMA entities.

2. The multilateral dimension: North Africa SRCM

30. The 2ND annual consultative meeting of the SRCM-North Africa sub-regional coordination Mechanism occurred in June 2015 upon the initiative of the ECA North Africa Office. The coordination mechanism is devoted to boosting cooperation and collaboration between the international and regional institutions with mandates for assisting UMA and North African countries in their development efforts. The objective is to promote higher synergy and greater efficiency of intervention via regular sharing of information, mutual capitalization of the accomplishments and experiences, and, as much as possible, joint programmes or projects in support of UMA and other players involved in the North Africa integration process.

31. The meeting opened the cycle of annual evaluations of the mechanisms. Firstly, it made it possible to check the correlation of the planned actions with the sub-region's development challenges, as well as their alignment with UMA medium term priorities and its Member States. An activities report

prepared by ECA in collaboration with the UMA General Secretariat was presented for this purpose. In addition to the status of implementation of the joint Platform agenda, the report reviews the lessons learnt in this first year, as well as the short term prospects and challenges. Among these challenges it seems important to underscore (i) the imperative of bringing to completion the establishment of MSRC-NA activation structures, and the (ii) requisite development of advocacy for greater mobilization of resources.

32. For the June 2015 to May 2016 period, exchanges between the partners made it possible to identify potential areas for ensuring synergy in the efforts deployed by the partners to support AMU, aiming at four target objectives:

- Strengthening of the statistical, economic and social information;
- Rules of origin, facilitation of trade and harmonization of customs documents;
- Analysis of 'Youth – Employability and Migration' dynamics;
- Management of natural resources, the fight against desertification and support to the Maghreb professional associations.

III. Support/Counseling, special initiatives and interactions with other ECA divisions and other partners

A. Support/Counseling

1. Support to a Gender Sensitive Approach for the UMA General Secretariat

33. In the framework of the 2014-2015 multi-annual cooperation programme signed between the UMA General Secretariat and the ECA North Africa Office, the latter supported UMA in establishing a Gender Strategy with the aim of implementing the provisions and instruments calling for the strengthening of women's rights and the promotion of gender equality. Indeed, the adoption and application of an UMA gender strategy represents a new stage so that the gender approach is effectively taken into account in its work programme and internal operations. The specific objectives of the UMA Gender Approach are as follows:

- Strengthening within the UMA GS of the capacity for the inclusion of the gender approach in its processes, structures and programmes, as well as in those of the Member States;
- Better planning and budgeting of gender activities;
- Strengthening of the Member States' capacity to follow and evaluate the progress registered in the implementation of agreements and conventions pursuant to gender equality and the promotion of women;
- Promoting the sustainability of UMA actions and the information and awareness-raising tools, it produces to promote the integration of gender equality in the wider regional integration process.

34. The implementation of a gender strategy should help UMA create an institutional culture in which accounting for the gender approach would become an integral part of life in the Organization's workplace. In the medium and long terms UMA could be in a position to sustain its activities and awareness-raising tools to promote the effective and systematic integration of the Gender issue in the more comprehensive process of regional integration that UMA strives to emphasize and accelerate.

35. This strategy was duly reviewed and discussed in a meeting organized by the North Africa Office on 20 May 2015 and attended by the Secretary General and UMA top management, subsequently the document was finalized on the basis of the discussions and comments put forward.

36. The gender strategy is divided into five chapters including one devoted to the action plan that ECA-NA proposes to facilitate progressive and effective implementation by the UMA General Secretariat. The final project of this strategy was officially submitted by the UMA GS to member countries for information and for them to provide their viewpoint.

2. Technical support for statistical data

37. The development of country profiles requires the gathering and harmonization of data on the countries, aggregation of the indicators which are useful to regional economic communities, as well as analysis of the trends to produce more reliable forecasts. In this respect, technical missions were organized in Egypt and the Sudan to agree with the focal points of these countries on the data and potential indicators which could enrich the thematic analyses of CPs.

38. In the same framework, the North Africa Office took part in a joint mission with the ECA African Statistical Center, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the African Development Bank and PARIS 21, in Cairo (Arab Republic of Egypt) from 13 to 17 September 2015, following a request by the Egyptian authorities for assessment of the country's National Statistics System (SSN) with a view to developing a new national strategy for Statistical Development (SNDS). The SSN evaluation report to which ECA NA contributed was submitted to the Egyptian authorities in December 2015 and should lead to the establishment of a new national strategy for Egyptian statistics.

39. The Office also organized a technical support mission for the establishment of a new information system on sustainable development in Tunisia (January 2016). The objective was to determine the issue of data and the existing information systems in connection with sustainable development, to understand the stakes involved with the new system proposed and identify the type of support the Office would be able to provide to the Tunisian Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development.

40. Then, further to a request for technical support by the Sudanese Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, the Office organized a technical support mission to the benefit of the Public/Private Partnership Unit (PPP) recently put in place by the Ministry to give new impetus to the relationships between the public and private sectors. In partnership with the PPP unit and the Sudanese Businessmen and Employers (SBEF), the Office initiated a study, the main objective of which was to gather from SBEF members more refined information on their current understanding of the African market, (ii) their international development ambitions, (iii) the difficulties encountered to export, and (iv) the needs for assistance to conduct more international activities. It is expected that the outcomes of this research will provide some useful food for thought for the formulation of an African strategy for the Sudan.

41. This approach makes it possible to agree with Member States on the areas in which support is requested to strengthen their capacities for the production and dissemination of statistics and carry out policy analyses to boost the sub-region's development priorities.

3. Support to the implementation of the PASR-LCD in the Maghreb and to the LPI initiative

42. The office finalized the study on the economic, social and environmental profitability of the strategic investments to fight desertification. This study will produce an advocacy document serving as a convincing case based on better knowledge of the economic, social and environmental fallout of investments to fight desertification, in order to convince the decision-makers and development partners to invest in this area and provide support to the implementation of the PASR/LCD steered by AMU.

43. Furthermore, the Office provided significant support to UMA Land Policy Initiative (LPI) (8-9 October 2015) by contributing to the definition of the components of the LPI-AMU initiative for a better integration of land issues in the Maghreb.

B. Special initiatives and interactions with the head office divisions and other partners

1. Initiative for capacity building regarding the use of funds transfers from workers abroad for development purposes

44. This initiative initiated in 2014 is intended to reinforce the country capacity to formulate and adopt strategies, policies and programmes to improve the impact of expatriate workers' remittances on the financing of development. This activity comes within the framework of the work programme already started in 2008 on Migration issues and seeks to interact with one of the major recommendations of the 2nd high level United Nations Dialogue on Migration which is about improving the impact of funds transfers on the development of member countries.

45. In the framework of this project and in partnership with ESCWA, ECA carried out, as part of a pilot phase, two national studies (Morocco and Tunisia) on the status and contribution of migrants' remittances on economic and social development. Also in the framework of this project, ECA held two regional workshops that, in addition to validating the studies, made it possible for experts to reflect together and exchange experiences and good practices leading to more effective use of migrant funds transfers to finance development.

2. Contribution to discussions on the transition toward an inclusive green economy.

46. In the framework of its contribution to discussions on the transition to an inclusive green economy the Office prepared a publication on the topic "Industry and green economy in North Africa". This report places firstly green economy in the various national contexts and proceeds with an analysis on the basis of a survey on businesses in various sectors: (i) their perception of environmental stakes, their perception of green economy and the opportunities it offers; (ii) the policies and environmental and social practices; (iii) the constraints and expectations.

47. The report concludes with the presentation of a number of priorities in terms of reform, among which: defining an integrated strategic framework for the green economy, adapting the industrial policy, improving the regulatory framework, strengthening business support systems, more investment in research and development, the creation of green domains in universities, and last but not least, the initiation of an information, education and communication programme on the opportunities offered by the green economy, and the job outlook for the young and women. This document will be a part of the next economic report on Africa. Put out by the ECA this report will deal with the following subject: « Going green and industrialization in Africa ».

3. Meeting of the special group of experts on the promotion of inclusive green economy and structural transformation in Africa, organized by the ECA (SID)

48. The Office has actively participated in the meeting of the special group of experts on the promotion policies of the inclusive green economy and structural transformation in Africa organized by the ECA (Special Initiatives Division) on 24 and 25 November 2015. It shared the outcomes of the work done on green economy in North Africa (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia).

IV. Strategic partnerships

49. In addition to the office's partnership with UMA via multi-annual work programmes, through partnerships with other United Nations agencies working for economic and social development and regional integration in North Africa, the sub-regional Coordination Mechanism, and participation in the work of United Nations country teams, the Office developed other strategic partnerships for the implementation of specific projects. These partnerships are related to collaboration between the regional United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic and Social Commission for West Asia.

A. Partnership with the United Nations agencies

50. The Office participates in the work of United Nations agencies through thematic groups such as the migration group with which it organized an international colloquium on African immigration to Morocco in April 2015, in collaboration with the Agdal-Rabat University of Law, Economic and Social Sciences. This activity allowed the United Nations system based in Morocco to engage in interchange with the various partners, governments, civil society entities, and academia to focus on the major focus areas of the new migratory policy in Morocco. It was pointed out that this policy implies a cross-cutting look at the migratory issue with the mobilization of different ministries under the coordination of the Ministry for Moroccans Residing Abroad (MRE). The ECA Office presented various studies on migration issues, in particular the last report on the comparative analysis of the integration process of migration in the development policies of UMA Member Countries.

51. The Office is also often represented at the communication group meetings and has had the opportunity to take part in joint activities. Moreover, the office has cooperated on a regular basis with a number of North African UNICs, especially in Morocco. This cooperation allowed the office to disseminate its press releases via UNIC websites in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia and for the publication of articles about ECA activities in the United Nations newsletter in Rabat, the joint organization of the publication of UNCTAD 2015 report and the Office's participation in the Colloquium on African Migrations organized by the Agdal-Rabat University of Law, Economic and Social Sciences, etc.).

B. Partnership with ESCWA

52. Initiated in 2013 with ESCWA and the IPU, the project entitled "Institutional Support and Capacity Building of Arab Parliaments and other Stakeholders for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security" proved to be a highly pertinent initiative given the events the region has been through since 2011 and their repercussions on security and the economic and social conditions of the population, especially the most vulnerable, in particular women and young girls. Indeed, since these events occurred, various forms of discrimination, violation and exploitation have appeared or worsened including gender based violence, human trafficking, and forced and early marriage.

53. The Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women has the objective of correcting the injustice and poor treatment of women in conflict situations making obligatory the protection of women's and girls' rights in: i) situations of conflict or post conflict, the participation of women in the maintaining of peace and conflict resolution, post-conflict reconstruction and decision-making processes and ii) the provision of emergency services targeting women and girls. These areas of action are known under the name of the(4) pillars of Resolution 1325, in other words, the participation, protection and provision of relief and redress.

54. The project to which ECA-NA contributes covers seven countries: Iraq, Jordan, Libya, the Sudan, Syria, Palestine and Tunisia. Its objective is to strengthen the capacities of parliamentarians and other players to accelerate and improve the effective implementation of this resolution in these countries. In this respect, the Office contributed for a regional study to be made on the "shortcomings and limits of legislation pursuant to the implementation of Resolution 1325 in Arab countries", as well as to the review of the training manual based on this resolution. Furthermore, it organized two workshops on the resolution pillars, in particular Prevention and Protection (Tunis, 10-13 November 2015) for which it managed to procure the participation of a great number of parliamentarians.

55. The Office also supported ESCWA in knowledge production and in capacity building put in place national action plans for the implementation of the resolution, as well as the organization of an awareness-raising seminar addressing national Arab Mechanisms for gender issues (Amman, December 2015). The Office subsequently presented three studies and used its knowledge management platform to setup an experts' community of practice in the region, as well as the generation, dissemination and exchange of knowledge on Resolution 1325.

56. According to a mid-term assessment conducted by the partners involved in this project including the ECA-NA Office, the various related activities carried out this year contributed quite substantially to spreading knowledge on Resolution 1325 among law makers, national gender mechanisms and other stakeholders. This made it possible to mobilize wider commitment for the lifting of restrictions and shortcomings limiting effective and accelerated implementation in the region.

57. The ECA-NA office co-organized with ESCWA and the Moroccan Center for Clean Production (CMPP) a regional workshop on «Innovative Technologies for Waste Management in the Arab Region – Paving the way for the Transition to a Green Economy» held in Casablanca, Morocco 29 to 30 September 2015. Representatives of green Help Desks from several counties in the Arab region, clean production centers and SMEs, research institutes, public institutions, international partners and technical experts working in the field of solid waste management took part in this get-together. This meeting constituted an opportunity of choice for sharing experiences and good practices with regard to solid waste management in the Arab region. The participants also discussed the most adequate technological options for the Arab region, the needs for strengthening capacities in this area, as well as the institutional and financial reforms required to facilitate the establishment of effective solid waste management in the region.

58. The Office also contributed to drafting a 2015 report on the situation of international migration in the Arab region, a publication by the United Nations system coordinated by ESCWA. This report presents the migration trends in Arab League member countries and attempts to draw lessons from the factors accounting for these phenomena while issuing recommendations for a better management of migratory flows. The Office partook in this report on the basis of the research conducted through the Study of the Migration Issue in the development and strategies Policies in North Africa done under the previous work programme.

59. With ESCWA, the Office organized a workshop on the harmonization of customs procedures and electronic documents exchange between Arab country customs administrations (Casablanca, 2 to 4 December 2015). This meeting initially scheduled to be held in Tunis on behalf of ESCWA and in Casablanca on behalf of ECA was for the purpose of preparing the steps to be followed for the establishment the electronic document exchange platform. This activity is an integral part of the global partnership between UNECE and the five Regional Commissions for the implementation of the project entitled « Building the capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to facilitate the crossing of borders and of international and regional integration».

C. Partnerships with Academia and Research Centers

60. In 2015 the ECA-NA Office signed four agreements with Universities and Research Centers: The Information Science School -ESI (Rabat-Morocco), the school for Governance and Economics-EGE (Rabat- Morocco), the National Institute for statistics and Applied economics -INSEA (Rabat-Morocco), the Laboratory of Economy Applied to Development -LEAD (University of Toulon – France). The Office also discussed with a number of universities and research centers from other North African countries in order to sign similar agreements in relation during the implementation of its 2016-2017 work programme.

61. The objective of these partnerships is to strengthen cooperation and exchange relationships between ECA and academia and research centers, and to undertake concerted actions designed to define the framework for future initiatives and joint actions useful to the concerned parties. For ECA, the partnerships aim at developing close collaboration with these institutions to enhance its role as it responds to the socio-economic development needs of the Member States in the North Africa region, and boost the generation, gathering, dissemination and sharing of information, knowledge and know-how to support decision-making processes and improve the fallout from development policies. For these establishments, the partnerships aim at initiating and developing exchanges with ECA as a think tank for the North Africa region to adapt training to market needs on the one hand, and to benefit from relations ECA has with similar institutions in Africa. The intention would be to establish cooperation relations, create new partnerships and hold joint scientific and exchange activities.

V. Status of the implementation of the 30th ICE recommendations

62. Implementation of the 30th ICE recommendations to ECA was an integral part of our 2015 work programme. Several of the said recommendations have been mentioned in part II of this report. However, to comply with the express demand of the Member States, the most significant achievements per thematic area are listed as follows:

A. Country profiles

1. Integrating as much as possible the indicators concerning sustainable development (green economy) and climatic risks in the country profiles.

63. Green economy was included in three country profiles (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia). In forthcoming CPs this effort will be continued through analysis of the climatic policies, policies in connection with energy transitions, sustainable development and the green economy. The analysis will be documented through available indicators.

2. Assisting Member States in setting up a sustainable data transmission system ensuring quality country profiles generated from harmonized data

64. ECA-NA coordinated with Member States for the designation of data focal points. The list of focal points is now available and ECA-NA endeavors to activate direct collaboration with the focal points in order for them to become mobilized in a useful way in a sustainable data collection process and update to produce country profiles and thematic analyses.

65. In this respect, data gathering and Technical Assistance missions (Egypt, Sudan) were organized to obtain the data required for the production of country profiles and specifically sectoral information for the thematic analyses to be developed. In the case of Egypt, ECA-NA took part in a joint mission with the African Statistics Center, the Economic and Social Commission for West Asia, the African Development Bank and PARIS 21 for the assessment of the National Statistics System (SSN) of the entire country to devise a National Statistics Development Strategy (SNDS).

66. The ECA-NA also carried out a technical support mission for the establishment of a new information system on sustainable development in Tunisia. The objective is to better define the issue of data and the existing information systems related to sustainable development. This was to understand the stakes involved with the new proposed system and to identify the type of support to be provided by the Office to the Tunisian Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development.

67. Furthermore, the ECA African Center for Statistics (ACS) is now developing a strategy and program to build the capacities of ECA member countries.

3. Taking into account the development of entrepreneurship by working more with private sector players to better inform the entrepreneurship indicators and the business environment.

68. In the framework of a technical support mission to the Public Private Partnership (PPP) Unit of the Sudanese Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, the Office met with the Sudanese Businessmen and Employers Federation (SBEF) to discuss the initiation of a study on Sudanese exports. Five meetings with the persons in charge of SBEF professional Chambers were held to validate the study objectives and methodology, the survey questionnaire, definition of the sampling, and study modalities. Afterward the SBEF issued a request to ECA-NA for technical expertise to study the interest of a proposal made by COMESA to Sudan to solve the problems of funds transfers in the framework of sub-regional trade agreements.

69. On the other hand, an important component of the North Africa Development Forum was devoted to helping the private sector get ready to participate in the negotiations on the Continental Free Trade Zone.

B. Regional integration

1. Improving and multiplying spaces for dialogue with private sector players to better identify the operational hurdles and help them in their regional trading and investment initiatives.

70. The Office carried out a technical support mission for the Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) unit of the Sudanese Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. In this framework the Office was entrusted with a study with the Sudanese Businessmen and Employers Federation (SBEF) the main objective of which is to gather from the members of this private sector organization the most refined information possible relative to: (i) their current understanding of the African market, (ii) their ambitions to expand internationally, (iii) the difficulties encountered for exports and (iv) their needs for assistance to have more transactions on the international market. It is expected that the outcomes of this research will provide useful food for thought to devise of an African strategy for the Sudan.

2. Helping the countries make full use of the technical assistance provided by international organizations to promote capacity building in trade related areas and help boost regional trade.

71. The African Trade Policy Centre has endeavored to support States throughout the year by organizing many workshops. The ATPC also organized workshops for member state experts, in particular a workshop for trade experts in December 2015.

3. Pushing for greater orientation of aid for trade to the RVCs and contribute to review follow up.

72. The Office participated in the fifth global review of aid for trade and contributed a specific intervention on the importance of the RVCs on the issue of aid for trade activities.

4. Supporting UMA and North African countries in their participation to the Continental Free Trade Zone negotiations.

73. The Office makes sure UMA is invited and takes part in continental meetings by seeing to it that it is systematically invited for active participation.

C. Economic and social performances

1. To include in the next North Africa ESC report an analysis of the countries' performances in areas such as institution quality, rule of law implementation, progress made by financial system and economic governance.

74. Performance and institutions governance issues will now be dealt with in the country profile thematic studies.

2. Supporting the capacities of countries and in particular of economic actors to improve their access to the continental market in order to make the most of the future continental free trade zone (CFTZ) to diversify their economies and trading partners.

75. A workshop was organized for the private sector to inform economic players of the continental free trade zone discussions developments, and to analyze their role in the negotiations.

D. Regional, international agendas and other special initiatives

1. Continue to help countries coordinate their efforts in relation to the devising and implementation of regional and international agendas to strengthen their common positions, especially for the definition of SDG monitoring indicators of the SDGs and to keep them informed of progress achieved.

76. The report on the regional, international agendas and other special initiatives is an important tool for informing the countries on these initiatives and of ECA role and activities in this process.

77. In addition, a technical support mission was organized in view of setting up a new information system on sustainable development in Tunisia (January 2016). This mission made it possible to tackle the issue of data and the existing information systems in connection with sustainable development. The mission was designed to understand the stakes of the new proposed system and identify the type of support the Office would be in a position to provide to the Tunisian Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development.

78. In this area, the ECA will still provide support to Member States to adapt and modernize the existing national information systems on sustainable development to boost the review and follow-up of the 2030 sustainable development programme implementation.

2. Promote networking of the focal points involved in international negotiations for the definition of world agenda to strengthen their negotiating power and better reflect the region's priorities.

79. ECA-NA coordinated with member countries for the designation of data focal points. The list of focal points is now available. The ECA NA seeks to activate direct collaboration with the focal points and get them mobilized in a useful way in a sustainable process of country data collection and updating for the production of CPs and thematic analyses.

80. Furthermore, to facilitate networking the ECA NA Office in 2015 set up a Knowledge Management Platform in order to boost links between economic and social actors, reducing institutional impediments, costs and deadlines related to the production of a corpus of knowledge and expertise, while promoting its dissemination between communities of practice. This KM platform helps bring into fruition information data and expertise sharing networks, between the partners involved in the region's development programme whether with intergovernmental organizations, United Nations agencies, the private sector or civil society.

E. Implementation of the 2014-2015 activity programme and the 2016-2017 draft programme of work

1. Keeping up the will to use as a matter of priority country data that may be more recent than that available in international institutions reports.

81. Activating country focal points in the short term will lead to preferring the use of data the sources of which are the countries themselves, as already shown by the country profiles.

2. Reflect more in the work programmes for 2016-2017 the activities related to the implementation of the development agenda post 2015 as well as the action plan to be adopted on the occasion of COP21.

82. The ECA-NA office is expected to be involved in the preparation of COP22 which will be held in 2016 in Marrakech (Morocco). The Office will lend support to the countries in the framework of the follow up and implementation of the 2030 programme for sustainable development (fresh financial resources to be mobilized).

3. Better assist member countries in integrating the gender approach in development policies and particularly in climate change negotiations.

83. It is expected that the country profiles will increasingly introduce this dimension. The 2016-2017 work programme explicitly integrates this cross-cutting dimension. All the country profiles developed by the Office systematically covered the gender aspect by using indicators developed by AGDI and other indicators currently recognized and used.

84. Furthermore, the thematic part of the Regional CP is devoted to the status of gender equality in North Africa, mobilizing the same indicators for the analysis of the policies adopted in the region. This document also underscores persisting challenges regarding the integration of the gender approach in

national development policies. Also expected is that the joint project, still under study, with FAO and UMA on the genderization of agricultural statistics will also cover climate change and its gender aspects.

85. Furthermore, in the framework of its contribution to the preparation of COP 22 scheduled for 2016 in Morocco, the Office will seize this occasion to build greater awareness-raising among member countries with regard to the stakes involved with the Conference, and will boost support geared to the promotion of transformative climate policies integrating gender issues.

VI. Challenges, lessons learned and outlook for 2016

86. The ECA internal restructuring exercise begun in September 2012 has reached its maturity phaseduring the period under review. This exercise has already led to the publication of various ECA strategies to reach the set objectives. The initial years of implementation show that even if the outlook is more favorable, many challenges are still to be met. They deal with ECA capacity to find the most effective way to efficiently collaborate with Member States on data management, on the ability of UMA to mobilize resources, as well as the human and financial resources needed to achieve integration, as well as the impact of sub-regional political and social conditions and the ability of the Office to achieve positive results.

A. On capacity building for Member States and the Arab Magrehb Union (UMA)

87. To is to be noted is that during the period under review the Office received several positive reactions from its customers. Its efforts were also recognized and appreciated by the United Nations work teams in the countries which underlined the dynamic participation of Office's experts in their work, as well as its continuous advocacy so that the regional dimension becomes a constant endeavor in United Nations actions in North Africa.

B. On political and social conditions in the region

88. The region is confronted to several challenges at the political, economic and social levels. With regard to politics, the region has been marked by periods of political unrest in most countries. The political and social events beginning in 2011 thrust Tunisia, Egypt and Libya into a period of uncertainty. Egypt and Tunisia, although still marked by a shaky security situation, have undertaken political reforms leading to presidential elections which indicate of a return to political normality. Libya is still facing substantial political difficulties with strong security implications that considerably dampen its development prospects. Morocco and Algeria remain exempt from major political upheavals. However, all the region's countries need to develop good governance. The political instability is to be seen as linked to governance, particularly from an economic standpoint undoubtedly constituting an impediment to regional development. The lack of good governance is discernable in the efficiency of public regulations and in the efficiency of the State.

89. From an economic standpoint, the region's economies remain insufficiently diversified, notably in term of exports. Their growth remains reliant on primary sectors and natural resources. Algeria, Sudan, Mauritania, and to a lesser degree Egypt, have extremely concentrated exports in natural resource sectors. Morocco and Tunisia have managed a relative diversification of their exports.

90. Developing the private sector remains a major stake for the economies of North Africa. Improving the business climate is one of the main objectives of the region's governments. Only Morocco and Tunisia are ranking under 100 in the Doing Business classification. Algeria and Egypt have fallen back in the 2016 classification. Mauritania deployed substantial efforts to improve the business environment starting 2013, in particular with regard to business creation and access to credit.

91. The lack of economic diversification also weighs heavily on the resources at the disposal of governments to support economic and social development. For the majority of the region's countries the State budget is dependent on a limited number of sectors and volatile resources. Progress has certainly occurred in improving the management of public finances and resources diversification. However, much more can still be done in a context characterized by slim margins of maneuver to genuinely solidify these countries' actual fiscal potential in these countries.

92. In conclusion, unemployment remains an endemic problem across the region. The unemployment rate is above 10% in the majority of countries. Unemployment affects youth much more highly. It exceeds 25% in all countries except Morocco (21.4% in 2015).