



Subregional Office for Central Africa



Overview

Located in Yaoundé, the Subregional Office for Central Africa of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) was established in 1962, just four years after the Economic and Social Council had established ECA. It promotes economic diversification and structural transformation for inclusive and sustainable development in an integrated Central Africa.

In this regard, the Subregional Office measures achievement in terms of the extent to which it contributes to: (a) enhancing the capacity of its member States to design and implement economic diversification policies and reforms that contribute to social inclusion and broad-based development in the subregion; and (b) strengthening the capacity of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) to address the development challenges confronting the subregion, implement subregional development initiatives and accelerate the pace of subregional cooperation and integration.

The Subregional Office covers seven member States: Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe. It also serves ECCAS and CEMAC in the pursuit of subregional cooperation and integration.

Key areas of work

The Subregional Office's work streams include the provision of evidence-based policy analysis and comparative studies to help member States to refine their policy instruments and strategies; advisory services, including contributions to the formulation of visions, long-term development plans and sectoral strategies; capacity development in key areas such as the alignment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want with national development plans, as well as statistical develop-

ment; and raising awareness of development issues of concern to the subregion and supporting relevant stakeholders in speaking with one voice and adopting common positions on such issues. High-level policy dialogues and, more importantly, the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts have been the main agenda-setting platforms to shape such policy discourse and positioning in Central Africa.

Topics of study and analysis carried out by the Subregional Office range from regional integration and trade, agribusiness development, statistics and development planning, infrastructure and transport development to information and communications technology (ICT) policy/digital economy development, post-conflict issues, natural resources management, governance and gender mainstreaming and the development of young people. The Subregional Office is also engaged in the monitoring of economic and social progress and offering solutions (through knowledge products), providing technical assistance and knowledge advisory services to member States and regional economic communities, and delivering capacity-building services to member States, the regional economic communities and non-State actors for improving the economic and social conditions of the countries covered.

Subregional Office for Central Africa as a centre of excellence for economic diversification

More recently, economic diversification through resource-driven and trade-induced industrialization has been recognized as a credible pathway for Central Africa to overcome its overdependence on oil and other commodities and ascend the regional and global value chains. Work on economic diversification policy and reforms has been central and will be the Subregional Office's area of specialization. This will support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 1, 8, 9, 10 and 12, in particular.



Subregional Office for Central Africa as secretariat for intergovernmental bodies and inter-agency coordination

The Subregional Office serves as the secretariat for the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts, a subsidiary body of ECA for each of its five regional offices. The committee in Central Africa brings together government representatives from all seven countries under the purview of the Subregional Office, but extends participation to all other ECCAS member States in the spirit of regional integration; the regional economic communities and their specialized bodies; and other intergovernmental organizations of the subregion, development partners, private sector leaders, think tanks and other key players with whom partnership is important for realizing the Office's mandate.

Sessions of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts are convened annually to discuss key issues and challenges pertaining to the economic and social development of the subregion, with a view to making appropriate recommendations to address them and map pathways of collaboration to do so. The thirty-third session of the Committee was held in September 2017 on the theme of "Made in Central Africa: from a vicious to a virtuous circle", which was a call to address Central Africa's excessive dependence on the export of raw materials, which exposes the region to external shocks and leads to macroeconomic instability. The Committee adopted the Douala Consensus on economic diversification (through resource-driven and trade-induced industrialization), giving the Subregional Office a strong mandate to work on economic diversification issues.

The Subregional Office also serves as the secretariat for the coordination of special development mechanism such as the subregional coordination mechanism of United Nations system support to the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa's Development programme in Central Africa. It is currently finalizing a comprehensive common indicative programme to enhance system-wide

coherence, with a view to reducing duplication of efforts, fostering economies of scale and maximizing development outcomes. The programme is anchored to three outcome areas: structural transformation for inclusive and sustainable development; market access and value chain development; human and social development; and governance, peace and security.

Partnerships

To carry out the mandate of ECA in Central Africa, the Subregional Office works with several partners in the subregion, including the following:

- All member States and national bodies, including ministries of finance, economy and development planning, other sectorial ministries and national statistics offices
- African Union representatives in the subregion
- United Nations bodies represented in Central Africa, namely, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and the country offices of various United Nations agencies under the country teams for the seven countries covered, as well as United Nations agencies in West Africa in leveraging the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and other initiatives
- Regional economic communities: ECCAS and CEMAC
- Intergovernmental organizations and other specialized agencies of ECCAS and CEMAC
- Bank of Central African States, the Development Bank of Central Africa, the African Development Bank and the African Export-Import Bank
- Multilateral development partners, including

the European Union, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund

- Universities, think tanks and civil society organizations
- Private sector organizations, notably employers' federations

Highlights of recent achievements

Multi-country/subregional achievements

Economic diversification gaining traction in Central Africa with the Douala Consensus

Through the thirty-third session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts, the Subregional Office engineered the Douala Consensus of 2017. It outlines clear priority actions for governments and other stakeholders in the subregion to achieve economic diversification and structural transformation and follow a sure path to sustainable development. An ongoing campaign through the Consensus has resulted in public/private dialogues on economic diversification in Cameroon and encouraged Gabonese authorities to advance their programme on value addition for exports, especially in the wood sector. Chad and Equatorial Guinea are also prioritizing economic diversification.

Framework for reduced telephone roaming costs in Central Africa

The Subregional Office's study and campaign for the establishment of a "Central Africa One Network Area," in collaboration with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), has resulted in a commitment by Equatorial Guinea to champion the cause by actively working with Cameroon to set the pace for low-cost roaming between both countries. Equatorial Guinea's commitment was made at an ITU conference on the digital economy in Central Africa, which, among other things, followed-up on studies done by ECA and ITU with a remit from the Council of Ministers of Telecom-

munications and ICT in the ECCAS zone. This move will reduce the costs of doing business in Central Africa, facilitate trade and connectivity, enable telecommunications companies throughout the region to benefit from economies of scale and broaden the tax returns for member States. It is an important step towards the operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area in Central Africa.

Country-specific achievements

Cameroon and the Congo: alignment of national development plans with the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063

Cameroon and the Congo are aligning their national development plans with the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, following tailored mentorship programmes offered by the Subregional Office in collaboration with the Macroeconomic Policy Division of ECA. "This training has greatly improved on the strength and capacity of planning officials from key ministries and representatives of the civil society with regards to... aligning the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 2063 Agenda with national development plans," wrote the Minister of Economy and Planning of Cameroon to the Executive Secretary of ECA following the mentorship programme, which continues.

All countries: evidence-based analysis to support policy formulation/implementation

Through the country profiles and other topical studies, the Subregional Office tracks macroeconomic and social developments in the subregion and undertakes policy analysis in support of evidence-based planning, policymaking and better economic management. The studies and their findings are disseminated through several forums, including communities of practice, webinars and policy dialogues. The findings from country profiles on Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo and Gabon triggered high-level policy dialogues, demonstrating the ability of the

Office to meaningfully engage member States and other stakeholders in the search for credible pathways and policy options to structurally transform the economies in the region. Profiles for Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe have also been produced and are being channelled to policy-makers in the countries concerned in a prelude to similar high-level policy dialogues.

The development perspectives shared during the policy dialogues are being translated into policy instruments for the beneficiary countries.

Cameroon, Chad, the Congo, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea: support for updating modelling tools for policymaking

Planning experts from five Central African countries were trained on several modelling tools to support evidence-based decision-making and negotiations for policy and fiscal space to pursue development objectives such as economic diversification in the context of tight macroeconomic fundamentals. The training included an integrated planning and reporting tool developed by ECA to improve the alignment of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 with national development plans and a product space analysis and economic diversification model. A government official from Cameroon said that the exercise had equipped him and his colleagues “with formulas and even attitudes that allow us to improve the effectiveness of our development policies, because they will be more evidence-based, up-to-date models will enable us to stay on course with regards to our long-term goals of becoming an emerging country”.

Central African Republic: support for post-conflict transition efforts

The Subregional Office diagnostic study on the root causes of conflict in the Central African Republic is an important input to the efforts towards a democratic transition in the country. It not only offers an understanding of the socioeconomic causes of the conflict and its impact, but also, and more importantly, provides a pathway to returning

to normalcy. A strong recommendation was made for the international community to support the political, economic and social facets of the transition.

The Subregional Office channels its technical contribution on the nexus between conflict and development through avenues such as the Permanent Consultative Committee on Security in Central Africa, which is coordinated by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa.

Ongoing country-specific and multi-country support

Congo: Technical support for mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 into the country’s national development plan and the formulation of a long-term development vision.

Chad: Technical support was provided for its economic diversification strategy, a strategic study on industrialization and the industrialization master plan. A road map to achieve this has been drawn with a focus on the creation of an enabling environments to attract foreign direct investment, notably by improving the legal and regulatory environment; the establishment of an integrated financing for development framework; the development of the knowledge economy, with a focus on innovation systems; the development of renewable energy; the boosting of agriculture systems; the expansion of transport/development corridors; the pursuit of green industrialization, capitalizing on regional integration; rigorously pursuing science, technology, engineering and mathematics and technical and vocational education and training curriculums; and strengthening the project preparation facility.

Equatorial Guinea: The Subregional Office is providing strategic support for structural transformation and economic diversification, in line with the country’s Horizon 2020 strategy, which suffered setbacks owing to the oil glut. Following a high-level policy dialogue on economic diversification and working sessions with members of the

Government, concrete areas of support are being explored: diagnostic studies on diversification to determine value chain opportunities to specialize in on the basis of the country's comparative advantages; the possibility of developing a world-class logistics centre in Africa; the possibility of specializing in high-quality transport and other services hinged on the Consensual Transport Masterplan for Central Africa; the setting up of a solid industrial and diversification coordination hub overseen by the highest authorities of the State; creating a system of public-private partnerships; designing an enabling environment for business to thrive in, guaranteeing judicial security and financial systems for development, such as the Dubai International Financial Centres; specializing in organic agricultural production and marketing; and boosting human resources through science, technology, engineering and mathematics and technical, vocational education and training system.

Support to the regional economic communities

A compelling transport master plan to boost Central Africa' integration

The Central Africa consensual transport master plan was formulated under the leadership of the Subregional Office, in close collaboration with the Development Bank of Central Africa, the CEMAC Commission and the ECCAS general secretariat. A total of 36 roadways have been developed to ease transport integration in Central Africa. The master plan is a significant contribution to regional integration and trade in the subregion and provides the framework necessary for the implementation of the Action Plan for the Boosting Intra-African Trade in Central Africa. It has been instrumental in resource mobilization, given that it assists in project selection and the prioritization of investment. As an effective member of the steering committee of the master plan, the Office is currently mobilizing partners to give a new lease on life to the plan.

Improving harmonization of the regional economic communities, market access and trade

As a main initiator of the CEMAC-ECCAS rapprochement and in its capacity as a member of the Steering Committee for the Rationalization of Regional Economic Communities in Central Africa, ECA has been providing regular support to the harmonization efforts between ECCAS and CEMAC. Owing in part to the Subregional Office's consistent work in this area, the secretariat is facilitating the harmonization of programmes, policies and instruments of ECCAS and CEMAC, which are aimed at ultimately merging the two organizations into one, more efficient regional economic community.

The Subregional Office has also provided solid technical support, resulting in improved market access and the harmonization of trade rules and regulations in the subregion. Even with some difficulty, ECCAS and CEMAC now operate with harmonized customs nomenclature, preferential tariffs and rules and certificates of origin as a result of ECA support. This is an important step towards the realization of the potential of the African Continental Free Trade Area in the subregion.

Two long-term ECA-sponsored consultants are embedded in the ECCAS secretariat to support its market access and trade agenda. In order to accelerate the process, the Subregional Office is providing training support on the procedure of accreditation to the harmonized ECCAS/CEMAC preferential tariff, which will benefit exports from Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Congo, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe. To date, 170 individuals, including members of national approval committees, other administrative officials, representatives of business entities involved with intracommunity exports and other stakeholders in Cameroon, Chad and Gabon have been trained on the procedures. Training will continue in other countries alongside a campaign to raise the awareness of State officials overseeing the circulation of goods and services in the zone.

Recent publications

Recurrent publications

- Cameroon structural transformation, employment, production and society (STEPS) profile – 2018
- Cameroon country profile – 2015
- Central African Republic country profile – 2016, 2017
- Chad country profile – 2017
- Congo country profile – 2016, 2018
- Equatorial Guinea country profile – 2017
- Gabon country profile – 2016, 2018
- Sao Tome and Principe country profile – 2016, 2018

Non-recurrent publications

- Made in Central Africa: “From a Vicious Circle to a Virtuous Circle” – 2018
- Harnessing the Potential of Agro-industry to Support Structural Transformation in Central Africa – 2018
- The Status and Prospects of the Implementation of the African Mining Vision in Central Africa – 2018
- Harnessing the Potential of Agribusiness to Support Structural Transformation in Central Africa - 2017
- Promoting Intraregional Trade through Information and Communications Technology in Central Africa – 2017
- Status and Prospects of the Implementation of the African Mining Vision in Central Africa - 2016
- Strengthening Democratic Transitions in Post-conflict Countries in Central Africa - 2016
- Report on Progress and Prospects for Macroeconomic Convergence in the Central African Subregion - 2015
- Assessing and Improving Road Safety in Central Africa - 2015

Statistics on Central Africa

Total area: 3,021,100 km²

Total population: 49.6 million (2015)

- Percentage between 0 and 15 years of age: 43.9
- Percentage of young people (between 15 and 24 years of age): 19.7

Global CO₂ emissions: 20,483.862 Kt in 2013 for the subregion

Cameroon

- Surface area: 475,650km²
- Population: 24.05 million, of which 42.7 per cent are 14 years of age or below, 4.8 per cent are 60 years of age or more and; 54.4 per cent live in urban areas
- Ranked first in ECCAS in the Africa Regional Integration Index, with a 0.664 score
- Capital: Yaoundé
- Cameroon is the fifth-biggest producer of cocoa in the world and the third in Africa. With 1,200 MW, the country has the third-largest hydroelectric power potential in Africa, after the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ethiopia

Central African Republic

- Surface area: 622,984 km²
- Population: 4.65 million, of which 43.2 per cent are 14 years of age or below, 5.5 per cent are 60 years of age or more and 40 per cent live in urban areas
- Ranked fifth in ECCAS in the Africa Regional Integration Index, with a 0.507 score
- Capital: Bangui
- The Central African Republic is one of the Africa's major diamond producers, although production is almost entirely done by artisanal methods

Chad

- Surface area: 1,284,000 km²
- Population: 14.9 million, of which 47.1 per cent are 14 years of age or below, 4 per cent are 60 years of age or more and 22.5 per cent live in urban areas
- Ranked fourth in ECCAS in the Africa Regional Integration Index, with a 0.512 score
- Capital: N'Djamena
- Chad is the leading Central African country in terms of livestock production. The results of the most recent general census of livestock indicate that it has nearly 94 million livestock units, placing the country in third place in Africa

Equatorial Guinea

- Surface area: 28,052 km²
- Population: 1.26 million, of which 37.2 per cent are 14 years of age or below, 4.4 per cent are 60 years of age or more and 39.9 per cent live in urban areas
- Ranked seventh in ECCAS in the Africa Regional Integration Index, with a 0.403 score
- Capital: Malabo
- Equatorial Guinea is the leading oil producer in the CEMAC area and the third-largest oil producer in sub-Saharan Africa

Congo

- Surface area: 342,000 km²
- Population: 5.26 million, of which 42.3 per cent are 14 years of age or below, 5.2 per cent are 60 years of age or more and 65.4 per cent live in urban areas Ranked fourth in ECCAS in the Africa Regional Integration Index, with a 0.531 score
- Capital: Brazzaville
- The Congo has large potash deposits, with resources valued at 1.07 billion tons for an estimated annual production of 5 million tonnes of potash. Potash is an essential mineral for making agricultural fertilizers.

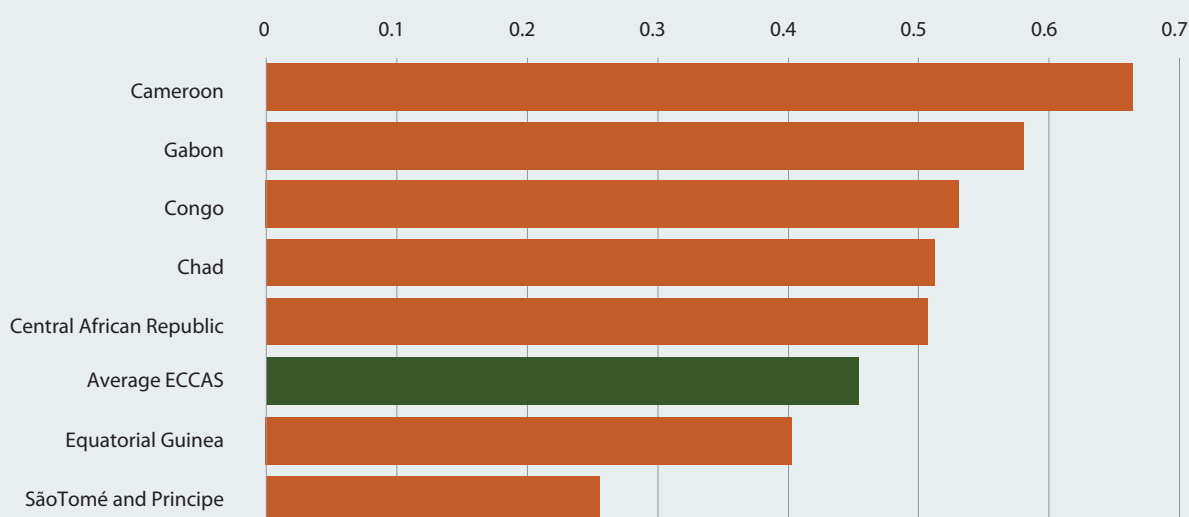
Gabon



- Surface area: 267,668 km²
- Population: 2.02 million, of which 35.9 per cent are 14 years of age or below, 6.4 per cent are 60 years of age or more and 87.2 per cent live in urban areas Ranked second in ECCAS in the Africa Regional Integration Index, with a 0.580 score
- Capital: Libreville
- According to Venture Africa, Gabon is among Africa's top 10 producers of palm oil, with a current annual production level of approximately 50,000 metric tons. Given that it already produces in excess of local consumption, the country is projected to become Central Africa's leading exporter of palm oil by 2020. Belgium's SIAT and Singapore's OLAM are operating the major palm oil projects in the country

Sao Tome and Principe

- Surface area: 964 km²
- Population: 964,000, of which 42.8 per cent are 14 years of age or below, 4.3 per cent are 60 years of age or more and 65.1 per cent live in urban areas
- Ranked tenth in ECCAS in the Africa Regional Integration Index, with a 0.256 score
- Capital: Sao Tome
- Sao Tome and Principe has opted to focus on the blue economy, which concerns fisheries, aquaculture, minerals, energy, transport, trade, seabed mining, coastal zone management, tourism, marine biotechnology and endangered, threatened and protected aquatic species

Regional integration scores of countries covered (with ECCAS average)





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