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**Economic Commission for Africa
Conference of African Ministers of Finance,
Planning and Economic Development
Fifty-second session**

Marrakech, Morocco, 25 and 26 March 2019

Items 5 and 6 of the agenda*

**Consideration of recommendations and adoption of resolutions and
Consideration and adoption of the ministerial statutory**

Report of the Conference of Ministers on the work of its fifty-second session

Introduction

1. The fifty-second session of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development was held at the Palais des Congrès de la Palmeraie, Marrakech, Morocco, on 25 and 26 March 2019.

I. Opening of the session [agenda item 1]

A. Attendance

2. The session was attended by representatives of the following member States: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Togo, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

3. The following regional economic communities were represented: Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, Economic Community of West African States, Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

4. The following United Nations bodies and specialized agencies were represented: Economic Commission for Europe, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development/World Trade Organization International Trade Centre, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, United Nations Environment Programme, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for

* E/ECA/CM/52/1/Rev.1.

Refugees, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Office for West African and the Sahel, United Nations Office to the African Union, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Resident Coordinator Office, United Nations Secretariat, World Bank Group, World Food Programme.

5. Observers from the following Member States of the United Nations were present: Paraguay and Pakistan.

6. Representatives of the following intergovernmental and regional organizations were also present: African Development Bank, African Peer Review Mechanism, African Union Commission, African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development, Alliance of African Institutes of Bankers, Central Bank of West African States, Delegation of the European Union to the African Union, Railroad Association of South Africa, Rail Working Group.

7. Observers were present from the following organizations: Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria.

B. Opening statements

8. The opening session was moderated by the chief executive officer of Mark Eddo Media, Mark Eddo. Opening statements were made by the State Minister of Finance and Economic Planning of Sudan, Mustafa Yousif Holi; the Executive Secretary of ECA, Vera Songwe; Former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Duvvuri Subbarao; the Minister of Planning, Monitoring and Administrative Reform of Egypt, Hala El-Said; the Vice President of the Economic and Social Council, Omar Hilale; the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Amina Mohammed; and the Minister of Economy and Finance of Morocco, Mohamed Benchaaboun.

9. Speaking in his capacity as Chair of the outgoing Bureau, Mr. Hali expressed gratitude to the Government and people of Morocco for hosting the fifty-second session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. He commended ECA and member States on the pertinence and timeliness for African policymakers of the theme of the current session: "Fiscal policy, trade and the private sector in a digital era: a strategy for Africa". In conclusion, he thanked the outgoing Bureau for the results that it had achieved and wished all participants a successful session.

10. Ms. Songwe said that the theme for the current session of the Conference provided the context for deliberations on such important issues as resource mobilization, job creation and inclusive growth, and the opportunities offered by rapid digitization to address those issues. After a period of subdued growth, growth prospects for Africa were beginning to improve, primarily thanks to strengthening global demand for African products, increasing oil production and rising oil prices, robust private consumption, and sustained infrastructure investment. Poverty levels remained high, however, although the proportion of Africans living in extreme poverty was declining. In that context, she highlighted the importance of fiscal policy in closing the rising financing gap, which was immense and growing and was impeding efforts by Africa to foster development. Through the adoption of appropriate fiscal policies, African countries could increase government revenues by between 12 and 20 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). She also urged member States to step up their support for the private sector and unleash its enormous potential, noting that the African Continental Free Trade Area would create a 1.2 billion-strong market for African goods and services and significantly bolster the continent's private sector. In conclusion, she highlighted the tremendous opportunities offered by the digital economy for inclusive growth and stressed the need for a framework to adapt fiscal policy to the changing structure of African economies in the digital era, to raise the funds needed to achieve the goals of

the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

11. Mr. Subbarao outlined the Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile Trinity initiative in India, which was promoting financial inclusion by facilitating electronic payments. To that end, India had issued 1.3 billion digital identity documents, making possible the opening of 300 million new bank accounts, including by women and young people. Mobile phone penetration rates in India were rising rapidly and some \$12 billion of transactions were now conducted every month using innovative e-payment platforms. The Government was spearheading the development of harmonized digital infrastructure, had created an Indian payment gateway to reduce the country's reliance on foreign payment mechanisms and had facilitated the development of bank-led as opposed to mobile-led e-payment platforms. Digital infrastructure in India was also strengthening consumer protection, promoting the financial inclusion of women and the use of microfinance and other financing mechanisms for small and medium-sized enterprises, and helping to combat money laundering. India was striving to enhance the resilience of its digital platforms and reduce digital transaction costs. To ensure that digital innovations put people first, policymakers must now seek to understand the psychological and social aspects of poverty.

12. Ms. El-Said welcomed the annual gathering of ministers and experts as a platform for the sharing of experience, expertise and knowledge relevant to the challenges faced by Africa and its future development prospects. In that context, she outlined national planning frameworks formulated by her Government and its vision contextualizing and embedding the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. The Government of Egypt had ramped up its efforts to create a business-friendly environment, enhance domestic and foreign investment, boost the participation of the private sector in the country's development through public and private partnerships, in particular in infrastructure and the services sectors, increase energy supply, create new cities and develop industrial zones. She stressed the need for African countries to prioritize investment, enhance cooperation, integration and intra-African trade, with the aim of catalysing growth by taking advantage of the growing market constituted by the continent's increasing population. On the subject of digitization, she confirmed that in Egypt, as in many other African countries, e-payments were gradually replacing cash.

13. Mr. Hilale emphasized the importance of coming together and reflecting on the prospects for achievement of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. Those prospects included prosperity, no one left behind, and socioeconomic development in Africa through an integrated and inclusive approach. In that regard, he commended ECA on its support for the development of Africa through the generation of ideas and analyses useful to member States and other development partners, and the promotion of regional cooperation and formulation of African common positions on central issues for the continent. In common with other regional commissions, ECA was gaining global relevance, notably through its efforts to strengthen multilateralism. To that end, member States of the Economic and Social Council would discuss United Nations regional reform at the Council's session in May 2020, taking the example of ECA and its leading role in mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals into regional development.

14. Ms. Mohammed said that, while too many places in the world were sliding back into poverty, mistrust and instability, the growth and development prospects of Africa over the medium term were looking positive, but the defining question for the continent was how African countries could achieve growth that supported job creation, increased wealth and reduced poverty and inequality. Much economic progress was being supported by digitization, but to fully harness its benefits, the public and private sectors must come together

to invest in infrastructure and build human capacity. Recalling that the Secretary-General had constituted a High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation, to contribute to the global debate on how to mitigate risks in a digital world, she called upon ministers of finance, planning and economy to work on generating resources for their ambitious goals, within a tight fiscal space, and indicated that the African Continental Free Trade Area had immense potential as an anchor for economic integration and dynamism, with the potential to boost intra-African trade and generate domestic revenue essential to move Africa forward. The United Nations was counting on all Member States to support it in its endeavours to implement the 2030 Agenda, to engage more actively with United Nations country teams on the ground, and to take a leadership role in the landmark General Assembly high-level dialogue on financing for development, to be held in September 2019.

15. Mr. Benchaaboun welcomed all participants to Marrakech on behalf of the King of Morocco, Mohammed VI, and the Government and the people of Morocco, who were strongly committed to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa, including through South-South cooperation. Africa had great potential to accelerate its development efforts by leveraging its natural resources and human capital. To reduce inequalities, African countries must now promote good governance and seek to capitalize on comparative advantages, giving priority to domestic resource mobilization and ensuring that financial resources were used effectively. In particular, they must make effective use of digital technologies, which could enhance revenue collection, boost trade and strengthen regional and global value chains. Policymakers must also take action to foster business-friendly environments, strengthen digital oversight mechanisms and promote skills development with a view to addressing emerging challenges related to digital technology. In closing, he expressed the hope that the recommendations of the session would be used to strengthen the development efforts of the African continent.

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

16. The following countries were unanimously elected to form the new Bureau:

Chair:	Morocco (North Africa)
First Vice-Chair:	Ethiopia (East Africa)
Second Vice-Chair:	Zambia (Southern Africa)
Third Vice-Chair:	Togo (West Africa)
Rapporteur:	Equatorial Guinea (Central Africa)

17. The newly elected Chair, Mr. Benchabboun, introduced the theme of the current session of the Conference of Ministers. The agenda was adopted, as follows:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of the Bureau and adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
3. High-level ministerial policy dialogue on the theme of the fifty-second session of the Commission.
4. High-level round-table discussions.

5. Consideration of recommendations and adoption of resolutions.
6. Consideration and adoption of the ministerial statement.
7. Other matters.
8. Closing of the session.

III. High-level ministerial policy dialogue on the theme of the fifty-second session of the Commission: “Fiscal policy, trade and the private sector in the digital era: a strategy for Africa” [agenda item 3]

18. The Executive Secretary chaired the policy dialogue. The lead speaker was the former Secretary of Finance of the Philippines, Cesar Purisima. The panellists included the Head of Emerging Markets Strategy, London Stock Exchange Group, Martina Garcia; the Minister of Finance of Mauritania, Moctar Ould Djay; the President of the Chamber of Mines of Zambia, Goodwell Mateyo; the Director General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, Li Yong; the Chief Executive Officer of Maroc4Invest, Hayat Essakat; and the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Isabelle Durant.

A. Presentation

19. Mr. Purisima focused on fiscal reform in the Philippines as a case study. Following fiscal reforms carried out by successive administrations, since the revolution in 1986, the country had emerged from being considered the “sick man of Asia”. By 2018, it had experienced 20 years of uninterrupted economic expansion, achieved through such measures as value added tax restructuring and exemptions, liberalization of tariffs, an anti-corruption campaign and full banking liberalization. The major lessons learned from the Philippine experience were the need to implement fiscal reform initiatives that ensured macroeconomic stability and fostered confidence-building by spending the resulting additional revenue prudently.

B. Discussion

20. In the ensuing discussion, the panellists each made brief presentations, the content of which is outlined below, followed by comments from the floor.

21. Ms. Garcia described the transparent platform offered by the London Stock Exchange to enhance trust and revenue generation. In 2018, some 18 African companies had been registered on the Exchange and had raised \$1.5 billion on offshore currency markets, which had been used by them to offset currency mismatches and lessen the impacts of future economic crises.

22. Mr. Djay discussed the ambitious fiscal policy reforms carried out in Mauritania, starting in 2010, which had resulted in a tenfold expansion of the tax base and a major increase in tax collection. Sound use of the revenue generated and measures to keep the population informed about the use of tax revenue had been critical in fostering compliance with taxes. The additional revenue was used to boost electricity supply, build roads and for activities aimed reducing the poverty level, which had fallen from 41 per cent in 2008 to 30 per cent in 2014.

23. Mr. Mateyo focused on the importance of devising appropriate tax policies. He took issue with the common complaint that mining companies in mineral-rich countries in Africa, like Zambia, did not pay their fair share of

taxes. That perception, he maintained, was due to lack of information, as demonstrated by the work of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, showing the significant contribution to national revenue made by the extractive industries. Stable, consistent and predictable fiscal policies were important for companies to invest in the mining sector and tax incentives were not a priority issue.

24. Mr. Yong noted that Governments still needed to create a sound investment climate, tax more fairly and spend more judiciously in their countries to attract the foreign direct investment needed to free up financial resources for the required infrastructure development fundamental for conducting business. He also noted that digitization could expand the fiscal space with initiatives, such as e-payment platforms, and that support in that area needed to be extended to small and medium-sized entrepreneurs.

25. Ms. Essakati explained that tax collection in Morocco was being carried out over an online platform but that the system was too technical and counter-intuitive for the taxpayers, who lacked understanding of tax-related duties and responsibilities. She suggested that young people could play a critical role in harnessing technologies for developing innovative applications, including for tax collection and revenue management.

26. Ms. Durant noted that digitization was set to transform economies, trade and small and medium-sized enterprises by enhancing connectivity and e-commerce. In that regard, African countries could learn from the experiences of other countries, including those of India and the Philippines, engage in dialogue with innovators, and establish African platforms for e-trade.

27. Contributing to the dialogue, participants stressed the importance of sharing experiences and learning from one another, such as through South–South cooperation, and the need for predictable and stable fiscal policies. They noted the need for transparency, including with regard to information on taxpayers and highlighted the role of digitization in that regard.

C. Recommendations

28. In the light of the discussion, the following recommendations were made:

(a) Member States should:

(i) Ensure that their fiscal policies, including tax rates, are consistent and predictable over time in order to create a conducive environment for long-term investment and business decisions and that fiscal policies, including tax rates, are fair and comparable internationally in order to attract and retain investment;

(ii) Institutionalize fiscal reform to ensure policy consistency, predictability and durability and ensure that such policy reform is accompanied by the strengthening of relevant organizations and regulatory frameworks;

(iii) Ensure the rational use of revenue as a key element of their national fiscal reforms;

(iv) Develop and implement effective population and taxpayer engagement and communication strategies as part of programmes involving fiscal policy reform and implementation;

(v) Ensure that fiscal policies, including tax rates, are also fair and comparable internationally in order to attract and retain investment;

(vi) Implement policy reforms in education and human resources development to build capacity and strengthen skills related to the application of digitization in fiscal policy reform, which is essential to ensuring access to and the effective use of digital platforms;

(vii) Continue to create an enabling environment to attract foreign direct investment, which would free up the resources needed for infrastructure development fundamental for conducting business;

(viii) Mainstream digitization in public sector provision to expand its fiscal space and increase accessibility;

(ix) Develop different financing schemes, including capital markets;

(b) ECA should promote South–South cooperation and carry out programmes designed to strengthen the capacity of member States to apply digitization and fiscal policies, through the centre of excellence on the digital economy to be established by the Commission.

IV. High-level round-table discussions [agenda item 4]

A. Round table 1: Enhancing fiscal policy through digitization

1. Introduction

29. The round table was chaired by the Commissioner of Macroeconomic Policy and Economic Research of the Economic Community of West African States, Koffi Apraku. The lead speaker was the Minister of Finance of Egypt, Mohamed Maait. The panel comprised the Minister of Finance of Ethiopia, Ahmed Shide; a partner of the firm McKinsey and Company, Tawanda Sibanda; the President of Tunisia Startups, Amel Saidane; the country lead of the Youth Alliance for Leadership and Development of Nigeria, Chuks Okoriekwe; and the Chief Executive Officer of EcoCash, Natalie Jabangwe.

2. Presentations

30. Opening the discussion, Mr. Apraku underscored the substantial role that the digital economy and digitization could play in the fourth industrial revolution. African countries could learn from the economic transformation taking place in Asian countries as a result of digitization, particularly in the areas of medicine, taxation, business and governance.

31. Mr. Maait outlined how digitization could enhance the effectiveness of fiscal policies enabling African countries to increase tax receipts by between 3 and 4 per cent of GDP, which would help those countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Big data analytics could improve tax administration by promoting compliance, lowering tax collection and non-compliance costs and facilitating the identification of new revenue sources. Revenue collection was significantly impeded by the loophole that corporations could conduct business in a tax jurisdiction without maintaining a physical presence there. He described policy, tax administration and institutional reforms enacted in Egypt to strengthen the country's tax system.

32. Mr. Shide highlighted the public finance reforms recently enacted by Ethiopia, which was introducing the use of biometrics-based tax identification numbers to identify taxpayers, who could now register and pay taxes online.

Ethiopia was also using digital technology to streamline customs procedures, track exports and improve its tax assessment, revenue management and public finance management systems and debt recording and servicing mechanisms. Key challenges encountered in the implementation of those reforms included the limited capacity of taxpayers to use digital technology, the high costs for small businesses associated with that technology, and insufficient compliance with and enforcement of new requirements.

33. Mr. Sibanda said that digitization could significantly enhance public financial management, in particular by improving spending efficiency and revenue collection. Digitization was still no magic bullet that could solve all financial management challenges. To optimize the use of digital technologies, it was critical to establish clear benchmarks, appropriate legal frameworks, and effective leadership and monitoring and evaluation systems.

34. Ms. Saidane argued that African countries should leapfrog legacy tax systems and develop new models of taxation through fiscal experimentation and by making optimal use of digital expertise and blockchain technology.

35. Mr. Okoriekwe underscored that African countries should consider employing blockchain technologies and artificial intelligence to help curb tax avoidance and should update their laws and regulations to strengthen e-commerce and impede base erosion and profit shifting.

36. Ms. Jabangwe focused on the experience of EcoCash, a mobile payment company used by 80 per cent of the adult population of Zimbabwe. Although not a bank-led system, EcoCash had three and a half times as many customers as all the banks operating in Zimbabwe put together. In 2014, Zimbabwe had introduced a 2 per cent transaction tax on mobile money, which had enabled the country to run a fiscal surplus for the first time in 20 years.

3. Discussion

37. In the ensuing discussion, participants noted such challenges as the difficulty of monitoring implementation of tax identification systems, the large volume of cash transactions and the scale of the informal sector that were impeding efforts to improve tax collection. They drew attention to other problems, including weak financial infrastructure, a lack of trained government officials, and the need to educate taxpayers on tax compliance in the digital era. It was agreed that there was an urgent need to curtail base erosion and profit shifting and their harmful effects on countries' tax bases.

38. The panellists underscored the need for African countries to resolve broader connectivity and digital infrastructure issues in order to take full advantage of the opportunities arising from the African Continental Free Trade Area. They also discussed the impact of digital transaction taxes on cross-border e-commerce in Africa.

4. Recommendations

39. In the light of the discussion, the following recommendations were made:

(a) Member States should revise their public finance management policy frameworks to accommodate the digital economy in order to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of their tax collection and expenditure management systems;

(b) Member States should ensure that, in planning for a digital economy, they should, as far as practicable, adopt a participatory approach that takes into account the needs and priorities of all major stakeholders;

(c) Member States should revise their laws and regulations on the digital economy and technology in line with innovative business models;

(d) Member States should invest in infrastructure, human resources development and awareness-raising initiatives in order to support the development of digital economies;

(e) Member States should curtail base erosion and profit shifting, which are facilitated by the development of e-commerce and the existence of low-tax jurisdictions;

(f) ECA should support efforts by member States to reduce the impact of base erosion and profit shifting on their tax bases;

(g) ECA, the African Union Commission and the regional economic communities should consider imposing a single flat-rate charge on all digital transactions to facilitate cross-border e-commerce in Africa.

B. Round table 2: Trade and private sector development in the digital era

1. Introduction

40. The round table was chaired by the Minister of Economy and Finance of Djibouti, Ilyas Moussa Dawaleh. The panellists comprised the Executive Director of the International Trade Centre, Arancha Gonzalez; the Executive Director of AfriLabs, Anna Ekeledo; the Minister of Industry, Trade and New Technologies of Morocco, Moulay Hafid Elalamy; the World Bank Country Director for the Maghreb and Malta, Middle East and North Africa, Marie-François Marie-Nelly; the Director of the United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for Africa, Ahunna Eziakonwa; and an artisan chocolatier from the company Instant Chocolate, Axel Emmanuel Gbaou.

2. Presentations

41. Ms. Gonzalez said that the digital revolution was leading to improved revenue collection and connecting people from all parts of the social pyramid in a more transparent manner. She underscored the need for governments to use the potential of digitization to inform people, in particular those in the informal sector, about the uses to which they put the revenue that they collected. Noting that only 20 per cent of exporters in the analogue trade world were women, yet women represented 80 per cent of exporters in e-commerce, she pointed out that incentives for e-commerce could boost gender equality in trade. She stressed the need for the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement to include rules on e-commerce at the continental level and urged member States to join the current World Trade Organization (WTO) discussions on e-commerce: to date, Nigeria was the only African country that had joined the talks.

42. Mr. Elalamy focused on the role of the private sector in digitization in Morocco, where more than 1.5 million people worked in the digital sector, employed by companies of all sizes. Africa had the opportunity to leapfrog to the digital stage in its development and to harness the massive opportunities of digitization, including elimination of the need for a physical presence in a particular location, allowing people to work from long distances and payments to be made electronically. Through digitization Africa could significantly boost its contribution to the world economy and the entire continent could benefit from that process.

43. Ms. Anna Ekeledo noted that the issues addressed at the current session – fiscal policy and digitization – reflected challenges faced by young innovators in starting businesses. There was a consequent need to increase start-up investment and mentorship programmes for young innovators in Africa, and to offer more training in entrepreneurship. In addition, Africa's young innovators needed opportunities to develop their export skills and a

common platform for sharing knowledge, monitoring progress, and ensuring the sustainability of their initiatives.

44. Ms. Eziakonwa noted with satisfaction that Africa was increasingly taking ownership of its development challenges and seeking home-grown solutions in place of reliance on development aid. The digital economy offered enormous opportunities to tackle inequality, empowerment and issues related to governance and to develop businesses through the multiple new technologies. She expressed concern that the age gap between the continent's youthful population and its leaders might have a negative impact on the growth of the digital economy. African leaders had to create an environment for the digital economy to thrive, through the empowerment of young people, rather than associating youth with risk.

45. Ms. Marie-Nelly stressed that the digital economy could facilitate leapfrogging by African economies and that African countries needed visionary leadership to take full advantage of its benefits. Although a number of African countries had high Internet penetration rates, the quality, speed and affordability of the Internet must be improved to enable them to reap the full benefits of connectivity. She cited African success stories in digitization, including rapidly growing e-commerce platforms, which could be emulated by young entrepreneurs across the continent.

46. Mr. Gbaou spoke on the contribution by young people to digitization in Africa and reviewed success stories in that regard, focusing on his own experience in the production of chocolate in Côte d'Ivoire. His company's image had been promoted through social media and digitization had made electronic transactions possible, enabling the company to sell over 10 million bars of chocolate within a year and to showcase its products in stores across the world. Digitization, through the use of smart phones, had enabled him to train a critical mass of women in the cocoa industry.

3. Discussion

47. In the ensuing discussion, participants learned about the work of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in the areas of digitization, in conjunction with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and through the Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business, which ECE hosted. ECE stood ready to work with ECA and its member States on issues related to digitization.

48. Other issues raised during the discussion included the link between digitization, the green economy and job creation, in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals; international cooperation; and capacity development and retention in the digital economy. Noting the need for policies that enabled economic growth while protecting the environment, participants expressed concern that many countries lacked the capacity to implement such policies. Countries could, however, replicate simple technologies that had been successfully applied elsewhere, including in African countries that served as role models in the digital economy. Tackling climate change by investing in green growth could create jobs, transform Africa's economies and accelerate poverty eradication.

49. Participants stressed that, in their development plans, African countries must tackle the issues of the digital economy and climate change in an integrated manner, in line with the approach highlighted in the Sustainable Development Goals. The digital economy presented an unprecedented opportunity for the continent's development and called for integrated approaches, plans and solutions from Governments, United Nations organizations, development partners and the private sector. Collaboration among African countries and between these countries and development partners, together with South-South cooperation, was critical as Africa needed

resources to deal with digitization. To combat the negative impact of the brain drain from Africa on the development of its digital economy, countries that benefited from the influx of African professionals should collaborate with African countries in building their human capacity in digital technology.

4. Recommendations

50. In the light of the discussion, the following recommendations were made:

(a) ECA and its member States should strengthen their participation in the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business;

(b) ECA should strengthen its collaboration with ECE on issues related to digitization and facilitate collaboration between ECE and African countries in this area;

(c) ECA should help member States to replicate good practices in digital economy;

(d) Member States should build their human and technological capacity in digitization through collaboration with one another, with development partners and through South–South cooperation;

(e) Member States should formulate integrated plans for the development of the digital and green economy;

(f) Member States should participate in the WTO negotiations on e-commerce.

V. Consideration of recommendations and adoption of resolutions [agenda item 5]

51. In their discussion of the recommendations and draft resolutions, representatives noted, with regard to draft resolution E, on the review of the intergovernmental structure of ECA pursuant to its resolution 943(XLIX) and resolution 957(LI), the need to assess the impact of the reviews in the light of member States' priorities and recommended that ECA should develop guidelines and specify a time frame for that assessment.

52. Following that discussion, the Conference adopted the resolutions with some amendments (see annex II).

VI. Consideration and adoption of the ministerial statement [agenda item 6]

53. The Conference considered the draft ministerial statement, made general observations and proposed amendments, after which the ministerial statement was unanimously adopted (see annex I).

VII. Other matters [agenda item 7]

54. No matters were raised under the agenda item.

VIII. Closing of the session [agenda item 8]

55. Closing remarks were made by the Executive Secretary and by the Minister of Economy and Finance of Morocco. In her remarks, the Executive Secretary conveyed her commendation and gratitude to her colleagues from ECA and to the Government of Morocco for the efforts to ensure the success

of the session. The Minister expressed his satisfaction that his country had been able to rise to the challenge of organizing the session, as demonstrated by the interactive evaluation surveys, and conveyed thanks to all those who had contributed to that success, both from Morocco and from ECA.

56. Following those remarks, the Chair declared the session closed at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, 26 March 2019.

Annex I

Ministerial statement of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development

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

Meeting in Marrakech, Morocco, on 25 and 26 March 2019, for the fifty-second session of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development,

Having deliberated on the theme “Fiscal policy, trade and the private sector in a digital era: a strategy for Africa”,

Do hereby:

1. *Note* that the gross domestic product of Africa grew at a rate of 3.2 per cent in 2018, down from 3.4 per cent in 2017, and that economic growth is expected to recover to 3.4 per cent in 2019 owing, primarily, to strengthened global demand for African products, rising commodity prices, robust private consumption and sustained investments in infrastructure;

2. *Recognize* that the continent has made progress towards achieving desired economic and social outcomes, with poverty and inequality rates declining in the various subregions, albeit at a slow pace and that a number of challenges remain, including the need to substantially increase the current economic growth rate in order to create jobs and improve living standards through the diversification of African economies, in particular for vulnerable segments of the population such as women and young people;

3. *Acknowledge* that the broadening and diversifying of sources of government revenue are a prerequisite for increased public investment in economic and social sectors, and that there is considerable scope for leveraging private-sector sources of finance to complement government financing to attain the Sustainable Development Goals;

4. *Also acknowledge* that African economies face major financing gaps and challenges in the mobilization of domestic resources, despite the implementation of several fiscal and budgetary reforms;

5. *Recognize* that digitization may enhance fiscal policy performance and development finance by increasing domestic revenue generation and allocation and reducing the cost of revenue collection, and by facilitating trade and private sector investment and development that foster growth and job creation and reduce gender inequality;

6. *Call upon* African countries to improve their telecommunications infrastructure by doubling broadband connectivity by 2022, and to extend the coverage to remote areas on the continent;

7. *Note* that smartphone penetration rose from 37 per cent in 2017 to 44 per cent in 2018 and is projected to increase to 51 per cent in 2019, which will facilitate the engagement of the private sector in local manufacturing, retail applications and service development;

8. *Acknowledge* that, while digitization provides numerous new opportunities for streamlining and improving relations with taxpayers and harnessing efficiency gains, it has also given rise to a number of emerging threats and challenges; that limited Internet access in Africa continues to impede the development of digitization in economic and social sectors, including e-commerce, e-health and e-government, which are constrained by

high transaction costs, the spatial distribution of information exchanges, and limited access to international markets; and that these constraints demonstrate the need for countries to assess the challenges of digitization with a view to undertaking appropriate remedial actions;

9. *Note* that Governments need to design and improve innovative digital mechanisms that facilitate revenue collection and increase the efficiency of tax administration by promoting the use of online platforms for self-reporting by taxpayers and the use of digital mechanisms to record relevant data on transactions and the identity of taxpayers and that digitization, in that regard, could be an important tool for the promotion of good governance and combating corruption and illicit financial flows;

10. *Acknowledge* the need to increase significantly the availability of high-quality and timely data with a view to supporting fiscal policy, trade and private sector development in the digital era and strengthening the implementation of national development plans, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union;

11. *Also acknowledge* the corresponding need for a stronger commitment by member States to allocate adequate financial, technical and human resources in support of the production, dissemination and use of statistics;

12. *Recognize* that censuses are indispensable tools for promoting development in Africa and providing robust data to support the implementation and monitoring of national development plans, the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and, in this respect, urge all member States to undertake the 2020 round of population and housing censuses in Africa;

13. *Note* that civil registration provides individuals with legal documents required to secure their identity, nationality, civil rights and access to social services and, in this respect, recognize the need to develop and strengthen civil registration and vital statistics information systems and infrastructure as a foundation for a legal identity, including effective digital identity systems;

14. *Recognize* that harmonized and interoperable civil registration and digital identity form foundational legal identification systems that provide proof of legal identity necessary for multiple functional purposes;

15. *Note* that progress has been made in regional integration and commit ourselves to taking measures and steps to enhance the incorporation into domestic law and implementation of regional integration agreements and treaties, including the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and call upon member States to address the impediments to economic integration such as restrictions on visas and residence permits;

16. *Take note* that, in terms of its infrastructure development, Africa continues to lag behind other regions, acknowledge the need to strengthen resource mobilization in order to close the infrastructure gap and also to build the technical capacity necessary for the preparation of bankable cross-border infrastructure projects and, in this respect, commit ourselves to strengthening cooperation, in particular among landlocked developing countries and transit countries, in the development and management of cross-border infrastructure;

17. *Recall* the commitment made by Member States pursuant to General Assembly resolution 73/242 of 20 December 2018, to convene the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries at the highest possible level, including Heads of State and Government, in 2021, and the commitment of the Commission, in collaboration with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, to organize an African regional review meeting in 2020 prior to that conference;

18. *Acknowledge* the support provided by the United Nations system to the organs of the African Union at regional and subregional levels within the framework of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa, and request the General Assembly to strengthen the mechanism and its secretariat through the provision of adequate human and financial resources;

19. *Recognize* that State-owned and private rail operating companies incur considerable costs when renewing or extending their rail infrastructure and in financing rolling stock, making it essential to attract private capital and foreign investment, and that the Protocol to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment on Matters Specific to Railway Rolling Stock, which extends the application of the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment to all railway equipment, is an important financing facilitating instrument that enables member States to conclude agreements with public and private lenders and lessors of railway rolling stock;

20. *Acknowledge* and appreciate the commendable capacity development activities that are being undertaken by the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, reiterate our commitment to ensuring the sustainability of the Institute through the payment of annual assessed contributions and the settlement of outstanding contribution arrears and call upon the United Nations and, in particular, the Commission and its partners to increase their support to the Institute in the interests of structural transformation in Africa;

21. *Note* the 2020 programme priorities of the Commission, reaffirm our commitment to support the proposed budget and call upon the United Nations to approve the Commission's 2020 plan and budget as presented to this Conference;

22. *Also note* the review of the intergovernmental structure, its findings and recommendations and endorse the proposed adjustments to the intergovernmental structure of the Commission, including the new sectoral subsidiary organs and the change of name of the subregional intergovernmental committees of experts to "intergovernmental committees of senior officials and experts".

Vote of thanks

23. We thank, in particular, His Majesty King Mohammed VI, the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco and the Moroccan people for having hosted the Conference, for the excellent facilities made available to us and for their warm hospitality.

24. Lastly, we wish to extend our gratitude to the Economic Commission for Africa for successfully convening the fifty-second session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

Annex II

Resolutions and decision adopted by the Conference of Ministers at its fifty-second session

A. Resolutions

962(LII) Data and statistics

The Conference of Ministers,

Acknowledging the role of the national statistical system as the backbone of the transformative agenda for Africa, in supporting economic diversification and industrialization policies and promoting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want,

1. *Endorses* the report and resolutions of the sixth meeting of the Statistical Commission for Africa, held in Addis Ababa on 3 and 4 October 2018, on the theme: “Enhancing national statistical system capacity to support policies for Africa’s economic diversification and industrialization”;

2. *Takes note* of decision EX.CL/Dec.987(XXXII) of the Executive Council of the African Union to request its member States to allocate 0.15 per cent of national budgets to support the production, dissemination and use of statistics for the implementation of national development plans, the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

3. *Urges* development partners to enhance the capacity of national statistical systems in line with the growing demand for statistics;

4. *Encourages* member States to mainstream geospatial and non-geospatial information technologies as a basic framework for supporting statistical production and the dissemination of statistical data;

5. *Calls upon* member States to mainstream national strategies for the development of statistics into national development plans and budgeting processes;

6. *Also calls upon* member States to review and amend, as appropriate, their respective regulatory frameworks relevant to statistics in the light of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the African Charter on Statistics;

7. *Requests* member States to increase the availability of data relevant to the indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals and integrated regional indicators;

8. *Urges* member States to undertake the 2020 round of population and housing censuses to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

9. *Encourages* member States to strengthen civil registration and vital statistics systems;

10. *Urges* member States to support national statistics offices and related line ministries in adopting international statistical standards, to fully implement the 2008 System of National Accounts and to compile and update supply and use tables;

11. *Invites* member States to consider integrating the International Comparison Programme into regular price collection as best practice and use, in particular in the light of the African Continental Free Trade Area process;

12. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa to strengthen the capacity of member States to make use of the integrated tool developed by the Commission for monitoring implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

963(LII) Midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action for the Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024

The Conference of Ministers,

Reaffirming the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want; its resolution 934 (XLVIII), in which African landlocked and transit developing countries, regional and subregional organizations and all other stakeholders were invited to implement the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 in a coordinated, coherent and expeditious manner,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 72/232 in which the Assembly decided to convene a comprehensive high-level midterm review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, to be held in December 2019, and decided also that the high-level midterm review should be preceded by regional preparatory meetings, as appropriate and within existing resources,

Noting that African landlocked developing countries have made mixed progress towards the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and continue to lack adequate infrastructure, in particular, transport, energy and information communications technology infrastructure, and also continue to concentrate their export markets on a very limited number of products and to be confronted with complex development challenges,

1. *Takes note* of African Regional Midterm Review Meeting of the Vienna Programme of Action, held on 18 and 19 March 2019 in Marrakech, and endorses its outcome;

2. *Encourages* African landlocked developing and transit developing countries to intensify their efforts to implement the Vienna Programme of Action;

3. *Calls upon* development partners, relevant organizations of the United Nations system, the private sector and other stakeholders to further strengthen their efforts to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action;

4. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue to provide technical support to the region's landlocked developing countries in areas related to the Vienna Programme of Action, such as infrastructure investment, transport facilitation, productive capacity development, logistical integration and logistics cost studies;

5. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the African Union, the African Development Bank and other relevant regional organizations further to assist African landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries in infrastructure development, development of bankable projects, production capacity development, trade facilitation and structural transformation through, in particular, enhanced investment and technical assistance, and to promote greater cooperation between African landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries and enhanced regional integration;

6. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island

Developing States, to undertake the ten-year regional review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024.

964(LII) 2020 programme plan and budget

The Conference of Ministers,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 72/279 of 31 May 2018 on repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operation activities for development of the United Nations system in which the Assembly reaffirmed the role and functions of the United Nations development system at the regional level, including the regional economic commissions and the regional teams of the United Nations development system, and underlined the need to continue to make them fit for purpose in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, and to revamp the regional structures, recognizing the specificities of each region and bearing in mind that no one size fits all,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 71/243 of 21 December 2016 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system,

Recognizing the continuing efforts of the Economic Commission for Africa to reposition itself and to enhance its programmatic orientation to be able to effectively support the implementation of and follow-up to the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and Agenda 2063 of the African Union,

Noting with appreciation the vision of the Economic Commission for Africa to deliver ideas and actions for an empowered, inclusive and transformed Africa in the framework of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 through its three core functions, namely, its function as a think tank, its convening function and its operational function,

Having examined the 2020 programme plan and budget,¹

1. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to develop a medium-term programme framework covering three to five years, to facilitate the engagement of member States with the Commission; annual plans and budget will be derived from the framework and performance measured on its bases;

2. *Also calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to increase the level of ambition in its programme of work;

3. *Adopts* the 2020 programme plan and budget of the Economic Commission for Africa, taking into consideration the above calls.

965(LII) Luxembourg Protocol to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment on Matters Specific to Railway Rolling Stock

The Conference of Ministers,

Mindful that the African continent has a continuing shortfall in investment in transportation infrastructure,

Recognizing that railways constitute an efficient and environmentally sustainable way of moving people and goods within individual African States and across the continent,

¹ E/ECA/COE/38/12.

Acknowledging that African States are committed to modernizing and expanding the existing national and regional rail networks,

Mindful that, under relevant African Union guidelines, new African rail networks should ideally be constructed using the standard rail gauge, measuring 1,435 mm, which will require States or State-owned enterprises to make major new investments in railway rolling stock,

Recalling that States or State-owned or private rail operating companies will incur considerable costs as a consequence of renewing or extending the rail infrastructure and rolling stock and will therefore need to attract substantial private capital and foreign investment,

Recognizing that the African rail system will need to be operated as cost-effectively as possible,

Noting that, to date, 24 African States have become party to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment and its Protocol on Matters Specific to Aircraft Equipment,² both of which were adopted at Cape Town, South Africa, on 16 November 2001,

Mindful that, as yet, very few African States are fully familiar with the Luxembourg Protocol to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment on Matters Specific to Railway Rolling Stock,

1. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue, including through its subregional offices, its awareness-raising and advocacy efforts for States across the African continent on the Luxembourg Protocol to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment on Matters Specific to Railway Rolling Stock (Luxembourg Rail Protocol) at the earliest opportunity, with a view to elucidating its merits and potential contribution to the financing of rolling stock in rail projects;

2. *Also calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to inform interested parties from the public sector and the private sector across the continent on, and educate them in, the way that private credit and leasing can assist with providing the financial resources necessary to revitalize and expand the African rail network, and the benefits of becoming party to the Luxembourg Rail Protocol.

966(LII) Review of the intergovernmental structure of the Economic Commission for Africa pursuant to its resolution 943(XLIX) and resolution 957(LI)

The Conference of Ministers,

Recalling its resolution 908(XLVI) of 26 March 2013, in which the Commission mandated the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa to realign the programmes and priorities of the Commission to the new strategic orientation, with a view to supporting the transformative development agenda of the African Union,

Recalling also its resolution 943(XLIX) of 5 April 2016, in which it requested the Executive Secretary of the Commission to undertake an independent, comprehensive and thorough review of the intergovernmental structure of the Commission, including its Intergovernmental Committee of Experts,

Recalling further its resolution 957(LI) of 15 May 2018, in which it decided to grant additional time to the Commission to conduct further review and analysis of the intergovernmental structure of the Commission, and requested the Executive Secretary to report to the Conference at its next session

² United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 2307, No. 41143.

on restructuring the conference structure and subsidiary bodies of the Commission, including the intergovernmental committees of experts,

Noting General Assembly resolution 72/279 of 31 May 2018, in which the Assembly reaffirmed the role and functions of the United Nations development system at the regional level, including the regional economic commissions and the regional teams of the United Nations development system, and emphasized the need to address gaps and overlaps at the regional level, and endorsed a phased approach to revamping the United Nations development system at the regional level,

Noting also the new strategic directions of the Economic Commission for Africa for an empowered and transformed Africa and the structural reform of the secretariat of the Commission to deliver ideas and actions for an empowered, inclusive and transformed Africa in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, through its three core functions, namely, its function as a think tank, its convening function and its operational function,

1. *Takes note* of the review of the intergovernmental structure, its findings and recommendations;

2. *Endorses* the following adjustments to the intergovernmental structure of the Economic Commission for Africa:

(a) To organize the sectoral subsidiary organs as follows:

(i) Committee on Economic Governance;

(ii) Committee on Statistics and Data;

(iii) Committee on Private Sector Development, Regional Integration, Trade, Infrastructure, Industry and Technology;

(iv) Committee on Climate Change, Blue Economy, Agriculture and Natural Resource Management;

(v) Committee on Social Development, Poverty and Gender;

(b) To change the name of the subregional intergovernmental committees of experts to the intergovernmental committees of senior officials and experts, with a view to ensuring effective policy uptake and greater participation of senior government officials in the committees.

967(LII) Progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 and preparation for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

The Conference of Ministers,

Taking note of the report of the Economic Commission for Africa on progress in the implementation of the priority areas of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 (Istanbul Programme of Action),

Recognizing that more than half of the population of Africa resides in least developed countries and that those countries have particular structural impediments to their sustainable development and transformation,

Noting with concern that African least developed countries continue to have low productive capacity, in particular in the manufacturing sector, that their share in global exports has declined since the adoption of the Istanbul Programme of Action, and that their receipts of official development assistance have been volatile and below the commitments set out in the Istanbul Programme of Action,

Welcoming the anticipated graduation from the least developed country category of Angola and Sao Tome and Principe, which will join those African countries that previously graduated, namely Botswana, Cabo Verde and Equatorial Guinea,

Affirming that the continued support of the international community will play a key role in overcoming many of the barriers to sustainable development that are faced by the least developed countries,

Recalling the Ministerial Statement adopted at the Second Joint Annual Meeting of the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, in which Ministers called upon the Commission to organize a regional review meeting for Africa prior to the convening of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries,

Recalling also paragraph 157 of the Istanbul Programme of Action, in which the General Assembly was invited to consider holding a Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, in order to make a comprehensive appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action and decide on subsequent action,

Taking note of General Assembly resolution 73/242 of 20 December 2018, in which the Assembly decided to convene the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries at the highest possible level, including Heads of State and Government, to be held in 2021,

1. *Calls upon* African least developed countries to continue their efforts to mobilize resources both domestically and internationally and implement the Istanbul Programme of Action to accelerate economic and social development;

2. *Encourages* the Economic Commission for Africa and its development partners, including countries in Africa that are not in the least developed country category, to continue their support for implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action;

3. *Invites* the Economic Commission for Africa, with the cooperation of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, to organize a regional review meeting for Africa in 2020, prior to the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

968(LII) Fiscal policy, trade and the private sector in a digital era: a strategy for Africa

The Conference of Ministers,

Taking note of the report of the Economic Commission for Africa on the status of fiscal policy in Africa and the finding in the report that there is a financing gap that needs to be closed to meet the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want,

Considering that the rapid digitization in today's world presents unique opportunities for fostering sustainable development, in particular, through enhanced public revenue mobilization and management, trade and private sector investment and finance,

Noting the efforts made by the Economic Commission for Africa, together with the African Union Commission, to launch the digital identity, digital trade and digital economy initiative for Africa,

Noting also decision EX.CL/Dec.2(XXXIV) of 8 February 2019 of the Executive Council of the African Union to mandate the African Union Commission, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa and

other relevant stakeholders, to develop a comprehensive African Union digital trade and digital economy development strategy,

Considering the challenges that the digital economy presents in tax policy, making it easy for businesses to shift profits from the use of digital assets, such as intellectual property, away from places where the income is generated to low-tax jurisdictions, thus resulting in erosion of the tax base,

Resolved to leverage the use of digital technology to strengthen revenue collection and public finance management in Africa, review current taxation frameworks to accommodate the digital economy, taking due account of the changing nature of businesses caused by digitization to support the efforts being made in the context of the digital identity, digital trade and digital economy initiative for Africa,

1. *Calls upon* decision-makers in Governments, the private sector and civil society to foster and prioritize financing for building digital infrastructure, working to digitize payments in every sector, and putting in place regulations to ensure that digital financial services may be used by everyone and everywhere and are duly protected against cybercrime;

2. *Urges* the Economic Commission for Africa to support member States and the African Tax Administration Forum in their efforts to develop frameworks that leverage digitization to strengthen revenue mobilization and public financial management through automation, digital identity and the modernization of fiscal processes;

3. *Also urges* the Economic Commission for Africa to support member States in building digital infrastructure that could be used to combat illicit financial flows;

4. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and other relevant partners, to develop a comprehensive African digital trade and digital economy development strategy, including principles for good digital identity and harmonized standards, and a regional regulatory framework for digital finance and financial technology.

969(LII) Digitization and the digital economy initiative

The Conference of Ministers,

Recognizing the substantial benefits and opportunities of digital technologies and the key role that digitization can play in achieving the targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 of the African Union: The Africa We Want, and in promoting the overall development of Africa,

Recalling its resolution 941(XLIX) of 5 April 2016 on the organization of an annual African regional review of progress in the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, in which it reaffirmed the potential of information and communications technology to foster socioeconomic development,

Noting the decision of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union at its thirty-second ordinary session, calling on the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union Commission and other partners to develop a digital identity, digital trade and digital economy strategy for Africa to be submitted for consideration and endorsement by the Executive Council in February 2020,

1. *Commends* the Economic Commission for Africa for setting up the African digitization initiative;

2. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue to work on policy research, regional dialogue and capacity development on digitization and the digital economy in member States, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, regional economic communities, member States, the African Development Bank, the African Tax Administration Forum, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Bank and other stakeholders;

3. *Also requests* the Economic Commission for Africa to fully operationalize a centre of excellence on digitization and the digital economy, with a view to tackling the critical issue of capacity shortfalls in the digital sector of member States, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the regional economic communities, the African Development Bank, the African Tax Administration Forum, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Bank, development partners and African institutions of higher learning;

4. *Urges* the Economic Commission for Africa to ensure that the centre of excellence on digitization and the digital economy has tangible, time-bound and results-based deliverables to support member States;

5. *Invites* member States to consider developing strong security systems to combat cybercrime and cyber-related threats emanating from the digitization of their economies.

B. Decision

A(LII) Date, venue and theme for the fifty-third session

At its 4th plenary meeting on 26 March 2019, the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development decided that its fifty-third session would be held in Addis Ababa in 2020 on a date in the month of March or April and that the theme of the fifty-third session would be: “The future of Africa: industrialization in the digital era”.

4th meeting of the plenary, 26 March 2019
