



52nd Session of the Economic
Commission for Africa

Fiscal policy, trade and the private sector
in the digital era: A strategy for Africa

Marrakech, Morocco | 20-26 March 2019

Tentative timetable

Wednesday, 20 March 2019 Meeting of the Committee of Experts

Palais des Congrès de la Palmeraie de Marrakech

8.30–9 a.m.	Opening of the meeting (agenda item 1)
9–9.45 a.m.	Election of the Bureau and adoption of the agenda and programme of work (agenda item 2)
9.45–11 a.m.	Session I: Overview of recent economic and social developments in Africa (agenda item 3)
11–11.15 a.m.	Coffee break
11.15 a.m.–12.30 p.m.	Session II: Assessment of progress on regional integration in Africa (agenda item 4)
12.30–2.30 p.m.	Lunch break
2.30–4 p.m.	Session III: Presentation on the theme of the fifty-second session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development: “Fiscal policy, trade and the private sector in a digital era: a strategy for Africa” (agenda item 5)
4–4.15 p.m.	Coffee break
4.15–5.30 p.m.	Session III (continued)
5.30 p.m.	Reception

Tentative timetable

Thursday, 21 March 2019 Meeting of the Committee of Experts

Palais des Congrès de la Palmeraie de Marrakech

9–10.45 a.m. **Session IV: Statutory issues** (agenda item 6)

10.45–11 a.m. Coffee break

11 a.m.–12.30 p.m. **Session V: Statutory issues** (agenda item 6)

12.30–2.30 p.m. Lunch break

2.30–4 p.m. **Session VI: Statutory issues** (agenda item 6)

4–4.15 p.m. Coffee break

4.15–6 p.m. **Session VII: Statutory issues** (agenda item 6)

Tentative timetable

Friday, 22 March 2019 Meeting of the Committee of Experts

Palais des Congrès de la Palmeraie de Marrakech

9–10.30 a.m.	Session VIII: Statutory issues (agenda item 6)
10.30–10.45 a.m.	Coffee break
10.45–11.15 a.m.	Date, venue and theme of the fifty-third session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (agenda item 7)
11.15–11.30 a.m.	Other matters (agenda item 8)
11.30 a.m.–4 p.m.	Drafting of the report on the meeting of the Committee of Experts
12.30–2.30 p.m.	Lunch break
4–6 p.m.	Session IX: Consideration and adoption of the report of the Committee of Experts; consideration of recommendations and draft resolutions (agenda item 9)
6–6.30 p.m.	Closing of the meeting (agenda item 10)

Tentative timetable

Saturday, 23 March 2019 Side events and other meetings

Palais des Congrès de la Palmeraie de Marrakech

9 a.m.–6 p.m.

Twentieth session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa and the Third Joint Meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa and the regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group

Venue: Cristal Room

The twentieth session will focus on the theme “United Nations support to the African Union Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: towards durable solutions to forced displacement in Africa”. The meeting brings together senior officials from the United Nations and African Union systems to deliberate on strengthening coordination at regional, subregional and national levels for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want of the African Union. The deliberations are expected to provide guidance on solutions and resources for joint programme implementation following the reforms of the United Nations and the African Union towards accelerating the attainment of the African agenda for transformative development.

9–11 a.m.

Side event 1: Launch of the Economic Report on Africa 2019

Venue: Oliveraie Room

The Economic Report on Africa 2019 provides an evidence-based assessment of the nature and performance of fiscal policy in Africa, including an analysis of challenges and opportunities together with best practices. The Report argues that the current level of government revenue to GDP is low (19.1 per cent) and African countries can double government revenue, boosting it to as much as 39.4 per cent.

Tentative timetable

9–11 a.m.

Side event 2: Briefing on the messages and recommendations of regional integration flagship reports of ECA: (a) Assessing Regional Integration in Africa (ARIA) IX: next steps for the African Continental Free Trade Area; (b) African Regional Integration Index (ARII) report 2019

Venue: Orangerie Room

The African Regional Integration Index Report (known as ARII) is a recurring joint publication of ECA, African Union Commission and African Development Bank. The main objective of ARII is to monitor and evaluate the status of economic integration among African countries. The preliminary results of the report indicate that regional integration in Africa remains low across the five dimensions that are analysed: trade integration, regional infrastructure, productive integration, free movement of people, and macroeconomic. South Africa emerges as the most integrated country particularly in regard to trade integration, regional infrastructure and productive integration; with South Sudan as the least integrated mainly because of its modest performance in regional infrastructure and financial integration.

ARII is a joint publication of the African Union Commission, ECA and the African Development Bank. In parallel, the three institutions produce the report, *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa*. Its 2019 edition was its ninth, and was produced in partnership with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), on the theme, “Next steps for the African Continental Free Trade Area”. In particular, it focuses on the challenges of implementation following the ratification and entry into force of the Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. The three main policy areas – investment, intellectual property, and competition policy – in phase 2 of the negotiations are analysed to guide negotiators in addition to examining the implications of the spread of digital trade for the African Continental Free Trade Area.

This side event will present the key messages and recommendations of the 2019 *ARII* and the 2019 *ARIA IX*.

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Le Palais des Congrès de la Palmeraie de Marrakech

9–11 a.m.

Side event 3: Gender-sensitive budgeting: a strategic instrument for economic transformation and inclusive development in Africa

Venue: Palmeraie Room

The promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls is a fundamental right enshrined in important regional and international normative frameworks. African Governments are committed to eliminating gender inequalities through both the ratification of international and continental conventions, and internal legal, political and social reforms. Despite this commitment and the significant progress made, gender inequalities persist in Africa. Some of the strategies being followed show tangible results, among which, it is important to mention the integration of the gender dimension into socioeconomic planning, including in budget planning, which has had a direct impact on inclusive and gender-sensitive development policies. The main objective of this parallel session is to conduct an in-depth, pragmatic reflection on gender budgeting as a strategic instrument for promoting gender equality in the current development context of Africa. This will allow an analysis of the experiences in Africa in respect of gender-sensitive budgeting in order to understand its results, successes, challenges and opportunities. This session targets policymakers, civil society organizations, development partners and United Nations organizations.

1-3 p.m.

Side event 4: The blue economy in North Africa: the efficiency of maritime transport in facilitating international trade in the digital age

Venue: Palmeraie Room

The main objective of the Forum on the Blue Economy in North Africa on the Efficiency of Maritime Transport in Facilitating International Trade in the Digital Age is to contribute to the further reflection on the integration of the blue economy approach in development policies and strategies, taking as a starting point the analysis of maritime transport in North Africa and its impact on international trade. The Forum will also provide an opportunity to discuss the practical guide developed by ECA to assist member States in formulating a strategy on the precepts of the blue economy and integrating the concept into existing national development strategies.

Saturday, 23 March 2019
Side events and other meetings

Le Palais des Congrès de la Palmeraie de Marrakech

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1-3 p.m.

Side event 5: Railway rolling stock financing: a new solution for Africa

Venue: Oliveraie Room

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want of the African Union, particularly its first ten-year implementation plan, has identified the railway network as a critical land transport mode for the future of the continent. An integrated high-speed train network that will connect African capitals and commercial centres to facilitate the movement of goods, services and people, reduce transport costs and relieve the congestion of current systems is one of the major flagship programmes approved for implementation in the first ten-year plan. The main objective of the event is to discuss the Luxembourg Protocol to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment on Matters specific to Railway Rolling Stock, and how it will play a key role in mobilizing private capital to create a sustainable model for financing existing and new rail projects.

1-3 p.m.

Side event 6: Digital trade in Africa: implications for inclusion and industrialization

Venue: Orangerie Room

The digital revolution is transforming the way we carry out business, produce and trade, and presents a significant opportunity for the African continent to industrialize and catch up with the rest of the world. The Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0) is rapidly evolving and changing the traditional labour-intensive path to industrialization. At the same time, digital trade can be a tool for boosting intra-African trade, which is more diversified and industrialized than Africa's trade with the rest of the world. This is expected to be supported by the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area and related efforts for continental cooperation on issues related to the digital economy. While the digital economy is being felt across the continent, there exists a substantial digital divide between African countries and the rest of the world. This presents a number of challenges for the African continent that will need to be addressed in a way that is consistent with inclusion, transparency, people-centred governance and the attainment of human rights. In this context, the event will discuss how Africa's digital transformation can be used as a tool for inclusive industrialization through trade on the continent.

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3.30-5.30 p.m.

**Side event 7: High-level strategic dialogue on investments in Africa:
human capital, infrastructure gaps and private sector partnerships**

Venue: Oliveraie Room

The event will bring together selected high-level panellists and contributors from across the continent of Africa. It will focus on having and sustaining a strategic policy dialogue exploring common challenges and opportunities and local, country-driven solutions on the need for prioritization of investments in and increased budget allocations for human capital, food security and nutrition, sustainable agriculture and related infrastructure in partnership with the private sector.

3.30-5.30 p.m.

**Side event 8: Planning tools for harmonized alignment with and
monitoring of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063**

Venue: Orangerie Room

This event will provide a demonstration of the web-based Integrated Planning and Reporting Toolkit, which has been designed to support member States to align and integrate simultaneously the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 into national development plans. Users can assess visually the level and strength of alignment between the two development Agendas, and generate harmonized progress reports.

Tentative timetable

Sunday, 24 March 2019 Side events and other meetings

Palais des Congrès de la Palmeraie de Marrakech

9 a.m.–6 p.m. **Twentieth session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa and the Third Joint Meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa and the regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group (cont.)**

Venue: Cristal Room

9–11 a.m. **Side event 9: Education, migration and displacement**

Key lessons from the 2019 *Global Education Monitoring Report – Migration, Displacement and Education: Building Bridges, Not Walls*

Venue: Oliveraie Room

This high-level event, hosted by UNESCO, will provide a platform to discuss promising practices in the inclusion of migrants and refugees in national education systems from across the continent, and the role of education in making societies peaceful, more prosperous and more resilient to migration and displacement. Representatives from three African countries and intergovernmental agencies will discuss the findings and recommendations from the *2019 Global Education Monitoring Report*, sharing their unique perspectives with others.

Tentative timetable

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9–11 a.m.

Side event 10: Youth inclusiveness in driving the implementation agenda of fiscal policy, trade and investment through digital innovation in Africa

Venue: Palmeraie Room

The African Continental Free Trade Area aims to create a single continental market for goods and services, with free movement of business persons and investment with a combined population of more than one billion people and a combined gross domestic product of more than \$3.4 trillion, thus paving the way for the establishment of the Customs Union and a more unified Africa. However, key implementation factors in the success of the Free Trade Area is the role of young people on the continent and leveraging the enormous innovation in digital technology. This landmark agreement could be instructive in bridging physical integration when the opportunities presented by the Internet are leveraged. First, ICT has not only become a necessity, but it has become a window of opportunity for innovation, progress, and change. Currently, Africa has 167 million Internet users, predominately young people, who are using the Internet as a tool for growth, leading to a better future. Going digital will therefore bring enormous benefits for young people, in particular, more access to education through online classes (with a possibility of exporting similar services across the continent using the window of the negotiations), which can be accessed almost anywhere or the reduction of information asymmetry allowing for easier entry into the competitive labour market. Furthermore, the improved digital literacy of young people in Africa will provide them with more opportunities to start effective enterprises, by reducing costs and increasing sales using digital strategies. Thus, it is imperative to explore youth inclusiveness in implementing Africa's fiscal policy, trade and investment through digital innovation, given the recently signed Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. Moreover, enterprises, including digital companies – run by young people, who constitute a large part of the continent's burgeoning private sector operators – will be abreast of the inherent benefits of the agreement, and better positioned to leverage it, in order to grow and expand their businesses across the continent. These upsides will be considered at the side event through a combination of keynote presentations and fireside chats examining how youth inclusiveness can drive the implementation agenda of the African Continental Free Trade Area through digital innovation.

Sunday, 24 March 2019
Side events and other meetings

Le Palais des Congrès de la Palmeraie de Marrakech

Tentative timetable

9–11 a.m.

Side event 11: Planning for the workforce of tomorrow: is Africa ready?

Venue: Orangeriaie Room

This event will discuss the state of African education and training systems, finance, employment and the future of work, especially job creation for young people within the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area. Emphasis will be put on how disruptive technologies are shaping the labour markets and what Africa needs to do to respond to the existing issues of youth unemployment and underemployment, and at the same time to the future of work. Discussions will also focus on how ongoing initiatives such as the “Future of Work Centenary Initiative” by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the “Global Commission of the future of work”, and the African Technical Vocational Education Training Continental Strategy are addressing or can better address these challenges. The outcome of the event is expected to inform the future orientation of IDEP in terms of retraining, reskilling and upskilling civil servants, governments officials and workers in this era of disruptive technologies.

1-3 p.m.

Side event 12: Fintechs, digital ID and financial inclusion to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Future We Want

Venue: Orangeriaie Room

African Governments and their development partners, recognizing the importance of financial inclusion as an important engine for growth with equity, are devising strategies and policies to create a more inclusive financial sector. It is estimated that about 60 per cent of eligible Africans are unbanked. Advances in technology can help countries to reduce or eliminate this number. Financial technology companies (fintechs) and roll out of digital identification systems can help. There has been an enormous growth in fintechs and fintech products in Africa in the past five years. Leading financial institutions such as Ecobank and Stanbic, and African central banks are setting up fintech units, adopting their own digital ID systems (such as BVN in Nigeria) and rolling out financial inclusion strategies. But the extent to which fintechs can help expand financial inclusion depends on their ability to identify the unbanked. It is estimated that over 500 million Africans do not have a government-issued ID. The lack of ID limits full participation in the economy, creates the risk that millions may be left behind, and results in significant economic losses. Studies show that digital identification can unlock wealth creation and contribute to GDP growth through financial inclusion and reduction in transactions costs. With this in view, ECA and the African Union recently launched an African Digital ID and Digital Economy Initiative to assist member States to roll out digital ID platforms, promote innovation and advance inclusion. This event will explore how Africa can seize the opportunities presented by new digital technologies to promote financial inclusion to achieve the development objectives expressed in the 2030 Agenda and concretized in Agenda 2063. The side event will bring to the surface ideas, identify action areas, and propose concrete suggestions on fintechs and digital identification platforms for debate and consideration by policymakers. It will help increase awareness of the promise and perils of the digital economy among African policymakers and promote high-level dialogue on them.

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1-3 p.m.

Side event 13: Leading or following? Shaping tax reform in Africa

Venue: Oliveraie Room

The event will review the progress that has been made in tackling illicit financial flows by multinationals and look at alternative solutions that go beyond the global tax reforms that are now being discussed. The session will allow policymakers, civil society and private sector participants to discuss a concrete package of policy options and recommendations towards a more inclusive international cooperation in tax matters with special regard to African countries. An actively-moderated panel discussion format will be adopted, with only minimal time for initial statements, ensuring interaction among the panellists to challenge and engage with shared views, as well as providing time for reaction from the audience to broaden and further stimulate the debate.

1-3 p.m.

Side event 14: High-level policy dialogue on capitalizing on the nexus between climate change and public budget for resilient economies in Africa

Venue: Palmeraie Room

Close to \$3 trillion are needed to finance both the conditional and unconditional nationally determined contributions to climate action under the framework of the Paris Agreement. Conditional actions depend on the availability of climate finance flows while unconditional actions will be financed fully from resources at the national level. Yet, climate change is having a negative impact on the economic performance of many African countries, thereby limiting the fiscal space needed for public financing of climate actions. Although many African countries are already spending between 2 per cent and 9 per cent of their GDP on adaptation to climate change, public resources are increasingly limited, with competing demands for funding for health, education and other sectors. The principal objective of this high-level policy dialogue is to bring together African Ministers of Finance and Planning and other stakeholders to share inspiring examples of what works and what does not work, regarding how African countries can use their budgetary and planning functions to leverage limited public resources to mobilize higher levels of private and external finance to invest in sustainable, climate resilient economies. For example, the event may explore how countries are using cross-sectoral approaches to assist in integrated planning and implementation of climate action in the context of development priorities across the agriculture, land-use and water sectors.

Sunday, 24 March 2019
Side events and other meetings

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Tentative timetable

3.30-5.30 p.m.

Side event 15: Financing for health care in Africa – the role of the private sector

Venue: Orangerie Room

The main objective of the event is to use the key messages of the report on “Health care and economic growth in Africa” to critically examine the nature and extent of the financing challenges facing the health sector in Africa; discuss options for leveraging the private sector to partner with the public health sector; and identify innovative financing opportunities for the health sector in Africa. Participants will include Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economy, line ministry representatives and senior experts from African member States, regional economic communities, United Nations organizations, pan-African financial institutions, African academic and research institutions, and private sector and other intergovernmental organizations.

3.30-5.30 p.m.

Side event 16: United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. Towards an inclusive strategy to address sustainable development and security challenges in the Sahel

Venue: Oliverie Room

The main objective of the event is to engage with government officials and partners on the new development of United Nations support to the Sahel. The event will provide policymakers and other partners with the updated information on the United Nations Support Plan and the work of the United Nations for the Sahel. A key principle of the new United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel is to have governments in the driving seat. The United Nations has begun engaging with governments and regional organizations on the substance of their strategic and programmatic priorities for inclusion in that integrated strategy for the Sahel. The event will offer a unique opportunity to engage with officials and delegates on the socioeconomic prospects for the Sahel. The event will provide updated information on the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel and engage with officials, partners and donors on the implementation strategy.

Tentative timetable

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3.30-5.30 p.m.

Side event 17: Launch of the African Fintech Network

Venue: Palmeraie Room

Africa's financial sector is generally underdeveloped. According to some estimates, more than 60 per cent of the African population has no access to financial services. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development does not include specific goals or targets for financial inclusion. Advances in technology can help countries to reduce or eliminate the number of unbanked Africans and change the financial and innovation/start-up landscape of the continent in fundamental ways. There has been an enormous growth in fintechs and fintech products in Africa in the past five years. Most stakeholders in Africa's growing fintech community agree that it is vital to sustain development and coordination of the various innovations so that people across the continent can benefit from the socioeconomic spin-offs. At the national level, fintechs are making a positive impact, however, much more needs to be done towards setting up a cross-border self-regulatory organization in line with a future African common market in view, in line with the Abuja Treaty on the African Economic Community.

On 24 January 2018, innovators, technology hubs, financial institutions, regulators, start ups and other key players came together to set up the African Fintech Network and Council as a basis for strengthening cooperation. It is envisioned that the Network will contribute to making Africa a leading global Innovation Hub, promote Africa as a preferred investment destination and, in the process, help create employment opportunities, contribute to fast-tracking access to basic financial services for all, and generate faster economic growth. Therefore, the main objectives of this side event is to consolidate the African Network and create an awareness of the possibilities that fintechs present for meeting the continent's important goals of improved access to financial services and financial inclusion to achieve the 2030 Agenda and realize the aspirations of Agenda 2063.

Tentative timetable

Monday, 25 March 2019 Ministerial Conference

Palais des Congrès de la Palmeraie de Marrakech

8.30-9 a.m.	Group photograph
9-10.15 a.m.	Opening of the session (agenda item 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statements by the host • Statements by the special guests
10.15-10.30 a.m.	Election of the Bureau and adoption of the agenda and programme of work (agenda item 2)
10.30-11 a.m.	Coffee break Press conference
11 a.m.-12.30 p.m.	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)
12.30-2.30 p.m.	Lunch break 2019 Adebayo Adedeji Lecture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The digital transformation of Africa: hype or reality?
2.30-5.45 p.m.	High-level round-table discussions (agenda item 4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Round table 1: Enhancing fiscal policy through digitization • Round table 2: Trade and private sector development in the digital era
4-4.15 p.m.	Coffee break
6.15 p.m.	Reception Launch of <i>ECA – 60 Years in Step with African Development</i>

Tentative timetable

Tuesday, 26 March 2019 Ministerial Conference

Palais des Congrès de la Palmeraie de Marrakech

9–11 a.m.	Consideration of recommendations and adoption of resolutions (agenda item 5)
11–11.15 a.m.	Coffee break
11.15–12.15 p.m.	Consideration and adoption of the ministerial statement (agenda item 6)
12.15–12.45 p.m.	Other matters (agenda item 7)
12.45–1 p.m.	Closing of the session (agenda item 8)
1–1.30 p.m.	Press conference