



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

Conference overview

The fifty-third session of the Commission consists of the preparatory meeting of the Committee of Experts and the Conference of Ministers. In addition to considering the statutory matters of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Conference is one of the premier forums on the continent for dialogue and exchanges of views between African Ministers responsible for Finance, Planning and Economic Development and Governors of Central Banks on issues pertinent to the development agenda of Africa.

Theme of the fifty-third session

The fifty-third session of the Commission will deliberate on the theme of "Africa's sustainable industrialisation and diversification in a digital era".

Most countries that have developed did so through industrialization. But the world in which this traditional route to development took, however, is changing. Digital technologies are propelling us into the fourth industrial revolution. But, anthropogenic carbon emissions are changing our climate, and triggering atypical fluctuations in weather conditions globally such as rises in temperature, and increased risks of flood, drought and agricultural shocks. The result is a world that requires new strategies if development is to continue.

The fifty-third session of the Conference of Ministers will feature deliberations on digitization and its impacts, including the challenges and the means through which it is forcing a character makeover of



the technology industry. The focus will be on how digitization is opening up opportunities in agriculture, services and clean energy, and how these can help spur the processes of industrialization and diversification, while providing options for adapting to climate change, including methods to ensure resilience. The discussions will highlight Africa's endowment of clean energy potential, and the risks of expensive environmental damage.

Sustainability must be recognized and affirmed as central to sustainable development – African development strategies in this changing world must account for a sustainable blue economy, green growth and smart cities.

The upcoming Conference of Ministers presents a call for action, and a chance for us all to take an active part in ensuring that Africa prepares adequately for the world ahead.

Date and venue

Pursuant to the agreement of member States at the fifty-second session, the fifty-third session will be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from Wednesday, 18 March to Tuesday, 24 March 2020.

Format of the Conference

(a) Committee of Experts, 18–20 March 2020

The Committee of Experts will hold a three-day preparatory technical meeting to consider the theme

of the conference, review the state of economic and social development in Africa, and consider progress on regional integration. Further, the Committee of Experts will consider the statutory issues relating to the work of the Commission and make recommendations, as appropriate, for consideration at the Conference;

(b) Conference of Ministers, 23 and 24 March 2020

The plenary sessions of the Conference will commence with a high-level policy dialogue on the theme for 2019, followed by a round-table discussion on a series of sub-themes. The Conference is designed to be interactive and thought provoking. Contributions from seasoned and high-level panellists from within and outside Africa will guide the discussions which will also draw from recent research reflected in the Issues Paper.

(c) Side events, 21 and 22 March 2020

On the margins of the conference, there will be a number of side events and other meetings devoted to key development issues of relevance. The annual Adebayo Adedeji Lecture Series will also take place on these dates. The side events, held in parallel, will usually be limited to 90 minutes each.

Participation

This being a statutory meeting of the Commission, participation is expected from members of the Commission. Other participants include relevant ministers and representatives of member States, the United Nations system, including specialized agencies of the United Nations, regional economic communities, pan-African financial institutions, African academic and research

institutions, development partners and other inter-governmental organizations. Invitations will also be extended to other cooperating partners, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

Bureau of the Commission

The Bureau represents the five African subregions. It comprises a Chair, three Vice-Chairs and a Rapporteur. Bureau members are elected at the commencement of the first meeting of each Session; Bureau members hold office on a rotational basis, according to subregion. The Chairman or a Vice-Chairman acting as Chairman shall participate in the meetings of the Commission in that capacity and not as the representative of the member by whom he or she is accredited.

Composition of the Bureau (elected at the fifty-second session of the Conference):

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)

Composition of the Bureau (to be elected at the fifty-third session of the Conference):

Chair: Central Africa

First Vice-Chair: Southern Africa

Second Vice-Chair: West Africa

Third Vice-Chair: East Africa

Rapporteur: North Africa

