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Item 6 of the agenda**

Consideration of recommendations and adoption of draft
resolutions

Report of the Committee of Experts

Introduction

1. The thirty-seventh meeting of the Committees of Experts of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development was held in Addis Ababa from 11 to 13 May 2018.

Part One

I. Opening of the meeting [agenda item 1]

A. Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following States: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

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

4. The following United Nations bodies and specialized agencies were represented: United Nations Secretariat, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Labour Organization, International Maritime Organization, International Monetary Fund, International Telecommunication Union, International Organization for Migration, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Office of the United

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Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Group, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, United Nations Office for Project Services, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, United Nations Office to the African Union, United Nations Population Fund, World Bank, World Food Programme, World Health Organization.

5. Observers from the following States Members of the United Nations were present: Cuba, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Qatar, Russian Federation, United Arab Emirates, United States of America.

6. Representatives of the following intergovernmental and regional organizations were also present: African Development Bank, African Union Commission, Banque des États de l'Afrique Centrale, League of Arab States, NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency.

7. Observers were present from the following organizations: Addis Ababa University, African Capacity-Building Foundation, African Centre for Economic Transformation, African Humanitarian Action, African Peer Review Mechanism, Africa Policy Research Institute Limited, African Risk Capacity Agency, African Tax Administration Forum, AKLDP/USAID Tufts University, AMC Overseas FZE, Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission, Crisis Action, Ethiogreen Production and Industry PLC, Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency, Ethiopian Teachers Association, Femmes Africa Solidarity, Geneva Global Inc., German Society for International Cooperation, International Council of Voluntary Agencies, Igbinedion University, Jigjiga University, Mams (BHM Ventures), Mercy Corps, National Planning Commission, National Youth Council, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, One Campaign, RAND Corporation, Rail Road Association, Rail Working Group, SDG Centre for Africa, Seychelles Institute of Teacher Education, University of Dschang, University of Sheffield, University of South Africa, University of Yaounde.

B. Opening statements

8. The opening of the thirty-seventh meeting of the Committee of Experts of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development was chaired by the Coordinator of the General Directorate for Planning and Economic Policy of the Republic of Senegal, Mayacine Camara, Chair of the outgoing Bureau of the Committee of Experts.

9. Opening statements were also delivered by the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Vera Songwe, and the Permanent Representative of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the African Union and ECA, Woinshet Tadesse.

10. In his opening remarks, Mr. Camara congratulated ECA on its sixtieth anniversary and commended the Commission on its rich record of achievements to date, including its promotion of Agenda 2063 and of efforts to combat illicit financial flows and, most recently, the signing of the agreement on the African Continental Free Trade Area. Welcoming the selection of the African Continental Free Trade Area as the theme of the current session, he noted that the agreement marked an important step towards the creation of an African economic community, one of the major aspirations of the Abuja Treaty, and that it also offered an opportunity for the continent to reduce its dependence on official development assistance and to enhance domestic resource mobilization as the engine of its economic growth.

11. In her statement, Ms. Songwe stressed the need to act boldly to capitalize on the African Continental Free Trade Area, by creating fiscal space to foster investments to ensure economic diversification and create jobs. It was vital to operationalize the agreement to generate growth that supported diversification, industrialization and development; promote small and medium-sized enterprises and empowered women and young people through employment and entrepreneurship.

12. Noting concerns about the implications of the African Continental Free Trade Area for fiscal policies in Africa, she emphasized that the impact of the agreement on fiscal revenue would be minimal since intra-African trade constituted a small share of the continent's total trade and had mostly been liberalized under various regional economic arrangements. The agreement provided opportunities to wider public sector reforms and create more fiscal space, for the continent to mobilize internal resources to meet the targets of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. To that end, African countries needed to design long-term strategies and prudent macroeconomic frameworks. Despite the priority already attached to infrastructure development, much remained to be done and full advantage must be taken of the African Continental Free Trade Area, to which ECA was fully committed. In conclusion, she congratulated Ghana and Kenya as the first countries to have ratified the agreement.

13. In her remarks to participants at the current session, Ms. Tadesse welcomed the theme, as the African Continental Free Trade Area was a flagship project of Agenda 2063 that opened up immense new scope for the African economic integration agenda. She also congratulated Ghana and Kenya for having deposited their instruments of ratification, demonstrating the commitment of Africans to the vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa. She noted that much work remained to be done, however, in pursuit of the ultimate goal of accelerating intra-African trade and using trade as an engine for growth and sustainable development. In particular, she noted outstanding issues from the first phase of negotiations that must be resolved and the commitment needed from member States to reach consensus during the second phase, so that the agreement could benefit all member States. In addition, she emphasized the need for the agreement to be accompanied by national strategies to build productive capacities and put in place trade-related infrastructure in order to ensure equitable benefits to all African countries.

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

14. The following countries were elected by the Committee to form the new Bureau:

Chair: Sudan (North Africa)

First Vice-Chair: Equatorial Guinea (Central Africa)

Second Vice-Chair: Ethiopia (East Africa)

Third Vice-Chair: Lesotho (Southern Africa)

Rapporteur: Senegal (West Africa)

15. The experts adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Election of the Bureau and adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
3. Overview of recent economic and social developments in Africa.
4. Assessment of progress on regional integration in Africa.
5. Presentation on the theme of the fifty-first session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development:

“African Continental Free Trade Area: creating fiscal space for jobs and economic diversification”.

6. Statutory issues of the Economic Commission for Africa:
 - (a) Report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Economic Commission for Africa (covering the period April 2017–March 2018);
 - (b) Report on the follow-up by the Economic Commission for Africa to the resolutions of the special meeting of the Permanent Representatives of the member States to the Economic Commission for Africa;
 - (c) Report of the tenth session of the Committee on Trade and Regional Integration;
 - (d) Revised strategic framework for the period 2018–2019;
 - (e) Report of the second session of the Committee on Gender and Social Development;
 - (f) Review of the intergovernmental structure of the Economic Commission for Africa pursuant to resolution 943 (XLIX);
 - (g) Report on the subsidiary bodies of the Economic Commission for Africa and reports by the subsidiary bodies;
 - (h) Report on United Nations support for the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa’s Development programme;
 - (i) Progress in the implementation of the priority areas of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020;
 - (j) Implementation of international migration programmes in Africa.
7. Date, venue and theme of the fifty-second session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.
8. Other matters.
9. Consideration and adoption of the draft report of the meeting of the Committee of Experts; consideration of recommendations and draft resolutions.
10. Closing of the meeting.

16. The Bureau of the Economic Commission for Africa had met on 3 May 2018 in Addis Ababa to review the preparations for the fifty-first session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and had decided that, to enhance the efficiency of the work of the Conference of Ministers, it would establish an ad hoc drafting committee to take responsibility for reviewing and clearing the draft report of the Committee of Experts in advance of its consideration for adoption by the Committee in plenary. In addition, the drafting committee would review the draft ministerial statement and draft resolutions with a view to merging, reconciling or clarifying them as necessary prior to their consideration by the Conference of Ministers in plenary meeting. The secretariat drafting team would work with the ad hoc drafting committee and, at the end of each segment, would submit the part of the report relating to that segment to the drafting committee. The drafting committee would have a membership of 10, made up of members of the outgoing and incoming Bureau, and would be chaired by the first Vice-Chair of the incoming Bureau.

Part Two

Account of proceedings

III. Overview of recent economic and social developments in Africa [agenda item 3]

IV. Assessment of progress on regional integration in Africa [agenda item 4]

A. Presentations

17. In view of the common ground shared by items 3 and 4 of the agenda, it was decided to take them up as a single item. Accordingly, under item 3, the representative of the secretariat provided an overview of recent economic and social developments in Africa, highlighting the main messages in the overview of recent economic and social conditions in Africa, set out in document E/ECA/COE/37/2/Rev.1. The representative noted that Africa's economic growth performance had modestly recovered in 2017 after experiencing its lowest levels in 2016 since the beginning of the century. Poverty (measured by poverty headcount ratio) had been declining, although at a relatively slow pace due to high poverty gaps, inequality and lack of decent job creation. But significant progress had been made in both education and health.

18. Under item 4, introducing the assessment of progress on regional integration in Africa, set out in document E/ECA/COE/37/3, the representative of the secretariat recalled that regional integration was a longstanding priority for Africa, as demonstrated by continental initiatives such as Agenda 2063, the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa and the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade. Most recently, the launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area had further advanced the economic integration process already started by the regional economic communities. The prompt and effective implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area was expected to provide momentum for intra-African trade, but inclusive gains would be contingent on supporting measures and policies to address the non-tariff constraints to trade and investment.

B. Discussion

19. In the ensuing discussion, experts noted that the average economic growth rate in Africa remained below the level needed for inclusive and sustainable social and economic development. Investment was identified as the key factor for economic growth and must be stepped up to support industrialization and structural transformation. Private investment remained low, however, despite its potential for job creation and value addition given the continent's rich resource endowment. It was agreed that ECA should continue to support member States in their efforts to build a strong and diversified industrial sector that was capable of creating more decent jobs, and reduce episodes of growth volatility and poverty.

20. While widespread commitment was declared to the African Continental Free Trade Area, it was acknowledged that implementation of the initiative remained a challenge. Experts suggested that the success of the agreement was tied to its impact on transformation, diversification and value addition in African countries, which should form the basis for the monitoring of regional integration and the progress made on the initiative. It was expected that the second edition of the Africa regional integration index and the new country business index for the African Continental Free

Trade Area being developed by ECA would capture some aspects of the progress being made and provide information on the baseline.

21. It was noted that trade performance in Africa had been boosted by global economic recovery and commodities exports. Experts noted the crucial importance of understanding the composition and direction of Africa's trade. While intra-African exports had increased over the past few years, that same trend was not reflected in intra-African imports, which showed the effect of underdeveloped regional value chains and low levels of intraregional trade in intermediate goods among African countries. By lowering intra-African barriers to trade, the African Continental Free Trade Area was expected to provide a platform for enhancing productive integration and value chain development in Africa.

22. In addition, concerns were raised about the regularity, quality and relevance of the statistics used on the continent, in particular those pertaining to social development issues. Experts stressed that ECA must take the steps necessary to ensure the timely availability of data and statistics, as the latter remained critical for development planning, policy design and implementation. The high level of corruption in Africa was noted as a critical risk factor militating against economic and social development, in particular through its impact on public expenditures that deepened fiscal deficits. The ECA publication African Governance Report V was cited as a policy tool that could support member States in their efforts to maximize domestic resource mobilization through improved and effective natural resource management.

C. Recommendations

23. In the light of the discussions, the Committee of Experts made the following recommendations:

(a) Member States should continue to focus on medium and long-term strategies to attract private investment and build infrastructure to boost productivity and competitiveness, applying effective fiscal policy as a critical tool for growth and stability;

(b) Industrialization could contribute significantly to job creation, reduced growth volatility and the eradication of poverty. ECA should continue to support member States in their efforts to enhance transformation, diversification and value addition, which could benefit significantly from the more diversified intra-African trade under the African Continental Free Trade Area and from its implementation. ECA should therefore report regularly on the progress of the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area and measure its impact on transformation, diversification and value addition;

(c) There is an urgent need for the prompt signing, ratification and implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area. Cooperation between ECA and the African Union in supporting the process remained critical, complemented by investment regulations and policies;

(d) The availability and use of timely and reliable data and statistics should be a top priority for ECA if it is to remain effective and relevant to African countries. To that end, effective mechanisms are needed to link ECA and its member States to ensure the timely availability of the most recent national data and statistics, including geospatial data.

V. **Presentation on the theme of the fifty-first session of the Conference: “African Continental Free Trade Area: creating fiscal space for jobs and economic diversification”** [agenda item 5]

1. **Presentation**

24. The representative of the secretariat introduced the theme of the fifty-first session of the Conference: “African Continental Free Trade Area: creating fiscal space for jobs and economic diversification”, and presented the key messages under the theme as set out in document E/ECA/COE/37/13. While the African Continental Free Trade Area presented an opportunity to leverage trade for industrialization, economic diversification, economic growth and job creation, it would affect African countries differently given the diversity in their economic configurations. Safeguards should therefore be provided for vulnerable countries and such groups as women, young people and informal cross-border traders. African countries would need to explore ways to enhance their fiscal positions and should invest new resources in the complementary Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade, thereby ensuring that the benefits of the initiative were enjoyed by all.

2. **Discussion**

25. The ensuing discussion revolved around the quality of public expenditure in African countries, improving their fiscal space, the impact of the African Continental Free Trade Area, in particular a potential loss in revenue and alternative sources of revenue, and the specific needs of countries to optimize their benefits from the initiative. Other issues discussed included trade in services, innovation and intellectual property rights in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area and its alignment with national development plans, regional development initiatives and other trade agreements in which African countries were engaged.

26. Regarding the improvement in fiscal space, experts stressed that prioritizing investment was a prerequisite to maximizing the benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Area and regional integration in general. Fiscal space was viewed from the perspective of mobilizing additional resources to finance investment in support of sustainable development. It was emphasized that the potential loss in revenue resulting from creation of the African Continental Free Trade Area should not lead to a reduction in expenditure on critical sectors such as infrastructure and technology, which suffered from a huge financing gap in Africa. Other areas that required urgent investment included capacity-building and trade facilitation measures, especially for landlocked countries. Undertaking those investments would require countries on the continent to improve their domestic resource mobilization, notably their tax collection mechanisms, and to develop innovative financing approaches. Tax exemptions and tax evasion, in particular in the extractive industry sector, also had to be curbed. In effect, African countries had to mobilize more resources from the multinational companies that exploited natural resources on the continent.

27. Overall, while acknowledging concerns about loss in tariff revenue from the African Continental Free Trade Area, it was noted that those would be offset by the multiplier effect of increased trade in value-added goods and the associated job creation.

28. Experts underscored the importance of public expenditure management, which encompassed ideas on prioritizing and planning for development, to the achievement of socially desired outcomes. They stressed the importance of good economic governance as being at the heart of public expenditure management. Dealing with corruption and poor economic management, for example, by

blacklisting corrupt agents and managing public tendering processes, and bringing on board both public and private sector entities in those efforts, offered a means of enhancing economic governance and anti-corruption efforts. Those efforts could help to ensure that public resources reached the average African, thereby achieving value for money.

29. Experts noted that growth in some African countries was driven mostly by services and that the agreement on the African Continental Free Trade Area included a protocol on trade in services. At the same time, there were considerable gaps in statistics on trade in services in most African countries that needed to be addressed for effective evidence-based decision-making during the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area. In that regard, it was observed that building the capacities of African countries in the area of statistics on trade in services was critical.

30. In terms of the alignment of the agreement on the African Continental Free Trade Area with existing trade arrangements on the continent, experts raised concerns related to the economic partnership agreements that were already being implemented by some member States. In that regard, it was clarified that ECA had undertaken a study indicating that economic partnership agreements could have adverse effects on the African regional integration agenda. Deepening African economic integration in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area prior to the full implementation of the economic partnership agreements could offset the negative effects of those agreements. That implied, however, that the transition periods provided under the economic partnership agreements should be used by African countries to fast-track the implementation of the agreement on the African Continental Free Trade Area in order to achieve the goals of Agenda 2063.

31. It was noted that the African Continental Free Trade Area was generally aligned with the national development plans of African countries and that it was one of the priority areas of the first ten-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063. In addition, experts stressed the role of fostering innovation by safeguarding intellectual property rights in optimizing the benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Area and supporting the structural transformation of African economies. Their attention was drawn to the ECA publication *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa VII: Innovation, Competitiveness and Regional Integration*, which dealt extensively with the links between regional integration, innovation and competitiveness.

32. Intellectual property rights would be the subject of the second phase of the African Continental Free Trade Area negotiations scheduled to commence in August 2018. Existing legal and regulatory frameworks on intellectual property rights were not necessarily adapted to the African context and everyday realities. Different policy regimes and sets of rules protecting intellectual property rights existed in various parts of the continent. In that context, experts recognized the critical need to harmonize intellectual property rights frameworks with a view to stimulating innovation and enabling member States to reap the full benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

33. Experts deliberated on the potential benefits that countries with special needs, such as landlocked and small island developing States, would reap from the implementation of the agreement. They noted the specific features of different countries had been given close attention during the negotiations and that the final text of the agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area included provisions on customs cooperation that addressed issues of critical importance, including opportunities, for countries with special needs. Experts also discussed the need to support member States in implementing the agreement, in particular in demonstrating short and long-term gains, identifying its possible pitfalls, and addressing capacity gaps and related institutional challenges through evidence-based impact studies, simulations and tailored capacity support.

3. Recommendations

34. In the light of the discussion, the Committee made the following recommendations:

- (a) ECA should widely disseminate the findings of its research on the impact of the African Continental Free Trade Area;
- (b) ECA should provide country-specific solutions on how to ensure that the African Continental Free Trade Area does not undermine social spending;
- (c) ECA should strengthen its research on the impact of the African Continental Free Trade Area, with particular attention to specific countries and ways in which the associated challenges could be tackled;
- (d) ECA and other development partners should undertake research and propose resource mobilization pathways to support the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area;
- (e) ECA, acting through the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning and in collaboration with other partners such as the African Capacity-Building Foundation should develop a comprehensive capacity development programme on the African Continental Free Trade Area for the African Union, regional economic communities and member States;
- (f) Member States are encouraged to improve their tax collection and tax administration systems;
- (g) ECA should support and build sustainable capacity in national statistical systems with a view to improving the quality and availability of trade data, given the inadequacy of statistics on trade in services in many African countries;
- (h) Member States should prioritize the ratification of legal instruments and conclude work on the road map for the operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area;
- (i) Member States are encouraged to maintain the necessary policy space while negotiating international trade and investment agreements in the light of the African Continental Free Trade Area, in order not to compromise the regional integration and structural transformation efforts being made on the continent;
- (j) ECA should undertake an assessment of existing frameworks governing intellectual property rights and support member States in the process of their harmonization before and during the second phase of the African Continental Free Trade Area negotiation process.

VI. Statutory issues [agenda item 6]

A. Report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Economic Commission for Africa (covering the period April 2017–March 2018)

B. Report on the follow-up by the Economic Commission for Africa to the resolutions of the special meeting of the permanent representatives of the member States to the Economic Commission for Africa

1. Presentation

35. Under sub-items (a) and (b) of agenda item 6, representatives of the secretariat presented the report of the Executive Secretary on the work of the Commission for the period April 2017–March 2018, set out in document E/ECA/COE/37/5, and the

report on the follow-up by the Economic Commission for Africa to the resolutions of the special meeting of the permanent representatives of member States to the Economic Commission for Africa, set out in document E/ECA/COE/37/6.

2. Discussion

36. The experts took note of the documents, without further discussion of the sub-items.

C. Report of the tenth session of the Committee on Regional Cooperation and Integration

D. Revised strategic framework for the period 2018–2019

E. Report of the second session of the Committee on Gender and Social Development

F. Review of the intergovernmental structure of the Economic Commission for Africa pursuant to resolution 943 (XLIX)

1. Presentation

37. Under sub-items (c), (d), (e) and (f) of agenda item 6, representatives of the secretariat presented the report of the tenth session of the Committee on Regional Cooperation and Integration, set out in document E/ECA/CRCI/10/; the revised strategic framework for programme 15, on economic and social development in Africa, of the United Nations biennial programme plan, set out in document E/ECA/COE/37/4; the report of the second session of the Committee on Gender and Social Development, set out in document E/ECA/CGSD/2/9; and the note by the secretariat on the review of the intergovernmental structure of the Economic Commission for Africa pursuant to resolution 943 (XLIX), set out in document E/ECA/COE/37/7/Rev.1. In their presentations, representatives highlighted salient points in the respective documents, with a view to guiding their discussion by the experts.

2. Discussion

38. In the ensuing discussion, experts highlighted the need for the regional economic communities to adopt solid frameworks to assess the economic impact of the African Continental Free Trade Area. Thus, risks relating to food security and its management could be minimized using regional mechanisms for food storage and the pooling of costs. Investment in innovative technical solutions for improving electricity supply would also contribute to the enhancement of intra-African trade, as exemplified by the work of the Organization for the Development of the Senegal River.

39. The secretariat noted that ECA had facilitated the creation of innovative power generation pools in East and Southern Africa. The African Union Commission, together with its member States, was working on the standardization and regulation of electricity markets with a view to further enhancing cross-border trade. Infrastructure services, including energy services, would be addressed by the trade-in-services protocol of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

40. The secretariat affirmed that ECA supported the creation of regional mechanisms to improve food security, pointing to the Economic Community of West African States as a good example in that regard. Experts were informed that the ECA economic model for analysing the impact of free trade arrangements, including the African Continental Free Trade Area, was global in outlook and that a significant number of African countries had been included in its database.

41. It was noted that the new strategic orientation of ECA was more responsive to the needs and priorities of Africa in the context of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

Experts noted the need for a sharper focus on the thematic areas that were in line with the mandate of ECA in order to avoid duplication of the work being done by other United Nations system entities. ECA should assist member States in developing tools and mechanisms for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular in respect of cross-cutting issues such as data collection. They also addressed the sequencing of the strategic reorientation of ECA and its alignment with the reform agenda of the Secretary-General that was currently being negotiated among member States.

42. The secretariat drew the attention of the experts to Economic and Social Council resolution 671 A (XXV), from which the ECA mandates were derived. The new strategic orientation took into account the reform agenda of the Secretary-General, in particular the roles and functions of the regional commissions in advancing the regional dimension of development. That had been set out in the statement of collaboration between the United Nations Development Group and the five regional commissions. The recently signed framework between the United Nations and the African Union on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 underscored the central role of ECA in regional development. ECA was also mandated to manage the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa, thereby further strengthening United Nations support for the African Union.

43. In recognition of the nexus between development and peace and security, it was noted that the Secretary-General had emphasized the role of the regional commissions in crisis prevention and in supporting improved resilience, in line with the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. In that regard, ECA had been mandated by the Deputy Secretary-General to take a leadership role in promoting socioeconomic development in the Sahel.

44. Experts noted that the informal sector was large and dominated by women. It was therefore necessary to develop a programme to integrate the informal sector into the larger development framework and ensure the participation of women in economic activities. The alignment of national objectives on gender with the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 should be mainstreamed into all ECA programmes.

45. The secretariat noted the importance attached to gender and how that related to poverty, inequality and jobs in Africa. It informed the experts that the harmonization of gender indices within the context of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 would assist in strengthening the capacity of national statistics offices to develop gender-sensitive statistics. It also reported on current work in the areas of gender and agricultural value chains in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area. It was noted that insufficient attention had been given in existing national accounts to gender-disaggregated data and the contribution of women to economic activities. The experts therefore expressed the need for disaggregated statistics on gender.

46. Experts requested clarification on how the statutory committees would be streamlined, in the light of the new strategic orientation and the role and engagement of ambassadors based in Addis Ababa. Clarification was also sought on which sections of the ECA rules of procedure would be reviewed.

47. The secretariat indicated that additional time would be required to finalize the review in order to take on board the outcomes of ongoing reform processes. The review would assist in soliciting input from member States to ensure that the intergovernmental structure was more efficient and effective and to support policy processes. The preliminary findings of the review highlighted the limited engagement between the secretariat and the representatives of the member States in Addis Ababa and pointed to the need for improved engagement with the ambassadors based there.

3. Recommendations

48. In the light of the discussion, the Committee made the following recommendations:

(a) ECA should expand the application of the economic model of the African Continental Free Trade Area to include all member States, with a view to facilitating inclusive impact assessments;

(b) ECA should support member States in their efforts to integrate the informal sector into the larger development framework;

(c) ECA should continue to mainstream gender in all its programmes and report on the status of mainstreaming;

(d) At the next quarterly briefing, the secretariat and permanent representatives of member States in Addis Ababa should further consider the role of the permanent representatives in the intergovernmental structure of ECA and the frequency of their meetings;

(e) ECA should be granted more time to finalize the review of the intergovernmental structure.

G. Report on the subsidiary bodies of the Economic Commission for Africa and reports by the subsidiary bodies

1. Presentation

49. Under sub-item (g) of agenda item 6, representatives of the secretariat presented reports of the meetings of the intergovernmental committees of experts for the various subregions, which were set out, for Central Africa, in document ECA/SRO/CA/ICE/33/17; for East Africa, in document ECA-EA/ICE/21; for North Africa, in document ECA/SRO-NA/ICE/32/6; for Southern Africa, in document ECA/SA/ICE.XXII/2017/9.1; and for West Africa, in document ECA/WA/ICE/20/01d. In addition, they presented the progress report on the work of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, set out in document E/ECA/COE/37/8; the note on the draft revised statute of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, set out in document E/ECA/COE/37/9; and the progress report on the third session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development: achievements, main outcomes and way forward, set out in document E/ECA/COE/37/11. In their presentations, the representatives drew attention to issues of particular concern highlighted in the various documents, with a view to seeking the input of experts.

2. Discussion

50. The ensuing discussion centred on issues of capacity development, in line with the objectives of the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063 and the reforms to the African Union; the paucity of data and statistics for the implementation, monitoring and review of and follow-up to the continental and regional agendas; the harmonization of national, regional and international development frameworks; deepening regional financial integration; and value addition and beneficiation of Africa's natural resources.

51. The experts strongly commended the work of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning in building the human and institutional capacities of African member States. They expressed concern, however, at the lack of visibility of the Institute among member States and called for increased communication to enhance its visibility on the continent, given the quality of the training that it provided and the importance of its mandate. The representative of the Institute noted the recommendation and informed the experts that work was already under way to address that challenge. The experts encouraged and underscored the need for the Institute to work in partnership with other capacity development institutions on the continent in order to offer more comprehensive and stimulating capacity development to member States.

52. The experts submitted requests for capacity development in various areas, including training in support of the mainstreaming of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda

2063 into national development plans, the African Continental Free Trade Area, data and statistics, and value chains. They also requested that the Institute train African diplomats. The Institute reiterated its commitment to supporting all member States in those and other equally important skills and to including African diplomats in its training.

53. The experts expressed concern at the low representation of women in training provided by the Institute in 2017. It was clarified that gender parity remained an important priority for the Institute, and measures employed by the Institute to ensure gender parity in its training were identified. Member States were called upon to encourage the nomination of women participants to training courses offered by the Institute.

54. The experts sought clarification on the criteria that the Institute was using to identify countries and universities in which to offer master's degree programmes. While no specific criteria had been established, it was clarified that past collaborative experiences, coupled with a commitment to efficiency, effectiveness and continent-wide development, guided the partnerships of the Institute with universities. In addition, the experts urged the Institute to ensure that its programmes were open to participants throughout the continent.

55. With regard to the payment of assessed contributions and arrears, the experts sought clarification on the table provided in the progress report on the work of the Institute and were informed that it contained only a list of member States that had contributed in 2017 in accordance with the past recommendation of both the Governing Council of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning and the Conference of Ministers. The experts noted the differences in the fiscal years applied by the Institute and various member States.

56. Experts who had requested the list of countries that were members of the Governing Council and the Institute's Technical Advisory Committee and the associated terms of reference were advised to seek those through bilateral discussions between their member States and the Institute.

57. The experts noted the recommendation by the Governing Council calling for increased financial support for the Institute and expressed their strong support for the recommendation, given the critical role that the Institute was required to play in building the capacity of member States towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the aspirations of Agenda 2063. They also noted the Institute's draft revised statute, as approved and submitted to the Conference by the Governing Council.

58. With regard to the issue of statistics, raised in connection with the progress report on the third session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, experts reiterated that the lack of accurate and timely data and statistics remained a problem, impeding their efforts to attain the Sustainable Development Goals and the aspirations of Agenda 2063.

59. In connection with the work of the subregional offices, experts commended ECA and those offices on the support that they provided to member States in crucial areas, notably development planning, statistics, regional integration and industrialization, including regional value chains.

60. Experts noted the need to harness natural resources, with a view to making them a lever for industrialization in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area. In addition, it was noted that African countries remained vulnerable to the volatility of commodity prices on international markets and were thus regularly subject to a deterioration in the terms of trade and macroeconomic imbalances, including a drop in fiscal and export revenue and economic downturns. That situation pointed to the imperatives of economic diversification, increased value addition and industrialization to ensure sustained growth rates and higher living standards.

61. Experts expressed concern at the limited awareness of Agenda 2063 and noted the urgent need for the wide dissemination of information on that instrument. In addition, exogenous shocks, especially the price volatility of commodities, continued to take their toll on the growth prospects of many African countries.

3. Recommendations

62. In the light of the discussion, the Committee made the following recommendations:

(a) The African Institute for Economic Development and Planning should sustain and increase its capacity development support for member States in order to build the skills necessary to support the effective implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area, the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. Such training programmes should be responsive to the capacity development needs arising from the reforms to the African Union and those of the diplomatic community, in particular diplomatic officials based in Addis Ababa. In developing and implementing the capacity development activities, the Institute should work in partnership with other regional capacity development institutions. It should also continue and increase its efforts to ensure gender parity in the participation of its training programmes;

(b) Member States should support the critical role and mandate of the Institute through the settlement of outstanding arrears and the regular payment of their assessed annual contributions;

(c) ECA should provide systematic financial support to the Institute and take all steps necessary for the General Assembly to increase its grant to it, in line with the recommendations of the Governing Council;

(d) The Executive Secretary should transmit the draft revised statute of the Institute to the Economic and Social Council once it is adopted by the Conference of Ministers at its session, to be held on 14 and 15 May 2018;

(e) ECA should intensify its support to member States to strengthen and enhance their statistics and data capacities in order to document the voluntary national review and the work of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development with regard to the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(f) The African Union Commission and ECA and its partners should take all action necessary to raise awareness of Agenda 2063 alongside the 2030 Agenda;

(g) ECA should support member States with appropriate approaches to ensure that their natural resources are processed locally rather than exported in raw form. In particular, ECA should guide member States that have already signed long-term contracts allowing the export of untransformed products. The goal should be to ensure that natural resources contribute optimally to promoting inclusive and job-creating growth and industrialization;

(h) Subregional reports on recent economic and social progress should be enriched with additional issues, including health, access to energy, access to water and intraregional trade;

(i) ECA should provide the African Centre for Statistics and the subregional offices with adequate human and financial resources so that they are able to fulfil their missions.

H. Report on United Nations support for the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa's Development programme

1. Presentation

63. The representative of the secretariat presented the report on United Nations system support for the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa's Development programme, set out in document E/ECA/COE/37/10, and outlined the

modalities by which that support was provided, as detailed in the report. The representative noted, in particular, that the United Nations would continue to support the African Union as it implemented its far-reaching reforms, and identified the role that ECA would play in that process.

2. Discussion

64. In the ensuing discussion, experts raised concerns relating to the alignment of continental initiatives, such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development, the African Peer Review Mechanism, the African Growth and Opportunity Act and the African Continental Free Trade Area, with the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. They underscored the importance of harmonizing national monitoring and evaluation frameworks with the continental and international agendas. It was emphasized that the coherent implementation of all those initiatives and agendas in the context of national development priorities required a good understanding of the relationships among them. The mapping of such relationships was therefore critical in identifying their linkages and synergies to ensure coherent integration and avoid the duplication of efforts.

65. In addition, on the connected issue of transboundary infrastructure development, experts deliberated on the potential benefits of that process development and how it could deliver on the Africa regional integration agenda. They noted that investment in transboundary infrastructure development in Africa was beset with concerns relating to high risk and an overabundance of laws, policies and regulations, and the fact that investment opportunities were scarce. Their attention was drawn to a model law for the development of transboundary infrastructure projects in Africa, which concerned the harmonization of legal, regulatory and policy frameworks in relation to private sector investment in infrastructure projects in Africa, in particular those falling within the purview of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa.

3. Recommendations

66. In the light of the discussion, the Committee made the following recommendations:

(a) African countries should leverage synergies among multiple development initiatives by mapping the relationships among them and integrating the various agendas into national development plans;

(b) ECA should strengthen the capacities of African countries to identify intersectoral synergies and trade-offs among the various agendas in order to shape national policy prioritization and sequencing;

(c) Where transboundary infrastructure development is concerned, member States should adopt the model law to facilitate private sector investment and financing in transboundary infrastructure development;

(d) ECA should raise the awareness of member States regarding the model law to promote the harmonization of cross-border rules, regulations, laws and policies governing transboundary infrastructure projects in Africa.

I. Progress in the implementation of the priority areas of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020

1. Presentation

67. Under sub-item (i) of agenda item 6, the representative of the secretariat presented the summarized report on progress in the implementation of the priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020, set out in document E/ECA/COE/37/12, and drew attention to findings in the report of concern to the Commission, notably that progress among

African least developed countries remained mixed, and that a range of remedial measures were required on the part of Governments to meet the graduation eligibility criteria for least developed countries.

2. Discussion

68. In the ensuing discussion, experts congratulated the five African countries that were close to graduation from the least developed country category. They noted that the criteria for assessment of the progress of African least developed countries needed to be made clearer and that 12 countries, only 2 of which were from Africa, had been recommended for graduation from that category in 2018, leaving the continent with 31 least developed countries.

3. Recommendations

69. In the light of the discussion, the Committee made the following recommendation: ECA should provide support to member States in the areas of social and economic development, including infrastructure development, thereby ensuring that as many countries as possible graduate from the least developed country category.

J. Implementation of international migration programmes in Africa

1. Presentation

70. Under sub-item (j) of agenda item 6, the representative of the secretariat introduced the note by the Executive Secretary on the migration programme of the Economic Commission for Africa, set out in document E/ECA/COE/37/16, and highlighted salient points in that document. In particular, experts were informed of the role played by ECA in addressing the issue of international migration within, to and from Africa, in the light of the importance vested in migration by such instruments as the 2030 Agenda.

2. Discussion

71. In the ensuing discussion, experts drew attention to the importance of data on migration and pointed out several dimensions, such as the number of people involved and the impact on families and remittances. In order to fully understand those issues, it was important to have comprehensive data. Up-to-date and disaggregated data and knowledge were critical for evidence-based policymaking to effectively address, in a holistic manner, the multilayered factors behind migration.

72. The experts also noted that the discourse on the migration of African people to Europe and other regions was informed in large part by economic and social issues, politics and emotions. On the basis of the statistics presented, it was noted that Africa's migration trends were no different from those of other regions and that, in fact, much of the migration occurred within the continent. The actual and potential benefits of migration to Africa and the recipient countries were widely ignored. Remittances from Africans living outside the continent accounted for a large portion of total foreign currency receipts. Owing to the high costs of formal money transfer systems, however, people chose to use informal means, which were not reflected in official statistics. African migrants were frequently blamed for various problems, such as unemployment. The many programmes that had been implemented in Africa to avoid a brain drain, and those implemented by the developed countries to encourage people to return home, had not stopped migration because of the poor working conditions in the migrants' countries of origin. It was also noted that the migration initiatives encompassed efforts to address underemployment and unemployment and that the free movement of labour allowed for the optimal allocation of human capital, given that skills moved to regions, industries and countries where they commanded the highest value.

73. Turning to the issue of the African Continental Free Trade Area and its impact on migration, experts emphasized that, without people, goods and services would be

unable to cross borders. In that regard, for intraregional trade to become a reality in Africa, the protocol on the free movement of people should be ratified in parallel with the agreement on the African Continental Free Trade Area, and implementation of the agreement and all its protocols should follow immediately thereafter.

3. Recommendations

74. In the light of the discussion, the Committee made the following recommendations:

(a) Member States should strengthen their focus on data relating to migration;

(b) Member States should explore practical measures that would unleash the full potential of migration for sustainable development, in particular by integrating migration into development planning;

(c) The secretariat should enhance its support to member States in strengthening the capacity and systems for data generation and analysis in the area of migration and in other areas in general;

(d) African countries should design their own migration and employment policies that are informed by their own realities and supported by robust data;

(e) African countries should design and implement policies to create decent work, better working conditions and competitive pay in order to reduce migration outside Africa and to avoid a brain drain;

(f) The secretariat and other regional bodies should provide technical support to strengthen the capacities of African countries to design policies that generate and safeguard decent work for nationals and immigrants, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals;

(g) Member States should facilitate cost-effective money transfer mechanisms on the continent in order to increase the use of formal channels and improve foreign currency records;

(h) Member States are urged to ratify the protocol on free movement of persons enshrined in the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community, followed by its implementation;

(i) African member States are encouraged to engage the private sector in infrastructure development.

VII. Date, venue and theme of the fifty-second session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development [agenda item 7]

75. The representative of the secretariat referred the experts to the note on the dates, venue and theme for the fifty-second session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development in 2019, set out in document E/ECA/COE/37/15. He proposed that the meeting be held in Addis Ababa in March 2019 on the theme, “New fiscal policy for Africa”.

76. Possible dates were discussed for the fifty-second session of the Conference of Ministers in 2019. The Committee questioned the month proposed for the next session and recommended that the secretariat consult with the African Union Commission on an appropriate date. The venue proposed by the secretariat was endorsed, unless a member States makes another proposal.

77. Following discussions on the theme suggested by the secretariat, the Committee identified three additional themes for further deliberation:

(a) The need to advance the African Continental Free Trade Area through economic transformation, diversification and value-addition towards the digital economy era;

(b) The role of the private sector in implementing the African Continental Free Trade Area, with a view to socioeconomic transformation, diversification and value addition in the era of the digital economy;

(c) Fiscal policies for the African Continental Free Trade Area within the frameworks of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

78. The Chair invited experts to deliberate further on the four proposed themes and come to an agreement on a single theme. Experts took note of the subthemes for the round-table discussions to be held during the fifty-first session of the Conference of Ministers, in addition to the discussion on the overall theme of the fifty-second session. In the light of those considerations, the secretariat, after having taken into account all proposals, proposed a compromise theme for the fifty-second session: "Fiscal policy, trade and the private sector in the digital era: a strategy for Africa". The Committee, after deliberation, endorsed the theme of the fifty-second session.

VIII. Other matters [agenda item 8]

79. Following a request by the representative of one member State for time to be allocated for a presentation on the Luxembourg Protocol to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment on Matters specific to Railway Rolling Stock, the Chair invited a representative of the Rail Working Group to present the Protocol to the Committee.

80. The representative of the Rail Working Group presented an overview of the critical role of railways, stressing that significant investment would be needed in Africa in both rail infrastructure and rolling stock in the coming years. The Luxembourg Protocol would facilitate the financing of new procurements of rolling stock using private capital and the movement of rolling stock across national borders, which was of vital importance to cross-border trade and the movement of people on the continent.

81. Experts noted the role of railway networks in supplementing road and air transport and in contributing to the realization of the African Continental Free Trade Area. They also discussed the potential merits of the Luxembourg Protocol and observed that more time would be required for its close examination, in compliance with established procedures for reviewing and adopting legal instruments. Additional time would also be needed for experts to consult the competent authorities in their respective countries. Deliberation on the Luxembourg Protocol was deferred to the next session of the Conference.

IX. Consideration and adoption of the draft report of the meeting of the Committee of Experts and consideration of recommendations and draft resolutions [agenda item 9]

82. Under this agenda item, the Committee considered the draft report of its meeting together with the six resolutions for consideration and adoption by the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. Several experts made comments and proposed amendments to the report and to the draft resolutions. After extensive discussion, the Committee unanimously adopted the report. The resolutions, as amended by the Committee, are attached to the present report for consideration and adoption by the Conference of Ministers.

X. Closing of the meeting [agenda item 10]

83. Closing remarks were made by the Chair of the outgoing Bureau of the Committee of Experts and the Deputy Executive Secretary. The Chair commended experts on their fruitful deliberations and the spirit of consensus displayed in drawing up the recommendations. The Deputy Executive Secretary noted that the spirited participation by experts during the session reflected the timeliness and relevance of the theme of the Conference and that their insights and recommendations would help to shape and improve the Commission's work in supporting implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

84. Following those statements and the customary exchange of courtesies, the Chair declared the meeting closed.

Annex

Draft resolutions

LI. African Institute for Economic Development and Planning

The Conference of Ministers,

Recalling Economic and Social Council resolution 2013/2 of 5 July 2013, by which the Council endorsed the updated statute of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, on the recommendation of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, as set out in its resolution 908 (XLVI) of 26 March 2013,

Recalling also its recommendation set out in resolution 942 (XLIX) of 5 April 2016 for the Governing Council of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning to further consider the revised statutes based on amendments to them approved by the Council at its fifty-fourth meeting, held in Addis Ababa in February 2016,

Taking note of the decision of the Governing Council of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning at its fifty-fifth meeting, held in Addis Ababa in March 2017, approving in full the amendments to the statute of the Institute presented to the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development at the ninth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, in 2016,

Recalling article IV, paragraph 3, of the updated statute of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, by which the Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development is required to appoint the 10 members of the Governing Council of the Institute who will serve as representatives of African Governments,

Recognizing the central role of planning in meeting the development priorities of Africa, in particular in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹ and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want,

Acknowledging the critical role that an adequate capacity-building programme will play in the achievement of the development objectives of member States, in particular those of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063,

Taking note of the achievements of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning in 2017, as presented in the progress report on the work of the Institute,²

Taking note also of the decision of the Governing Council of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning at its fifty-sixth meeting, held in Dakar in March 2018, recommending an increase in the regular United Nations grant to the Institute, from 2.6 million to 5 million United States dollars per biennium, and the provision of more systematic programme-based extrabudgetary support to the Institute by the Economic Commission for Africa, at the level of 2 million dollars annually,

¹ General Assembly resolution 70/1.

² E/ECA/COE/37/8.

Commending the Economic Commission for Africa on its continued provision of support to the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning,

Cognizant of and concerned by the uneven and unpredictable nature of the assessed annual contributions of member States to the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, a situation that limits its ability to sustain its provision of much-needed capacity-building support to member States,

Recognizing with appreciation the effort made by a number of countries to pay all or part of the arrears in their contributions to the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning,

Aware of the increasing demand for the training courses of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, as evidenced by the doubling of the number of applications between 2014 and 2017 to the Institute for skills development training courses, and appreciative of the strategic initiatives being implemented by the Institute to meet the rising and varying capacity development needs of member States,

1. *Endorses* the updated statutes of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning and requests the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa to transmit the statutes to the Economic and Social Council for consideration and adoption and for the subsequent issuance of the appropriate directive to ensure their implementation;

2. *Also endorses* the reconstituted membership of the Governing Council of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning;

3. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, to take all steps necessary to request the General Assembly to increase the regular grant to the Institute from 2.6 million to 5 million United States dollars per biennium in support of the Institute's programme;

4. *Also requests* the Economic Commission for Africa to adopt a more systematic gender sensitive programme-based approach to the provision of support to the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning and to provide such support at the level of 2 million dollars annually;

5. *Reiterates* its call to member States for the more regular payment of assessed annual contributions and the settlement of arrears to the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, and calls upon the Institute to redouble its recovery efforts as part of a more comprehensive resource mobilization strategy.

LII. Review of the intergovernmental structure of the Economic Commission for Africa

The Conference of Ministers,

Recalling its resolution 908 (XLVI) of 26 March 2013 on refocusing and recalibrating the Economic Commission for Africa to support Africa's structural transformation, in which it mandated the Executive Secretary to realign the programmes and priorities of the Commission with its 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 on the proposed strategic framework and biennial programme plan of the Economic Commission for Africa for the biennium 2018–2019, in which it requested the Executive Secretary to undertake an independent, comprehensive and thorough review of the intergovernmental structure of the Commission, including its intergovernmental committees of experts,

Noting the ongoing reforms of the United Nations development system,

Noting also the unique role of the Economic Commission for Africa and its comprehensive mandate as the main economic and social development centre of the United Nations system for the African region,

Taking note of the report on the implementation of resolution 943 (XLIX)¹ and the request therein for additional time to carry out a more comprehensive review,

Considering that the effectiveness and efficiency of the intergovernmental structure of the Economic Commission for Africa benefits from engagement and communication between the secretariat, member States, major groups and other stakeholders,

1. *Commends* the efforts of the Executive Secretary to facilitate an effective process of consultation on the comprehensive review exercise;
2. *Decides* to grant additional time to the secretariat to conduct further review and analysis of the intergovernmental structure of the Economic Commission for Africa;
3. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to report to the Conference of Ministers at its next session on restructuring the conference structure and subsidiary bodies of the Economic Commission for Africa, including the intergovernmental committees of experts.

¹ E/ECA/COE/36/8.

LIII. Implementation of international migration programmes in Africa

The Conference of Ministers,

Recognizing the substantial benefits of and opportunities afforded by safe, orderly and regular migration and the key role of migration in promoting development in Africa, and the critical role of international migration within, from and to Africa in the global migration discourse,

Reaffirming its resolution 940 (XLIX) on international migration in Africa, in which it called for the establishment of a high-level panel on international migration in Africa,

Noting the important contribution of the High-level Panel on International Migration in Africa, supported by the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union Commission, and the urgent need to support member States in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals on migration,

Noting also the need to implement and monitor the outcomes of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, currently under negotiation,

Noting with appreciation the continued efforts of the Economic Commission for Africa, in partnership with the African Union Commission and other development partners, to undertake regional and subregional consultations and to initiate studies that have informed migration discourse on the continent,

Recognizing the urgent need for African member States to implement migration commitments, including the Migration Policy Framework for Africa¹ and its plan of action for the period 2018–2027, the African Continental Free Trade Area and the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment,

Recognizing also that the primary role of regional economic commissions, in accordance with the report of the Secretary-General on repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,² is to engage as policy think tanks and provide data and analytical services and policy advice, including on migration issues,

Recognizing further that the regional economic commissions continue to serve as platforms for engagement with regional intergovernmental institutions for intraregional and interregional exchanges, thereby extending and expanding new forms of development cooperation and regional partnerships,

Noting that the Economic Commission for Africa is a fundamental institution for generating innovative thinking and forging regional policy consensus on the continent,

Mindful of the importance of cooperation at the national, regional and international levels to ensure the implementation of migration commitments involving the full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants, regardless of migration status,

1. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue to work with the African Union, regional economic communities, member States and other stakeholders on policy research, regional dialogue and capacity development on migration issues, in particular on creating a positive narrative and developing strategies to harness it for regional development;

¹ A/61/345, annex.

² A/72/124-E/2018/3.

2. *Also requests* the Economic Commission for Africa, in partnership with the African Union, to continue to provide support and advice to member States on mainstreaming migration policies into their national development plans and strategies;

3. *Further requests* the Economic Commission for Africa, in partnership with the African Union and in close consultation with other relevant regional organizations, to track and monitor the progress made in implementing migration programmes in Africa through various means, including by convening periodic conferences;

4. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa, through its regional and subregional offices, to address the critical areas concerning migration, including sustainable development, thereby providing frameworks for action by member States, the private sector and civil society.

LIV. Revised proposed strategic framework and biennial programme plan of the Economic Commission for Africa for the biennium 2018–2019

The Conference of Ministers,

Recalling its resolution 908 (XLVI) of 26 March 2013, in which it mandated the Economic Commission for Africa to establish its new strategic direction and programmes to support the structural transformation of Africa,

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 with appreciation the report of the Executive Secretary on the work of the Economic Commission for Africa for the period April 2017–March 2018,¹ which highlights the significant results that the Commission achieved in all its programme areas,

Recognizing the continuing efforts of the Economic Commission for Africa to reposition itself and its programmatic orientation with enhancements to be able to effectively support the implementation of and follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,² the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development³ and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want of the African Union,

Noting with appreciation the strategic objectives 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,

Acknowledging with appreciation the new strategic focus of the Economic Commission for Africa on supporting the sustainable development of Africa through a growth-enabling macroeconomic and microeconomic environment with, as its key priorities, eradicating poverty and addressing inequality; achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women; accelerating economic integration and trade through increased diversification, stronger institutions, better governance and closer engagement with the private sector and between the public and private sectors; promoting green and blue economic development paths through energy, natural resources and climate change adaptation and mitigation; expanding domestic resource mobilization as a long-term path to sustainable development finance; and forging a data-informed policy architecture,

Having examined the revised proposed strategic framework and biennial programme plan for the biennium 2018–2019,⁴

Having considered the note by the secretariat on the new strategic directions for the Economic Commission for Africa: putting ideas into action for an empowered and transformed Africa,⁵

1. *Takes note* of the exchange of views among member States on the strategic objectives of the Economic Commission for Africa contained in the report on the follow-up by the Commission to the resolutions of the special meeting of the Permanent Representatives of the member States to the Commission;⁶

¹ E/ECA/COE/37/5.

² General Assembly resolution 70/1.

³ General Assembly resolution 69/313, annex.

⁴ E/ECA/COE/37/4.

⁵ E/ECA/COE/37/14.

⁶ E/ECA/COE/37/6.

2. *Adopts* the revised proposed strategic framework and biennial programme plan for the biennium 2018–2019.

LV. Harnessing the potential of the African Continental Free Trade Area and creating fiscal space for jobs and economic diversification

The Conference of Ministers,

Reaffirming its commitment to regional integration as a major factor behind inclusive economic development in Africa,

Noting with deep appreciation the efforts of the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the African Union Commission and other development partners, to promote regional integration in support of broad-based and inclusive development in Africa,

Welcoming the milestone reached in economic integration in Africa through the signing of the agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area in Kigali on 21 March 2018 and the call for its ratification and effective implementation,

Acknowledging the potential of the African Continental Free Trade Area to advance African industrialization, value addition, economic diversification and development to promote businesses, trade and job creation on the continent, consonant with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹ and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want of the African Union,

Reaffirming its commitment to supporting the African Continental Free Trade Area to the greatest extent possible, in accordance with the agreed road map to its establishment,

Recognizing that potential tariff losses emanating from the African Continental Free Trade Area in the short term could be offset in part in the medium and the long term by other taxes, such as value added taxes, as a result of economic diversification brought about by the African Continental Free Trade Area,

Mindful that current levels of tax revenue are not sustainable, and that enhancing fiscal space, including through mobilizing additional domestic resources, therefore remains critical,

Recognizing the importance of securing policy space for the operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area,

Noting the need to strengthen knowledge and capacity on issues relating to the African Continental Free Trade Area,

Committed to pursuing integrated policies, including through targeted efforts to implement the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade and to undertake the action necessary to make the most of the opportunities presented by the African Continental Free Trade Area,

Noting that the realization of the full benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Area requires the mobilization of massive resources and investment to address boundary constraints,

Noting also the importance of regularly tracking progress on the state of implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area,

Resolved to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public expenditure and to tackle corruption,

1. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue to provide technical support to the African Union Commission and the States

¹ General Assembly resolution 70/1.

members of the African Union to conclude the negotiations of the agreement to establish the African Continental Free Trade Area;

2. *Also calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to work closely with the African Union Commission and other regional, continental and international institutions, such as the regional economic communities, the African Development Bank and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, to provide technical support to facilitate the ratification process and implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area;

3. *Further calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue to support member States in their efforts to enhance their structural transformation through industrialization, economic diversification and value addition;

4. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa to work in collaboration with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the African Union Commission Specialized Agency for Capacity Development to support the States members of the African Union in developing national strategies to benefit from the African Continental Free Trade Area that complement the broader trade policy of each State party to the agreement to establish the African Continental Free Trade Area and in identifying the key trade opportunities, current constraints and steps required to take full advantage of the African market;

5. *Also requests* the Economic Commission for Africa to support the States members of the African Union in enhancing their fiscal space and mobilizing additional domestic resources through strengthening tax administration, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public spending, tapping into private financing and improving the sustainability of borrowing;

6. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the African Union Specialized Agency for Capacity Development, to formulate a comprehensive capacity development and training programme on issues relating to the African Continental Free Trade Area for the benefit of its member States;

7. *Urges* member States to maintain the policy space and coherence necessary while negotiating international trade and investment agreements, with a view to realizing the full potential of the African Continental Free Trade Area and attaining the continental structural transformation goals;

8. *Requests* the States members of the African Union that have signed the legal instruments of the African Continental Free Trade Area to ensure their rapid ratification and effective implementation, and calls upon the member States that have not yet signed the instruments to take the action necessary to do so;

9. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa and other development partners to support the mobilization of resources and promote investment to facilitate the harnessing of the full benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Area;

10. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to monitor progress and report regularly on the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area, and to measure its impact on structural transformation through industrialization, economic diversification and value addition.

LVI. Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

The Conference of Ministers,

Recalling the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled “The future we want”,¹ in particular paragraph 84 on establishing a high-level political forum on sustainable development and paragraph 97, in which the General Assembly acknowledged the importance of the regional dimension of sustainable development and the ability of regional frameworks to complement and facilitate the effective translation of sustainable development policies into concrete action at the national level,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 67/290 on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, in which the Assembly acknowledged the importance of the regional dimension of sustainable development and invited the regional commissions to contribute to the work of the forum, including through annual regional meetings, with the involvement of other relevant regional entities, major groups and other relevant stakeholders as appropriate,

Recalling further the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development,² which highlights the central role of technological cooperation for the achievement of sustainable development,

Reaffirming the commitments entered into by African countries at United Nations conferences and at the summits, review conferences and meetings of the Assembly of the African Union, convened with a view to working towards achieving sustainable development,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 61/16, in which the Assembly urged the regional commissions to contribute, within their mandates, to the review of progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields,

Reaffirming that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development³ and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want of the African Union are mutually reinforcing and relevant to structural transformation and sustainable development in Africa, and also reaffirming its unwavering commitment to the effective and integrated implementation of, follow-up to and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063,

Recalling its resolutions 930 (XLVIII) and 939 (XLIX), in which the secretariat was requested, in collaboration with the African Union Commission and other partners, to convene the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on an annual basis for follow-up to and review of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063,

Recognizing the importance of formalizing the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development as an intergovernmental forum under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Africa to follow up on and review progress made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda,

1. *Decides* formally to establish the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Africa to follow up on and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development³ and to act as a multi-stakeholder forum at which matters relating to sustainable development and the structural transformation priorities of Africa can be discussed;

¹ General Assembly resolution 66/288.

² General Assembly resolution 69/313, annex.

³ General Assembly resolution 70/1.

2. *Also decides* that the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development will be convened annually by the Chair of the Bureau of the Forum, with the support of the secretariat of the Economic Commission for Africa, and that its meetings will be aligned with the schedules, programmes of work and themes of the Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up and the high-level political forum on sustainable development;

3. *Further decides* that the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development will take into consideration decisions relating to sustainable development taken by the African Union, including in connection with Agenda 2063;

4. *Encourages* member States to volunteer for national reviews and calls upon the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development to develop modalities for holding such reviews, in accordance with the principles and guidelines of the 2030 Agenda;

5. *Underscores* the need for secure, stable, adequate and predictable financial resources to enable the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development to hold annual meetings and carry out its mandate effectively;

6. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the African Union Commission and other partners, to take all steps necessary to organize on a regular basis a multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation as an input into the work of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development;

7. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and other partners to continue to support the work of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, including by ensuring the full and effective participation of representatives of member States, major groups and other stakeholders in the Forum;

8. *Calls upon* Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, major groups and other donors to provide technical support and financial resources for the work of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, with a view to enhancing integrated follow-up and review and promoting the timely, effective, full and coherent implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.
