

Subregional Office for West Africa

**Twentieth meeting of the Intergovernmental
Committee of Experts for West Africa**

**Ouagadougou
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Report of the twentieth meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts for West Africa



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I. Introduction

1. The twentieth meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts for West Africa of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) was held on 18 and 19 May 2017 in Ouagadougou, with logistical and financial support from the Government of Burkina Faso. The theme of the meeting was “Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 in West Africa: the role of development planning”.

2. The theme is particularly relevant to the current context, marked by the implementation or the formulation of long-term development policies and plans by most African countries, in particular those of West Africa. Another rationale for the theme is the need to structure those plans and visions in accordance with the international commitments to which the countries of the subregion have subscribed within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

3. The meeting was an opportunity to review four statutory reports of ECA, on the activities of the Subregional Office, the economic situation in West Africa in 2016 and prospects for 2017, the implementation of regional and international programmes and subregional initiatives in West Africa, respectively. Finally, the meeting served as a framework for formulating pertinent recommendations, aimed at consolidating the efforts of countries in development planning and in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

II. Participation

4. Present at the meeting were representatives from all State members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d’Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. The following regional economic communities and intergovernmental organizations were also represented: ECOWAS, the Niger Basin Authority, the Central Bank of West African States, the West African Development Bank, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and the Mano River Union (MRU). The Permanent Secretariat of Non-Governmental Organizations of Burkina Faso also took part.

III. Opening ceremony [agenda item 1]

5. Several speeches were delivered at the opening ceremony, notably by the Director of the Subregional Office for West Africa, Dimitri Sanga; the Resident Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Ongone Obame, in his capacity as representative of the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations system in Burkina Faso; and a representative from the Directorate of Planning and Economic Policy of Senegal, Oumy Ndiaye Sarr, in her capacity as representative of the outgoing Chair of the nineteenth meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts. The Secretary of State in charge of regional development in Burkina Faso, Pauline Zouré, representing the Minister of the Economy, Finance and Development, gave the official opening address.

6. In his address, the Director of the Subregional Office for West Africa, Mr. Sanga, expressed his gratitude to the Burkinabe authorities for their continuous support to ECA. He pointed out that “apart from the discussion on development planning, this meeting provides the Committee an opportunity to assess the work of ECA and to review reports on the economic conditions in West Africa in 2016 and the outlook for 2017, the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and progress towards a single currency in the ECOWAS zone”.

7. For his part, the Resident Representative of FAO, Mr. Obaseki, also on behalf of the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations system in Burkina Faso, reiterated the commitment of the United Nations system to assisting West African countries in their day-to-day development work, in particular in respect to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in synergy with their national development plans.

8. In her address, Ms. Sarr, in her capacity as representative of the Director-General of Planning and Economic Policy of Senegal and outgoing Chair of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts, thanked the Director of the Subregional Office for West Africa and commended the Office on its implementation track record, which was in sync with the recommendations of the nineteenth meeting of the Committee. She went on to provide an account of the activities carried out under the mandate of the Chair, which included efforts to consolidate ECA technical assistance to countries; to institutionalize cooperation with subregional organizations, in particular ECOWAS, UEMOA, Afristat and the Mano River Union; and to boost the generation of knowledge. In that regard, Ms. Sarr highlighted the publication of profiles of eight countries in the subregion and the completion of ground-breaking studies on a single currency, the African Charter on Statistics, the common external tariff and economic partnership agreements with the European Union. In conclusion, she reiterated her support to the incoming Chair.

9. The last opening address was delivered by Ms. Zouré, in her capacity as Secretary of State in charge of regional development in Burkina Faso and representative of the Minister of the Economy, Finance and Development. She praised the choice of Burkina Faso to host the present meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts. She noted the relevance of the themes for discussion, given current efforts by her country to implement its national economic and social development plan. Ms. Zouré also pointed out that, beyond Burkina Faso, all West African countries were directly engaged in strengthening development planning and in linking the Sustainable Development Goals with national development strategies. Before declaring the meeting open, the Secretary of State urged participants to seize the opportunity for exchange offered by the Committee to come up with relevant recommendations that could guide decision makers towards a better future for West Africa.

IV. Election of the Bureau [agenda item 2]

10. The Bureau, elected by acclamation, was comprised as follows:

Chair: Burkina Faso
Vice-Chair: Liberia
Rapporteur: Senegal

V. Adoption of the agenda and the programme of work [agenda item 3]

11. The participants adopted the following agenda, amending it to add an item for the second day of the meeting concerning the summary of discussions of the first day:

1. Opening ceremony.
2. Election of the Bureau.
3. Adoption of the agenda and the programme of work.

4. Review of statutory reports:
 - (a) Report on the implementation of the programme of work of the Subregional Office for West Africa in 2016 and outlook for 2017;
 - (b) Note on economic conditions in 2016 and outlook for 2017 in West Africa;
 - (c) Report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals;
 - (d) Report on subregional initiatives: focus on the progress made by the subregion towards a single currency;
 - (e) Roundtable on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 in West Africa: the role of development planning.
5. Presentation on the continental initiatives of the Economic Commission for Africa.
6. Special session on regional integration.
7. Review and adoption of the conclusions and recommendations of the meeting.
8. Date, venue and theme of the next meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts.
9. Other matters.
10. Closing ceremony.

VI. Account of the proceedings

A. Review of statutory reports [agenda item 4]

1. Report on the implementation of the programme of work of the Subregional Office for West Africa in 2016-2017 and outlook for 2017-2018

12. The secretariat presented the report on the activities of the Bureau for the period from March 2016 to March 2017. The report contained reviews of publications and summaries, meetings and seminars, as well as the technical assistance provided to member States and subregional organizations. Emphasis was placed on the overall level of completion of activities envisaged in the programme of work for the period under review. The activities in question were carried out through measures aimed at strengthening statistical systems and accelerating subregional initiatives. They were also centred on functional services to intergovernmental organizations, including the meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts and expert group meetings, consultancy services and technical assistance to member States, and technical cooperation with regional economic communities and other subregional organizations. The Bureau also reported on other ground-breaking activities undertaken relating to the production of country profiles and the compilation of information and statistics on civil status. For the period 2017-2018, the main activities will focus on the present meeting of the Committee, the production of new country profiles and a pilot document for Benin entitled called “Structural Transformation - Employment, Production, Society”, as well as the continuation of assistance to and technical cooperation with member States and subregional organizations.

13. During the discussions, the participants commended the Bureau on its dynamism and requested that the stated 100 per cent activity completion rate be revisited in the light of actual implementation rates. They called upon countries to share experiences among themselves regarding technical assistance activities and assessments of the production of country profiles, the African Social Development Index and the African Regional Integration Index. Participants also recommended that there be greater synergy with the activities of intergovernmental organizations and that civil society participate in ECA activities. Finally, they called for a presentation on activities with a focus on concrete outcomes.

14. The Director of the Subregional Office for West Africa emphasized the recommendation regarding the format of the report, while calling upon countries that receive support from ECA to provide results-oriented reports. In addition, he underscored the multifaceted support provided by ECA to countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, which received support in developing a manual on monitoring and evaluation procedures for all priority projects and programmes within the scope of its national development plan. Senegal was next to share its experiences with the monitoring and evaluation system for projects and programmes implemented with the support of ECA. That was followed by assurances from ECA regarding its willingness to strengthen the inclusive nature of its activities, as demonstrated by the regular invitation of non-State actors to its meetings. Regarding the country profiles and the ECA indices, analyses of the lessons learned had been regularly conducted. Hence, the production of a pilot profile addressing structural transformation, employment, productivity and society was aimed at further anchoring country profiles within the theme of structural transformation.

2. Report on subregional initiatives: focus on the progress made by the subregion towards a single currency

15. The secretariat presented a report on progress made since the inception of the idea of a monetary cooperation mechanism within ECOWAS. The report contained a review of the stumbling blocks and of necessary and optional modifications, along with the positive externalities of a single currency, notably in terms of the development of intra-ECOWAS trade. The report also contained an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of an ECOWAS single currency option and concluded with a set of recommendations.

16. According to the secretariat, the difficulties and obstacles to ECOWAS monetary integration are due to technical factors, in particular the economic disparities among ECOWAS countries, their differing degrees of vulnerability in respect of international economic relations, and the weakness and vulnerability of financial and payment systems in West Africa. The membership of 8 of the 15 countries of the subregion in the CFA franc zone posed obstacles of an economic, political and historical nature.

17. In the view of the secretariat, regional monetary integration and economic integration must proceed in unison. An ECOWAS single currency would have its desired impact only if progress were made in the other areas of regional integration (trade, infrastructure, etc). It was indicated in the conclusion of the report that, regarding the various forms of monetary integration and given the lessons drawn from past experiences, the single currency choice taken by ECOWAS countries appeared to be well justified, with the goal of securing irreversible commitments among ECOWAS countries and enabling them to collectively cope with the uncertainties of the international environment.

18. The participants expressed thanks to ECA for its report and analyses, in particular those on all the issues being addressed and the prospects for a subregional single currency. They

noted the numerous unexpected changes made to the calendar for the rollout of activities. In response, they recommended more focused analyses of the scenarios for transitioning to a single currency, taking the naira or the CFA franc as the currency of reference. Moreover, they underscored the need to further involve Nigeria in the process, given its economic and demographic weight in the subregion. The participants questioned the relevance of convergence criteria, which were still not being adhered to either in the ECOWAS zone or in the WAEMU zone, despite the latter already having a single currency. Lastly, they highlighted the importance of political factors in creating a single currency.

19. In response, the secretariat requested that the participants deepen technical exchanges in that regard in order to provide insights to policymakers. It reiterated the commitment of ECA to refining the analyses of the two scenarios in question and to working with States through related technical studies on the topic, including in regard to the opportunity costs faced by countries.

3. Note on economic conditions in 2016 in West Africa and outlook for 2017

20. In its presentation, ECA focused on economic performance in 2016 and the outlook for 2017 at the global, African and subregional levels. It then reviewed the initiative to produce country profiles, with a focus on progress, lessons and prospects for the process.

21. On the basis of estimates and projections by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, there was a slight slowdown in the global growth rate, to 2.2 per cent in 2016, versus 2.5 per cent in 2015, with prospects for a modest recovery in 2017, estimated at 2.7 per cent. Regarding the African continent, the economic growth rate fell to 1.7 per cent in 2016, compared to 3.1 per cent in 2015, with variations across subregions.

22. The growth rate of the ECOWAS subregion took a downturn, falling to -0.2 per cent in 2016, compared to 3.1 per cent in 2015. This drop in economic activity of 3.3 percentage points was mainly due to the poor performance of Nigeria, the main economy of the subregion, which in turn was due to the fall in oil prices. It also reflects significant contrasts, with countries and subgroups of countries showing stronger economic growth. The WAEMU zone recorded a growth rate of 7 per cent and six countries in the subregion experienced economic growth of more than 5 per cent.

23. In general, more favourable prospects are expected for 2017, with an anticipated increase in economic activity of 2.0 per cent. However, the persistence of security risks in the countries of the Sahel zone could affect that growth.

24. In its presentation, the secretariat looked at the process of producing country profiles. It noted the progress made, with the publication of 41 profiles, including 8 for West Africa, between 2016 and 2017, and the ongoing development of 4 other profiles for countries in the ECOWAS zone. The key lessons and prospects of the process mainly focused on a greater integration and analysis of structural transformation dimensions, greater ownership of the process by member States and regional organizations, along with the strengthening of statistical and planning systems.

25. Participants emphasized the relevance of the analysis made by ECA of the economic situation and the outlook for the subregion. They questioned the sources of data used and stressed the need to give priority to the use of data generated by national entities. The

persistence of the negative effects of the Ebola virus disease in affected countries was also discussed. Participants recommended more specific analyses of countries with a view to highlighting progress made, notwithstanding the overall drop in subregional activity. Lastly, they highlighted the importance of ongoing revisions to the basis for calculating gross domestic product (GDP) and the need to intensify efforts aimed at mobilizing domestic resources.

26. In response, the secretariat assured participants that data from ECOWAS, the West African Monetary Agency and individual countries had been used for the analyses. A tangible revival was noted in two of the three countries affected by the Ebola crisis. The secretariat reiterated the commitment of ECA to supporting countries in their work to revise the basis for calculating GDP. Those revisions are indeed essential to improving the analysis of the dynamics of structural transformation. In conclusion, the secretariat indicated that the mobilization of internal resources was one of the key recommendations of the report.

4. Report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

27. The secretariat presented a report on the review of the Sustainable Development Goals. In the report, it was noted that, despite the multiplicity and complexity of the challenges, all the countries of the subregion had already undertaken concrete actions to ensure greater ownership and better monitoring and evaluation of the Goals. Such actions are of particular relevance to prioritizing targets under the Goals, adapting the associated indicators to specific contexts, and integrating the Goals into national sectoral development policies and strategies.

28. The secretariat noted, however, that these processes were still ongoing and that there had been setbacks in conducting an empirical assessment of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals two years after their adoption. The report pointed out that more than 48 per cent of the indicators required new data collection approaches, with implications for the mobilization of human and financial resources. It stressed the need to strengthen national planning and statistical systems in terms of institutional, technical and operational capacities.

29. The discussions that followed the presentation highlighted concerns about institutional coordination and monitoring in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063, along with the weaknesses in the statistical and planning systems of countries in the subregion. Participants noted the limited scope of the report, which focused on the analysis of only 5 of the 17 indicators.

30. In response, ECA indicated that the Sustainable Development Goals had been adopted by States, so it was incumbent on them to meet the requirements for planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. Regarding the monitoring and evaluation of the Goals and Agenda 2063, a harmonized monitoring and evaluation framework is being developed by ECA to support countries in adapting the Goals and Agenda 2063 to their respective development benchmarks. In conclusion, ECA stressed the need to harmonize the time horizons of international and national development benchmarks to facilitate the unified monitoring of indicators.

5. Roundtable on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 in West Africa: the role of development planning

31. The secretariat presented a policy brief on concepts in development planning that described the pertinent experiences of West African countries. The report underscored the main

bottlenecks and identified the key challenges to development planning in West Africa and offered views on how countries can use national development plans to ensure better implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda.

32. The report revealed that many West African countries have medium- and long-term vision documents and planning frameworks, along with growth and social development goals that are even more ambitious. For example, national development strategies now go beyond the goal of poverty alleviation to incorporate goals such as growth acceleration, job creation, structural transformation and sustainable development. In conclusion, the report echoed concerns relating to the multiplicity of planning frameworks and the coherence of their institutional foundations, the mobilization of domestic resources in financing development in West Africa and the alignment between budgets and plan priorities.

33. The ECA report was complemented by a presentation made by the former Minister of Planning and National Development of Ethiopia, Mersie Ejigu, on the challenges of development planning. The analyses and experiences that were shared in that regard focused on the need to strengthen leadership for an inclusive vision of medium- and long-term development and to consolidate ongoing efforts in development planning and the linking of national strategies to international programmes (the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063). Presentations given by panel members were followed by speeches given by several member States, notably Burkina Faso and Liberia.

34. During the discussions, participants highlighted the difficulties that countries faced in implementing their development plans. Among the explanatory factors, they cited institutional instability in the development and implementation of development benchmarks in various countries, along with difficulties encountered in financing development plans. Participants stressed the importance of involving the private sector in formulating and implementing development plans. They also emphasized the need to extend the concept of the blue economy to watercourses and groundwater and to reflect that in national planning models.

35. In response, ECA and participants hailing from the countries concerned emphasized the importance of funding envelopes and the need for greater focus on domestic resources. In that context, Burkina Faso noted that 60 per cent of the financing for its development plan, which is currently being implemented, has come from internal sources. With respect to institutional foundations, the main recommendation was to give a key role to the core institutions in charge of planning and to national statistics institutes in respect of the monitoring and evaluation components. Strengthening political leadership and stability in strategic policies for development were also recognized as decisive factors in the successful implementation of development plans.

B. Presentation on the continental initiatives of the Economic Commission for Africa [agenda item 5]

36. The secretariat made three presentations on: (a) the capacity-building strategy of ECA in support of structural transformation within countries; (b) the report on ECA activities in 2016-2017 and outlook for 2017-2018; and (c) the thematic section on urbanization of the ECA *Economic Report on Africa 2017*.

37. Participants reiterated their appreciation for the dynamism of ECA in producing knowledge and providing technical assistance to countries. They stressed the importance of building capacity in respect of urbanization issues, for their proper consideration within the

framework of economic development and structural transformation in Africa, in general, and the West African subregion, in particular.

38. In response, ECA expressed its willingness to receive from countries requests that are linked to ECA focal areas and to organize capacity-building activities on economic development topics, in particular urbanization.

C. Special session on regional integration [agenda item 6]

39. Presentations were made by WAEMU and the Mano River Union. The need to enhance regional integration and synergies among subregional organizations was emphasized. ECA also informed participants about ongoing initiatives of the United Nations system to strengthen the capacity of the Lake Chad Basin Commission to address the multidimensional crises affecting the Sahel region.

VII. Review and adoption of the conclusions and recommendations of the meeting [agenda item 7]

40. The rapporteur read aloud the draft conclusions and recommendations to the participants. After broad discussions and the inclusion of the proposed amendments, the session adopted the recommendations annexed to the present report.

VIII. Date, venue and theme of the next meeting [agenda item 8]

41. The next meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts will be held in 2018 in Benin. The Director-General of the Economy and Planning of Burkina Faso, Soabou Diallo, will act as Chair of the Committee until its next meeting, the date of which will be determined by ECA in agreement with Benin. ECA will communicate the theme of the next meeting before that date.

IX. Other matters [agenda item 9]

42. No issue was raised in regard to this agenda item.

X. Closing ceremony [agenda item 10]

43. On behalf of the participants, a vote of thanks was expressed to the Burkinabe authorities for hosting the meeting and for their attentiveness to the needs of the participants. Thanks were also expressed to the Subregional Office for West Africa, in particular its Director and the secretariat, which provided assistance to the Director throughout the meeting.

44. The closing ceremony was marked by two speeches. The Director of the Subregional Office for West Africa, Mr. Sanga, commended the quality of the debates, “through which the experts became fully cognizant of the stakes involved in these two programmes”. In his closing remarks, the Secretary-General of the Ministry of the Economy, Finance and Development of Burkina Faso, Abel Somé, pointed out that the meeting in Ouagadougou confirmed the role and usefulness of planning in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 in West Africa.

Annex: summary of recommendations

The Intergovernmental Committee of Experts calls upon member States, regional economic communities, intergovernmental organizations and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) to undertake the following actions:

1. Report on the implementation of the programme of work of the Subregional Office for West Africa in 2016-2017 and outlook for 2017-2018

ECA should:

- Present the activities of the Office with greater focus on results and measuring performance;
- Develop, in collaboration with member States, a framework for integrating the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 into national development plans.

2. Report on subregional initiatives: focus on the progress made by the subregion towards a single currency

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) should:

- Lobby Nigeria and the Conference of Heads of State of the West African Economic and Monetary Union to accelerate the process of creating a single currency.

ECA should:

- Conduct a study on the advantages and disadvantages of a single currency, widening the scope of scenarios to include the specific cases of Nigeria and the CFA franc zone, as well as the relevance of convergence criteria;
- Organize a high-level meeting or colloquium of experts to discuss lessons learned from failures and missed opportunities regarding a single currency and prospects for a subregional monetary union.

3. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Agenda 2063 and development planning in West Africa

- (a) Note on economic conditions in 2016 and outlook for 2017 in West Africa

Member States should:

- Undertake measures to reduce the vulnerability of countries to fluctuations in the prices of raw materials through the implementation of prudent public-spending policies and mechanisms to manage risks of fluctuations in export earnings;
- Strengthen export diversification and commodity transformation policies;

ECA should:

- Support countries in their endeavours to revise their bases for the calculation of gross domestic product so as to more accurately reflect the dynamics of structural transformation.
- (b) Report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals / Roundtable on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 in West Africa: the role of development planning

Member States should:

- Strengthen institutional coordination for implementing, monitoring and evaluating the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063, placing the core institutions in charge of planning and statistics at the heart of the mechanism;
- For the countries concerned, prioritize the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals and adapt the indicators;
- Ensure consistency among various development planning instruments;
- Strengthen institutional and programmatic coordination among member States that share river basins in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063.

ECA should:

- Facilitate capacity-building for national planning and statistics systems.
- 4. Presentation on the continental initiatives of the Economic Commission for Africa**

Member States should:

- Integrate the multiple dimensions of urbanization, notably the economic dimensions, into national development and structural transformation strategies.

ECA should:

- Organize meetings of experts at the subregional level that are dedicated to the intersections between urbanization, industrialization and structural transformation.
- 5. Special session on regional integration**

Member States, ECOWAS and intergovernmental organizations should:

- Intensify regional integration and synergies in the activities of subregional organizations, especially as part of implementing a common external tariff and in view of the entry into force of economic partnership agreements.

6. Recommendations of the ad hoc experts group meeting

The Intergovernmental Committee of Experts has endorsed the recommendations of the ad hoc experts group meeting on the impact of the implementation of the common external tariff and economic partnership agreements in West Africa.