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Report of the thirty-third session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts for Central Africa

Theme: Made in Central Africa: from the vicious circle to the
virtuous circle

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I. Introduction

1. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Subregional Office for Central Africa of the organized the thirty-third session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts for Central Africa in Douala, Cameroon, from 26 to 29 September 2017 on the theme of “Made in Central Africa: from the vicious to the virtuous circle”, in partnership with the Ministry of the Economy, Planning and Regional Development of Cameroon.
2. The main goal of the meeting was to give experts the opportunity to discuss economic and social development issues in Central Africa, in particular the industrial fabric, and propose strategies to speed up structural transformation of the economies of the subregion.
3. Another aim of the meeting was to take stock of the implementation of subregional, continental and international initiatives and review the progress made in executing the Economic Commission for Africa Subregional Office for Central Africa programme of work for 2016.

II. Participation

4. A total of 150 experts participated in the meeting. Apart from representative of Cameroon, the host country, the following member States were represented: Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe.
5. Delegates of the following institutions participated in the meeting: the African Development Bank (AfDB), the African Intellectual Property Organization, the African Power Pool, the Bank of Central African States, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), the Central African Forests Commission, the Economic Commission on Cattle, Meat and Fish Resources, the French Development Agency, the Embassy of France and the Multisector Subregional Institute of Applied Technology and Project Planning. The following agencies of the United Nations system were also represented: the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).
6. Private sector representatives included delegates of the following organizations: the Cameroon Women Entrepreneurs Network, the Baba Danpullo, Mugano investment Group, the Cameroon Employers’ Association, the Cameroon Businesswomen’s Association, MTN Cameroon, Orange Cameroon and VELIA SARL. Representatives of the Advanced School of Economic and Business Sciences of the University of Douala, non-governmental organizations and civil society, including FISTEC, Ever Green Technology, GIC AFATEX-International, the Network of Civil Society Organizations for the Green Economy in Central Africa, the Youth Employment Service and the media also attended the meeting.

III. Opening ceremony

7. The opening ceremony was chaired by the Director General for the Economy and Public Investments Programming of the Ministry of the Economy, Planning and Regional Development of Cameroon, Isaac Tamba. Four speeches by the following officials were given: the Director of the Subregional Office for Central Africa, Antonio Pedro; the Deputy Executive Secretary of ECA, Giovanie Biha; the outgoing chair of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts, Dorothy Bekolo, and Mr. Tamba, who opened the thirty-third session.

IV. Election of the Bureau

8. Participants elected the Bureau as follows:

Chair: Cameroon
Vice-Chair: Chad
Rapporteur: Gabon

V. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work

9. The participants adopted the agenda and programme of work.

VI. Conduct of deliberations

10. The proceedings were conducted in plenary and parallel sessions to deepen the discussions. Presentations were made on the various items of the agenda, followed by discussions.

1. Presentation of the working document entitled “Made in Central Africa: from the vicious circle to the virtuous circle”

11. In his introduction, the presenter recalled that the significant economic downturn in Central Africa that had begun in 2015 was due to the decline in the international prices of commodities. He contended that, with a production system dominated by primary commodities exports, limited manufacturing and very weak technological development, Central Africa was trapped in a vicious circle. The circle was sustained by many industrialization initiatives and plans that had failed to deliver on expected results and by several negative internal and external factors.

12. The presenter nevertheless indicated that Central African economies possessed advantages, notably natural resources endowments and other favourable enablers for exiting the vicious circle and migrating towards a virtuous one wherein the manufacturing industry would drive growth and development. In that connection, he recommended that the subregion draw inspiration from initiatives, such as industrialization master plans, special economic zones, project preparation, implementation units and project preparation facilities.

13. He then proposed priority actions contained in the following seven variables: (a) the definition of strategic guidelines for the accelerated industrialization of Central Africa; (b) the need for strong leadership and appropriate institutional structuring of industrial policy; (c) the prioritization of industrialization policies in national and regional development plans and policies; (d) heavy investment in industrial infrastructure and in human capital for rapid technological development; (e) strengthening national and regional capacity to implement industrial and infrastructure projects; (f) establishing the requisite institutions to finance industrialization; and (g) supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, national champions and foreign direct investment for the successful integration of regional and global value chains.

14. The presenter pointed out in his concluding comments that a paradigm shift at the national and regional levels demanded a change of mindsets, dialogue and strong commitment by private and public sector leaders.

2. High-level panel and discussions on “Made in Central Africa: from the vicious circle to the virtuous circle”

15. A presentation of the working document was followed by discussions on the main theme of the meeting. The discussion was facilitated by a five-member high-level panel.

16. The first panellist, a representative of the Ministry of the Forest Economy of Gabon, Aliou Mbia Kombé Barry, gave an overview of his country’s perspective and experience with regard to economic diversification and industrialization in the timber sector. He began by indicating that some measures envisioned in the working document were already being implemented, notably a ban on exports of unprocessed log timber, as set out in a decision issued in 2010 by the President of Gabon. The measure had made it possible to increase timber processing rates from 20 per cent in 2009 to 75 per cent in 2012. Similarly, the number of timber processing plants had surged from 80 to 155 and the number of jobs in the sector increased from 4,500 to 10,500. As a backup measure, a special regime area was established to enable investors to benefit from exemptions on specific imports, such as equipment. In addition, some forest areas had been set aside for investors who were issued forest permits that allowed permanent access to resources. Furthermore, a national timber exchange had been established, although it was not yet operational. Turnover in the sector had climbed from 140 billion CFA francs (\$263 million) to 200 billion CFA francs.

17. He noted, however, that, of the 400 timber species in Gabon, only 60 with marketable potential were harvested. The country wished to raise this figure to at least 150. He called for greater research and development to boost knowledge of the potential value addition and recommended the harmonization of national policies for greater complementarity among the economies of the subregion.

18. Mr. Pedro, the next speaker, provided a snapshot of the work of ECA pertaining to structural transformation. The Commission had begun to focus heavily on issues relating to industrialization and structural transformation in 2010, tackling diverse themes and issues over the years. In 2010, in the *Economic Report on Africa*, an annual flagship publication of ECA,

it was argued that Africa needed strong growth to create decent jobs. In 2011, the focus of the *Economic Report on Africa* was on the role of the State in development. In that report, it was recommended that a developmentalist approach be taken similar to what had been undertaken in Japan and the Republic of Korea. The *2012 Economic Report on Africa* was focused on the need to unleash the growth potential of Africa, with one key recommendation being broadening policy space. Mr. Pedro suggested that it would be necessary to transcend the conventional wisdom of the Washington Consensus. The *2013 Economic Report on Africa* was centred on the promotion of industrialization through leveraging primary commodities, while the 2014 iteration was focused on industrialization through trade. The role of the continental free trade area was analysed therein in terms of the vast market that it would afford each African country. The three most recent editions contained discussion on the institutions needed to promote industrialization, green economy compliant industrialization and the role of urbanization in the promotion of industrialization.

19. In addition, Mr. Pedro stressed the importance of knowledge production and sharing in order to fine-tune industrial policies. In that regard, in the ECA document titled *Transformative Industrial Policy for Africa*, the myth that industrial policy was outdated was dispelled. Many countries had had recourse thereto and continued to do so. His other key messages were that economic diversification was a must for countries of Central Africa that could no longer afford to depend only on oil products. He also underscored the need to transcend comparative advantages to identify and promote new industries and protect nascent industries, notably in the manufacturing sector. He concluded by stating that the time was ripe to depart from resources-for-infrastructure initiatives to resources-for-industrialization ones.

20. In her intervention, H el ene Tsobgni Tioma (women-sponsored small and medium-sized enterprise) said that the difficulties preventing small and medium-sized enterprise from operating efficiently in the industrial sector in Central Africa were both internal and external. External difficulties included inadequate energy supply, weak technological development, the poor quality of transport and communication infrastructure, the lack of qualified manpower, market instability, an unfriendly business environment, difficulty in gaining access to international capital and the scarcity of domestic financing because of the lack of a financing culture. Regarding internal difficulties, she cited the small size of small and medium-sized enterprise, the difficulties in complying with the rules of the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa and the requirement of rigorous accountability.

21. Ms. Tioma emphasized the need to build the capacity of the personnel of small and medium-sized enterprises, notably through the establishment of platforms that facilitate access to new technologies; to improve the availability and quality of infrastructure; to generate industrialization plans; and to design development plans that take in to account of small and medium-sized enterprises. In addition, she recommended the provision of adequate financing for small and medium-sized enterprises, the promotion of new technologies and the establishment of special economic zones based on regional comparative advantages.

22. An economist at the secretariat of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Jules Touka, focused on the issues, challenges and prospects for a subregional

industrial policy. He began by recalling that the main mandate of ECCAS was to steer the regional integration process in Central Africa and that a widening of markets would likely generate economies of scale and spur greater production at the least cost. He said that ECCAS was working to develop a regional industrial policy and to outline issues, including the need to infiltrate the 150 million-strong regional market that was a net importer. Strong urban growth engenders high demand for industrial products and building materials, which leads to the need to leverage the benefits of globalization. Countries of the Central African subregion were home to extensive iron deposits that could satisfy the needs of emerging economies, making Central Africa a metallurgical hub. In addition, the region should seek to attract investors in agribusiness, given its arable land potential and conducive weather conditions; the growth of the middle class in emerging economies, which was driving high labour costs and constituted an opportunity for countries of the region to position themselves as suppliers of cheap manpower and thus attract delocalized activities of multinationals; and its positioning on the global value chains.

23. Mr. Touka recommended the deployment of industries through the adoption of cluster and value chain approaches, a bold commitment by States to finance infrastructure and backup structures and the consolidation of regional integration. He added that the issue of finance was crucial and that countries must consider setting up sovereign funds that could be used to finance their infrastructure. In addition, lease financing was an option that small and medium-sized enterprises might explore. He wrapped up the discussion by underscoring the importance of promoting environmentally friendly industrialization.

24. The GICAM representative for the centre-south-east region, Narcisse Palissy Chassem, elaborated on the role of the private sector in industrial development. He explained in depth to the meeting the status of industrial development in Central Africa and noted that the subregion imported essentially industrial products and exported only unprocessed ones. He argued that the growth model was untenable and that the region's industrial sector was neither attractive to the local private sector nor to foreign investors on account of a tax policy that was marked by numerous high levies. Low-quality infrastructure and education, a lack of funding for long-term activities, smuggling and the lack of an independent justice system were also factors that discouraged foreign investors. He concluded by recommending that States protect local industries, notably by allocating to them a share of government procurement and by prohibiting the importation of some strategic goods for the development of the local industry.

25. The discussions that ensued from the panellists' presentations focused on the role of regional economic communities in the promotion of growth, the establishment of regional research centres and the need to carry out demand analysis in the countries of the subregion and thus define the market and leverage the possible synergies, the lifting of trade barriers and the need to establish or to strengthen public-private dialogue frameworks.

3. Thematic group work

26. Participants broke into three groups to further reflect on the following themes: (a) small and medium-sized enterprises and value chains; (b) industrial development financing instruments; and (c) the preparation and implementation of industrial policies.

27. The outcomes of the group work and the recommendations were presented during a plenary session. Thereafter, a small working group was set up to review the recommendations with the following objectives: (a) clustering them; (b) assessing the feasibility of each one at the global and regional levels; (c) proposing an implementation timeline for the short, medium and long term; (d) identifying partners or stakeholders likely to contribute to implementation; (e) highlighting the relevant roles of the private sector and technical and financial partners; and (f) identifying potential funding sources.

28. The outcomes of the small working group were also presented in a plenary session, in the form of a recommendations matrix, which participants considered and validated. The participants, however, emphasized the need for the recommendations to be brought to the attention of policymakers and recommended the establishment of a mechanism to monitor and evaluate the implementation of them with the full involvement of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts Bureau. Accordingly, ECA indicated that the issue was the subject of internal consideration as part of the restructuring of the intergovernmental mechanisms to improve their effectiveness. In the light of this, the ECA Subregional Office for Central Africa planned to organize quarterly meetings with the Bureau.

29. In addition, the experts requested ECA to raise the industrial policy issue to the highest level so that it did not remain just a wishful thought, and would bring about tangible results.

4. Dinner-debate

30. The ECA Subregional Office for Central Africa organized a dinner-debate during which panellists and experts discussed in depth the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts theme.

5. Economic Commission for Africa Subregional Office for Central Africa report of activities for 2016 and programme of work for 2017

31. The secretariat presented the ECA Subregional Office for Central Africa report of activities for 2016 and the programme of work for 2017. The presenter began by recalling the objectives and results expected from the work programme of the Bureau for the 2016-2017 biennium and outlined the activities carried out to promote the structural transformation of the economies in Central Africa and accelerate regional integration. Such activities included publications and the launching of them, organization of high-level meetings and dialogues, and assistance extended to national and subregional institutions. He also presented insights into the work programme that continued to place priority to economic diversification and the acceleration of regional integration, while underscoring that the ongoing reform of the United Nations system would have an impact on the programme.

32. The Committee took note of the full implementation of the activities of the ECA Subregional Office for Central Africa for 2016. The experts, however, requested that, for its subsequent report of activities, the Bureau should highlight the objectives attained and their impact, along with the implementation timeline.

6. Recent developments and economic forecasts for Central Africa

33. The experts listened attentively to a presentation delivered by the secretariat on recent developments and economic forecasts for Central Africa. The expert representing ECA pointed out that macroeconomic growth in Central Africa had slumped as a result of the decline in international oil prices. Growth in the CEMAC region had declined from 1.6 per cent in 2015 to 0.2 per cent in 2016. Public finances management was marked by a growing budget deficit in the oil-producing countries. Regarding external trade, the current account balance had declined on the back of, for example, unfavourable trade balances and a deterioration in services and revenue in almost all the countries. The presenter noted that the growing level of indebtedness was a threat to the long-term development of the countries of the subregion. Nevertheless, inflation was relatively subdued, notably in the CEMAC region, thanks to accommodative monetary policies. He concluded on an optimistic note by saying that projections would be more favourable in 2018 than in 2017 if the global economic recovery continued and the prices of main export commodities, notably oil, were, as expected, increased.

34. The ensuing discussions were centred on the frailty of Central African economies and the need to limit their vulnerability to fluctuations of international oil prices by speeding up the diversification of the production structure. Pro-cyclic fiscal policies during high oil prices and the level and pace of indebtedness were identified as some of the main causes of the financial difficulties encountered by countries of the subregion. It was also noted that emphasis should be placed on the real convergence of CEMAC economies rather than on nominal convergence, and greater understanding of the structural transformation of the economies of the subregion was needed.

7. Status report on regional and international programmes and other special initiatives in the subregion

35. The secretariat presented the annual report on the state of play of regional and international programmes and other special initiatives in the subregion. The report focused on progress made in the Central African subregion in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063. It was revealed that, notwithstanding strides made in attaining some of the targets, the subregion was facing difficulties in halting extreme poverty and hunger, improving health and education, and enhancing access to basic infrastructure. The challenges relating to planning, financing, follow-up and production of statistics that Central African countries must tackle in order to implement the two agendas were also highlighted in the presentation. In addition, countries must strive to harmonize and converge their strategic planning frameworks and instruments for the implementation of these two initiatives.

36. During the ensuing discussions, experts underscored the importance of ownership by States of the efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in order to promote and make them country projects, while contextualizing their indicators. They also pointed out the need to use disaggregated statistical indicators to gain a clearer interpretation of poverty reduction measurement indices.

8. Subregional dimension of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

37. ECA delivered a presentation titled “Towards an African regional forum on more effective sustainable development: enhancement of subregional engagement mechanisms”, which was intended to stimulate effective participation of member States and regional economic communities of the subregion in the preparatory phases of and in the African Forum on Sustainable Development.

38. The presenter set the stage by recalling General Assembly resolution 67/290 in which the Assembly decided to establish a high-level political forum on sustainable development as the main organ of the United Nations responsible for sustainable development issues. The forum was placed under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council and on the basis of regional consultations. The Assembly, in its resolution, also recommended the regional commissions, including ECA, to facilitate those consultations. The outcomes of those consultations would be presented to the high-level political forum on sustainable development for review..

39. The presenter then outlined the guiding frameworks that underpin the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, namely, the adoption by African Union Heads of State and Government of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan (2014-2023) of Agenda 2063. He added that ECA had been mandated to organize a yearly African forum on a theme aligned with that of the high-level political forum on sustainable development to serve as a platform to assess the status of integrating the implementation of the two agendas and to adopt a common position for the forum. In addition, the forum afforded countries the opportunity to voluntarily undertake a periodic national review of the status of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. He noted that no Central African country had, to date, participated in the exercise, but indicated that the Congo had registered to participate in the 2018 forum.

40. The presentation ended with a proposal consisting of tangible actions for the subregion to commit to the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and the high-level political forum on sustainable development processes.

To member States:

- Establish a national observatory for monitoring the efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals;

- Identify national experts to participate in the virtual community of practice and in the subregional review mechanism to be set up by ECA;
- Actively participate in the 2018 and 2019 Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

To the Economic Commission for Africa:

2018 Forum:

- Follow up on the appointment of national experts to participate in the discussions of the virtual communities of practice;
- Initiate and manage virtual communities of practice on the Sustainable Development Goals for the 2018 Forum and Agenda 2063;
- Gradually develop a database on information, knowledge and good practices on implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 in the subregion;
- Compile and adopt the report of virtual communities of practice in the form of key messages;
- Officially transmit the key messages to the 2018 African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development.

2019 Forum:

- Request the appointment of experts to participate in virtual communities of practice on the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 for the 2019 Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development;
- Initiate and coordinate discussions on the virtual communities of practice;
- Compile the conclusions of the discussions in the form of key messages of the subregion;
- Submit the messages for discussion during the 2018 Intergovernmental Committee of Experts;
- Coordinate the adoption of the subregion's key messages;
- Submit the subregion's key messages to the 2019 Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development.

41. Participants took note of the presentation and expressed the wish to support the participation of their relevant countries in the national voluntary review for the 2018 Forum and their registration for the 2019 Forum.

9. Implementation of subregional initiatives in Central Africa: the roaming

42. The secretariat presented a report on the status of roaming in Central Africa. After explaining the concept, the ECA expert indicated that roaming is one of the 16 indicators of the African regional integration index developed jointly by ECA, the African Union Commission and AfDB. He shared the experience of other African subregions in establishing roaming, underscoring the good performance of the Southern African Development Community area. He also highlighted the disparities in rates between operators in Central Africa to the detriment of consumers, explaining that that was because of the absence of a harmonized binding subregional regulatory framework that would compel telephone operators to adopt prices close to local rates. On the basis of that that, the presenter made the following recommendations: (a) the preparation of a subregional memorandum of understanding to govern technical, pricing and legal aspects of roaming, which would be supervised by the regulators of each country of the subregion; (b) the establishment of a subregional committee responsible for implementing roaming; (c) the adoption of common strategies to reduce rates; and (d) the implementation of roaming agreements on mobile networks.

43. Following the presentation, discussions centred on the excessively high rates charged by some operators. In that regard, participants recommended the supervision of such rates by subregional regulation authorities and encouraged ECCAS to implement the recommendations on roaming issued during the meeting of ministers in charge of information and communications technology held in Brazzaville in November 2016.

10. 2017 Economic Report on Africa

44. The Economic Commission for Africa launched the 2017 edition of the *Economic Report on Africa*, which was based on the theme “Industrialization and urbanization for Africa’s transformation”. Prior to the launch, the ECA Deputy Executive Secretary delivered a statement followed by the presentation of the report in two parts.

45. Part one of the presentation focused on the economic and social context of Africa marked by promising long-term growth prospects, notwithstanding the recent slowdown of the global economy and the weakening economic performance. The fundamental economic parameters were still robust to the extent that growth could benefit from the demographic dividend and from the industrialization and structural transformation programme. Such prospects, however, depended to a large extent on the management of the rapid urban transition. Notably, the region had the highest urbanization rate in the world after Asia and, in 20 years, it would be predominantly urban.

46. Part two of the presentation was devoted to the theme of the report, with a specific focus on the problem of urbanization on the continent, the linkages between urbanization and structural transformation, including industrialization, and the policies needed to better harness the urban potential to achieve industrialization. Specifically, it emerged from urbanization indicators that this strong and multidimensional trend would be the hallmark of countries of the continent in the decades to come. Moreover, theory and recent economic history had indicated that industrialization and structural transformation could not happen without urbanization. Africa, however, had not paid special attention to the economic dimension of urbanization. The recommendation was made to, among other things, mainstream urbanization into national development strategies and to design industrial policies that were consistent with urban policies in order to better harness the potential of urbanization. The presenter also recommended that the experts adequately mainstream urbanization into structural transformation processes and industrialization.

47. The experts congratulated the secretariat for the quality of the report and the relevance of the theme in relation to the economic and social challenges of the subregion. On the basis of the ensuing discussions, the following recommendations were made:

To member States, ECA and subregional organizations:

- Spotlight the problem and potential of urbanization in all studies and work conducted on the transformation and industrial development process in Central Africa.

To member States:

- Mainstream demographic, social, environmental and economic dimensions of urbanization into national development strategies and sector policies, including those on industrial development, agriculture, trade, innovation, infrastructure and investment promotion.

To the Economic Commission for Africa:

- Organize national and subregional meetings on structural transformation, industrial policies and urbanization, especially within the framework of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts.
- Assist member States in mainstreaming urbanization into their visions, national development policies and strategies, and into industrial policies.

11. Ad hoc meeting of experts

48. Participants took part in an ad hoc meeting of experts organized alongside the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts. The goal of the meeting was to consider and enrich

the report of the study titled “Leveraging agro-industry potential to support structural transformation in Central Africa”.

49. In the opening statement, the Director of the Subregional Office for Central Africa argued that agro-industry constituted one of the prerequisites of structural transformation and economic development of countries of the subregion. He stressed that development of agro-industry was one of the best opportunities for achieving sustainable economic growth, wealth creation and reducing poverty in Central Africa.

12. Presentation of the report of the study titled “Leveraging agro-industry potential to support structural transformation in Central Africa”

50. The study on leveraging agro-industry potential to support structural transformation in Central Africa was intended to contribute to deliberations on diversified and socially inclusive growth through agro-industry development in Central Africa. Accordingly, the presentation covered three main points. First, it gave a state of play of agro-industry, its potential and its performance in Central Africa. It emerged that there is great potential in Central Africa for the agro-industry potential, which was underexploited. To tap that potential, development policies that advocate more efficient exploitation to better contribute to the structural transformation of the subregion were needed. In addition, the presentation included a snapshot of agro-industry development policies in which the weak links that had stunted expected outcomes were highlighted. It concluded with the identification of five priority areas to promote agro-industry, the availability and accessibility of inputs, the intensification of production, the availability and accessibility of infrastructure, processing and marketing.

51. In the ensuing discussions, the importance of land issues and women’s empowerment were highlighted. The experts suggested that the intervention areas be reordered and appealed for greater coherence in generating and implementing agro-industry development policies. They underscored the need for increased investment in research and for the development of value chains to strengthen productivity.

52. Following the discussions, experts issued the following recommendations:

To the Economic Commission for Africa:

- Update the statistics of the study and add the missing information for some countries;
- Work with UN-Women to further deal with the issue of access by women to land;
- Conduct additional analysis on the issue of land grabbing;
- Insert the matrix of the Sustainable Development Goals in the report.

To member States:

- Align agro-industry development policies with the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;
- Boost investment in statistics production and dissemination;
- Develop aquaculture and agro-industry skills;
- Build the capacity of government services responsible for agricultural and rural development.

13. National agro-industrial development experiences

53. During the session, experts shared national agro-industrial development experiences.

54. The representative of Gabon stated that, as part of the Gabon strategic plan, an ambitious programme had been envisioned to develop agro-industry. Three levers (growth, employment and agriculture) underpin the programme that was intended to contribute to improve the gross domestic product by 4 to 5 per cent. It also included a national land allocation plan that was aimed at establishing cooperatives. At the time, Gabon had been heavily engaged in planting oil palms, rubber trees and sugar cane, pending the development of other agricultural activities. In addition, the Government had entered into a three-pillar (environment, social, economic) public-private partnership process with the OLAM Company, the second largest employer in the country after the State, in the production of oil palm.

55. The representative of Cameroon said that his country had designed an agricultural value chains development programme in order to bring together sector stakeholders (suppliers, processors, producers). In addition, the country had an agricultural markets development programme that was expected to act as an interface between producers organized in cooperatives (maize – cassava – sorghum) and agro-industrial companies.

56. The representative of the Central African Republic said that, given the situation at the time, his country was planning a vast programme to revive agriculture by according priority to the creation of cooperatives to promote agricultural products. Administrative measures would also be implemented to support the programme and facilitate access by farmers to technologies.

57. The representative of Burundi spoke about the 2012-2032 regional industrialization strategy designed by the East African Community, which served as the reference framework for the country's industrial policy. The country had crafted the 2016-2025 national agricultural strategy, an extension of the 2008-2016 plan. Its with the goal of exiting the crisis and consolidating security, carrying out reconstruction and reviving agriculture in order to improve public finances, increase revenue and strengthen the purchasing power of rural and urban populations. The Government had sought the assistance of the European Union to develop

export sectors for regional and European markets. That concerned quality control of high value-added coffee, sugar cane, essential oils and dairy products and their by-products.

58. The representative of the Congo spoke about the existence of an ongoing programme on development of the agro-industry in the cocoa and coffee sectors with the support of the World Bank.

59. The representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo said that his country had in place a national agricultural investment plan for the period 2013-2020 that served as the reference framework for agricultural sector and rural development planning. The objective of the plan was to stimulate sustained annual growth of the agricultural sector with the ultimate goal of reducing poverty, ensuring food self-sufficiency and creating sustainable jobs. With regard to training in the sector, an agricultural training centre provided training to technicians, with a view to improving agricultural productivity and industrialization. The country had also established a \$750 million fund for granting loans at very attractive interest rates to help small and medium-sized enterprises to develop. Other initiatives carried out include the construction of a fertilizer plant, the establishment of agropoles through public-private partnerships and the establishment of a single window. Notwithstanding those measures, the number of enterprises had dropped from 9,000 at independence to 500.

60. The representative of Angola stated that, although abandoned during the years of civil war, the agricultural sector had become a strategic development sector for industrial diversification and poverty reduction, citing incentive measures that included such initiatives as the setting up of a fertilizer plant, an agricultural insurance institution and a single window that allowed for the establishment of a business in 48 hours. Animal production had also improved with the building of, for example, a day-old chicks' production plant. With regard to maritime fishing, a lot of investment had been made to purchase fishing boats and to build fish meal plants.

61. The representative of Chad informed the Committee that the country had a five-year plan for the period 2013-2018, the objectives of which were to increase the availability of cereals and to boost agricultural production that remained unpredictable and very much depended on rainfall. The plan was centred on five key areas:

- Control and management of water;
- Intensification and diversification of agricultural productions;
- Support to the promotion of agricultural subsectors and management of food crises;
- Capacity-building for technical support services, notably employers' organizations;

- Promotion and development of growth sectors (sesame, peanuts, shea butter, gum arabic).

62. Growth sectors constituted the fourth source of foreign exchange earnings for Chad, but the products (cotton, peanuts, gum arabic, and sesame) were being exported without any added value. The objective was therefore to process and then export them. Accordingly, in designing the national industrialization programme, planners would draw from the experience of past industrial projects (cotton and the fruit juice plant) that were located in remote areas, which were far from the basins of the raw materials that were supposed to serve as inputs.

14. Group work

63. Two working groups were constituted and discussions focused on the challenges of increasing agricultural productivity and modernizing value chains. The outcomes of the group work were presented in plenary.

15. Date and venue of the next meeting

64. The Subregional Office for Central Africa planned to conduct timely consultations with the authorities of member States, notably Chad, to determine the venue and date of the next session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts.

16. Any other business

65. No item was raised under any other business.

VII. Theme, date and venue of the next session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts

66. The Committee proposed “Financing industrialization in Central Africa” as the theme of the next session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts to build on the ongoing discussion of industrialization in Central Africa.

VIII. Adoption of the transcript of conclusions and recommendations of the meeting

67. Participants adopted a consensus referred to as the “Douala Consensus” (see annex). The Consensus advocates a paradigm shift “from a resources-for-infrastructure model to a resources-for-industrialization model (R4Id)”. This would require, among other things, the establishment of business parks and growth centres; speeding up the implementation of the African Union’s Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade; the development of industrialization based on tapping and processing abundant natural resources; and strengthening intersector coordination and public-private dialogue.

IX. Closure

68. At the end of the meeting, the Committee extended a vote of thanks to the President of Cameroon, Paul Biya, and to the Government and the people of Cameroon for the warm reception and the hospitality accorded to the participants during their stay in Douala.

69. After the intervention of the Subregional Office for Central Africa, Mr. Pedro and the Sub-Director for Regional and International Trade Relations of the Ministry of Commerce of Cameroon, Emmanuel Mbarga, thanked the experts for their active participation in the meeting and declared the thirty-third session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts for Central Africa closed.

Annex

DOUALA CONSENSUS ^a

Preamble

WE, participants at the 33rd session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE) for Central Africa under the theme: “Made in Central Africa: from a vicious circle to a virtuous circle”,

Representing Governments of ECCAS member States, regional and subregional institutions (ECCAS, CEMAC, their specialized institutions and OAPI), the private sector (Employers organizations, Chambers of Commerce, etc.), the Civil Society, as well as agencies and organizations of the United Nations system, and other financial and technical partners, meeting in Douala, Republic of Cameroon, on the initiative of the SubRegional Office for Central Africa of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (SRO-CA/ECA) and in collaboration with the Government of Cameroon,

Noting that with an average annual real GDP growth rate of 5 per cent between 2010 and 2015, economic growth in Central Africa neither accelerated the pace of industrialization nor enhanced the development of intra-regional trade,

Noting that several countries of the sub-region affected by the collapse of commodity prices, notably oil, are facing significant macroeconomic imbalances marked by a contraction in growth, spiralling indebtedness, worsening fiscal and trade deficits and a substantial drop of external reserves,

Recognizing that the current system of production has not been able to engender a virtuous circle of inclusive growth, essentially because of heavy concentration of production factors and resources in low productivity activities,

Considering that to foster a shift towards a trajectory of sustained growth and long-term human development, the structural transformation expected in Central Africa must derive from an industrialization process anchored on commodities given the existing natural resources potentials,

Aware that economic diversification through an accelerated industrialization process is the imperative pathway towards inclusive and sustainable growth and breaking with vulnerability arising from increased dependence on unprocessed raw materials,

Taking due account of the communiqué of the Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central African States (CEMAC), held in Yaoundé-Cameroon on 23rd December 2016 prescribing steps towards short-term macroeconomic stabilization and intensification of measures and actions to achieve economic diversification,

^a Published without formal editing.

Hereby adopt the Consensus hereafter to speed up economic diversification through industrialization:

It is important to prioritize industrial policy in national development visions and strategies, while ensuring consistency with the rest of macroeconomic and sectoral policies, notably trade and urbanization policies. Accordingly, there is need to promote an appropriate macroeconomic framework underpinned by active and contra-cyclic public policies, fostering the entrepreneurial spirit, innovation and competitiveness.

Consequently, it is important to generate or update sub-regional and national industrialization policy frameworks. At sub-regional level, the industrialization framework must be harmonized taking due account of the ongoing process of rationalization of Regional Economic Communities (RECs). At national level, industrial policies must be drafted and effectively implemented, with commitment at the highest level possible. Moreover, institutions, mechanisms and tools must be strengthened and a framework for inter-sectoral coordination and public-private consultation enhanced.

It is imperative to organize regular high-level regional meetings between member States and private sector players, notably within the framework of annual summits on industrial development in Central Africa.

In order to accelerate the industrialization process in Central Africa, it is imperative to raise the level of productivity, competitiveness, attractiveness of economies and of sub-regional integration.

In this light, it is important to ensure that industrialization is not only transformative and hinged on commodities, but is driven by trade and promotes agro-industry and the manufacturing sector.

Accordingly, special emphasis must be laid on the “Made in Central Africa” trademark, as well as establishment of industrial areas and growth centres, to the accelerated implementation of the initiative “Boosting Intra-African Trade – BIAT”, support to the development of national, subregional, regional and international value chains as well as support to nascent industries.

Valuing local products and promoting Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) is key to boosting their competitiveness for better integration into value chains.

Facilitating access to national and sub-regional funding instruments suited to the needs and requirements of a transformative industrial policy is indispensable. The time has come to diversify partnerships of the type “resources for infrastructure” and opt for partnerships of the type “resources for industrialization” wherein our natural resources will form the basis of our industrialization.

All recommendations of the 33rd Session of the ICE contained in annex 1 need to be brought to the attention of the policy organs of ECCAS and CEMAC and member States. The Bureau of the ICE, with the assistance of the ECA Sub-Regional Office for Central Africa will monitor the implementation of the Douala Consensus and its recommendations.

Vote of thanks

We, participants at the 33rd session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE) for Central Africa, meeting in Douala from 26 to 29 September 2017, extend our gratitude to His Excellency Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon and Head of State, for authorizing the hosting of the session.

We also thank the Government and people of the Republic of Cameroon for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to us throughout our stay in Douala.

Lastly, we thank the ECA for the impeccable organization of the 2017 edition of the ICE and commend the choice of the theme of the session. We are satisfied with the level of representativeness of participants from national and regional stakeholders working on the issue of industrialization, agro-industry and value chains in Central Africa.

Done at Douala, on 29 September 2017