



**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA**

Quarterly Briefing Meeting with African Ambassadors

Briefing Note

Addis Ababa 13 March 2013

Briefing Note of the Executive Secretary

The Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa and African Ambassadors held his second quarterly briefing with African Ambassadors to exchange views on ECA's work. The meetings continue to be a sounding board on how ECA is responding to the interests and demands of its member states.

This Note provides an overview of substantive work undertaken by ECA over the past three months. It will also highlight some key activities that will be taking place over the next three months.

I. Activities from December 2012 to March 2013

The approach taken in this Note is to focus on substantive areas of work and accompanying outcomes rather than to provide a listing of events. The topics to be addressed relate to an update on the ECA reform process, technical assistance services provided to member states, knowledge generation and information sharing activities and consensus building.

1. ECA reform update

With the invaluable support of the Permanent Representatives Committee and the Executive Council of the African Union, ECA's proposals on its new strategic direction were endorsed by the January 2013 African Union Summit of Heads of State and Government in its Decision *Assembly/AU/Dec.450 (XX)* on "*Refocusing the Economic Commission for Africa to support the transformation agenda of the African Union*". Subsequently, the ECA has embarked on the change process accompanying this new strategic direction aimed at retooling itself and recalibrating its work.

It should be recalled that the refocusing and reprofiling of ECA responds to many needs including the changing global environment, recent changes in the African continent itself and global processes including the Rio +20 Conference and the post-2015 development agenda. And, as announced during the first quarterly briefing, ECA's programmatic work is being realigned with emphasis on (i) strengthening the rigor and pertinence of knowledge produced by ECA; (ii) making ECA the authoritative source of analytical insights into African development; (iii) generating knowledge underpinned by robust statistics; and (iv) improving the packaging and communication of ECA knowledge products to core policy constituents.

With regard to knowledge generation the emphasis will be on specialization in areas in which ECA research can make a difference or have an impact. It will take the frontline in generating original data and knowledge, grounding its policy research and advocacy on clear and objective evidence. This would require giving greater emphasis on generating robust statistics and data using innovative techniques including information and communications technologies. It also means that ECA's sub-regional presence will be leveraged to support the collection and collation of data in member States which will also be used to generate informative and regularly updated country profiles.

The overall ECA programme of work is therefore being organized around nine (9) interdependent and complementary subprogrammes to support the transformation agenda of the African Union and its NEPAD programme. These are: (1) *Macroeconomic policy*; (2) *Regional integration and trade*; (3) *Innovations, technologies and management of Africa's natural resources*; (4) *Statistics*; (5) *Capacity development*; (6) *Gender and women in development*; (7) *Sub regional activities for development*; (8) *Development planning and administration*; and (9) *Social development policy*;

The reconfiguration of the sub-programmes is based on several principles particularly with regard to ensuring that ECA's work is based on its specialization and comparative advantages in economic and social development. This specialization means for instance that ECA's work would not duplicate activities that are better undertaken elsewhere including in the African Union or in UN specialized agencies.

ECA's knowledge generating activities will have to be complemented by sub-programmes that enhance knowledge delivery to its member States and their regional and sub-regional institutions with IDEP playing a central role in the area of capacity development. The modalities for implementation of these sub-programmes include a combination of policy research, consensus building, capacity development, and advisory services and training. The process of reform will also be accompanied by efforts to upscale programme delivery through new business standards aimed at changing gradually its institutional culture.

The next steps for ECA will be present a detailed proposal to the upcoming Joint AU-EC|A annual meetings of the Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (21-26 March 2013, Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire) for submission to the UN Economic and Social Council for approval and subsequently to the UN General Assembly for endorsement.

2. Knowledge Generation And Sharing

ECA continues to generate and share knowledge on different issues with its constituents and stakeholders.

Our focus on climate change was intensified with 6 county case studies on climate resilience in the agricultural sector; and climate change loss and damage being finalized during the period under review. The preliminary results of these case studies were presented at the COP 18 meeting. Peer reviewed case studies will later be published in academic journals.

Another important knowledge sharing platform for the ECA has been the annual publication of our flagship report on economy in Africa. African countries have a real opportunity to promote economic transformation through a commodity-based industrialization process, capitalizing on the continent's resource endowments and high commodity prices and the changed organization of the global production process.

The 2013 edition of the Economic Report on Africa (ERA 2013), themed *Making the Most of Africa's Commodities: Industrializing for Growth, Jobs, and Economic Transformation*, presents a justifiable case that massive industrialization based on commodities in Africa is imperative, possible and beneficial. This year's publication will be launched during the upcoming African conference of finance ministers in Abidjan.

The ECA continues to support the anti corruption agenda on the continent. In this regard, two studies were completed on 'A Model for Anti Corruption Laws' and 'Findings on Corruption from the APRM Country Reports'. It is hoped that countries will use the recommendations in this report and use it to strengthen anti corruption institutions in-country.

The role of ICT in development cuts across all sectors. ICT makes it easier and faster to share information and lessons learnt in different areas. In this light an E-Network for sharing good practices on National Gender Machineries has been set up and is currently being piloted among six countries. A workshop held in March will begin the process of initiating dialogue on how to advocate on gender issues with other ministries, departments and agencies in-country. It is hoped that expanding this innovative sharing mechanism through the use of ICT will enhance the success of gender mainstreaming at the national level.

A closely related activity was the production of a 'Compendium on Good Practices in Gender Mainstreaming: Gender and Local Governance' which showcased six case stories on the positive impacts of mainstreaming gender in local development and decentralization. It is hoped that this compendium will inspire and increase commitment for the implementation of national policies and strategies on gender equality and women's empowerment.

An IDEP 50th High-Level Policy Dialogue was convened in Dakar, Senegal, as the grand finale event to mark 50 years of the establishment of the Institute. A Dialogue was held on the theme of "50 Years of Development Planning in Africa: Retrospect and Prospect". About 75 participants, including the President of the National Assembly of Senegal, the Executive Secretary of the ECA, ministers, ambassadors, senior academics, senior civil society leaders and representatives of the media attended.

A policy dialogue on "Cultures of Development Planning" was organized on the back of the 2013 edition of FESPACO, the biennial pan-African festival of cinema. The programme attracted the participation of development planners, culture workers, and policy researchers drawn from all of the sub-regions of Africa.

Our Library and information services department have rolled out a federated search application for the Access to Scientific Knowledge in Africa (ASKIA) Initiative and are currently developing the ECA Institutional Repository with 16,000 records and 9,000 digital files. These applications, when finalized will improve research and documentation capacity of ECA staff in their effort to support member states and RECs better.

Another ECA flagship publication is the Assessing Regional Integration in Africa (ARIA VI) Report. This is an annual report that aims to carry forward the momentum towards boosting intra African trade and the establishment of the CFTA by helping to fast-track the

harmonization of key trade policies and instruments. This is a joint publication by the ECA and the AfDB. The publication is in its final stage of preparation and will be launched later on in the year.

Other publications in finalizations stages include the 2013 MDGs report, the 2013 African Economic Outlook Report, the third edition of the African Governance Report (AGR III), the Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Report and Africa's Innovation Ecosystem publication.

3. Technical Cooperation/Advisory Services

The ECA is mandated to provide technical support and assistance to member states and RECs on demand. On a regular basis, technical staff are seconded to provide specific time bound and relevant support to ongoing processes and events. It is under this mandate that a staff was seconded to the secretariat of the High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Agenda. Technical support included the preparation of background papers that informed the discussions the panel meetings.

Land and its proper governance is an important element of African societies. The processes of its economic valuation, link to ecosystems and the role of grassroots participation in its proper management were key themes in trainings organized for 110 members of land agencies, private sector, civil societies and RECs in two workshops held in both Anglophone and Francophone Africa. It is expected that new skills learnt from these meetings will support member states in address pressing land issues in their respective countries.

Working closely with the African Union Commission, the ECA supported the work of the African Union Advisory Board on Corruption (AUABC) in various dimensions especially during the celebration of Anti corruption week.

On the statistics front, in addition to supporting the design of various indices such as the African Gender and Development Index (AGDI) and the Sustainable Development Indicators (SDI), ECA also assisted national statisticians to develop a road map for implementing the African Plan as part of implementing the 2008 System of National Accounts (SNA). It is expected that this roadmap will help address in the long run to ensure standardization in the work of National Statistics Authorities.

ECA continued to work with member states on Public-Private Partnership (PPP) projects. During the period under review, ECA in conjunction with other regional commissions implemented a Development Account project on building PPPs for promoting renewable energy in rural areas. The project is expected to demonstrate to stakeholders, especially the private sector, the benefits of PPP on improving access to energy services in rural areas while contributing to reasonable profits. ECA provided the technical expertise to support the project.

In collaboration with our capacity building wing –IDEP, ECA and UN-Women co-hosted a policy dialogue on "Engendering Development Planning in Africa". This meeting brought together about 25 directors of gender policy, development planning, and policy researchers

drawn from various African countries to deliberate on strategies to ensure gender is mainstreamed in development planning processes.

Technical assistance on water, sanitation, waste management was also provided to member states in the context of sustainable development.

4. Consensus Building

Consensus building covers a wide range of events and activities in which ECA supports member states to reach agreements on particular issues of continental importance.

In this light, ECA supported and was represented at the Congress of African Economists meeting in Dakar in March. This meeting brought together economists working on African issues to discuss emerging trends and share research information about African development. . The outcome of this meeting will feed into the upcoming Africa Finance Ministers Conference.

Governance experts also met at The Third Committee Meeting on Governance and Popular Participation in Africa under the theme ‘The Developmental State; What Options for Africa?’ This meeting brought together civil society experts, government officials, scholars and the media. It is hoped that the recommendations of this meeting will be taken seriously by African states in their developmental planning processes.

ECA supported Africa’s preparation towards the 57th session of the Commission on the Status of Women by bringing together Ministers of Gender and Ministers of Foreign Affairs. The outcome was the Addis Ababa Declaration which helped inform and ensure an African common position. It is expected that this Declaration will be used by member states for negotiations at the CSW in New York.

In a related event towards preparing Africa to better influence global United Nations processes, the ECA also supported preparatory work by the African group for the 44th UN Statistical Commission in New York. ECA staff worked with colleagues from the AfDB, AUC, RECs and member states over two months to develop appropriate African positions on statistics. These were then shared during the Commission Meeting. It is hoped that these positions will influence the outcome of the meeting and the future of statistics in Africa.

Our training and capacity building wing, IDEP, also held the annual meeting of their governing council in Dakar. The session deliberated, among others, on the revised IDEP 2013 work plan and budget, and the proposals of the Chair of Council for a deeper programmatic integration of IDEP into the ECA.

5. Sub Regional Activities For Development

Sub Regional offices (SROs), prior to moving to their new functions as sub regional data banks, continued to generate knowledge, provide advisory services and build consensus.

Technical support and assistance was provided under a broad range of themes including trade and the structural transformation of African economies, advice to RECs on various policy harmonization issues was provided, the tracking the progress of NEPAD in specific regions was supported, national economic forecasting models were inputted into, and platforms for regional working groups on the Post MDG agenda was provided. These assists, given on demand and to support specific time bound activities, have ensured that members states' development processes stay on track and adequately address issues of long term importance at country and regional level.

Our SROs were particularly busy in the area of natural resources, green economy, industrialization and the regional integration agenda. Consultations and meetings on cross boundary natural resource exploitations, national level initiatives on green economy, dialogue with governmental policy makers on the importance of the Africa Mining Vision, as well as specific support for strengthening trade agreements between regional neighbors were held at various levels.

In the area of knowledge generation, all SROs produced region and theme specific technical papers and publications and supported expert group meetings aimed at accelerating growth and development on the continent.

Region specific Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE) meetings on topics broadly aligned under industrialization, green economy and energy security also took place in the period under review.

II. Forthcoming events: Mid-March to June 2013

1. Update on the 6th Joint Annual Meetings of the AU-ECA Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development

Preparations for the 6th Joint Annual Meetings of the AU-ECA Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development are well underway to take place in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire from 25 to 26 March 2013 under the theme "*Industrialization for an Emerging Africa*". The Conference will be preceded by a meeting of the Committee of Experts to be held from 21 to 24 March 2013.

The two institutions are working very closely here in Addis Ababa through regular meetings of a Steering Committee that is co-chaired by the AUC Commissioner for Economic Affairs and the Deputy Executive Secretary of ECA. ECA and AUC are also working closely with all African Embassies and Diplomatic missions in Addis Ababa in order to mobilize massive participation and at the highest possible level. Regular consultations with the various host country organizing commissions are also taking place on regular basis in order to coordinate efforts for successful outcome. Furthermore, the Executive Secretary of ECA has undertaken several of consultation missions to a number of African capitals to provide more insight on the new ECA's strategic direction and to make a strong case for participation in the Conference at the ministerial level.

It should be recalled that this session of the Conference is one of the most important statutory events in the annual calendar of both the ECA and the AU. The Conference will address the question of how African countries can design and implement effective industrial strategies and policies that will support the promotion of value addition and economic transformation, and reduce dependence on the production and export of unprocessed materials. More specifically, this year Conference will deliberate against the background of recent economic and social developments, strategies and policies for accelerating industrialization in Africa; industrialization and structural transformation; the challenges of planning and financing industrialization in Africa. Other issues such as progress towards regional integration as well as towards the MDGs and the Post-2015 Development Agenda and implementing Rio+20 will be discussed in order to provide a framework to the theme of industrialization and value addition in Africa.

Judging from the record high level of confirmations received to date – close to 30 ministers; a dozen Governors of Central bank and about 150 experts – the 2013 edition of the Conference promises to be a very exciting and engaging event with high expectations, given the wide range of issues to be discussed and their relevance to Africa’s transformative agenda. It will also be the first ever such a Conference for both the new Chairperson of the AUC and the Executive Secretary of ECA to engage African ministers.

In order to improve on the Conference format in terms of interaction, the two institutions have adopted the *Davos Style* plenary sessions, so as to give Ministers an opportunity to discuss and share their views and experiences in transforming their economies. The discussions will draw on Issues Papers and technical background materials, which synthesizes the results of our recent research on the subject. This will include providing pragmatic policy recommendations and highlighting best practices in terms of policies and measures adopted by member States in formulating and implementing industrial policies.

The Conference is expected to lead to the adoption of a ministerial policy statement, which will provide the basis for concerted action at national and regional levels on the issues discussed. The Ministerial Statement and other outcomes of the Conference will be submitted by AUC as major inputs to inform discussions at the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government in May 2013. ECA will also submit the documents to the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

The Conference will be the first opportunity to formally launch the joint ECA-AUC flagship annual publication: *Economic Report on Africa-2013* themed *Making the Most of Africa’s Commodities: Industrializing for Growth, Jobs, and Economic Transformation*.

2. *World Economic Forum-Africa next session*

ECA will be collaborating with the World Economic Forum-Africa to organize a side-event on Private Equity Financing during the next session of WEF-Africa taking place in Cape Town, South Africa from 8 to 10 May 2013. The purpose of the event is to promote and accelerate private equity investments in Africa in support of its long term economic growth

and development. It is expected that the event will highlight the potential of PE as an alternative source of financing investments in Africa, contribute to deepening capital markets and to generating growth and jobs in the continent. The side event will also explore key opportunities existing in private equity industry in Africa, as well as identifying challenges affecting the growth of the industry. It will also highlight areas requiring policy action by governments so as to put the private equity industry on the path of sustainable growth.

3. *Retreat for African Ambassadors/Permanent Representatives to the United Nations*

ECA is working closely with the African Union Commission, the Office of the Special Adviser for Africa, the Special Adviser on the post-2015 Development Agenda and UNIDO amongst others to organize a Retreat for African Ambassadors/Permanent Representatives to the United Nations in New York on the Transformative Agenda for Africa. The retreat which will also take place in the New York area is planned for 19 to 20 April 2013 and the programme is being finalized in consultation with the African Group in New York. Its outcomes will be shared with all relevant parties including the African Group of Ambassadors in Addis Ababa.

4. *50th anniversary celebrations of the OAU/AU*

ECA will be working very closely with the African Union with regard to arrangements for the 50th anniversary celebrations of the OAU/AU taking place in May 2013. ECA's support will extend across all possible areas including participation in events, contribution to planning and organizing, publication of documents, provision of venues for activities and the like. It is to be recalled in this regard that Africa Hall which is located in the ECA compound was the home of the OAU/AU Summits up until the new AU facilities were commissioned last year.

III. Partnerships

ECA has continued to forge strategic partnership between different groups of partners.

1. *Annual joint review meeting of the pooled fund partners support to ECA*

ECA held its annual joint review meeting of the Pooled Fund Partners on 11 March 2013 at the United Nations Conference Centre. Four funding partners – Denmark, Sweden, Norway and the UK came together and agreed to pool their funding to a specific set of activities within the priority areas of the work of ECA through a joint funding framework, which is known as the Joint Financial Agreement.

The ECA's Partners Forum remains an important platform for interaction and dialogue with various partners. The four partners and ECA reached an understanding on common procedures for consultation and decision-making, disbursement mechanism, monitoring and reporting, review and evaluation, financial management and the exchange of information and cooperation between signatories, and a framework for partnership.

The meeting shared ideas on the implementation of several programmatic aspects of the ongoing partnership and on the forthcoming ECA's Business Plan 2013-2015.

2. *Strategic Partners Dialogues (SPD)*

In 2009 and 2011, the AUC, ECA and AfDB in association with the RECs hosted two events, the so-called "Strategic Partners' Dialogues" which provided opportunities for the leadership of the host institutions to discuss major issues in partnership and development with high-level representatives of a large number of partner organizations, in particular bilateral donor agencies.

A third such event is presently being planned for 2013 as part of the consultations forming part of the Agenda 2063 drafting process. As such, the event will take place between the May 2013 and the January 2014 Summits, probably in September or October. The meeting will give the parties an opportunity to discuss the implications of the Agenda 2063 vision for the future development of the partnership between Africa and its external partners.

3. *ECA Business Plan 2013-2015*

As part of implementing ECA's new strategic direction, efforts were made to realign the Strategic Framework of the Commission for the period 2014-2015 so as to take account of the African transformative agenda. This has resulted in revisiting the upcoming ECA's Business Plan currently under preparation before engaging prospective partners.