

**Economic and Social Council**

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**Economic Commission for Africa**  
**Committee on Gender and Social Development**  
First Session  
Addis Ababa, 17 and 18 December 2015

**Aide-memoire****I. Introduction**

1. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), through its Social Development Policy Division, is convening the first session of the Committee on Gender and Social Development, in Addis Ababa, on 19 and 20 November 2015.
2. The Committee is a statutory body of experts and policymakers that provides guidance and advice to ECA on gender and social development issues. Based on its mandate, it will provide strategic vision and direction to the Social Development Policy Division by reviewing activities implemented during the period 2014–2015, and discussing those planned for the biennium 2016–2017. The deliberations of the Committee will result in recommendations to strengthen ECA subprogrammes on gender and social development to better serve Africa's member States and its regional and subregional organizations.
3. The theme of the first session of the Committee, "Sustainable Development Goals in Africa: Enhancing gender-responsive and social development policies", is consistent with the current regional and global policy processes and dialogues on inclusive and sustainable development. The outcome of the session will contribute to framing Africa's priorities, as far as gender and social development issues are concerned, and to shaping those global processes.
4. The Committee will be organized in a context marked by a number of regional and global development frameworks, including Agenda 2063, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the outcome of the global process which Africa shaped through its common position on the post-2015 agenda. The Sustainable Development Goals were adopted by the General Assembly in September 2015, in New York.
5. In addition, the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which will be held from 30 November to 11 December 2015, will lead to a new international agreement on climate change, applicable to all countries, with the aim of keeping global warming below 2°C. A critical milestone is the attention given to gender issues and social development in those processes.

## **II. Objectives**

6. The Committee will provide member States with a platform to reflect on structural and emerging gender and social development issues in the overall regional and global development landscapes. In so doing, the most effective strategies to tackle gender and social development issues in Africa, and the role that ECA could play in that regard, will be discussed.

7. Specifically, the aim of the Committee is to review the progress of gender and social development in Africa, and to identify challenges, what has worked, and implementation gaps to ensure the desired impact is obtained.

## **III. Expected outcomes and outputs**

8. A number of outcomes and outputs are expected from the first session of the Committee. These include:

### *Outcomes*

(a) Enhanced understanding by the Committee of the approaches that can be used to deal more effectively with gender and social development challenges, during the policy formulation, implementation and reform processes;

(b) Strengthened capacity of member States to develop, implement and monitor gender and social development policies and programmes;

(c) Strengthened partnerships for enhanced responses to social development opportunities and challenges in Africa;

(d) Enhanced grasp of the role that Africa's population and ongoing urbanization processes could play for the inclusive and sustainable transformation of the continent.

### *Outputs*

9. At the end of the session, conclusions and recommendations made by the experts and policymakers will be adopted. These will subsequently be embodied in a report.

## **IV. Role of the Committee on Gender and Social Development**

10. The role of the Committee is set out in paragraph 18A.45 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014–2015 (A/68/6), which reads as follows:

The role of the Committee on Gender and Social Development, as an advisory forum of experts and policymakers, is to provide guidance to the Commission in its work of promoting equitable and inclusive human and social development in Africa, with particular focus on gender, employment, population and youth development, social protection and urbanization. The Committee reviews follow-up activities pertaining to global conferences and regional action programmes in the areas of social development, including the global and regional frameworks on gender equality and women's empowerment. It also reviews major trends and issues of regional interest regarding human and social development. The Committee meets biennially.

11. More specifically, the Committee:

- (a) Provides guidance and an expert opinion on the Division's priorities and activities;
- (b) Reviews past activities and future programmes;
- (c) Provides recommendations for strengthening ECA programmes to better serve member States and regional economic communities;
- (d) Provides policy guidance to ensure the relevance of activities for meeting Africa's development needs and addressing development challenges on the continent;
- (e) Supports implementation and review of the regional and international policy agenda in relation to the areas of work of the Division;
- (f) Supports ECA partnership with the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank, and with development partners.

## **V. Election of the Bureau**

12. The Committee shall elect a Bureau consisting of a Chair, two Vice-Chairs and two Rapporteurs for a two-year term (2016–2017). The election of the Bureau will take place at the first session. Subsequently, the Bureau will be elected every two years. The election of the officers will be based on three criteria: geography (one representative from each ECA subregion), language and gender.

13. The Bureau will be elected following consultations with senior members of the diplomatic corps, the members of the Committee and the secretariat of the Committee (ECA).

## **VI. Format of the session**

14. The first session will be organized into plenary sessions as per the attached draft agenda. Thematic presentations will be made by the secretariat, followed by plenary discussions during which the Committee will make observations and comments, draw conclusions and make recommendations.

## **VII. Documentation**

15. The first meeting of the Committee will be informed by the following reports of the subprogramme:

- Provisional agenda, provisional programme of work and provisional annotated agenda
- Report of the Social Development Policy Division to the Committee
- African Gender and Development Index
- Draft African Social Development Report
- African Social Development Index
- Report on Urbanization
- African Youth Report

16. Other non-recurrent publications and technical materials will also be distributed for information during the session.

## **VIII. Participation**

17. The Committee is composed of experts from ECA member States drawn from line ministries and the African Union Commission, as well as representatives of the United Nations system, civil society organizations, academia and the regional economic communities as observers. ECA and the Social Development Policy Division serve as convener and secretariat of the Committee.

## **IX. Language**

18. The session will be conducted in English and French, with simultaneous interpretation.