

Office for West Africa

**Twenty-second Meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts for
West Africa**

Robertsfield, Liberia
8–10 May 2019

**TWENTY-SECOND MEETING OF THE
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE OF SENIOR
OFFICIALS AND EXPERTS FOR WEST AFRICA**

Conclusions and recommendations

Introduction

1. The twenty-second session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for West Africa of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) was held from 8 to 10 May 2019 in Robertsfield, Liberia, with the technical, logistical and financial support of the Government of the Republic of Liberia. The theme of the meeting was "***Demographic dynamics for sustainable development in West Africa: challenges and policy measures***".
2. The following ECA statutory documents were reviewed: the report on the implementation of the Office's work programme and the report on the progress made in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The twenty-second session of the Committee presented an opportunity to discuss the economic and social profile of the subregion and ECA initiatives in support of the efforts made by the various countries in the field of development and regional integration. It also served to provide dialogue on the Liberia country profile prepared under the structural transformation, employment, production and society (STEPS) framework and also as a forum to discuss measures needed to address the challenges posed by the demographic dynamics for development programme and to better position the West African countries in their efforts to capture the demographic dividend. Lastly, the session made recommendations pertaining to the development of the West African countries.

Participation

3. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following ECOWAS member States: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. The regional economic commissions and the following intergovernmental organizations were also represented: Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), Sub-Saharan African Economic and Statistical Observatory (AFRISTAT), the President's Delivery Unit (PDU) of Kenya, the African Development Bank, the African Centre for Meteorological Application for Development (ACMAD) and the United Nations Development Programme in Liberia.

Opening ceremony

4. Four statements were delivered at the opening ceremony, by the following participants: Bakary Dosso, Acting Director of the ECA Subregional Office for West Africa Office; Pa Lamin Beyai, Resident Coordinator a.i. of the United Nations System in Liberia; Rock Comahoue (Benin), the outgoing Chair of the Committee at its twenty-first session; and Samuel D. Tweah Jr., Minister of Finance and Development Planning of the Republic of Liberia, who gave the official opening address. The ceremony, which was enhanced by the performance of a Liberian cultural troupe, was graced by the presence of Kofi Konadu Apraku, Commissioner for Macroeconomic Policy and Economic Research and Fatima Siga Jagne, Commissioner for Social Affairs and Gender of the ECOWAS Commission.

Election of officers

5. The following officers were elected:
 - Chair: **Liberia**
 - Vice-Chair : **Nigeria**
 - Rapporteur : **Benin**

Adoption of the agenda

6. The representatives of member States adopted the following agenda submitted by the secretariat.

Presentations and discussions

a. Report on the profile of the West Africa subregion

7. In its presentation, ECA noted that West Africa's growth had accelerated in 2018 (3.2 per cent compared to 2.4 per cent in 2017), driven by the expansion of oil production in Ghana and Nigeria, the dynamic service sector, strong domestic demand and infrastructure investment. That trend was expected to consolidate in 2019, with growth expected to reach 3.4 per cent. The social performance of the subregion remained below par, however, and was subject to various forms of risks (related to international economic conditions, internal civil and security disturbances, climate variability and the challenge posed by demographic dynamics), which could hinder economic and social progress in the short and medium term. Those problems called for suitable solutions. Efforts must therefore be made to better control demographic dynamics and capture the demographic dividend, mobilize more internal resources, make the economy more resilient through diversification and transformation policies and improve the business environment.
8. The discussions focused mainly on the importance of modernizing the agricultural sector, developing infrastructures, stimulating the private sector, reducing gender inequalities, investing in human capital, creating more decent jobs, strengthening intra-Community trade and accelerating the process of creating the single currency. The representatives called on ECA to deepen analyses of the security situation and its impact on the countries' socioeconomic performances and to update some of the countries' macroeconomic data, focusing as much as possible on national **sources**.

b. Report on the implementation of the work programme of the Subregional Office for West Africa in 2018 and prospects for 2019

9. The secretariat presented the report on the activities of the Office for the period July 2018–May 2019. In line with the previous report, the focus was placed on the changes initiated or likely to be initiated vis-à-vis the expected outcomes. As a result, the activities carried out had, on the whole, enabled the Office to exert a greater influence on policies, gain credibility and trust, strengthen its accountability mechanisms, deepen its learning culture and strengthen its operational effectiveness. The Office reiterated that the weakness of the national statistical systems and the continuing threat of the economic, socio-political, and institutional and security environment in the subregion were a hindrance to the implementation of its activities. It was noted that the Subregional Office for West Africa was likely to face increased demand during the 2019–2020 period as a result of its specialization in issues of demographic dynamics for development. The Office undertook to continue supporting member States in the subregion not only in developing national strategies to enable them to take full advantage of the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement, but also in assessing their progress towards achieving the structural transformation of their economies and the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union.
10. Representatives thanked ECA for the various forms of support provided and asked ECA to supplement the activities conducted with information relating to certain countries. The discussions concerned in particular the format of the Bureau's activity report, the recommendations of the

Intergovernmental Commission of Experts 2018 addressed to ECA and the progress of a number of projects initiated at the continental level. In particular, participants sought information on the draft African integration index, support for the development of national strategies on the Continental Free Trade Area and its impact on the economies of the area, the single currency project and the prospect of ECOWAS enlargement. They expressed regret that the integrated tool for planning and monitoring for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 was still in a test phase in some countries, almost four years after the adoption of Agenda 2030 and urged ECA to speed up the finalization and implementation process.

c. Report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

11. The secretariat presented the draft 2019 report on progress made by countries of the subregion towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Unlike the 2018 report, which had focused on the Sustainable Development Goals, the 2019 report also assessed progress in the achievement of the corresponding targets of Agenda 2063. The main weakness of the report was the non-availability of data. As a result, it had not been possible to cover all the indicators of the two agendas. In terms of results, it appears that, thanks to the public policies implemented by the States, the majority of countries had made encouraging progress in the field of maternal and child health, access to drinking water, the promotion of renewable energies and the creation of wealth through the expansion of the middle class. There was still a widening gap, however, in the areas of poverty alleviation and malnutrition; quality of education; gender and income inequality; sanitation and decent housing; nature conservation; and civil status and domestic resource mobilization. In addition to that sectoral underperformance, there was a cross-sectoral deficit in the financing and financial autonomy of national statistical systems. The secretariat report concluded by highlighting some new developments regarding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and the process of their monitoring and evaluation.
12. At the end of the presentation, discussions focused on the consistency of the data analyzed with national data, the appropriateness of the indicators analyzed in relation to national realities, the number of countries considered for analysis on certain indicators, the comparison of the data analyzed with realities on the ground, the consistency between the data contained in the tables and graphs and the analyses contained in the summary report. Participants also noted the difference in base years that made it difficult to compare countries. They wanted progress to be analyzed in terms of perspective against the targets. Representatives also felt that an analysis of performance before 2015 was not particularly relevant. In addition, they called for more in-depth analysis by country and by indicator.

d. Report on ECA continental initiatives

13. The Secretariat outlined the highlights of the Commission's work at the continental level and the capacity-building opportunities offered to member States through the Institute for Planning and Development (IDEP). On the basis of the report presented by its Executive Secretary at the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development held in March 2019 in Marrakech, Morocco, ECA presented the areas in which it recently provided support at the continental level. Support to Member States focused on development planning issues, alignment of the 2030 and 2063 agendas with national plans for development, economic diversification and industrialization, gender and demographic dividend as well as statistics. In relation to the Institute, participants were given information, its mandate, its governance institutions, its statutory activities, the number of people trained since 2018, research activities conducted, the course catalogue adopted by the technical advisory committee in 2018, current training and research activities relating to the African Continental Free Trade Area, online training

courses either already launched or scheduled to begin soon and the proposals for actions and programmes to be considered in the subregional context.

14. Representatives took note of ECA activities at the continental level, including capacity building. Some countries welcomed the option offered by IDEP to provide tailor-made training. The member States commended the Institute for its plans to include in its roadmap the training of a critical mass of government officials from the various countries. They requested and received information on the procedure for the selection of IDEP focal points and the criteria for awarding scholarships.

e. Special session on regional integration

15. Representatives heard a presentation by ECOWAS on its efforts to achieve integration. The Commissioner for Macroeconomic Policy and Economic Research started by highlighting efforts made by ECOWAS in the field of peace and security and the tangible results obtained in countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Liberia and, to a lesser extent, in Mali. ECOWAS worked on the premise that good governance was an important component of the struggle for peace, security and development. He then outlined the significant strides made by the Community towards achieving the single currency by 2020, including a multilateral surveillance mechanism that would ensure that States move forward on the same basis. He noted the erratic nature of the growth of economies that adversely affected regional indicators from one period to the other. He concluded by outlining the next steps in the roadmap towards the ECOWAS single currency, highlighting the measures taken in many other areas of interest for the development of West Africa.
16. Discussions focused on the modalities for the implementation of the single currency and the financing of the Community Development Programme (CDP), consisting of seven flagship projects.

f. Round table: "Demographic dynamics at the service of sustainable development in West Africa: Challenges and policy actions"

17. The round table was conducted under the moderation of Amadou Diouf, Acting Chief of the Demographic Dynamics for Development Section of the Subregional Office for West Africa, as part of a panel discussion comprising the following resource persons: Dr. Fatima Siga Jagne, ECOWAS Commissioner for Social Affairs and Gender; Pr. Latif Dramani, Coordinator of the Regional Excellence Centre on Generational Economics (CREG/CREFAT); Dr. Leticia Appiah, Executive Director of the national population council (NPC), Ghana; Mr Mainassara Assouman, Director General of Planning at the Ministry of Planning, Niger; Dr. Sanjo Faniran of the Ministry of Budget and National Planning, Nigeria; and Ms. Oumy Ndiaye of the Ministry of Economy and International Cooperation, Senegal.
18. The panel was informed by a discussion note which made the point that development could not be effective if economic policies were not coupled with adequate social policies, underlining the fact that, notwithstanding the significant economic performance achieved by most countries in the subregion in recent years, West Africa still faced significant social challenges. The subregion also had a population with a large proportion of young people, 44% of which were under 15 years of age, a proportion which continued to grow at a high rate of 2.7%. In this context, to seize the opportunity of the demographic dividend opened up by the structure and trend of the subregional population, it was imperative to invest on a larger scale in improving reproductive health and access to longer-term, quality education, particularly for girls. It was also crucial to strengthen

economic opportunities, especially for women and young people, with a view to creating more jobs for these groups

19. Thereafter, the presentations of the resource persons focused on identifying the optimal policies and measures to capture the demographic dividend and their integration into national development plans. Emphasis was placed on the concepts of transition and demographic dividend, the demographic experiences of developed countries and South-East Asia, the links between population dynamics and security issues in the region, contraceptive policies and ongoing initiatives in West Africa on demographic issues, including employment policies, small and medium enterprise strategies and youth and women's capacity-building projects. It should be noted that Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Cabo Verde shared their experiences in optimal policies and measures adopted by the States to capture the demographic dividend and integrate them into national development plans.
20. From the discussions it emerged that strategies to capture the demographic dividend must also include a subregional dimension, particularly through the community policies of the ECOWAS Commission. Such strategies must also include targeted actions against sexual abuse and human trafficking (including the rights and protection of children), raising awareness to bring about changes in behaviour and the creation of opportunities and schooling for girls. The improvement of civil registration systems was deemed essential in ensuring respect of the right to identification of populations but also in informing and guiding development planning, including policies to strengthen human capital. Furthermore, development policies must prioritize family planning, which, beyond being a right for women, was one of the determinants of fertility and therefore of population dynamics. While considering the diversity of options and measures required to capture the demographic dividend, representatives stressed the need to prioritize more comprehensive and integrated measures, which must be driven by the fiscal policy.

g. Dialogue on the Liberia STEPS profile

21. In its presentation, ECA noted that the Liberian economy was not very diversified. The economic structure continued to be dominated by the primary sector which accounted for about 70 per cent of the overall gross added value for the period 2010–2017, with the secondary and tertiary sectors representing respectively 11.4 and 17.9 per cent of that added value over the same period. The contributions of the sectors and branches of activity to overall added value had remained relatively steady since the beginning of the 1990s, suggesting a relatively slow transformation of the economic structures. In addition, there was a strong concentration around iron ore and rubber of either unprocessed or slightly processed exports, which represented some 70 per cent of the country's exports. At the social level, notwithstanding the progress made in implementing the development agendas, fertility rates were still high, the demographic transition was slow and many people had limited access to basic social services. These were challenges that required a consolidation of efforts for the successful implementation of the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development 2018–2023 and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.
22. Representatives welcomed the choice made by ECA to use data from national sources to conduct the analyses. They deplored the lack of reference to the main determinants of fertility in the document presented. With regard to the assessment of the unemployment rate, they stressed the importance of taking into account the context of African countries, where informal employment holds sway. On the question on Liberia's economic and social performance, they noted the dearth of investment in the agricultural sector and the low share of social spending in the national budget. Representatives also took note of the efforts undertaken by the Liberian authorities to improve the results achieved, through the implementation of the national development plan. An appeal was made to external partners to help Liberia to revitalize its

economic and social fabric, in particular by supporting programmes aimed at educating young people and improving the capacity to implement the country's development programme through fiscal policy leverage.

h. Report of the experts' group meeting on national capacities and mechanisms for assessing progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063: Status, challenges and prospects in West Africa

23. The representatives noted the report of the meeting.

i. Recommendations

24. The following recommendations were adopted by the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts for West Africa:

Report on the West Africa subregional profile

ECOWAS:

- Should hold further discussions aimed at developing at the sub-regional level, a strategy for the diversification of economies.
- Should remove constraints on the implementation of the Common External Tariff (CET).

Member States :

- Should develop strategies to modernize agriculture and put in place a long-term financing plan for agriculture.

Report of the implementation of the programme of work of the Subregional Office for West Africa in 2018 and the outlook for 2019

ECA:

- Should restrict the use of paper in the production and dissemination of working and information documents for the meetings of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts.
- Should ensure that the activity report is more in line with ECA's strategic priorities.
- Support member States upon request in strengthening vital statistics.
- Should take better account of issues of poverty and disability in the analysis and research work carried out by the Office, in the spirit of the UN Agenda 2030 not to leave anyone behind.
- Should improve coordination with the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank in the production of the regional integration index for Africa.

Member States:

Should prioritize the issue of vital registration and statistics.

Report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and agenda 2063

ECA:

- Should support countries in the rebasing of GDP to improve comparability between countries.
- Should support Member States in their efforts to take ownership of Agenda 2063 in collaboration with the African Union Commission.

Member States:

- Should produce the reference years of the SDG indicators.
- Should carry out the rebasing of GDP.
- Should strengthen communication between National Statistics Institutes and ministries in charge of planning and economics in order to achieve greater coherence between statistics and policy analysis.

Round table: “Demographic dynamics for sustainable development in West Africa: challenges and policy measures”

ECA:

- As part of the activities of the DDD Center, should generate knowledge that will support the States in the formulation of fiscal policies sensitive to the capture of the demographic dividend.

ECOWAS/ Member States:

- Should integrate population dynamics into development policies with a view to matching the wealth created with the social needs brought about by the growth of the population.
- Should more effectively take into consideration the schooling of girls in the formulation, implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation of development policies.

Report on the continental initiatives of ECA

ECA:

- In collaboration with subregional partners such as WAEMU and ECOWAS and under the coordination of IDEP, should develop a tailor-made, medium-term vocational training programme based on an assessment of the subregion's top training needs.
- Should plan and facilitate the organization of a round table of development partners to mobilize adequate funding for the implementation of the regional vocational training plan.

Member States:

- Should clear the arrears in financial contributions to enable IDEP to meet the growing training needs of countries, which is essential to support the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the 2063 Agenda.
- Should adopt tailor-made courses for the benefit of a critical mass of civil servants at the national level.

Launch of Liberia STEPS profile

ECA:

- Should refer to the main determinants of high fertility in the analysis of social conditions.



- In assessing the labour market, should take into account the context of African countries which is characterized by informal employment.

j. Report of the experts' group meeting on "National capacities and mechanisms for evaluating progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Development agenda and agenda 2063: Status, challenges and outlook for West Africa"

The Intergovernmental Committee of Experts for West Africa took note of the experts' group meeting and endorsed it.

Nigeria offered to host the twenty-third session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts for West Africa 2020. The date will be determined later by ECA, in cooperation with the Nigerian authorities.