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Summary of the work of the Economic Commission for Africa, 2019–2020

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith a summary of the work of the Economic Commission for Africa for the period 2019–2020.



Summary of the work of the Economic Commission for Africa, 2019–2020

[Original: Arabic, English and French]

Summary

In the period from April 2019 to March 2020, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) achieved a number of significant milestones in support of member States' development priorities and in line with the Commission's new strategic directions to deliver ideas and actions for an empowered, inclusive and transformed Africa in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want of the African Union. The present report summarizes notable achievements from that period that demonstrate the Commission's three core functions in action, including interventions in support of regional and subregional priorities; policy advisory services at the national, subregional and regional level; and assistance provided upon the request of member States for technical and capacity development. Information is also included on the instrumental role of ECA platforms for policy dialogue and consensus-building in advancing the capacities of African public officials in policy formulation and implementation.

I. Introduction

1. In 2019, ECA achieved a number of significant milestones in support of member States' development priorities and in line with the Commission's new strategic directions to deliver ideas and actions for an empowered, inclusive and transformed Africa in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want of the African Union.

2. As Africa, like the rest of the world, moves into 2020 and embarks on the United Nations decade of action and delivery for sustainable development, a more targeted implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is essential. For African countries, there is an acute need for accelerated action to deliver on the promises of prosperity. To enable this, as of March 2019, ECA started to implement a strategy for integrated and coherent programme delivery in 22 countries of focus by consolidating key deliverables of the Commission for joint planning and delivery in order to create a critical mass of investment in niche areas in these countries. This strategy is already contributing to improved programmatic interlinkages and integrated multidimensional policy support to countries and making optimal use of limited resources for more effective delivery on national priorities.

3. As the leading job creator on the continent, the private sector is at the heart of development discussions at ECA. The Commission is deepening its collaboration with the private sector in support of policies that foster stronger private-sector participation and private-sector governance in African economies and is also working with major stakeholders to ensure that African countries benefit from rapid technological change. Through ECA efforts, countries have ratified the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and have embarked on the development of national competitiveness strategies. Where infrastructure is concerned, the focus has moved from policy discourse to actions on the ground through the Sustainable Development Bond Initiative, where private-sector financing is being incentivized for the deployment of clean energy to meet the continent's growing energy needs.

4. ECA, guided by its strategic directions, the joint African Union-United Nations Framework, and the newly formed issue-based coalitions, is leveraging partnerships within and across the United Nations and the global development system to support countries in achieving their development objectives, underpinned by a focused work programme that emphasizes macroeconomic governance, private-sector development, technology, data and statistics, climate change, poverty and inequality, gender equality and regional integration.

5. Presented below are some of the notable achievements from 2019 that demonstrate the Commission's three core functions in action, including interventions in support of regional and subregional priorities; policy advisory services at the national, subregional and regional level; and assistance provided upon the request of member States for technical and capacity development. Information is also included on the instrumental role of ECA platforms for policy dialogue and consensus-building in advancing the capacities of African public officials in policy formulation and implementation.

II. Advancing implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the region

A. Poverty, gender and social policy

Strengthening the capacity of member States to monitor progress in gender equality and women's empowerment

6. ECA has extensively been applying the African Gender and Development Index, used by member States to perform self-assessments of their progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment, and also in the production of national reports for the 25-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Programme of Action. The index has also been used to produce the regional synthesis report for the 25-year review, endorsed by member States at a meeting of the African Union Commission. In addition, the index and national and regional reports for the regional 25-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Programme of Action were used by experts and ministers in drafting the document on the African political declaration and key messages on the 25-year review, for submission at the global 25-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Programme of Action.

7. The African Gender and Development Index also underpinned the production of several knowledge products and tools that were used to provide tailored technical support to member States, and to deliver hands-on training to their officers. They also informed high-level policy dialogues which have resulted in policy advocacy and uptake. Thus, in Namibia, ECA supported production of the national women's economic empowerment strategy, which will guide government measures to accelerate the achievement of women's economic empowerment. The strategy has subsequently been validated by the stakeholders for endorsement by the cabinet. Technical support was also provided to Mauritania, including an assessment of the national strategy for institutionalization of gender mainstreaming and the development of a road map to address shortcomings. This resulted in the integration of gender dimensions into the review of the country's national development plan and statistical framework.

8. These efforts helped to enhance the capacity of member States to monitor their progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment. This was demonstrated by the submission on time by 50 countries of their national reports under the 25-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 29 of which made direct and indirect references to the African Gender and Development Index and used related analysis in their self-assessed national reports, as part of the review process.

9. In addition, the African Gender and Development Index was also used to support the production of the African Union gender scorecard. This scorecard is an African Union assessment and ranking tool, designed since 2016 to measure country performance in respect of gender equality, the reaping of the demographic dividend and the control of corruption. Results of the gender scorecard assessment were presented at the 2019 Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, at which awards were presented to the Heads of State of the five best performing member States, in recognition of their greater accountability for gender equality. The roll-out of the African Gender and Development Index has been cumulative over the years, with implementation in no less than 40 countries in 2019.

Improved biomedical engineering expertise and innovative capacity of young people

10. ECA launched a pilot project in 2011 to assist member States in harnessing new technologies for improved health-care outcomes in Africa. The project, on engineering expertise to improve health outcomes in Africa, was designed to build

biomedical engineering and innovation capacity to overcome the inadequacy of medical devices needed by health-care professionals to offer life-saving services. The project's main aim was to develop the domestic capacity of African countries to install, repair, maintain and upgrade medical devices, attract female students to engineering and instil enhanced entrepreneurial and innovation competencies to bring medical devices to market.

11. Since 2011, ECA has been encouraging policymakers, industrial research institutions, the private sector, hospitals and universities to support and invest in the growth of biomedical engineering. These efforts contributed to enhancing the capacity of member States to harness new technologies for the development of Africa, as demonstrated by the critical number of young people that now have the capacity to install, repair, maintain and upgrade medical devices.

12. The project developed an innovative and entrepreneurial medical devices culture and helped to build the human resources necessary to bring new and improved medical device services and technologies to market. Close to 1,200 students embarked on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in biomedical engineering. Of the students that attended the innovators summer schools between 2012 and 2016, 48 per cent have now launched their own businesses; 65 per cent have developed new prototypes; 92 per cent have retained the social networks forged; and 19 per cent have won grants. Some 30 per cent of the students are female and all the innovation prizes at the seven innovators summer schools were won by female students.

13. To ensure sustainability, the African Biomedical Engineering Consortium was launched in 2012 to serve as a custodian and promoter of standards of training and research, capacity-building and resource mobilization, and also as a promoter of teacher and student exchanges. Since then the Consortium has attracted two grants worth some \$3 million – \$1.5 million in funding from the European Union for postgraduate training and staff exchanges (see the project website at www.africanbmembility.org), and another 1.2 million euros to develop an Africa-Europe electronic platform for the safe design of medical devices (see the project website at <http://ubora-biomedical.org>). Two partner teams, in Malawi and Uganda, have won global awards and prizes for design innovations – one of which is already on the market, while another completed its first clinical trials in 2018.

B. Strengthening trade and regional integration

Ratification of the African Continental Free Trade Area and strategies to harness its advantages

14. Working in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the European Union, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the International Trade Centre, Resident Coordinator offices and development partners, ECA contributed to the strengthening of regional cooperation and integration among member States for increased trade flows, improved industrialization and increased investments with better equipment, by promoting understanding of the benefits and challenges of implementing the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. Among the enablers, ECA conducted awareness-raising events in 34 member States, targeting national authorities, civil society organizations, journalists and the private sector through national forums, high-level promotional events and regional and subregional workshops on the Agreement and the importance of its ratification.

15. Harnessing the benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Area must start with a process of its incorporation in domestic legislation and frameworks. To that end, ECA has been assisting member States in the development of national strategies

on the Free Trade Area. Countries needed to identify both existing gaps and their comparative and competitive advantages for diversification and ability to develop or integrate value chains under the Agreement. This requires the design and implementation of new policy interventions or the retuning of existing policy frameworks, with a view to deriving maximum benefit from the Free Trade Area. The national strategies facilitated the identification of key value addition and trade and investment opportunities in potential markets, supply-side constraints, the measures to boost trade and production capacities required for a country to take full advantage of national, regional and global markets within the context of the Free Trade Area. These strategies are contributing primarily to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals 17 (targets 17.11 and 17.12) and 9 (target 9.2.1).

16. These efforts helped member States to gain a better understanding of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. A minimum of 22 member States must ratify the Agreement for it to enter into force and advocacy and awareness-raising efforts had to be sustained to fulfil this requirement and to garner a maximum number of signatories. In April 2019, the 22-country threshold was reached. As a result, the Agreement came into force in May 2019. In July 2019, at the African Union summit in the Niger, the operational phase of the Agreement was launched. Of the 55 members of the African Union, only one has yet to sign the Agreement. By the end of 2019, 27 countries had ratified the Agreement and nine national strategies on the Free Trade Area had been developed.

Implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area in Southern Africa

17. In addition, ECA provided technical support to member States in awareness-raising among stakeholders on the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and also supported the development of national strategies on the Free Trade Area through which the countries could best position the private sector and, in particular, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in benefiting from the expanded regional market created through the Free Trade Area. National multi-stakeholder awareness-raising and consultation workshops were held in Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe in 2019, while national strategies were produced and validated for Zambia and Zimbabwe. In this way, awareness of and knowledge about the African Continental Free Trade Area were strengthened and subsequently disseminated and the apprehensions and scepticism of stakeholders were allayed, in particular those of the private sector, regarding what they had initially perceived as the negative impacts of the Agreement, and countries were thereby placed on the path towards its ratification.

18. These efforts contributed to strengthening subregional and national programmes and capacities to achieve inclusive industrialization for reducing poverty and inequality in Southern Africa, as demonstrated by, first, the adoption by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Heads of State and Government in August 2019 of the template for development of the capacities of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in Southern Africa and also the SADC Protocol on Industry, whose development had been technically supported by ECA. Second, the endeavour to promote intraregional trade as a means of developing the productive capacities of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises was evidenced by the ratification of the Agreement in five member countries of the subregion, namely Eswatini, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Third, national strategies on the Free Trade Area were developed for Zambia and Zimbabwe.

19. Those achievements, namely, the development of national implementation strategies for the Free Trade Area by two countries; ratification of the Agreement by five countries; and the adoption of key instruments by one regional economic

community, represent an attainment of six outcomes, against the planned target of three outcomes.

C. Integrated multidimensional modelling, policy analysis and institutional reforms

Strengthened policy formulation and implementation through use of macroeconomic models

20. In response to the growing number of African countries seeking technical assistance with regard to tools and the associated capacity development activities, in 2015, ECA initiated a project to develop a prototype macroeconomic model that is generic in nature and scalable and can be customized into specific country characteristics reflecting specific country's economic developments. The development process, which involved the assessment of model requirements pertaining to African countries and the review of existing literature, model design, development and testing, continued for much of 2015 and 2016 before embarking on the actual model customization and its implementation in countries.

21. ECA has since supported African countries in the development and implementation of the macroeconomic models, to assist them in their policy formulation and implementation process. In specific countries, the process included surveying the countries' requirements, including those of Algeria, Burundi, Cameroon, Djibouti, Egypt, the Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritania, Senegal and Sierra Leone; the availability to them of economic analysis tools, knowledge and skills in economic analysis, in particular in econometrics and modelling in general; and collaboration between different country institutions. This survey informed the model development process and the associated skills development training sessions in modelling, forecasting, policy simulation and economic analysis in general.

22. The model is currently at different phases of development and implementation in various countries. Thus, it has been put into use in its final form (stage 3) in Algeria, Burundi, Djibouti, the Gambia and Ghana; scoping missions and initial training (stage 2) have taken place in Egypt, Ethiopia and Mauritania; and scoping missions involving requirements analysis (stage 1) have taken place in Cameroon, Kenya, Senegal and Sierra Leone. This work has contributed to strengthening macroeconomic policy analysis in member States, as evidenced by model output forecasts and simulations used during the country's deliberations with donors in Djibouti and the Gambia and in budget discussions in Ghana.

National planning strengthened for balanced regional development

23. ECA supported the formulation of a new development framework for Ethiopia and the different regions of the country, which outlined policy priorities and interventions designed to remedy regional imbalances through the country's national 10-year prospective plan for the period 2020/21–2030/31. National development planning in Ethiopia has largely focused on economic planning with insufficient regard for spatial and physical planning and its implications for economic outcomes. In addition, intersectoral linkages across key economic sectors have been weak. Ethiopia as a whole and the different regions of the country have also faced challenges in becoming more competitive, attracting investments, developing their resource potential and growing into dynamic hubs of economic transformation.

24. To tackle these shortcomings, ECA supported efforts by the National Planning Commission of Ethiopia to formulate a development framework to guide regional development priorities aligned with national growth and transformation targets. In

this process, representatives of all regions and sectors were consulted in order to strengthen the alignment of spatial and economic planning processes and priorities at various scales. ECA also helped to enhance the policy expertise and capacities of representatives of regions and sectors in Ethiopia through the use of its guidebook for policymakers on integrating urbanization in national development planning.

25. These efforts contributed to strengthening policies for inclusive and equitable spatial development policies in Ethiopia, as demonstrated by the formulation for the first time of a regional development framework for the country. By defining priorities for leveraging the potential of its regions to achieve its 10-year prospective plan, the framework will promote balanced regional development and improved economic and social outcomes for all.

Implementation of the Gambian national development plan (2018–2021)

26. In 2018, the Government of the Gambia launched its medium-term development plan – the national development plan for 2018–2021, anchored on the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. The successful implementation of the national development plan hinges upon the coordination and strong commitment of all the ministries, departments and agencies, accompanied by a robust monitoring and evaluation framework.

27. Acknowledging the role of ECA in supporting African countries in their development efforts through capacity development, the Government, represented by a high-level delegation from the Ministry of Finance approached the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) to seek support in strengthening the capacity of its officials in planning and budgeting, with a view to significantly upgrading implementation of the national development plan. In response, a two-week training-of-trainers session on results-based management was conducted in December 2018 in Banjul in collaboration with the Gambian office of the United Nations Development Programme. Applying lessons learned by the Gambian Government at an international conference organized in May 2018 in Brussels to mobilize resources for the flagship projects outlined in its national development plan, the availability of human and institutional capacity in project management and the development of bankable project proposals were identified as key requirements before the organization of another resource mobilization conference. Subsequently, a week-long intensive and practical training course was conducted in June 2019.

28. The course was part of the Government's commitment to enhancing capacities to address the perceived capacity gaps and to support reforms aimed at strengthening the development of bankable project proposals for the effective implementation of the 2018–2021 national development plan. It was aimed at familiarizing the participants with the use of selected tools on project proposal formulation, project proposal writing and project management strongly linked to the various priorities of the national development plan. This work was in line with targets 1.b, 5.1, 5.5, 5.a, 5.c, 8.1–8.9, 10.1, 10.4, 10.7, 17.1, 17.6, 17.8–17.15, and 17.17–17.19 of the Sustainable Development Goals, and also with the corresponding priorities of Agenda 2063.

29. These efforts were aimed at strengthening the capacity of African countries – in the present case, the Gambia – to formulate and manage effective public sector policies, as demonstrated by the high level of participation (37 Gambian public officials, including 10 women, and satisfaction rate (95 per cent). It has further resulted in the development of a project proposal on increasing milk production in the Gambia, which the Government of the Gambia intends to submit to its development partners. This proposal is one of many that are in the development pipeline by the Gambia.

D. Integrated delivery of services through the ECA subregional offices

Unemployment levels dropping in North Africa

30. ECA organized a regional high-level dialogue on development strategies and policies for employment creation in North Africa. Serving as a platform for the public sector, the private sector and civil society, the dialogue helped to identify policy reforms needed in the short, medium and long term, to overcome existing bottlenecks and labour market difficulties. In addition, the analysis of regional value chains identified sectors presenting complementarities among member countries with better job opportunities. This analysis was also extended to the blue economy sector.

31. By providing technical assistance to the Central Bank of Egypt, the Ministry of Economy of Algeria and the Central Bank of Mauritania, ECA launched the development of national macroeconomic models to reflect the main characteristics of each economy, with the aim of moving towards evidence-based macroeconomic policies in favour of employment.

32. ECA has stimulated interest in member States in the analysis of distortions in resource allocations and public policies. A memorandum of understanding has been concluded with the Higher Planning Commission in Morocco – the national statistical authority – on the development of a model quantifying such distortions, with a view to orienting resource allocations towards sectors that have more potential in terms of job creation.

33. To promote a coordinated approach with the many partners working in the area of employment, ECA initiated collaboration with a number of international institutions, including the World Bank, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the African Development Bank, research institutes such as the Brookings Institute and a range of national partners, including the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE) of Morocco, through which it has been possible to identify common areas for action. In addition, a revised road map (2019–2020) for implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals was adopted at a session of the subregional coordination mechanism, including one focus area on employment.

34. With ECA assistance and through the vehicle of South-South cooperation Morocco and Mauritania were able to adopt formally the 2008 System of National Accounts (2008 SNA). Use of the new system enhanced the methodological approach used for the compilation of national accounts (in terms of coverage of data collection, consideration of the informal sector, method of calculating financial sector variables, and other requirements).

35. As a result of the changes in its national accounts and thanks to the various innovations, the GDP of Mauritania was revised to reflect the actual components of income. For example, by rebasing its GDP, the figures jumped to 203,385 million ouguiyas in 2014, an evolution of 25 per cent by comparison with the levels for that same year calculated by the previous system of accounts (162,648 million ouguiyas, according to SNA 93).

Single currency for the countries of the Economic Community of West African States

36. ECA implemented 27 projects at country and regional levels in 2019, including in the areas of advocacy, consensus building and technical assistance in advancing the single currency agenda in the 15 Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) countries.

37. In 2018, the ECOWAS Commission requested support from ECA in assessing implementation of the road map towards introduction of the single currency by 2020. Limited progress has been made since the adoption by the Authority of Heads of State and Government, the supreme institution of ECOWAS, in 1987 of a monetary cooperation programme, intended to pave the way for the adoption by the subregion of a single currency by a deadline that has been repeatedly postponed, initially set for 1994.

38. The current deadline of 2020 was set in 1995, along with a road map which was assessed by ECA. That assessment alerted the Commission and its member States to the need to step up progress and gave options that led to the updating of the road map. Technical assistance provided by ECA further helped the Commission to build consensus that led to three important decisions in 2019: first, the adoption of a monetary policy framework for the single currency; second, the adoption of a central bank model for ECOWAS; and, third, agreements on the name of the single currency.

39. In this context, ECA developed a number of knowledge products, including structural transformation, employment, production and society (STEPS) profiles for Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Liberia, which provided a diagnosis on the state of economic diversification and structural transformation in those countries; and a background study on measuring demographic dynamics for development in West Africa. These efforts contributed to advancing the regional integration agenda, as demonstrated by the adoption of the regional monetary framework and the adoption of a central bank model for ECOWAS. The adoption of the monetary policy framework was an important step towards the harmonization of the monetary policy after the launch of the currency. ECOWAS member States agreed to base their future monetary policy on a flexible exchange regime with an inflation-targeted policy.

40. Adoption of the central bank model is a key step in facilitating further discussions related to the other necessary reforms to move to the final launch of the ECOWAS single currency. It was further agreed by member States that adoption of the single currency will be followed by the formal establishment of the ECOWAS Central Bank.

National economic diversification strategies for Central Africa

41. National economic diversification strategies are being pursued in an endeavour to overcome the boom-and-bust fluctuations of commodity prices. Thus, in Central Africa, ECA has been working intensively in its countries of focus, namely Cameroon, Chad and the Congo. The work by ECA in this area has also been extended to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe.

42. ECA developed a number of knowledge products and conducted related high-level policy dialogues to analyse progress, opportunities and challenges in the areas of economic diversification, structural transformation and related issues, and also to assist in the formulation of national value propositions of selected countries in Central Africa. The national value proposition defines what is unique about each country in that subregion, including its comparative and competitive advantages and other strengths and opportunities. The knowledge products include a regional profile in the STEPS series, providing a diagnosis on the state of economic diversification and structural transformation in the subregion, a background study on digital transformation in Central Africa, a publication on the role of development planning in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, with particular attention to diversification and industrialization (Goals 8 and 9), and an impact study on the effect of the African Continental Free Trade Area in Central Africa.

43. All these studies and think pieces served as the basis for high-level policy dialogue with State and non-State entities, culminating in the adoption of common positions and views on how to accelerate economic diversification in the subregion. For example, at their meeting in October 2019, Central African ministers of finance and economy decided to focus the next three-year programme with the International Monetary Fund not only on short-term measures to restore macroeconomic stability but, to an equal extent, on medium to long-term structural issues such as economic diversification.

44. Work carried out by ECA on roaming and cybersecurity, including studies, high-level policy dialogues and advocacy, highlighted the need to reduce the costs of roaming in Central Africa and to establish a single network area as one of the mechanisms to boost and facilitate intraregional trade in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area in Eastern Africa

45. In this context, ECA has been working extensively in its countries of focus, namely Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda and Seychelles. Organized in collaboration with the Government of Eritrea, UNDP and the office of the Resident Coordinator, the twenty-third annual session of the subregional Intergovernmental Committee of Experts and Senior Officials was held in Asmara in November 2019, attracting over 300 participants from the subregion. This meeting led to requests from the Government of Eritrea for further support in 2020 in the areas of blue economy and energy.

46. Overall, work in this domain focused on deepening regional integration and was delivered principally through a number of knowledge products, including a report on macroeconomic and social developments in Eastern Africa in 2019, which benchmarked performance towards national, regional and international goals, an expert group paper assessing the state of social cohesion, and a study undertaken with the organization TradeMark East Africa, measuring the impact of trade facilitation measures on manufacturing in the subregion. A study undertaken at the request of the East African Community (EAC) into the underlying causes of the stagnant levels of intraregional trade within EAC was reviewed by the permanent secretaries of trade ministries and resubmitted in April 2019, making an important contribution to the debate on how to remove existing bottlenecks on trade.

47. Where efforts to support implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area are concerned, ECA conducted a series of impact analyses for member States (Burundi, Comoros, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania), along with a more comprehensive report providing a subregion-wide assessment of the African Continental Free Trade Area, which was published jointly with TradeMark East Africa in December 2019. This report, which is, to date, the only subregional assessment of the African Continental Free Trade Area, highlights the need to accelerate regional integration in Eastern Africa and sets forward a series of recommendations to that end. These documents served as an entry point for discussion at national forums held subsequently in the aforementioned countries and generated requests from Rwanda and Uganda for more elaborate and detailed analyses.

48. ECA also developed a national African Continental Free Trade Area strategy for Kenya, thereby meeting a requirement in the 2019 work programme of that country's Ministry of Industry, Trade and Cooperatives. A regional event was convened in March 2019 in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, jointly with the East African

Business Council, to promote awareness in the private sector of the continuing negotiations on the African Continental Free Trade Area.

49. To promote awareness of the African Continental Free Trade Area among the general public, a video campaign was launched, culminating in the production of two short explanatory videos, on the general benefits of the Free Trade Area and on its specific benefits to young people. The videos were widely disseminated, including on national television channels and at the high-level business summit of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) held in September 2019 in Nairobi, which was attended by four subregional presidents. Over the course of 2019, ECA participated in more than 30 conferences and television appearances across the subregion, advocating accelerated efforts to implement the African Continental Free Trade Area and explaining its potential benefits.

50. Following a request from the East African Community to assist in drafting its tourism marketing strategy, ECA convened a subregional forum on the tourism marketing strategy with the aim of identifying key priorities for that economic community. This subregional forum was followed by six national consultative forums across the EAC member States: Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. The national forums informed the preparation of the subregional strategy, which was followed by a subregional validation meeting to finalize the strategy. ECA also delivered advisory services on the issue of tourism satellite accounts for Kenya. Lastly, a study was produced on the sustainable financing of tourism, which explored different financing models and options. The study resulted in high-level policy dialogue, triggering a request for further advisory services.

Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in the industrialization process in Southern Africa

51. In this area, ECA implemented several initiatives, including knowledge generation and policy research focused on structural transformation, employment and productivity through the STEPS profiles for three member States, Eswatini, Malawi and Mauritius. The profiles focused on how the member States could achieve structural transformation by facilitating the growth of their micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and the private sector generally, and identified the key challenges and opportunities facing these countries.

52. In addition, a policy report was produced on the integration of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in the industrialization process of Southern Africa. The policy report constituted a background study for discussion and policy recommendations at the twenty-fifth session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts of Southern Africa, hosted by the Government of Eswatini from 11 to 13 September 2019. The session furnished an important convening platform for a wide variety of stakeholders to deliberate on the theme of strategies and policies for strengthening and integrating micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in the industrialization process in Southern Africa.

53. Key recommendations emerging from the session included the need to develop a collaborative platform to strengthen the capacities of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises; the need for strong interlinkages between such enterprises and multinational corporations in the production process; and the need for member States to create enhanced incentives through fiscal and monetary policies to support such enterprises in Southern Africa.

E. Landlocked developing countries

54. ECA provided technical support to Ethiopia in incentivizing private sector investment in the energy sector. To this end, the Commission undertook a review of the country's regulatory environment for investment in its electricity sector. The study was undertaken in the context of private sector generation of electricity to supply industrial parks in Ethiopia and in the framework of a memorandum of understanding between ECA, the Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy of Ethiopia and the infrastructure development fund Africa50.

55. ECA also collaborated with the African Union Commission in conducting the midterm review of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa. As part of the Programme's steering committee, ECA has also been involved in preparing the second phase of the Programme, including in applying the criteria for project selection, anchored on the prioritization of regional projects. This is important, as regional corridors not only enable landlocked countries to participate effectively in intra-African trade, but also provide them with access to the sea, hence facilitating their international trade.

56. ECA has also been promoting cooperation between African landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries in infrastructure development and regional integration. Thus, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, ECA has developed the post-2020 strategic directions for road safety in Africa, adopted at the fourth African Road Safety Conference, held in Addis Ababa in August 2019. These directions will be of particular benefit following the expected increase in cross-border traffic that will result from the African Continental Free Trade Area.

57. As part of its contribution to the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 in Africa, in infrastructure, ECA provided technical assistance to Angola, Eritrea and Ethiopia in energy statistics and in efforts to attract private sector investment in the energy sector. In addition, ECA trained 22 officials from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan in energy modelling. In collaboration with the RES4Africa Foundation, the Commission has also developed a methodology to assess the effectiveness of the regulatory environment of the electricity sector in African countries. Experts from nine African countries have been trained in the use of the methodology and will thus undertake national case studies in 2020.

III. Strengthening the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda

A. Private sector development, innovative finance and infrastructure development

58. ECA implemented a programme aimed at assisting member States to develop innovative financing mechanisms to fund infrastructure development. The majority of African member States are unable to close their massive infrastructure gaps, amounting to more than \$93 billion per year for both capital investment and maintenance, rendering the identification and use of innovative sources of financing of the utmost importance.

59. To support member States in mobilizing both public and private capital for financing infrastructure, ECA convened a series of training measures, conferences and retreats for institutional investors, to raise their awareness of the opportunities to invest in infrastructure projects in Africa. Thus, in April 2019, ECA convened the

second in this series of events in Kenya, in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the National Association of Securities Professionals, the World Bank Group and the Kenyan Pension Fund Investment Consortium (KEPFIC), bringing together Kenyan and United States-based pension funds and asset managers with the aim of facilitating investment and the co-financing of sustainable infrastructure in Kenya.

60. This conference was informed by the great success achieved at a similar crowding-in investment conference organized in Senegal in March 2017, which resulted in the impactful investment of more than \$50 million by the Chicago Teacher's Pension Fund and the Alameda County Employee's Retirement Association, a pension fund based in Oakland (United States), in infrastructure projects in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Senegal and South Africa.

61. The objective of the April 2019 conference was to raise awareness about policy, regulatory and fiduciary barriers in mobilizing domestic pension savings to finance infrastructure on the continent. The conference was attended by more than 40 United States-based pension funds, asset managers and industry experts, who together represented some \$1 trillion in assets under management, and 12 pension funds which were members of KEPFIC (currently managing \$2 billion in assets), with a view to exploring investment opportunities in infrastructure, real estate, private equity and other sectors in Kenya.

62. These efforts contributed to the leveraging of innovative financing instruments in Africa, as demonstrated by the way the outcomes of the conference stimulated the appetite for innovative investment in infrastructure and housing projects in Kenya. The conference proved to be a very productive step towards the commitment to invest at least \$200 million in the region. Through its continued engagement with the Government of Kenya, ECA has made significant strides in building and enhancing partnerships between United States-based investors and Kenyan pension funds under the coordination of KEPFIC, allowing them to form ventures with local partners in pursuing these investments in Kenya.

B. Aligning national development plans with Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063

63. ECA provided support to member States in the use of tools to monitor and align their development plans with the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063. In that endeavour, a training workshop was organized on the integrated planning and reporting toolkit, from 27 to 29 August 2019, in Addis Ababa, to introduce more countries to the toolkit. Representatives of 13 countries attended the workshop and received training in the use of the toolkit for the alignment of national development plans with the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063. During the workshop, attention was drawn to the importance of a streamlined flow of results from impact to outcomes and then to outputs, and also for the need to limit the number of indicators for each layer of result.

64. As of December 2019, 18 countries registered as users of the toolkit and the result frameworks of their national development plans have been entered into the portal. Efforts are now under way to align those plans with the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063, with five countries having passed the halfway point in that alignment process. From this point on, ECA will be working with United Nations country teams and Resident Coordinators' offices to promote the use of the toolkit in more countries.

C. Digitalization

65. ECA has been supporting the African Union Commission in the development of a digital strategy for Africa aims to develop a continental digital transformation strategy, designed to harness the benefits of digitalization and support the implementation of digital trade, digital identity and digital economy programmes in support of the African Continental Free Trade Area. Thus, the Centre of Excellence for Digital Identity, Trade and Economy was launched by ECA to support member countries in their effort to fully exploit the benefits of digitalization for the continent's development.

66. The Centre of Excellence has primarily developed a comprehensive conceptual framework to guide work within the continent in the domain of digitalization and to streamline the provision of technical and capacity-development support to member States in the various aspects of the initiative. For that purpose, the Centre has adopted the digitalization opportunities diagnosis process, working in partnership with the Pathways for Prosperity Commission. In this process, the Centre is applying its flagship Digital Maturity Model, which assesses the status of digitalization in the various target countries.

67. ECA is also working on establishing the Digital Earth Africa programme, which is intended to deliver an exceptional fit-for-purpose platform that can translate over 50 years of Earth observation satellite imagery into information and insights on changes on land and sea in Africa. Digital Earth Africa will build on the Data Cube technology to deliver a unique continental-scale structure and tools that democratize the capacity to process and analyse satellite data into ready-to-use insights about the continent's environmental conditions and other processes. Digital Earth Africa serves as a building block in the efforts by the African continent to harness information resources for an African information society and knowledge-led economy. The programme will offer a new way to build a robust data infrastructure, with trillions of individual observations, that can give a better understanding of the continent's changing landscape and provide insights that will enable African governments, non-governmental organizations, businesses and individuals to make better informed decisions.

68. With ECA support, Nigeria has identified requirements for the digitalization of processes to bridge the databases of various agencies active in the domain of illicit financial flows, and is developing a programme to build its capacity to enhance the effectiveness of programmes set up in the country to combat such flows. Based on the experience gained by Nigeria, ECA plans to adapt the programme for other countries in 2020. In addition, it is working with software providers to enhance the inter-operability of member States' existing digital systems, with a view to comprehensively tackle trade misinvoicing malpractices.

IV. Spotlight on the use by ECA of technology to enhance the quality and timeliness of censuses

69. ECA implemented a country support programme on the implementation of the 2020 round of population and housing censuses. Among the programme's focus areas was the promotion of technological applications in the conduct of censuses, as opposed to traditional paper-based and manual methods. The use of technology in censuses enhances the quality of the data collected, the availability of the census outcome and the timely reporting of results. Collecting data about people and the houses in which they live using a tablet with a structured questionnaire reduces interview error and time in collecting information – a common problem in paper-

based interviews. Use of a digital data collection approach reduces the time spent cleaning, validating and tabulating the data before making the results widely available. Accordingly, as indicated by an assessment conducted by ECA, technology will play a major role in the 2020 round of African censuses, with more than half of all countries planning to conduct their censuses by digital methods.

70. At the same time, however, ECA underestimated the challenges encountered by member States in the transition from paper-based to digital censuses, stemming largely from the inadequacy of the digital tools and software required. To surmount these challenges, ECA developed an application that would automatically load the correct software on to each tablet and ensure distribution to the right area. This significantly reduces the risk of error and the amount of work (and hence cost) involved in preparing the tablets for the census, while also speeding up the process.

71. One of the focus countries for this support programme, Kenya carried out a digital census in August 2019 using 163,000 tablets. ECA provided technical assistance for the Kenyan National Bureau of Statistics, in the use of the census application. Based on the results of this census, ECA has organized an expert group meeting on electronic data collection and dissemination in censuses for other countries planning to undertake a digital census in the coming years.

72. Work in this area contributed to strengthening the production of credible data, statistics and geospatial information in Africa, as demonstrated by the significant reduction of the time required for the calibration of the tablets, compared to the time that it would have taken if the National Bureau of Statistics had had to calibrate the tablets manually. Overall, the use of the application saved a total of 506 days, significantly improving the timely availability of data.

V. Leveraging partnerships for sustainable development

A. Collaboration and coordination for the implementation of the African Union–United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

73. ECA launched activities in the peace, security and development nexus, which constitutes one of the themes of the African Union–United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These activities, conducted in collaboration with the office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa, included a meeting on implementation of the regional strategy for the Horn of Africa held in July 2019 and the leading role played by ECA in implementing socioeconomic elements of that strategy.

74. ECA is one of the United Nations entities that worked on the Sahel 2043 prospective study, which forms part of the United Nations initiative to ensure better synergy between development actions and combating terrorism, for the promotion of peace across the Sahel region. Following completion of that study and in the light of its findings, ECA organized policy dialogues in different countries, to discuss synergies between humanitarian work, the promotion of development and peace and security. In addition, in response to a request from ECOWAS for the provision of technical support to its Community Development Programme team to review and align its Sahel strategy with the Sahel 2043 prospective study, ECA organized a technical working session with the Community Development Programme to develop a road map to revise the ECOWAS Sahel strategy. Revision of that strategy will be carried out in 2020.

75. In addition, ECA worked to strengthen its collaboration with other United Nations entities in advancing the “Building back better” programme for climate resilient investment in reconstruction and development in cyclone-affected regions of Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe and joint work on the human security index with the United Nations Office to the African Union and the United Nations trust fund for human security.

B. Partnerships for the implementation of the ECA programme of work

76. Innovative partnerships with a wide range of national, regional and global stakeholders continue to be of vital importance for the implementation of the ECA programme of work. Over the course of 2019, ECA signed a number of framework agreements with a wide range of partners. These included: (i.) the financial services corporation MasterCard, to promote financial and digital inclusion across Africa; (ii.) the multinational insurance firm AXA, to assess the role of the private health insurance coverage and access to quality health care; (iii.) the phosphate mining and fertilizer company OCP SA, to explore innovations in agriculture across the entire agricultural supply-chain; (iv.) the Global Green Growth Institute, to cooperate in knowledge-sharing and capacity-building on climate-resilient green growth and development; and (v.) the Enterprise Incubator Foundation of Armenia and the African Export-Import Bank, to undertake research and evidence-based knowledge for innovation, science and technology policymaking and the University of Turku in Finland on the same area.

77. In addition, ECA also formed partnerships with a number of think tanks, with a view to assessing the impacts of economic integration and diversification policies on African economies. Lastly, working in partnership with the African Union and UNDP, ECA has finalized a common regional indicators framework, capturing 63 indicators drawn from both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063, which will be used in preparing the region’s biannual progress report.

VI. Conclusions

78. Key lessons learned during the reporting period include the following:

79. With regard to global and continental actions, the Commission remains a key player in addressing priorities in Africa. Most of the milestones achieved by ECA programme clusters were found to be relevant to the needs of member States and beneficiaries and aligned with the Commission’s strategic directions. This has, indeed, reinforced the function performed by ECA of setting agendas and the strategic role of ECA in policy articulation and formulation in the region.

80. The interventions of ECA as they relate to its convening and operational functions have been effective in strengthening the capacities of member States in respect of a wide range of development issues. Closer attention should be given, however, to a more integrated and multidimensional approach to policy advice.

81. In providing support to member States in the use of tools to monitor and align their development plans with the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, ECA rolled out a capacity development programme on the integrated planning and reporting toolkit, by which an encouraging number of countries were introduced to the toolkit, while others have now registered as users of the toolkit and the result frameworks of their national development plans have been entered into the portal. From this point on, ECA will be

working with United Nations country teams and Resident Coordinator offices to promote the use of the toolkit in more countries.

82. Thanks to concerted efforts by ECA, countries have ratified the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area and have embarked on the development of national competitiveness strategies. ECA has been assisting member States in the development of these national strategies by helping them to identify both existing gaps and their comparative and competitive advantages, with a view to diversification and the development or integration of value chains under the Agreement. This support has earned ECA more recognition and credibility in its operational work.

83. Africa, like the rest of the world, is faced with the historic challenge of responding to both a global recession and the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, ECA has been at the forefront of a coordinated response with member States to undertake an in-depth analysis of the impact of the pandemic in Africa. ECA has also been serving as a platform where African countries can develop and agree upon common positions as they engage with international finance institutions and multilateral partners. The choices of policymakers in the coming year will determine how African countries fare in the present decade of action and delivery to 2030.
