



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General

1 April 2021

Original: English

**Economic Commission for Africa
Conference of African Ministers of Finance,
Planning and Economic Development**
Fifty-third session

Addis Ababa (hybrid), 22 and 23 March 2021

Report of the Conference of Ministers on the work of its fifty-third session

Introduction

1. The fifty-third session of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development was held at the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa, in a hybrid format featuring both in-person and online participation, on 22 and 23 March 2021.

I. Opening of the session [agenda item 1]

A. Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following States: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

3. The following United Nations bodies and specialized agencies were represented: Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations; International Civil Aviation Organization; International Fund for Agricultural Development; International Labour Organization; International Organization for Migration; International Telecommunication Union; International Trade Centre; Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; United Nations Children's Fund; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs; United Nations Development Coordination Office; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women); United Nations Environment Programme; United Nations Human Settlement



Programme; United Nations Industrial Development Organization; United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development; United Nations Office for Project Services; United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel; United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services; United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States; United Nations Office to the African Union; United Nations Population Fund; United Nations Regional Commissions New York Office; United Nations Resident Coordinator Office; United Nations University; United Nations World Institute for Development Economics Research; United Nations World Meteorological Organization; World Bank; World Food Programme; World Health Organization; World Intellectual Property Organization.

4. Observers from the following States Members of the United Nations were present: Australia, Barbados, Belgium, Canada, China, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, United Arab Emirates.

5. Representatives of the following intergovernmental and regional organizations were also present: African Development Bank, African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation, African Union Commission, African Union Development Agency; Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, Central Bank of West African States, Economic and Statistical Observatory for Sub-Saharan Africa; Federation of West African Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Islamic Development Bank Group; West African Monetary Institute; International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT); West African Monetary and Economic Union.

6. Observers were present from the following organizations, among others: ActionAid International; Addis Ababa University; Africa Finance Corporation; Africa Fintech Network; African Digital Education Trust; African Institute for Mathematical Sciences; Ajemalebu Self Help; Arab Agricultural Production Co. Ltd.; Better Than Cash Alliance; Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; BJM Management Consultancy Co. Ltd.; BlackCamel Energy Ltd.; Brooklyn College; Cellule de Suivi de l'Intégration; Centre for Health Sciences Training, Research and Development; CGE Consultants; Chatham House; Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme Non-State Actors Coalition; COODSynergyn Oil West Africa Ltd.; Corporate Council on Africa; Crown Agents Ltd.; Datem Ltd.; Delaware State University; East African Bottling Share Company; Eastern Africa Farmers Federation; ELIF Business Solutions Ltd.; Environnement et Développement du Tiers Monde: LEAD Afrique Francophone; Euclid University; Findlay House Global; Fintech Association of Nigeria; Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Ethiopia; Gatef Organization; Gender Youth for Change and Peace Building; Géomatique Topographie Ingénierie Conseils (GTOPIC); Ghana Geological Survey Authority; Global Youth Connect for Sustainable Agriculture; Goblis Foundation; Groupe Conseils Mireille Mouéllé; Groupe Loukil; Hanyang University; IHS Markit Ltd.; Industrial Parks Development Corporation; Initiative Africa; Institute for Public Policy Initiatives; Institute of International Finance; International Forum of Sovereign Wealth Funds; International Movement for Advancement of Education Culture, Social and Economic Development; International Relations Institute of Cameroon; Kahe International Group; Kenya Pension Fund Investment Consortium; Kuvuna Foundation; La Tribune Afrique; LAConsulting; Ladoke Akintola University of Technology; Life and Hope Uganda; LMS International; Loukil Group; Lusa News Agency; Maghreb Emergent; Majengo Estates Developers Ltd; Mazars; Meinhardt (Singapore); Muchinga General Enterprises Ltd.; National Association of Nigerian Traders; News Agency of Nigeria; NFC Bank; Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission; Nigerian Television Authority; ONE Campaign; Oxfam International; PanAfrican Capital Holdings Ltd.; PanaPress; Pfizer; Premium

Hortus; PUTTRU Technologies Ltd.; Q'legend International Limited; Rail Working Group; Regiolex Consulting Ltd; Rockefeller Foundation; Rotary International; Rwanda Envisage Incubators; Samara University; Sargasso Worldwide Ghana Ltd.; Sasakawa Africa Association; SDG Action Strategy Centre; Sharlearn Research and Taxation Consultancy; Skynotch Energy Africa Ltd.; Social and Media Studies Institute (Morocco); SOS Children's Villages International; South African Youth Council; Strathmore University; SUNami Solar Ltd.; Trippinz Care Inc.; Tshwane University of Technology; Union pour la Promotion, la Défense des Droits Humains et de l'Environnement dans la région des Grands Lacs (UPDDHE); University of California Los Angeles; University of Cape Coast; University of Cape Town; University of Ibadan; University of Lagos; University of Lomé; University of Nairobi; University of Tunis El Manar; University of Venda; Urukundo Initiative; Vida Pharmaceuticals (Pty.) Ltd.; Waltersmith; Women for Africa Foundation; WVL Development Advisers Limited; YALDA Botswana; Youth Alliance for Leadership and Development in Africa; ZimInd Publications.

B. Opening statements

7. The opening session was moderated by Mark Eddo, CEO, Mark Eddo Media and chaired by Mohamed Benchaaboun, Minister of Economy, Finance and Administration Reform, Morocco, Chair of the outgoing Bureau.

8. Opening statements were delivered by Mr. Benchaaboun and the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, Vera Songwe. These were followed by statements by five special guests: Ken Ofori-Atta, Minister of Finance, Ghana; Minouche Shafik, Director of the London School of Economics and former Deputy Governor of the Bank of England, and Mia Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados and Chair of the Joint World Bank-International Monetary Fund Development Committee. The official opening address was delivered by Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

9. Speaking in his capacity as Chair of the outgoing Bureau, Mr. Benchaaboun expressed gratitude to the Government and people of Ethiopia for hosting the fifty-third session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. Calling for collective support to protect vulnerable groups, he urged countries to rebuild and diversify their economies through sustainable industrialization for better resilience. To that end, he stressed the need for adequate financing for the recovery process and commended ECA on its leading role in addressing the debt and liquidity concerns of member States in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

10. Ms. Songwe addressed the Conference on the public health, economic and climate nature of the crisis facing African countries. She emphasized the need for the region to secure sustainable access to vaccines and urged African countries to come together and develop a comprehensive package for building forward better, leveraging the African Continental Free Trade Area as a springboard for green recovery efforts.

11. Mr. Ofori-Atta highlighted the nexus between health care, finance and the phenomenon of vaccine nationalism. He outlined five priority areas of intervention, namely: building resilience, developing new financing models to support recovery, stimulating domestic manufacturing capabilities to mitigate the risks of global supply-chains, leveraging African integration and regional value chains and scaling up digital transformation and inclusive innovation. He urged governments to work with development partners and the business community to secure and restore lives and livelihoods.

12. Ms. Shafik stressed the need for Africa to promote a new social contract providing for an inclusive safety net to ensure security and opportunity across the continent. She further underscored the importance of achieving universal health care with an emphasis on digitalization, which catered for prenatal care, immunizations, treatment of communicable diseases and access to medical care to deal with the crisis and mitigate limitations of the public health-care system.

13. Ms. Mottley drew attention to the current devastation wreaked by the pandemic, identifying three principal causes: the high dependence on trade, travel, and foreign direct investment; the tight fiscal space, which was unable to cater for massive fiscal stimulus to support the private economy; and the insufficient public and private financing flows to support responses to the pandemic. She noted that the Group of 20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative alone would not be enough to mitigate the crisis and called for a comprehensive effort going beyond government debt.

14. In his official opening address, Mr. Ahmed welcomed all participants to the session and pointed out the need for African economies to respond effectively to the accelerating pace of digital transformation and intergenerational challenge of climate change and create employment for the continent's fast-growing young population. He declared the session officially open and wished the ministers fruitful deliberations.

II. Election of the Bureau and adoption of the agenda and programme of work [agenda item 2]

15. The following countries were unanimously elected to form the new Bureau:

Chair:	Equatorial Guinea
First Vice-Chair:	Madagascar
Second Vice-Chair:	Zambia
Third Vice-Chair:	Sierra Leone
Rapporteur:	Morocco

16. The newly elected Chair, Valentín Ela Mayé, Minister of Finance, Economic and Planning of Equatorial Guinea, thanked the outgoing Bureau and introduced the theme of the current session of the Conference of Ministers. The agenda was adopted, as follows:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of the Bureau and adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
3. High-level ministerial policy dialogue on the theme of the fifty-third session of the Commission.
4. High-level panel discussions.
5. Consideration of recommendations and adoption of resolutions.
6. Consideration and adoption of the ministerial statement and communiqué.
7. Other matters.
8. Closing of the session.

III. High-level ministerial policy dialogue on the theme of the fifty-third session of the Commission [agenda item 3]

A. Introduction

17. Mr. Ela Mayé chaired the policy dialogue, which was moderated by Mr. Eddo. The lead speaker was the Minister of Finance of Rwanda, Uzziel Ndagijimana. The panellists were the Director-General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Li Yong; the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Houlin Zhao; the Minister of Finance of Ethiopia, Ahmed Shide; the Deputy Minister of Planning and Economic Development of Egypt, Ahmed Kamaly; and the Commissioner for Economic Development, Trade, Industry and Mining of the African Union, Albert Muchanga.

B. Presentation

18. Mr. Ndagijimana highlighted the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy of Rwanda, which included the contraction of gross domestic product (GDP) growth to 3.4 per cent in 2020 and fiscal deficits that made it difficult for the country to respond adequately to the pandemic. He noted that, in contrast to rich countries that deployed huge stimulus packages, African countries had very limited resources for an effective response to and recovery from COVID-19. He welcomed the African Continental Free Trade Area initiative as an opportunity for African countries to strengthen industrialization and diversification.

C. Discussion

19. In the ensuing discussion, the panellists welcomed the theme of the Conference, noting that promotion of digital technology was important for Africa to boost industrialization in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

20. They noted that, while Internet connectivity had risen by 77 per cent in some countries, connectivity in rural areas remained very low in Africa, at about 6 per cent of the population, exposing the major digital divide within countries and between economies.

21. They observed that the continent's market, in population terms, would grow from the current 1.2 billion to 1.7 billion people by 2030, with an aggregate middle class growing from 350 million to 600 million people, and that a significant share of growth in Africa would be driven by domestic consumption. They emphasized the need to capitalize on the African Continental Free Trade Area to develop regional value chains in support of inclusive and sustainable industrialization. They also noted that African countries had difficulty securing vaccines owing to the practice referred to as "vaccine nationalism".

22. Contributing to the discussion, participants underlined that industrialization policies should be pro-growth, with the private sector playing a central role, and facilitated by strong institutions and good governance. They reiterated that, in addition to market integration, the development of productive capacities for industrialization was essential.

D. Recommendations

23. In the light of the discussion, the Conference recommended that:
- (a) Member States should:
 - (i) Develop policies and strategies for sustainable and inclusive industrialization, diversification and digitalization and, to that end, promote special economic zones and green industrial parks, create an attractive investment code and prioritize investment in requisite infrastructure and new technologies such as 5G and artificial intelligence;
 - (ii) Build on the Industrial Transformation Strategy of the African Union and the declaration of the Third Industrial Development Decade for Africa to support the formulation and effective implementation of national digitalization strategies to support industrialization;
 - (iii) Prioritize vocational training to boost skills and use foreign direct investment strategically, in particular in the information and communications technology (ICT) and manufacturing sectors;
 - (iv) Remove non-tariff barriers to trade and promote “made in Africa” standards to ensure the effective operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area;
 - (v) Take advantage of the African Continental Free Trade Area to develop and strengthen regional value chains and use the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity for countries to develop the capabilities to produce their own vaccines;
 - (b) ECA should:
 - (i) Support countries with the formulation of policies and strategies to develop resilient economies through green industrialization empowered by digitalization.

IV. High-level panel discussions [agenda item 4]

A. Panel 1: The big debate: sustainable growth in the digital era post-COVID-19

1. Introduction

24. Mr. Ela Mayé chaired the policy dialogue, which was moderated by Mr. Eddo. The lead speaker was the Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning of Nigeria, Zainab Ahmed. The panellists were the Senior Minister and Special Adviser to the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Arkebe Oqubay; the President, Centre for Global Development, Masood Ahmed; the Managing Director and Head of Moody’s Sovereign Risk Group, Alastair Wilson; the Director of the Africa Department of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Abebe Aemro Selassie; and the Minister of Economy and Recovery of Gabon, Nicole Jeanine Lydie Roboty Mbou.

2. Presentations

25. Ms. Ahmed observed that there was no straight answer to the question under consideration. She highlighted resource mobilization efforts to support African countries in their response through initiatives such as the Nigerian One United Nations COVID-19 Response Basket Fund, the Africa Anti-COVID-19 Fund, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, and stimulus packages put together by IMF, the World Bank and the African Development

Bank. The private sector response had been unpredictable. Nigeria faced a funding gap of over \$154 million to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and had introduced the country's Finance Act and energy policy to help close the gap.

26. Mr. Oqubay outlined Ethiopian experience in industrialization and economic transformation. The country was aiming to boost productive capacity by investing in an industrial system which included the building of green industrial parks, and a domestic policy capability based on active industrial policy learning from other countries. Full recovery from the crisis needed comparable investment in infrastructure and human capital and a conducive macroeconomic environment.

27. Mr. Ahmed argued that the private sector could have done more and had the potential to play a central role in the recovery process. He called for partnership between governments and private sector. Developing countries needed to build on the 2020 experience and forge a five-year strategy to achieve a sustainable recovery.

28. Mr. Wilson said that the recovery process required institutions and an institutional environment of high quality; the private sector needed to play a central role; and a much healthier credit environment was required to enhance investor confidence.

29. Mr. Selassie said that IMF was helping to finance the resilient recovery of member States. While multilateral efforts were focused on vaccines, the huge financing gaps faced by the region required efforts by the international financial institutions to bridge the gap with debt rescheduling and concessional financing. Structural transformation and economic diversification were needed to foster growth and job creation. He stressed the need to underpin vaccine policies with commensurate economic policies.

30. Ms. Mbou observed that countries and the multilateral institutions had been caught unawares by the pandemic. In consequence, countries had returned to protectionism and the crisis had triggered uncertainties. Where Gabon was concerned, the country had received support from the French Agency for Development (AFD), IMF, the European Union, the World Bank and the African Development Bank in mitigating the impact, but it had not benefited from the Group of 20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative. Pursuing a green economy pathway was an essential part of the country's recovery plan: it needed an effective legal and policy framework, including green bonds and access to international financing markets.

3. Discussion

31. In the ensuing discussion, participants stressed the need to enhance and leverage the role of the multilateral system and the private sector; the importance of measured responses by credit rating agencies, in view of the impact of the crisis; and the need for governments to create an environment conducive to the participation of the private sector.

32. Doubts were expressed as to whether the multilateral entities, in particular the banks, were still fit for purpose given the changing circumstances. In general, participants decried the volatility of financial support and called for predictable financial flows.

33. Participants also underlined that the crisis was an opportunity to focus on the transformation of Africa. A green economy was a viable solution for economic recovery and diversification in the post-COVID-19 period.

4. Recommendations

34. In the light of the discussion, the conference made the following recommendations:

- (a) Member States should:
 - (i) Build a strong and effective relationship with the private sector and create an enabling environment for private sector interventions;
 - (ii) Achieve a resilient recovery, by increasing the green energy supply through the adoption of policies favourable for renewable energy and the continent's natural resources endowment;
 - (iii) Invest in infrastructure and, in particular, enhance digitalization to underpin all recovery and development efforts;
- (b) Member States and their partners should:
 - (i) Strengthen global coordination to effectively combat future crises;
 - (ii) Redefine the multilateral institutions so that they are fit for purpose;
 - (iii) Support technology transfer for vaccine development, infrastructure development and digitalization, alongside recovery assistance;
- (c) The multilateral system and the private sector, at both domestic and international levels, should provide support to African countries in their response and recovery efforts;
- (d) Credit rating agencies must revisit their rating measures and methodologies to ensure that they not do more damage to developing countries, in particular during crises.

B. Panel 2: Managing debt and innovative finance for fiscal sustainability, and the role of the private sector

1. Introduction

35. Mr. Ela Mayé chaired the policy dialogue, which was moderated by Mr. Eddo. The lead speaker was a partner at Eighteen East Capital, Thomas Venon. The panellists comprised the Chief Executive Officer of AFD, Rémy Rioux; the representative of the Minister of Planning and Development of Benin, Alistair Alinsato; the Minister of Planning, Development and International Cooperation of Togo, Sandra Johnson; the Executive Vice-President of the Institute of International Finance, Clay Lowery; the Minister of Finance of Djibouti, Ilyas Dawaleh; and the Chief Executive of the African Union Development Agency; Ibrahim Mayaki.

2. Presentation

36. In his presentation, Mr. Venon focused on the Liquidity and Sustainability Facility being championed by ECA to facilitate access to liquidity, lending and investments.

37. Mr. Rioux stressed the need to reinforce financial institutions in line with sustainable climate and development objectives and conveyed the readiness of AFD to assist African ministers in that endeavour.

38. Mr. Alinsato highlighted the failure by risk assessments to take due account of the evolution of African economies, which resulted in poor credit ratings, inhibiting their ability to raise debt. He reported on a domestic resource mobilization programme that had been developed by Benin.

39. Ms. Johnson highlighted the impact of the pandemic on State budgets. She laid out the private sector-centred road map followed by Togo, which included three dimensions: social inclusion, job creation and digitalization.

40. Mr. Dawaleh emphasized the importance of continuing to invest in development and urged African countries, ECA and other partners to rethink debt management from a long-term perspective to avoid undermining economic diversification, job creation or digitalization.

41. Mr. Lowery highlighted risks of increased government debt, such as the loans taken out by the corporate sector when their business models were not robust and the political risks associated with terminating expenditures.

42. Mr. Mayaki stressed that illicit financial flows hampered development in Africa and its resilience to shocks and stressed the need for bankable infrastructure projects in the continent.

3. Discussion

43. In the ensuing discussion, it emerged that the Group of 20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative, while appreciated by its beneficiaries, was challenging to put into practice. Its effect was uneven across countries, in particular because of differing debt management practices and contexts. Furthermore, the Initiative was a short-term measure and did not address longer-term debt challenges, causing uncertainty for investors and borrowers. Innovative solutions which did not erode economic growth but involved the private sector were required. The Liquidity and Sustainability Facility was identified as a possible solution.

44. Illicit financial flows undermined human rights, peace and security in Africa while eroding financing for development. Six years since the publication of the report of the High-Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa,¹ many of its recommendations had not been implemented. Among such recommendations were the call for a global pact on financial integrity for sustainable development and proposals on taxes on digital trade and on an international minimum corporate tax.

45. Ministers were informed that the African Union Development Agency had launched an initiative to mobilize resources from African pension funds to finance infrastructure development on the continent. Infrastructure development had enabled countries such as Djibouti to advance their geostrategic positioning and role as logistics hubs. Large infrastructure projects of that kind, however, contributed to countries' indebtedness and vulnerability. Other countries such as Togo were seeking to maximize the benefits of their strategic geographic location and port infrastructure through the African Continental Free Trade Area.

4. Recommendations

46. In the light of the discussion, the Conference recommended that:

- (a) Member States should:
 - (i) Advocate the extension of the Group of 20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative, which currently runs to the end of June 2021, to the end of 2021, with ECA support;
 - (ii) Review debt management mechanisms so that development objectives are not compromised;
 - (iii) Reform their financial systems and improve their governance through enhanced transparency and financial integrity in support of sustainable development;

¹ United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, *Illicit Financial Flows: Report of the High-Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa* (Addis Ababa, 2015).

- (iv) Explore all financing options to fund the continent's infrastructure projects, in particular those of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa;
- (b) ECA should:
 - (i) Continue to assist the establishment of the Liquidity and Sustainability Facility and identify willing donor countries to make it operational;
 - (ii) Along with other partners, continue to facilitate discussion to find viable long-term solutions for the management of debt by African countries.

C. Panel 3: Is Africa ready to finance its own vaccine?

1. Introduction

47. Mr. Ela Mayé chaired the panel, which was moderated by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) presenter, Lerato Mbele. The lead speaker was the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Tedros Adhanom. The panellists comprised the Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Winifred Byanyima; the Director of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, John Nkengasong; the President of the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank), Benedict Oramah; the Global Advisor to Pfizer Biopharmaceuticals, Susan Silbermann; the Minister of Finance of Sierra Leone, Francis Kaikai; the Minister of Finance of the Congo, Sele Yalaghuli; the Minister of Health, Population and Hospital Reform of Algeria, Abderrahmane Benbouzid; the Group Senior Executive of Aspen Pharmacare Holding Ltd., Stavros Nicolaou, and the Director of the Pasteur Institute of Dakar, Amadou Sall.

2. Presentations

48. Mr. Tedros stressed that vaccines should be accessible to all and pointed out that \$13.8 billion dollars of global GDP were lost with each month of delay in vaccines reaching Africa. Production urgently needed to be scaled up. He noted that Africa was not taking advantage of existing local manufacturing capacities and highlighted the importance of measures to improve local manufacturing capacities. To that end, Africa could take advantage of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs Agreement). Regional initiatives were in place and WHO was working with the African Union on the establishment of the African Medicines Agency.

49. Ms. Byanyima stated that a practice that might be termed “vaccine apartheid” was unfolding and bemoaned the lack of a global plan for equitable access to vaccinations. She called for a change of the pattern whereby the rich countries were vaccinating one person per second, while in Africa the rate of vaccinations was less than one hundredth of that. An additional challenge was posed by the need to bring down the price of vaccines, since African countries were paying three times as much as developed countries for their vaccines.

50. Mr. Nkengasong affirmed that the continent was ready to produce its own vaccines, subject to the sharing of intellectual property rights and scientific knowledge, but noted that the necessary political will and commitment were needed to translate words into action. He underscored the need for a strong coalition to tackle the challenges of controlling the virus and developing a road map to facilitate access to vaccines, through the African Union.

51. Mr. Oramah highlighted two lessons learned from COVID-19: the need to procure vaccines to reach herd immunity of 60 per cent of the African population; and the importance of investing in the manufacture of vaccines and

also strengthening the African Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. Afreximbank had set aside \$2 billion for vaccine acquisition but ministers of finance should allocate more resources to support local institutions, rather than rely solely on international benevolence.

52. Ms. Silbermann elaborated the Pfizer five-point plan for dealing with the virus: sharing of tools, insights and data as quickly as possible; drug development insights; developing drug manufacturing capabilities; staying connected with other institutions such as WHO and the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention; and accelerating distribution of vaccines.

53. Mr. Kaikai highlighted the value of lessons learned by his country from the Ebola pandemic in such areas as: domestic revenue generation; supply chain management on the ground; public trust and public education about the virus and the need for vaccination; and international collaboration and a better coordinated approach between the African Union and member States.

54. Mr. Yalaghuli observed that the main problems facing his country were the financing of vaccines and vaccination, given budgetary constraints occasioned by the pandemic; and the non-acceptance of the vaccination measures by some sections of the population. He called for more support for the continent from such partners as the World Bank.

55. Mr. Benbouzid reported that his country planned to vaccinate 70 per cent of its population, requiring 40 million doses. The country had instituted a digital platform for people to sign up for their vaccination and awareness-rising about the vaccine was being conducted over the media.

56. Mr. Nicolaou emphasized that the ramping up of vaccination programmes was the best plan for member States to contain any further spread of the virus. Investment in technology and skills and strengthening collaboration with research and academic institutions were key to private sector engagement in combating the pandemic. He called for dialogue between ministers of health and finance for the financing of vaccines and vaccination programmes.

57. Mr. Sall highlighted the financial and distribution challenges faced by pharmaceutical companies on the continent in their efforts to participate fully and efficiently in vaccine programmes. He elaborated on the lessons learned from their perspective, including the importance of good partnerships; the need to develop a strategy with a regional vision; the creation of distribution networks; and clarity of business regulations.

3. Discussion

58. In the ensuing discussion, the participants highlighted the need for finance and health ministers to collaborate in facilitating the procurement of vaccines; allocate adequate budgetary resources to support local institutions in the manufacture of vaccines and research and in development and innovation; and support the localization of the supply chains of vaccines.

59. Participants also stressed the need for the local private sector to explore business opportunities in supply chains and collaboration with international partners, including in the local manufacture of vaccines; and the urgency of introducing vaccines at the scale needed to immunize at least 60 per cent of the population, so as to achieve herd immunity.

60. Participants encouraged member States to lobby WTO to waive intellectual property rights, in order to facilitate the local manufacturing and distribution of vaccines on the African continent; the importance of a continental vision; and the need to strengthen the capital base of Afreximbank to enable the Bank to support larger loans.

4. Recommendations

61. In the light of the discussion, the Conference recommended that member States should:

(a) Ratify the Treaty Establishing the African Medicines Agency and sign up to the Corona Virus Treatment Acceleration Programme;

(b) Support the intellectual property rights proposal tabled by India and South Africa;

(c) Invest in the development of local manufacturing capacity and form partnerships with international producers of vaccines;

(d) With the leadership of the ministers of finance, support investments in and allocate financial resources to science and technology and research, development and innovation;

(e) Focus on short-term and immediate solutions, such as vaccine acquisition, while preparing for the medium and long-term strategies in a coordinated manner with continental leadership.

V. Consideration of recommendations and adoption of resolutions [agenda item 5]

62. Following a discussion, the Conference adopted the draft resolutions with one amendment. The resolutions are set out in annex I to the present report.

VI. Consideration and adoption of the ministerial statement and communiqué [agenda item 6]

63. The Conference considered the draft ministerial statement and the draft ministerial communiqué and proposed amendments. Both documents were unanimously adopted, as amended. The ministerial statement is set out in annex II to the present report and the communiqué was posted on the ECA website.²

VII. Other matters [agenda item 7]

64. Under this item, the Chair recalled that African countries had collectively agreed to support the candidacy of Mr. Oqubay, Senior Minister and Special Adviser to the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, for the post of Director General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and urged all ministers to honour that stated commitment.

VIII. Closing of the session [agenda item 8]

65. Closing remarks were made by Ms. Songwe and the Secretary of State in charge of Treasury of Equatorial Guinea, Milagrosa Obono Angue, on behalf of the Chair of the Bureau, Mr. Ela Mayé.

66. Ms. Songwe expressed her appreciation to the Bureau and the ministers for the quality of the deliberations during the session and assured them of the commitment of the Commission to pursue its support for member States in their

² Available at <https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/com/2021/E2100446-29March-Eng-COMMUNIQUE.pdf>.

response, recovery and reset efforts. In conclusion, she emphasized the imperative of inclusive partnerships with the private sector and development partners in order to achieve the “Africa we want”.

67. Ms. Obono Angue thanked ECA for the successful management of the conference amid the challenges of the pandemic, the outgoing Bureau for its contribution and all representatives for their active participation. She encouraged ECA to continue supporting member States and institutions as they implemented the resolutions of the fifty-third session of the Conference and echoed the Bureau’s satisfaction with the results of the current session, as captured by the ministerial statement and communique.

68. Following those remarks and the customary exchange of courtesies, the Chair declared the session closed at 5 p.m.

Annex I

Ministerial statement of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development

We, African ministers of finance, planning and economic development,

Meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 22 and 23 March 2021, for the fifty-third session of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development,

Honoured by the presence of the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed, and the governors of our national and regional central banks, and other high-level dignitaries and special guests,

Having deliberated on the theme “Africa’s sustainable industrialization and diversification in the digital era in the context of COVID-19”, and considering that industrialization is arguably the only historically proven path to sustainable economic growth and development, underpinned by stronger industrialized economies fostered by digitalization and diversification, and coupled with environmentally friendly policies and strategies,

While being cognizant of the health and economic effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which, compounded by the adverse effects of climate change, has severely affected African economies, pushing them into contraction for the first time in 20 years, and stalling or reversing the reduction in poverty observed over the past few years, and progress made in education and health outcomes, exposing delays in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union,

Do hereby:

1. *Acknowledge* that, despite the pick-up in economic growth to 2.9 per cent in 2019, compared with 2.7 per cent in 2018, the coronavirus pandemic significantly affected African growth in 2020, with an estimated 5.4 per cent decline in gross domestic product growth rate with adverse impact on social development, and induced severe challenges for African countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and goals of Agenda 2063;
2. *Note* the challenges and possible risks and uncertainties to the medium-term outlook, particularly as a result of low economic activity due to lockdowns to combat the pandemic, the threat from climate change, the global economic slowdown and the vulnerabilities exposed by COVID-19;
3. *Note with concern* the trend towards deindustrialization, as the pandemic has further accentuated the decline in industrial production in Africa, and the consequent need to strengthen the industrial base in Africa;
4. *Recognize* the fact that most of our economies are still agriculture-based, and that, in consequence, natural disasters and climate-related challenges such as cyclones Idai and Kenneth in 2019 and drought pose adverse threats to the African growth trajectory, inflicting serious economic damage on most of the countries in East and Southern Africa, amounting to about \$2 billion, signifying the urgency and importance of putting in place strategies to prevent or minimize those effects;
5. *Also recognize* the importance of aligning industrial policies with other relevant sectoral policies, promoting local consumption and production, participation in regional and global value chains, and capitalizing on the

benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Area to stimulate the industrialization of the continent;

6. *Further recognize* the importance of pursuing an inclusive industrialization and economic diversification strategy that fosters the emergence of competitive micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and a well-linked informal sector, contributing to economic growth and job creation, and the need to strengthen the capacity of entrepreneurs, in particular of women and youth entrepreneurs;

7. *Recognize* the magnitude of the economic and social costs incurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for African countries to put in place strategies and policies that could help in supporting the strong rebound of Africa in growth and macroeconomic stability, and to ensure debt sustainability, in order to build forward better from the crisis, and that a continental strategy, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area, could play a significant role in fostering the recovery process and beyond in this regard;

8. *Acknowledge* that African policy responses to combat the spread of COVID-19 – such as social distancing, lockdowns and border closures, along with fiscal and monetary measures aimed at injecting liquidity and easing the burden of the crisis on vulnerable groups and the private sector – have significantly affected the macroeconomic situation of African countries, in particular their fiscal and debt stance, and that, as a result, African countries are compelled to put in place policies that improve macroeconomic management and domestic resource mobilization, and encourage private sector investment;

9. *Take cognizance* of the imperative for Africa to continue adopting evidence-based policymaking processes, with the aim of planning, designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating sustainable and inclusive development policies that foster social cohesion through quality data within the frameworks of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union, while noting that accelerated growth, higher investment rates, improved productivity and decent job creation require a stable and resilient macroeconomic environment;

10. *Note* the contributions of the Economic Commission for Africa in supporting evidence-based policymaking and implementation across Africa, including its work on macroeconomic modelling, forecasting and scenario-building, amid growing resource constraints, and the importance of extrabudgetary resources in expanding the ability of the Economic Commission for Africa to respond adequately to the needs of member States, regional economic communities, the African Union and other relevant stakeholders;

11. *Recognize* that, before the COVID-19 outbreak, Africa had made considerable progress towards social outcomes, with a reduction in poverty levels in most subregions, but the pace of poverty reduction has been slow, with gross domestic product per capita growth of 0.5 per cent, lower than the previous two decades, and that this growth trajectory, which has currently been stalled or even reversed due to the pandemic, has not been inclusive, with low job creation, underscoring the view that the source and type of growth matters for job creation in the continent, and that the theme of the present session, “Africa’s sustainable industrialization and diversification in the digital era in the context of COVID-19”, is therefore timely in addressing the issues of good quality job creation, through digitalization, in a manner that will ensure sustainable industrial development, while taking note of the role digital technologies have played during the COVID-19 crisis;

12. *Also recognize* the role played by digital technologies in transforming industry through what is referred to as the fourth industrial

revolution, which includes the adoption of technologies such as industrial robots and three-dimensional printing in manufacturing, and the use of big data and artificial intelligence in product development and e-commerce in marketing and sales, taking industrialization to an entirely new level;

13. *Take note* of the opportunities that the COVID-19 pandemic has provided to strengthen policies and build forward better through an industrialization pathway that is environmentally sustainable and digitally empowered, which calls for policymakers to sow the seeds of a firm foundation for the digital era by strengthening research and development capabilities, mainstreaming science, technology and innovation in development policies, investing in Internet and digital infrastructure, and improving digital literacy skills and labour conditions;

14. *Recognize*, therefore, the need for Africa to embrace environmentally sustainable industrialization and diversification as a pathway to create jobs for women and young people in building forward better, while taking note of the emerging technologies of the fourth industrial revolution, the challenges of climate change and pandemic outbreaks, which are posing considerable new risks and opening up different options and opportunities for the development process of Africa;

15. *Take cognizance* of the swift and active response by the African Union – jointly with African Governments, the Economic Commission for Africa, regional institutions and development partners – to address the pandemic, building on the comparative advantage gained from the previous experiences of health pandemics in the continent, such as Ebola;

16. *Recognize* that, besides the current efforts to contain and address the adverse impacts of the pandemic, Africa must take effective action to increase value added and create decent jobs for the 170 million African young people set to enter the job market between 2019 and 2030, and also ensure resilience to future shocks;

17. *Call upon* member States, therefore, to design and implement strategies and policies that could drive green industrialization and diversification, including through the formulation of integrated green and climate-resilient growth and digitalization strategies and plans, into industrial and other national development frameworks;

18. *Also call upon* member States to build better digital and new climate economy foundations in all sectors to improve productivity by appropriately strengthening research and development capabilities, mainstreaming science, technology and innovation in development policies, and investing in digital parks, digital skills development, including basic computing, computer programming and coding, and job-neutral soft skills, such as communications, management, analytical and critical thinking, and creativity;

19. *Call upon* the private sector to sustainably harness green and blue economy strategies and climate-resilient industrialization, recognizing in that process the rapid growth and increasing integration of new and emerging technologies, such as digital technologies, nanotechnologies, biotechnologies and advanced materials, that underpin the fourth industrial revolution;

20. *Call upon* the Economic Commission for Africa and its development partners to enhance technical support to member States to support diversification and industrialization, including in unlocking the potential of the private sector in achieving green and climate-resilient industrialization, in aligning their industrialization strategies with the Sustainable Development Goals, Agenda 2063 goals and green and blue economy principles, and also to assess the implications of new and emerging technologies for the

industrialization of Africa and adopt good practices in harnessing emerging technologies to achieve sustainable industrialization;

21. *Call upon* member States to pursue inclusive industrialization and economic diversification strategies that prioritize the development of competitive micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and ensure linkages with the informal sector in accelerating economic growth, job creation and entrepreneurship development, in particular for women and young people, with adequate support from the Economic Commission for Africa and other development partners;

22. *Take note* of the nomination of Arkebe Oqubay as the Africa candidate for the post of Director General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization;

23. *Recognize* the important role that the United Nations Industrial Development Organization must play in building forward better, and also in contributing to and supporting the industrial and economic policies that will support inclusive and sustainable growth in the developing world;

24. *Acknowledge* Mr. Oqubay's proven track record in leading, formulating and delivering innovative and meaningful policy change across developing economies;

25. *Express our confidence that* that Mr. Oqubay's extensive experience, combined with his international outlook, makes him the best candidate for the role of Director General;

26. *Recognize* Mr. Oqubay's far-reaching vision for a revitalized United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the focus that he is placing on carbon-neutral industrialization, global knowledge exchange and inclusive industrial growth;

27. *Welcome* the opportunity to work closely with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization in the post-COVID-19 era and in the years to come;

28. *Extend our support* for the candidacy of Mr. Oqubay for the post of Director General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization;

29. *Welcome* the adoption by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union at its thirty-third ordinary session, held in Addis Ababa 9 and 10 February 2020, of the Common African Position on Asset Recovery, in which the Assembly resolved to ensure that all the financial resources lost through illicit capital flight and illicit financial flows were identified and returned to Africa to finance the continent's development agenda;

30. *Recognize* the challenges faced by member States in tracking, apprehending and recovering financial resources illicitly transferred from the continent, thereby limiting the realization of domestic resource mobilization for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the aspirations of Agenda 2063;

31. *Call upon* the United Nations, in particular the Economic Commission for Africa, members of the Consortium on Illicit Financial Flows and other partners to leverage digitalization to support African countries in the implementation of the Common African Position on Asset Recovery and enhance domestic resource mobilization on the continent;

32. *Recognize and commend* the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with its development partners, for supporting and providing a platform for the African ministers of finance to hold discussions on several initiatives on debt, such as the Group of 20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative and sovereign debt restructuring, to enhance member States' access to development financing;

33. *Call upon* the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with its development partners, to continue this support, which is important for economic growth to rebound;

34. *Commend* the Economic Commission for Africa on its continued support for the advancement of the continent's integration agenda, including through the provision of policy, analytical and technical support to member States, regional economic communities and pan-African organizations, such as the African Union Development Agency, in particular priority action programme II of its Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, and the African Peer Review Mechanism of the African Union;

35. *Call upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue strengthening its analytical, technical, advisory and training capacity in support of evidence-based policymaking and implementation, including on macroeconomic modelling, forecasting and scenario-building, and to make additional efforts to mobilize extrabudgetary resources necessary for responding to the increasing demands and requests for its services by member States, regional economic communities, the African Union Commission and other relevant stakeholders;

36. *Recognize and commend* the commitment of African leaders to the development of the continent, as evidenced by the start of trading under the African Continental Free Trade Area on 1 January 2021, and the commencement of phase II and phase III negotiations on investment, competition policy, intellectual property rights and e-commerce;

37. *Reaffirm* our call upon the Economic Commission for Africa to provide technical support to member States to implement the national strategies of the African Continental Free Trade Areas, agriculture, regional value chains in pharmaceuticals, agroprocessing and mineral beneficiation, and also negotiations in phase II and phase III of the African Continental Free Trade Area negotiation process;

38. *Encourage* further progress by the regional economic communities and various member States in facilitating the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Establishment, which has now been signed by 32 member States but ratified by only one member State;

39. *Welcome* the work of the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with its partners, in monitoring the implementation of regional integration activities and programmes through its various monitoring tools, including the mechanisms described in the publication *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa*, the Africa Regional Integration Index and the African Continental Free Trade Area country business index;

40. *Recommit* ourselves to continuing and strengthening our efforts to address the challenges that our member States continue to face in the implementation of various landmark regional integration initiatives and commitments, in particular in the areas of industrialization, climate-smart economies, digitalization, data and statistics, infrastructure, energy, macroeconomic policy convergence, peace and security, trade and investments;

41. *Recognize* the need for member States to continue reforming their financial systems and improving their governance through enhanced transparency and financial integrity in promoting sustainable development;

42. *Also recognize* that African landlocked developing countries have made progress in the implementation of various priority areas of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, including in the building of transit transport and economic corridors, although progress has been very mixed and slow, as a result of which a majority of these countries have continued to face particular challenges;

43. *Take note* of the High-Level Political Declaration issued at the December 2019 Global Comprehensive Midterm Review of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, “Calling for action to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action”, and in this regard call upon the Economic Commission for Africa, in close collaboration with its partners, to continue providing policy, analytical and technical support to African landlocked developing countries in their efforts to implement the Vienna Programme of Action, including through building their capacity to leverage the opportunities provided by regional initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area;

44. *Also take note* of the 2022 programme priorities of the Commission, reaffirm our commitment to support the proposed budget and call upon the United Nations General Assembly to approve the Commission’s 2022 plan and budget as presented to this august Conference;

45. *Recognize* that African least developed countries and Haiti have made good progress on the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020, in particular with regard to raising per capita spending on primary education, which has contributed to increased primary enrolment and completion rates and improved gender parity in primary and secondary schools, have been notably successful in politically empowering women through increased representation in national parliaments and local government, and have also reduced export concentration by diversifying their primary commodity exports;

46. *Express concern* that the impact of COVID-19 is jeopardizing the progress made so far, as outlined in the 2020 report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020,¹ and also the Economic Commission for Africa report on the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action in African least developed countries;²

47. *Also express concern* that, besides slowing growth, the pandemic is expected to reverse gains achieved in the areas of gender equality, poverty eradication and reduction in income inequality, education and employment, thereby jeopardizing prospects for the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030;

48. *Further express concern* that, while half of the six least developed countries that have graduated from the category so far are from Africa – Botswana, Cabo Verde and Equatorial Guinea – the slow and uneven development in African least developed countries and Haiti will undermine the limited progress towards the graduation criteria, against the target of the Istanbul Programme of Action, which specified that half the number of least developed countries should qualify for graduation;

49. *Express particular concern* that the pandemic could further heighten debt vulnerabilities of African least developed countries and note that five of the six countries in debt distress are African least developed countries and two of the least developed countries have decided to seek debt restructuring under the common framework for debt treatments beyond the Debt Service Suspension Initiative of the Group of 20;

50. *Underline* the need to revisit the current system of support for the least developed countries in the lead-up to the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, in January 2022, with a view to ensuring

¹ A/75/72-E/2020/14.

² Economic Commission for Africa, “Progress in the implementation of the priority areas of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 (Istanbul Programme of Action): Africa regional review of the Istanbul Programme of Action”, Addis Ababa, 2021.

that international support measures provide the levels of assistance necessary for the African least developed countries and Haiti to break down the structural barriers to advancement that they face and overcome their vulnerabilities;

51. *Reaffirm*, to this end, our call for the Commission to continue to support African least developed countries in their efforts to graduate from least development country status and facilitate their implementation of the programme of actions that emanates from the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

Vote of thanks

52. We thank the Government and people of Ethiopia for the hospitality that they have afforded the member States and representatives of various institutions and organizations that participated in this Conference, and also for the courtesies extended to us, which ensured the success of our meetings.

53. Lastly, we wish to extend our gratitude to the Economic Commission for Africa for successfully convening the fifty-third session of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

Annex II

Resolutions adopted by the Conference of Ministers at its fifty-third session

A. Resolutions

972 (LIII). African Continental Free Trade Area

The Conference of Ministers,

Recognizing the development potential of the African Continental Free Trade Area as a vehicle for achieving the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union,

Taking note of declaration Ext/Assembly/AU/Decl.1(XIII) of 5 December 2020, adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union at its thirteenth extraordinary session, in which it endorsed 31 December 2021 as the deadline to conclude phase II and phase III negotiations under the African Continental Free Trade Area,

Recalling decision Assembly/AU/Dec.569(XXV) of 15 June 2015, adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union at its twenty-fifth ordinary session, in which it called upon the Economic Commission for Africa to provide support to Member States, the African Union Commission and the regional economic communities to ensure the timely conclusion of the negotiations,

Cognizant of the role of trade in the equitable sharing of public health goods and services, such as personal protective equipment, ventilators and vaccines, in the face of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis,

Recognizing the importance of re-envisioning trade, to account appropriately for climate change, including through the creation of green value chains, and to leverage the emergence of the digital economy, including through the implementation of a protocol on e-commerce to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area,

Recognizing also the potential of the African Continental Free Trade Area to accelerate the process of economic recovery and building forward better in addressing the challenges of COVID-19 and the post-COVID-19 environment,

1. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue supporting the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, including and in particular the ratification of the Agreement by those member States that have yet to do so, in close collaboration with the African Union Commission and the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area;

2. *Urges* the Economic Commission for Africa to provide technical support to its member States, the African Union Commission, the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area, and regional economic communities, in respect of agricultural development, industrialization, high-priority continental infrastructure projects, in particular those listed in Priority Action Plan II of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, digitalization, implementation of national strategies for the African Continental

Free Trade Area, and phase II and phase III negotiations under the African Continental Free Trade Area;

3. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa to prepare a study on how to foster investments on the continent through the African Continental Free Trade Area, to be presented to member States in 2022 at the fifty-fourth session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development;

4. *Also requests* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue providing technical support to the secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area, including in developing and deploying digital trading systems and documentation.

*5th plenary meeting
23 March 2021*

973 (LIII). Data and statistics

The Conference of Ministers,

Acknowledging the urgency, in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, of transforming statistical production systems in African countries, so as to generate the data needed for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union,

Noting the continuing efforts and initiatives undertaken to track the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals at the national, subregional and continental levels in Africa in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak,

Recognizing the experiences shared by the World Health Organization and member States relating to health statistics and the conclusion that building the capacities of countries in respect of health statistics and mortality surveillance would be critical to improving health services, which have been greatly affected during the COVID-19 pandemic,

Taking note of the report and resolutions of the seventh meeting of the Statistical Commission for Africa, held online from 13 to 15 October 2020, under the theme: “Developing regional solutions to enhance the resilience of African national statistical systems to meet the need for data during the decade of action in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic”,

Welcoming the creation of an African group on transformation and modernization of official statistics, composed of 10 directors general of national statistical offices, and encourages the group to propose regional guidance and standards for the modernization and transformation of national statistical systems,

1. *Urges* partners and Governments to build strong monitoring systems and health information systems at the national and local levels;

2. *Calls upon* pan-African organizations and partners to work in close collaboration and foster synergies to support African countries, in particular those with the lowest levels of statistical development, to mitigate the impact of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic;

3. *Calls upon* member States to renew their commitments to the conduct of population and housing censuses during the 2020 census round and calls in particular for technical assistance and advisory services for countries

in conflict and post-conflict countries and for those that have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic;

4. *Urges* that steps be taken to ensure that key targets and indicators of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 are incorporated into national development plans;

5. *Also urges* that steps be taken to ensure that the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework is incorporated into national development plans and is fully contextualized at the regional level, with a view to extending current national data systems to new data frontiers, such as earth observation, geospatial data and big data, in support of integrated spatial planning and inclusive and sustainable growth;

6. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa, working with other key regional partners, such as the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank, to continue its support for member States in strengthening the capacity of their statistical and data systems.

*5th plenary meeting
23 March 2021*

974 (LIII). Civil registration and vital statistics

The Conference of Ministers,

Noting the vital role of data, statistics and civil registration in national planning and in achieving the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union,

Recognizing the critical importance of fully functional and universal civil registration systems and the adoption in 2010 by the first Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration of the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems, the main objective of which has been to ensure that everyone in Africa is counted,

Acknowledging the resolutions and achievements of the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration, which has been held every two years since 2010, with the objective of providing policy direction for the transformation and accelerated improvement of civil registration and vital statistics systems in Africa,

Noting the adoption in 2019 of the Lusaka Declaration by the fifth Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration, in which the Conference welcomed the opportunity to modernize civil registration and vital statistics systems in Africa through technological solutions aimed at building centralized digital civil registries for all vital events, thereby enabling wide access, inclusive coverage and reduced costs through automated systems,

Taking note of the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda, backed by the Deputy Secretary-General, which was launched in 2019 as a “One United Nations” approach to support member States in building holistic, country-owned and sustainable civil registration, vital statistics and identity management systems,

Cognizant of the principles of the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda of complete civil registration and universal registration of all vital events; the production of regular, comprehensive and accurate vital statistics; and the establishment and maintenance of population registers and identity-management apparatuses from birth to death,

1. *Urges* African Governments to invest in creating fully functional legal identity systems, with a foundation built on strong civil registration

systems that start at birth and end at death, and to provide citizens with special probatory instruments that enable them to prove, with unquestionable certainty, the facts relating to a person's existence, identity, and personal and family situation;

2. *Recommends* that civil registration systems be recognized as essential government services that should continue even during emergencies, given their intrinsic value in upholding human rights, their administrative uses and their role in the production of vital statistics;

3. *Encourages* member States to digitize civil registration systems and processes, from notification to certification, to make them more dynamic, interoperable, resilient, proactive and agile;

4. *Urges* member States to build interoperable registration systems that are based on a life-cycle approach that accounts for people as they enter the cycle upon birth, progress through various stages of life and exit the cycle upon death;

5. *Calls upon* member States to establish closer links between civil registration authorities and the health-care sector so that vital events occurring in health-care institutions can be formally reported to civil registration authorities;

6. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue to support member States in promoting civil registration in Africa.

*5th plenary meeting
23 March 2021*

975 (LIII). Sustainable industrialization and diversification of Africa in the digital era in the context of the coronavirus disease pandemic

The Conference of Ministers,

Recalling its resolution 969 (LII) of 26 March 2019 on digitalization and the digital economy initiative, in which it requested the Economic Commission for Africa to continue its work on policy research, regional dialogue and capacity development on digitalization and the digital economy in member States,

Taking note of decision EX.CL/Dec.1032(XXXIV) of 8 February 2019 of the Executive Council of the African Union, mandating the African Union Commission, in collaboration with member States, the Economic Commission for Africa and other relevant stakeholders, to develop a comprehensive African Union digital trade and digital economy development strategy,

Cognizant of decision Assembly/AU/Dec.751(XXXIII) of 9 February 2020 of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union introducing the negotiation, within the African Continental Free Trade Area, of a protocol on e-commerce and directing the African Union Commission to embark on preparations and capacity-building ahead of that negotiation,

Acknowledging the considerable economic challenges posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the effect of the pandemic on efforts to accelerate digitalization and shorten supply chains in Africa and the world more broadly, and the imperative to take advantage of the expanded policy space for industrial policy in building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic, including in the pharmaceutical, agriculture and mining sectors,

Cognizant that digitalization is fundamentally changing the nature of industrialization and the means of achieving it and, in that process, the traditional routes to development, economic diversification and job creation,

Recognizing the importance of natural gas as a key input and a fuel for the clean energy transition of Africa,

Reaffirming the commitments made by all signatories to the Paris Agreement on climate change¹ to reduce the emissions that cause climate change and to transition to a low-carbon economy,

Taking note of the issues paper of the Economic Commission for Africa on the sustainable industrialization and diversification of Africa in the digital era in the context of COVID-19² and the finding of the paper that Africa must reimagine its industrialization pathway for sustained and inclusive growth, job creation and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 in Africa,

1. *Encourages* member States to re-envisage industrialization and diversification, including by deepening their research and development capabilities, mainstreaming science, technology and innovation and formulating integrated green and climate-resilient growth and digitalization strategies within national development frameworks;

2. *Calls upon* member States to build better digital and new climate economy foundations by appropriately investing in digital skills development, including basic computing, computer programming and coding, and job-neutral soft skills;

3. *Also calls upon* member States to upgrade digital middleware in Africa by adopting digital identity systems and supporting digital payment solutions and to invest in the continent's digital hardware by improving and ensuring affordable internet coverage and energy access;

4. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to provide technical support to member States to leverage the African Continental Free Trade Area as a framework for the vertical integration of industries and supply chains and achieving the digitalization of Africa;

5. *Also calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to carry out a study to explore the prospects for and merits of establishing an African expert group on gas to advise member States on how to unlock the potential of gas in industrialization and the transition to clean energy;

6. *Further calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to help member States to include digital expenditures in their national budgets.

*5th plenary meeting
23 March 2021*

976 (LIII). Coronavirus disease vaccines

The Conference of Ministers,

Recognizing the serious threat that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) poses to the health, social and economic development of peoples and countries around the world, and the rollback in the gains recorded in Africa towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union,

¹ See FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1, decision 1/CP.21, annex.

² E/ECA/COE/39/4.

Noting the progress made in the development of vaccines to contain and stem the spread of the disease, and the need for equitable access to those vaccines by all countries and peoples around the world,

Considering that, notwithstanding the declaration by world leaders in April 2020 that any COVID-19 vaccine would be a global public good, it is likely that 9 in 10 people in the poorest countries will not receive the vaccine in 2021,

Considering also that the supply of vaccines has skewed disproportionately towards Western countries, which account for only 14 per cent of the global population, prompting the World Health Organization to warn against the practice of “vaccine nationalism”, a practice that may deny developing countries prompt and equitable access to vaccines,

Recognizing that African countries escaped the worst of the first wave of the pandemic in 2020 but the second wave is spreading fast across the continent and health systems are in danger of collapsing, and that the longer the virus is left to ravage African countries without immunization, the longer all of humanity remains at risk, because no one is safe until everyone is safe,

Acknowledging that, with the existing COVID-19 vaccine supply, production and distribution processes, there is less probability of achieving global herd immunity but greater prospects of genetic mutations, and that much more stringent border controls could lead to longer economic stagnation, with a global cost estimate of 9.2 trillion United States dollars associated with supply chain disruptions and demand shocks, with developed countries bearing half of these costs,

Considering that the COVID-19 pandemic, leveraging the African Continental Free Trade Area as a business blueprint, complemented by a smart sustainable industrialization process, also provides opportunities to greatly accelerate the recovery of Africa through vaccine deployment and effective transmission management efforts, and that equitable global access to COVID-19 vaccines is estimated to be worth more than 460 billion dollars in economic benefits to 10 major economies alone,

Reaffirming that the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access facility aimed at equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines is welcome, but does not resolve the undersupply of production and at best will only cater to 20 per cent of the African population,

Recalling the painful lessons of the early years of the HIV/AIDS response, when millions of lives were needlessly lost because life-saving treatment remained out of reach for African countries, which highlights the urgent need for more timely and effective interventions in response to COVID-19,

Noting that the various regional initiatives led by the African Union Commission, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, the Economic Commission for Africa and all other stakeholders, including the private sector, need to take fuller advantage of the African Continental Free Trade Area in the domain of health, by promoting localized manufacturing and pooled procurement in vaccine production, and by enhancing continental and national supply chain management to achieve equitable access, thus contributing to sustainable industrialization,

1. *Commends* various initiatives undertaken by the Economic Commission for Africa to support member States in leveraging the adoption of the African Union Commission and Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention Africa Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 Outbreak in March 2020 as a blueprint and master plan for coordinating regional efforts to ensure

synergy and minimize duplication, to save lives and support African social and economic development;

2. *Also commends* various initiatives undertaken by the Economic Commission for Africa in supporting African member States in the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights on vaccines, debt relief and the issuance of special drawing rights;

3. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue these efforts;

4. *Also requests* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue to advocate the equitable distribution of and access to COVID-19 vaccines in all regions of the world, including Africa;

5. *Further requests* the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the African Union Commission and all relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, to assist African member States in putting in place continental strategies and policies to facilitate the production of vaccines on the continent, improve pooled procurement, in particular through digital technologies, as exemplified by the African Medical Supply Platform, and leverage the use of digital tools in national supply chains for improved accessibility for all, which will improve the affordability and accessibility of vaccines and assist in generating inclusive economic growth, stimulating job creation and eradicating poverty for the continent's socioeconomic development and sustainable growth;

6. *Urges* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue to support member States in vaccine procurement, including through additional funding made available from debt relief under the Group of 20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative, development finance institutions and special drawing rights.

*5th plenary meeting
23 March 2021*

977 (LIII). Economic Commission for Africa support for least developed countries in the context of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

The Conference of Ministers,

Recognizing that African least developed countries and Haiti represent an enormous human and natural resource potential for world economic growth, welfare, prosperity, and food and energy security,

Acknowledging the considerable efforts that African least developed countries and Haiti have made in implementing the commitments of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020,

Concerned that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has further jeopardized the limited progress towards the goals of the Istanbul Programme of Action, as outlined in the 2020 report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Programme of Action³ and in the 2021 Economic

³ A/75/72-E/2020/14.

Commission for Africa report on progress in implementation of the Programme of Action by African least developed countries,⁴

Cognizant of the need to revisit the current system of support for the least developed countries in the lead-up to the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in January 2022, with a view to ensuring that international support measures provide the levels of assistance necessary for the African least developed countries and Haiti to address the structural barriers to development that they face, and overcome their vulnerabilities, as agreed in the political declaration of the Africa Regional Review meeting, held in Lilongwe from 22 to 26 February 2021 in preparation for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries,⁵

Requests the Economic Commission for Africa to continue to support African least developed countries in their efforts to graduate from least development country status and facilitate their implementation of the Programmes of Action that emanate from the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

*5th plenary meeting
23 March 2021*

978 (LIII). Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024

The Conference of Ministers,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 74/15 of 5 December 2019 on the Political Declaration of the High-level Midterm Review on the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, in which the Assembly called for action to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action,

Affirming its resolution 963 (LII) of 26 March 2019 on the midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, in which it requested the Economic Commission for Africa, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the African Union, the African Development Bank and other relevant regional organizations further to assist African landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries in infrastructure development, the development of bankable projects, production capacity development, trade facilitation and structural transformation through, in particular, enhanced investment and technical assistance, and to promote greater cooperation between African landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries and enhanced regional integration,

Recognizing that landlocked developing countries are highly dependent on transit countries for access to international markets and are particularly vulnerable to cross-border restrictions in combating the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the social and economic impacts of the associated lockdown measures, the health effects of the pandemic, commodity price shocks and any likely global recession,

⁴ Economic Commission for Africa, “Progress in the implementation of the priority areas of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 (Istanbul Programme of Action): Africa regional review of the Istanbul Programme of Action” (Addis Ababa, 2021).

⁵ See the outcome document of the African Regional Review Meeting, available at https://www.un.org/ldc5/sites/www.un.org/ldc5/files/outcome_document_arr_2021.pdf.

Recognizing also that the pandemic will have an impact on the progress of landlocked developing countries towards attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and the aspirations included in the Vienna Programme of Action,

Cognizant that trading pursuant to the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, which started on 1 January 2021, signals a unique turning point in the continent's pursuit of industrialization and that effective implementation of that Agreement and the Vienna Programme of Action will further advance progress by African countries towards fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 of the African Union: The Africa We Want, of the African Union,

Underscoring the importance of the full implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for sustainable and inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and reduction of the impact of future shocks,

Taking note of the road map for the accelerated implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in the remaining five years adopted by the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries on 23 September 2020,

1. *Invites* the African landlocked and transit developing countries, regional and subregional organizations and other stakeholders to implement the provisions and actions of the Political Declaration of the High-level Midterm Review on the Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024,⁶ including those on the promotion of regional connectivity, trade facilitation, the development of regionally integrated, sustainable transport infrastructure resilient to climate change and disasters, the diversification of export structure, the adding of value to exports and the effective implementation of regional integration agreements;

2. *Urges* transit countries to enhance cross-border collaboration with landlocked countries, by taking needed action to minimize disruptions to international and transboundary transport, eliminate trade restrictions and facilitate movement of, primarily, essential goods such as food, medical supplies and personal protection equipment;

3. *Calls upon* transit countries also to enhance collaboration with landlocked countries by strengthening the transparency and availability of information about transit and border procedures, making use of digital technologies, with a view to helping landlocked developing countries to respond effectively to the COVID-19 pandemic and prevent future disruptions of a similar nature;

4. *Invites* development partners and relevant international, regional and subregional organizations to enhance support for landlocked developing countries and transit countries in implementing the relevant international trade and transport facilitation conventions;

5. *Underscores* the importance of mobilizing necessary resources; to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and to support the landlocked developing countries;

6. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, other relevant United Nations system organizations, regional and international development partners and other international organizations, to support landlocked developing countries and transit countries in leveraging the opportunities provided by regional and integration initiatives, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area;

⁶ General Assembly resolution 74/15.

7. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the Office of the High Representative, other relevant United Nations system organizations and relevant international and regional organizations, to continue providing technical support to the landlocked developing countries in Africa in the priority areas of the Vienna Programme of Action, including those included in the road map for its accelerated implementation.

*5th plenary meeting
23 March 2021*

979 (LIII). African Institute for Economic Development and Planning

The Conference of Ministers,

Taking into account the challenges ahead in the context of successful achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the first decade of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union, and the imperative to build stronger and more resilient economies whose performance will benefit all, leaving no one behind,

Recalling article IV, paragraph 3, of the updated statute of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, by which the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development is required to appoint the 10 members of the Governing Council of the Institute, who will serve as representatives of African Governments on three-year terms, with eligibility for reappointment for one additional term only,

Noting the proposed new membership of the board of the Institute, comprising the Central African Republic and Equatorial Guinea for Central Africa; Ethiopia and Rwanda for East Africa; Mauritania and the Sudan for North Africa; Botswana and Mozambique for Southern Africa; and Ghana and Guinea for West Africa, in addition to the permanent seats occupied by Senegal as host country and the African Union Commission,

Recognizing the central role of development planning in meeting the development priorities of Africa, in particular in the context of COVID-19 and to support resilient recovery and effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063,

Taking note of the decision of the Governing Council of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning at its fifty-sixth meeting, held in Dakar in March 2018, and reaffirmed during its fifty-seventh and fifty-eighth meetings, held in June 2019 and December 2020, respectively, recommending an increase in the regular United Nations grant to the Institute, from 1.3 million to 2.6 million United States dollars per annum,

Recalling its resolution 956 (LI) of 15 May 2018, requesting the General Assembly to increase the regular grant in support of the Institute's programme, and noting that the recommendation is yet to be effected,

Aware of the current financial challenges facing the United Nations, but cognizant of the great importance of capacity-building to achieving the goals and aspirations of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 for African countries, as evidenced by the rapidly increasing demands by African member States for capacity-building support from the Institute,

Commending the successful efforts being made by the Institute to recover contribution arrears from member States,

Recognizing with appreciation the example being set by several African member States through the partial or full settlement of their contribution arrears to the Institute,

1. *Endorses* the reconstituted membership of the Governing Council of the Institute;
2. *Reiterates* its call to the Economic Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the Institute, to take all steps necessary to request the General Assembly to increase the regular grant in support of the Institute's programme;
3. *Reiterates* its call to member States for the more regular payment of assessed annual contributions and the settlement of arrears to the Institute.

*5th plenary meeting
23 March 2021*

980 (LIII). Special drawing rights

The Conference of Ministers,

Noting with grave concern the adverse socioeconomic and health impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on African economies, coupled with their limited fiscal and monetary tools to respond to the crisis, which will most likely derail their efforts to build forward better and to achieve the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union,

Welcoming the fiscal stimulus measures implemented by African countries in response to the pandemic, despite their limited fiscal space,

Encouraged by the financial assistance and support provided by the international community to low-income countries, including the postponement of debt service payments and the provision of much needed liquidity to save lives and rebuild livelihoods,

Concerned that, notwithstanding existing support measures, the fiscal buffers of African countries have been depleted as revenues have declined and expenditures have surged, in the context of a rising number of COVID-19 cases, deteriorating trade balances, increasing inflationary pressures and depreciating exchange rates,

Concerned also that, in the absence of a rapid roll-out of vaccines, subsequent waves of COVID-19 cases will further undermine the fiscal positions of African economies, elevate their debt vulnerabilities and move them even closer to debt distress,

Conscious that the growth of high-interest private debt as a share of the debt stock of African countries has been associated with an increase in the debt-service burden, which has further constrained their fiscal space,

Acknowledging that additional concessional financing is needed to ensure that macroeconomic responses to the pandemic do not further elevate the debt vulnerabilities of Africa,

Cognizant of the important role of special drawing rights as a source of concessional financing and the effective role that a new issuance of special drawing rights played in the global response to the financial crisis of 2008,

Convinced that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic greatly exceeds that of the financial crisis in terms of its unprecedented impact on real growth in gross domestic product, health, unemployment and inequality, both within and among countries,

Concerned that the current mechanism for allocating special drawing rights favours developed countries, at the expense of low-income and middle-income countries, which lack adequate fiscal and monetary tools to respond effectively to a pandemic of this magnitude,

Encouraged by the support of the Group of 20, following the endorsement by the Government of the United States of America, for a new allocation of special drawing rights that is underpinned by an appropriate reallocation mechanism,

1. *Commends* the Economic Commission for Africa on its advocacy of and substantive support for a new issuance and reallocation of special drawing rights to low-income and middle-income countries;

2. *Acknowledges* the work performed by the Commission in designing a liquidity and sustainability facility to reduce the cost of private credit for African countries;

3. *Requests* the Commission to continue to provide a convening platform for African policymakers and other relevant stakeholders, and to advocate a new issuance of between 500 billion and 650 billion United States dollars in special drawing rights, which would be a vital step in providing much needed liquidity and investment financing for African countries, and for low-income and middle-income countries in particular;

4. *Also requests* the Commission to support advocacy efforts by member States for the extension of the Group of 20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative until at least the end of 2021, which would free up an additional 8 billion dollars for recovery in 2021 and provide much needed liquidity to respond to the crisis;

5. *Calls upon* the Commission to mobilize support for a special drawing rights reallocation mechanism that is commensurate with the development financing needs of African countries;

6. *Encourages* member States to work collectively to ensure that they have a common voice and position on the issue of special drawing rights.

*5th plenary meeting
23 March 2021*

981 (LIII). 2022 programme plan and budget

The Conference of Ministers,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 71/243 of 21 December 2016 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, in which the Assembly called upon the United Nations regional commissions and the United Nations development system to fully implement the statement of collaboration between the United Nations Development Group and the United Nations regional commissions on support to member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 72/279 of 31 May 2018 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, in which the Assembly reaffirmed the role and functions of the United Nations development system at the regional level, including the regional economic commissions and the regional teams of the United Nations development system, and underlined the need to continue to make them fit for purpose in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda,

Noting that the formulation of the medium-term programme framework was affected by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) situation and will require further consultations with constituencies and stakeholders,

Acknowledging the good level of alignment and focus of the programme plan and budget of the Economic Commission for Africa with the development priorities and aspirations of Africa,

Having examined the 2022 programme plan and budget,

1. *Calls upon* the Economic Commission for Africa to include performance measures in the four-year medium-term programme framework (2022–2025), to facilitate the tracking of progress in its implementation;
2. *Urges* the Economic Commission for Africa to consider working towards the consolidation of its programme plan and budget documents;
3. *Also urges* the Economic Commission for Africa to work towards strengthening its resource mobilization efforts, with a view to improving the balance between regular budgetary allocations and extrabudgetary resources;
4. *Adopts* the 2022 programme plan and budget of the Economic Commission for Africa.

*5th plenary meeting
23 March 2021*

B. Decision

A (LIII). Date, venue and theme for the fifty-fourth session

At its 5th plenary meeting on 23 March 2021, the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development decided that its fifty-fourth session would be held in Addis Ababa in 2022 on a date in the month of March and that further consideration should be given by the Commission, working with the Bureau, to its theme, to reflect the work being done to seize opportunities and overcome development challenges, including those posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and with a view to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the aspirations of Agenda 2063 in the post-COVID-19 era.

*5th plenary meeting
23 March 2021*