

**Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials
 and Experts for North Africa**

Thirty-fourth meeting

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**Summary of ECA activities in North Africa
 (October 2018 - September 2019)**

Contents

I. Introduction	2
II. Major achievements of the work program during the period under review	2
A. Major outcome 1: Building the capacity of member States in the North African sub-region to design and implement national policies and strategies for sustainable employment creation	2
1. High-Level Regional Dialogue on Employment in North Africa	2
2. Country profile, STEPS and research papers produced	4
3. North African Development Forum "Blue Economy in North Africa: Smart maritime transport in facilitating international trade in the digital era"	5
4. Advisory support	6
B. Major outcome 2: Building the capacity of member States in the North African sub-region and the regional economic communities to implement sub-regional development priorities in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030) and Agenda 2063, with due regard to youth and gender issues.	6
1. Sub-regional coordination and partnerships in support of MDG achievement in North Africa.	6
2. Advisory support in monitoring the implementation of development agendas	7
3. Data revolution in North Africa: Using data for structural transformation	9
III. Special initiatives, interactions with headquarters divisions and partnerships	9
A. Special initiatives	9
B. Interactions with headquarters divisions	12
C. Partnerships	12
1. Partnerships with institutions, universities, research centers and think tanks	12
2. Partnerships with the United Nations system and other development partners	14
IV. Status of implementation of the recommendations of the thirty-third ICE	15
A. Recommendations on the sub-regional profile	15
B. Recommendations on the AfCFTA	15
C. Recommendations on regional and international agendas	15
D. Recommendations on the ECA strategic framework of work	16
E. Recommendations for research on the blue economy	17
F. Recommendations on migration	17
V. Challenges, lessons learned and prospects	17
A. About access to data	17
B. About planning the Office's activities	17
C. About the UMA	18
D. About instability in the sub-region	18

I. Introduction

1. This report covers the activities carried out by the ECA Office for North Africa during the period from October 2018 to September 2019 (from ICE 2018 to ICE 2019). This period is essentially the second year of implementation of the revised strategic framework for 2018-2019, which was adopted by the Committee of Experts of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, held in Addis Ababa in May 2018.

2. The activities implemented were carried out in close consultation and collaboration with Member States, ECA headquarters divisions, other sub-regional offices, the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), United Nations system agencies and other partner institutions.

II. Major achievements of the work program during the period under review

3. In the context of the new ECA vision, the sub-regional Office for North Africa formulated a new specialization strategy launched in the 2018-2019 biennium in the area of "Employment, skills and sustainable development." This new strategic framework aims to help the seven member countries (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia and Libya) design and implement policies and programs to promote job creation and sustainable development for a structural transformation in accordance with Agendas 2030 and 2063. This objective is currently being achieved through two major outcomes: (a) Building the capacity of member States in the North African sub-region to design and implement national policies and strategies for sustainable employment creation; (b) Building the capacity of member States in the North African sub-region and the regional economic communities to implement sub-regional development priorities in line with the sustainable development objectives and Agenda 2063, which encompass youth and gender issues.

4. Activities included in the Office's work program were carried out to deliver on the priorities identified above. The recommendations of previous meetings of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE) as well as contributions from Member States, the UMA and other partners have also helped shape the scope of the Office's activities throughout the period under review.

A. Major outcome 1: Enhanced capacity of member States in the North African sub-region to design and implement national policies and strategies for sustainable employment creation

5. To contribute to the achievement of this first major outcome, the Office organized a High-Level Regional Dialogue on Employment in North Africa and a North African Development Forum on the Blue Economy; it also produced publications (country profiles, STEPS and research papers).

1. High-Level Regional Dialogue on Employment in North Africa

6. As part of the development of its new area of specialization and in order to align itself with the priorities of member countries, the ECA Office for North Africa, in partnership with the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE) of Morocco, organized a High-Level Regional Dialogue on Employment in Rabat in April 2019 on the theme "Development strategies and policies for job creation in North Africa." The forum was attended by more than 70 experts and employment specialists from the sub-region, representing the seven member countries, the private sector and NGOs. The dialogue provided a platform for discussion between the public sector, the private sector and civil society on the reforms and policies needed to overcome identified obstacles and create momentum for job creation in the North African region.

7. The forum drew on work and analysis on employment in North Africa undertaken by ECA, partner institutions and academia. As a result of this dialogue, an action plan was developed to stimulate employment in the sub-region by identifying constraints that hinder the ability of enterprises to create jobs and reforms to be undertaken to overcome them. The fundamental question was how to develop the capacity of the public and private sectors, working in partnership, to fully address the challenges facing businesses and ensure that government support and incentives are more effective in stimulating job creation, including through structural transformation and strengthening the private sector's contribution to inclusive economic growth and sustainable development.

8. The proceedings of the forum started with a framework presentation on employment trends at the regional and continental level entitled "African Employment Outlook." The presentation shared some key lessons on trends and transformations in Africa that are directly related to employment as well as examples of continental initiatives that can stimulate the economy and create better conditions in the labor market. The debates and discussions were then structured around three panels of experts.

9. The first panel focused on the long-term vision and job creation in an ever-changing environment. Following the discussions, a number of recommendations were made, including improving the quality of inter-sectoral coordination, prioritizing employment policies, targeting measures to support employment promotion and a legislative framework which fosters flexibility and decent work.

10. The second panel dealt with institutions and job creation in relation to governance, regulatory and public policy issues. The discussions resulted in recommendations for establishing independent evaluation mechanisms for public employment policies, creating a regional employment observatory, introducing appropriate fiscal and customs measures to stimulate job creation, targeting public sector support, promoting digitization and streamlining administrative procedures and adopting a participatory approach that includes civil society.

11. The third panel examined access to resources and factors of production, including financing, skills and innovation. Following discussions, recommendations were made concerning (i) entrepreneurship, in particular, identifying new job-creating niches, reforming the national entrepreneurial framework to facilitate access to markets for young entrepreneurs, removing barriers to access international markets and mobilizing the diaspora in a drive to create jobs by financing know-how and accessing relationship-based networks; (ii) resources and innovation, in particular, by implementing tailored incentive policies for Research and Development, duplicating successful experiences in terms of R&D and setting up national innovation systems and industrial ecosystems, stimulating FDI, seizing the opportunity of generating employment through the transformation of environmental debt into green jobs; (iii) the education and training system, in particular, by integrating entrepreneurship and soft skills at an early stage into education and training systems, involving industry in the governance bodies of education and training institutes from curriculum design, implementation to professional integration.

2. Country profile, STEPS and research papers produced

12. The purpose of the country profiles is (i) to enable ECA to conduct and disseminate country and regional analyses; (ii) to make recommendations for economic transformation by promoting sustainable growth and social development; (iii) to strengthen regional integration, development planning and economic governance; and (iv) to conduct an analysis of potential risks and propose ways to mitigate them.

13. The Libya country profile was completed during the period under review. In addition to an assessment of the economic and social situation, this profile analyses policies and challenges facing the country both in economic and social terms, particularly in terms of employment. This country profile is supplemented by a thematic analysis addressing the impact of the country's political, security and migration situation on development.

14. In addition, the new ECA methodology entitled Structural Transformation, Employment, Production and Society (STEPS) was applied in Algeria's case. The main objective of STEPS is to produce country-specific data analyses and policy recommendations for structural transformation for sustainable development. Thus, while the Country Profile is a snapshot of the situation in the country at a given time, STEPS is a prospective study, which attempts to identify future trends.

15. STEPS Algeria has confirmed that, due to its heavy dependence on the hydrocarbon sector, the country has not fully undertaken an economic structural transformation to generate growth that will meet the priorities of a young and vibrant population. This largely explains the current situation and should lead to policy changes and refocus Algeria's attention on structural reforms aimed at accelerating private sector development, promoting economic diversification and improving productivity and entrepreneurship. STEPS aims to provide decision-makers with the fundamental macroeconomic analysis to facilitate decision-making related to these reforms.

16. A Policy brief on "Institutional Quality and Structural Transformation" was produced by the Office to highlight the extent and impact of distortions caused by market and institutional failures. These distortions lead to an inefficient allocation of resources between companies and sectors, slowing economic diversification and improved labor productivity as compared to more dynamic emerging economies and leading to persistent unemployment, particularly among educated youth. If implemented, the proposed targeted reforms to combat these distortions could generate substantial productivity gains, improve competitiveness, support job creation and facilitate structural transformation in North Africa.

17. The Office has also produced a Policy brief on "Sectoral Mapping of the Potential of Regional Value Chains in North Africa." The paper suggests that North African countries' efforts to facilitate trade, revise the institutional framework for regional integration and improve basic infrastructure have not had a significant impact on the promotion of RVCs. However, it notes that significant opportunities can be seized in this area at the sectoral level. The analysis provides some lessons on selective sectoral mapping assessing the existing situation and the potential for RVC development in the sub-region. It provides a draft action plan for the promotion of the RVC development and a set of recommendations to address identified deficiencies.

18. Moreover, the Office published a research paper on "Trade liberalization and women's employment in Africa" indicating that trade liberalization can be both positive and negative for women as it affects access to markets, production and consumption patterns as well as access to employment. The paper recommends that United Nations organizations continue to produce research and analysis on trade and gender issues,

assist in the development of tools for the formulation and implementation of gender-sensitive trade policies, and provide support for the promotion of regional and sub-regional networks of women entrepreneurs and in the workplace.

19. The Office contributed to a book entitled "Ethical Consumerism and Comparative Studies Across Different Cultures-Emerging Research and Opportunities," published in the United States by IGI Global (Pennsylvania), with a chapter entitled "Fair Trade and Ethical Consumerism: A Complementary Perspective". This contribution explains that fair trade aims to increase stakeholder satisfaction (producers, employees, consumers, environmental interest groups, etc.). Ethical consumerism uses fair trade to achieve different objectives related to consumers, environmental and human issues. Fair trade can in turn support ethical consumerism. The submission argues that ethical consumerism and fair trade are inextricably linked and that their benefits are mutually reinforcing. It addresses the employment of women in relation to fair trade and provides policy recommendations.

20. A policy paper on "Road safety in North Africa, a new look at an old problem" was produced by the Office. Road safety has a significant impact on GDP, estimated by the WHO at 3% of GDP worldwide. In Morocco, for example, the latest WHO estimate puts it at 2% of GDP. Road deaths have become the leading cause of death among children and young adults aged 5 to 29 worldwide. The incidence of road deaths is higher in poor countries (low- and middle-income countries account for more than 90% of all road deaths). In North Africa, road deaths average 20 deaths per 100,000 population, which is close to the African average of 25, the highest rate in the world. Between 2013 and 2016, not a single low-income country succeeded in reducing road fatalities. This document shows that the quality of institutions is a key factor in curbing trends in road deaths, and that the effectiveness of public policies in this area is undermined by citizens' non-compliance with the rules. Given the challenge of changing the behavior of drivers and pedestrians (who account for a significant share of fatalities) and the cost to public finances, a new approach to road safety must be adopted. The research paper recommends using modern tools to develop innovative solutions that will both increase the effectiveness of traditional policies and help devise new ones.

3. North African Development Forum "Blue Economy in North Africa: Smart maritime transport in facilitating international trade in the digital era"

21. The North African Development Forum (NADF) is a bi-annual initiative that mobilizes regional stakeholders around an issue of interest and relevance to the sub-region. The 8th edition of the Forum was held in Marrakech, Morocco, on 23 March 2019, alongside the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, on the theme "Blue Economy in North Africa: Smart maritime transport in facilitating international trade in the digital era."

22. This edition of the NADF looked into the potential of the blue economy to contribute to economic growth and structural transformation in the sub-region. The Forum provided an opportunity for decision-makers to share their experiences in integrating the blue economy approach into development policies and strategies for the digital era and its impact on international trade in goods and services. It contributed to further reflection on mainstreaming the blue economy (BE) approach into development policies and strategy, taking as a starting point the analysis of maritime transport in North Africa and its impact on international trade. The Forum also allowed discussion of an ECA guidebook developed to support member countries in the formulation of an BE strategy or its integration into existing national development strategies.

4. Advisory support

23. After four years of technical assistance provided by the ECA Office and the African Center for Statistics (ACS), the Government of Mauritania officially adopted the new National Accounts System (2008 NAS) in May 2019. Technical assistance, based on South-South cooperation with Morocco, supported the National Statistics Office (ONS) of Mauritania in improving the coverage of certain areas of economic activity through better data collection and taking into account the structural changes that have affected the national economy in recent years. The concepts introduced by the new 2008 NAS have improved the methodological approach (in terms of coverage for data collection, consideration of the informal sector, method of calculating financial sector variables, etc.) used to compile national accounts. As a result of these changes, and thanks to the various innovations, GDP was revised to 203,385 million Ouguiya in 2014, or +25% compared to its level in the same year under the old accounting system (162,648 million Ouguiya under NAS 93).

24. The ECA Office and the Macroeconomics and Governance Division, with the support of consultants, conducted a training workshop in January 2019 in Cairo for a team of professionals from the Central Bank of Egypt on an Egyptian Macroeconomic Model. The main objective of this model is to produce forecasts and analyze the impact of economic policy changes. The model covers four sectors of the economy: households, businesses and production sectors, government and foreign trade - imports and exports. ECA also plans to conduct follow-up meetings with the Central Bank of Egypt in order to further develop this model and enable it to serve as a genuine macroeconomic policy decision-making tool.

25. The Office is also supporting the Algerian Ministry of Finance in building a macro-econometric model based on modeling work developed by ECA. Three country missions were carried out to enhance the Ministry's capacities and support its adaptation of this model to the specificities of the Algerian economy.

26. Similarly, the Office provides support to the Ministry of Finance of Mauritania in the design of its macro-economic model. In this regard, two country missions were carried out to enhance the Ministry's capacities in this area. A third mission is planned to finalize the model and calibrate it according to the specificities of the Mauritanian economy.

B. Major outcome 2: Strengthened capacity of member States in the North Africa subregion and regional economic communities to implement subregional development priorities in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 with due consideration for youth and gender perspectives

27. During the period under review, capacity building of member countries and the UMA to implement sub-regional priorities for sustainable development was conducted through sub-regional coordination and partnerships in support of MDG achievement, advisory support, organization of an expert meeting and the production of a publication on the data revolution in North Africa.

1. Sub-regional coordination and partnerships in support of MDG achievement in North Africa.

28. The Sub-Regional Coordination Mechanism (SRCM) aims to foster coordination and collaboration between international and regional institutions whose mandate includes supporting North African countries and the UMA in their efforts to develop and achieve the SDGs. Its objective is to promote greater synergy and effectiveness through regular sharing of information, pooling of achievements and experiences, and implementation of joint programs or projects.

29. The 5th Annual Consultative Meeting of the SRCM-North Africa was held in June 2019 at the initiative of the ECA Office for North Africa, in collaboration with the UMA General Secretariat. The meeting was attended by the UMA General Secretariat, the ECA, the Resident Coordinators of the United Nations System of Algeria and Morocco, United Nations agencies (FAO, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNIDO, ILO, ESCWA), regional organizations (ISESCO, AOAD, OADIM) and international institutions (IDB, AfDB).

30. A revised roadmap (2019-2020) for SDG implementation was adopted at the SRCM meeting, focusing on awareness, monitoring and reporting, and covering five key areas: (i) SDGs/Agenda 2063 (lead: UNFPA), (ii) employment (lead: ECA), (iii) food security (lead: FAO), (iv) climate change (lead: UNESCO) and (v) regional integration (lead: ECA). The roadmap was developed in accordance with the strategic priorities of the African Union for the sub-region and the AU-UN framework for the implementation of both Agendas 2030 and 2063. Participants agreed on the working arrangements and monitoring framework to ensure more effective implementation and use of available means and resources to support this process.

2. Advisory support in monitoring the implementation of development agendas

31. Following a request from the Ministry of Finance of Mauritania, the Office, in collaboration with UNDP and UNICEF, provided direct assistance to Mauritania to finalize its Voluntary National Report (VNR) with a view to its submission to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2019. In this respect, the Office supported the Ministry of Finance in structuring the VNR in order to accurately reflect progress made and identify ways to speed up achievement of SDGs. The country team benefited from expert meetings organized by UNDESA on preparing the VNR and the HLPF. As a result of this process, the MEF has been able to build analytical capacity and improve its approach to monitoring the implementation of SDGs.

32. The Office has also launched support to Mauritania for the implementation of its Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity (SCRAPP) at the regional level, in accordance with SDGs and Agenda 2063. This work begins with a pilot project in the Hodh El Chargui region.

33. In addition, the Office, in collaboration with the Macroeconomics and Governance Division at ECA headquarters, supported the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank in the use of an ECA macroeconomic model to produce better economic forecasts in Mauritania.

34. In response to a request from Mauritania for the development of the national strategy for the implementation of the AfCFTA agreement, the Office, in partnership with the African Trade Policy Center (ATPC) at ECA headquarters, conducted a scoping mission in February 2019 under the umbrella of the AfCFTA - EU Project. To this end, several meetings were organized with ministerial departments and representatives of the private sector. Following this mission, a national consultation forum was organized in April 2019. The Forum, whose objective is to contribute to raising awareness among various relevant public and private stakeholders, was a starting point for reflection on main thrusts in the design of the country's national AfCFTA strategy.

35. Following a request from the Tunisian Ministry of Trade, the ECA Office for North Africa, in collaboration with ESCWA, conducted an impact assessment of Tunisia's accession to COMESA. The findings were presented at a national validation

workshop held in April 2019 in Tunis. This has enabled Tunisian stakeholders to better understand the potential positive and negative implications of the country's accession to the African sub-regional grouping, and to identify possible solutions to address current logistical and regulatory obstacles and constraints. The workshop was also a valuable opportunity to highlight the benefits of Tunisia's participation in the AfCFTA. Subsequently, the Office organized two national fora on the AfCFTA, the first in Tunis and the second in Sfax, in order to raise awareness among national stakeholders of the need for greater ownership and involvement in the implementation of the AfCFTA in Tunisia.

36. The Office also conducted a mission to Egypt in March 2019 to identify needs for support to Egypt in terms of the AfCFTA implementation. The mission finalized (i) the concept note detailing the areas of collaboration between ECA and the Egyptian Ministry of Trade and Industry, (ii) the ECA's support to Egypt in the context of the OECD's Production Transformation Policy Review (PTPR), and (iii) identified opportunities for the development of RVCs within the framework of the AfCFTA (iv) prepared a timetable for the implementation of collaborative activities between ECA and Egypt and (v) presented the results of ECA modeling work on the impact of the AfCFTA on key variables such as GDP, trade, revenue and well-being.

37. A scoping mission was conducted in the Sudan in January 2019 in response to a request to support the country in its preparations for the ratification of the AfCFTA. A series of meetings were held with ministerial departments (Ministry of Trade and Industry, Central Bank of the Sudan, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, Customs Authority, National Strategic Planning Council) and private sector representatives (National Association of Chambers of Industry, National Union of Chambers of Commerce). Following this mission, it was agreed to support the holding of a national consultation forum on the AfCFTA, to launch preparations of the national strategy for AfCFTA implementation and to monitor its ratification process. Due to the recent political situation in the Sudan, this work is currently on hold.

38. The Office organized a scoping mission to Algeria in November 2018 to relaunch the partnership with ECA. During this mission, a number of senior officials were consulted to determine prospects for future cooperation. The meeting with the Ministry of Trade identified a need to initiate a study of the impact of the AfCFTA on the diversification and revitalization of the national economy, as well as the need to work on other themes, such as international franchising. The Ministry also formulated the need to assess the impact of Algeria's accession to ECOWAS.

39. The meeting with the Ministry of the Environment provided an opportunity to discuss the drafting of the Voluntary National Report on SDG implementation, promotion of renewable energies and the circular economy as well as development of local capacities in preparation for selective sorting. The Ministry of Employment has indicated its interest in undertaking an evaluation of youth employment schemes and in sharing experiences among North African countries on youth employment policies. The Ministry of Social Solidarity, Family and Women's Affairs wishes to exchange information between North African countries on the practices of social information systems. The Ministry of Finance, for its part, requested support in determining "customs value" as well as customs facilities and smuggling issues.

3. Data revolution in North Africa: Using data for structural transformation

40. The Office organized an Experts' Meeting from October 30 to 31, 2018, in Tunis, Tunisia, on the topic "Data Revolution in North Africa: Putting Data at the Service of Structural Transformation." The meeting was attended by representatives of national institutions involved in statistical data production, analysis and dissemination and in monitoring the implementation of SDGs and Agenda 2063 (Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Ministries of Planning and Finance, Ministries of Environment and Sustainable Development, Institutions in charge of Statistics, Economic, Social and Environmental Councils) as well as the Ministries in charge of Employment and Agriculture. The seven countries of the sub-region were represented at the meeting, as well as the UMA General Secretariat, AFRISTAT, UNDP, FAO, WFP, ILO and AfDB and civil society organizations.

41. The findings of the study on the data revolution in North Africa were presented, discussed and endorsed at this meeting by participants and member countries. This research provided an overview of the current state of national statistical systems (NSS) in six countries of the sub-region (Algeria, Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan, Morocco and Tunisia), with a review of the literature on Libya. It identified the main actors in statistical ecosystems, analyzed the capacities of NSS and identified gaps and obstacles which hinder their ability to produce and use quality data. This study presents not only a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the legislative, institutional and technical constraints facing North African countries, but also of the priority actions and concrete solutions for policy makers, Pan-African institutions and development partners interested in using data for sustainable development.

III. Special initiatives, interactions with headquarters divisions and partnerships

A. Special initiatives

42. During the period under review, the Office participated in a number of conferences, fora and meetings:

- Participation in October 2018 in the first workshop devoted to VNR submissions to the HLPF organized by UNDESA in Geneva (Switzerland). On the sidelines of this meeting, the ECA organized a meeting to discuss countries' challenges and their priority needs for support in the VNR process as well as in the implementation of SDGs. The needs identified focused on statistical capacity building, exchange of experience and harmonization of approaches and methodologies for calculating indicators. The Office also participated in the second global workshop on VNRs organized in February 2019 in Bonn, Germany, by UNDESA in collaboration with the Staff College of the United Nations System and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. The workshop provided an opportunity to review progress in VNR preparation and to share experiences from countries reporting to the HLPF-2019.
- Participation in November 2018 in the Nairobi International Conference on Promoting a Sustainable Global Blue Economy. The ECA delegation actively participated in the discussions and on the basis of previous work, notably by the North Africa Office, a concept note on ECA's approach to the Blue Economy was shared and presented for discussion.

- Participation in December 2018 in the first edition of the intra-African trade fair organized by Afrexim Bank. This participation enabled the launch of the report on the "Potential of Regional Value Chains in North Africa: Sectoral Mapping." On this occasion, the Office held a meeting with the Egyptian Minister of Trade and Industry to discuss possible future collaboration between the two institutions and prepare ECA's support to the Egyptian presidency of the AU in 2019.
- Participation in the African Forum on the Ratification and Implementation of the AfCFTA held in November 2018 in Lagos, Nigeria, the Office participated in the Africa Trade Forum, which was attended by senior officials from the continent and leading experts to discuss the AfCFTA implementation process.
- In December 2018 in Nairobi, Kenya, the Office participated in the Experts' Meeting on Strengthening the Regional Coordination Mechanism in Support of the AU and NEPAD and the Experts' Meeting on Improving Monitoring and Evaluation of the Regional Coordination Mechanism - Africa. These meetings provided an opportunity to review the functioning of the RCM/SRCM mechanisms, identify challenges and suggest improvements, and discuss the results-based monitoring and evaluation framework linked to the functioning of these mechanisms.
- The Office represented ECA at the Africities conference organized by the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) in Marrakech in December 2018. The Office contributed to the organization of two regional events: the first on the harmonized framework for the implementation of a new urbanization agenda, the second on urbanization and national development planning. These events led to substantive discussions with UCLG and Cities Alliance and the formulation of joint project proposals on the topic of urbanization, which is a pressing issue for the African continent.
- Participation in December 2018 in Marrakech in the high-level conference organized for the adoption of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. During side-events of the conference, the Office actively participated in discussions with other members of the ECA delegation.
- Participation in the 20th session of the RCM-Africa, held on the sidelines of the Conference of Ministers in Marrakech in March 2019, during which the Office contributed to drafting the report and recommendations aimed at strengthening the effectiveness of the RCM-Africa Mechanism and Sub-regional Coordination Mechanisms (SCRMs), as part of ongoing United Nations and African Union reform efforts. Discussions focused in particular on improving working relations between the RCM-Africa and the United Nations Regional Group for Sustainable Development, in order to better respond to the priorities of the African Union and its Regional Economic Communities. The meeting also agreed on the need to align the work of the RCM-Africa with the two joint United Nations-African Union frameworks that have been adopted to enhance partnerships on peace and security, and for the integrated implementation of the two Agendas 2030 and 2063.

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- As part of the ongoing reforms of the United Nations (UN) system, the Office represented ECA at the meeting of UN Regional Directors for Arab Countries and at the Regional Meeting of the Coordination Mechanism organized by ESCWA, at its headquarters, in Beirut. Both meetings benefited from the presence of Ms. Amina Mohamed, Deputy Secretary General, who stressed the need to enhance collaboration between various United Nations agencies to improve the efficiency of programs undertaken and to better respond to the complexity of sustainable development requirements. The issue of overlap between the two regional commissions in North Africa was discussed and requires a joint approach upstream of all activities conducted in the field.
 - In June 2019, the Office participated for the first time in the 18th Mediterranean Conference on Sustainable Development organized by UNEP-MAP (Mediterranean Action Plan) in Budva, Montenegro, to discuss progress in the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development. Three regional commissions (UNECE, ESCWA and UNECA) from countries around the Mediterranean basin presented priority actions to support the achievement of SDGs in the sub-region. Following this conference, a joint UNEP-MAP project with the three regional commissions was developed and submitted for funding to ensure better synergy between the actions undertaken by the various partners.
 - In June 2019, ECA, represented by the Office, was invited to participate in the 20th meeting of the Association of European Senates to which representatives of the Senates of seven African countries (Algeria, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Kenya, Morocco and the DRC) were invited for the first time. ECA presented its perspective on how to promote more active dialogue between the two continents on Africa's development priorities (in particular trade, investment and climate change) and the role of senates. The African senators participating in this meeting requested more detailed information on ECA's work program and its activities in each of the sub-regions.
 - Participation in July 2019 in Milan (Italy) in the meetings of Mediterranean Parliamentarians on the theme of SME financing. The Office made a presentation on SME financing in North Africa.
 - The Office contributed to the meeting organized by the World Bank in March 2019 in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) on jobs and structural transformation, the topic of the 19th fund of the International Development Agency (IDA), a subsidiary of the World Bank.
 - The Office also contributed to the workshop organized by Brookings Institute in September 2019 in Nairobi, Kenya, on the promotion of pollution-free industries as a new industrial development model for Africa.

B. Interactions with headquarters divisions

43. The Office participated in the meeting of the Steering Committee of the ECA African Trade Policy Center (ATPC) in late February 2019 in Libreville, Gabon, as well as in the Expert Group Meeting to review guidelines for national strategies for the implementation of the AfCFTA. The ATPC presented a manual on how to implement the AfCFTA providing guidance to African policymakers and negotiators on unresolved issues in the agreement negotiations. The recommendations made in the guide have been adopted by the Member States. The Center also produced country information notes on the impacts of AfCFTA implementation, particularly for Algeria, Egypt, Libya and Morocco.

44. In April 2019, the Office organized a national workshop on the development and implementation of Environmentally Extended Supply-Use Tables (EE-SUT) in the field of forestry in Morocco on behalf of the ECA African Center for Statistics and in collaboration with FAO, in Rabat, Morocco. The workshop was attended by a national team composed of representatives of the High Commission for Planning (HCP), the High Commission for Water and Forests and the Fight against Desertification (HCEFLCD) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Marine Fisheries and Rural Development (MAPMDR). The workshop aimed to strengthen the national team's technical capacity to implement the System of Environmental and Economic Accounting (SEEA) for agriculture, forestry and fisheries. The workshop made it possible (i) to assess the availability of data, in order to better understand the state of preparation of statistics available for the preparation of tables (EE-SUT), (ii) to define and present the general structure of EE-SUT in the forest sector in Morocco (including industry and product classifications) and (iii) to design and finalize the national work plan for the preparation of the forest account in Morocco.

45. In September 2019, the Office participated in an experts' meeting in Addis Ababa, organized by the ECA African Trade Policy Center, to review the methodology for the compilation of the AfCFTA Country Business Index (ACBI). This meeting of experts was an opportunity to carry out a critical analysis of the dimensions and indicators to be used in the compilation of this index and verify the validity of the instruments proposed for data collection from companies that produce/trade across borders in Africa.

C. Partnerships

1. Partnerships with institutions, universities, research centers and think tanks

46. These partnerships are intended to strengthen cooperation and exchange between the ECA, institutions, universities and research centers, and to take collaborative action to define the framework for future joint initiatives and actions that will benefit all parties. For the ECA, these partnerships seek to foster close collaboration with institutions to better meet the needs of member States in North Africa through the creation, collection, dissemination and sharing of knowledge and experience in support of development policy decision-making processes. For partners, these initiatives aim to develop exchanges with the ECA as a think tank for the North Africa region, with a view to adapting trainings to market needs, on the one hand, and to benefit from the ECA's relations with similar institutions in Africa to establish cooperation relations and organize joint academic and exchange activities, on the other hand.

47. A new partnership was established with the Economic, Social and Environmental Council of Morocco (CESE) in the field of employment. This made it possible to benefit from the contributions and experience of the Social and Economic Councils of

Algeria, Mali and the Central African Republic during the High-Level Regional Dialogue on Employment, also organized in collaboration with the International Labor Office (ILO), the African Development Bank (ADB), the World Bank (WB), Afreximbank, the International Trade Center (ITC) and McKinsey.

48. In addition, advisory support to Mauritania for the implementation of the 2008 NAS involved support and collaboration from technical partners such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) through its West AFRITAC Office, the Sub-Saharan Africa Observatory Agency (AFRISTAT) and National Statistical Offices (Morocco, Cameroon, Tunisia, Senegal and Niger).

49. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in August 2019 with the High Commissioner for Planning (HCP), to define a framework for cooperation between HCP and the ECA Office for North Africa and to establish a sustained working relationship and encourage knowledge and information sharing between the two institutions, in accordance with their respective expectations. For ECA, this partnership aims to foster the creation, collection, dissemination and sharing of knowledge and know-how that support decision-making processes in socio-economic development policies. For HCP, this partnership aims to strengthen cooperation with ECA in the areas of data exchange and expertise, strengthening statistical production and conducting joint analytical studies. It will also strengthen South-South cooperation with other African countries.

50. The Office has concluded a partnership agreement with the Maghreb Bank for Investment and Trade (BMICE) for the exchange of information, data and expertise. In this regard, the Office and BMICE agree to share macroeconomic, financial and social studies and data from UMA countries, sectoral studies of UMA member countries' economies at their disposal and expertise and know-how on methods for analyzing the economies and markets of UMA countries.

51. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) with ITFC (Islamic Trade Finance Corporation), a subsidiary of the Islamic Development Bank, has also been developed to enhance cooperation on regional integration between Arab and African countries members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). The partnership focuses on three priority areas: strengthening regional value chains, trade facilitation and technical assistance for AfCFTA operationalization.

52. Under agreements with universities and research centers, the Office contributed to scientific research and publications and actively participated in a number of academic meetings:

- Production of a paper on SME financing in North Africa. The paper assesses the gap in financing for SMEs and constraints they face. It prompts further reflection on public policies needed to improve SME financing. The paper will serve as a starting point for an applied research project involving the Office, researchers and think tanks from the sub-region as well as public institutions, such as ministries of finance in member countries.
- Participation in February 2019 in the Multi-stakeholder Dialogue organized by Cadi Ayyad University and the African Center for Innovative and Sustainable Solutions (ACISS), in collaboration with UNEP, on the topic of academia as a platform for innovative solutions to the challenges of sustainable development in Africa. In the sidelines of the Dialogue, Cadi Ayyad University and the ACISS organized a meeting with partners to discuss opportunities for cooperation. The meeting was attended by the University of Limoges, the Polytechnic University of

Turin, UNEP, the *Agence universitaire de la francophonie*, UCLG-Africa and the ECA Office for North Africa. Several areas of collaboration were considered relevant by participants: youth employability through entrepreneurship and the opportunities that green sectors could offer; value chain development in relation to waste management and the promotion of a social and solidarity-based economy.

53. The Office has also initiated further discussions with other North African Universities and Research Centers with a view to concluding new agreements and diversifying its research partnerships portfolio at the sub-regional level.

2. Partnerships with the United Nations system and other development partners

54. The Office participated in the UNCT group retreats in Morocco and Tunisia. It has also participated in the regular meetings of UNCT Morocco as well as in other North African countries, on an ad-hoc basis. These meetings provided an opportunity for information sharing between different UN agencies and, most importantly, to present ECA's activities at the regional level and discuss potential synergies with national projects. This is a priority of the United Nations reforms for better coordination and alignment of support interventions at different levels (global, regional and national) to accelerate the achievement of SDGs. As a result of the sharing of information and interactions, the Office has been approached by: (i) UNCT Morocco, to make a proposal on the design of a new development model, (ii) UNCT Algeria, to contribute to discussions on macroeconomic balances and solutions to stimulate growth, (iii) UNCT Mauritania, to present the economic and social situation of the country, and (iv) UNCT Tunisia to contribute to the formulation of the UN Strategic Framework for Action. The Office was also approached by the UN Mission in Libya for closer collaboration in the areas of economic development and regional integration.

55. Following a request from the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations system in Algeria, the Office prepared a memorandum on the situation of the Algerian economy. This memorandum was presented at a UNCT meeting in June 2019 in Algiers. This work provided an opportunity to discuss the role that the United Nations system can play in the country in support of socio-economic development policies.

56. As part of the discussions initiated by Morocco on its new development model, and at the request of the Resident Coordinator, the Bureau produced a memorandum containing proposals for the design of a new development model. This memorandum was forwarded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. It was then presented in June 2019 at a meeting at the Royal Institute of Strategic Studies (IRES) in the presence of development partners and a range of public institutions in the country.

57. The Office organized a joint event with FAO, AfDB and the Government of Morocco on food security. This meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the challenge of food security in a continent that has more than 50% of the world's uncultivated arable land. The discussion focused on ways to strengthen African countries' action in this area, by promoting South-South and triangular cooperation, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and the sharing of experiences and know-how. The meeting discussed projects initiated, and initiatives launched in Africa in the field of food security by African countries as well as development partners, international and regional financial institutions to enhance the contribution of South-South and triangular cooperation to food security and Agenda 2030 implementation.

58. Collaboration with UNDP and UNICEF facilitated preparations for the 2019 VNR for Mauritania. It has made it possible to mobilize the expertise and financial resources needed to organize this activity and to include this achievement within the UNDAF framework in support of monitoring the implementation of SDGs in Mauritania.

IV. Status of implementation of the recommendations of the thirty-third ICE

59. Implementing the recommendations of the 33rd ICE to ECA has been an integral part of the 2018-2019 work program. Several of these recommendations are addressed in Part II of this report. However, and in order to comply with the Member States' express request, the most significant achievements by field are listed below:

A. Recommendations on the sub-regional profile

2. Include a section in the sub-regional profile devoted to analyzing intra-regional trade and, more broadly, regional integration;

60. Administrative considerations limiting the size of parliamentary documents submitted to member countries at the ICE to 16 pages (5200 words), including the Regional Profile document, make it difficult to add the requested analysis to the document. Nevertheless, an analysis of intra-regional trade is provided in a separate paper.

B. Recommendations on the AfCFTA

7. Step up awareness and advocacy activities with member countries to expedite ratification of the AfCFTA.

61. In April 2019, the Office organized two national fora on the AfCFTA in Tunisia, the first in Tunis and the second in Sfax, to raise awareness among national stakeholders on the need for greater ownership and involvement in AfCFTA implementation. The Office supported Mauritania in designing its national strategy for a gradual implementation of the AfCFTA. In addition, the Office conducted a mission to Egypt in March 2019 to assess the support needs of this member country with regard to AfCFTA implementation and provide support for the Production Transformation Policy Review (PTPR). A scoping mission was also conducted in Sudan in January 2019 in response to a request to develop the national strategy for the implementation of the AfCFTA agreement. During a scoping mission to Algeria in November 2019, the Office met with the Ministry of Commerce, which identified a number of needs, including a study of the impact of the AfCFTA on the national economy.

C. Recommendations on regional and international agendas

8. Organize a sub-regional meeting to share country experiences and good practices in preparing Voluntary National Reports and implementing SDGs;

62. The Office supported the organization of the 5th session of the African Regional Forum for Sustainable Development in Africa in April 2019 and the 5th Annual Consultative Meeting of the Sub-Regional Coordination Mechanism (SRCM) in June 2019; in order to share good practices and further thinking regarding SDG implementation, including with regard to the preparation of Voluntary Country Reports.

9. Develop a North African regional profile on SDGs that includes cases from all countries in the sub-region.

63. The Office produced a North African regional profile on SDGs in 2017. A proposal to update this report every three years to assess progress in a substantial way is submitted to the Member States for their consideration.

D. Recommendations on the ECA strategic framework of work

11. Enhance complementarity with all development partners to avoid duplication, pool efforts and maximize outcomes;

64. The close links established with UNCTs in each country and the Office's involvement in discussions on global UN reform have helped provide a clearer perspective on the activities of various agencies and the synergies that can be created. Thus, the Office has worked more closely with UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, UNIDO and FAO on various interventions in the sub-region or in specific countries.

12. Schedule a special Forum on successful national initiatives for job creation, which would allow for the sharing of experiences, pooling of expertise and identification of areas for possible partnerships among the countries of the sub-region;

65. ECA's North Africa Office organized in April 2019 in Rabat, in partnership with the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE) of Morocco, a High-Level Regional Dialogue on Employment on the theme "Development strategies and policies for employment creation in North Africa". This Forum was attended by more than 70 experts and employment specialists from the sub-region, representatives of the seven member countries, the private sector and NGOs. It provided a platform for discussion between the public sector, the private sector and civil society on the reforms and policies needed to overcome obstacles identified and create momentum for job creation in the North African region.

13. Address, to the extent possible, the following development areas, which are considered relevant and crucial for the sub-region:

- North African countries' public expenditure performance;
- South-South cooperation and industrial integration in North Africa;
- South-South cooperation in relation to transport and services offered to facilitate the transport of goods;
- Trade facilitation;
- South-South cooperation: sub-regional good practices and future perspectives;
- Water issues and their importance for the sub-region
- Extent and impact of the informal sector and smuggling on national economies.

66. The 2019 ICE will focus on themes considered relevant and crucial for the sub-region, such as employment (the Office's area of specialization) and trade facilitation.

E. Recommendations for research on the blue economy

16. Support member countries in their efforts to integrate the blue economy into national development strategies;

67. The Office organized the 8th edition of the North African Development Forum in Marrakech, Morocco, in March 2019, on the sidelines of the ECA Conference of Ministers, on the theme "Blue Economy in North Africa: smart maritime transport in facilitating international trade in the digital era". The forum brought together decision-makers from the sub-region and elsewhere to share their experiences in integrating the blue economy (BE) approach into development policies and strategies.

17. Enhance research on the blue economy by working with member countries to identify and collect the most relevant data.

68. The 8th edition of the North African Development Forum on the theme "Blue Economy in North Africa: Smart Maritime Transport in Facilitating International Trade in the Digital Era" introduced the ECA-developed guidebook to assist member countries in data collection and strategy formulation for BE or to integrate the concept into pre-existing national development strategies.

F. Recommendations on migration

22. Assist member countries in integrating migration and its links to development in national development policies;

69. The Office has developed a project on migration and its links to development. This project aims to build member countries' capacities in collecting data on migration and the mutual recognition of skills and diplomas so as to facilitate mobility of expertise and the labor force. The effective start of this project is scheduled for 2021.

23. Assist member countries in the production and availability of reliable migration data.

70. This recommendation will be addressed by the project on migration and its links to development, designed by the Office and scheduled to be launched in 2021.

V. Challenges, lessons learned and prospects

A. About access to data

71. One of the challenges facing the Office is the limited access to relevant data and information from Member States. Despite the support for an Open Data approach in some Member States, data remains difficult to access. This continues to depend mainly on the quality of relations with interlocutors and not on institutional arrangements or agreements between the Office and its partners. Although this matter is regularly discussed with Member States at the ICE, it has not yet been resolved.

B. About planning the Office's activities

72. One of the lessons learned during the period under review is the need to ensure that the Office's activities are carefully planned and sequenced and to seek greater consistency with any new initiatives that are added to the initial work plan. This will enable the Office to meet its commitments and to operate at a more appropriate level of quality. During the period under review, the Office participated in the preparation and implementation of two major ECA events, namely the Conference of Ministers and the African Regional Forum for Sustainable Development, which were organized this year in Marrakech, Morocco. This has resulted in a shift in most of the Office's activities into the second half of 2019, a situation that has put pressure on operational capacity during that period.

73. In addition, the time spent identifying and mobilizing external expertise also contributes to delays in the implementation of the Office's scheduled activities. Centralized recruitment of external consultants and experts and coordination of recruitment procedures between the Office and ECA headquarters is a recurrent challenge. However, organizing activities, in particular experts' meetings, consistently requires the availability of such prerequisites within the timeframe prescribed by the workplan. This situation impacts the Office's ability to produce studies and research in a timely manner, to ascertain quality assurance in accordance with established procedures and to share them with stakeholders in a timely manner in advance of the experts' meetings. In reality, this is a genuine opportunity to improve the quality of publications issued by the ECA Office for North Africa.

C. About the UMA

74. The pace of integration in the Maghreb remains limited. The Arab Maghreb Union's economic grouping trades very little within its borders. In 2018, only 3.34% of exports from UMA member countries were destined for the Maghreb market, which is an extremely low share given the performance recorded by the other Regional Economic Communities on the African continent and the potential of this region. With the exception of 2018, the trend in recent years has been negative: intra-Maghreb trade has been steadily declining since 2013.

75. It must be noted that the UMA General Secretariat currently does not have the necessary human, financial and technical capacities to successfully carry out the mission of steering Maghreb integration. In this regard, the Executive Secretary of ECA has undertaken to hold periodic meetings with the leadership of RECs on the continent. These meetings provide an opportunity to take stock of collaboration with respective institutions and to generate dialogue and consultation that can boost such collaboration. It was decided to organize a regional seminar on the potential impact of the AfCFTA on the Maghreb economies. The event is scheduled for 11-12 November 2019 in Rabat (Morocco).

D. About instability in the sub-region

76. The sub-region continues to face many challenges, particularly political and security challenges. It continues to be impacted by the effects of changes brought about by protest movements and periods of political transition. The sub-region is also facing regional geopolitical tensions, with serious security consequences that severely constrain its development prospects.

77. It must be recognized that all countries in the sub-region need to bolster good governance, in particular economic governance, in order to reduce social inequalities and political instability, which still constitute a serious impediment to development ■