I. Introduction

The global economy is experiencing important technological shifts with the rise of digital technology as a key driver. This can be seen today in the rapid growth of the digital economy. Digitalization and the digital economy are impacting on developing economies, changing patterns of production and consumption, and transforming global value chains. These shifts are likely to intensify in the coming years with the emergence of new technologies, including artificial intelligence, 3D printing, robotics, cloud computing, and autonomous vehicles, as part of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The associated rise in “digital trade”, further highlights how information, products, and services are increasingly exchanged through the internet, and underpinned by global data flows. As further digital products and services emerge, digital policy is likely to become a mainstream consideration for policy makers.

At this juncture, African and other developing countries face an important challenge. On the one hand, the digital economy provides an opportunity to leapfrog development while on the other, these major technological shifts threaten to widen the digital divide. Digital inclusion of the population is important in building a vibrant economy. At the same time ensuring that those who interact with digital products and services do so in ways that do not lead to uneven relationships with global digital firms, is vital. There is a need for a more informed understanding of the technological and economic shifts, arising from the transformative impact of digitalization and the digital economy; and the consequent implications for African and developing countries.

A Workshop on Digital Transformation in Africa: Leveraging the Promise and Addressing New Challenges, co-organised by Global Economic Governance (GEG) Africa and the African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), was held in Pretoria, South Africa on 10 September 2018. The Workshop brought together a wide range of panellists from the South African Government, private sector, civil society, academic and research institutes. The purpose of the Workshop was to examine the opportunities and challenges of digital transformation in more detail, and to provide insight on how other countries have effectively integrated digital policies in their development and industrial strategies in order to accelerate digital ‘catch-up’. It further examined the issue of digital trade and inclusivity; as well as the impact of digital trade on a range of human rights and vulnerable sections of the population.

The Workshop delivered the following key messages:

1. Rapid technological change will have far reaching consequences for South Africa and African countries. African countries therefore need to actively engage in understanding and developing appropriate policy responses, which address the rise of digitalization.
2. While digital trade can have a transformative effect on African economies, it also presents challenges that need to be addressed in a way that is consistent with inclusion, transparency, people-centred governance and the attainment of human rights. This makes the analysis of digital trade from an inclusion and human rights angle, in addition to an economics angle, crucial.

3. The distinction between policy instruments targeted at enabling markets for digital trade and those that are more interventionist and directly geared towards digital catch-up is valuable. It is also worth noting, however, that these two sets of instruments should not necessarily be mutually exclusive. A blended approach is likely to yield the highest returns.

4. An effective digital policy is one that combines an outward orientation to facilitate trade and inward investment with a domestic orientation that promotes entrepreneurship, competition, prudent data management and tax rules, accessible and affordable digital services, and relevant education and training.

5. Digital jobs offer a unique opportunity particularly for young men and women to overcome social, economic and political constraints to their participation in the workforce.

6. The transformative growth and employment opportunities presented by ICT was emphasised, particularly for African youth. Other digital jobs identified, included BPO sector jobs, virtual freelancing, and digital platform-linked jobs. Online outsourcing was identified as new opportunity area.

7. Barriers to Internet access and use in Africa include inter alia: lack of awareness, affordability, access, socio-cultural norms and concerns regarding safety and security, poor literacy, lack of education and digital skills. While digital technology creates new forms of employment, these barriers must be addressed and appropriate policies developed in order to ensure the inclusive benefits of digitalization.

8. The transformative power of technology is helping to solve global social challenges and assisting marginalised and vulnerable groups; as evidenced by the maternal health messaging service, MomConnect as well as Livestock Wealth’s crowd farming platform and Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator programme.

9. A response to the Fourth Industrial Revolution is not the responsibility of one-stakeholder alone. There is a need for a sustainable development ecosystem to include government, private sector, philanthropic organisations, civil society, international developments partners, universities and research institutions, to confront the potential disruptions and catalyse the inclusive opportunities of digital transformation for the continent.

10. The Fourth Industrial Revolution has significant implications for a range of civil and political rights, including the right to: privacy, freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and association; as well as socio-economic and cultural rights, including right to: work and to the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work, health, education and to participate in cultural life; as well as the right to development. Policy makers should consider human rights as part of a policy response to digital transformation.
II. Welcoming Remarks and Opening Dialogue

Welcoming remarks were delivered by Ms Nadira Bayat, Programme Director: GEG Africa, and Mr David Luke, Co-ordinator of the African Trade Policy Centre, ECA. Opening statements were delivered by Dr Nimrod Zalk, Industrial Development Advisor in the Office of the Director-General of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and Mr Dave Malcolmson: Chief Director, Regional Organisations, Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO).

At a time when the staggering emergence of new technologies is fundamentally changing the way we live, engage with each other and do business – addressing questions around what this actually means for Africa and other developing countries has become a priority for African policy makers as well as for institutions of global economic governance. While the digital economy offers great opportunity for the continent to leapfrog and overcome under-development, it also presents immense challenges in the context of the current digital divide. Integrating human rights norms as well as human rights principles of transparency, accountability, participation and non-discrimination in digital policies and strategies, should be central to the development of digital policy responses, which serve developmental objectives and contribute to the African Union’s (AU) Agenda 2063 and the United Nation’s (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Digitalization offers particular opportunity for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), which represent 80 percent of enterprises in Africa. Digital trade can also be a tool for boosting intra-African trade which is more diversified and industrialized than Africa’s trade with the rest of the world; while providing considerable benefit to African consumers. Digital trade, however, poses risks for African countries. The main beneficiaries of digital trade are currently the most developed countries, who are shaping the digital ecosystem. Without supportive policies and a conducive environment for digital innovation in Africa, existing digital and income divides will widen. The rise of digital platforms and E-commerce will reshape the retail sector, and in turn have deep implications for developing countries’ industrialization processes. Digitalization also has broad impacts across all sectors, in both production and the delivery of services. An additional concern for African countries is that digital trade may enable international companies to distort their taxable income through transfer pricing. This is a significant concern as Africa’s illicit financial flows are already estimated to be higher than the continent’s total receipts of official development assistance.

African countries therefore need to develop policy responses which address the rise of digitalization. In forging a suitable policy response, African countries should consider the following: (i) developing responses to digitalization that are tailored to domestic conditions and policy considerations; (ii) securing a degree of national sovereignty with respect to issues of data ownership, privacy, cybersecurity, structural transformation and economic inclusion objectives; (iii) ensuring the adaptation by national taxation systems to the rise of E-commerce and digital platforms; (iv) addressing issues of market dominance, competition and market access; and (v) developing digital industrial capabilities, including ensuring high speed and cheap broadband, building linkages between digital platforms and domestically produced goods and services, providing industrial financing instruments to do so and adapting technology and skills curricula and institutions to new digital realities. This will be crucial to ensure that African countries move from being largely digital followers to digital innovators.

The transformative realities of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, particularly its tremendous potential for industrial development as well as the accompanying challenges for
inclusive socio-economic growth and development, led to South Africa’s decision to identify the Fourth Industrial Revolution as a key outcome of its 2018 BRICS Chairship. South Africa assumed the BRICS Chairship for 2018 under the theme “BRICS in Africa: Collaboration for Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution”. Recognising the need for collective efforts to address the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, a BRICS Working Group on the 4th Industrial Revolution was established as one of the main outcomes of the 10th BRICS Summit. In addition, BRICS Leaders’ endorsed the establishment of an Advisory Group under the BRICS Partnership on the New Industrial Revolution (PartNIR), which aims at deepening cooperation in digitalization, industrialisation, innovation, inclusiveness and investment to maximise the opportunities and address the challenges arising from the 4th Industrial Revolution. PartNIR is designed to enhance comparative advantages, boost economic growth, promote economic transformation, strengthen sustainable industrial production capacity, create networks of science parks and technology business incubators and support small and medium sized enterprises in technology sensitive areas. South Africa’s participation in BRICS and cooperation in this area, is ultimately aimed at bridging the divide between developed and developing countries, to ensure that the Fourth Industrial Revolution translates into the continuing advancement of Africa and the developing world.

III. Panellist Presentations

Session One: Bridging the Digital Divide: Comparative Analysis of Digital Policy Making

Dr Matthew Stern, Managing Director, DNA Economics, moderated the first session. Speakers included: Dr Christopher Foster, Lecturer in ICT and Innovation, University of Sheffield (UK), and Dr Shamel Azmeh, Lecturer in International Development and Global Political Economy, University of Bath (UK) (via Skype). Mr David Luke: discussant.

This session highlighted how the growth of the digital economy has also induced a ‘digital divide’ in many parts of the world. Adopting an appropriate policy approach, however, can help to mitigate this problem. Referring to a discussion paper that he and Prof Azmeh had written entitled, “Bridging the Digital Divide and Supporting Increased Digital Trade”, Dr Foster placed the digital economy under the spotlight, analysing its trajectory in recent years and the opportunities and challenges that it presents, particularly for policy-makers in developing countries. The development of a digital culture involves a series of steps, with the formation of a digital sector (the result of increased digital access) eventually giving way to a digital economy. The latter cuts across all sectors and lays a firm foundation for digital trade. Given the right policy mix and regulatory and commercial environments, the digital economy can empower SMEs and significantly increase export opportunities. Inherent challenges in this process, however, include qualifying to participate in value chains, complying with cross-border digital protocols and retaining sufficient control over digital platforms.

In terms of policy approaches, Dr Foster compared two broad options: the enabling-market approach, aimed at developing economic conditions that support technological diffusion, and the digital catch-up approach, aimed at accelerating digital readiness and trade through more structured interventions. These two policy approaches are not mutually exclusive. As various sectors in a country are at different stages of development and contribute to the economy in different ways, it is often advisable to adopt a blended approach. Infrastructure, E-commerce, locally owned vs. international digital platforms, skills development, SME support (especially for online trading), business reforms, and coherence with industrialisation plans; are among the issues to be addressed in a digital policy.
Given the prevalence of the digital divide, it is important that policies aimed at leveraging the benefits of the digital economy and digital trade have inclusivity as an overarching goal. Participating in and benefiting from the new digital world is central to human development. In this regard, providing support to local businesses to produce more value-added goods and services is critical. So, too, is achieving stronger regional cooperation in the digital arena. Although it is natural that African countries should wish to retain policy space to address their particular mix of socio-economic challenges, there needs to be coherence between their respective trade and investment regimes to encourage cooperation on the digital front. This will go a long way towards helping countries benchmark their policy and regulatory efforts against agreed standards and will aid the process of digital catch-up.

As discussant Mr. Luke agreed with the authors of the Paper, that the digital economy offers both opportunities and challenges for developing and African countries. What is clearly needed is a system of governance that tackles both the challenges associated with digital trade and capitalizes on the opportunities. The categorization of the various policy instruments available to developing country policy makers developed in the Paper provided a helpful tool for informing digital strategies on the continent. While the distinction between policy instruments targeted at enabling markets for digital trade and those that are more interventionist and directly geared towards digital catch-up is valuable; it is important to note that these two sets of instruments should not necessarily be mutually exclusive. A hybrid approach is more likely to yield the highest returns.

Mr Luke referred to the section in the “Bridging the Digital Divide and Supporting Increased Digital Trade” Paper on international negotiations on digital trade. He stressed the importance of continued engagement by the WTO Africa Group in the current WTO work programme on E-commerce. This will help to ensure that the work programme reflects the concept of inclusive trade, and takes into full account the situations of WTO members at different stages of development. In the future, pushing E-commerce aside from the multilateral negotiating table may not be in Africa’s best interest, and may risk pushing the continent further behind in the global trading system. This is because, if E-commerce isn’t negotiated at the multilateral level, it will be negotiated plurilaterally, an approach which risks establishing as international norms, rules that are inappropriate for countries which are not party to the negotiations; thereby increasing the digital divide.

Mr Luke outlined some of the ECA’s broader efforts to position the African continent to participate in and benefit from the digital economy. He noted that the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) agreement has now been signed and work is due to commence on the second phase of the negotiations later this year. While E-commerce is closely intertwined with the issues covered in this second phase which currently include investment, competition policy and intellectual property rights; it is becoming increasingly clear that the AfCFTA must also encompass a digital strategy. The second phase of the AfCFTA negotiations provides a platform for AU member states to put in place institutional arrangements for cooperation on the digital economy. The ECA is advocating for African Trade Ministers to make a decision to expand the scope of the AfCFTA to include E-commerce. This is viewed as crucial to boosting inclusion, connecting African businesses and advancing intra-African trade. The trade team at the ATPC engages actively in the debates around E-commerce and is supporting the African Union Commission (AUC) to develop a strategy for addressing this important issue in the context of the AfCFTA.
Session Two: Digital Transformation: A South African Perspective

Ms Lily Sommer, Trade Policy Expert, African Trade Policy Centre, ECA, moderated the second session. Speakers included: Ms Ilse Karg, Future Industrial Production Unit, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI); Ms Pamela Mondliwa, Senior Researcher, Centre for Competition, Regulation and Economic Development; and Mr Saul Levin, Director, Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS).

While the first session painted a broad picture of trends at a global level, this session adopted a more focused approach - providing important insights into where South Africa is on its digital journey and offering key lessons for other countries on the continent. The session highlighted the fact that while South Africa may be ahead of other African countries in terms of digital readiness and diffusion, digital inclusion remains uneven. The following key challenges of the South African economy and the implications for digital transformation were highlighted: (i). fragility of commodity based growth and the hollowing out of more diversified capabilities, (ii). policy agenda focus on large firms, (iii). challenges related to the building of productive capabilities, (iv). persistently high levels of concentration, (v). extensive financialisation, undermining productivity and long-term investment; and (vi). management of natural resource revenues/unsustainable exchange rate appreciation. The above points to a lack of transformation in the South African economy. For an economy to remain dynamic, smaller firms need to be given the opportunity to invest in technology-rich production processes and human talent, and to grow their market share.

Transformation when applied in a digital context is multi-faceted; and involves ensuring coherence and devising the right blend of policies and regulations for telecommunications, E-commerce, competition and other sectors. At the same time, industrial development goals should not be undermined. Interdependence in production and service delivery is becoming the new norm, with clustering and networks playing a pivotal role in the attainment of competitiveness. South Africa’s digital policy framework is informed by the National Development Plan (NDP) and UN Agenda 2030. Grounded in the concept of human development and inclusivity, this framework has several key components and a phased-in implementation programme. South Africa’s digital policy deliberations are being supported by extensive institutional capacity-building and stakeholder engagement. Embedded in South Africa’s digital policy approach is the recognition that structural reforms are needed to encourage greater competitiveness (particularly in the manufacturing sector), to make labour markets more flexible in order to address the skills mismatch, and leverage the full potential of a young and growing population.

South Africa needs to absorb the high numbers of unemployed youth in the country by identifying and nurturing talent in ways that drives and supports innovation. As the nature of work rapidly evolves and transforms, the demand to equip South African youth with new skills, from software development and data management to creative, critical thinking and problem-solving – will increase. To take advantage of the clear benefits that accompanies the Fourth Industrial Revolution, South Africa has placed strong focus on building skills in maths, science and engineering, and driving entrepreneurship. Recognising the importance of partnerships, the South African Government has identified civil society, industry, labour, Africa and the international community as critical stakeholders in the policy development process to address the challenges and harness the opportunities of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. As a proactive response to IR 4.0, the DTI recently established the Future Industrial Production Unit at DTI to research the potential impacts Industry 4.0 will have on existing value chains and South Africa’s employment landscape; and to develop policies, strategies and programmes to address
the competitiveness issues of South African manufacturing companies, as well as the gap in technical skills required for advanced manufacturing.

As the digital economy evolves, production processes are becoming more digitalized. Institutional support is needed, provided by business associations and state relevant institutions, to help firms transition to a more data-rich and complex working environment. For example, the DTI sector desks are tasked with determining the impact of various technologies on different sectors of the economy. It is not only actual production processes that are undergoing a metamorphosis. Complementary activities, such as decisions relating to factory location, intellectual property protection and export market selection must be similarly forward-looking. How to build a strong technological base is the subject of much debate. While some argue for the development of local capabilities and businesses, others advocate for the importation of skills and technology as being more likely to produce quicker results and allow for more regional or global expansion. Both approaches have potential advantages and drawbacks. Thus, the necessary checks and balances must be built into digital and digital trade policies and regulations to ensure that digital catch-up is not at the expense of building a strong cohort of local industry players.

Session Three: Harnessing the Fourth Industrial Revolution for Employment

Ms Nadira Bayat of GEG Africa moderated the third session. Speakers included: Mr Mamadou Biteye, Managing Director, African Regional Office, The Rockefeller Foundation; Mr Ibrahim Nour Eddine Diagne, Managing Director, GAINDE 2000; Mr Dirk van Zyl, CEO, National Technology Implementation Platform; and Mr Krish Chetty, Chief Researcher, BRICS Research Centre, Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC).

With the breathtakingly vast and innovative technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution transforming the employment landscape, this session focused on the importance of developing appropriate interventions to meet the demands of the digital economy; and address the specific needs of women and youth. Digital jobs offer a unique opportunity for young men and women to overcome social, economic and political constraints to their participation in the workforce. Mr Biteye provided an overview of the initiatives undertaken by The Rockefeller Foundation to generate social and economic opportunities for African youth and women. In this regard, he referred to the successful “Digital Jobs Africa” initiative of The Rockefeller Foundation, to catalyze new, sustainable employment opportunities and skills training for African youth, with a focus on the ICT sector. In Kenya, “Digital Divide Data (DDD)”—as part of The Rockefeller Foundation’s “Digital Jobs Africa” initiative—offers in person and online learning to provide youth with the flexibility to complete assignments according to their own schedules, while developing teamwork and communication skills. The Rockefeller Foundation has identified “Impact sourcing” - an inclusive employment practice through which companies intentionally connect high-potential, disadvantaged youth to available jobs- as a priority. Developing gender-inclusive digital jobs programs for youth is the subject of a new Solutions for Youth Employment (S4YE) Report, supported by the The Rockefeller Foundation and entitled “Digital Jobs for Youth: Young Women in the Digital Economy”.

The transformative growth and employment opportunities presented by ICT was emphasised, particularly for African youth. Other digital jobs identified, included BPO sector jobs, virtual freelancing, and digital platform-linked jobs. Online outsourcing was further identified as a new opportunity area. While the number of Africans registered on online platforms is extremely modest by global standards, it is a sector that is predicted to grow. It is also inherently vulnerable. There is a lack of awareness in many African countries of the
opportunities associated with online outsourcing. High connectivity fees and strong competition from skilled individuals in other parts of the world are further deterrents. Skills development and training was identified as a priority. The fact that various categories of jobs requires a different type of skills set was highlighted. Preparing the continent to leverage the promise of digital transformation required skills and development training, from basic ICT to more advanced digital and analytical skills. The importance of language and the softer cognitive skills was emphasised, as was the need to tap into the potential of the African diaspora. It was highlighted that, although the digital skills gap may be more acute in Africa, it is a global issue with most skills institutions’ being outdated and misaligned to the digital reality. Investing in the appropriate skills now places Africa on a more equal footing to compete and prosper in the digital age.

One way of addressing the challenges of national education systems could be the introduction of a parallel structure driven by industry, aimed at building sector-specific skills to fast-track development in priority areas. Mr Dirk van Zyl referred to a collaborative venture between government (DTI) and industry in South Africa, aimed at building skills to support ‘factories of the future’, in partnership with colleges, centres of excellence and other entities. Increasingly, factories will be relying on big data, data analysis, robotics and many other applications. Mr van Zyl also spoke of the advantages of building skills systems made up of modular units, with variable entry and exit points. This approach resonates with the global trend in manufacturing towards the acquisition of ‘stackable’ skills in a flexible environment. The more innovative and digitally prepared African countries can become, particularly in the value-added manufacturing sphere, the greater the likelihood of attracting investment and being chosen as locations for high-tech factories of the future. While relying on machine-driven innovations like robotics, artificial intelligence and high-speed data analysis, these factories will still require human support services in the form of machine installations and maintenance, financial support and logistics services.

Mr Chetty commented on the importance of a holistic digital skills uplifting strategy. He noted that the challenge faced by education policy makers is to determine how to ensure policy is agile to respond to the rapid pace of the changing needs of employers. Given the fluidity of the digital economy, any minimum standards that are introduced for the purposes of digital education standards must informed by a dynamic and responsive standard-setting body. The HSRC therefore proposes the need to: (i). balance the skills demand with the supply; (ii). introduce a specific digital skills standard-setting body; and (iii). consider introduction of Nano – Degrees.

Barriers to Internet access and use in Africa include inter alia: lack of awareness, affordability, access, socio-cultural norms and concerns regarding safety and security, poor literacy, lack of education and digital skills. While digital technology creates new forms of employment, these barriers must be addressed and appropriate policies developed in order to ensure the inclusive benefits. The session highlighted that a response to the Fourth Industrial Revolution is not the responsibility of one-stakeholder alone. There is a need for a sustainable development ecosystem to include government, private sector, philanthropic organisations, civil society, international developments partners, universities and research institutions, to catalyse the inclusive opportunities of digital transformation for the continent.
Session Four: Building an Inclusive Digital Economy in Africa: Reaching out to Vulnerable Populations

Mr Kerushan Govender, Managing Director, Blacfox, moderated the fourth session. Speakers included Ms Anriette Esterhuysen, Association of Progressive Communications; Mr Siven Maslamoney, Manager, Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator; Ms Debbie Rogers, Managing Director, Praekelt Foundation; and Mr Ntuthuko Shezi, Founder and CEO, Livestock Wealth.

This session focused on the transformative power of technology in helping to solve global social challenges and assisting marginalised and vulnerable groups. The maternal health messaging service MomConnect, produced by the Praekelt Foundation, and adopted by the South African National Department of Health, is an excellent example of leveraging technology, and social media to improve health outcomes. MomConnect uses mobile technology to improve the health of pregnant women, newborns and infants at national scale. MomConnect’s launch on WhatsApp has widely extended the provision of health and maternity information. SMS and Email are too expensive or simply inaccessible for many women, while WhatsApp provides a cost-effective and engaging way for mothers to access this information in their language of choice. The move away from SMS in favour of an IP based solution, signals a fundamental shift in how public services will be consumed and designed over the coming decade.

Livestock Wealth’s crowd farming platform, which connects investors looking to invest in cows with farmers looking for investment to grow their farms; is another innovative example of leveraging technology to unlock agricultural and investment opportunities on the continent. Mr Shezi explained that the initiative worked like a bank fixed deposit, whereby investors could invest in a cow for a 12 or 24 month period with an option to re-invest. African and international investors can monitor their investment on the farm by using Livestock Wealth’s mobile application.

South Africa is grappling with one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the world, at 67% for under 25s. In order to respond to this challenge, the Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator is developing a tech platform to help excluded young people to find jobs. Harambee uses technology, including free mobile phone data to help young South Africans find their first jobs. It is also developing an algorithm, to assist low-income youth, who are often discriminated against by job match algorithms. Ms Esterhuysen pointed out that the Fourth Industrial Revolution has significant implications for a range of civil and political rights, including the right to: privacy, freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and association; as well socio-economic and cultural rights, including the right to: work and to the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work, health, education and to participate in cultural life; as well as the right to development. African countries should consider horizontal policy integration as well as conducting human rights impact assessments and building human rights into skills development and training. It is essential that policy makers consider human rights as part of a policy response to digital transformation.

IV. Conclusion and Next Steps

Ms Bayat closed the Workshop by remarking on the importance of multi-stakeholder platforms, as part of a sustainable development ecosystem. She thanked the panellists, moderators and active participants for their positive energy and for sharing their valuable
knowledge, insights, experiences and practical lessons; towards the common goal of advancing progress on the topic of digital transformation in Africa.

Mr Luke synthesised the main recommendations that emerged from the Workshop. These included the need for:

i. National digital industrialisation strategies, in order to exploit the opportunities offered by the digitalization-industrialization nexus.

ii. Horizontal integration and coordination across government and with the private sector on digital issues.

iii. The development of a continental framework for cooperation and benchmarking on digital trade, including E-commerce.

iv. Revolutionary skills development to position Africans, in particular youth and women, to participate in and gain from digitalization.

v. An improved understanding of the innovations taking place in the fintech sector and how they can be supported and harnessed for development.

vi. Ensuring that the Fourth Industrial Revolution is inclusive, citizen-centred and supports the attainment of a range of civil and political; and economic social and cultural rights.

The main outcome of the Workshop was the decision to produce an Outcome Report, which will be used to inform background documents and side events at ECA’s fifty-second session of the Conference of Ministers to be held next year in Marrakech, Morocco, under the theme “Fiscal policy, trade and the private sector in the digital era: a strategy for Africa”. The Conference will also offer a platform to engage with high-level decision makers and call for coordinated action on digital industrial policies and processes on the continent.

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