This is the third edition in the series of Questions and Answers with ECA’s Executive Secretary about issues that concern and affect the organization and staff.

1. Hello ES and welcome to the third in the “Q&A with the ES” series. We take this opportunity to wish you a great 2019! The revised organization structure in support of ECA’s new strategic directions has just been launched. What are the challenges in the way forward?

   ES: I am happy to inform Team ECA that the revised organization structure has been effective from 11 February 2019. We have sent out an organization-wide communication regarding this, along with a comprehensive note on the various organization units and their functions, and also the Staffing List. As I mentioned in my information circular, any transition brings with it challenges and adjustment. So will this transition. And it is therefore important to be aware that the success of managing this transition depends on our ability to communicate seamlessly and to build collective approaches to problem-solving.

   More important, we must recognize that this reform is not an end in itself – rather it is a means to an end. This reform is intended to ensure that ECA is fit for purpose and aligned with its new strategic directions in support of its mission: to deliver ideas and actions for an empowered Africa, informed by the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. We have also built in greater clarity on our overall objective, which is to support the continent to effectively confront one of its central challenges: inclusive and sustained economic growth that will create decent jobs especially for the youth.

   As we move ahead, our challenge will be to galvanize Team ECA towards realizing the purpose of this organization, to be more client-oriented, and to be more responsive to the needs of and challenges faced by the people of Africa. I am a strong believer in ECA’s important role at the member State, regional and global level to influence the development agenda. We must continue to work to ensure that we provide an exceptional, innovative platform to develop ideas for a prosperous Africa, consistent with the Secretary-General’s reform agenda.
2. **What does the programme planning budget for the year 2019 look like? How does it support ECA’s aspirations to position itself as a premier think tank?**

**ES:** The priorities for ECA in implementing its 2019 programme budget will centre around the nine subprogrammes, namely:

- Subprogramme 1, Macroeconomic policy and governance
- Subprogramme 2, Regional integration and trade
- Subprogramme 3, Private sector development and finance
- Subprogramme 4, Data and statistics
- Subprogramme 5, Climate change, environment and natural resource management
- Subprogramme 6, Gender equality and women’s empowerment
- Subprogramme 7, Subregional activities for development
- Subprogramme 8, Economic development and planning
- Subprogramme 9, Poverty, inequality and social policy

As you are aware, the five subregional offices are now going deeper into their identified areas of specialization to ensure a more effective approach to priority issues of concern and development challenges faced by member States in their respective subregions.

To facilitate the implementation of ECA’s priorities the following total amounts (representing 50 per cent of ECA’s 2019 appropriation and allocation) have been allotted under the three programmatic areas as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Budget responsibility centres</th>
<th>2019 allotment issued (50%) – US$</th>
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<td><strong>RB</strong></td>
<td>Section 18 (ECA Main)</td>
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<td>Section 11 (NEPAD)</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>48 021 400</td>
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<td><strong>XB</strong></td>
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*Allotments are in Umoja, distributed under the respective divisions, and communications to that effect have been issued.

**Consists of a brought-forward balance of $8,300,000 and signed agreements totalling $8,332,700.
Recently, the Controller sent a communication to all offices about measures that are being put in place to address the 2019 cash flow situation of the United Nations, including an additional budget block of 15 per cent. Effectively, 15 per cent of the 2019 allocations of all entities have been blocked and entities have been informed that all non-discretionary non-post allocations, including for rent and utilities, must be pre-committed for the full year. For ECA, the 15 per cent funds block amounts to $3,931,200 (s.18 – 3,680,100; s.33 – 216,450 and s.11 – $34,650). ECA is expected to monitor its spending and commit funds only towards the end of the year to be spent early next year so that it does not lose the funds. The priority is the payment of salaries. Beyond that, ECA has to maintain its vacancy rate within the General Assembly-approved vacancy rate.

We would be paying special attention this year to enhancing the quality of monitoring and reporting on budgetary aspects, and also to building partnerships and resource mobilization in support of our mandate. It is important that we continue to build a healthy funding pipeline for the extrabudgetary initiatives that we seek to take up and, to that end, an outreach exercise is currently under way.

3. **In the revised structure and strategy, there is emphasis on the role of the subregional offices in their defined areas of specialization?**

**ES:** In all, five subregional offices (SROs) have been established to bring the services of ECA closer to the member States and subregional groupings at each of the five subregions of the Commission.

- The subregional offices of the Commission will, in addition to supporting implementation of the five strategic directions through the subprogrammes, also specialize in selected thematic areas to ensure a more effective approach to member State support at the subregional level. The capacity and resources of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) will be strengthened in order to provide the necessary training and policy support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 by member States. The areas of specialization identified for the SROs are as follows:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>SRO</th>
<th>Area of specialization</th>
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<tr>
<td>SRO-NA</td>
<td>Employment skills and balanced development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRO-WA</td>
<td>Demographic dynamics for development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRO-CA</td>
<td>Economic diversification policy and reforms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRO-EA</td>
<td>Deepening regional integration – towards the implementation of AfCFTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRO-SA</td>
<td>Inclusive industrialization</td>
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</table>

- SRO-NA, in Rabat, will, in addition to its mandate, provide relevant technical assistance to member States and to regional economic communities and intergovernmental organizations in building their capacities to sustain economic, social and political transformation, with a particular focus on employment, skills and balanced development, with the aim of ensuring inclusive growth, taking into consideration access to equal opportunities for women and young people.
SRO-WA, in Niamey, will contribute to achieving structural transformation for inclusive and sustainable development in West Africa, focusing on demographic dynamics for development.

SRO-CA, in Yaoundé, will contribute to achieving economic diversification and structural transformation for inclusive and sustainable development in an integrated Central Africa subregion with focus on economic diversification policy and reforms.

SRO-EA, in Kigali, will contribute to achieving structural transformation for inclusive and sustainable development in the subregion, with a focus on deepening regional integration.

SRO-EA, in Lusaka, will contribute to achieving structural transformation through inclusive industrialization aimed at sustainable economic growth and reducing poverty and inequality in the subregion.

We are hopeful that each subregional office, by specializing in the selected thematic area, will ensure that priority issues of concern and development challenges faced by member States in their respective subregions are appropriately addressed. In terms of implications of this approach on ECA’s human resources strategy, it is important to note that we cannot develop specialized expertise in our SROs without the requisite knowledge, technical expertise and skill sets that are relevant to their chosen areas of specialization. Accordingly, for the future, our approach to staffing for the SROs will have to take into consideration the need to recruit staff with experience and knowledge in those areas.

4. We recently concluded the fifty-second session of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. What were the main takeaways?

ES: The fifty-second session of the Conference of Ministers successfully took place from 20 to 26 March 2019 under the theme of “Fiscal policy, trade and the private sector in the digital era: a strategy for Africa” in Marrakech, Morocco. The meetings saw African ministers and experts responsible for finance, planning and economic development engage in dialogue with heads of regional economic communities, private sector entities, civil society and the academic sector on the centrality of fiscal policy if governments are to increase revenues for financing development. The discussions also emphasized the need to leverage the opportunities presented by the digital economy to accelerate diversification and inclusion. These remain necessary and important levers for the successful implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

The meeting saw the adoption of a ministerial statement on the theme that included important calls for governments to take actions in areas of digitalization to enhance fiscal performance, leverage the African Continental Free Trade Area and support resource mobilization. Member States also called for more to be done in infrastructure development and data and statistics. A detailed report will be published.

The following eight resolutions were adopted by member States:

- 962(LII) Data and statistics
963(LII) Midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action for the Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024

964(LII) 2020 programme plan and budget

965(LII) Luxembourg Protocol to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment on Matters Specific to Railway Rolling Stock

966(LII) Review of the intergovernmental structure of the Economic Commission for Africa pursuant to its resolution 943(XLIX) and resolution 957 (LI)

967(LII) Progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 and preparation for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

968(LII) Fiscal policy, trade and the private sector in a digital era: a strategy for Africa

969(LII) Digitization and the digital economy initiative

The meeting also endorsed the membership of the Bureau of the fifty-second session as follows:

- Chair: Morocco (North Africa)
- First Vice-Chair: Ethiopia (East Africa)
- Second Vice-Chair: Zambia (Southern Africa)
- Third Vice-Chair: Togo (West Africa)
- Rapporteur: Equatorial Guinea (Central Africa)

A series of side events and other meetings also took place on the margins of the Conference, including the 2019 Adebayo Adedeji Lecture, which discussed the issue of Africa’s digital transformation, and the twentieth session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa, which was devoted to the theme: “United Nations system support for the African Union in commemorating 2019 as the Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: towards durable solutions to forced displacement in Africa”.

5. You have consistently highlighted the importance of voluntary national reviews (VNRs) in Africa. What is the status of VNRs by African countries and how is ECA supporting VNRs?

ES: One of the major pillars of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, alongside the Goals and related targets, is the continuing review of implementation. Voluntary national reviews (VNRs) are part of the follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The VNR is a process by which countries take stock of and assess the shortcomings in implementation of the goals and targets. The VNRs facilitate the sharing of
experience, successes, challenges and lessons learned; promote the strengthening of policies and institutional frameworks; and help in marshalling multi-stakeholder support and partnerships to accelerate the implementation of the Goals. A VNR therefore allows a country to plan more appropriate policies, structures and processes, and revise its national development goals, with a view to effectively achieving the Goals. VNR reports are, as prescribed by GA resolution 67/290, presented and deliberated at the annual meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, held under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council.

Since 2016, 19 out of the 54 African member States have taken part in the VNRs. These countries are Benin, Botswana, Cabo Verde, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Morocco, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Togo, Uganda and Zimbabwe. In 2019, 18 African countries (Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ghana, Lesotho, Mauritania, Mauritius, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tunisia and United Republic of Tanzania) will conduct VNRs and present their reports at the 2019 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. This means that 18 African countries are yet to offer themselves for VNR. These countries are Angola, Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan and Zambia.

ECA’s support to VNRs is delivered within the broader context of ensuring effective coherent and integrated implementation, follow-up, monitoring and reporting on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and specifically the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063, by leveraging the Commission’s core functions as a think tank and of convening, providing policy advice and promoting capacity development.

ECA has therefore supported countries in the alignment of national development frameworks with the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. It provides support in the development of national data and statistical capacity, including the application of a harmonized set of core indicators for regional-level monitoring, such as through the annual Africa Sustainable Development Report. It convenes the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, in collaboration with regional organizations and agencies of the United Nations. The Regional Forum provides a crucial platform for consensus-building, peer learning, policy advocacy and strengthening capacity for voluntary national reviews and to advance the implementation of the two agendas.

Looking ahead, a coordinated and strategic approach within ECA and a guide for ECA technical support to VNRs is required to ensure effective support to member States in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063. To this end, ECA has developed a strategic plan for improving the preparation, reporting and follow-up on VNRs in the region. Implementation of this strategic plan should give greater visibility to ECA support to VNRs and also facilitate greater collaboration with the United Nations resident coordinator system and the United Nations country teams, in line with the reforms to the United Nations development system. The framework also has the potential to contribute to deepening ECA’s partnership with the African Union and the regional economic communities in supporting member States’ efforts to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 into their national development plans, and also to foster stronger collaboration with the United Nations Sustainable Development Group for Africa, the Department for Economic and Social Affairs and other non-United Nations partners.
In the context of ECA’s five strategic directions, the Commission will aim, in 2019, to achieve a critical mass of investments in selected countries of focus to maximize the impact and visibility of its analytical, policy, technical and capacity-development services. The 2019 African VNR countries will be considered as part of the overall process of identifying countries of focus targeted by ECA interventions in 2019.

6. **ES, the Staff Union has often raised the issue of lack of transparency in the recruitment process in ECA. How do you respond to these concerns? What role do you think the Staff Union can play in enhancing the effectiveness of the hiring process?**

**ES:** The Staff Union has aired its concerns regarding the lack of transparency in the recruitment process on multiple occasions. We have been engaging in dialogue with the Staff Union on these issues, to see how its concerns can be addressed. Some of the perceptions that have been brought to our attention are that job openings are at times drafted so as specifically to favour certain individuals. Or that, in some cases, the selection to certain positions has been decided even before the recruitment process starts. Another concern that has been raised is that siblings, children and relatives of staff members are being recruited as consultants and individual contractors.

It is important to state here that the recruitment process in the Secretariat is well defined and is also built with adequate institutional checks and balances that help to avoid malpractice or the vesting of disproportionate authority – to influence the outcomes of the process – with one individual or function. Where there are specific complaints, the management is committed to investigating them to establish the facts and if it is determined that the process did not adhere to the regulations and rules of the Organization, I can assure you that we will not hesitate to cancel the process.

During my last meeting with the Staff Union on 23 January 2019, we had a frank discussion with the staff representatives. I have requested the staff representatives to provide us a metric or, what we are calling a “key performance indicator” (KPI), which they feel will indicate the adherence of the process to the rules and regulations of the Organization and a transparent, measurable and consistent way in which we can collectively measure and monitor the recruitment process. There is a need to bury the past perceptions of opaqueness and malpractice and the only way to make that happen is to ensure that the future process is fully transparent. I look forward to working with our staff representatives to achieve this goal.

In the past we discussed a proposal to have a staff representative as a member of the assessment panels. We have consulted extensively with stakeholders and with Headquarters on this matter. The present guidelines on recruitment clearly spell out who can be a member of an assessment panel and these do not provide for membership of staff representatives. The Staff Union does, however, have a critical role to play in the central review bodies, where they have the authority to ask questions, critically to analyse the recruitment process and, where they see deviations, to seek explanations. As we know, the central review bodies have equal representation from both the staff and the management side. This is possibly the strongest institutional check on the recruitment process. I call upon the Staff Union to work with us further to enhance the strength and effectiveness of this review process. I understand that the Staff Union would like to propose again that we include staff observers in the recruitment process. We will continue to discuss the matter in consultation with the Office of Human Resources to find a way forward.
Regarding the concern about the hiring of siblings, children and relatives, I have requested the Staff Union to bring to our knowledge any such cases about which they have been informed and we will investigate them all without fail. I am personally committed to ensuring transparency and consistency in the process.

7. **On the specific point that you mentioned regarding the central review bodies, the Staff Union recently sent a letter suggesting that these bodies were ineffective and were operating in an opaque manner. What are your thoughts on this matter?**

**ES:** We did indeed discuss this issue as well during the meeting. The matter was presented to us as “HR’s opaque control over the CRB process and the inefficiencies in their functioning”.

The last membership tenure of the central review bodies was for the period 1 September 2016 to 31 August 2018. We analysed all recruitment cases that had been referred to the central review bodies. As you will be aware, recruitment cases for General Service positions are referred to the Central Review Panel and recruitment cases for P2 to P4 positions are referred to the Central Review Committee. Both bodies are based in Addis Ababa. Positions at P5 and above are referred to the central review bodies at Headquarters, in New York. Each recruitment case is reviewed by a review committee of at least four members.

During that last membership tenure period, namely between 1 September 2016 and 31 August 2018, 20 recruitment cases were referred for review to the Central Review Panel and 32 recruitment cases were referred to the Central Review Committee. Of the 20 cases referred to the Panel, it was found that:

- In only one case, there had only been one staff representative in the four-member Central Review Panel;
- In 14 cases, two members out of the four-member Central Review Panel had been staff representatives;
- In three cases, three members of the four-member Central Review Panel had been staff representatives;
- In two cases, all four members of the Central Review Panel had been staff representatives.

Accordingly, in 19 out of the 20 cases that were referred for review to the Central Review Panel, there were at least two staff representatives who reviewed each case.

Further, of the 32 cases referred to the Central Review Committee, it was found that:

- There were no cases in which no staff representative had been part of the Central Review Committee;
- In five cases, two members out of the four-member Central Review Committee had been staff representatives;
• In 25 cases, three members out of the four-member Central Review Committee had been staff representatives;

• In two cases, all four members of the Central Review Committee had been staff representatives.

Accordingly, in all 32 cases that were referred for review to the Central Review Committee, there were at least two staff representatives who reviewed each case. In fact, in most of the referred cases – namely, 25 out of the 32 cases – the majority, or three members, of the four-member Committee were staff representatives.

Except for five of the 32 members of the central review bodies, two of whom were management representatives and three were staff representatives, all members participated in the review process throughout their tenure. We are trying to find out if these five members declared themselves unable or were unavailable to participate when called upon or if there were any other reasons for their non-participation.

I have requested the Staff Union to help us reinforce the importance of the central review bodies and I am committed to listening to any ideas that can help us further improve the process.

8. After a pause of over a year, we have now restarted the recruitment process. In the early days, we also saw the cancellation of some job openings. Could you throw some light on how the process is shaping up?

ES: In September 2017, discussions commenced on the large-scale restructuring of ECA to ensure that it was fit for purpose and to align it more closely with stakeholder expectations. To facilitate the reallocation of resources, we decided temporarily to suspend recruitment with effect from 6 November 2017, until such time as the new ECA structure was finalized. As a result, recruitments in 2018 have been marginal, in response to urgent needs of the organization and in exceptional cases where it was known that the restructuring would not affect the location of the post. Upon finalization of the restructuring process, we recommenced the recruitments and, as we speak, over 20 new job openings have been advertised. Recruitment in the “GS and related” category continues to be restricted to internal staff members or filled by temporary appointments in the light of the impending implementation of the Global Service Delivery Model (GSDM).

Gender parity will be a prime consideration in these recruitment exercises. We have been assigned gender parity targets for ECA, level by level and year by year, and we are expected to achieve full gender parity by 2023. For us to be able to recruit more women candidates, it is important that we make contact with target groups through focused outreach strategies, that we encourage them to apply for job openings and that we monitor the recruitment process at every stage to ensure that sufficient women candidates who meet the criteria make it through the process.

In 2018, we closed a total of 12 recruitments on the Inspira platform, out of which six were in the “GS & Related” category and six in the ‘P & above” category. Out of the six in the “GS & related” category, three of the selections were female candidates. Out of the six in the “P & above” category, four were of female candidates. This indicates a conscious effort in the direction of achieving gender parity.
Efforts have been now initiated following the commencement of recruitment in line with the revised structure of ECA. ECA has initiated focused outreach activities, both within and outside the United Nations system, to attract qualified women candidates and to encourage them to apply for vacant positions, in particular posts in the Professional and above category. Some of these initiatives are listed below:

ECA concluded a long-term agreement with one executive search firm and is in the process of engaging an additional firm for the provision of talent search services. This was done with the guidance of the Office of Human Resources at Headquarters and through a procurement process approved on 19 April 2018 by the Procurement Division at Headquarters.

To ensure that at least 30 per cent of the applicants against each job opening in the “P & above” category are qualified female candidates, in line with the ECA gender parity strategy, the Office of Human Resources monitors the status of applications against each job opening; as a result, the deadline of some of the job openings had to be extended or in some cases the job openings were cancelled and re-advertised with the three primary aims. These were, first, to improve the gender and geographical representation of candidates, by making possible an increased number of female applicants critical for attainment of the Secretary-General’s and Executive Secretary’s compacts; second, to make possible an increase in the number of applicants from different countries, in particular under-represented countries, critical for the attainment of those compacts; and, third, to encourage applicants who would normally not consider applying to international organizations or to ECA in particular to make such applications.

The Office of Human Resources has put in place a more comprehensive outreach strategy, working together with its partners and stakeholders, including the Office of Human Resources at Headquarters, the United Nations common system network in Ethiopia, networks of ECA directors and chief human resources officers, using the mailing list of rostered applicants of the United Nations funds and programmes, the Impactpool platform, advertisements in international news magazines, other online newspapers and social media platforms.

The D1 and P5 job openings, in particular, were included in advertisements in the *Economist* and *Jeune Afrique*, the 5 and 16 January 2019 editions respectively.

During the posting and announcement period, to attract more female candidates the following actions were undertaken as part of the outreach effort, in addition to posting on the usual secretariat and ECA website:

- Job openings were circulated through all United Nations common system agencies in Ethiopia;
- All females rostered for similar jobs were sent emails inviting them to apply for the position in question;
- Institutions such as the International Development Research Centre, the African Economic Research Consortium, and the Council for the Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa were contacted and requested to circulate the job openings (in French and English) within their network;
The outreach section at the Headquarters Office of Human Resources was also requested to disseminate the job openings on the MailChimp platform, the job openings were sent to chief human resources officers in United Nations offices away from Headquarters, regional commissions, United Nations tribunals, the secretariat of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, Permanent Missions to the United Nations, and they were also circulated via the D1 and D2 networks.

With the aim of boosting the number of women candidates, ECA also participated in the two-day #GlobalDevWomen Virtual Career Fair for Women run by the Devex media platform on 13 and 14 November, which brought 500–700 female candidates at the middle to senior level (with seven or more years of relevant experience) together with top employers in the global development sector. The virtual career fair – together with its partners and exhibiting organizations – was promoted on the Devex.com platform to an audience of over 1 million professionals around the world, targeting women from diverse nationalities and sectors. ECA participated by building a page under the virtual booth of the United Nations Secretariat, providing information about ECA. Four advertised positions were posted, with links directing prospective candidates to Inspira. Around 25 forthcoming job openings were posted to elicit interest from the participants. Around 500 candidates visited the Secretariat’s booth and we received 108 emails expressing interest from some 60 prospective women candidates.

Efforts are under way and will continue towards facilitating the achievement of gender parity at all professional levels of the Organization, and to have a geographically diverse workforce, achieved through efficiency, transparency, and accountability. The hiring managers and human resources partners are working collaboratively to initiate recruitment exercises in good time and to ensure that positions are filled in a timely manner.

9. **You have had periodic meetings and discussions with the staff union on issues that affect staff members. What are some of the important matters on which there have been discussions and agreement on the way forward?**

**ES:** Following discussions in previous town halls, I requested the constitution of a human resources working group with representatives from both staff and management to discuss human resource matters, in particular that of recruitment. I am informed that the group has met to work out its terms of reference and the way forward. I have called upon the group to work with renewed vigour to complete its tasks and to make its recommendations to me at the earliest possible juncture, so that we can systemically address matters of concern, and continue to stress the issue of trust and transparency in recruitment and, most important, that of competence.

Where consultants and individual contractors are concerned, working in partnership with the staff representatives, management is taking stock of the list of consultants and individual contractors with the aim of improving the recruitment standards in these categories.

Discussions are under way to explore the possibility of including observers in the recruitment processes. In this regard, the staff union would be providing proposals on best practices that can be used to enhance transparency in this area.
10. **You have placed great emphasis on the implementation of the Staff Engagement Action Plan. What is the latest on this front?**

**ES:** The staff engagement action plan is a critical component of our overall efforts to improve the working environment in ECA and to build a culture of communication, trust and team work. To address the issues that were highlighted by the staff engagement survey of 2017, we set up a staff engagement project team that was mandated to put together the staff engagement action plan. I am happy to note that steady progress is being made to deliver some of the actions and initiatives that were highlighted by the action plan. Thus, on 11 January 2019, we released a communication in an ECA Announcements email circular informing staff members about the status of implementation of the action plan. Staff members are now able to access all information pertaining to the staff engagement initiative via the “Staff Corner” link on the ECA intranet. The link also includes information for staff members on progress in the planned initiatives. This progress includes the following:

- Most divisions have now commenced their monthly divisional meetings under the Ubuntu banner, led by the respective directors. I have also stressed the importance of this key initiative as a means both of enhancing organization-wide communication and of building team spirit and a shared sense of purpose. Recently, the Office of Human Resources released further guidelines on how these meetings could be structured and made more meaningful. I shall be going through the monthly minutes of these meetings to appraise the progress of this initiative.

- The SEPT working group on work life balance has been working closely with the United Nations Health Care Centre. The Health Centre launched a Wellness Week in January 2019 with talks and discussions on health issues, a series of Zumba classes and hikes for staff members. It now releases regular bulletins on various health issues and I am confident that we will be able to engage much more closely with staff members on ways of further enhancing our work-life balance.

- As part of the health promotion activities, the Health Care Centre and the Knowledge and Library Services Section have made available to staff educational materials provided by the UpToDate platform. UpToDate is a tool designed to facilitate understanding by staff members of health-related issues and to communication between clinicians and patients, helping patients to be better informed about their health care.

- A gym project survey was launched on 14 November 2018 to gather feedback on staff needs in this area and how the facilities at the health club could be improved. I am hopeful that the data collected will feed into an improvement plan for the health club.

- The “Staff Corner” section of the ECA intranet will over time be a comprehensive information corner enabling staff members to understand more about various staff initiatives, committees, their functioning, their outcomes and other matters. Details of the ECA Joint Negotiations Committee (JNC) are already made available to staff members.
To enhance the levels of information flow and communication, the ECA intranet now has dedicated sections on the following:

- **Best practice and learning:** this features good practices of the Commission in a wide range of work streams to sustain and improve the quality of the work that we perform.

- **Budget:** this gives staff members access to information on the budget, including the status of allotments.

- **Performance Management Dashboard:** this includes informative and user-friendly charts, graphs and reports enabling management to make informed decisions based on business intelligence and ECA’s strategic priorities.

- **Statutory documents:** this comprises documents issued by the United Nations and its statutory organs such as the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Human Rights Council and the Economic and Social Council.

- **ECA Repository:** this provides easy-to-read information on the repositioning of the United Nations development system with links to the UNDS home page and important documents on the United Nations reform process, and also on United Nations-African Union joint frameworks.

I have taken keen interest in interacting personally with staff members through a series of town-hall meetings called from time to time. I am hopeful that the Staff Union will take up this initiative as we move ahead. I have also followed up these meetings with this Q&A series, to further clarify some of the discussions that we have had in the town hall meetings.

The ECA reforms have been notified and the implementation process has begun. This will bring greater clarity to the work of the various units. Progress is being made and we are moving steadily towards the desired outcomes. More work is certainly needed, however, and I will be engaging with the SEPT and with staff members to understand how we can truly achieve the goals set out in our engagement action plan. What needs to be understood is that these initiatives cannot succeed without the active participation of staff members. I therefore call on each member of Team ECA to support the implementation of these initiatives and also to provide their valuable feedback in further improving that implementation.

**Thank you ES for your time and responses.**

**ES:** Thank you and I wish each member of Team ECA the very best!