



**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA**

**54th Session of the Committee for Programme and
Coordination (CPC)
on the proposed Biennial Programme Plan, 2016-2017:
Programme 15, Economic and social development in Africa**

Introductory Statement

by

**Mr. Carlos Lopes
UN Under-Secretary-General and
Executive Secretary of ECA**

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Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished members of the Committee, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address this important Committee to introduce for your consideration, the proposed biennial programme plan for 2016-2017 for programme 15: Economic and social development in Africa, which is under the responsibility of the Economic Commission for Africa.

Background and context

I would like to state from the outset that the proposed biennial programme plan for 2016-2017 that is before you today has been prepared in the context of the reforms implemented at ECA over the last 2 years, following the endorsement by the General Assembly of a new strategic direction and programme orientation for the Commission as contained in resolution A/RES/68/248 of December 2013. The plan, therefore, reflects continuity in the programme directions approved for the current biennium 2014-2015.

Furthermore, ECA's biennial programme plan for 2016-2017 has been formulated in close consultation with member States and endorsed by the Commission at its forty-seventh session held in Abuja, Nigeria in March 2014, organized as part of the seventh joint annual meetings of the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and AU Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance.

The proposals contained in the fascicle before you fully reflects the main policy priorities of members States as derived from legislative mandates emanating from relevant intergovernmental bodies, including the General Assembly, ECOSOC, various sessions of the Commission and the African Union summit. It also takes into account the comments and observations by a number of central review bodies such as the CPC and ACABQ.

Mr. Chairman,

From the outcome of the last session of the Commission, transmitted to your Committee, you will have observed that the Commission concurred with the programmatic content of the proposed Strategic Framework for 2016-2017, noting that it had taken into account the main priorities of the region as reflected in the NEPAD and the African Union Agenda 2063. The Conference of Ministers went on to endorse the proposed biennial programme plan for 2016-2017 and called on the CPC to support the plan. The Conference also called on the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to ensure that Africa's development remains a top priority for the United Nations post 2015 development agenda.

Programme focus and objectives

As stated in paragraph 15.1 of the fascicle before you, the overall objective of the programme in 2016-2017 is to promote inclusive and sustainable economic and social development in support of Africa's structural transformation, in line with the priorities and vision

articulated in the African Union's Agenda 2063, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015, as and when it is approved by the General Assembly, and the outcomes of other major United Nations conferences and international agreements since 1992.

As you all know, Africa has, for the most part, seen impressive and sustained economic growth of 5 per cent on average over the last decade with remarkable progress in advancing economic and social development, including progress towards meeting some of the targets of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Underpinning this growth were relatively high commodity prices, increased domestic demand and improved economic governance and management. At the same time, the current pattern and quality of growth has not been inclusive and could undermine the continent's chances of achieving structural transformation and sustainable development as a large part of its population remains trapped in economic poverty, facing unemployment and inequality.

The overriding policy challenge facing the continent today, therefore, is to sustain the recent positive trends by achieving higher, sustained and inclusive growth; investing in human development, including improving access to education, health, infrastructure; employment creation; boosting agriculture and food security; speeding up the pace of regional integration; promoting trade, including intra-African trade; and enhancing State and institutional capacities for improved economic management. Ensuring gender equality and building national statistical capacity should also remain top priorities. Resource mobilization is a

critical cross-cutting challenge that must be addressed if Africa is to make progress in these areas. Sustaining the positive trends will also depend critically on a favorable international environment that supports Africa's special needs – particularly in climate change, international trade and enhancing the continent's voice in key global decision-making forums and processes.

Consistent with the Commission's mandate and comparative advantage, the Commission's overall strategy to effectively respond to these development challenges will continue to centre around nine inter-dependent and complementary sub-programmes, which are focused on sectors or priorities that are key to the transformation of Africa, as follows: (1) Macroeconomic policy; (2) Regional integration and trade; (3) Innovations, technologies and management of Africa's natural resources; (4) Statistics; (5) Capacity development; (6) Gender and women in development; (7) Sub-regional activities for development; (8) Development planning and administration; and (9) Social development policy.

The programme orientation will ensure that adequate emphasis is given to supporting African countries to progress towards gender equality, overcome identified gaps in planning and statistics and to adapt to mega-trends such as urbanization, shifting demographics and challenges of environmental sustainability, including promoting green economy policies for sustainable development and poverty eradication in the follow-up to Rio+20.

While many of the priorities contained in the biennial programme plan for the period 2016 -2017 reflect continuity in the direction of

the work carried out by ECA in 2014-2015, a number of enhancements and refinements will be made to the programme in 2016 -2017 to address important emerging issues in support of Africa's transformation. A key new feature of the present plan, therefore, is the implementation of the priorities of African Union's Agenda 2063 and the international development agenda beyond 2015, as and when approved by the General Assembly.

Strategy

The ECA will deliver on the expected results of the programme plan by improving the quality of the services that it provides in the area of policy research and knowledge generation; advocacy, consensus-building and the adoption of common regional positions on key issue; and capacity development and technical cooperation. The Commission will continue to ensure high quality and achievements of expected program results by strengthening its quality assurance processes and overall results based management environment, incl. through its enhanced program accountability framework and its evaluation policy.

ECA will continue to leverage its comparative advantage to engage with a wide range of partners to include the AU Commission; African Development Bank; UN entities; other regional organizations, major policy think tanks; universities and research institutions; private sector and foundations; and civil society organizations. It will enhance collaboration with United Nations Development Group entities, incl. through the regional coordination mechanism convened by ECA in support of the African Union and its NEPAD programme at the regional and sub-regional levels.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Delegates, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee for its support to our work. This support remains a key to our success, as ECA has become a stronger, relevant and better focused organization in the region. Our credentials both as a regional forum for policy dialogue and as a development policy think tank in the service of Africa continue to achieve wider acceptance. Finally, ECA will strive to work with the member States, development partners and other stakeholders to implement the priorities contained in this programme plan, in order to support the accelerated transformation of African countries.

I thank you for your attention and look forward to providing you with any clarifications that you may need on the proposed programme.

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