

**Economic and Social Council**Distr.: General
2 January 2020

Original: English

Economic Commission for Africa
Committee of Experts of the Conference of African
Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
Thirty-ninth meeting
Addis Ababa, 18–20 March 2020

Item 4 of the provisional agenda*
Assessment of progress on regional integration in Africa

Assessment of progress on regional integration in Africa**I. Introduction**

1. Regional integration is an economic and political priority for African countries, as demonstrated by the abundance of integration programmes being adopted and implemented at continental and regional levels. Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are the cornerstone in the pursuit and realization of the aspiration of an economically integrated African continent. Although these communities have similar objectives, they continue to manifest differences in their structures and performances, including in the pace and level of achievement of their treaty goals and objectives. While some have made significant progress in key areas of integration, others have continued to struggle to achieve the goals set out in their treaties and conventions, and in meeting the milestones set out in the historic 1991 Treaty establishing the African Economic Community (Abuja Treaty). The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) report on best practices in regional integration in Africa provides a full account (E/ECA/CTRCI/8/4).

2. The signing of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area by 44 African countries on 21 March 2018 in Kigali, and the launch of its operational phase in July 2019, in Niamey, represented momentous steps in the recent history of the integration of Africa.¹ The Agreement has the potential to accelerate progress towards the fulfilment of the aims of the Abuja Treaty, which includes establishing the grounds for mutual economic development among African member States through a gradual process of coordination, harmonization and progressive integration of the activities of current and future RECs.

3. The African Union officially recognizes eight RECs,² also referenced in the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, as the

* E/ECA/COE/39/1.

¹ The main objective of the tenth session of the Committee on Regional Cooperation and Integration was the examination of efforts that had been deployed towards fast-tracking the implementation of the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-Africa Trade and the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. The signing of the Agreement was therefore a culmination of all those efforts.

² Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Arab Maghreb Union (AMU),



building block for its implementation, and for the eventual establishment of the Continental Customs Union. Although the overall performance of these communities in various dimensions of integration has generally been mixed, the factors that underpin this performance constitute useful lessons to be leveraged for the advancement of the region's integration agenda, including in the implementation of the Agreement.

4. This report presents an assessment of progress on regional integration in Africa, with a particular focus on progress made by RECs in key dimensions of regional integration, including: macroeconomic integration; productive integration; trade integration; infrastructure integration; the free movement of people; and governance, peace and security. The Africa Regional Integration Index, together with other key indices, formed the basis of the present report.³ Following the introduction, the structure of the report is as follows: section II focuses on trade integration; section III on productive integration; section IV on macroeconomic integration; section V on infrastructure integration; section VI on migration and the free movement of people; section VII on governance, peace and security; and, to close, section VIII offers a conclusion and recommendations.

II. Trade integration

5. Trade is envisaged as the foundational area of integration in many RECs, and is included in the African Union's Minimum Integration Programme of 2009 and its Agenda 2063. In pursuit of the call made at the tenth session of the Committee on Regional Cooperation and Integration for ECA to continue to support efforts to fast-track the implementation of the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-African Trade and the establishment of a Continental Free Trade Area, the Commission dedicated a significant portion of its work to supporting trade integration on the continent – including providing technical support and training to Member States, RECs and other relevant regional institutions – in the negotiations for the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. In particular, ECA, together with other partners, such as the African Union Commission, contributed to the development of the draft text that was subsequently used as the basis for the process relating to the negotiations for the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. This contributed to the successful conclusion by Member States of the negotiations, resulting in the three main legal instruments underpinning the African Continental Free Trade Area; the Protocol on Trade in Goods, the Protocol on Trade in Services, and the Protocol on Rules and Procedures on the Settlement of Disputes.

6. Furthermore, ECA carried out research and disseminated policy findings on the potential benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Area, including in the creation of employment, industrial linkages, economic diversification and structural transformation. The Commission's forecast has demonstrated that the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area is set to boost intra-African trade by more than 50 per cent and facilitate welfare gains amounting to \$16 billion. The economic benefits are estimated to be even greater if trade facilitation reforms are undertaken at the same time. These findings contributed in encouraging more Member States to sign and ratify the

Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

³ The Africa Regional Integration Index – jointly produced by ECA, the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank (AfDB) – is a multidimensional index that captures integration in the following five areas or dimensions that matter for social and economic development: trade, productive, macroeconomic, infrastructural and free movement of people. The scores closer to 0 indicate lowest performances, while scores closer to 1 indicate highest performances.

agreement. In addition, ECA has produced analytical work in the areas of intra-African and international trade, industrialization and regional value chains development for RECs and Member States. For example, in December 2018, ECA launched the report on *The potential for the creation of Regional Value Chains in North Africa: a sector-based mapping*. These efforts have assisted the member States of RECs to mainstream diversification, industrialization and economic transformation strategies into national development plans, which promote intra-African trade as envisioned in the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-Africa Trade and Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

7. As of 8 October 2019, the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area had been ratified by 28 member States of the African Union, and 54 countries had signed. The Agreement presents an opportunity for RECs to deal with issues such as low intraregional economic community trade, tariff liberalization and elimination of non-tariff barriers. It also offers the possibility for accelerated action towards all dimensions of regional integration.

8. With support from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the African Union Commission, the European Union and the International Trade Centre, ECA has been working with several countries in various RECs to assist them in a demand-driven programme to develop country-specific national strategies relevant to the African Continental Free Trade Area process. Such strategies are intended to streamline the priority interests of a country so as to fully benefit from the African Continental Free Trade Area, together with the RECs' current free trade areas and customs unions.⁴ These countries include Cameroon, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Malawi, Togo, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In addition, tools have been developed by ECA to assess and monitor the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area: namely, the Africa Regional Integration Index, which is already in use; and the African Continental Free Trade Area Country Business Index, which is a work in progress. ECA publications and publication series, such as *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa* and the *Economic Report on Africa*, and a number of knowledge products, also assist in this regard.

9. Intra-African trade gradually increased to 16.1 per cent of total African trade in 2018 (to reach \$ 159.1 billion), up from 15.5 per cent in 2017.⁵ This remains very low compared with intraregional trade in other regions, such as Asia (52 per cent) and Europe (73 per cent). The continent's share of world exports was at 2.3 per cent, while its share of world imports stood at 2.5 per cent.⁶ The factors behind this include the lack of industrialization, manufacturing and value addition, with most African countries having a commodity export dependence of more than 80 per cent, whereas the bulk of African imports are industrial products and manufactured goods. High intraregional import tariffs also persist, and a number of countries have either not established, ratified or fully implemented REC-level free trade areas, including the Tripartite Free Trade Area. Measures such as the Pan-Africa Payment and Settlement System, a continent-wide digital payment system launched by Africa Export–Import Bank (Afrexim) in July 2019, will boost intra-African trade through facilitating intra-African trade payments or cross-border transactions in African currencies.

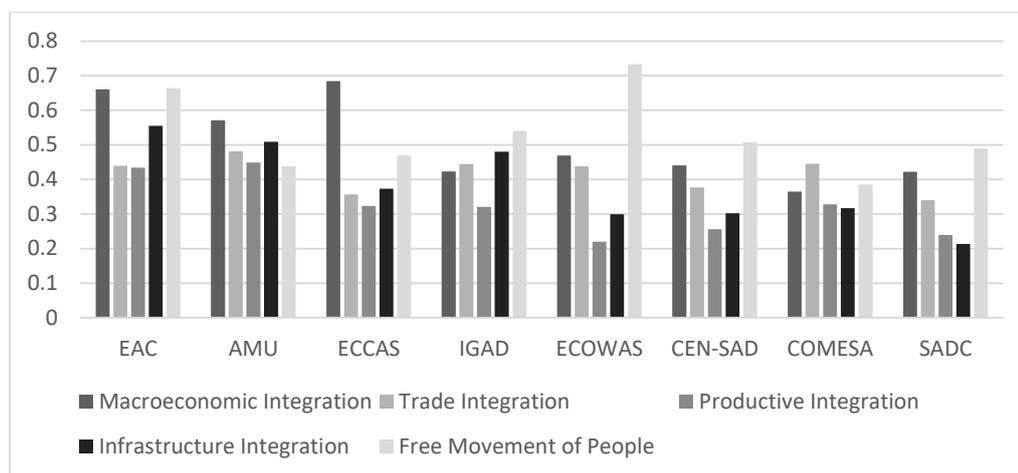
⁴ The Secretariat is currently drafting a report on how to govern the interface between the African Continental Free Trade Area and the RECs' free trade areas and customs unions.

⁵ Africa Export–Import Bank (2019). *African Trade Report 2019: African Trade in a Digital World*. Available at https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/demo2.opus.ee/afrexim/African-Trade-Report_2019.pdf. Accessed on 9 January 2019.

⁶ Available at https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/demo2.opus.ee/afrexim/African-Trade-Report_2019.pdf. Accessed on 9 January 2019.

10. Overall, regional blocs have achieved mixed results on the trade integration dimension (see the figure below).⁷ Many of the RECs continued to register low scores in the area of trade integration, with an average score of 0.383. The highest performing REC in terms of trade integration the Arab Maghreb Union was AMU, with a 0.481 score; while the Southern African Development Community SADC was the least trade-integrated regional bloc, with an average score of 0.340.

Performance of regional economic communities on the five dimensions of regional integration



Source: Data from the Africa Regional Integration Index (ECA, forthcoming).

III. Productive integration

11. For five of the eight RECs, productive integration is their poorest-performing dimension of regional integration. This shows that most of the communities are lagging in terms of intraregional intermediate exports and imports, and are recording a very low merchandise trade complementarity index. This is despite the fact that very low levels of productive integration hamper effective regional integration, as productive integration is central to enhancing industrialization and trade in an intraregional economic community and intra-African context. It is also critical to integrating African economies into regional value chains and global value chains, as envisioned in Agenda 2063.

12. The AMU and the East African Community EAC are taking the lead in productive integration, with index scores of 0.449 and 0.434, respectively, while the Economic Community of West African States ECOWAS is the least integrated regional bloc in the productive integration dimension, with an index score of 0.220. Despite the low performance of the majority of RECs on productive integration, there are several initiatives being carried out to improve the situation, including some that are supported by ECA. For example, ECA is providing technical support and working collaboratively with the SADC secretariat and SADC member States to assist them in domesticating the SADC Industrialization Strategy and Roadmap (2015–2063), designed to accelerate industrialization in the region through beneficiation and value addition for socioeconomic transformation. A draft protocol on industry has been developed to promote competitive industrial bases in the region. SADC has undertaken studies to establish priority regional value chains in the agroprocessing,

⁷ The trade integration dimension of the Africa Regional Integration Index is measured by five indicators: average intraregional import tariffs; share of intraregional exports over gross domestic product (GDP); share of intraregional imports over GDP; share of intraregional trade; and whether the country has ratified, signed, or not signed the protocol on the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area.

minerals and pharmaceuticals industries, so as to increase intraregional trade and integration into global value chains.

13. EAC is implementing its East African Community Industrialization Policy (2012–2032), even though the contribution of industry to GDP between 2012 and 2017 decreased for all EAC member States – with the exception of the United Republic of Tanzania, which increased from approximately 22 per cent to 26 per cent.⁸ In light of the importance of energy in enabling industrialization, EAC has also prioritized the development of energy security policies to underpin its industrialization. To that end, ECA has supported the EAC secretariat and member States in the development of the EAC Energy Security Policy Framework, which is intended to provide policy guidance towards the development of the region’s energy sector. The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa COMESA has developed the COMESA industrial strategy (2017–2026), and, in June 2019, approved the Action Plan and Regional Guidelines on Local Content Policy to facilitate industrialization. Similarly, ECOWAS has put in place the West Africa Common Industrial Policy (2015–2020).

IV. Macroeconomic integration

14. Overall, in the macroeconomic integration dimension, the performance of the RECs has remained weak. The Africa Regional Integration Index finding shows that the eight communities have an average macroeconomic integration score of 0.399. This takes into account the number of bilateral investment treaties in force, the number of countries in a region that share a common currency or with convertible currencies, and the regional inflation rate differential (that is, the difference between the inflation rate of countries and the target inflation rate of the region).

15. The Economic Community of Central African States ECCAS and EAC are the highest-performing communities in terms of macroeconomic integration, with 0.684 and 0.660 scores, respectively, on the index. The high performance of ECCAS is largely driven by the fact that 6 out of 11 ECCAS member States are members of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community – which is now at a more advanced stage of macroeconomic, monetary and financial integration, and shares a common currency (the CFA franc of Central Africa). It is one of the three monetary unions operating in Africa, the others being the West African CFA franc (covering French-speaking countries in West Africa) and the Common Monetary Area (covering all Southern African Customs Union member States, except Botswana).

16. The EAC target is to replace national currencies with a common currency by 2024, through the adopted convergence criteria and the East African Monetary Union Protocol of 2013. Although the REC has recorded some progress, meeting the 2024 target is a huge task. According to research undertaken by AfDB in 2018, the estimated average annual inflation was 5.28 per cent (excluding South Sudan, which had a national annual inflation rate of 104.1 per cent), against a targeted inflation ceiling of 8 per cent. The continent’s average fiscal deficit of GDP was 17 per cent (against a targeted 3 per cent of GDP fiscal deficit ceiling), and public debt-to-GDP ratio was at 50 per cent, compared with 67 per cent in 2016.

17. Other RECs are also making some strides towards macroeconomic integration. COMESA intends to form a monetary union by 2025, and has set macroeconomic and monetary convergence targets to harmonize economic indicators. In terms of financial integration, COMESA has achieved a regional

⁸ East African Development Bank (2019). The State of Industrialization in the EAC. 7 May 2019. Available at <https://eadb.org/the-state-of-industrialization-in-the-eac/>. Accessed on 9 January 2019.

payment and settlement system, which is an electronic payment platform that facilitates cross-border payments between and among COMESA member States in a multicurrency environment. As of March 2017, nine COMESA countries were implementing the payment and settlement system.

18. In 2014, ECOWAS realigned its convergence criteria with the aim of merging the goals of both the countries of the West African Monetary Zone⁹ and the West African Economic and Monetary Union¹⁰ into a single monetary zone by 2020. ECOWAS member States have recently agreed that countries meeting the primary convergence criteria (targets on budget deficits, annual inflation and gross reserves) and secondary convergence criteria (targets on public debt-to-GDP ratio, central bank financing of budget deficits and nominal exchange rate variations) will adopt a new common currency, the “Eco”, from 2020, as was agreed to by ECOWAS Heads of State on 29 June 2019. To this end, ECA is assisting the ECOWAS Presidential Task Force (created to monitor the creation of the single currency) in analytical work to assess the road map, with a view to proposing scenarios and suitable approaches to accelerate the community’s progress towards the adoption of an ECOWAS common currency.

19. With regard to the Community of Sahel-Saharan States CEN-SAD, 10 of its member States are party to either the West African Economic and Monetary Union or the Central African Economic and Monetary Community Monetary Union, whose West African CFA franc and Central African CFA franc have always been at parity and are effectively interchangeable. In AMU, while the aim of the region is to establish a Maghreb Economic Union, financial and macroeconomic convergence and the creation of a single currency have not been articulated in its founding treaty.

20. Prioritization of coordinated and sound fiscal and monetary policies is necessary to bring economic stability in RECs, and assist in enhancing cross-border investment and greater macroeconomic integration. To sustain the above, ECA will continue to build on current programmes, supporting macroeconomic integration in RECs.

V. Infrastructure integration

21. Africa has forgone an estimated 25 per cent of cumulative economic growth in the past two decades, due to inadequate infrastructure. According to AfDB in 2018, the continent’s infrastructure requirement was estimated at between \$130 billion and \$170 billion annually, with a financing gap in the range of \$68 billion–\$108 billion.¹¹ The deficit hinders regional integration in general, because infrastructure facilitates production, trade facilitation and economic linkages.

22. The Africa Regional Integration Index, which focuses on four modes of infrastructure – electricity, transportation, information and communications technology (ICT), and water and sanitation – attests to this reality. The RECs’ rating on the infrastructure integration dimension of the index utilizes the AfDB Composite Infrastructure Development Index, together with the proportion of intraregional flight connections to countries as indicators. The overall average score of Africa on infrastructure integration is 0.220, with 31 of the 54 countries classified as “low performers”, while 11 are “average performers”. Both EAC and AMU have the most integrated infrastructure, with 0.555 and 0.509 index scores, respectively; while ECOWAS and SADC have

⁹ The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

¹⁰ Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, the Niger, Senegal and Togo.

¹¹ African Development Bank (2018). *African Economic Outlook 2018*, chapter 3. Available at www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/2018AEO/African_Economic_Outlook_2018_-_EN_Chapter3.pdf. Accessed on 9 January 2019.

the least infrastructure integrated scores of 0.299 and 0.214, respectively. At country level, South Africa (with a 0.898 score) is on top, followed by Egypt, Seychelles and Morocco, respectively. The bottom four countries with the least integrated infrastructure comprise South Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia and Chad. More attention has been given to road infrastructure, rail transport, air transport, energy and ICTs by African countries.

A. Road infrastructure

23. African leaders are pursuing key regional and continental infrastructure initiatives, including those under the African Union's Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) Steering Committee, which is mandated to monitor progress on infrastructure developments within the context of Agenda 2063. The top five transport infrastructure development priority projects in Africa that are now at advanced stages of preparation or ready for funding and implementation under PIDA are: Yamoussoukro Decision – Single African Air Transport Market (costing \$5 million); Abidjan–Lagos Coastal Corridor Project (\$ 290 million); North–South Multimodal Corridor Project (\$2,325 million); Central Corridor Project (\$840 million); and the Trans-Maghreb Highway Project (\$ 75 million).¹²

B. Rail transport

24. A Pan-African continental high-speed rail, which is one of the flagship projects of Agenda 2063, is aimed at physically and economically connecting African capital cities, megacities, commercial hubs, economic zones and tourist destinations. In December 2018, the African Union Development Agency engaged a consultant to conduct a detailed scoping study of the continent's Integrated High Speed Railway Network Project. An inception report and a prioritization framework has since been developed that will further guide the scoping study. At regional and national levels, several national rail developments, upgrading and expansion projects are being initiated and implemented in countries such as Egypt (Luxor–Cairo and Luxor–Hurghada High-Speed Railway Projects), Kenya (Standard Gauge Railway Project), Senegal (Dakar Regional Express Train Project and Dakar–Bamako Standard Gauge Railway Project) and Uganda (Tororo–Gulu and Malaba–Kampala–Pakwach Standard Gauge Railway).

C. Air transport

25. Intra-African air connectivity received a major boost in January 2018, when the Single African Air Transport Market, a flagship project under Agenda 2063 for liberalizing and unifying the African skies, was launched during the African Union Summit. The Transport Market facilitates the free movement of people and goods, and enhances the continent's integration and connectivity. It is aimed at supporting the Action Plan for Boosting Intra-Africa Trade, the African Continental Free Trade Area and the Protocol on Free Movement of People. As of July 2019, a total of 28 member States belonged to the Single African Air Transport Market, covering more than 750 million people, with slightly more than \$ 1.5 trillion GDP in 2018 (65 per cent of the continent's

¹² PIDA (2018). PIDA Implementation through Good Governance – Realizing Smart Infrastructure for Africa's Integration. Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/newsevents/conceptnotes/36062-cn-draft_concept_note_program_pida_week_2018_081018.pdf. Accessed on 9 January 2019.

GDP).¹³ Of those member States, 18 have signed a memorandum of implementation to remove restrictions in existing bilateral air service agreements that are contrary to the Yamoussoukro Decision. In 2018, Africa had handled almost 140 million passengers on an origin-destination basis, which was a 120 per cent increase from those handled in 2013.¹⁴

D. Energy

26. Investment in energy infrastructure is needed for economic growth, poverty reduction and access to affordable energy for all. The share of the population that has access to electricity in Africa has risen from 42 per cent in 2015 to 51 per cent in 2018. The average effective cost of electricity to manufacturing enterprises in Africa is close to \$ 0.20 per kilowatt-hour, around four times higher than industrial rates elsewhere in the world. PIDA estimated that demand for power would grow annually by 6 per cent until 2040. Installed generation capacity in Africa, around 191 gigawatts in 2016, would have to increase to 446 gigawatts by 2040 to meet the demand.¹⁵ Notable initiatives in energy infrastructure development include: the Ethiopia–Sudan Transmission Interconnector; the Zambia–United Republic of Tanzania–Kenya Transmission Interconnector (to connect Southern African Power Pool with the East African Power Pool); and the Batoka Gorge Hydroelectric Power Project (between Zambia and Zimbabwe). Other ongoing initiatives include renewable energy projects, which are supported by AfDB through the ARCH Africa Renewable Power Fund.

E. Information and communications technology

27. Mobile and Internet telephone charges in Africa are about four times higher than those in South Asia, and international call prices are more than twice as high. In Africa, 1 gigabyte of data costs nearly 18 per cent of an average monthly income in 2016, compared with only 3 per cent in Asia. Closing the ICT infrastructure gap will facilitate both trade and intraregional and interregional connectivity. Alongside several ICT connectivity projects at the national level, RECs are also making progress in implementing telephone infrastructure, fibre-optic projects and ICT projects. According to the 2018 progress report provided by PIDA, construction has started on the Liberia section of the Freetown–Monrovia–Abidjan Fibre-optic Link Project and Guinea sections of the Bissau–Conakry and Conakry–Bamako Fibre-optic Link Projects in the ECOWAS region. To reduce the cost of payments made to overseas transit carriers to exchange local and continental Internet traffic, the African Internet Exchange Project – which is being implemented under PIDA with funding from the European Union and Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund – has made progress in establishing Internet exchange points in African countries and regional Internet hubs. By 31 December 2018, 17 Internet exchange points had been established in Africa.¹⁶

¹³ International Civil Aviation Organization (2019). The Single African Air Transport Market: Sustainable Regulatory System. Available at www.icao.int/Meetings/a40/Documents/WP/wp_186_en.pdf. Accessed on 9 January 2019.

¹⁴ African Civil Aviation Commission (2019). The Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) Implementation of Concrete Measures: Challenges and Progress. Available at http://afcac.org/en/images/2019/Meetings/July/kigali/afcac_pptx2.pdf. Accessed on 9 January 2019.

¹⁵ PIDA (2019). PIDA Progress Report – 2018. Available at <https://www.au-pida.org/download/pida-implementation-report-2018/>. Accessed on 9 January 2019.

¹⁶ New Partnership for Africa's Development Agency, African Union Commission, African Development Bank (2017). PIDA Progress Report 2017, NPCA, African Union, AfDB, Midrand, Addis Ababa, Abidjan. Available at www.tralac.org/documents/resources/african-union/1685-pida-progress-report-2017/file.html. Accessed on 9 January 2019.

F. Infrastructure for African landlocked countries

28. The 16 landlocked African countries, many of which are low-income countries, have built-in geographic disadvantages that contribute to poor economic, social and even political performance. An estimated 77 per cent of their export value consists of transport costs, which presents a serious barrier to regional and global trade. The Commission, in partnership with regional and global partner institutions, has continued to support landlocked developing countries, in particular under the framework of the 2014 Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024. The Vienna Programme of Action is aimed at responding to the specific needs and problems of landlocked developing countries due to their remoteness and geographical constraints.

29. In the area of infrastructure financing, landlocked developing countries are benefiting from transboundary infrastructure projects in the sectors of transport, energy and digital communication systems, which all assist them to break down various geographical and logistical barriers to regional integration and trade competitiveness. Transboundary infrastructure projects in various RECs whose geographical scope covers landlocked developing countries, continue to receive funding commitments. For example, the Trans-African Highways Programme – which covers several landlocked developing countries and is under PIDA projects – received a funding commitment of \$24 million from Japan. The North–South Power Transmission Corridor (an 8,000 km energy line linking 11 countries in COMESA, EAC, SADC and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development IGAD, including four landlocked developing countries – Ethiopia, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe) also received a funding commitment of \$ 12 million from Japan. Similarly, the Northern Multimodal Corridor – a transport corridor passing through six COMESA and EAC countries, including two landlocked developing countries (Burundi and Rwanda) – has received a \$156 million funding commitment from Germany and \$ 111 million from Japan.¹⁷

30. The African Continental Free Trade Area process presents more opportunities to integrate and mainstream the funding needs of the infrastructure of landlocked developing countries into continental and global projects, as well as improve their productive capacities. A regional or corridor approach would help to enhance the bankability of infrastructure development projects in landlocked developing countries, thereby enabling them to have access to infrastructure financing.

VI. Migration and the free movement of people

31. Africa is making progress towards the free movement of people across borders. Economic growth will follow through tourism, trade and investment, human capital mobility, and finding solutions to labour skill gaps and skills mismatch. The Africa Regional Integration Index findings showed that the best performing dimension of regional integration of five out of the eight RECs was the free movement of people. ECOWAS and EAC are the best performing RECs on the free movement of people, with 0.733 and 0.664 scores, respectively, while COMESA had the weakest performance, with an average score of 0.385. ECOWAS has in place an ECOWAS passport and no visa requirements. EAC is also implementing its Protocol on Movement and Labour.

32. Throughout the RECs, progress has been made in liberalizing visa regimes for other Africans. The Africa Visa Openness Report 2019 – Visa Openness Index, produced by AfDB and the African Union, reveals that, in

¹⁷ Infrastructure Consortium for Africa (2018). *Infrastructure Financing Trends in Africa–2017*. Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

2019, 25 per cent of Africans did not need visas to travel to other African countries, up from 20 per cent in 2016; Africans can get visas on arrival in 26 per cent of other African countries, up from 24 per cent in 2018; then the percentage of Africans that need visas to travel to other African countries was reduced from 55 per cent in 2016 to 49 per cent in 2019.¹⁸

33. Some countries, however, still maintain stringent visa regimes and requirements. Again, most member States are yet to ratify the African Union Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment. The Protocol, which was adopted on 29 January 2018, is intended to promote the free movement of people and the ability to establish business and residence in Africa. The Protocol needs 15 ratifications to enter into force, but as of 16 July 2019, it had only 4 ratifications¹⁹ and 32 signatures. Meanwhile, ECA has partnered with ECOWAS to harmonize and align the ECOWAS regional framework on the free movement of people with the African Union Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment.

34. To enhance labour mobility and integrate it into the continent's education sector through the development of education and skills, and the mutual recognition of academic qualifications, the four main instruments (comprising the Nyerere Mobility Programme, the African Quality Rating Mechanism and Accreditation, Pan-African University, and Tuning Africa) of the Strategy to Harmonize Higher Education Programmes in Africa, are being championed by the African Union.

VII. Governance, peace and security

35. Peace and security create environments conducive to the pursuit of regional integration and the attainment of broader continental development objectives. Through their Joint United Nations–African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, signed in April 2017, the United Nations and the African Union have collaborated on conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peace support operations and security, through joint mechanisms and regular consultations and close collaborations with RECs. The African Union has complemented this with the African Governance Architecture and the African Peace and Security Architecture.

36. Given their proximity to local realities, some RECs have intervened to uphold democratic norms and principles, and resolve conflicts, instability and peace and security challenges. In 2018 and 2019, peace and security challenges were experienced in countries such as Burundi, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan.

37. The Commission has continued to contribute towards securing peace, security and stability in the Sahel region through the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. It utilized its convening power to facilitate high-level events in 2018 to provide the policy advice necessary for the implementation of the United Nations Sahel Support Plan (2018–2022), which is meant to assist countries in that region to spur growth, socioeconomic growth and development, and to consolidate peacebuilding and governance efforts.

38. The member States of ECOWAS continue to support the ECOWAS mission in Guinea-Bissau, which was established in 2012 to manage the post-

¹⁸ Africa Visa Openness Index Report 2019. Available at www.visaopenness.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/visa-openness-2019.pdf. Accessed on 9 January 2019.

¹⁹ Rwanda (25 May 2018), Mali (3 May 2019), Sao Tome and Principe (28 May 2019), and the Niger (5 July 2019).

coup transition in that country. In June 2019, during the fifty-fifth ordinary session of the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States, the mandate of the mission in Guinea-Bissau was extended for a period of six months, from 1 October 2019. ECOWAS is also supporting peace and security efforts in the Gambia through the ECOWAS mission, established in January 2017 following a political crisis. In addition, the REC has assisted to peacefully resolve the political crisis in Togo through deploying two ECOWAS facilitators in 2018, President Nana Akufo-Addo of Ghana, and President Alpha Condé of Guinea.

39. IGAD has been involved in leading efforts to resolve the wars in Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan. At present, it is overseeing the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan, signed in September 2018. Again, IGAD and the African Union had jointly mediated efforts in the Sudan, which successfully led to the formation of an inclusive transitional Government in September 2019. In Somalia, IGAD has been supporting peace efforts to assist with the country's political recovery and supporting Somalia in preparation for its 2020 national elections. The member States of both IGAD and EAC (Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda) are part of the countries contributing troops to the African Union mission to Somalia.

40. In SADC, the REC continues to support the joint United Nations–SADC operations, meant to neutralize conflict, mainly in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since 2015, SADC has been facilitating dialogue, constitutional and security sector reforms in Lesotho through the SADC preventive mission in Lesotho. In 2018, SADC also managed to facilitate national dialogue and the peaceful resolution of the post-election crisis in Madagascar.

41. The African Peer Review Mechanism, an African tool for voluntary self-monitoring in all aspects of governance and socioeconomic development of member States, remains key to promoting peace and security in the RECs. In July 2018, the African Union repositioned the Mechanism as a tool for conflict prevention. ECA has provided advisory services and capacity-building programmes, and has developed knowledge products towards the strengthening of the Mechanism. From 2013 to 2016, no country had been reviewed by the Mechanism, but have now resumed, and new member States have joined, including Namibia (in 2017) and Botswana (in 2019). This will improve governance and create a conducive environment for regional integration.

VIII. Conclusions and recommendations

42. While progress continues to be made in pursuit of the continent's regional integration agenda throughout the eight RECs, challenges remain that impede the achievement of deeper integration. In particular, most RECs and Member States are struggling to achieve progress in the areas of productive integration.

43. To assist RECs to improve their performance on various dimensions of regional integration, the secretariat would want to continue to:

(a) Support RECs in mainstreaming Boosting Intra-African Trade in their programmes and policies;

(b) Strengthen its support of this goal, building on the collaborative work on regional industrialization, as has already been initiated in SADC and ECOWAS;

(c) Broaden its capacity-building programme on the use of macroeconomic and forecasting models in economic planning and development, to empower Member States and RECs;

(d) Support the African Continental Free Trade Area ratification drive and implementation, including through awareness-raising programmes, developing national implementation strategies and doing more analytical work, including on the interface between the African Continental Free Trade Area and RECs' free trade agreements/customs unions;

(e) Encourage RECs and Member States to collaborate with development partners in the area of infrastructure financing, with a view to reducing Africa's infrastructure deficit, particularly in Africa's least developed countries and landlocked developing countries;

(f) Support efforts to expedite the ratification of the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons;

(g) Continue working on monitoring regional integration progress and achievement, including refining and strengthening assessment tools, such as the Africa Regional Integration Index, the African Country Business Index, and Assessing Regional Integration in Africa, and other analytical studies on regional integration;

(h) Encourage more African countries to join the Single African Air Transport Market to facilitate the full implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision on liberalization of air transport markets in Africa;

(i) Assist African landlocked developing countries in mainstreaming the Vienna Programme of Action into their development plans and strategies, while RECs integrate the same into their programmes of work;

(j) Encourage RECs and Member States to ratify and implement the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance; and be part of the African Peer Review Mechanism, with a view to creating a conducive environment for regional integration;

(k) Support the implementation of the Joint United Nations–African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security (2017) including through collaboration with RECs.