

QA

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

— with the Executive Secretary —



This is the ninth edition in the series of Question & Answers with ECA's Executive Secretary about issues that concern and impact the organization and staff. In this edition, the ES speaks about the alternate work arrangements, the accountability exercise, the performance management cycle, staff engagement, RPTC allocations, and some exciting work that the ECA is leading.

Q1: ES, we are currently in a time of great uncertainty. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought forth challenges as well as opportunities. Can you tell us more about how this experience has been and what are the support measures put in place for staff?

ES: Indeed, we live in very uncertain times. The Covid-19 pandemic has forced us to view alternative realities. From the way we conduct our business to the methods and platforms through which we deliver on our mandate. The challenges posed by the pandemic have once again reaffirmed my belief in the pivotal role that ECA plays in the region to assist and advice member States on policies and approaches to deal with economic and social imperatives.

Our efforts within the Commission and in tandem with our sister entities have been focused on ensuring business continuity in a highly volatile environment as our member States need us now more than ever before. Initial efforts focused on strengthening the preparedness of the UN Healthcare Care Centre to provide critical care and support to staff and their families, including sensitization on preventive measures. We have also worked to make sure that our business continuity and pandemic plans support the continuation of critical operations during the crisis. In this regard, the following initiatives or actions have been undertaken:

- We have signed an agreement with a local hospital facility, approved by the host government, to provide standard dedicated facilities to treat any UN staff or their dependents who contract the disease;
- The UN Health Care Clinic is also exploring the possibility of establishing isolation facilities within the UN compound where infected persons or suspected cases can be quarantined before transferring them to designated treatment centres. Currently, there is a temporary holding area for suspected cases identified at the Clinic. Other measures taken on the medical front include routine temperature screening of staff and visitors who have to come into the compound;
- To minimize the risk of transmission and spread of the disease, the UN Clinic initiated telemedicine service as an effective way of delivering its services, where staff and their families could consult a physician on the phone;
- Handwashing facilities and hand sanitizer stations have been installed for use in common areas in the compound;

- Support to all UN personnel arriving in Ethiopia with medical conditions and those in transit to their duty stations or homes by establishing a documented protocol for their transit and providing an appropriate quarantine location. UNDSS has also set up a WhatsApp group for such UN personnel to share information;
- On the procurement front, despite disruptions in the global supply chain, we have been able to purchase and deliver urgent and critical medical supplies and lifesaving equipment, such as Personal Protective Equipment, ventilators/respirators, thermo scanners, essential medicines, as well as 4G routers to enable most staff work remotely;
- HR continues to provide proactive support to staff on a diverse range of other operational issues within the context of existing human resources management practices, including providing guidance on recruitment and on boarding of staff, benefits and entitlements, insurance and travel policies, and staff rules and regulations that will enable staff implement special arrangements such as telecommuting etc.;
- Keeping all staff (at the duty station and the sub-regional offices) updated and informed about the evolving situation with COVID-19 through timely dissemination and broadcast of SG's directives, guidance on telecommuting, alternate work arrangements, travel restrictions, and directives from host country authorities etc.
- To contain the spread of COVID-19, measures were also initiated to restrict physical access to the UNECA compound in Addis Ababa with entities instituting alternate working arrangements/ virtual work arrangements with a small complement of critical staff continuing to work on site.
- In duty stations where host country decisions have restricted the movement of people, entities have made arrangements for staff members to work remotely unless their presence is physically required.
- We have switched over to the use of IT as an enabler to help us connect as an organization. Increasingly, team meetings and meetings with our clients are being organized through IT platforms such as MS Team, WebEx and Skype. We have faced technical challenges in some areas to organize these interactions, but so far, we have not experienced a "deal-breaker".
- If staff are not able to discharge their functions remotely due to the nature of their functions and have not been required to physically report to duty, managers may temporarily assign them to other functions that can be undertaken remotely, such as online training and professional development. I have personally spoken about the need to also utilize this time to complete the mandatory online learning programmes.
- We have circulated the Quick Start Guide to Telecommuting Using Office 365 which provides information about Office 365, OneDrive, Teams, and SharePoint Online so that staff can work effectively from any location, on multiple devices, and stay in touch with colleagues. The guide also contains useful information regarding preparations to work remotely.
- ITUSS have also been organizing regular online training sessions delivered via Microsoft Teams to assist staff with carrying out their daily tasks effectively and efficiently while telecommuting. Staff members can schedule private one-on-one training session with the team on the following: a) How to use Microsoft Teams for remote meetings, collaboration and file sharing; b) how to remotely access ECA network resources (VPN); c) how to use Skype for Business; d) chosen topics on any of the Microsoft Office Products; e) Microsoft OneDrive for online file management; f) how to use Zoom.
- HR and UNHCC have also organized an online awareness session for staff members on the psycho-social dimensions of Covid-19. This is in addition to the several online sessions that are being organized by the Staff Counsellor's Office at HQ dealing with topics such as personal preparedness and financial readiness, information sessions and health updates on Covid-19.

In line with the SG's directive on these matters, staff members are required to discharge their functions from a remote location, generally their home, as an alternate work arrangement until there is a change to this. This measure is commensurate to the extraordinary situation we face and is meant to facilitate business continuity at a time where it is essential to reduce social contact to a minimum. The S-G has also clarified that these special measures are not be confused with flexible working arrangements as regulated by ST/SGB/2019/3 and ST/IC/2019/15 and staff members are not required to fill any agreement or form. However, at the end of every week, staff members should ensure that telecommuting days are entered in Umoja.

We are also sensitive to the fact that some staff members face disruptions due to closure of schools and day care centers. That is why the organization has also relaxed the requirement regarding core working hours. The expectation is that staff members will work for the required number of hours and continue to deliver on assigned tasks. Staff members are responsible for informing their managers if they are unable to work fulltime and managers have also been advised to exercise maximum flexibility. Staff members who need to care for their children and cannot work full time may avail of

annual leave, uncertified sick leave and special leave without pay or use them in combination with remote working to reduce their working schedule.

I understand that staff members are anxious about returning back to normalcy. I also acknowledge that work from home has its own challenges. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the efforts of our staff members and the extended organisation of consultants, individual contractors and others who have risen to the challenges posed and who continue to work and support the delivery on our mandate. We shall get through this together.

Q2: In the last Q&A session, you briefly outlined the findings of the 2019 Staff Engagement Survey. As we get into the action planning phase to address some of the findings, what do you think is the way forward ES?

ES: The Staff Engagement Survey is an important barometer for the leadership to gauge the sentiments of the staff. The 2019 Staff Engagement Survey provided richer responses as a result of the larger participation rate (81% in 2019 compared to 41% in 2017) and the increased participation of female staff members (30% more women staff in 2019 as compared to 2019). I would like to present a quick summary of the way the engagement scores have moved in the last two years.

Areas for action as identified after 2017 survey	% Favourable scores		
	2017 survey	2019 survey	Variance
Continuous Improvement	52%	61%	9%
Agility	41%	41%	0%
Empowerment	47%	58%	11%
Work Life Balance	47%	50%	3%

Other dimensions that were measured:

Alignment	67%	79%	12%
Engagement	66%	65%	-1%
Gender & Diversity	70%	54%	-16%
Brand Excellence	48%	50%	2%
Business Transformation	46%	52%	6%
Growth & Development*	48%	41%	-7%
Innovation	46%	56%	10%
Performance Management	57%	62%	5%
Retention	49%	57%	8%
Ethics, Trust & Integrity	54%	56%	2%
Collaboration & Teamwork	-	66%	-
General	-	67%	-

- A new question was added under the dimension “General” in the 2019 survey. Under this dimension, staff were asked about how confident they were that the organization will take the results of this survey into account. I am happy that 67% of the participants expressed a favorable response. This is important because it tells us that our staff members do believe that actions on the ground are being initiated in response to the concerns that they raise. I wish to take this opportunity to assure everyone that we take the results of the survey seriously and that the survey will feed into concrete action plans.
- Following the 2017 survey, we introduced several actions based on the feedback from the survey. The 2017 Staff Engagement Survey Action Plan had identified 4 areas for action which had some of the lowest favourable scores. These four areas were continuous improvement, agility, work-life balance and empowerment.
- We see improvement across 3 of the 4 areas – continuous improvement, empowerment and work life balance as shown on the table above. However, we have not been able to move the needle in the “Agility” dimension. This dimension measures the UN’s ability to anticipate, respond to, and equip staff to influence change. We therefore need to reflect on whether our actions in this area were relevant and sufficient or if we need to have a new approach to make this dimension work for ECA.

- In terms of our understanding of the results, whilst we need to acknowledge the improvements, we would also need to take a nuanced view about the items that were measured under each dimension. I say this because it is easy to get carried away by improved scores. It is difficult however, to sustain the positive traction that we see in some of the dimensions unless there are sustained efforts towards a cultural change.
- It is a matter of concern to see that the percentage favourable responses for the dimension on “Gender & Diversity” showed a drop on 2019 (54%) over the 2017 responses (70%). I see the latest scores as being more representative of staff sentiment, particularly from female staff members who have participated in the 2019 survey in large numbers.
- I have presented data on the gender parity across various organisation units in ECA below. In line with the approved gender parity strategy, ECA is expected to achieve full gender parity by the end of 2023. I am however personally committed to making this happen through all possible actions ahead of time. We would particularly gear efforts towards driving parity in those units where parity levels are low (marked in red).

Disaggregated gender distribution across Divisions

Division	Prof. & above		GS & related		Total		%	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
OES	10	4	12	3	22	7	76%	24%
SPORD	5	6	6	3	11	9	55%	45%
ACS	2	19	10	8	12	27	31%	69%
RITD	6	14	11	1	17	15	53%	47%
MGD	3	9	8	3	11	12	48%	52%
GPSPD	5	9	7	3	12	12	50%	50%
PSDFD	3	7	9	1	12	8	60%	40%
TCND	2	11	8	5	10	16	38%	62%
IDEP	1	3	10	10	11	13	46%	54%
SRO-CA	1	9	3	8	4	17	19%	81%
SRO-EA	5	3	7	4	12	7	63%	37%
SRO-NA	1	5	4	6	5	11	31%	69%
SRO-SA	2	6	6	6	8	12	40%	60%
SRO-WA	2	6	5	5	7	11	39%	61%
PCKMD	7	20	37	55	44	75	37%	63%
DOA	13	13	55	75	68	88	44%	56%
OSLA	1	-	-	-	1	0	100%	0%
SSS	1	1	33	106	34	107	24%	76%
Total	70	145	231	302	301	447	40%	60%

- Whilst recruitment is an important tool for driving gender parity, it is equally important to acknowledge that an enabling environment also needs to be provided to staff members, specifically to our female staff members to support retention. I shall be discussing this are with various stakeholders in the weeks to come.

As we embark upon the action planning process based on the results of the 2019 survey, I call on your continued engagement with the process and support to implement the action plans.

Q3: ES, you had spoken about the need to progress on the performance management front. Given that we are in the midst of “alternate work arrangements” and the date for completing the e-PAS for the 2019-2020 performance cycle is fast approaching, would you like to tell us more about this?

ES: Once again, I would like to emphasize that the function of the Performance Management and Development System is to promote communication between staff members and supervisors on the goals and key results to be achieved and the success criteria by which individual performance will be assessed. The system should also promote continuous learning, recognize successful performance and address performance shortcomings. If done well, the system will significantly help improve the delivery of programmes by optimizing performance at all levels by:

- Promoting a culture of high performance, personal development and continuous learning;
- Empowering managers and holding them responsible and accountable for managing their staff;
- Encouraging a high level of staff participation in the planning, delivery and evaluation of work; and

- Recognizing successful performance and addressing underperformance in a fair and equitable manner.

Looking at the table below, I note that between the last communication in March 2020 and now, we have made progress in terms of our compliance with the requirements of the performance management and development system, though a lot more is required.

Division	End of cycle / Complete	End of cycle / In progress	Midterm / In progress	Workplan / Complete	Workplan / In progress	Not started	Grand Total
OES	2	7	2	1	6	7	25
SPORD	-	18	-	-	2	-	20
ACS	3	23	-	-	6	6	38
RITD	-	18	3	4	3	2	30
MGD	7	8	1	-	4	1	21
GPSPD	16	7	-	-	-	-	23
PSDFD	-	5	3	5	4	1	18
TCND	-	1	-	1	11	11	24
IDEP	-	1	-	-	1	2	4
SRO-CA	2	15	1	1	-	1	20
SRO-EA	-	15	1	-	-	-	16
SRO-NA	8	8	-	-	-	-	16
SRO-SA	4	13	-	-	1	-	18
SRO-WA	16	2	-	-	-	-	18
PCKMD	17	61	17	4	10	6	115
DOA	10	48	8	6	51	28	151
SSS	4	102	20	1	11	1	139
Total	89	352	56	23	110	66	696
%	12.79%	50.57%	8.05%	3.30%	15.80%	9.48%	100%

As on 11 May 2020, over:

- 9% of staff members have yet to start their e-PAS compared to 15% on 11 March 2020;
- 16% of staff members are yet to finalize their workplan compared to 18% on 11 March 2020;
- 51% of staff members are at the end-of-cycle stage compared to 46% on 11 March 2020
- 13% of staff members have completed their end-of-cycle appraisal compared to the 0.3% on 11 March 2020;

Whilst reviewing the status of completion of the e-PAS for the 2019-2020 performance cycle, it is equally important that we work towards finalizing other work plans for the 2020-2021 performance cycle. I am therefore calling on all staff members to complete e-PAS for current cycle 2019-2020 and commence discussions to finalize their work plan for next cycle 2020-2021 by **30 June 2020**.

Q4: **ES, as part of the restructuring exercise, ECA reviewed its activities under the Regular Programme for Technical cooperation (RPTC). Can you tell us more about the RPTC allocations that have been made so far and how the projects were chosen?**

ES: Given the context of the unprecedented crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic, with its potential economic and social impacts on member States, and ECA's modalities of delivery, I stressed the need to prioritize RPTC project proposals so that we make best use of available funds to respond to the needs of member states quicker. A key objective of the RPTC funds allocation is the dedication of critical financial resources to respond to ad-hoc requests related to COVID-19 and other pressing advisory services requests from member states and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs).

As of 8 April 2020, SPORD and DOA received twenty (20) proposals from ten (10) sub-programmes, requiring a total budget of US\$1,099,6001 (see the below table):

Sub-programmes (SPs)	Initial (2 April)		Proposed by SPORD (14 April)	
	No. of projects	Amount \$US	No. of projects	Amount \$US
1 PSDFD	2	124,000	2	100,000
2 GPSPD	2	157,000	2	100,000
3 TCND	1	100,000	1	100,000
4 SRO-EA	3	152,000	3	100,000
5 SRO-CA	1	100,000	1	100,000
6 SRO-NA	1	50,000	1	50,000
7 SRO-SA	1	52,000	1	52,000
8 SRO-WA	1	99,000	1	70,000
9 ACS	2	135,000	2	100,000
10 IDEP	6	130,000	4	72,000
Total	20	1,099,000	20	844,000

MGD and RITD did not submit project proposals under this review. However, both RITD and MGD will collaborate closely with other sub-programmes. For example, MGD will participate in 11 out of the 20 project proposals.

The Sub-programmes extensively improved the quality of their project proposals and all were aligned with the seven (7) SLT criteria for assessment:

- i. Inter divisional collaboration and joint delivery;
- ii. Alignment with the 2020 RPTC thematic areas;
- iii. Alignment with RPTC modalities of delivery;
- iv. Focus on impacts, specific and measurable results;
- v. Partnership with UN entities at the country level;
- vi. Demand driven-requests from MS (Counties of Focus); and
- vii. Addressing inter-related challenges for sustainable development, including the impact of COVID-19.

In addition to the SLT's criteria, Divisions had to demonstrate that approved projects would be implemented by the end of 2020.

In line with the above, a thorough review of the submissions was undertaken, including the proposed budget. This review resulted in the recommendation of 18 out of the 20 projects for approval with a total budget of \$844,000, representing a 23% reduction on the initial budget requested (see above table)². An additional amount of \$225,000, representing additional expenditure incurred for the 2020 ARFSD, was also recommended for approval.

Three (3) of the above proposals (from ACS and SRO-EA) were developed to respond to the continental needs to tackle COVID-19 impact.

Prior to this review, a total of \$360,000 was allocated to TCND (\$300,000) for the 2020 ARFSD and RITD (\$60,000) for "Support to Ethiopia's WTO accession negotiations".

Following the above allocations, a balance of US\$233,373 remains available to support member States response efforts to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as we see this unfolding, we recognize that this may still be insufficient to undertake

¹Excluding the Additional Expenditures of 2020 ARFSD- \$225,000.

² Two trainings from IDEP have been dropped- (i) the training on IFF should be implemented with MGD's ongoing DA (12nd tranche) and; (ii) the training on "Digital training on building climate resilient transport infrastructure in Africa" should be dropped as its pertinence was questionable.

the actions needed. As such, other sources of funding such as the Development Account and the Regular budget may have to be explored for the support of COVID 19 activities.

Q5: The ECA has been one of the leading institutions that is helping shape the region's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Could you tell our staff members about what the ECA has done so far in relation to Africa's response?

ES: We were quite cognizant of the potential impact of the pandemic on the continent early on in March, especially when you look at the trade and other developmental related activities between China and African countries. It was obvious that the disruption of activities in China could weigh on African economies significantly if not managed. We quickly undertook a macroeconomic impact assessment on the outbreak on African countries and brought African ministers of finance together for a coordinated approach to the response. Our analysis led to the global calls for a two-year complete debt standstill for all African countries and for \$100 billion to cover the immediate costs of a fiscal stimulus to provide social safety nets for the most vulnerable. We have seen that this has already led to results with a number of countries benefiting from debt relief packages from the international financial institutions. We have also further customized our macroeconomic model framework into an African wide model to continually assess the impact of the pandemic on African economies across sectors, especially those that are suffering significantly such as trade, tourism, services, agriculture etc. In addition to assessment on African countries we have been looking at what our development partners have been doing and their lockdown measures. The analysis was further extended to look at the COVID-19 impact on the countries revenues as the outbreak has disrupted trade related activities which are the main source of the countries' development funding.

Also, noting that many countries experienced high fiscal deficits in 2019, with some African countries having debt-to-GDP ratios of above the African average of 61 per cent, breaching the 60 per cent threshold, it was important to look at the debt sustainability risk and the fiscal policy pressures countries are being subjected to because of the outbreak. This led to the review of the various policy responses different countries have put in place to safeguard their economies.

The analysis has since informed part of the narrative in the ECA's report 'COVID-19 in Africa: Protecting lives and economies', as well as the Lockdown Exit Strategy report. We have also contributed to the UN Country Team report on the assessment of the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on Ethiopia, which has led to the identification of bankable projects in support of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

In addition to some of the knowledge products that we have generated, we have also held a number of policy dialogues, debates and webinars on this. We have led discussions on what countries need to be looking at in terms of exit strategies, what recovery plans should factor in and how we come out of this with a sustainable development approach.

Q6: ES, what are some of the most exciting initiatives we have rolled out in recent times?

ES: I am glad you asked that question. ECA has been championing some exciting initiatives in response to the evolving situation. I would like to take this opportunity to explain some of these initiatives:

• **Africa Covid-19 Communications & Information Platform (ACCIP):**

The ACCIP is a new initiative that we are preparing to launch to further support member states in their efforts towards combating the impact of the pandemic. This initiative is aimed at enhancing the capability of governments across the continent to communicate and interact with the citizenry in mitigating and managing the impacts of Covid-19. The epidemic has already demonstrated impact beyond health. The ACCIP will complement the existing work by different governments and private sector.

The platform will have three major components:

- 1) Online digital data set covering public information on health, economy, livelihood and food security.
- 2) An artificial intelligence engine that explores, identifies and displays trends, information and insights and the answers to key questions which can determine where health interventions should be made, and how economic resources should be deployed, from myriad of sources including social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp.
- 3) Provides an inbound Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) & Interactive Voice Response (IVR) communication tool (with customizable content for each country), which allows governments to conduct needs assessments (health, food, and economic) as well as measuring the efficacy of current COVID 19 communication, and population screening (through a self-screener accessible to any citizen with a mobile device, including basic device users).

The true power of the platform is its ability to integrate both online broadband and mobile narrowband information, as well as facilitate collaboration across mobile network operators to serve the people that live in the country.

To respond rapidly to gaps in the supply for critical medical resources needed to combat the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa, Afreximbank has received requests from governments to provide them with funds to buy pharma products. Countries also expressed the need to be informed of potential suppliers as supply chains from most traditional markets have been blocked. In this regard, ECA is supporting Afreximbank to develop an electronic platform for pooling supply/demand of the Covid-19 related pharmaceuticals and medical supplies such as face masks, personal protective equipment, test kits and ventilation machines. This platform will enable suppliers (top pharma manufacturers in Africa identified by Afreximbank) and buyers (African governments) to trade COVID-19 products in a more transparent, timely, reliable, and efficient manner as well as link them to both ends of the value chain i.e. to feed suppliers and feed traders or consumers (buyers).

- **Policy Exchange and Peer Learning Platform**

In parallel to the ACCIP, we are also preparing to launch a peer exchange and e4learnig platform for policy makers. As you can imagine at this point in time, policy and decision makers are inundated with addressing challenges and developing pragmatic solutions to national challenges. This is all happening in real time. As a result, now more than ever, countries and policy makers need to learn from what has worked and what has not as they strive to address similar problems in their settings. This platform is a haven to come together and exchange on solutions, best practices and challenges with the aim of strengthening collaboration and learning. This space also draws from the inputs into the ACCIP and is focused on converting the analytics towards possible lessons for policy and intervention design at member States level. This Policy Exchange and Peer Learning platform is being implemented by the ECA Digital Center for Excellence in partnership with Future States, which is a UN Foundation entity and Omidyar Network.

Q7: Since its establishment, ECA has undergone several organizational transformations to position itself to ensure that it remains relevant to the needs and aspirations of its member States. The principal objective of the most recent ECA reform was to re-orient the Commission to effectively implement its mandate, including effectively supporting the implementation of and follow-up on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063. With due consideration for the changing development landscape that warranted strategic repositioning, the reform was specifically aimed, amongst others, at enhancing programme impact and visibility; and strengthening accountability and transparency. Can you tell us what has been done so far to enhance programme impact and visibility as well as strengthening accountability and transparency across the commission?

ES: ECA has put in place various approaches to programme delivery to enhance its programme impact and visibility and to foster accountability and transparency. These approaches, among others, include:

- **Countries of Focus (CoF):**

This provides an avenue for an integrated and coherent approach that enhances programme impact, builds functional teams, improves cost and operational efficiency, and gives greater visibility and policy influence. The COF is to ensure that ECA concentrates its resources to support member-states over a period of time, and promote greater accountability of its work at the country level.

- **Accountability and Programme Performance Review Meeting (APPRM):**

ECA has established a quarterly APPRM to take stock of progress made in achieving results as well as to identify areas that need improvements. This platform affords an opportunity for ECA staff, particularly the ECA Senior Leadership Team (SLT), Chiefs of Sections and programme staff, to reflect on and assess collectively progress made and results achieved during the period under review. It also provides a platform for each subprogramme to share and discuss the opportunities and the challenges they faced while executing their workplan, as well as to draw lessons that will improve programme delivery across the Commission. The meeting allows ECA to focus on the areas that are pertinent for efficient, effective, relevant and impactful programme delivery, supported by result-based approach. These include joint delivery in ECA's Countries of Focus (CoF), contribution to SDGs, alignment to ECA's strategic directions, gender mainstreaming, ES compact, partnerships, and risks and mitigations. The APPR meeting, therefore, provides the opportunity to enhance result-based planning and reporting, facilitates experience sharing on ECA's interventions and changes brought to beneficiaries, fosters accountability, and increases ECA's relevance in the Continent.

- **Programme and Project Management Manual:**

ECA is revising its programme and project management manual (PPMM) of 2017, based on the ongoing UN reform, to realign its programme and structure to support the new vision, mission and strategic directions of the Commission. ECA

has also decentralized programme management functions to Divisions/SROs/IDEP to increase efficiency and effectiveness in programme delivery, empowering managers to determine how best to use their resources to support programme delivery, and enhancing transparency and accountability in programme planning, budgeting, monitoring, delivery, evaluating and reporting.

- **Accountability and Quality Assurance Policy:**

ECA has recently updated its quality assurance policy document to strengthen its internal accountability system in the production of its knowledge products and other major outputs of the institution. Through the quality control process of those products, there is greater transparency, inclusion, and participation of key stakeholders in the review and validation processes of those products, hence greater accountability is fostered. The process involves the establishment of review panels, and internal and external peer reviews and sometimes expert meetings to validate those knowledge products and outputs of the institution. As a knowledge policy institution, the quality of our knowledge products is very important and we ensure the highest standard of quality control and accountability in their production processes.

- **Evaluation Policy:**

The evaluation function in ECA is responsible for deepening and promoting a learning and accountability culture at the Commission in line with its corporate evaluation policy. Evaluations are conducted with the view of informing planning, programming, budgeting, implementation and reporting as well as to contribute to evidence-based decision making and organizational effectiveness. All evaluations are conducted as per the UN Evaluation group (UNEG) norms and standards to ensure an objective assessment of ECA programmes and to provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the Commission's decision-making processes. The corporate evaluation framework provides both normative and oversight support to the Commission by developing self-evaluation guidelines, methodological tools and templates to strengthen evaluative thinking and reporting on the key think tank, convening and operational functions of the Commission.

Q8: Following the adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, the UN Secretary-General put forward an ambitious package of proposals for making the organisation more responsive, effective, transparent, accountable, efficient, and decentralized to better support its normative and operational activities. In this regard, the Secretary-General instituted, amongst others, a shift from biennial to annual programme planning, budgeting and reporting. In addition, the shift narrowed significantly the scope of the strategic framework which served as the basis for programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation only to reflect priorities and longer-term objectives of the organization. What is the strategy to narrow this gap between long term organizational priorities and objectives and the annual planning and reporting process?

ES: I am glad you asked this question. At the COM 2019 meeting, member States also raised concern on the new integrated programme planning and budgeting cycle, noting that it was not ambitious enough and called for the development of a medium-term planning framework for the Commission, which would be used to inform the annual plans and budgets. The member States went further to adopt Resolution 964(LII) 2020 Programme Plan and Budget, which calls upon the *“Economic Commission for Africa to develop a medium-term programme framework covering three to five years, to facilitate the engagement of member States with the Commission; annual plans and budget will be derived from the framework and performance measured on its bases”*.

ECA's strategy to narrow this gap is to develop a tool for planning, strategy formulation and reporting that covers a medium-term framework, built on the previous strategic framework with additional components that are aligned with result-based management approach and principles and responsive to calls being made for transformative organizational change in the context of the UN reforms. This Medium Term Programme Framework (MTPF) covers the period 2021-2024 and is aligned with ECA's new vision and strategic directions. The formulation exercise has considered the unfolding review of UN regional structures and assets which is likely to shape the role, functions, coordination and collaborative mechanisms of UN regional entities. The MTPF will be finalized this year and expected to be an integrated programme, results, budgetary and management framework, which enhance efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, and transparency, and will serve as ECA's key strategic and planning document. The Framework will also serve as a reference to guide development of annual operational plans, strategic communication and partnership and resource mobilization efforts.