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It is with great pleasure that we publish this third issue of KAKAKI NEWS, the Newsletter of the Sub-Regional Office for West Africa of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).

This edition is published against the backdrop of the economic crisis brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has severely affected the growth prospects of developing countries, particularly in Africa. Africa’s economic growth has declined by 1.4% compared to an average annual growth rate of 5% over the past decade. The continent’s financial deficit, according to the African Development Bank (AfDB), remained above pre-pandemic levels, with 5.1% of GDP in 2021 compared to 4.3% in 2019.

It is in this context that the Ukrainian crisis has intervened, exacerbating food and energy insecurity in Africa.

However, every crisis brings opportunities. Endowed with significant natural resources, West African countries are committed to accelerating the diversification and transformation of their economies, which is the sine qua non for their inclusive and sustainable development. The adoption of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) provides countries with a normative, strategic framework for accelerating such a transformational process.

To accompany such a dynamic, our Office has supported the formulation and ongoing implementation of national AfCFTA strategies. In this same perspective, the West African Business Linkage Platform was created and is operational in order to establish effective partnership relations between women and young entrepreneurs on the one hand, and to connect them with business champions on the other hand.

Accelerating the capture of the demographic dividend is also an important imperative given the demographic profile of West Africa, whose population is estimated at 411 million (of this total, more than 50% are women and more than 64% of this population is under the age of 24).

Consequently, supporting our countries to invest in the dimensions of the demographic dividend, namely governance, productive youth employment, health and education, has been one of the priority interventions of our Office.

To this end, in synergistic partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Generation- al Economies Research Consortium (GERC), our Office has supported the implementation of the regional Demographic Dividend Responsive Budgeting (DDRB) program for the integration of the SD dimensions into sectoral policies and budgets.

A year marked by challenges but also opportunities, which the ECA Sub-Regional Office for West Africa is committed to maximizing in order to best serve our member States.

As the Dalai Lama said it, “Determination and hope are the key factors for a better future”. Enjoy your reading!

Ngoné Diop
Directrice, BSR-AO/CEA
Harnessing the Demographic Dividend

Through ECA’s Sub-Regional Office for West Africa, countries of the Sub-Region engaged in evidence-based policy and programmes towards achieving demographic dividend.
Under the theme “Bridging the Research-Policy Gap to Accelerate the Demographic Dividend in West Africa,” the meeting aims to accelerate progress toward the demographic dividend by stimulating policy-oriented research and translation to strengthen evidence-based policy and planning processes in the West African sub-region.
The Sub-regional Office for West Africa of ECA, in partnership with the Government of Côte d’Ivoire, through the National Population Office (ONP), organized from 21 to 25 February 2022 in Grand Bassam a regional workshop on the transformation of the traditional budget into a functional budget for a demographic dividend sensitive budgeting (DDSB) in six ECOWAS countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Niger, Senegal, Togo).

This meeting aimed at transforming the traditional budget of Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Niger, Senegal and Togo into a functional budget.

This instrument, if aligned with the pillars of the Demographic Dividend, namely employment and entrepreneurship; education and skills development; health and welfare; and governance and youth empowerment, could accelerate the achievement of the conditions for sustainable and inclusive growth.

said the Head of the Centre of Demographic Dynamics for Development at the ECA’s Sub-Regional Office for West Africa, Bakary Dosso.
Implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

To date, 13 of the 15 ECOWAS countries having ratified the agreement and 11 having developed national FTAA strategies, West Africa is well on its way to implementing this instrument of regional and African integration and sustainable development.

ECA’s West Africa Sub-Regional Office strengthens national AfCFTA implementation strategies in the subregion by:

A. engaging with key stakeholders on the FTAA: ministries in charge of trade, industry, private sector, trade facilitation committees, customs

B. Providing technical support for the formulation and validation of national FTAA strategies in 10 countries: Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo have validated their national FTAA strategies and 8 are in the process of implementing them.

C. Developing trade facilitation tools (trade portal, impact assessment studies, sector strategies, etc.)

In addition, the ECA Sub-Regional Office for West Africa is implementing a joint project with the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation and the Enhanced Integrated Framework on FTAA implementation in Niger, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Guinea and Togo.
Fostering regional Integration

ECA Sub-Regional Office for West Africa engages with countries to support the integration of the ECOWAS Vision 2050 pillars into the formulation and implementation of national development plans
The Government of Niger, through the ECOWAS National Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), organized from September 6 to 7, 2022 a training of trainers workshop on the ECOWAS Vision 2050.

The objective of this meeting was to contribute to a better implementation of the new ECOWAS Agenda 2050 in Niger.
As part of the African Union Summit on Industrialization and Economic Diversification being held November 20-25 in Niamey, Niger, a side event on inclusive and sustainable industrialization as a driver of resilience and stability for the Sahel was organized on November 22 by the Government of Niger, the African Union, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) Subregional Office for West Africa, the Office of the Special Coordinator for Sahel Development, and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

The objectives of this side event are essentially to present a new narrative for the Sahel based on the opportunities for youth and women offered by industrialization and economic diversification, to sensitize private and public sector participants on the potential of agribusiness activities in various value chains to further support resilience in the Sahel through growth and job creation, to create a better understanding by participants of the strategic investments needed to support agribusiness in the Sahel, and to present Niger’s industrial priorities and best practices.

“The time for speeches and strategy design is over. Niamey Summit must be a time for action to change the narrative of the Sahel”, Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, Special Coordinator for the Development of the Sahel
The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in partnership with the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS), the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), and the Senegalese Ministry of Economy, Plan and Cooperation, launched in June 2022 the annual forum of intergovernmental organizations from West Africa, to examine and address the impact of emerging risks and challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and the unfolding crisis in Ukraine.

During the two-day forum in Dakar held on 21 and 22 June 2022, participants addressed sustainable development issues, identified, and discussed policy directions and actions needed to strengthen the resilience and recovery of West African economies. They also laid the groundwork for policy responses to emerging development challenges in West Africa, including growing levels of food insecurity, the climate challenge, extreme violence, and the breakdown of social cohesion.
The States of the subregion are setting out on the path of structural transformation of their economies thanks to technical assistance from the ECA’s Subregional Office for West Africa in formulating policies, strategies and national development plans.

It is within this framework that the ECA, through its Sub-Regional Office for West Africa, supported the organization of the investors’ round table for the financing of Niger’s Economic and Social Development Program (ESDP 2022-2026), which was held from 5 to 6 December in Paris.

The ECA organized a “stimulating” ministerial discussion on the need for value chain development and increased investment in the energy, agriculture, livestock and mining sectors to enable Niger to take full advantage of the AfCFTA.
The Sub-Regional Office for West Africa (SRO-WA/ECA), held 19 April, virtually, a high-level dialogue with key partners on financing issues for countries in the sub-region.

The meeting is part of a series of dialogues initiated by the SRO-WA/CEA as a prelude to the Fifty-fourth Session of the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (CoM2022), scheduled for March 2022 under the theme:

"Financing Africa’s recovery: breaking new ground."

The objective of this high-level dialogue was to stimulate reflections on the theme of CoM 2022 “Financing Africa’s recovery: breaking new ground”, focusing on the specific financing needs of West African countries, and innovative strategies to the latter.

It was held in the presence of the Under-Secretary General of the United Nations and Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel, Mr. Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, the Deputy Executive Secretary of the ECA, the Director of the SRO-WA/ECA, Mrs. Ngone Diop, the ECOWAS Resident Representative in Niger, Mrs. Liliane Alapini, the Director General of the African Solidarity Fund, Mr. Ahmadou Abdoulaye Diallo, the Director General of Planning at the Ministry of Economy, Planning and International Cooperation of Senegal, Mr. Mouhamadou Bamba Diop, Mrs. Reine Mbang Essobmadje, Co-founder of the Digital Coalition, CEO of Evolving Consulting and Vice-President of GICAM and Mrs. Hana Weters of the International Centre for Private Enterprise (CIPE). The meeting was also attended by approximately 200 representatives of the United Nations System in West Africa, the Private Sector, the Civil Society, Academia, the Media and the members of the ECA Young Economist Network.

This panel session, which was held in the margins of the Fifty-fourth session of the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, aimed to highlight innovative solutions for resilient recovery and mechanisms for better access to financing while promoting the gender and youth inclusion.

“The West Africa Business Linkage Platform launched in September 2021 by the ECA en Afrique will give MSMEs access to a wide range of resources including markets, trainings, jobs, among others”, said Madam Ngoné Diop, Director of the Sub-regional Office for West Africa.
The Director of the Sub-regional Office for West Africa of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (SRO-WA/ECA), chaired on Tuesday a press briefing on Youth and Women’s empowerment led by her Office.

Ngone Diop:

“Political access to young people and women is fundamental to accelerating the development of the continent. Member States have ratified regional and global frameworks when it comes to ensuring gender equality and youth participation.”
Joint Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North and West Africa: Delegates, senior representatives and experts from the Regional Economic Communities of the two subregions discuss and propose short- and medium-term responses to food and energy security problems in North and West Africa

The Sub-Regional Offices for North and West Africa of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Government of Morocco launched on Tuesday 1st November, in Marrakech, Morocco, in hybrid format, a joint Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North and West Africa on the theme “Food and energy security in North and West Africa amid multiple crises”. This joint Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts is held in a context where efforts made by North and West African countries to build back their economies affected by the COVID-19 pandemic are hampered by elevated and volatile food and energy prices as a result of Ukraine-Russia war.
Photos album of the joint Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for North and West Africa
Hosting an Economic Newspaper in Togo called “Economy and Development” and being part of a Network of Economic Journalists for West Africa set up by the Sub-Regional Office for West Africa of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (BSR-AO/CEA), is extraordinary and honorable! Since 2017, when I connected to this library of economic information, the research and knowledge received have profoundly transformed the perception of the economic and development news of the sub-region. Economic information that is difficult to access in the country is freely available in the various BSR-AO/CEA publications. I must confess that the language used to write economic articles whets the appetite in view of the availability of various reliable statistical data on economic and social development issues of interest to the subregion. The main findings and recommendations from the surveys published on the ECA website, press releases, and advocacy actions relayed in the newspaper’s columns create strong confidence and credibility with national and international partners. This enabled our media in 2019, to be classified among the best newspapers of the year as well as the participation in various economic forums organized by the Government and its partners. In addition, the various capacity building seminars notably on AfCFTA, digital revolution, civil acts registration, women’s empowerment, post covid-19 revival and the media coverage of major ECA events in West Africa have been such a support to our media on public policy issues during economic debates on radio and TV. Furthermore, the ECA Media Platform maintains the fellowship and exchange of information among journalists from the 15 member states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Thank you BSR-AO/CEA for putting in place this network!!!