QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY

Standards and Quality Assurance Section
Strategic Planning, Oversight and Results Division

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The present document outlines the quality assurance management system and approach at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), including policies, standards, tools and guidelines, and also organizational arrangements. It serves as an update of the ECA operational quality policy and plan for the period 2014–2017 (December 2014), building on the gains from the implementation of that plan and using lessons learned from that experience to introduce the required changes for a more systematic and improved quality management system and approach at ECA. The policy document is informed by the recently completed reform process at ECA and the ongoing United Nations global reform efforts of the Secretary-General.

The purpose of the present document is to define the means by which ECA will verify that its knowledge products and services are sound, relevant, well-tailored, timely, accessible and influential in order to ensure that they are indeed fit-for-purpose and of high quality. It also takes into account the extent to which ECA products and services comply with legislative mandates and with United Nations policies and procedures. In that context, the document describes the coordinated activities that are required to direct and control the quality of the Commission’s work. More specifically, the document covers the quality of major ECA publications, corporate events, strategic planning instruments and other elements, and focuses on programmed deliverables identified in the ECA annual programme plan and annual business plan, whether funded from the regular budget, the regular programme for technical cooperation, the development accounts or through extrabudgetary contributions from the multi-partner trust fund.

The document is divided into three sections. The first section, the introduction, explains the purpose of the policy document, provides the background to it and recalls lessons learned from previous years. Section 2 describes the ECA quality management system, including its operational definitions, the tenets of the quality assurance policy, and the ECA quality management approach. Section 3 outlines the organizational arrangements and resources that are required to manage and control quality at ECA.

1.2 Background

Over the course of 2017, the United Nations embarked on a profound reform process, outlined in the Secretary-General’s report of July 2017, on repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: ensuring a better future for all (A/72/124–E/2018/3), and his follow-up report of December 2017 (A/72/684). As stated by the Secretary-General in the first of those reports, the reform was designed to set up “a United Nations development system that is fit for purpose for the 2030 Agenda. The reforms seek to address gaps and overlaps in the functions and capacities of the system as it works more efficiently and collectively towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals”. The report further addresses issues of accountability, transparency and stronger oversight and urges greater coherence at all levels, in particular through a reinvigorated resident coordinator system. To this end,
the report recognizes three key functional roles for the regional economic commissions and the pertinence of their substantive support for the United Nations country teams and the Resident Coordinator offices.

Moreover, in that first report, the Secretary-General recognizes that the regional economic commissions are essential components of the policy backbone of the United Nations development system and that they play a primary role as policy think tanks, providing data and analytical services and policy advice to address regional issues, and supporting the development of a wide range of regional rules, standards and conventions. They serve as platforms for engagement with regional intergovernmental institutions, for exchanges within and between regions, extending and expanding new forms of development cooperation and regional partnerships. The report suggests that regional economic commissions should be empowered as the lead voice of the United Nations development system on policy-making and research and the production of knowledge projects at the regional level that nurture integration and balanced progress in sustainable development.

During the early part of 2018, ECA launched its restructuring process, which was essentially framed around the vision of delivering on “Ideas for a prosperous Africa”. The reforms were driven by the need to increase the Commission's influence on the African transformational agenda with a strategic delivery model aimed at, first, aligning ECA activities with the changing demands and priorities of member States in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union; second, bridging the development gap by strengthening and building new network alliances and by working in a comprehensive and collaborative manner; and, third, strengthening traditional partnerships and developing new strategic partnerships within the continent and globally within global policy engagements.

In line with the Secretary-General’s reform agenda and vision, ECA has reorganized its programmatic areas of work with new enhancements around five strategic directions, designed to reaffirm its role as a force of integration at the regional, subregional and country levels for the implementation of both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and to provide innovative platforms for the development of ideas and results. The new strategic directions followed by ECA may be summarized as follows: first, to build the analytical capabilities of ECA as a premier knowledge institution for the generation of knowledge and applied policy to meet the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063; second, to formulate macroeconomic and structural policy options for the transformation of Africa; third, to design innovative financing models for the development of human, physical and social infrastructure assets; fourth, to integrate regional and subregional transboundary initiatives to advance regional integration; and, fifth, to advocate a common position for Africa at the global level and to develop regional responses as a contribution to global governance issues.

Given the ongoing operationalization of the reform process at ECA and the new key roles assigned to the regional economic commissions, it will be important for ECA to ensure that its knowledge products and services are relevant, timely, impactful and of high quality by strengthening its standards and quality assurance procedures under the
purview of the ECA Standards and Quality Assurance Section, formerly known as the Operational Quality Section.

The planning, coordination and promotion of all ECA quality assurance activities will be spearheaded by the Standards and Quality Assurance Section of the ECA Strategic Planning, Oversight and Results Division. To this end, the Strategic Planning, Oversight and Results Division will work in close collaboration with other divisions, the subregional offices and the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) in achieving its objectives.

Taking into account the new institutional architecture and the focus on development activities, in its global reform process the United Nations has attributed three core functions to the regional economic commissions: their think-tank function, their convening function and their operational function. The present document calls for a mandatory quality assurance review process that is more systematic and simplified, and yet more rigorous, to be followed throughout the preparation and delivery of the ECA knowledge products and services identified against each of the aforementioned core functions:

- **Think-tank function** – to generate knowledge and applied policy research, organize expert reviews on the analytical work of ECA and other stakeholders, and facilitate the implementation of policy recommendations. In delivering policy options and knowledge, ECA will leverage African potential and strengthen relevant regional and country set-ups, other think tanks and universities as knowledge providers and capacity development agents for the continent. In terms of quality assurance review processes, special attention will be paid to all ECA knowledge generation products, in particular the ECA flagship publications and a selected number of special thematic, headline and geographic publications;

- **Convening function** – to provide regional intergovernmental platforms to discuss transboundary regional and subregional issues and matters of common concern and to provide a platform for ECA policy organs. The quality assurance review process will focus here on all ECA corporate events, such as meetings of the ECA policymaking organs, subregional intergovernmental committee meetings, United Nations regional coordination meetings and African and other regional forums;

- **Operational function** – to implement innovative solutions, provide policy advice to countries, support the implementation of innovative solutions for development, implement capacity development at regional, subregional and country levels in coordination with the Resident Coordinator system, and provide training and policy support through IDEP. The quality assurance review process will cover the delivery of all ECA capacity development activities, including technical advisory services, technical cooperation, training programmes and policy dialogue programmes and activities.

While the central importance of quality has long been implicit in the work of ECA, it is explicit in the present policy document as an integral part of ECA quality delivery processes and articulated in terms of the level of adherence to quality planning (criteria, method and responsibilities); quality control (operational techniques and activities used);
and quality assurance (adequacy of the nature of the product or service measured against preset standards). In order to fully apprehend the impact of the ongoing reforms on the service delivery model of ECA, a focus on the quality of the review process is as important as a focus on outcomes.

1.3 Insights from the past

Assuring the quality of ECA products and services over the period from 2014 to 2017 brought valuable lessons which were taken into account in updating the current policy document with a view to developing a more refined policy that is more in tune with the current opportunities and challenges presented by the new ECA strategic direction and the ongoing reform of the United Nations development system.

1.3.1 Continued refinement of quality assurance methods and tools in line with quality objectives

After four years of introducing a quality assurance policy at ECA, panel members and other key stakeholders involved in the quality control of ECA products and services provided useful feedback on the methods and tools applied. For instance, they highlighted that the relevance and validity of each of the quality objectives differed across corporate deliverables in accordance with their varying nature, uses and impact. The application of these quality objectives and their assessment criteria, along with their interpretation, differed among panel members and between panels. They also noted that the process was sometimes cumbersome and overlong. With the aim of achieving a friendlier and adaptable quality assurance policy for ECA that was usable across the organization, the quality objectives, methods and tools to be applied were reviewed, simplified and adapted to the needs and priorities of the secretariat.

1.3.2 Working towards improving the overall understanding and application of quality assurance procedures

Without processes, positive results can neither be consistently achieved nor successfully sustained. Due attention to processes has positive effects on programme management, including fostering the accountability and transparency of an institution. It is therefore important for ECA to strengthen its internal accountability system in order to ensure that it delivers on the mandates entrusted to it and subsequent results. There is an overall perception, however, that processes can be unwieldy, unnecessary and may delay the submission of deliverables. This was illustrated by the low level of attendance by selected members in the work of the quality review panels and the generally limited communication between the Strategic Planning, Oversight and Results Division and ECA staff at large.

For high quality results, the culture of processes must be embedded across the work of ECA, and all staff must own and have a strong commitment to the quality assurance process. This goal has been pursued through training measures and the issuance of certificates on project management methodology, following the PRINCE2 project management method and practitioner certification programme, one-on-one sessions with draft teams, and by boosting staff ownership of results by acknowledging
the contributions of panel members to ECA major publications and to the planning and servicing of key meetings and events.

1.3.3 Conducting rigorous quality reviews for all major ECA products and services

The ECA operational quality policy and plan for the period 2014–2017 provided a framework to guide the planning, deployment, monitoring and evaluation of quality assurance activities in the Commission. The framework specified the use of quality assurance panels in reviewing major knowledge products and services. Such panels were only created, however, to assure the quality of a few ECA deliverables, such as the *Economic Report on Africa*, the ECA country profile series, and the ECA strategic framework and annual business plan.

It was observed that products that had been reviewed by ECA panels showed evidence of having gone through a more rigorous process than those that did not. As a result, the current policy aims to strengthen the quality assurance function by extending recourse to quality assurance panels in the reviews of all major ECA products and services.

1.3.4 Going beyond intermediate results to measure the quality of ECA end products and services

ECA seeks to deliver products and services that generate and enhance high-level public policy debates, promote evidence-based decision-making and influence policy change aimed at making tangible and sustained improvements in people’s lives. Over the past four years, the Strategic Planning, Oversight and Results Division has aimed at ensuring the highest standards of ECA products and services through the development and operationalization of various tools and mechanisms. To date, attention has been given to the extent to which the delivery of the Commission’s products includes a comprehensive review of relevant literature, the application of sound analytical methods and the use of high-quality data sets.

While the tools and mechanisms created have contributed to the more efficient management of quality assurance procedures, the extent to which the quality of ECA products has improved is yet to be assessed. The new policy provides a window of opportunity to strengthen the ECA quality review processes and to explore mechanisms that may better measure the quality of its products and services. It is important that the Strategic Planning, Oversight and Results Division move beyond being a mere intermediary in the review process to being recognized as the key structure in driving the quality assurance management system across the board. This is based on the premise that the Division develops the necessary quality assurance tools and clear indicators to measure the extent to which ECA products have been improving over time. This could lead to a better understanding of processes; closer alignment with global frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals; greater opportunities to inform decision-making; and the ability to target future actions and plans more effectively. This, in turn, will result in the higher quality of products and more effective outcomes.
1.3.5 Overlapping structures within the organization that divert attention from quality assurance procedures and should be streamlined

The establishment of quality assurance panels marks a significant milestone in building and sustaining a culture of quality at ECA and in entrenching results-based management in the Commission. The panels are constituted and convened for major products and services with a view to spreading accountability for quality across ECA and maintaining independence in quality reviews while contributing new insights into the product or service at hand. Their major function is to cultivate the organizational culture of systematization, coherence and consistency throughout the life cycle of an output. In some cases, however, these panels exist in tandem with other structures, such as committees that seem to operate a parallel quality assurance function. This duplication of effort, if not adequately addressed and streamlined, is likely to jeopardize any attempt to establish a consistent system for quality assurance.

Overall, the existence of parallel quality assurance functions or panels may result in different understandings of quality assurance, hence the importance of their merger and alignment in line with approved policies and procedures. This process of alignment and merging has been addressed in the present policy document.

2. ECA quality management system

This section presents the ECA quality management system, including its quality policy and approach to assuring quality. The system draws from the existing body of knowledge on quality management, including that of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and, in particular, the PRINCE2 project management method. In addition to the ISO 9000 international standard, which is the reference par excellence for developing quality assurance practices and mapping the processes used to implement quality assurance, the ECA quality management system has also adopted the PRINCE2 methodology, principally because the PRINCE2 methodology embodies established and proven best practices. It is widely recognized and understood, and therefore provides a common vocabulary for all involved. PRINCE2 is also a flexible framework that can readily be tailored to any type or size of project and that provides explicit recognition of project responsibilities so that all parties understand their roles and responsibilities. It further promotes learning and continual improvements. The choice of PRINCE2 is also justified by the fact that most of the focal points in the ECA divisions and subregional offices and in IDEP have been trained and have obtained certification in the methodology. This will be strongly conducive to enhancing effective communication and understanding for operationalizing quality management systems across ECA.

2.1 Definitions

More broadly defined, quality assurance may be described as a means of establishing, maintaining and recording the consistency of predetermined standards in terms of the products and processes of an organization. Although the notions of “quality assurance”, “quality control” and “quality support” are interconnected, they are still different, yet they are often used interchangeably. The definitions applied in this policy document conform
to the specific terminology from PRINCE2, derived from the ISO 9000 standards, which clearly establishes the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Adopted definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>The degree to which a set of characteristics of a product, service, process, person, organization, system or resource fulfils requirements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality assurance</td>
<td>An independent (i.e. independent of the project team) check that products will be fit for purpose or meet requirements.</td>
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<td>Quality control</td>
<td>The process of monitoring specific product results to determine whether they comply with relevant standards and of identifying ways to eliminate causes of unsatisfactory performance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality criteria</td>
<td>A description of the quality specification that the product must meet, and the quality measurements that will be applied by those inspecting the finished product.</td>
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<td>Quality management</td>
<td>The coordinated activities to direct and control an organization with regard to quality.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>An established method of accomplishing a consistent performance or result; a procedure may typically be described as the sequence of steps that will be used to execute a process.</td>
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2.2 ECA quality assurance policy

As a United Nations regional commission, ECA plays a key role in supporting the implementation in Africa of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Agenda 2063 of the African Union, by leveraging its three core functions, as set out in section 1.2 above.

Since 2013, the strengthening of quality assurance processes established in 2009 has been a key component of the ECA business model. In 2018, reforms to the 60-year old institution reiterated the function of ECA as a think tank to support Africa’s growth and prosperity aspirations.

ECA strives for excellence, and as such, every final product or service intended for public release should pass through rigorous quality review processes. To that end, six quality principles and five quality objectives have been designed to strengthen the role of ECA on the African continent and, in general, at the global level.

2.2.1 Quality principles

The six quality principles are the foundation for ECA interactions, both internally and with its clients. They are:

**Principle 1 - Focus on beneficiaries**: ECA exists to serve its end users, and should therefore understand their needs, meet their requirements and strive to exceed their expectations.

**Principle 2 - Staff engagement**: The provision of quality products and services is the responsibility of every member of staff. Their full involvement is therefore necessary for ECA to achieve its objectives.
Principle 3 – System approach to management: ECA is a system of interrelated and interconnected processes. To achieve its objectives efficiently and effectively, these processes should be managed as a system and in a consistent manner aimed at preventing quality problems.

Principle 4 – Evidence-based decision-making: Effective decisions are based on the analysis of data and information, including feedback from beneficiaries.

Principle 5 – Continual organizational learning: ECA should strive to continually improve its overall performance by harnessing the collective knowledge and skills of its staff, clients, and partners.

Principle 6 – Recognition: ECA should celebrate success by publicly recognizing exceptional performers in advancing innovative programme delivery in the secretariat.

2.2.2 Quality objectives

Quality objectives are the basis for measuring the quality of ECA products and services. The quality of ECA products and services will be assessed by measuring the extent to which they comply with these objectives in line with the new ECA mission of delivering ideas and actions for a transformed Africa. Based on the Commission's new mandates and priorities, five quality objectives and their respective attributes (or performance indicators) have been identified to ensure highest standards of its delivery and outputs. These quality objectives, emanating from the six principles outlined above and the ECA mandate, will be applied to the Commission's three core functions in line with: first, its five strategic directions; second, the level of innovative thinking introduced in developing the knowledge product; third, its contribution to agenda setting; fourth, support for continental global and regional development agendas; and, fifth, the credibility of supporting data and information.

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<th>Quality objective 1</th>
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<td>Alignment of the five strategic directions of ECA</td>
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ECA products must be aligned with its stated mission of “Delivering ideas and actions for an empowered, inclusive and transformed Africa” and its associated five strategic directions, as spelled out in section 1 above.

Quality reviews of ECA products and services under this policy objective will be undertaken to ensure that they all have the attributes listed below.

Attributes for quality objective 1

Evidence must be provided that the product under review:

1.1 Leverages the analytical assets of ECA and demonstrates its capabilities to generate knowledge and applied policy with the aim of implementing the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;
1.2 Contributes to the formulation of macroeconomic and structural policy options to accelerate economic diversification and job creation for Africa’s transformation;

1.3 Promotes innovative financing models for the development of human, physical and social infrastructure assets;

1.4 Supports ideas and actions to foster deeper regional integration and the development of regional public goods, with a focus on peace, security and social inclusion;

1.5 Advocates a common African position at the global level and develop regional responses as a contribution to global governance issues.

**Quality objective 2**

**Innovative thinking**

Beyond strengthening its core functions as a policy development and research institution, it is important that ECA continue to work towards bringing forward innovative thinking in response to current continental challenges and assert its position as a genuinely influential organization. In this context, the commitment by ECA to play its role as a think tank of reference on African development policy issues includes its willingness to experiment with new methodologies, bring non-traditional partners to the table and to work together with these partners to provide paradigm-shifting contributions to advance knowledge and development.

To this end, rather than replicating proven practices and conventional narratives, ECA should continue to provide new development insights in a timely and useful manner. These efforts should also contribute to building the traction of innovative measures and foster an enabling environment in which governments, entrepreneurs, think tanks and universities can scale up innovation on the continent.

Quality reviews of ECA products and services under this policy objective will be undertaken to ensure that they all have the attributes listed below.

**Attributes for quality objective 2**

Evidence must be provided that the product under review:

2.1 Applies cutting-edge concepts and methodologies;

2.2 Provides timely development insights;

2.3 Addresses emerging issues and provides fresh policy or paradigm-shifting approaches to advance knowledge.
ECA contributions should be strategic in nature and aimed at effectively influencing development outcomes that make a difference on the continent. They should shape the debate in Africa and beyond, inform policy and strengthen the continent's influence in global issues and multilateral discussions, bringing attention to African priorities and issues. This will be more effectively achieved through strong partnerships and new alliances with like-minded organizations.

ECA is well positioned to apply a cutting-edge understanding of African development policy issues and its contributions should make a difference in the transformation of Africa. This transformation should entail finding solutions to regional and transboundary challenges, bearing in mind that social inclusion and peace and security constitute important components of the development nexus. Lastly, ECA work should also contribute to strengthening the position of Africa in global governance issues.

Quality reviews of ECA products and services under this policy objective will be undertaken to ensure that they all have the attributes listed below.

**Attributes for quality objective 3**

Evidence must be provided that the product under review:

3.1 Provides clear justification for its delivery with a well formulated problem and business case;

3.2 Shows potential to influence the priorities and programmes of key partners working on African development;

3.3 Adequately addresses the transformation agenda of Africa.

Sustainable development solutions consistent with the United Nations development system, global framework and continental partners

The quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system calls upon entities of the United Nations development system to mainstream the Sustainable Development Goals in their strategic planning documents and their work at all levels. This is premised on the realization that the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development and should therefore continue to be the highest priority of the United Nations development system. The review stresses the importance of ensuring coherent

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1 General Assembly resolution 71/243.
and coordinated support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other internationally agreed development goals by the United Nations development system.

Quality reviews of ECA products and services under this policy objective will be undertaken to ensure that they all have the attributes set out below.

**Attributes for quality objective 4**

Evidence must be provided that the product under review:

4.1. Engages the United Nations development system in its delivery model;
4.2. Supports and strengthens the normative and policy capabilities of United Nations country teams and the United Nations Resident Coordinator system;
4.3. Responds to the challenges of achieving the 2030 Agenda and other global development frameworks, including Agenda 2063;
4.4. Contributes to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women.

**Quality objective 5

Credibility**

Transparency, accountability, respect and responsibility across all streams of work at ECA constitute the basis for building a strong Commission. This includes rolling out policy options that are based on clear evidence through calibrated research, sound statistics and frank feedback from key stakeholders, where methodological constraints and limitations are clearly emphasized. To that end, the development of all ECA key products should include consultations with key stakeholders – including concerned member States, civil society and universities – in their drafting, and careful peer reviews in the final steps. Transparency and accountability are essential for building trust and credibility.

ECA applies an integrated approach to its development interventions, bringing together strands of work in each of its subprogrammes and priority areas. The aim is to ensure that the Commission’s work is comprehensive rather than piecemeal. It is clear that operationalization of the new ECA approach to programme delivery in countries of focus will go a long way towards improving programmatic interlinkages, coordination and joint delivery of ECA interventions in member States and in contributing to achieving greater visibility, building trust and ensuring credibility.

Quality reviews of ECA products and services under this policy objective will be undertaken to ensure that they all have the attributes set out below.
Attributes for quality objective 5

Evidence must be provided that the product under review:

5.1. Demonstrates objectivity, independence and balance, with full disclosure of data sources and limitations;

5.2. Uses ECA standard operating procedures and international standards, together with state-of-the-art data sources and disaggregated data;

5.3. Reflects any mutual accountability attempts undertaken, including joint reviews and consultations with key stakeholders;

5.4. Involves relevant ECA divisions and subregional offices and IDEP, including in the delivery model and dissemination campaign;

5.5. Makes extensive use of existing ECA knowledge (for example, through the citation of ECA sources in reports).

2.3 Policy objectives: expected results of the ECA quality assurance function

The overall policy objective is to implement a quality assurance system that supports ECA goals under the Commission's three functions: its think-tank, convening and operational functions, by producing high quality products and services that are relevant to the needs and expectations of end users and contribute to advancing the African development agenda. In this regard, four key results will be pursued in operationalizing the quality assurance function at ECA. These are described below.

2.3.1 Enhanced corporate culture of quality in ECA

The delivery of products and services of excellence and the commitment to quality assurance can only be guaranteed if the ECA quality assurance function is fully owned and practised across the secretariat. To that end, responsibility for quality assurance should not be seen as a stand-alone activity or restricted to staff at the Standards and Quality Assurance Section of the Strategic Planning, Oversight and Results Division, but a responsibility of all ECA staff.

A concerted effort should therefore be made to develop a corporate culture of quality at ECA. This would entail:

a. Increased participation by ECA senior leadership in quality assurance activities and public demonstration of their commitment to quality assurance;

b. Training to improve the understanding by ECA staff of the principles of quality assurance and its role in programme and project management;

c. Introduction of incentives for panel members of quality reviews, such as formally recognition of their contributions to ECA knowledge products and services;
d. Development of tools to improve effective communication on quality control processes and outcomes.

2.3.2 Upholding the quality of ECA products and services in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063

In the light of the drive by ECA to advance its position as a premier knowledge institution and to move towards attainment of the Commission’s five strategic directions, it is crucial that ECA products and services should be fit for purpose and at the highest standard. To that end, ECA outputs must observe the quality objectives outlined in section 2.2.2 and comply with this quality assurance policy as a whole.

ECA knowledge delivery activities should be well attuned to global and regional frameworks, in particular the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, and highly sensitive to the context and needs of the region.

The quality of its products should be upheld through:

a. The establishment of minimum standards and quality objectives for publications, and also for other products and services;

b. The planning, coordination and implementation of, and reporting on, quality assurance activities, processes and systems;

c. The provision of advice and feedback to staff and managers on quality assurance issues;

d. Compliance with United Nations-wide initiatives, United Nations rules and regulations and ECA policies and procedures;

e. The development of mechanisms to ensure uptake of feedback and lessons learned from review processes;

f. The development of indicators to track improvement of the quality of products over time.

2.3.3 Compliance with the mandates of the Economic and Social Council and United Nations-wide initiatives on gender mainstreaming

In line with the Compact between the ECA Executive Secretary and the Secretary-General, there is a need to ensure compliance with the mandates of the Economic and Social Council and United Nations-wide initiatives on gender mainstreaming. This entails:

a. Monitoring compliance with gender mainstreaming mandates based on the gender marker parity guidelines and procedures;

b. Monitoring the implementation and dissemination of gender marker reporting;

c. Attending global meetings under the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women to report on the ECA gender parity marker system and its results, with a view to exchanging knowledge and best practices in that area.
2.3.4 Compliance with the mandates of the Economic and Social Council and United Nations-wide initiatives on carbon footprint

In line with the compact between the Executive Secretary and the Secretary-General, there is also a need to ensure compliance with the mandates of the Economic and Social Council and United Nations-wide initiatives on carbon footprint. This entails:

a. Ensuring compliance with the ECA carbon footprint criteria throughout the programming cycle, based on the guidelines developed;

b. Compiling lessons learned for the exchange of knowledge and best practices;

c. Reporting on progress.

2.4 Quality management approach

2.4.1 Basis for the approach

The ECA quality management approach follows PRINCE2 methodology by tailoring it to ECA specificities and builds on existing practices in ECA and also on lessons learned from the implementation of the operational quality policy and plan for the period 2014–2017. In addition, the approach is in line with the provisions of the ECA programme management framework as they relate in particular to programme and project appraisal and approval process.

The ECA quality assurance system follows a dual approach whereby continuous internal and periodic external assessments of all products and services are administered.

Track 1: This track concerns systematic self-assessments by ECA divisions, subregional offices and IDEP based on the ECA quality objectives outlined in section 2.2.1 above, with an associated quality plan to be monitored over the life cycle of the products and services. When a product or service is being planned, developed and delivered, the ECA divisions, subregional offices and IDEP self-assess the extent to which the quality goals set out in the plan have been achieved, and report on any quality assurance challenges faced and lessons learned. The self-assessment reports and reviews will facilitate the reviews by the Strategic Planning, Oversight and Results Division and the quality assurance panels under track 2. Staff from the Strategic Planning, Oversight and Results Division will work closely with the assigned focal points in each programme area to ensure the completion of quality self-assurance activities.

Track 2: For strategic ECA products and services, quality reviews by quality assurance panels are undertaken to enhance learning and ensure the continuous improvement of products and services. Strategic products and services are determined by the senior leadership team. It should be noted that the quality assurance panels are organized to support learning and continuous improvement of products and services and that their recommendations are duly evaluated by the responsible programme managers and output focal points within the specific context of output realization. Where feasible, responsible managers and staff will participate in the panel meetings to cultivate learning and facilitate the adoption of panel recommendations. In addition to these quality assurance panels, the Standards and Quality Assurance Section will undertake periodic
quality assurance reviews of ECA products and services. It will incumbent on the Section to provide the schedule for planned quality reviews under track 2, in accordance with the programmed output’s schedule for planning, development and distribution.

Under the overall process involving a combination of tracks 1 and 2, the conceptual framework for quality monitoring and measurement at ECA follows a four-step procedure:

- **Quality assurance at entry:** These interventions are aimed at assuring the quality of planning documents, including concept documents and accompanying plans such as the quality assurance plan, the data plan (if data are to be collected), and the communications plan relative to guidelines.

- **Quality assurance during implementation:** Interventions at this stage ensure that development and production of the product or service are in compliance with the content in the approved concept documents and accompanying plans.

- **Quality at exit:** Interventions at this stage ensure that the outputs meet the quality criteria set by ECA and are deemed appropriate for carrying the ECA logo and ultimately distribution to end users.

- **Lessons learned:** These interventions have the objective of learning from the planning and implementation of the outputs and ensure that the lessons learned are reflected in the planning of other outputs with a view to improving their quality.

The essential elements of the quality assurance approach include quality planning, quality control, quality assurance, and quality methods that are described in subsequent sections below.

### 2.4.2 Quality planning

Quality planning is about defining ECA products and services, with their respective quality criteria, quality method (including the measures required for quality control and product approval) and the quality responsibilities for those involved. The purpose of quality planning is to provide a secure basis on which:

a. To obtain the agreement of senior leadership on the overall quality expectations of products and services, the quality criteria (including corporate and other standards to be observed – for instance, ECA has standards for publications and events), the means by which quality will be achieved and assessed and the acceptance criteria by which the product or service will be judged;

b. To communicate these agreements unambiguously so that all stakeholders – senior leadership, the responsible division or subregional office or IDEP, the Standards and Quality Assurance Section, panel members, the approver of the product or service – have a common understanding of what the product or service sets out to achieve;

c. For control purposes (in other words, establishing an effective baseline for the product quality controls, including the quality tolerances) and to secure a means of achieving a product or service that is fit for purpose;
d. To obtain approval for the inclusion of documents in the ECA annual publications catalogue.

The above aspects of planning will enable all ECA staff involved in the delivery of a product or service to have the same understanding of the scope of the product or service; of what constitutes a successful result (for example, the quality requirements for a flagship publication such as the *Economic Report on Africa*); of the quality approach to be adopted (for example, quality reviews with the use of panels or peer reviews by external experts); of the extent of work required; and of the persons who should be involved and their roles.

The quality planning process at ECA will therefore include:

a. Defining the product or service through a concept note;

b. Defining the overall quality expectation;

c. Identifying the quality criteria – including corporate (ECA) and other standards to be observed;

d. Establishing tolerances;

e. Articulating the quality method – measures required for quality control and product approval;

f. Identifying quality responsibility for those involved;

g. Communicating the quality approach to all ECA staff involved.

### 2.4.3 Quality control

Quality control focuses on the operational techniques and activities used by those involved in the delivery of ECA products or services to check that the product or service meets their quality criteria (for example through quality review); and to identify ways of eliminating the causes of unsatisfactory performance (for instance, by introducing process improvements guided by previous lessons).

### 2.4.4 Quality assurance

Quality assurance provides a check that the direction and management of delivering the product or service are appropriate to the nature of the product or service and that the product complies with relevant ECA and United Nations standards and policies. Quality assurance is therefore independent of the delivery of the product or service.

### 2.4.5 Quality method

Quality reviews complement the use of product descriptions – usually in the form of concept notes. The objective of quality reviews at ECA are to: assess the conformity of products with quality criteria documented in the product description or concept note; involve key interested parties – for instance, gender specialists, statisticians, and subject matter specialists, among others – in checking the product’s quality and in promoting
wider acceptance of the product; provide confirmation that the product is complete and ready for approval; and baseline the product for future change control.

Quality records provide assurances to the ECA senior leadership team that products really are complete (and consequently that the related activities are finished); products have met their associated quality criteria and are fit for their intended purpose (alternatively, that there are records of any quality failures and corrective action); the agreed processes have been observed; and approval authorities and key product stakeholders are satisfied. Quality records include reports of quality review meetings, and response forms (see annex IV below) prepared by producers of products (ECA divisions and subregional offices) indicating how they have addressed recommendations of quality reviewers of their products. The Standards and Quality Assurance Section completes the quality register entries for relevant products when these records are received. Quality records are useful sources of information for analysis purposes, with a view to learning from experience.

The Standards and Quality Assurance Section will keep a quality register that summarizes all quality management activities that are planned for a given year (see annex V). The purpose of the register is to issue a unique reference for each quality activity; act as a pointer to the quality records for a product; and act as a summary of the number and type of quality activities undertaken.

The main quality management report at ECA is the report of quality reviews prepared by the Standards and Quality Assurance Section. The purpose of the report is to document the deliberations at the review meetings and, in particular, to capture the recommendations (agreed actions) to improve the quality of products reviewed. The report is shared with all key stakeholders of the review process, including the chair of the ECA quality assurance panel, reviewers (panel members), the presenter (ECA division or subregional office), and the approver (the Executive Secretary through the Deputy Executive Secretary for Programmes, in the case of major publications). The indicative content of the review report is set out in annex II below.

The ECA quality assurance system for knowledge products and services is illustrated in figure 1.
2.4.5.1 Quality method for major ECA publications

All major ECA publications such as the *Economic Report on Africa*, *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa*, the *African Economic Governance Report*, among others determined by the senior leadership team, undergo mandatory quality control and assurance processes. The following steps will be followed in the delivery of ECA flagship publications (see figure 2):

1. **Choice of theme**: The senior leadership team will designate a small team to deliberate on different options for the theme of the publication – three to four topics – and to submit these options to the senior leadership team for it to select one of them for a particular year.

2. **Internal peer review of the concept note by the authoring division, subregional office or IDEP, as applicable**: This review will be chaired by the director of the authoring division, subregional office or IDEP and attended by the drafting team and all professional staff of the division, subregional office or IDEP, along with a small group of selected staff from other divisions, subregional offices or IDEP with knowledge on the subject matter.

3. **Senior leadership reviews and endorsement of the concept note**: This review will be chaired by the Deputy Executive Secretary for Programmes and attended by a small group of directors designated by the senior leadership team and the team drafting the publication. All divisions and subregional offices and IDEP are required to send comments on the concept note prior to the meeting and participants will agree on the extent to which these comments should be reflected in the document. Participants
at this meeting will also agree on the timeline and roles and responsibilities of all actors in the delivery of the report, and approve or endorse the concept note.

4. **External review of the concept note:** This meeting will be chaired by the director of the division leading the drafting of the publication and the reviewers will include recognized experts on the topic addressed by the concept note. The review will be open to interested ECA staff. This meeting is not expected to change the orientation of the concept note approved by the senior management review meeting. It will focus on elaborating the content of the chapters approved by ECA senior management, ensuring that emerging issues, the state of the art and innovative approaches are taken into consideration.

5. **Internal peer review of the draft report:** This meeting will be chaired by the Deputy Executive Secretary for Programmes and attended by all directors. The review will be open to interested ECA staff. Selected staff members will review the different chapters and will participate in discussion following presentations by authors during the meeting. A quality assurance panel, made up of ECA staff, will also present its findings during this meeting. The quality assurance panel will examine, first, compliance with the concept note; second, consistency of style and the storyline across the report; and, third, the extent to which ECA quality objectives have been met. The metrics for these quality objectives are presented in section 2.2.1 of the present document.

6. **External peer review of the draft report:** This meeting will review the revised version of the report that addresses the comments made during internal peer review. Recognized experts will be invited to attend the meeting, together with ECA staff. Panel members will also review the report and comment on the extent to which the quality shortcomings identified during the internal peer review of the draft report have been addressed.

   An important aspect of the quality review process will be the need to ensure that all the above steps are followed, and that the right people undertake the different reviews, using the appropriate procedures and tools provided by the Standards and Quality Assurance Section. The Section will participate in undertaking the reviews and coordinate all the quality assurance activities.
**Figure 2. Quality method for major ECA publications**

1. **SLT approves the theme**
   * 3-4 topics proposed
   * Reviewed by designated group
   * Theme selected by SLT

2. **Internal peer review of CN**
   * Chaired by director of authoring Division
   * Drafting team and relevant staff to attend
   * Selected staff with relevant competence invited
   * Reviewed CN submitted to SLT for approval/endorsement

3. **SQAS/SPORD undertakes/coordinates all quality assurance activities**
   * Revised report submitted to the DES-Prog for final approval

4. **External review of CN**
   * Chaired by the Director leading on publication
   * External experts invited
   * Focus on elaborating content
   * No change on orientation of approved CN

5. **SLT endorses the CN**
   * Chaired by DES-Prog
   * Review of CN by designated group
   * Timeline & Responsibilities defined
   * SLT approves/endorse the CN

6. **External review of draft report**
   * Chaired by DES-Prog, attended by all directors
   * Quality Assurance Panel presents the outcome
   * Open to interested staff

7. **Internal peer review of draft report**
   * Renowned experts invited
   * ECA staff participate
   * Reviews publication improved after internal review

8. **Publication cleared for production**

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**Timeline for producing ECA publications**

- The theme of major ECA publications should be known at least 16–18 months in advance of the delivery of the report.

**Approval process**

- The director of the division leading the drafting of a publication is ultimately responsible for the quality of the publication even if other divisions make significant contributions to the publication.
- The Executive Secretary through the Deputy Executive Secretary for Programmes approves or rejects the document based on the recommendations of the quality control panel.

**Guidelines for meeting quality expectations**

- Guidelines for achieving quality expectations such as gender mainstreaming, use of appropriate data (ECA standard operating procedure), links with Sustainable Development Goals, and having a clear storyline, among others, should be included in or attached to the concept note.
- The panel for the quality review of flagship publications will include gender specialists, statisticians and other colleagues with expertise relevant to ECA quality objectives.
Ensuring that comments and recommendations from various reviews are addressed

- It will be mandatory for authors to provide a written response to all comments and recommendations made at various reviews. The Standards and Quality Assurance Section of the Strategic Planning, Oversight and Results Division will provide the appropriate template for capturing comments and recommendations and responding to them (see annex IV below). The section will also ensure that comments are presented in a meaningful way and that recommendations are practicable.

Incentives

- The review of the concept note by senior leadership and the internal peer review of draft publications will be chaired by the Deputy Executive Secretary for Programmes.
- Panel members will be invited by the Deputy Executive Secretary for Programmes to review draft publications, attend review meetings and submit written comments on the draft publications.

3. Organizational arrangements and resources

3.1 Organizational arrangements

The organizational arrangements for the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of ECA quality assurance activities are summarized in figure 3 below. The main organizational units involved are the following:

- **Senior leadership team:** this team will be responsible for the overall strategic planning, oversight and control of quality assurance and related decision-making. This collegial responsibility can be discharged, as and when applicable, through a delegated group of directors. Other oversight bodies could also be constituted to support the senior leadership team in achieving its objectives effectively and in a timely manner.

- **Standards and Quality Assurance Section of the Strategic Planning, Oversight and Results Division:** the Section will spearhead the planning, coordination, operationalization and promotion of all quality assurance activities at ECA and will work in close collaboration with divisions, subregional offices and IDEP in order to ensure the smooth implementation of the ECA quality assurance policy and operational plan. In addition to contributing substantively, where possible, to quality reviews of knowledge products and services undertaken by quality assurance panels, the Standards and Quality Assurance Section will carry out a quality review of ECA strategic planning instruments such as the annual programme plan, annual business plan and corporate project proposals, regardless whether these are to be funded from the regular budget, the regular programme for technical cooperation, the development accounts or extrabudgetary resources from the multi-partners trust fund. The Section will also organize capacity-building
programmes for programme management focal persons and ECA staff at large in order to familiarize them with quality assurance practices and educate them on techniques and tools as part of efforts to promote a quality assurance culture in the house. To achieve excellence through learning and solution exchange, the Section will network with peers in other regional commissions, the United Nations system at large and other think tanks operating in Africa and beyond. In addition, the Section will be responsible for developing indicators to measure the extent to which the quality of ECA products and services have improved over time and prepare annual reports on quality at ECA.

- **Quality assurance panels**: these will be constituted to undertake quality reviews of strategic ECA products and services and will be supported by the Standards and Quality Assurance Section. Quality assurance panel members will be proposed by the Strategic Planning, Oversight and Results Division in consultation with the Deputy Executive Secretary for Programmes and appointed by the Executive Secretary.

- **Other ECA divisions, subregional offices and IDEP**: these entities will be responsible, first, for providing inputs for the development of the annual ECA quality assurance plan consistent with their respective submissions to the annual ECA catalogue of publications and calendar of events; second, for supporting the Standards and Quality Assurance Section in the successful delivery of the outputs; and, third, for providing information for the preparation of the annual ECA quality assurance reports.

- **Evaluation Section of the Strategic Planning, Oversight and Results Division**: the Section will undertake periodic evaluations of the quality assurance system in order to support and promote cross-organizational learning.

- **Programme management focal persons**: with the support of the Standards and Quality Assurance Section, these focal persons, for each division, subregional office and IDEP, will assist programme managers who are accountable for the quality of their outputs. The Standards and Quality Assurance Section will also provide support to the focal persons through the provision of capacity development training.
Figure 3. Quality assurance at ECA: organizational arrangements and roles

Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
- Provides strategic direction on quality assurance
- Approves terms of reference and composition of delegated groups; quality assurance policy, plans, manual; policies and executive guidelines on quality assurance
- Considers and approves annual QA reports and reports of QA reviews for dissemination
- Decides on measures to improve QA function and manage risks

Quality Assurance Panels (QAP) undertake
QA reviews of major ECA products and services, strategic planning instruments, and business processes

Focal persons support programme managers with QA responsibilities

Standards and Quality Assurance Section (SQAS)/Strategic Planning Oversight and Results Division (SPORD)
- Plans, coordinates, implements; reports on quality assurance activities, outputs, processes and systems
- Produces quality assurance policy, plans, tools/manuals, policies and executive guidelines on QA for review by QAP and senior leadership team
- Undertake and coordinates the quality reviews of ECA products and services, strategic planning documents and business processes
- Serves as a Secretariat for QAP
- Coordinates ongoing monitoring and evaluation of QA policy and plans
- Prepares and disseminates annual QA reports and reports of QA reviews
- Maintains database of quality measures
- Ensures compliance with ECOSOC mandates and UN-wide initiatives on gender mainstreaming and carbon footprint
- Leads in providing QA CD services to ECA staff
- Leads in identifying, assessing and controlling risks over the lifecycle of ECA products and services
- Provides QA support and feedback to staff and managers

Divisions/SROs/IDEP provide inputs for development of QA plan; assist SPORD in implementation of QA plans and development of QA manual; provide information for annual QA reports and monitoring and evaluation
### 3.2 Responsibility assignment matrix: RACI chart

The various responsibilities for the planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting of ECA quality assurance activities are provided below. The chart indicates the parties at four levels of involvement with the task: responsibility, accountability, consultation and information; hence the designation "RACI".

**Figure 4. RACI chart**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles and tasks</th>
<th>SLT</th>
<th>SQAS</th>
<th>QA panels</th>
<th>ECA divisions/SROs/IDEP</th>
<th>Director, SPORD</th>
<th>Eval Section</th>
<th>Prog. focal points</th>
<th>DES-Prog</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide overall leadership and guidance</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide oversight of the quality assurance system</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R, A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare quality assurance plans for products and services under their purview</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>R, A</td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C, I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan and coordinate quality assurance activities, processes and systems</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C, I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertake self-assurance and report on challenges and lessons learned</td>
<td>C, I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and maintain the quality register</td>
<td>R, A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertake quality reviews</td>
<td>R, A</td>
<td>R, A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serve as secretariat for quality assurance reviews</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporate comments and feedback from quality assurance panels and make adjustments as necessary</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R, A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approve or reject quality assured products and services</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R, A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carry out periodic evaluation of the quality assurance function</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>C, I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
<td>R, A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop indicators to measure improvement in the quality of ECA products and services</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>R, A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ECA Quality Assurance Policy

### Roles and tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles and tasks</th>
<th>SLT</th>
<th>SQAS</th>
<th>QA panels</th>
<th>ECA divisions/ SROs/IDEP</th>
<th>Director, SPORD</th>
<th>Eval Section</th>
<th>Prog. focal points</th>
<th>DES-Prog</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organize capacity-building on quality assurance</td>
<td>R, A</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compile and document best practices and lessons learned</td>
<td>R, A</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare and disseminate the annual report on quality assurance</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>R, A</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R – Responsible     A – Accountable     C – Consulted     I – Informed

### 3.3 Resources

ECA should ensure that adequate human and financial resources are available to manage the quality assurance function effectively, as indicated below.

#### 3.3.1 Regular budget

The human resources of the Standards and Quality Assurance Section comprise four posts at the professional level (one each at the P-5, P-4, P-3 and P-2 levels), and one general service post at the G-7 level. The following competences are required of the Section: analytical and writing skills; experience in the United Nations system; and skills in managing people and processes.

To complement the above staff mix, consultants will be recruited whenever the required experience and skills are not available in the Strategic Planning, Oversight and Results Division. Independent individual consultants and consulting firms will be recruited to participate in quality reviews of major ECA products, services and processes, including the periodic reviews of the quality assurance function at ECA. Staff from other ECA divisions, subregional offices and IDEP will also be involved in quality assurance reviews.

#### 3.3.2 Additional resources

Where financial resources for quality reviews are concerned, the lack of dedicated resources for the conduct of such exercises has been and continues to be the greatest challenge to promoting quality assurance at ECA. This is exacerbated by the somewhat timid attitude of programme managers towards quality assurance, which is all too often perceived as an additional layer likely to delay delivery processes.

In cognizance of the above challenge a call is made to the senior leadership to plan and allocate dedicated resources from their regular budget funds for expert group meetings or from their extrabudgetary resources for quality assurance to cover needs at the required staffing level and the cost of undertaking systematic and rigorous quality assurance reviews.
At the corporate level, it will also be important for ECA to allocate funds to cover costs associated for developing quality assurance products, guidance and services, and for processing annual reports (editing, layout, translation, brochures, promotional activities, and other requirements). Resources are also needed for the organization of capacity-building activities on quality assurance and for participation in external quality reviews and expert group meetings.
Annex I

Definitions

Quality management approach: An approach defining the quality techniques and standards to be applied, and the various responsibilities for achieving the required quality levels during a project.

Quality management system: The complete set of quality standards, procedures and responsibilities for an organization or specific entity (site, business unit, etc.) within that organization.

Quality records: Evidence kept to demonstrate that the required quality assurance and quality control activities have been carried out.

Quality register: A register containing summary details of all planned and completed quality activities. The quality register is used by the project manager and project assurance in the course of reviewing progress.

Quality review technique: A technique with defined roles and a specific structure, designed to assess whether a product in the form of a document (or similar output, such as a presentation) is complete, adheres to standards and meets the quality criteria agreed for it in the relevant product description. The participants are drawn from among those with the necessary competence to evaluate its fitness for purpose.

Quality checklist: A structured tool used to verify that a set of required steps have been performed.

Quality control measurements: The documented results of quality control activities.

Quality management and quality control tools: Tools designed to facilitate the quality planning process by linking and sequencing the activities identified.

Quality policy: A policy that establishes the basic principles that should govern the organization’s actions as it implements its system for quality management.

Quality requirement: A condition or capability that will be used to assess conformity by validating the acceptability of an attribute for the quality of a result.
Annex II

Indicative elements of final reports of quality assurance panels

The reports should be clear, concise and written in a balanced manner. They should focus on significant quality assurance issues, including commendable practices that can be replicated in the delivery of other products and services, and should not be overloaded with details.

The reports should have three main sections: an introduction; key findings; and recommendations. It is suggested that the main body of the report should not exceed 10 pages. Additional information may be provided in the annexes. The indicative contents of the report are summarized in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Assessment criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Introduction and context (suggested length – 1 page)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Description</td>
<td>Business process, output, project or system being reviewed is clearly described, including the stages and activities involved in its delivery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intended beneficiaries of the product or service being reviewed are clearly described.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Context of the review</td>
<td>The report clearly describes the following: Why the quality assurance review was undertaken The objectives and scope for the review The timing of the review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Methodology of the review</td>
<td>The report briefly explains how the review was conducted, including the composition of the quality assurance panel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Key findings (suggested length – 1-2 pages)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Quality assurance issues</td>
<td>The report clearly indicates the significant quality assurance issues identified in the review. The report identifies both quality assurance challenges and commendable practices that can be replicated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Observations</td>
<td>The report clearly describes each quality assurance issue identified in 2.1, indicating the implications, potential and realised, for the quality of the final product or service being reviewed. For quality assurance bottlenecks, the report indicates whether they are: Either specific to the product or service under review or system-wide Either minor or major, requiring immediate corrective measures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The report provides evidence to support its findings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Recommendations (suggested length – 1 page)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Recommendations</td>
<td>The report offers specific recommendations for each quality assurance issue identified in section 2. The recommendations are supported by and flow logically from the findings of the report. The recommendations address significant quality assurance issues. The recommendations are practical and can be realistically implemented. The recommendations are addressed to specific parties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Annex: the response form (annex IV) needs to be attached to the report.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exit form: ECA quality objectives and associated assessment criteria

This checklist is designed for use in reviewing the quality of ECA products at exit. The list aims to be exhaustive, covering all ECA quality assurance objectives. The review panel reserves the right to select criteria that are most appropriate to the nature of the product or service under review. The decision for final approval should be adjusted accordingly.

**Instruction to raters:**
- **2** = Exceeds requirements; **1** = Meets requirements; **0** = Does not meet requirements
- Please provide substantial feedback under comments (wherever the criterion is applicable) to improve the product.

---

**To what extent does the product meet the following ECA quality objectives?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Standards and criteria</th>
<th>Rating or score</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality objective 1: Alignment with the five ECA strategic directions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1. Leverages ECA analytical assets and demonstrates its capabilities to generate knowledge and applied policy towards achieving the SDGs and Agenda 2063</td>
<td>0 = Does not meet any of the ECA strategic directions</td>
<td>0 = Does not meet any of the ECA strategic directions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2. Contributes to the formulation of macroeconomic and structural policy options to accelerate economic diversification and job creation for the transformation of Africa</td>
<td>1 = Clearly meets at least one of the ECA strategic directions</td>
<td>1 = Clearly meets at least one of the ECA strategic directions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3. Promotes innovative financing models for the development of human, physical and social infrastructure assets</td>
<td>2 = Clearly meets more than one of the ECA strategic directions</td>
<td>2 = Clearly meets more than one of the ECA strategic directions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4. Supports ideas and actions to foster deeper regional integration, and the development of regional public goods, with a focus on peace, security and social inclusion</td>
<td>NA = Not applicable</td>
<td>NA = Not applicable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5. Advocates a common African position at the global level and develops regional responses as a contribution to global governance issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Quality objective 2: Innovative thinking

Beyond strengthening its core functions as a policy development and research institution, it is important that ECA continue to work towards bringing forward innovative thinking in response to current continental challenges and assert its position as a genuinely influential organization. In this context, the commitment by ECA to play its role as a think tank of reference on African development policy issues includes its willingness to experiment with new methodologies, bring non-traditional partners to the table and to work together with these partners to provide paradigm-shifting contributions to advance knowledge and development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Standards and criteria</th>
<th>Rating or score</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Application of cutting-edge concepts and methodologies</td>
<td>0 = Does not apply cutting-edge concepts and methodologies</td>
<td>1 = Applies cutting-edge concepts and methodologies</td>
<td>2 = Brings new concepts and methodologies to bear on the question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Timeliness of the knowledge product</td>
<td>0 = Unclear how the product should be meaningfully used in the context in which it is being assessed</td>
<td>1 = The product is clearly timely and relevant to the context it is being assessed</td>
<td>2 = The product is timely and provides strategic guidance on how recommendations could be implemented in a short period of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Focus on an unresolved analytical problem, providing fresh policy or paradigm shifting approaches to advance knowledge</td>
<td>0 = Does not focus on an unresolved analytical problem</td>
<td>1 = Provides fresh policy approaches to an unresolved analytical problem that will have clear benefits at national or regional levels</td>
<td>2 = Provides paradigm-shifting approaches to advance knowledge of an unresolved analytical problem, bringing new viewpoints that will have clear benefits at national or regional levels</td>
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<tr>
<td>NA = Not applicable</td>
<td>NA = Not applicable</td>
<td>NA = Not applicable</td>
<td>NA = Not applicable</td>
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<td>Quality objective 3: Contribution to agenda-setting in the transformation of Africa</td>
<td>ECA contributions should be strategic in nature and aimed at effectively influencing development outcomes that make a difference on the continent. They should shape the debate in Africa and beyond, inform policy and strengthen the continent’s influence in global issues and multilateral discussions, bringing the continent's priorities and issues to the debate. This will be more effectively achieved through strong partnerships and new alliances with like-minded organizations. ECA is well positioned to apply a cutting edge understanding of African development policy issues and its contributions should make a difference in the transformation of Africa. This transformation should entail finding solutions to regional and transboundary challenges, bearing in mind that social inclusion and peace and security constitute important components of the development nexus. Lastly, ECA work should also contribute to strengthening the position of Africa in global governance issues.</td>
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</table>
| 1.1 Clear justification for developing the product, with a well formulated problem and business case | 0 = Provides no clear justification with a well formulated business case  
1 = Provides a clear justification with a well formulated business case  
2 = Provides a clear justification with a well formulated business case with references to relevant resolutions  
NA = Not applicable |                  |          |
| 1.2 Potential to influence priorities and programmes of key partners working on African development | 0 = No recommendations or findings to influence priorities and programmes of key partners working on African development  
1 = Recommendations and findings influence priorities and programmes of key partners working on African development  
2 = Recommendations and findings influence priorities and programmes of key partners working on African development, and provides a minimum of one reference to the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063  
NA = Not applicable |                  |          |
| 1.3 The product adequately addresses the transformation of Africa | 0 = Does not adequately address the transformation of Africa  
1 = Adequately addresses the transformation of Africa  
2 = Adequately addresses the transformation of Africa, with clear links to job creation  
NA = Not applicable |                  |          |
### Quality objective 4: Sustainable development solutions consistent with the United Nations development system, global framework and continental partners

The quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system calls upon entities of the United Nations development system to mainstream the Sustainable Development Goals in their strategic planning documents and their work at all levels. This is premised on the realization that the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development and should therefore continue to be the highest priority of the United Nations development system. In particular, the review stresses the importance of ensuring coherent and coordinated support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other internationally agreed development goals by the United Nations development system.

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<td>Rating scale:</td>
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<td>0 = does not meet requirements</td>
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<td>1 = meets requirements</td>
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<td>2 = exceeds requirements</td>
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<tr>
<th>Rating or score</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tr>
<th>4.1 Engagement of ECA with the United Nations development system in delivering the product</th>
<th>0 = Provides no evidence of engagement with United Nations development system entities in the drafting</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 = Demonstrates collaboration with some United Nations development system entities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2 = Provides clear evidence of collaboration and contribution in the formulation/drafting of the product by UNDS</td>
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<td>NA = Not applicable</td>
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<tr>
<th>4.2 Contributes to and strengthens the normative and policy capabilities of United Nations country teams</th>
<th>0 = Demonstrates no contribution to or strengthening of the United Nations country teams</th>
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<td>1 = Demonstrates contribution to and strengthening of the United Nations country teams and provides a minimum of one recommendation to support the country teams</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2 = Demonstrates contribution to and strengthening of the United Nations country teams and provides at least two recommendations to support the country teams</td>
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<td>NA = Not applicable</td>
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### Attributes

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<td><strong>Rating scale:</strong></td>
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<td>0 = does not meet requirements</td>
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<td>2 = exceeds requirements</td>
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<th>Standards and criteria</th>
<th>Rating or score</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tr>
<td>4.3 The extent to which the product or service responds to the Sustainable Development Goals and other global development frameworks, including Agenda 2063</td>
<td>0 = Does not respond to SDGs &lt;br&gt;1 = Responds to SDGs, Agenda 2063 and other global development frameworks and provides reference to a minimum of one SDG &lt;br&gt;2 = Responds to SDGs, Agenda 2063 and other global development frameworks, and provides reference to a minimum of two SDGs with synergies or multiplier effects &lt;br&gt;NA = Not applicable</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.4 The extent to which the product or service contributes to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women</td>
<td>0 = Does not contribute to gender equality or the empowerment of women and girls (but should do) &lt;br&gt;1 = Contributes to gender equality or the empowerment of women and girls &lt;br&gt;2 = Has gender equality or the empowerment of women and girls as the primary or principal objective &lt;br&gt;NA = Not applicable</td>
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### Quality objective 5: Credibility

Transparency, accountability, respect and responsibility across all streams of work at ECA constitute the basis for building a strong Commission. This includes rolling out policy options that are based on clear evidence through calibrated research, sound statistics and frank feedback from key stakeholders, where methodological constraints and limitations are clearly emphasized. To that end, the development of all ECA key products should include consultations with key stakeholders – including concerned member States, civil society and universities – in their drafting, and careful peer reviews in the final steps. Transparency and accountability are essential for building trust and credibility. ECA applies an integrated approach to its development interventions, bringing together strands of work in each of its subprogrammes and priority areas. The aim is to ensure that the Commission’s work is comprehensive rather than piecemeal. In delivering policy options and knowledge, ECA leverages African potential and strengthens relevant regional and country organizations, think tanks and universities as knowledge providers and capacity development agents for the continent.
<table>
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<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Standards and criteria</th>
<th>Rating or score</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Product demonstrates objectivity, independence and balance, with full</td>
<td>0 = Demonstrates no objectivity, independence or balance with full disclosure of data sources and limitations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NA = Not applicable</td>
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<tr>
<td>disclosure of data sources and limitations</td>
<td>1 = There is clear evidence of objectivity, independence and balance with full disclosure of data sources and limitations</td>
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<td>2 = The work develops new methods to ensure objectivity, independence and balance, and demonstrates their effectiveness</td>
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<td>5.2 ECA standard operating procedures and international standards and</td>
<td>0 = No reference to ECA SOP and international standards and international standards and use of State-of-the-art data sources and disaggregated data</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>New types of data is generated to answer the research question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state-of-the-art data sources and disaggregated data are used</td>
<td>1 = There is reference to ECA Standard Operating Procedures and international standards and State-of-the-art data sources and disaggregated data are used</td>
<td></td>
<td>NA = Not applicable</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 = New types of data is generated to answer the research question</td>
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<td>5.3 Mutual accountability is ensured, including through joint reviews and</td>
<td>0 = No evidence is demonstrated of joint reviews or consultations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NA = Not applicable</td>
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<td>consultations with key stakeholders</td>
<td>1 = Key stakeholders are involved joint reviews or consultations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2 = Key stakeholders are involved in the design, formulation and joint review of the product</td>
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<td>NA = Not applicable</td>
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<td>Standards and criteria</td>
<td>Rating or score</td>
<td>Comments</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.4 Pertinent ECA divisions, subregional offices and IDEP are involved in the preparation of the product</td>
<td>0 = There is no collaboration with ECA divisions, subregional offices or IDEP</td>
<td>1 = Meets requirements</td>
<td>2 = Exceeds requirements</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 = There is some collaboration with pertinent ECA divisions, subregional offices or IDEP</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2 = There is evidence of strong engagement of ECA divisions, subregional offices or DEP in problem identification, strategy formulation and product development</td>
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<td></td>
<td>NA = Not applicable</td>
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<td>5.5 Existing ECA knowledge is used in the product (for example, citation of ECA sources in reports)</td>
<td>0 = There is no reference to ECA knowledge products</td>
<td>1 = Meets requirements</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1 = There is reference to at least three ECA knowledge products</td>
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<td>2 = There is reference to four or more knowledge products</td>
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Conclusion (select one)

Decision:

Complete: All criteria are rated as 1 (“meets requirements”) or 2 (“exceeds requirements”)

Conditionally complete: More than 12 criteria are rated as 1 (“meets requirements”) or 2 (“exceeds requirements”)

Incomplete: 12 or fewer criteria are rated as 1 (“meets requirements”) or 2 (“exceeds requirements”)

In cases where all the criteria would not apply, please use a percentage rating as follows:

- Complete: 100% of the criteria are rated as 1 (“meets requirements”) or 2 (“exceeds requirements”)
- Conditionally complete: More than 75% of the criteria are rated as 1 (“meets requirements”) or 2 (“exceeds requirements”)
- Incomplete: 75% or fewer of the criteria are rated as 1 (“meets requirements”) or 2 (“exceeds requirements”)

Complete: the product is fit for purpose, as is and ready for delivery.

Conditionally complete: the product is fit for purpose, subject to agreed actions. It is ready for delivery, with due consideration for the comments that still have to be addressed.

Incomplete: the product is not ready for delivery and requires another quality review cycle.

Completed by: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________
Annex IV

Quality review response form

Product or service reviewed:

Date:

Producing division, subregional office or institute:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality review panel recommendation</th>
<th>Response</th>
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Annex V

Quality register

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<tr>
<th>Quality activity No.</th>
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<th>Product</th>
<th>Quality method</th>
<th>Producer</th>
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<th>Approver(s)</th>
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<th>Actual review date</th>
<th>Target approval date</th>
<th>Actual approval date</th>
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References

ECA reform:


Other United Nations reform processes:


General Assembly resolution 72/279 of 31 May 2018 on repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (A/RES/72/279)

Quality assurance:


